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**“A ROAD TO PROSPERITY?” –
THE VALUES AND VALUE STRUGGLES
OF MEMBERS OF THE PROSPERITY MOVEMENT
ON THE OLD KENT ROAD IN THE UK**

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**Goldsmiths, University of London
Thesis submitted
for the degree of Ph.D. in Sociology
December, 2017**

Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own.
Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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Abstract

This thesis explores the localised prosperity movement on the Old Kent Road in London, which is heavily concentrated among Black Majority Churches attended by West African immigrants. The research draws on Skeggs' person-value model (2011, 2014) to examine whether the prosperity gospel has monetized Christian faith such that all immaterial values are converted to material value, and asks what, if anything, is left behind. Using a combination of urban ethnography, ethnography of religion, semi-structured interviews, visual methods (semiotics) and textual analysis, I examine the lived experience of the members of these churches, focusing on one specific church as a case study. This study has shown that the members of this movement experience various adverse circumstances such as difficulties associated with the migrant experience and institutionalized racism. The prosperity gospel functions as a liberation theology to counteract their marginalized position, as they strive collectively to reimagine and reposition themselves in society through various reactive and proactive strategies combined with the Pentecostal work ethic and through investing in the second generation. The Bible is used as a manual for being successful and overcoming obstacles. Through the message and practices, negative affects are transformed into positive affects and members are reinvigorated for their daily struggles. As the members resist their positioning by the dominant symbolic, a collective consciousness is formed where values of love and care are prevalent. Due to the members' adverse circumstances, prosperity theology adds a dimension of material value. However, this is on the basis of traditional Christian values and other values can also be found. This study validates Skeggs' person-value framework and also extends its reach to include transnational and religious aspects and the intersectionality between class and race. It also has important implications for the role of religion in fostering the integration of new migrants into the broader society.

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List of Abbreviations

BBT report	Being Built Together report
BMC	Black Majority Church
COMPAS	Centre of Migration, Policy and Society
FoL	Festival of Life
GO	General Overseer
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
MCWE	Morris Cerullo World Evangelism
MSG	The Message Bible translation
MTL	Mission to London
NIV	New International Version Bible translation
NKJV	New King James Version Bible translation
NLT	New Living Translation Bible translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version Bible translation
OKR	Old Kent Road
RCCG	Redeemed Christian Church of God

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Part 1

Chapter One: Introduction



Figure 1.1: A typical prosperity gospel message. Source: What's app message shared in Greeters' department of the church

The artefact presented above is part of the culture of the localised prosperity movement. The prosperity movement represents a large, growing and often controversial subsection of modern global Christianity and is played out in a vibrant way in local churches on the Old Kent Road in London, UK. It is particularly common in Black Majority Churches (BMCs - churches in which over 50% of the members are Black) where the membership consists largely of West African immigrants. This study is about a different journey along the Old Kent Road; a road connecting central London and the suburbs of south east London. Its vicinity is in the borough of Southwark which has an ethnically diverse population and is one of the most deprived boroughs in London with one of the highest rates of long term unemployment in England and Wales, especially amongst black and minority ethnic groups (Southwark Council, 2011). Southwark is also the 'African capital of the UK' (Rogers, 2013: 26) with a high concentration of operational BMCs. An estimated 20,000+ congregants attend BMCs in the borough across a whole Sunday, representing a mix of local, borough, London and home counties congregants which

leads to the speculation that this might represent the greatest concentration of African Christianity in the world, outside Africa (*ibid.*: 31, 39).

This suburban community along the Old Kent Road has been at the centre of my investigation. In recent years throughout this project, I have spent time in various neo-Pentecostal Black Majority Churches located on this road who promote the gospel of prosperity. The main focus is on one of these churches which I have given the pseudonym 'Overcomers' Church' where I did most of my fieldwork. Thus, this congregation provides the locus of my findings of this localised phenomenon. This thesis seeks to examine the lived experience of the members of these churches and to unpack what insight this gives into the struggle between material value and immaterial values, drawing on Skeggs' 'person value' model (2011; 2014). By employing a combination of urban ethnography, ethnography of religion, semi-structured interviews, visual methods (semiotics) and textual analysis, I provide a detailed insight into the multifaceted and often contradictory nature of this phenomenon.

The image above reveals the collective struggle of my participants as well as the approach of the theology promoted which focuses on interventionism and has at its heart a liberational, transformational approach. The mantra of this liberation theology and centre of it is: 'It does not matter where you come from, but where you are going'. The Bible is interpreted to empower their adherents with the goal of the re-imagination and re-engineering of their personhood, as well as to reposition them within the British society, whilst attaching them to the imagined community of 'Overcomers', victors, conquerors and champions in the face of structural barriers and constant devaluation in the institutionally British racist context. Thus, the Bible functions as a manual to be successful and also fulfils a therapeutic function for coping with various negative affects produced through the migration process, the neoliberal job culture and the institutional racism experienced by my informants in the process of settlement. Thus, this focus of the prosperity movement on the OKR with its this worldly concern stands in contrast to the theodicy and soteriology of traditional Christianity, where a dispensing of the reward depends on how one lives

in the here and now but occurs in the afterlife. The localised prosperity movement is in this way a religious culture that is compatible with the worldwide commodity culture, as these churches promote individual and social change, rather than having the focus on life beyond death. It is meant to enlarge one's vision of what can be done here and now with agents of change providing adherents with an enchanted vision of modernity, introducing them to individualisation and preparing them for lives in the British capitalist society.

The prosperity movement in the Black Majority Churches on the OKR is in essence a migration related phenomenon, with most of the church members being immigrants or children of immigrants from West Africa, primarily Nigeria and Ghana. As such, I will approach it through a number of spatialities (macro, meso, micro) to provide a comprehensive understanding. Introducing the macro processes helps to see the big picture, considering global governance and multi-lateral issues; broad economic, social and political drivers of migration and the international systems and structures that affect how migration is enabled or constrained. The meso perspective, relates to the national and sub-national realities of migration; the regional and national issues affecting migration patterns and their connections to one another and the broader global picture; as well as the communities and groups involved in the debate; the social networks linking people in sending and receiving countries; the national and sub-national institutions, bodies and systems affected by the movement of people and the political ramifications of migration and of the responses to migration. The micro perspective teases out the detail; the lives caught in this turbulence and the realities faced by those who move and those who stay; revealing how the bigger factors that shape or are shaped by migration concretely affect the human beings at the centre of the story. This comprehensive perspective interlocking the macro-, meso- and micro- processes resonates with the 'COMPAS¹ approach' (Gidley et al., 2014) to migration. Temporalities considered are the past in terms of roots/routes of the prosperity phenomenon on the OKR,

¹ The Centre of Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford is one of the most prominent research teams investigating migration and migration related issues in the UK. Their approach to migration consists of interdisciplinary research considering migration with its various intersections from different angles and through multiple lenses.

the present, revealing the current conditions in which it occurs as well as the lived experience of the members, and the future as this research considers the second generation and possible outcomes in terms of the re-positioning of them in the British social structure.

This study was part of a larger project of Bev Skeggs which I will discuss in greater detail in the following chapter. Skeggs has developed a theory of values and value, asking the question whether there is anything beyond the logic of capital – whether there is anything that cannot be capitalised upon. She wants to test the limits of capital's lines of flight by investigating two limit cases that attempt to convert values into value: modern digital relations and traditional prosperity theology. The latter domain of faith has always been associated with immaterial values rather than material value. The prosperity gospel, however seems to have monetised the realm of Christian faith. Thus, the starting point of my research was to seek to answer whether the prosperity gospel has monetised or materialised the immaterial realm of faith. Consequently, this monograph will tell the story of an ethnographic study of the prosperity theology movement in London, seeking to gain a better understanding of what is going on in these churches and how that can shed light on the interplay of value and values in a religious context. Skeggs' framework helps to understand the value/s struggle of people placed outside the dominant symbolic. Whilst her work to date has focussed on the traditional working-class population, mainly women, this study examines another group who also find themselves in a subordinated position - African migrants. As such, I introduce literatures on migration, 'race', religion and urban issues to supplement Skeggs' framework and shed further light into the localized prosperity movement phenomenon, which I will outline in this chapter.

In what follows, I will briefly sketch out the wider geo-political context, as well the localised context this phenomenon can be placed within, in relation to neoliberalism, international migration and postcolonial relations in the diaspora in a global city like London. I will then show what role religion plays in this localised setting and also introduce the prosperity gospel in general and how it found its way to the UK. This will bring out the intersections of class, migration, 'race' and religion

of this phenomenon. Afterwards I will lay out related studies and how my research project contributes to the knowledge in the field, by testing and applying Skeggs' 'person-value' model. This is then followed by my research questions and a more detailed outline of the thesis.

Global neoliberalisation and the London context - localised transnationalism

This study explores the lived experience of a suburban British population living on the margins of society and in particular their struggles for value and values in the quest to reposition themselves within the British society, forging a place for themselves in the presence of structural barriers and a general hostile socio-economic environment. As such, this section will look at the wider frame of global neoliberal forces and how they help understand this localised transnational phenomenon. This is a pressing concern, particularly in a time when neoliberal forces of globalization are producing, on the one hand, an ever-growing rise in international migration - approximately 244 million international migrants were living in the world in 2015 (United Nations, 2016), and on the other hand, unequal and uneven power relations with deepening social and economic divisions resulting in increasing stratification and social inequality (Oxfam, 2017).

It has been argued that 'what started as a series of ad hoc experiments to unleash the market as a force for reform in the UK has become something called 'global neoliberalism', with subcontracting as its favoured form of employment' (Wills et al., 2010: 4). This is outlined by Hall (2011: 705-6) in his '*Neoliberal Revolution*' as 'the neoliberal conjuncture', with its focus on open, competitive and unregulated markets, liberated from state intervention and the actions of social collectivities, and representing the optimal mechanism of socio-economic development as a response of a revived capitalism to the crisis of Keynesian welfarism (which tried to set the common good above profitability) in the 1970s. This model of the political economy is therefore grounded in the idea of the 'free, possessive individual' (Hall, 2011: 706, also Skeggs, 2011- this term will be further elaborated on in the theoretical framework chapter) with the state being seen as tyrannical and oppressive, thus it

must 'never govern society, dictate to free individuals how to dispose of their property, regulate a free-market economy or interfere with the God-given right to make profits and to amass personal wealth' (*ibid.*). This was especially achieved through privatisation and subcontracting of public services, thereby exposing workers to the winds of the market and transferring many thousands of workers from the public to the private sector, with significant implications 'with knock-on psychological effects' (Wills et al., 2010: 3). This process has also been summarized as the 'individualization of class' (Mäkinen, 2014) and has furthermore allowed market principles to permeate all aspects of life (Standing, 2011).

If one looks at the different ways this neoliberal economic model has been incorporated on a global scale into individual nation states, one can witness that different countries have connected this political economy to different forms of values from the new right, within the UK known as Thatcherism: neoliberal economics, characterized by de-industrialization and the all-pervasive rule of the market, and old Victorian conservative values. Moreover, this type of economy is historically rooted in the principles of classic liberal economic and political theory and is premised upon and constitutes a particular model of the self: 'one that can sell its labour, potentially – the optimising interested self, first identified by Adam Smith'. This self is 'a moral self, because it takes responsibility for its actions' (Skeggs, 2004c: 63). Skeggs argues in terms of the combination of the liberation of the capitalist market with the accompanying morality to sustain, maintain and reproduce it by subsuming people to the logic of market forces: 'This discursive neutralising of capitalism is a highly morally-charged issue, as it shifts our perception from capitalism as a force that generates class inequalities to a flat, neutral and equal space where everybody is free to exchange' (*ibid.*), thus creating the willing subject of labour. This creates subjects who see themselves as responsible or in other words 'an interested, morally responsible self' (*ibid.*), or the subject of value. Hence, this moral economy places the responsibilities for exchange on individuals that now have the moral obligation to pursue their self-interest and compete on the market.

During the last three or so decades, the UK has been responsible for developing and exporting the neoliberal model of the economy to the rest of the world. This

approach has dominated global capitalism, shaking off all handicaps in the race of markets, customers, orders and jobs. The neoliberal model of employment (and in particular, subcontracting) has provided the engine for economic globalisation and has increased rates of national and international migration. Multinational firms, the industrial power houses of the developing world reveal Thatcher's greatest and deadliest legacy, as they have used subcontracting to expand their activities, developing complex chains of production that involve suppliers in different parts of the world (global commodity chains or global production networks). They have exploited the opportunities associated with new sources of cheap labour in the global South. Corporate elites have been able to liberate themselves from any responsibility for workers in the chain as they directly employ few, if any, of the workers producing their goods. Subcontracting thus has become a key part of a booming global economy, evading the collective power of labour to a large extent with economic growth occurring alongside a reduction in workers' share of overall wealth (*ibid.*).

It is the golden age of corporatism, in the global North where low paid jobs created by subcontracting have been devalued to the point that it is hard to find people to fill them and in the global South where many millions earn less than they need to survive. Struggling nation states in the developing world were visited by programs of neoliberal reform in the global South (reductions of state expenditure, privatization of state assets, liberalization of markets, reductions of import tariffs, welcoming of inward investment), also known as structural adjustment (*ibid.*). As Wills et al. note 'the impact of these policies was almost immediately and uniformly severe in countries that lacked welfare systems, with devastating consequences for the poor, vulnerable and marginalised' (2010: 5).

This global subcontracting and the extension of market relations in tandem with the development of new communication infrastructure tended to increase international migration which has grown considerably since the 1980s. Thus, Wills et al. remark that 'the export of this model of economic development to the rest of the world has helped to create both the necessity and the desire for people to migrate across international borders in search of work' (2010: 1-2). These population movements have been encouraged by national governments seeking to recruit a labour reserve,

along with the widening inequalities and impoverishment of the global South generated by multinational corporations' activities. 'Processes of economic globalisation associated with subcontracted employment have thus placed the migrant at the centre of the contemporary labour process' (*ibid.*: 6). This segment of the UK population contains settled immigrants and newer arrivals providing the economy with a 'foreign born labour supply' (*ibid.*: 2). Their often disadvantaged and precarious conditions favour exploitative and exclusionary treatments by employers and politicians alike, and their representation in public discourse is increasingly hostile (see Berg et al., 2015; Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010).

How these complex dynamics are at play can be particularly well seen in London, which attracts a large number of migrants from many different countries². London's international status as a global city, denoting its significance as a production point of specialized financial and producer services that make the globalized economy run (Sassen, 2001), attracts different kinds of migrants with different migratory patterns. On the one hand, there are 'privileged citizens', mainly highly skilled professionals brought by transnational corporations or drawn by the career opportunities the service industries in London afford them. On the other hand, the presence of these privileged citizens also requires and attracts less skilled and other service-giving people, such as waitresses, chauffeurs, cleaners, etc. in order to make sure that all the demands of the global city are met (Getahun, 2012).

As such, London's formation as a world city has led to the polarisation of social class divisions, with a rather limited role ascribed to migrant workers and an especially distinctive migrant division of labour at the bottom end of London's labour market (Wills et al., 2010). Although not all of those coming to London from overseas necessarily end up in London's low-wage economy, nonetheless Sassen (1996) establishes that the increasing inequalities evident in global cities are a direct result of these new patterns of employment, with the growth at the top end of the labour market fueling growth at the bottom, and the immigrants from low income countries being very heavily over-represented at the bottom. The role of the British

² Official figures show that in 2015, the total usual resident population of London stood at just over 8 million with 3.2 million residents who had been born outside of the UK. (Rienzo & Vargas-Silva, 2017).

state in the production of London's new migrant division of labour is also crucial in these processes as there is a direct relationship between the requirements of employers and state immigration policies, such as that labour shortages encourage the partial opening of borders and vice versa labour surpluses their closure, thus this employer demand is shaping state immigration policies and the resultant division of labour.

London has become far more diverse through these processes of international migration, to the extent that Steven Vertovec (2007) has applied the concept of 'super-diversity' in regard to the multiplicity of immigrants' countries of origin, languages, religions and cultures. Furthermore, this concept also incorporates the different legal status held by migrants, as they enter the country through diverse routes (as high skilled workers, those with work permits, students, sector-based migrants, family members, and asylum seekers). Their legal status is important as it determines immigrants' rights in the UK, including rights in the labour market, rights to stay permanently in the UK and acquire British citizenship, as well as access to welfare benefits and rights to family reunion. This is also a key feature of my research participants' struggles.

Neoliberal processes affect the way different migrant groups are received in the UK, in London. In addition to a general preference for migrant labour as discussed above, due to the over-supply of would-be workers, employers have the opportunity to exercise further preferences in a 'hiring queue', in particular adopting national and racialized stereotypes to determine the reliability of potential recruits. Suzanne Model explains this process: 'Queuing theorists believe that, as long as the supply lasts, employers will hire into the best jobs workers of the heritage that employers rank most desirable. As the supply of such workers declines and/or the job opportunity becomes less attractive, employers will consider applicants with less desirable ancestries. And they will hire members of the least desirable heritage only when the supply of more favourably ranked groups is exhausted. By the same logic, when the workforce must be reduced, members of the least desirable heritage are the first to be made redundant' (2002: 85). In her multivariate analysis model, Model found trends of a relatively stable cross-national hierarchy of discrimination which

reflected established prejudices and stereotypes in London, with workers from African heritage ranking among the lowest group in the queue. Moreover, the queue is also existent in the scope of upward mobility once within a firm's employment.

Thus, migrants who arrive to the UK are sorted into the labour market before they even arrive, instead of being differentiated by skill. Integration into the labour market is crucial for the integration into British society, as the London labour market is polarised and can be divided into the primary segment characterised by better-paid and higher valued, permanent jobs with good working conditions and opportunities for career development and progression and conversely, the secondary sector which consists of temporary jobs, which are low-paid, low-status, have poor working conditions, and also lack job security and career prospects, with the secondary sector being composed mostly of migrants and ethnic minorities and women, whereas the primary sector tends to be dominated by men from the dominant ethnic group. As movement between the segments is severely limited, according to labour market segmentation theories (see Edwards et al., 1975; Gordon et al. 1982) it provides a huge challenge for workers in the secondary sector to secure work in the primary sector, regardless of their human capital, leading to persistent patterns of early disadvantage for some groups, with especially racial discrimination and labour-market disadvantage faced by new Commonwealth migrants being also cross-cut by gender. Wills et al. moreover highlight that 'given the racial heritage of European workers as white, this legal regime has also provided further grist to the mill of racism, with black workers being pushed down the employment hierarchy by the arrival of whites' (2010: 101). This results in segmented incorporation into the host society with few opportunities for social mobility.

My research participants represent a significant part of this migrant population in London who are however highly disadvantaged due to these described processes above. They arrive in the UK with high aspirations for social mobility, often with good university degrees, but experience structural barriers and marginalisation from the outset and often end up in the low-end economy of London's labour

market as the service-giving people, the cleaners, security guards, construction workers and nurses.

This structural segregation of my participants is additionally amplified by the geographical segregation within London, as London also exemplifies further negative impacts of the capitalist model as it contains staggering contrasts of wealth, poverty and power (Wills et al., 2010). The inequalities evident in contemporary London have a particular geography, with areas of greatest poverty being precisely those where immigrants are most likely to settle when they arrive. These are places of cheaper housing and of established diaspora communities with the social networks needed to find accommodation and work.

The borough of Southwark, where this prosperity phenomenon occurs, is on the front line together with other London boroughs of London's new migrant division of labour and its local effects, being a borough with one of the largest migrant communities, the largest number of unemployed residents, and a place where London's multiculturalism and the challenges of labour market deregulation is most obvious and acute. Also taking into consideration that the city has a chronic oversupply of low-skilled workers, leading to a surplus to requirements, this amounts to a stagnant reserve army of largely foreign born labour. It has been estimated that this oversupply is as great as three low-skilled workers for every low skilled job in the capital (HM Treasury, 2007). In addition to the effects of subcontracting, this supply and demand imbalance puts downward pressure on the terms and conditions of work and makes wages much less likely to rise over time. All this leads to increasing poverty and people's need to stay put. Wills et al. contend that 'the slack labour market also created a tendency for 'bumping down', whereby skilled workers ended up taking less-skilled jobs for lack of alternatives' (2010: 47), with London's rate being much higher than the rest of the country (HM Treasury 2007). Wills et al. thus remark that 'many of London's new migrants have been left with little choice but to take any job they can if they are to secure their income necessary to survive in the city' (2010: 52).

Furthermore, as migrants tend to live their lives alongside other migrants and as new arrivals tend to settle in the areas of cheapest housing, which already accommodate significant numbers of foreigners, and due to their structural position in the London labour market, migrants have few chances to get to know English or British people while staying in the UK, resulting in a lack of integration between migrants and natives (*ibid.*). This reveals the vicious circle of disadvantage and marginalisation that many migrants, including many of my participants, are sucked into and are seeking to escape.

Given the migrant division of labour in the London labour market, social mobility is central to the way migrants experience the outlined global and local stratified settings, social class processes and their position within them. First-generation migrants are thus prone to face many penalties, disadvantages and structural barriers in terms of establishing a position in society, particularly in highly stratified and unequal settings like London. To this end, they are often faced with initial downward mobility and for example carrying out low-skilled work, as seen above. This is also due to the fact that their degrees are often not recognized in the country of settlement or the occupational systems in the home and host country not being compatible (not the right kind of institutionalised cultural capital). In addition, they lack the right embodied cultural capital and are further confined through structural racism and wider socio-economic disadvantage (see next section). With upward social mobility, however, they can counteract this dynamic and gain social and economic benefits for the whole family; it is generally acknowledged that the second generation improves substantially on its parents' generation (Papademitriou et al., 2009). Therefore, in terms of social mobility and their position in society, the experience of both first and second-generation immigrants is very important from a social perspective.

As outlined so far, migrant communities are profoundly affected by their location in the wider socio-economy, where they invariably face discrimination and various sorts of exclusion, leading to an inability to participate fully in a society on economic, social and political grounds, involving not only poor-quality employment and barriers to benefits and welfare systems, but also a lack of respect as migrants

are not treated as equal citizens with equal respect. Thus, their structural position in the wider socio-economy has also a strong emotional impact on them.

Migrants' structural position - often inserted at the bottom end of the largely deregulated labour market - means that they have to deal with challenges of low pay, poor conditions and low status. Their nationality, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, age and legality all shape opportunities for work. So too do the ways in which they make sense of their position at work, drawing upon ideological explanations and resources to on the one hand improve, or to at least rationalise, their position, with discourses of race and religion being particularly important in this regard. First, I would like to briefly look at the issue of race and afterwards elucidate the role religion plays in this context.

The postcolonial legacies and the multicultural present of the research setting

This research investigates one particular segment of the British population who have arrived in the UK from new Commonwealth countries and former colonial countries in West Africa. Hence, this section will briefly explain what this dissertation means in invoking the postcolonial legacies and multicultural present of the research setting. As my participants, mainly Yoruba Nigerian migrants from West Africa, seek to build their lives in the UK, especially in London, they are confronted with a structural racist society and a general negative perception of immigrants, in particular towards people from African heritage. By focussing on this particular group that have arrived in the UK from the 1980s onwards and are seeking to settle here, this exposition is limited in its scope and its reflective engagement with this historically sensitive issue and can mainly provide a snapshot, a synchronic analysis of this phenomenon. However, as much as possible, attention is also being paid to the past investigating the sensibility of the historical legacies that have led to the formation of the phenomenon in the present, whilst also considering the second generation and the immanent future, thus making space for diachronic considerations of the emergent social world (see Keith, 2013). In doing

so I seek to give a critical account of the lived experience of my participants highlighting their struggles to incorporate themselves into the British society.

What is important to point out is that although racism occurs in varied ways, at different times, there are underlying historical and spatial causes and developments that have certain socially constructed forms of racisms and which have real long-lasting material and immaterial effects on minorities, e.g. through institutionalized practices of preference and discrimination. Socioeconomic factors, in combination with early but enduring views of race, have led to considerable suffering within disadvantaged racial groups. Skeggs shows how certain attachments and inscriptions become fixed on bodies arguing that people with African heritage 'are always inscribed and read as black in our Western colour-coded visual economy' (2004: 1) which has been generated through a system of inscription in the first place stemming from a complex cultural history. Thus 'some forms of culture are condensed and inscribed onto social groups and bodies that then mark them and restrict their movement in social space' (*ibid.*: 2). Throughout the history of humankind, the dominant culture has assigned identity based on race, both as a means of distinguishing one group from another, but more importantly as a means of diminishing their status and maintaining control. Often, this distinction is made simply on the basis of simple skin colour. Through this mechanism of assigning identity, race becomes a political weapon of the majority that has several limiting effects on the oppressed group, including determining their freedom of movement within the society, limiting upward mobility from class to class, prohibiting or minimizing economic gain, a psychological impact on how the oppressed individual perceives them self and exists within the confines of the limiting social expectations that have been imposed upon them as subjects of constant devaluation (economically and symbolically) (Skeggs, 2014: 13).

By investigating the prosperity movement phenomenon from a postcolonial perspective, I show how this community has formed through a collective consciousness as a form of collective resistance to overcome marginal positions, in the face of devaluation and fixation resulting from prevailing perceptions of white British which stem from the historical legacies of colonialism and the transatlantic

slave trade. Thus, the struggle of my participants' lives as black migrants or settlers in British society exposes neo-colonial relations. Utilising Foucault's and Hall's analysis of discourse and power, I will, on the one hand, show how these historical legacies of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade have real material and immaterial effects on my informants, having not only inscribed my participants as black subjects - subjects of constant devaluation economically and symbolically in the visually colour coded economy and society at large, but also how this common history of colonialism and slavery has been profoundly formative, unifying black people across their differences. Through 'an accident of birth' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012), my participants find themselves caught up in devaluation and negative representation as a collective group, which has concrete material effects on them leading to marginalisation and often exclusion. As a response they have formed communities that endeavour to counteract such forms of devaluation and marginalisation utilising epistemologies of the south.

This case study can be read as an addition to other studies on race and ethnicity in Britain by showing the vernacular culture of my participants. It pays particular attention to how their enchanted world view with associated practices are a form of counteracting various adverse circumstances and discourses that fix them into place, putting a floor under their feet and aiding them to see themselves from a position of power and self-determination beyond their current circumstances, thus enabling them to live their lives in a meaningful and 'successful' way. In doing so, this research considers the history of the formation of this phenomenon in order to be able to understand their culture. I will reveal how the adaptation of the prosperity discourse within BMCs on the OKR is a form of counter discourse to shift the discourse in favour of the congregants as to not letting them be defined by the past and the present, but to see themselves as people of the future who have the ability to steer their lives according to their imagination. To this end, this study aims to explore a sub-cultural socio-religious phenomenon in the UK, particularly focussing on London where a hotspot of the prosperity movement has developed on the OKR, and to capture the sense in which this migrant minority builds communities that enable adherents to flourish and to negotiate the everyday.

Historical legacies have not only brought about social injustice and structural discrimination for minority groups in the British context, but have also enabled practices of association, reciprocity and mutuality to become effective through community organisation where trust and solidarity are strengthened by those who assume racialized identities of ethnic particularity or racial specificity. This in turn creates particular collective identities in their collective struggles against particular forms of systemic injustice that draw on the logic of race in the UK and across the globe. These diasporic identifications of the first generation of my participants structure the discourse and practices of opposition to structural racism, providing a resource of solidarity for the mobilisation of resistance to being fixed, to re-position themselves within the British social structure and to forge a position for the second generation whilst giving them the right dispositions to overcome various hurdles (structural and immaterial) on the way. Thus, this research shows how this form of urban and immigrant religious community draws on religious affective solidarities in mobilizing a specific demographic within the modern multicultural British landscape.

This brings us to the multicultural present in which the research setting is located. Although most industrialised nations are now multicultural (with significant black and minority ethnic populations who have established themselves over several decades, with second and third generation descendants), within the current political climate the always contested and multivalent discourse on multiculturalism has been replaced by representations of society that emphasise fluidity, hybridity and cross-fertilisation. Accompanied by a shift in government and wider policy thinking in relation to the challenges posed by multicultural communities in Britain, migrants who were once encouraged to organise themselves when cultural difference was more accepted are now expected to practice community cohesion (Herbert, 2008). Although still 'valuing diversity', the UK government's agenda is now much more focused on building 'shared values' and a 'sense of belonging' among migrants and black and minority ethnic populations (Cantle, 2008). Ethnic diversity is again being constructed as a problem in public and political life and

following on from various terrorist attacks since 2005, multiculturalism is seen as having failed to foster a shared sense of nation and community cohesion.

Ethnic minorities may be defined as groups which have been assigned a subordinate position in society by dominant groups on the basis of socially constructed markers or phenotype, origins or culture; have some degree of collective consciousness based on a belief in a shared language, traditions, religion, history and experiences. An ethnic minority is therefore a product of both 'other-definition' and of 'self-definition'. Other-definition means ascription of undesirable characteristics and assignment to inferior social positions by dominant groups. Self-definition refers to the consciousness of group members of belonging together on the basis of shared cultural and social characteristics. The concept of ethnic minority always implies some degree of marginalisation or exclusion. Becoming an ethnic minority is not an automatic or necessary result of immigration, but rather the consequence of marginalization processes (Castles, 2014). In this context, Wills et al. argue that 'the focus on consensus-building through changing values tends to ignore the racism and structural inequalities that have often created a lack of social and community cohesion in the first place' (2010: 136), ignoring inequalities due to structural problems. The responsibility has been shifted from the state on to individuals. Whilst migrants often desire to integrate, in practice, their structural position and the wider economic and social exclusions that arise from the structural location prevent them from doing so (*ibid.*). To shed further light on the intersections between migration, race, religion and urban issues which become evident in these processes, the next section will look at the role religion plays in this urban migration context in more detail.

The role religion plays in this urban-migration context

As the community I am exploring is not only a suburban co-ethnic community, but a faith community and due to the fact that the overarching research question is centred around whether the monetisation of faith has occurred within this stream of Christianity, in this section I discuss the role religion plays in this urban context

among co-ethnic faith-based communities with particular focus on BMCs on the OKR. I start by firstly introducing the role religion plays in the migratory experience to the UK in general. The use of the term religion in this study will also be further clarified. Afterwards I will reveal the history and characteristics of the prosperity gospel and how it travelled to the UK and was then adapted to the experience of members of the BMCs, who promote a localised form of this gospel. At the end of this section, I will outline the various criticisms the prosperity gospel has attracted.

In respect to the number of very significant challenges in relation to work and the wider society, migrants develop survival tactics which they deploy in their everyday lives in order to resist and cope in contexts of widespread injustice and to counteract exclusion, stagnation, deprivation, penalties due to migrating as well as the negative affects that are produced through these experiences. Migrants thus develop a mixture of reactive and proactive tactics: reactive ones to respond to challenges facing them, and proactive ones to seek and improve their future situation, as well as to counteract the tendency towards isolation and loneliness, which will be most prevalent amongst those uprooted from their supporting and familiar contexts. Tactics can also involve collective responses to improve conditions in the host society. Faith based organisation are at the forefront of responses for migrants across the globe, supporting displaced people in diverse ways (Keith, 2013). In particular, data show that faith and faith communities are very significant among immigrants from African countries, especially from Ghana and Nigeria (Wills et al., 2010: 174-5). Through the experience of migration, immigrants may become *more* religious, leading the leaders of these faith organisation to foster a sense of community for these new adherents.

Migration has inevitably contributed to the way that the diaspora has shaped Christianity in the West, with migrant movements since the 1960s in the post-colonial era having been predominantly from areas with weak economic and political systems to the centres of global dominance and advanced industrial growth. The migratory pattern is often from underdeveloped economies in Africa, Asia and Latin America to developed economies in Western Europe and North America in the quest for economic and social leverage. An observable trend is that

these economic migrants do not only travel with their skills but with their 'religious backpacks' (Adedibu, 2013: 408). Very substantial growth of Black and other ethnic minority churches has occurred in Britain in recent decades, with for example around 500,000 Christians in BMCs. London in particular has seen major growth in church attendance, most commonly in areas of migration, and particularly in BMCs (Goodhew, 2012). Thus, religion is a major motor in the migration processes for my participants and the role of religious communities among the diaspora constitutes a major feature.

As this phenomenon on the OKR is a localised form of Sub-Saharan African neo-Pentecostalism in the diaspora in London, UK, this research adopts Soothill's (2007) definition of religion. Soothill points out that 'the meaning of 'religion' as it is understood in the West may differ substantially from the meanings it is given in Africa or elsewhere in the non-Western world. It is commonplace to speak of religion in Africa as 'part of the social fabric of everyday life as opposed to a separate sphere of human activity' (2007: 9). Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye contends that 'in African life and thought, the religious is not distinguished from the nonreligious, the sacred from the secular, the spiritual from the material. In all undertakings - whether it be cultivating, sowing, harvesting, eating, travelling - religion is at work. To be born into the African society is to be born into a culture that is intensely religious ... it has been said that in the traditional African society there are no atheists or agnostics' (cited in Soothill, 2007: 4). Soothill furthermore sustains this argument by observing that contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa is not less 'religious than 'traditional' Africa is portrayed to have been, with religion remaining an integral part of everyday life, and a 're-traditionalisation' and spiritualisation of its social worlds' (*ibid.*). Also, Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar (2004) argue that religious relationships may constitute the most important way in which Africans interact with the rest of the world, thinking about the world today largely through religious ideas which provide them the means of becoming social actors.

Soothill explains the meaning of religion further within the African context, stating that it is mainly about 'power' with African traditional religions being informed by a

worldview that is common to all and holding that events in the material world are influenced by the activities of a spirit world with which human beings interact. Thus, the spiritual world is more powerful than the material world. She goes on to explain 'the power of the spirit world can be accessed by those in the material world who possess the necessary skills and knowledge' (2007: 11), with those in possession of spiritual power being both revered and feared. Therefore, religion in Africa is more pragmatic than it is prescriptive or dogmatic, being more a matter of social well-being than ecclesiastical structures and creedal formulations. Furthermore, rather than being concerned with moral values or norms of behaviour it is more concerned with the explanation, prediction and control of events in the world. In the case of Christianity however, religious and moral doctrines are generated, but an underlying emphasis on the explanation, prediction and control of events persists. However, Christianity in West Africa is not a wholly home grown or local phenomenon but reminiscent of moments in the religious histories of Europe and North America. Nevertheless, this exposition of African binary ontology and cosmology provides the backdrop of understanding the meaning making of the prosperity message and its related practices witnessed in this transnational diasporic community on the OKR.

These African cosmologies, deriving from African indigenous spiritual ideologies are entirely different from Western ideologies and Western culture, with the effects of secularisation and the with disenchanted Enlightenment values and the emphasis of reason and intellectualism, as well as religious pluralism and the privatisation of faith and an unfamiliar worship style and discrimination encountered within the mainline churches resulting in a culture shock and feelings of alienation. Thus, religious commitment is major factor in transnational migration of Nigerian initiated churches, with familiar symbolic constructs and a common worldview, where a form of selective assimilation is practised and imagined by migrants, fostered by social interaction and their religious repository.

Having outlined the use of the term of religion in this thesis I will now introduce the prosperity theology movement in general. The prosperity gospel originated within Pentecostalism. From its humble beginnings as an early twentieth-century revivalist

movement among America's poorer socio-economic groups, Pentecostalism has spread across the globe to become what is broadly believed to be the fastest growing Christian movement today (Freeman, 2016; Anderson, 2004; Burgess and van der Maas, 2002; Hollenwenger 1997). By far the majority of Pentecostal converts are to be found in the non-Western world, particularly in Latin America, Asia and Africa, with Africa alone having an estimated 126 million Pentecostals and charismatics, constituting more than 10 per cent of the continent's population, with the vast majority of them, some 109 million, having joined since 1980 (Freeman, 2016; Barrett and Johnson, 2002).

Pentecostalism is constituted, on the one hand, of fundamental principles of the Bible with a conservative understanding of scripture, and on the other hand, of empowerment through spiritual gifts offered to all ('lay empowerments of the spirit' (Martin, 2002: 4)) and therefore, voluntarism (i.e. active, voluntary engagement in religious activities). Pentecostalism can be traced historically in three waves: classical Pentecostalism, referring to churches with links to the early American and European Pentecostal churches which stress the importance of speaking in tongues, as evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit; the second wave is comprised of charismatic members of the mainline Christian denominations, who began to experience the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the form of speaking in tongues, spiritual healing, miracles and the like, starting in the 1960s; and the third wave, or neo-Pentecostalism, is the broadest category encapsulating a vast number of non-denominational churches that have exploded onto the scene since the 1980s, characterised by a growth of transnational networks and para-church organisations, some of which are particularly notable for their size and influence. Neo-Pentecostals have been particularly creative and innovative in their adaptation of Pentecostal doctrine and styles to new settings and contexts, promoting in particular the prosperity gospel. The neo-Pentecostalist movements differ in several ways from classical Pentecostalism. While earlier forms of Pentecostalism promoted a rather ascetic approach to the material world, shifts since the 1980s in the Pentecostal churches have led to fundamental realignment with regard to views about material life and this worldly concern being firmly placed in the orbit of neoliberalism.

Neoliberal ideas and conceptions of wealth, accumulation and self-actualisation are embedded and reproduced in this form of Pentecostalism (Freeman, 2016; Obadare, 2016; Robbins, 2004). This convergence between neoliberalism and Pentecostalism marks a shift away from the ascetic individualism of earlier anti-materialist forms towards a thoroughly modern individualism (Soothill, 2007).

The prosperity theology promoted by neo-Pentecostal agents, also known as the gospel of health and wealth, is a message that promotes that God wants Christian believers to prosper in every aspect of life, with a particular emphasis on material blessings such as financial success. These blessings can be attained by faith, positive confession, tithing (seed faith), deliverance and prophecy. The doctrine is based on an interpretation of certain biblical passages that justify the logic of this gospel and the techniques to increase one's material wealth. The Bible is seen as a contract between God and the believer: if the believers have faith, God will fulfil his promise of security and prosperity. Salvation, in this view can take place in this life because Jesus wants his people to enjoy abundance and prosperity (Van Dijk 2005; Meyer, 1998; Marshall, 1991).

Prosperity theology became prominent in the United States during the 1950s. Through televangelism in the 1980s, the message spread on a global scale, which also led to the establishment of numerous so-called mega-churches and a plethora of smaller churches, ministries and Christian enterprises, such as TV channels and so on. Through this, Pentecostalism and the prosperity gospel found its home not only in church buildings but also in television and radio - mass media that have allowed it to reach hundreds of thousands of worshipers worldwide.

Prominent leaders in the development of prosperity theology include E. W. Kenyon, Oral Roberts, A. A. Allen, Robert Tilton, T. L. Osborn, Joel Osteen, Creflo Dollar, Kenneth Copeland, Reverend Ike and Kenneth Hagin (Bowler, 2013; Martin, 2002). During the course of my research, I regularly came across all these 'household' names alongside many others. Watching their services online and comparing them to the UK's mega-churches and to the smaller offshoot-churches on the OKR, I could witness

that this model was imitated, for example regarding the motivational style of preaching, the structure of the services and the set-up of the facilities.

Since the doctrine emphasizes the importance of personal empowerment, proposing that it is God's will for his people to be great and interpreting the atonement in Jesus Christ to include the alleviation of sickness and poverty, which are viewed as curses to be broken by faith, this movement has been likened to the cargo cult phenomenon (a belief that various ritualistic acts will lead to a bestowing of material wealth-cargo (Lindstrom, 1993; Burrige, 1969), traditional African religion (concerned with goods (Gifford, 2004)), and Black liberation theology (Rhodes, 1991b). The prosperity message that has the empowerment of the poor and oppressed as a focus, through various techniques, especially through motivational speech using the biblical text for inspiration. Some have also linked the origin of this teaching to the new thought movement which began in the 1800s (simply put, this movement says sickness originates in the mind, and right thinking has a healing effect (INTA, 2015)).

I propose that prosperity theology fits within liberation theology. Although there are differences, both theological stances have an over-realised eschatology with the expectation of the fullness of liberation and prosperity in this present life. Both theologies and their offshoots have the goal to help the marginalized and disenfranchised members of society to cast off the chains of economic deprivation. Both have a this-worldly, social orientation of faith. Prosperity theology is a movement in Christian theology which conveys the teaching of Jesus Christ in terms of liberation from unjust economic, political and social conditions. It is an interpretation of the Christian faith through the poor's suffering and their struggle and hope for better life chances. Prosperity theology emphasises individual success, whereas other branches of liberation theology emphasise race, gender or other issues. Prosperity theology offers biblical solutions to poverty and dismay, frustration and depression. However, this approach to liberation has been criticised by liberationists themselves for its individualistic focus, whilst ignoring the structural constraints that prevent oppressed individuals from excelling. It avoids challenging those in power, only promoting middle-class consumerism, rather than offering a developed sense of biblical justice. By linking faith to material success, critical voices

contend, prosperity preachers offer 'fool's gold', arguing that many faithful Christians will always lack the ability to transcend structural constraints on their economic plight (Lee, 2007). Other critics (see Garber, 2008; Withrow, 2007) argue that prosperity preachers transform Christ's message into the ideals of consumer culture. Nonetheless, the prosperity teachers themselves maintain that their message can empower people facing the challenges of the twenty first century, thus demonstrating a new kind of liberationist agenda. In this section I make explicit the historical and geographical histories of 'liberation theology' and Pentecostal 'prosperity theology'. I investigate their differences and commonalities, concluding that prosperity theology fits within the family of liberation theology displaying common features such as an over-realised eschatology with a focus on this-worldly matters and the promotion of values like dignity, freedom and self-determination as well as of self-improvement of a specific marginalised group of people who suffer under social, economic, and political oppression.

Strictly speaking, traditional liberation theology should be understood as a family of theologies - including the Latin American, Black, and feminist varieties. All three respond to some form of oppression: Latin American liberation theologians say their poverty-stricken people have been oppressed and exploited by rich, capitalist nations. Black liberation theologians argue that their people have suffered oppression at the hands of racist whites. Feminist liberation theologians lay heavy emphasis upon the status and liberation of women in a male-dominated society (Rhodes, 1991a). There have been numerous applications of liberation theology and shifts in emphasis from social theory to more theological and spiritual approaches and from social change to individual change have since occurred, from fighting for radical transformation of society to a 21st century application that focusses on radical personal transformation.

So, what is Latin American liberation theology? Liberation theology has its roots in Latin American Roman Catholicism. Its rise is seen as a response to widespread poverty and the mistreatment of large segments of Latin American society. An influential book promoting liberation theology is Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez's 'A Theology of Liberation' (1988). Liberation theology in the Latin American context is

a discourse built around the elements that make up its locus: a preferential choice for the poor, a critique of market idolatry and structural sin, and the prescient denunciation of injustice, among many others. Liberation theology belongs to a deeper and wider movement, a vast movement which Löwy calls 'liberation Christianity' (Andrade, 2017). Liberation theology is a forerunner of decolonial thinking. For one of the representatives of the modernity coloniality nexus, sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel, liberation theology has contributed to the production of anti-hegemonic thought in Latin America (*ibid.*). Theologians Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff have recognized the implications of modernity in the context of Latin America. Liberation theology is thus a modern critique of modernity, as these theologians, by drawing on contributions from the social sciences, have uncovered the workings of exploitation and domination put in place since the European conquest of Latin America. Liberation theology's originality lies in its having achieved a behind the scenes reading of history; that is to say, from the point of view of the victims of modernity. Gutiérrez accepts it is vital to give voice to those who are not considered human beings by the system: the exploited classes, the marginalized races, the despised cultures which he says are, at the end of the day, 'non-persons' (*ibid.*). In conclusion, liberation theology, the intellectual expression of liberation Christianity, should be understood as marking a turning point in the history of Latin American thought.

What is Black liberation theology? Black liberation theology is an offshoot of the South American liberation theology, which is largely humanistic, attempting to apply Christian theology to the plight of the poor. Black liberation theology focuses on Africans in general and African-Americans and also South Africans in particular being liberated from all forms of bondage and injustice, whether real or perceived, whether social, political, economic, or religious. The goal of Black liberation theology is to make Christianity real for Blacks. Black liberation theology attempts to focus Christianity on liberation from social injustice in the here and now, rather than in the afterlife.

Cone, a major advocate of Black liberation theology emphasizes that there is a very close relationship between Black theology and what has been termed 'Black Power'

(Rhodes, 1991b). He further states that 'Black Power' is a phrase that represents both black freedom and black self-determination wherein black people no longer view themselves as without human dignity but as human beings with the ability to carve out their own destiny. Cone contends that Black theology is the religious counterpart of 'Black Power'. Thus, Black theology is the theological arm of 'Black Power', and 'Black Power' is the political arm of Black theology. While 'Black Power' focuses on the political, social, and economic condition of black people, Black theology puts black identity in a theological context (*ibid.*). Cone emphasises the human work of self-liberation among Blacks. Though the 'Black Power' movement faded after the 1960s, the primary emphasis of the movement: dignity, freedom and self-determination of black people has continued in Cone's theological writings. In terms of eschatology, Cone has developed a theology that has hope for this life, rather than focussing on life in the next world as he was interested in an eschatology that has significance for black people who believe that their self-determination must become reality now. This over-realised eschatology is also key to the prosperity theology, with a focus on this-worldly matters and the promotion of values like dignity, freedom and self-determination as well as of self-improvement. This gospel also has the oppressed and marginalised at heart. Thus, if we now compare some central elements of liberation theology with the prosperity theology by concentrating on the central objective features of each of the two theologies, we will find elements that the two have in common.

We have seen that fundamentally, liberation theology is a Latin American phenomenon. It originated there and the socio-political background of that vast area is the context for its development. Basic principles have been more widely applied e.g. in the Black theology of the USA and South Africa, and certain elements have also been appropriated by those who promote feminist theology. It is clear that there are features of it which can be applied to any group which might consider itself to be socially, economically or politically oppressed or exploited or otherwise disadvantaged. Fundamentally, prosperity theology originated in North America with its socio-political background and especially in the USA. It has spread to the Global South and among minorities in the Global North. The gospel asserts

that prosperity is God's will for every Christian, including material and physical prosperity. As liberation theology is a programme and call for action, so is prosperity theology. The call for action in original liberation theology was largely social and political with the hopes of a more just society cherished by the working classes and by racialised groups of society in Black liberation theology. In a similar way, prosperity theology has a social dimension as well as an individual one. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier both theological stances have an over-realised eschatology with the expectation of the fullness of liberation and prosperity in this present life. Both theologies and their offshoots have the goal to help the marginalized and disenfranchised members of society to cast off the chains of economic deprivation. Both have a this-worldly, social orientation of faith. The interventionist approaches of these theologies are based on an idea of 'liberation' that they take primarily from biblical narratives. However, the prosperity movement is less focussed on the political sphere and more on the economic one, spreading at the same time as liberal capitalism was unleashed across the world and also being internally linked to it (Meyer, 2007: 21; Martin, 2002: 15; Hunt, 2000: 344; Coleman, 1995: 161). This theology offers no direct apology for social inequalities but amounts to a performative affirmation of it. The prosperity gospel is meant to assist religious individuals in succeeding in both the marketplace and professional life, as well as in private life with the help of faith. The adherents of this doctrine, which is widespread in evangelical Pentecostal churches, raise the claim that they are agents of social change who wish to exert, through their normative ideas, a transformative influence on society and its legitimizing foundations. Here religious ideas provide an additional justification for culturally established goals of success and the blueprints for collective practices designed to encourage the faithful on their earthly climb to the top of society (Sütterlüty, 2016). However, this prosperity discourse gives direction to the actions of the faithful with respect to inequality issues, but also, based on normative implications, it provides powerful sources of motivation to drive these actions. Yet, these agents of change promoting this gospel do not maintain a critical distance or oppose capitalist orders of justification. Rather, they duplicate or re-signify market-based habits of thought and dispositions of action (Maddox, 2012; 2013; Dawson, 2011;). The prosperous

churches of 'health and wealth' Christianity address social inequalities only insofar as they assign their members the task of growing through wealth, achieving a 'fullness of life' and 'taking domination' in every sphere of life (Maddox, 2012: 149, 152). Still, it can be argued that these agents of change effect social change from below focussing on the change of attitude and behaviour of individuals, whilst also creating a collective force of social change.

Having critically evaluated the differences and common features of the two approaches, it can be argued that the localised adaptation of prosperity theology witnessed in churches along the OKR functions as a form of liberation or 'liberating' theology as it has many of its features and is driven by agents of change who promote a belief system that seeks to liberate a specific group of people from socio-economic as well as racial oppression which is constitutive of the former. Also, as we have seen liberation and prosperity theology both exhibit an over-realised eschatology with a focus on this-worldly matters and the promotion of values like dignity, freedom and self-determination as well as of self-improvement. In this thesis I outline the history of the structural position of adherents of the prosperity movement on the OKR in the current British society elucidating the material and immaterial effects of this history. I show how the agents of change seek to counteract these effects by promoting change on a material but also affective and immaterial level to a certain demographic effected by this history, seeking to re-position them in society as well as to let them re-imagine themselves as persons of dignity, freedom and self-determination.

This all stands in contrast to the theodicy and soteriology of traditional Christianity, where a dispensing of the reward depends on how you live in the here and now but occurs in the afterlife. Therefore, the symbolic world of neo-Pentecostals is integrated around the key notion of transformation (Robbins, 2004; Meyer, 1998; Martin, 1990). The kind of transformation involved is a radical one that separates people both from their pasts and from their surrounding social world. Converts are encouraged to make a break with the past and adherents are then given a new vision for their future. Thus, the emphasis is on rupture, dualism and moral asceticism. The prosperity gospel has the ability to reproduce itself in various

places. However, it does take various forms in different parts of the world and therefore cannot be regarded as an imported package, 'rather it is a repertoire of religious explorations controlled, though sometimes barely, within a Christian frame and apt for adaption in a myriad indigenous contexts' (Martin, 2002: 6; see also Coleman, 2016). How this approach is adapted in the localised prosperity discourse among members of the movement on the OKR will be discussed in detail in chapter six on 'resistance from the margins' and chapters seven through nine concerning their value/s struggle.

Through the empowerment of the spirit and adaptation of the scriptures, as Martin (2002) shows, the aim is to make a way for the adherents to enter into modernity, as he anticipates that neo-Pentecostals will perform a service akin to Methodism in preparing working- and lower-middle-class people for the frugal enjoyment of prosperity, polite public discourse and democratic citizenship, initiating converts into modernity, introducing them to individualism and preparing them for lives in the global capitalist economy. Thus, Martin sees neo-Pentecostalism's role as an agent of modernity, providing an enchanted version thereof. It is the emphasis on individuality and inward faith, rather than rationalisation and bureaucracy that makes Martin link Pentecostalism to modernity rather than sixteenth or seventeenth century protestant frugality in the industrial phase of capitalism, especially as Pentecostalism is more based on story and song, gesture and empowerment, image and embodiment, enthusiastic release, but also personal discipline. This potent combination of empowerment with release is just as viable in terms of advancing modernity as rationalisation, he claims. Martin therefore considers contemporary Pentecostalism to be linked to modernity in a number of domains, such as: gender, secular law, transnationalism, voluntarism, pluralism, the nuclear family, peaceability, personal release and personal work discipline, consumption, modern communication and social and geographical mobility (2005: 142). This research will consider the role of contemporary Pentecostalism in respect to some of these domains, namely, transnationalism, individualism, the nuclear family, work discipline and personal ethic.

The localised transnational neo-Pentecostal prosperity movement on the OKR represents a 'meta culture' described by Simon Coleman (2000) as constructing a world within the world, setting up arenas of action, agency and imagination that invoke a global circumstance in a distinct way, sub-cultural way even. Similarly, Marshall-Fratani describes this as local 'micro narratives' that facilitate the production of 'vernacular globalisation' (2001: 96), allowing members of this transnational movement to reinterpret the global in terms of the local, enabling marginal people to rid themselves of backward and dissolute views and leap over the local national environment to embrace a global modernity as they reinterpret and reshape the global through transnational Pentecostal flows 'in which the local accesses the global but also adapts and transforms the global to meet one's own needs' (Soothill, 2007: 46).

As such this localised transnational prosperity movement on the OKR represents an instance of 'glocalisation' (Robertson, 1992), or 'hybridity'³, whereby theological motifs and religious practices take on new symbolic resonance and new meaning as they are transferred from one context to another. The promotion of individualism by agents of change in this movement enables people to make a break with the past (this will be discussed in detail in chapter six 'resistance from the margins'). Relationships and community responsibilities that are embedded in traditional ontologies are thereby turned into a new direction: global modernity and removing hindrances to individual development. The prosperity churches on the OKR provide such a 'support network within which the individual might foster this new identity and feel at home in a new community that offers refuge from modern urban life during the transition to modernity' (Soothill, 2007: 47). At the same time the focus is very much on the nuclear family rather than extended family and mechanism of village communalism and loyalty to a new form of communal solidarity in the new context of global modernity. The internalised personal work discipline with a strong level of self-motivation outlined by Martin (2002) as a survival aid in a precarious

³ 'Postcolonialism's concept of "hybridity" recognises the ability of local agents to incorporate, appropriate and sometimes resist the cultural products of a globalised world' (Soothill 2007: 26). This process is also sometimes referred to as 'glocalisation'.

outward economic environment is introduced in regard to the protestant self-discipline.

It has also been suggested that the role of contemporary Pentecostalism in the modern world is reminiscent of the role Max Weber ascribes to Protestantism and the rise of industrial capitalism, reviving the protestant work ethic fitting the global neoliberal restructuring of the global capitalist economy (Freeman, 2016; Brouwer et al., 1996). As such, the virtues of contemporary Pentecostals are betterment, self-discipline, aspiration, and hard work - 'Christian body-building' as Coleman (2000: 147) puts it - the so-called Protestant work ethic or neo-Pentecostal ethic. The work of Weber (2008 [1904-5]) is relevant to the study of neo-Pentecostalism as it recognises the role of religion in generating social and cultural change, as contemporary Pentecostalism represents a concept that makes the religious culture compatible with the worldwide commodity culture, as these churches form the religious arm of an economic, political and cultural system, promoting individual and social change. In this way a neo-Pentecostal ethic is similar to Weber's Protestant ethic, as it supports and legitimates the spread of capitalism. Weber's key point was that in order for a new economic system to be taken up by people, there had to be a shift in their values and subjectivity in order to motivate new behaviours and to make the new economic system moral, and Protestantism unintentionally did this. Can contemporary Pentecostalism be seen to play the same role with regards to neoliberal capitalism? For adherents of this movement it does motivate new behaviours and renders them moral with the notion that God wants people to be great. Although it is not an anxious quest to find evidence of one's election for salvation in the next world, still the consequences are the same: hard work, saving and limitation on certain types of consumption.

In the global South with a rapid flux of people newly disembodied from tightly knit communities in the countryside, contemporary Pentecostalism initially played an important role in providing new forms of community and morality in the new social setting. Many neo-Pentecostal churches still play this role in urban settings in the South, but also in the North in the diaspora for newly arriving migrants and for the urban poor that have as yet remained on the peripheries of city life. With people

increasingly struggling to find employment, jobs that are available demand workers that are diligent, flexible and able to work with minimal supervision. Neo-Pentecostalism helps produce such disciplined subjects, ideal for the neoliberal economy (Freeman, 2016). This fact lets Bialecki et al. (2008) claim that the prosperity gospel seems to have a new Protestant ethic to match a new neoliberal spirit of capitalism, what Freeman (2016) calls the 'Pentecost ethic'. The debate over whether, to what extent and how the neo-Pentecost prosperity gospel plays a role in establishing a type of Protestant ethic in today's Pentecostal converts will be taken up further in chapter five which discusses different influences of the localised form and the notion of the materialisation of faith. How this 'Pentecost ethic' is manifested among the members of the movement on the OKR will be further shown in chapter seven where I discuss the theme of *'tenacity and indefatigability'* in relation to their value struggle.

As such, Martin (2002) argues, the social niche most receptive to Pentecostalism is the respectable poor mainly from the global South, as well as minorities obscured from the main centres seeking to enter the modern world. He notes that global Pentecostalism has a particular and contingent relation to changes in economic and social climate. Coleman (2016) suggests that this gospel constitutes a distinctive wing of contemporary Pentecostal movement in certain respects with its own style and ethos and clearly overlain materialistic culture. Yet at the same time its adaptability and flexibility as well as their associated practices represent not a single gospel per se, but more a set of ethical practices that can be combined and reconstituted in very different cultural contexts, with the capacity to resonate with different sections of the population.

In my research, informants are recognised to be social actors who exert agency through their participation in religious beliefs and practices. Yet these actors are not seen as completely autonomous beings, but rather individuals who exist always in relation to a complex set of social structures and constraints which both influence and limit their actions (This will be further discussed in the exposition of the theoretical framework utilised for this research). Thus, whilst these members of the prosperity movement 'as acting 'subjects' may resist, challenge or reshape

'structures', they can never operate wholly outside them and therefore must inevitably be subject to them' (Soothill, 2007: 29).

Having its origin in the United States, the prosperity gospel has also been called the American gospel. In this American gospel shaped by the neoliberal ideology that undergirds the United States capitalist economic system, we can find a clear connection between capitalism and evangelicalism. The American dream enmeshed with religious faith, a faith that is all about wealth and blessing with a clear individualistic blend holding a strong work ethic combined with a conviction that prosperity is part of God's design for humanity, has created a new neoliberal religious landscape in the US and across the globe. This type of Christianity does not focus on life beyond death, but is meant to enlarge one's vision of what can be in the here and now, promoting as part of a divine plan the accumulation of capital that is meant to change one's social class with the uncritical embrace of capitalism, making these believers a new kind of neoliberal twenty-first century Christian (Machado, 2010).

This form of gospel took off in the African context since the 1980s in the time of the debt crises and related neoliberal structural adjustment. However, Christianity is of course not new to Africa. Birgit Meyer (2004) has argued that there has been a shift over the course of the twentieth century from mainline missionary churches that adopted European styles of Christianity and rejected traditional African religion, to African independent churches that creatively combined Christian and African religious elements in syncretic mixtures, to the new Pentecostal churches which offer a form of Christianity that fits well with African sensibilities and which acknowledges the validity of traditional African beliefs, while at the same providing a way to break from them. Many scholars and Pentecostal leaders alike have linked this sudden growth of Pentecostalism in Africa with the economic crisis of the 1980s and the subsequent structural adjustment programs that led to the worsening material conditions of life for many people. Despite their foreign roots, Pentecostal churches were a local and home-grown response to this situation and started to flourish (Freeman, 2016).

However, this shift must also be seen in connection to the historical colonial roots in Africa, particular West Africa with the emphasis of some early Christian missionaries on the links between Christianity, commerce and civilization, as missionaries worked to change the habits and life styles of the colonised people, thus being the supporting arm of colonialism. In addition to traditional African religion, these provided the preconditions for the neo-Pentecostal message of prosperity to take down roots and develop there. As it benefitted from the colonial history which came in tandem with Christianity, civilisation and trade and commerce, creating a desire for goods, as well as the existing this-worldly approach to religion and spirituality which stems from traditional beliefs in the correlation between spiritual power and material success. The modern convergence of neoliberalism and the prosperity gospel functions in a similar way as colonialism and connection with missionisation, providing the ethics for an economic system. In a time of economic recessions entailing real economic hardship, with the devaluation of currencies and eroded salaries, many people turned to religious organizations for support. Political disillusionment and frustration with governments' economic failures and short comings led many people to a quest for alternative forms of power, resulting in an increase in religious activity combined with political, economic, cultural and educational links with the United States since the 1970s. All of this provided a strong breeding ground for this gospel. Thus, Africa's religious and colonial history and its economic, political and cultural ramifications sowed the seeds for the later prosperity tradition to flower (Hackett, 1995).

The movement has also grown strongly in the UK, especially in London. In the UK, the prosperity gospel has grown mainly through migrants from West Africa (and also more recently from South America). Church plants of Hillsong have recently seen growth as well – this is a church with a more heterogeneous congregation and predominantly white leadership that also embraces prosperity theology to affirm their way of life and hope for success, as many of the adherents are young, upwardly mobile men and women. Nonetheless, the movement is concentrated among African migrants and Black Majority Churches (BMCs). Peter Brierley (2011) observed that Black Pentecostal churches are the fastest growing churches of all the churches in the UK going from 11% in 1990 to 23% by 2020.

Christian denominations in Africa commenced establishing branches in Britain to cater for the social and spiritual needs of their members in the diaspora (Osgood, 2012). For these reasons, black-led churches have been increasing in number and in membership ever since. These migrant churches are becoming more and more visible in the public space as they acquire their own buildings, such as industrial units, shop units and vacated properties (Burgess, 2012) and through media and their use of signage with banners and signs promising success and proclaiming the messaging of prosperity, such as “winner’s temple”, “sharing vision of success with people of destiny”, “a call to holiness, greatness and excellence”, “adding value to your life” and “house of wisdom and prosperity” (own findings). As the language of these signs indicates, these churches are members of the prosperity theology movement.

Having provided the backdrop to the role religion plays in this suburban context, I will focus in detail on the American and African influences regarding the theology promoted in the churches along the OKR in chapter five: *‘Roots/Routes of the Prosperity movement’*.

Religious commitment is a major factor in transnational migration of Nigerian initiated churches, with familiar symbolic constructs and a common worldview, where a form of selective assimilation is practiced by migrants, fostered by social interaction and their religious repository. As many of the BMCs in Britain have evolved to meet the existential needs and the contextual, social and religious aspirations of their congregation, providing a safe haven for socially ostracised migrants during the process of acculturation, they have been described as migrant sanctuaries and ethnic churches (Adedibu, 2013), migrant or immigrant churches (Waehrisch-Oblau, 2009) or asylum Christianity (Ukah, 2009).

In terms of reactions to the prosperity movement in general, it has not only attracted academic interest, but has also been criticised by secular commentators, notably the mainstream media, as an exploitation of the poor. This has mainly been due to the strong emphasis on tithing and the accompanying scandals related to this including the extravagant behaviours of its leaders. Furthermore, it has been criticised by

mainstream Christianity for having little to do with gospel ideals, focusing rather on wealth and an economic view of blessing with a very clear individualist tendency (e.g. see Withrow, 2007). Garber (2008) describes how ministers from mainstream protestant churches are calling the movement dangerous and are appalled by its message. They try to counter this teaching by citing certain Bible passages, such as: 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' (Matthew 6: 19-21, NRSV). I will engage further with the criticism of the media and the mainline churches in chapter five.

The various dimensions outlined above (neoliberalisation processes in connection to international migration flows, transnationalism, incorporation, postcolonialism and the role religion plays within these processes) supplement the theoretical framework elaborated on in the following chapter, so as to facilitate a detailed and critical account of the struggles for value and values (material and non-material) of the members of the prosperity movement on the OKR.

Contribution and thesis outline

In this section I firstly discuss the research questions that have guided my investigation, this is then followed by inserting my study in comparative ones outlining my contribution to the field. The chapter closes with an outline of the thesis.

The two main research questions to be addressed in this thesis are as follows:

RQ1: Is Prosperity Theology materialising Christian faith, such that the focus is on value rather than values?

RQ2: Are there any immaterial values remaining within prosperity theology churches, and if so what are they?

In order to answer these two overarching research questions, I have immersed myself into the experiences of one of the West African migrant churches along the OKR. As these churches (including the one where I did my fieldwork) are a marginalised group within the urban context in British society, I asked sub questions such as - How do they resist exclusion? How do they deal with negative affects? What kind of use values can be found ... or is it all about exchange value? Or are these intertwined, and if so, in which way? How do the members of this movement form a new value-system for themselves? And furthermore, since the phenomenon is a migration phenomenon, another key area of interest is what role religion plays among migrants in this urban context. These issues will be unpacked further in the following chapters.

(Neo-)Pentecostalism and especially the prosperity gospel appears to have garnered increasing scholarly interest in recent decades, both globally and also in the UK context. Relevant literature regarding the phenomenon in the UK includes comparative studies on New Commonwealth migrants of the Pentecostal family from in the fields of social anthropology, religious studies and migration studies. However, no work to date has explicitly tackled the prosperity phenomenon in London utilising a sociological lens⁴, in particular the person value model of Bev Skeggs which will be outlined in the following chapter.

This current study provides a detailed, empirical examination of the phenomenon from a sociological viewpoint as it orders value and values within the beliefs and practices of adherents of the prosperity movement on the OKR. In doing so, this investigation contributes to the debate on how migration is changing religious landscapes and altering the physical religious geography of the city as well as how religious actors and movements are shaped by particular aspects of global city dynamics (see Garbin and Strhan, 2017; Garnett and Harris, 2013). Utilising a multi-scalar approach to religion (global, national, regional, local, embodied dimensions and their interrelatedness) this analysis aims to make the lived experience of the

⁴ Although there have been studies on the prosperity movement within the sociology of religion, these have focused on other countries (not the UK). I will discuss these studies in chapter five on the American and African influences on the localised prosperity movement on the OKR.

collective endeavour of my participants visible. In particular, their diasporic life in their suburban community will be illuminated through the exploration of the devotional practices of their religious faith. Thus, this research project contributes to elucidating the lived reality of a suburban ethnic minority, making visible the nuanced complex worlds of urban life as Michael Keith (2013) advocates in the field of migration studies. It brings out the intersections of class, 'race', migration and religion, which add to the cultural diversity of the multicultural contemporary metropolis.

This study aids a shift in perspective on immigrant religion. Rather than seeing it as a barrier to inclusion or a disruptive force and a mark of social divide, it teases out its function as a bridge to inclusion, in the face of exclusion, as religious participation and practices help to turn immigrants into active citizens and give them and their children a sense of belonging or membership in the UK and a community of support. This in turn facilitates the process of adaptation and nurtures community cohesion.

With its focus on marginality and periphery and related struggles, this research contributes to our understanding of not only the relationship between migration and religion but also between both of these and the notion of the 'city' in relation to populations who now inhabit transnational urban spaces as well as particular locations within places like London (Coleman, 2013: 50). It shows the role of religion in fostering urban welfare and social justice. As capitalist development has contributed to poverty for large populations in urban areas, the welfare state's withdrawal and neoliberal restructuring has allowed faith-based organisation an increased opportunity to provide social welfare. The global city London shaped by the globalisation of migration, economic restructuring and gentrification provides a unique environment for the grounding of this transnational religion. Thus, this case study reveals the nuanced and complex, social, spatial and cultural postcolonial realities of this form of globalised transnationalism by applying the value/s lens and teasing out the participants' value struggle as well as their struggles for values.

This study then proposes that value and values as a model extended to and including the transnational and postcolonial dimensions can be paired with other approaches

to the sociology of religion, anthropology of religion, religious studies, sociology of migration or migration studies, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of various phenomena and resulting in a very thorough multidimensional exploration of these. Thus, the value/s lens provides a robust framework and useful toolbox of analysis as it helps to untwine domains of value and values and the role race plays whilst uncovering alternative value systems which lie outside the dominant symbolic. I will now bring my research in dialogue with comparative work investigating the phenomenon in the London and UK context from studies in social anthropology, religious studies as well as migration studies.

Richard Burgess' (2012) religious study on African Pentecostal churches of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) in Britain discusses factors that have contributed to the growth and popularity of this denomination. He finds that their appeal to migrants and focus on the African diaspora is mainly due to the fact that they provide a social and religious support network. Furthermore, the holistic approach and concept of salvation of these churches as well as their special focus on prosperity teaching, 'inculcating some of the core values of western society, such as materialism, success, careerism and human potential' (*ibid.*: 133), is seen as crucial for the success of the denomination. All this comes in combination with their commitment to human dignity and social justice, a certain charismatic leadership style that enables and empowers laity, and their ability to reinvent themselves in response to modernising trends. However, he does not explicitly consider the structural constraints and the intersections of class and race into his analysis. He thus does not account for the marginal position of the members of this denomination and does not place the beliefs and practices of this movement into the larger context of the struggle of adherents to forge a position for themselves in the new society of settlement, despite other's pre-perceptions about what their position in this society should be. As outlined above, my analysis includes class and post-colonial perspectives in order to put my informants' beliefs and practices which are part of the same denomination into the historical and structural context, informed by a cultural and embodied history as well as conditions encountered in the UK, London, including the spatial and social context of the phenomenon. Especially utilising

Skeggs' lens enables me to unpack the value/s struggle of my participants who have been forced to inhabit social relations differently, are subject to constant devaluation and are thus trying to make their lives liveable using a different value compass, revealing connections that enable them to flourish.

From the field of anthropology, comparable studies are those of Simon Coleman and Katrin Maier as well as James Doubleday. Coleman and Maier discuss their contribution, a multi-sited ethnography of Neo-Pentecostal RCCG churches in London and Lagos, in particular in three articles. Firstly, *'In, Of, and Beyond Diaspora?: Mapping, Migration, and the Production of Space among Nigerian Pentecostals'* (2010) explores the production of space and place among Nigerian Pentecostal members of the RCCG by looking at tensions and overlaps between diasporic and Pentecostal identities as expressed verbally or mapped by believers based in London. Spatial tropes of "homeland," "horizon," "city," "nation," and "globe" form much of the focus of their study. In the second article *'Who will tend the vine? Pentecostalism, Parenting and the Role of the State in "London-Lagos"'* (2011) they explore the tensions evident among Nigerian Pentecostals in London between social and ideological insularity on the one hand, and a more outward-oriented, expansive orientation on the other. Analysis of these stances is complemented by the exploration of believers' actions within a material but also metaphorical arena that they term "London-Lagos." Thirdly, *'Redeeming the city: creating and traversing 'London-Lagos''* (2013) focusses on strategies and aesthetics of urban expansion in Lagos and London by members of the RCCG. These two metropolises are juxtaposed and conjoined in significant ways as believers seek to fulfil spiritual and economic aspirations. 'London-Lagos' becomes a stretched city space that is created but also traversed as members negotiate diasporic linkages in the remaking of their lives as both believers and urban citizens. As my ethnography only explores the phenomenon from a London viewpoint, this multi-sited ethnography enhanced my understanding of my participants' spatial and religious imageries and aided me to decipher their prosperity discourse focussed on re-positioning adherents from the periphery to the centre of the British socio-economic structure.

James Doubleday's PhD thesis (2008) looks at African populations in the diaspora in and around London, especially congregations of new church organisations led and attended by Nigerians of the Yoruba ethnic. His study addresses questions of socio-cultural continuity and resistance to change by these new forms of Pentecostalism, at the analytical levels of the person and social relations. His research shows that migration to the UK in early adulthood enhanced the ardent social pressure in and on migrants to achieve their destiny of success in ways that conform coherently, both to Yoruba religious and cultural precedent, and their sense of modernity. Also, Pentecostal practices and beliefs were crucial to this coherent conformation, as Yoruba migrants interpreted and attempted to act upon their destinies, frustrations and successes. Their approach to religious practices and beliefs demonstrated a long process of individuation associated with the concept of individual destiny, with great coincidental significance in Yoruba imaginaries, new Pentecostalism and modern individualism. Their experience and practices demonstrated a more social and less inexorable African Pentecostalism in which simultaneous indigenising differentiation and homogenising globalisation is revealed on the level of the person, at once extending Yoruba culture, new Pentecostalism and society in Britain. Whereas Doubleday's work concentrates on the individual in- and outside of congregations, my research is more focused on the movement as a whole and in particular the beliefs and practices associated with it.

Juxtaposing both these comparable anthropological studies of Simon Coleman and Katrin Maier as well as James Doubleday with my findings reveals the significance of the role of the church in the formation of the members' personhood which centres around resistance to being fixed, positioned and imagined. The re-engineering of the personhood of members of this movement is sought to be achieved through providing an alternative enchanted worldview with the goal to re-position them and to let adherents re-imagine themselves as people of destiny and champions. These churches along the OKR empower their members through a life-coach approach and the adaptation of individualist techniques to make them fit with the British modern individualist neo-liberal culture.

Works from migration studies are Lesley Fesenmyer's fieldwork on Kenyan initiated Pentecostal churches in East London (2015; 2016; 2017) with the focus on the community of belonging and mutual support; and Olivia Sheringham's fieldwork on transnational Brazilian faith communities in London with the focus on belonging and transnational ties (2013). Fesenmyer examines modes of migrant identification and processes of migrant incorporation through the lens of religion. The project explores how the migratory experiences of Kenyans articulate with their religious identities and affiliations. At the same time, it is concerned with the churches migrant Kenyans have founded in London, which, in becoming UK-registered charities, have ostensibly claimed a role in the wider society at a time of ongoing austerity, as well as how these self-identified multicultural churches define 'civic' and 'social engagement' and the form it takes.

The project pays particular attention to place-making practices as Kenyan Pentecostals seek to emplace themselves locally and transnationally. The study contributes to debates on migration, religion, and (Christian) citizenship, and advances understanding of the relationship between faith, belonging, and (sub)urbanism. By utilising the lens of place (various peripheries: social, existential, structural, spatial) with the focus on Pentecostal self-and community making, many of Fesenmyer's themes are similar to my findings in relation to how adherents re-imagine, re-position, re-make and re-value themselves, as well as re-narrativize their lives, thus cultivating a sense of agency. However, her analysis fails to account for these dimensions systematically. Through the multidimensional lens of value and values my analysis structures the findings and untwines them accordingly. My analysis is therefore able to provide a rigorous and thorough exploration of the vernacular of globalisation, revealing the significance of the prosperity theology as a form of interventionism that seeks to make a break with the past to enable a transformation of personhood and empowerment of agency. This ideology of rupture is central to understanding this movement as a form of transformative collective resistance aiding its adherents to deal with adverse circumstances and to overcome marginal positions. This ethical framework as a religious model of change functions as a form of advanced 'just talk', a counter knowledge, knowledge born in struggle

which allows oppressed groups to represent the world in their own terms. This form of liberation theology and associated practices function thus as a counteracting mechanism to stagnation, devaluation and fixation resulting from prevailing perceptions of the colonial history and the transatlantic slave trade.

Utilising Bourdieu in the chapters on value, I give a detailed analysis of the church members' struggle for value through their transformation of habitus and other improving strategies to enable successful adaptation processes, as well as the investment in the children, thereby revealing the material dimensions of the phenomenon. In the values chapter, I show the significance of the culture of reciprocity and solidarity as well as the affective dimensions of the community that enables members to cope on an emotional level with their circumstances through a community of kindness and care for one another and the transformation and reversal of ugly feelings into positive ones, thus capturing the immaterial dimensions of the phenomenon.

Furthermore, in my study I utilise the postcolonial lens, teasing out the intersections of class and race more concretely, to reveal neo-colonial relations and collective resistance to them as an imagined community which has formed with a collective consciousness and imagination mobilised through agents of change with the goal to also leave a positive cultural legacy for the second generation, counteracting deprivation and stigmatisation.

Additionally, the focus on the nuclear family of the churches is investigated by Fesenmyer as a central element to the process of Pentecostal self-and community making. Part of the discourse of prosperity and their proactive strategies is the transformational approach which focuses on making a break with the past which also includes past relationships. Fesenmyer points out that members of the church are engaged in disentangling themselves from their extended family, especially regular material obligations. I examine this as an aspect of the holistic discourse of prosperity which demands a radical behaviour change including the restructuring of the family with the nuclear family being the central unity of production and consumption. The goal is to focus on and foster successful integration in the new society of settlement,

being relieved from social relations which may hinder their social development and progress, including relieving members of the burden of kin obligations, such as investing time and effort on remittance and travel. This social change is from traditional family relations to the western model of the family and is part of the modernisation process of the members which also incorporates the reformation of gender relations. Men are domesticated as they are to turn their energy and resources to the family and fulfil their role as a good provider etc. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter eight. I also detail the role of parenting effecting children's development and outcomes through the transmission of social- and emotional competencies to equip children and let them develop a positive racial concept in order to cope with racism. The aim of promoting higher self-esteem is to affect future attitudes in a positive way and to ultimately let them attain better life chances.

Sheringham (2013) explores the role of religion in the everyday lives of Brazilian migrants in London and Brazil, foregrounding religion as it is lived and practised both within the congregation and as an integral part of their everyday lives. She examines the powerful role of religion for providing migrants with a new sense of belonging as well as the transnational religious dynamics and tensions that may arise for them in the migration context. She finds that her Brazilian migrants use religion to respond to the experience of migration and that churches represent important spaces that cater for their needs: 'assisting in their adaptation to the host society, enabling a space for the creation of a sense of belonging or family and facilitating both the maintenance of transnational ties with people and places in Brazil' (*ibid.*: 190). She utilises the transnational lens to investigate transnational ties on an individual level and the level of the family inside and outside the church spaces such as domestic spaces and people's everyday lives, whereas my research has as its focus on the prosperity discourse and its associated practices in London. Therefore, my findings are somewhat restricted to the church activities of my respondents inside the church.

At the same time, my findings also differ from Sheringham's findings regarding the significance of transnational churches in terms of maintaining transnational ties, with religion functioning as a crucial resource for the transnationalisation of family life,

enabling the creation and maintenance of links across borders. As I have outlined previously when discussing the transformational approach I have encountered during my fieldwork which emphasises a break with the past, members of the movement are encouraged to break off traditional family relations and to not send remittances or travel, but rather to focus on the nuclear family in London. This is seen as more beneficial to the incorporation into the new nation state with the goal of enabling a successful migration process.

My analysis regarding the creation of transnational spaces that create ties is limited - it is mainly concentrated on my analysis of the 'Festival of Life', the denomination's bi-annual mega-event, in terms of transnational flows of religious cultures and their glocalisation in chapter five - as I instead explore the validation of the value of the transnational resources that migrants bring with them. I discuss Bourdieu and the transnational migrant experience in chapters two and eight where issues of convertibility of social, cultural and symbolic capital are investigated. The validation of the cultural and social capitals of my respondents is restricted due to the colour of their skin resulting from the British ethno-racial hierarchy that locates them as African subjects, a deficient and subordinated minority, being marked as outsiders. Their bodies are physical sites where relations of class, gender, race etc. come together and are embodied and practised. They face symbolic struggles over the assessment of their capitals as migration and 'race' disrupt ideas of the linear reproduction of cultural capitals, resulting in a discontinuity of cultural (institutionalised, objectified, embodied) capitals as incongruous with the legitimate symbolic capital. This lens makes it possible to capture the subtle processes of inclusion and exclusion. The members of the prosperity movement in London are engaged in letting their racialised bodies marked by non-whiteness become honourable by seeking to embody the legitimate language as part of the deployment of national capital, as well as engaging in other techniques to improve their appearance to attune to dominant middle-class conventions. This transformation of their bodies is utilised to display distinction and taste signified through elegance and sophistication required as part of the social and cultural exchanges. However, in regard to national capital their racialised bodies are marked by non-whiteness and

therefore their ethnic capital cannot be converted into symbolic capital. A devalorisation of the ethnic capital occurs resulting in a reduction in symbolic value. Their blackness is devalued. As appearance is experienced immediately signifying the worth of a person, my participants are engaged in improvement strategies to obtain a better fit with the national capital and to deflect and deter from association of negative ethnic value, seeking to position themselves and to gain the value and legitimacy of the respectable middle-class subject. This functions as a counteracting strategy as part of their overarching struggle for exchange value to gain convertible symbolic capital and attach value to themselves in the face of continuous symbolic violence. I will now give a brief overview of the following chapters of this thesis.

Skeggs' theoretical approach which will be utilised to analyse the micro processes of this phenomenon is laid out in detail in the following chapter. After this I give my epistemological underpinnings for this project in the methodology chapter. Subsequently the physical context of this research -the Old Kent Road and its churches - is laid out in chapter four. This is succeeded in chapter five by a discussion of the materialisation of faith focussing on 'traditional' Christian values, the Protestant work ethic in combination with the Pentecostal ethic and reactions from the mainstream media, as well as the mainline churches. I further elucidate the geographical (American and African) and theological influences through the lens of two mega events of the global prosperity movement in London. Chapter five thus also provides context to the localised prosperity movement on the Old Kent Road, which is an adaptation of the larger global movement. Specifically, chapter six **'resistance from the margins'** sets the scene to apply Skeggs' value/values theory as my theoretical framework, by investigating the phenomenon from a post-colonial perspective showing that the localised adapted prosperity discourse promoted on the OKR functions as a form of advanced 'just talk' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012) promoted by the agents of change with the goal to let adherents of the movement reimagine themselves and to reposition them within the British socio-economic structure, whilst attaching them to a community of support, empowering them and providing emotional coping mechanisms fulfilling a therapeutic function to deal with adverse circumstances. This provides the platform to present my findings related to the

church members' struggles for values and value. I will start by elucidating my participants struggle for 'value' looking at two major themes. First, **'indefatigability and tenacity'** as dispositions that enable them to keep going, by mapping out various techniques that focus on the transformation and re-structuring of the habitus of adherents, positive thinking and confession to reaffirm the newly acquired vision/aspiration, affirming a culture of resistance; testimonies that function as motivation and proof of success and God's provision; Worship songs, sustaining the belief in change; the Holy Spirit as empowerment from above; and the Pentecostal work ethic, acting out the newly acquired habitus of resistance and aspiration. These provide coping mechanisms as reactive strategies that counteract stagnation with the aim of increasing economic, social and cultural capital. The second theme **'adaptability and embodiment'** addresses the members' proactive strategies in my participants struggle for social capital affecting adaptation, their struggle for cultural capital, and their investment in children, counteracting deprivation and stigmatisation. These two chapters bring out the exchange value aspect of their beliefs and actions.

This is then followed by investigating my research participants actions beyond accruing capital and also by analysing their affects in chapter nine on *'Affective community and a culture of reciprocity'* focussing on two themes. The theme of **'solidarity and reciprocal altruism'** forms the first part of the chapter, focussing on community as a place of belonging in a global, diverse, anonymous city to counteract experiences of alienation, dis-embeddedness and exclusion, and bringing out my research participants' non-accumulative actions. The second theme **'vitality, valour and effervescence'**, which is very much intertwined with the relational aspect of the church community, reveals the other aspect of the use values or relational values of the person value theory, which is affect. The particular focus here is on how the message transforms negative affects into positive affects and on worship as a form of intoxication. It helps to comprehend what life feels like when people are trying to survive on the margins and to seek better conditions, and how through their participation in the church new affects that empower them are produced as ugly feelings are reversed.

These five themes account for both aspects of the theory and to identify their 'alternative value system'. Finally, in the conclusion as I will revisit my research questions and summarise my findings. Both aspects of the theory shall be considered together to evaluate critically the 'alternative value system' of a community that lives the conditions of neoliberal capitalist hegemony differently, expressed through their liberation theology which claims: 'It doesn't matter where you are now, what's important is where you are going', operating from a position of marginalisation. The chapter closes with a consideration of the transgressive potential of the research.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

To answer my overarching research question of whether and how faith has been monetised by the prosperity movement and to elucidate the lived experience of the members of the movement on the OKR - in terms of their value struggle as well as their struggle for values and to bring to light their alternative value system - I will employ Bev Skeggs' theory of values and value, in particular her 'person value model'. Hence, the aim of this research project is to discover how the prosperity theology movement can inform our understanding of the relationship between values and value in our modern society. Therefore, the next section will lay out Skeggs' framework in detail including how it is utilised and applied in this research as a tool for analysis of my ethnographic findings. After a brief introduction to her theory, the value/values dichotomy in her person value model will be elucidated. In order to do this, we will first look at Bourdieu's thinking tools which account for the exchange value aspect of the person value model (including recent applications of his toolkit to the transnational sphere). This is then followed by a critique of his approach and Skeggs' extension of a use-values dimension. After that I will show how Skeggs' model will be applied to investigate the lived experience of the members of the prosperity movement on the OKR.

Skeggs' sociology of value and values

Skeggs (2014) argues that the present traps us in the manifestations of neo-liberal forces of globalization, a neo-liberal world order or market ideology which naturalizes the market and thereby legitimizes the interests of capitalists and those who benefit from capital, those who have power and access to the symbolic means of promotion and production, and those who insist that 'real democracy is only possible when market forces are liberated and money is free to do what it wants' (Skeggs, 2014: 4). She remarks further that 'we are living in a time when it is

frequently assumed that the logic of capital has subsumed every single aspect of our lives' and 'the theories that document the incursion of this logic (often through the terms of neoliberalism and/or governmentality) assume that this logic is internalized, works and organizes everything including our subjectivity' (*ibid.*: 1). By doing so, the conditions which are described are reproduced, 'shrinking the domain of values and making it subject to capital's logic' (*ibid.*). Skeggs theory challenges those assumptions. She contends that in this way 'all values are reduced to value. Yet values and value are always dialogic, dependent and co-constituting' (*ibid.*).

Skeggs (2011; 2014) introduces the value/values dichotomy by arguing that 'value is economic, quantifiable and can be measured. It is primarily monetized [...] whereas values are moral, cultural, qualitative and difficult to measure' (Skeggs, 2014: 3) or 'understandings of value usually fit within either economics or moral philosophy in which value is a matter of remarkably precise measurement calculation (quantification) or notoriously slippery, via moral understandings of what matters to people – values (qualification)' (*ibid.*) and contends furthermore that processes of valuation (in an economic sense) are now the major method of understanding the social world. (*ibid.*). She asks: as the logic of capital is applied ever more broadly, encroaching on all aspects of life, whether there is anything left behind - from physical capital, to human capital, to symbolic capital, to bio-capital and so forth – does anything exist beyond capitalization? Skeggs thus argues that the lens of capitalism no doubt obscures certain elements – the question is how to identify these: how are values formed beyond value?

An important aspect of the value/values theory relates to personhood and the value of people. One key question of Skeggs' paradigm is to ask how those positioned as marginalised by the dominant symbolic generate alternative ways of making value. It explores the struggle for value lived by those experiencing intensified devaluation. In the context of Bourdieu's work on capitals, including economic, symbolic, cultural and social capital, Skeggs proposes a model of 'person-value' which may include these, but also goes beyond this approach to include the social values of people who are excluded from the mainstream: action (connection) and affect (*ibid.*: 5). As such, she considers value both economically *and* relationally,

and shows how 'person value' can be created through 'connections to others' (*ibid.*: 19). This extended model of person value is portrayed in the diagram below.

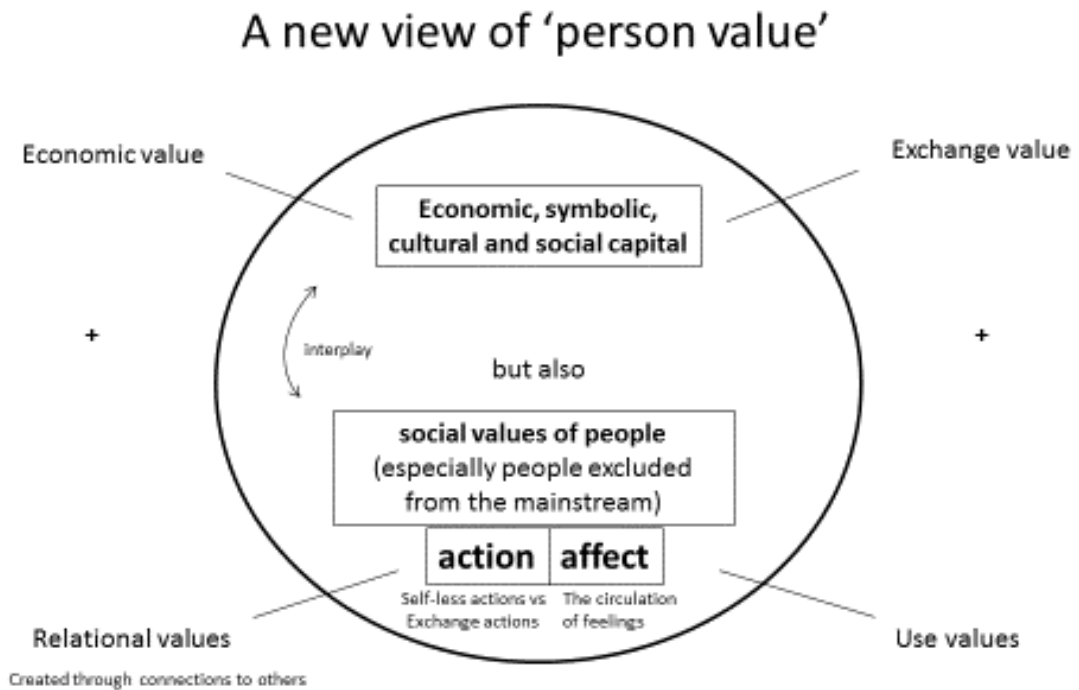


Figure 2.1: A new view of 'person value', own depiction based on Skeggs (2011; 2014).

Theoretical foundations - Bourdieu and the exchange-value self

Skeggs' model of person value takes Bourdieu's sociological gaze as a starting point. As such, before laying out Skeggs' model in more detail, I will examine Bourdieu's theory of practice and its key concepts, which serve as a tool kit to analyse the social world and provide insights into the 'exchange-value' model of the self. Bourdieu's influential model of society and social relations has its roots in Marxist theories of class and conflict. His theory is 'a science of dialectical relations between objective structures [...] and the subjective dispositions within which these structures are actualized and which tend to reproduce them' (Bourdieu, 1977:3). He offers an epistemological and methodological approach to a historicized and particular understanding of social life with three major theoretical thinking tools: field, habitus and capital which make up the structure and conditions of the social

contexts. The interlocking nature of these three concepts is of crucial significance for understanding his approach (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1989: 50) and can be portrayed by the following equation: $[(\text{habitus})(\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$. This can be unpacked as stating: practice results from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play of that social arena (field) (Grenfell, 2014).

One key tool in the analytical tool kit is the concept of habitus. Bourdieu asks how social structure and individual agency can be reconciled, and (to use Durkheim's terms) how the 'outer' social and 'inner' self help to shape each other (*ibid.*). Thus, habitus conceptualizes the relation between the objective and subjective or 'outer' and 'inner' by describing how these social facts become internalized; it is, 'a socialized subjectivity' and 'the social embodied' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127-8) - an internalized structure, the objective made subjective (Maton, 2014). Thus, Bourdieu defines habitus as a property of social agents (whether individuals, groups or institutions) that comprises a 'structured and structuring structure'. It is 'structured' by one's past and present circumstances, and it is 'structuring' in that one's habitus contributes to the shaping of one's present and future practices. It is a 'structure' in that it is systematically ordered rather than random or unpatterned (*ibid.*). This 'structure' comprises a system of dispositions which generate perceptions, appreciations and practices (Bourdieu, 1990: 53). The term disposition is crucial for bringing together these ideas of structure and tendency. It expresses first the result of an organizing action, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination (Bourdieu, 1977: 214). Furthermore, the notion of habitus is close to what is suggested by the idea of habit, while differing from it in one important respect. The habitus is that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. It belongs to a genetic mode of thought, as opposed to existentialist modes of thought (Bourdieu, 1993: 86). The term habitus refers not to regular practices or habits but rather to the principles underlying and generating those practices. It refers to the physical embodiment of

cultural capital, to the deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that we possess due to our life experiences. Skeggs notes 'the habitus is 'an immanent law' laid down by each agent in their earliest upbringing by the internalisation of objective structures. This is how individuals embody, in the form of dispositions the marks of social position and social distance' (Skeggs, 2004c: 84).

A second key concept is field. Bourdieu understood the social world as being divided up into a variety of distinct arenas or 'fields' of practice, e.g., the social space in which interactions, transactions and events occur. At stake in the field is the accumulation of capitals: they are both the process within, and product of, a field (Thomson, 2014). Each social field of practice (including society as a whole) can be understood as a competitive game or 'field of struggles' in which social agents (individuals or institutions) strategically improvise in their quest to maintain or improve their position, to transform or preserve the field by employing all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a consequence, their strategies (Bourdieu, 1998: 40–41). A social field thus contains social agents who dominate and who are dominated and constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space. Bourdieu accounts of a wide range of social fields of practice, each with its own distinctive 'logic of practice', and their role in social reproduction and change. What is important is, that even though a field is profoundly hierarchized, with dominant social agents and institutions having considerable power to determine what happens within it, there is still agency and change. Social agents do not arrive in a field fully armed with god-like knowledge of the state of play, the positions, beliefs and aptitudes of other social agents, or the full consequences of their actions. Rather, they enjoy a particular point of view on proceedings based on their positions, and they learn the tempo, rhythms and unwritten rules of the game through time and experience.

To gain an understanding of Bourdieu's analysis of the social world it is also critical to understand his ideas about capital, which were heavily influenced by the work of Karl Marx. Like Marx, Bourdieu argued that capital formed the foundation of social life and dictated one's position within the social order by constituting advantage and disadvantage in society. However, he considered capital more broadly

nominating four forms of capital: economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital, which are interconnected as one form can be transformed into another. Economic capital includes economic resources and wealth either inherited or generated from interactions between the individual and the economy. Social capital includes resources one achieves based on group membership, social networks of influence, relationships and support from other people. Cultural capital is any advantage a person has that gives them a higher status in society, that one acquires through being part of a particular social class. It is primarily a relational concept and cannot be understood in isolation from the other forms of capital. It comes in three forms: embodied (e.g. an accent or dialect, tastes, posture, mannerisms), objectified (e.g. material belongings), and institutionalized (e.g. credentials and qualifications such as degrees or titles symbolizing cultural competence and authority). Sharing similar forms of cultural capital with others creates a sense of collective identity and group position ('people like us'). However, cultural capital is a major source of social inequality as certain forms of cultural capital are valued over others, and can help or hinder one's social mobility just as much as income or wealth. Finally, symbolic capital includes things which stand for all of the other forms of capital manifested in individual prestige and personal qualities and can be 'exchanged' in other fields.

As indicated by the equation above, practice results from the interconnections between habitus, capital and field. Practice is not reducible to habitus but rather a phenomenon emergent from relations between social agents' habituses and their contextual social fields – it is the result of relations between one's habitus and one's current circumstances (Robbins, 2014). Therefore, the relationship between habitus and field is central. Bourdieu describes this relation as the meeting of two evolving logics or histories (1993: 46; 2000: 150–51). In other words, the physical and social spaces we occupy are (like the habitus) structured, and it is the relation between these two structures that gives rise to practices. The field, as part of the ongoing contexts in which we live, structures the habitus, while at the same time the habitus is the basis for social agents' understanding of their lives, including the field. On one side it is a relation of conditioning: the field structures the habitus. On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction. Habitus

contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127). To understand practice, one must therefore relate these regularities of social fields to the practical logic of social agents; their 'feel for the game' is a feel for these regularities. The source of this practical logic is the habitus. 'The habitus as the feel for the game', Bourdieu argues, 'is the social game embodied and turned into a second nature' (1994: 63). Thus, Bourdieu provides an objective account of social regularities and a subjective focus on the meaning-making of social agents. A field-habitus match denotes a situation when their habitus matches the logic of the field, they are attuned to the doxa - the unwritten 'rules of the game', the underlying practices within that field. Conversely, a field-habitus clash or disjuncture occurs when this is not the case. Moreover, by virtue of field-habitus match, social agents share the doxa of the field that determine the limits of the doable and the thinkable (Maton, 2014).

Bourdieu and the transnational migrant experience

Recently, Bourdieu's theory has been increasingly used for researching transnational migratory processes and social fields (see Nowicka, 2015; Benson, 2013; 2012; 2011; Oliver and O'Reilly, 2010; Erel, 2010; Kelly and Lusia, 2006; Ong 1999) which is relevant in the context of this study as we have seen in the previous chapter that the phenomenon under investigation is in essence a migratory phenomenon with the participants being immigrants from West Africa. However, Bourdieu has been criticized of 'methodological nationalism' underlying his research (Beck and Grande; Wimmer and Schiller; Painter in Nowicka, 2015). This is relevant in the challenge to adapt Bourdieu's framework to the study of transnational migration. Without doubt the experience of migration facilitates wide-ranging impact in social, economic, and cultural terms. As Sayad (2004: 3-4) reminds us that, 'to immigrate means to immigrate together with one's history (immigration itself being an integral part of that history), with one's traditions, ways of living, feeling, acting and thinking, with one's language, one's religion and all the other social, political and mental structures of one's society – structures

characteristic of the individual and also of society, since the former is no more than the embodiment of the latter – or, in a word, with one’s culture’. Looking at cultural processes and processes of reproduction in the transnational migration experience reveals in particular that ‘the field of the possibles’ (Bourdieu, 1984: 110) is always limited by structures, dispositions (habitus) and capital (Oliver and O’Reilly, 2010). Thus, the question of the convertibility of cultural capital and how cultural capital is circulated across national borders between fields and to analyze how geographical locations are crucial to the possibilities of appreciation and validation of capital.

As we have seen, according to Bourdieu, a person’s position in social space is determined both by the value and the weight of their capital portfolio. The accrual of capitals and thus value is a strategic imperative (Bourdieu, 1987). However, given the fact that capitals are context specific, their value is reassessed in the process of transnational migration. Ong (1999) argues in regard to cultural capital validation that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and capital acquisition seems to work seemingly when applied to French society, which he analysed as a fairly stable social class system where everyone knows his or her place even if cultural codes of distinction may shift from time to time. But, she asks, what happens when strategies of cultural accumulation run up against regimes of racial difference and hierarchy, so that possession of cultural capital is rendered somewhat ineffectual for being embodied in racially inferior agents? Thus, the experiences of West African immigrants help to complicate the picture regarding the effectiveness of accumulation strategies in transnational arenas. Ong questions in particular the convertibility of symbolic capital. Applying Bourdieu’s theory to the transnational sphere, the reproduction of social power as suggested by Bourdieu is especially uncertain for the newcomers deploying start-up symbolic capital, especially when he or she embodies other signs - for example, skin colour, foreign accent, and cultural taste - that may count as symbolic deficits in the host society. Thus, in transnational movements, newcomers may have acquired cultural capital that they have difficulty converting into symbolic capital because there is a perceived mismatch between the distinction of their symbolic capital and their racial identity, which may be associated with low social value in the host group - such individuals

may even be judged culturally incompetent. This glaring inconsistency destroys the misrecognition that cultural capital is a legitimate competence based on the biological singularity of the possessor and the prestige of innate property. 'Limits to cultural accumulation, then, are especially apparent to immigrants when there is a mismatch, from the hegemonic standpoint, between the symbolic capital and its embodiment' (Ong, 1999: 92). Accumulation of symbolic capital can only go so far in converting prestige and honour into social capital that will increase access to institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition in particular cultural economies. Therefore, the blending of a racialised person with a certain set of symbolic capital must be read as acceptable by the receiving society before any social prestige can accrue such an embodiment of 'correct' taste and accomplishment. This shows clearly that there are cultural limits set by cultural norms, modes of ruling and nationalist ideologies, as being perceived as culturally, linguistically, and racially Black African and therefore 'out of place' in the British institutional racist hierarchy which locates African subjects as a deficient and subordinated minority.

Benson and Osbaldiston (2016) point out that the inclusion of discussions of 'race' and ethnicity within the migrant experience which focus on how the ethnicization and racialization of migrant populations result in disadvantage, stand in contrast to studies of middle-class lifestyle migrants which demonstrate how ethnicization and racialization denote privilege (i.e. whiteness). This reveals different power relations in terms of ethnic relations, boundaries and potential economic disparities between migrants and host community members. Migrants may enjoy privilege or disadvantage wrought by the migrants' membership of powerful nation-states, rather than by their individual affluence and wealth. In this respect, the privilege of migrants originates from the powerful position of e.g. Europe or North America in the global economy and politics (Benson, 2013). This stands in stark contrast to the disadvantage of migrants who e.g. come from the 'Rest' to the 'West'. This reveals the unequal power dynamics in postcolonial or neo-colonial neoliberal globalisation processes in combination with international migration, as a systematic feature of immigration incorporation and trajectories.

Trying to counteract barriers, to be better equipped for struggles of various kinds and to create opportunities to exercise agency when settling and integrating in their new surroundings, migrants often employ their 'self-organizational skills' (Nohl et al., 2006). One key strategy is to engage in migrant communities in the country of settlement, i.e. in co-ethnic social networks or communities. These provide a space with a sense of community and security for its members in the sense of 'bonding social capital' within their close-knit groups (Gilchrist, 2004: 6), giving them an opportunity to reproduce their cultural and linguistic heritage and capital (Cederberg, 2012). As such they can play an important part in counteracting a field/habitus disjuncture within the country of settlement as they can provide a field where migrants feel like 'a fish in water' due to the habitual similarities within them (*ibid.*). The Black Majority Churches on the OKR which also function of as co-ethnic communities are actively engaged in these processes.

In addition, migrant communities provide practical and emotional support as well as access to social information and to further networks and opportunities (i.e. employment) with the aim of facilitating social mobility (*ibid.*). As such, they can play a crucial role in terms of accruing and accessing 'bridging and linking social capital' by reaching resources outside their normal circles (Gilchrist, 2004: 6) and the possibility of converting these resources into other resources or capitals with the effect of securing advantage or overcoming disadvantage. However, Cederberg points out that it is important to consider how these co-ethnic communities are located in the wider social context and in relation to other social networks and critically raises the issue of the 'isolating effects co-ethnic engagement may entail' (2012: 63). This study's distinct setting that London (and in particular, the Old Kent Road in one of its boroughs) provides, with its own distinctive logic of practice, facilitates the construction of a more nuanced and dynamic account of the mechanisms, social processes and inclusionary/exclusionary powers at play within the migrant population under investigation. How the struggle for social capital affecting adaptation plays out among my participants is discussed in chapter eight on 'adaptability and embodiment'.

There has been a growing recognition of the importance of accounting for transfer and validation of cultural capital within transnational arenas of practice (Erel, 2010; Nohl et al., 2006). The struggle of validating institutionalized forms of cultural capital is to a great extent responsible for the fact that migrants are often faced with initial downward mobility, e.g. if migrants' prior degrees and skills are not recognized or the occupational systems in their countries of origin and settlement are not compatible often results in them carrying out low-skilled work for a much lower salary. To be able to work in their professions, migrants are often required to undergo additional training and/or exams to have their professions re-accredited (Eich-Krohm, 2012), which can entail considerable money, time and pressure. Additionally, despite having acquired the right institutional capital, the validation of these capitals is restricted due to the limits put on West African immigrants because of the colour of their skin and the racial hierarchies that locate them as subordinated subjects and mark them as outsiders, as discussed above. With upward social mobility, however, they can counter-act this dynamic and gain social and economic benefits. In order to be able to achieve this, migrants employ various strategies, which will be elucidated also in chapter eight by looking at their struggle for cultural capital.

What is particularly interesting when applying Bourdieu to research transnational migratory processes and social fields is the question of how the process of habitus adjustment is experienced by social agents as this has a direct impact on the way they exercise agency and their perception of their place and position in their surroundings. This will be discussed on chapter seven on the theme 'indefatigability and tenacity' in terms of restructuring the habitus to counteract inequality, prejudice, and segregation and structural barriers, as well as in chapter eight in relation to their struggle to adjust to the new culture and to embody the right cultural capital.

Furthermore, the question of linguistic capital as a form of embodied cultural capital and a marker of distinction is an important point to consider when applying Bourdieu's thinking tools to migration phenomena. The ability to articulate in what Bourdieu (1991) has coined the 'legitimate language' is one of the central social

codes and cultural tools. A specially classed form of speaking is a key tacit requirement to be incorporated into the higher echelons of social life and into professional occupations, as it is intrinsic to the somatic norm in the professions, qualifying people to rise in particular occupations and professions. This assimilative pressure is posed by the normative culture, as these subtle codes are signs which are central to the discriminatory practices through which social spaces are formed. Language is central in how the dominant enforce their codes of social differences, being one attribute that is especially important in marking 'distinction' across all forms of social spaces as it carries symbolical power. Thus, to possess the right language skills, the theoretical norm against which all linguistic practices are objectively measured (Bourdieu, 1991) is absolutely key to the performance of public positions (Puwar, 2004). In relation to 'race' and language and social measurement in the colonial and post-colonial contexts, the power dynamics of linguistic encounters need to be considered, as in institutionalised settings the imperial legitimate language enables racialised bodies to become 'honorable' 'civilised' humans (*ibid.*, p. 112). Thus, accent and pronunciation act as a marker of difference, reflecting the power relations and the struggle of racialised bodies to integrate themselves into the higher echelons of society. This feature of embodied cultural capital will also be discussed in relations to my participants' value struggle for embodying the right cultural capital in the theme 'adaptation and embodiment' in chapter eight.

The application of Bourdieu to the transnational sphere will be used to illuminate the exchange value aspect of Skeggs' person value model, but also to inform the relational values aspect of it. As such, this study seeks to be better able to engage with the realities of migrants, who often find themselves struggling to accrue or exchange value, whose experience is marked by various disadvantages and deficits and who are thus exposed to struggles and inequalities of different kinds. The next section will introduce Skeggs' critique of Bourdieu and her extension of the concept through her person value model with the added use-values.

Skeggs' criticism of Bourdieu and extensions to the person value concept

Skeggs notes that Bourdieu offers explanatory power that is not offered elsewhere. His linking of the objective structure and the subjective experience and his metaphoric model of social space 'in which human beings embody and carry with them the volumes and compositions of different capitals [...] makes it possible to develop a clear approach to different types of values and mobility' (Skeggs 2004b: 21). However, she contends that Bourdieu's model of the exchange-value self 'where capitals, accrued over time, are lived and displayed on the body so that they become habituated – 'the habitus'' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012: 475) is useful in particular 'to understand the middle-class, their authorisation, exchange and use of distinction [...] how the middle-classes operate as a 'class for themselves' [...] how the bourgeois perspective is put into effect, how interests are protected and pursued and how authorisation occurs, but [...] he cannot account for the nuanced practices of those who do not operate from a dominant position' (Skeggs, 2004b: 29). He cannot explain 'the formation of personhood for those who cannot publicly legitimate themselves as 'subjects of value', the non-propelling, non-future accruing subject; those who are purposefully excluded from and cannot access the 'right resources, convert, exchange or accrue value for themselves' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012: 475). Therefore, in her critique of Bourdieu's model with its emphasis on exchange, accrual and interest she extends and develops his theory, illuminating socio-cultural issues arguing that he ignores a significant amount of social life. 'Values such as altruism, integrity, loyalty and investment in others are all missing... the use-values that we have in everyday life are of minimal value to Bourdieu's analysis' (Skeggs, 2004b: 29). She further notes that 'these non-accumulative, non-convertible values are central to social reproduction' (*ibid.*: 28-9).

In her person value model, Bourdieu's metaphors of capital which suggest that 'as people move through social spaces they encounter the possibilities for increasing their overall value through acquisition, conversion and accrual of capitals

(economic, symbolic, cultural and social)' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012: 5) are seen as a starting point. In addition, the habitus theory of Bourdieu offers a model of self as 'a technology of strategic game-playing accrual' (Skeggs, 2004c.: 84). 'It is also a very explicit model of accumulation, based on knowledge of the game and how to play it' (*ibid.*: 85). Skeggs goes on: 'the habitus is the embodiment of the accumulation (or not) of value given by the volume and composition of the different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural, symbolic), displayed as dispositions' (*ibid.*). Thereby the model of the habitus is reproducing the notion of the exchange-value self. Skeggs traces this exchange value perspective back to the seventeenth century and European colonialism and the possessive individual. She outlines different models of the self as proposed in contemporary society that all follow the logic of the exchange-value perspective (the aesthetic self, the prosthetic self, the reflexive self, the possessive individual, post-modern, risk, mobile etc. However, these selves require 'accesses to particular sources of value, such as cultural, social, economic and symbolic resources' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012: 4). Skeggs argues that all these 'theories of consumption which are focusing on objects themselves are missing a crucial point, namely that it is in the relationship that value is made' (2004c: 83).

The limit of Bourdieu's theory lies in understanding those who are positioned outside the dominant symbolic relations. Skeggs asks 'how do we conceptualize those experiences that do not fit within the exchange-value model of self and culture?' (2004c: 75). According to these various reproductions of the exchange-value model of the self, are those who cannot accrue certain forms of capital to themselves then evaluated through the dominant symbolic as being beyond value or without value, as lack? Skeggs asks: 'How do we represent them with value? And how do those trapped within the negative symbolic ever forge value for themselves?' (*ibid.*: 87).

Thus, Skeggs is looking beyond the gaze of Bourdieu for those that are excluded from playing the game, for the 'positive, affective, justifiable experiences of anger and exclusion' (*ibid.*). She proposes values beyond the dominant symbolic for the working class away from a lack or deficit view, such as hedonism, humour, dignity,

loyalty and caring. She argues 'for a way of thinking beyond exchange-value, instead through use-values that do not rely either on a concept of the self... nor rely on a concept of accumulative subjectivity, which is always reliant on exchange value' (*ibid.*: 88). She proposes to look at different value systems that are outside the dominant symbolic. 'Use-values can only be known when they are put to use, so they force a focus on the uses of culture, relations and practice' (*ibid.*: 89). This makes it possible to explore 'how something has different values in different relations, different contexts' (*ibid.*).

To explore how use-values are experienced, Skeggs examines affect (the circulation of feelings) with the aim of placing the focus on the social relations 'rather than the individual cognition of the feelings generated by these social relations' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012: 24), arguing that affect is highly significant since humans are sensuous beings inhabiting a sensuous world (Skeggs, 2004c: 89). In this way she analyses use-values through emotions such as pain, frustration and fear as experienced in daily life, carefully contained or expressed as anger and resentment towards symbolic violence. These negative affects are produced through an accident of birth and through a history of inequality and a 'frustration that things are not fair and a knowledge that they are unlikely to change in the future' (*ibid.*: 90). Skeggs contends that emotions of affect are an expression of an alternative value system. As well as discussing negative affects, she also explores more positive, non-utilitarian affects of care (loyalty and affection). She notes 'caring that is offered as a gift beyond exchange relations is of a different form to the relations established to promote and reproduce the logic of capital' (Skeggs 2014: 13). She goes on to say that '[c]aring offers us a different way of being in the world, relating to others as if they matter, with attentiveness and compassion, beyond exchange' (*ibid.*). In this way she also explores action as an act of altruism or connection to others, pointing out that 'if every action was a transaction of exchange nothing could work, not even capitalism, because not every action is instrumental, even though many rational action theorists would like to think so' (*ibid.*). She argues that social relationships are irrational and messy and seeks to identify different value practices especially when looking at people who are excluded from the possibilities

of being a 'proper person'⁵ who have been forced to inhabit social relations differently, being subject to constant devaluation (economically and symbolically), trying 'to make their life liveable, using a very different value compass, inhabiting the vectors of space and time differently' (*ibid.*), living the relations of injustice and inequality. Thereby looking at this relationality to others differently enables us, Skeggs proposes, 'to define our relationship to others through care' (*ibid.*: 14), based on values of care rather than exchange. Thus, she focusses on 'moments of connection, of enchantment, of affective force that propel us to ethical generosity' (*ibid.*: 16), on a range of actions that are selfless and gratuitous as identified by Luc Boltanski (2012) and on connections of those symbolically designated improper as shown by Les Back (2004), or 'connections that enable us to flourish' (Skeggs 2014: 17). She is seeking to recognize obscured values that live beyond value and gives them significance, as they may be able to block the logic of capital.

In this way, Skeggs proposes a more general model of 'person value' 'which may include the capitals described by Bourdieu but also thinks beyond an accrual acquisition property model to include the excluded and their social values, action and affect' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012: 5), which means 'to think of value economically (the distribution of resources) and relationally, as a more general ethos of living, for sociality, and connecting to others, through dispositions, practices and orientations' (*ibid.*).

Although Skeggs argues for the addition of relational values to the personhood model, coming away from a model focusing entirely on economic value, she also points out that values and value are not clear-cut, separate concepts, but rather 'dialogic, dependent and co-constituting' (2014: 1). Skeggs argues that values and value 'must be understood together and rather than assuming we know what either is we should interrogate their relationship and production' (*ibid.*: 4). This insight may prove particularly useful when examining the prosperity theology movement, where value and values appear to be intertwined in a complex manner, as Christian values are transformed into value and where values of affect and altruistic actions appear to be mobilised and appropriated in the pursuit of social mobility.

⁵ A person owning property in one's self - the possessive individual (Skeggs, 2004b: 22)

Value /values and prosperity theology

In the search for values beyond value, spirituality presents an interesting and potentially fruitful arena, and the prosperity theology movement is a limit case in the sense that this group is vigorously engaged in improving themselves. As such, my research applies the value/values approach to prosperity theology. On the one hand, the value/values theory provides a robust framework and useful tools of analysis to gain insight into this phenomenon. On the other hand, prosperity theology itself provides an interesting space to test and apply the value/values theory.

The prosperity gospel challenges the view that spirituality lies beyond the realm of monetisation, including it within the ever broader realm of capitalist rhetoric. It raises the question of whether spiritual, theological principles have been materialised and in this way, capitalised/monetised, such that faith does not function any more in the spiritual realm but within a capitalist framework and whether the prosperity gospel, which promotes faith as a means of achieving material prosperity in the here and now, turns immaterial faith into a material entity and as such turns Christian values into value, or whether the actual experiences of the members of these churches rather serve to highlight and reinforce the immaterial value of Christian faith. More precisely, the question to be addressed by my research is whether Christian faith represents a protected space which cannot be monetized upon, or whether this too is subject to the logic of capital, i.e. whether faith offers an immaterial form that cannot be totally materialised. Furthermore, if immaterial values are discovered within these churches, then these values themselves must also be analysed in depth – are these traditional Christian values such as selflessness and love? Or are there other values – not necessarily Christian but nonetheless immaterial – to be discovered? Skeggs' person value model will be used to explore these issues further.

Skeggs is looking for an alternative value system. Through her analysis, she points to an alternative value system which is less about accruing capitals of various kinds and

more about immaterial values. Her framework has to date been applied primarily to the (mainly white) working class. As the group I examine - African migrant members of prosperity churches - is also clearly outside the dominant symbolic, but differs in significant ways from Skeggs' examined segment of the British population, I have employed further frameworks drawing on literature from the sociology of religion as well as urban and migration studies, as outlined in the previous chapter. These various perspectives work together to provide deep insight into the phenomenon of the localized prosperity movement on London's Old Kent Road.

Chapter Three: Ethnographic Journeys and Knowledge Making

Introduction

Having in the previous chapter presented the theoretical frame, I now tell the story of how the research was conducted empirically and how I negotiated a range of methods, presenting an analysis of the research process. I will address the issues of how to observe, understand and represent the culture of my participants, whilst acknowledging that the process of knowledge making is a process of recognising or arriving at limits, such as the limits of my ability to know and to describe, and the limits of being a situated person who incompletely understands their own actions and their potential effects (from interview with Veena Das in DiFruscia, 2010). For over two and a half years, I have been studying the prosperity phenomenon mainly on the OKR, overall being less interested in these churches as institutions than in examining their religious practices as a whole especially inside congregational activities. In what follows, I will describe the evolution of this research. I will firstly describe how I came to do what I do before I go on to explain what I did and why and what I felt about the research and challenges along the way. I will reflect on how my responsibility to do justice to the accounts of my participants is in tension with the need to reflect upon them critically through the sociological theory I was testing and applying and in relation to how they relate to the wider context.

The research combines urban ethnography, ethnography of religion, semi-structured interviews, visual methods (semiotics) and textual analysis, utilising literary criticism to illuminate the organization, construction and meaning of the text. I will address some issues I faced during the research and discuss these methods in relation to how they produce knowledge in the field. I will firstly outline my motivation for carrying out this research, I then discuss the approach taken, including reasons behind this decision, and also give a brief summary of my ethical conduct throughout the research process. This is followed by a description of the first steps of my ethnographic journey. I then elucidate my ethnography in more detail, both of the OKR and a single church on the road. The ethnography was

followed up by experimental interviews which I also critically review in detail. I furthermore consider questions of reflexive practice and epistemic responsibility. This is followed by a description of the methods I used to analyse the data. I conclude with a justification of my approach and the relevant ethical issues during the fieldwork and how I dealt with these. This chapter provides an underpinning for the rest of the study as it examines the overall epistemological approach adopted, which was integral to the research process.

Before going into more depths about the methodological issues concerning this project and describing my ethnographic journey over the past few years, I would like to briefly talk about my motivation for this research. Doing research in a Black Majority Church has taken me outside my past experience to a space I was previously unfamiliar with. Many a times I have been asked why I do what I do and how I got involved in investigating this phenomenon. The fact that I did not share any affiliation with or have had any personal involvement in the phenomenon under investigation prior to commencing my fieldwork often left people puzzled about my reasons for studying this topic.

My academic background comprises two prior graduate level degrees, one in social sciences with particular focus on the application of theory, and the other in biblical studies. The final dissertation of my biblical studies degree was a social scientific investigation of the social formation of Pauline communities, applying social models to the formation of early church groups. After completing this, I came across an advertisement for a PhD studentship on prosperity theology in London in the sociology department at Goldsmiths, which sparked my interest enormously. I realized that this topic would almost perfectly combine the two strands of my prior studies, social studies and theology, as I had already started to do in my dissertation. I saw this as a great opportunity to investigate a real-life phenomenon in the contemporary world, rather than a community from the past on a textual level, using my skill sets from both degrees. As such, I applied and was very happy to be accepted to start research on this fascinating but previously unfamiliar topic. After being accepted to carry out this study, my ethnographic journey into investigating this phenomenon began. During the course of the research, I also

realized that the experiences of the West African migrant church members were in some ways similar to my own experiences as a migrant to the UK from Germany, although in other ways they are also different. Furthermore, the issues surrounding inequality, power struggles and symbolic violence spoke strongly to my sense of social (in)justice. Having now spent considerable time engaging with this phenomenon, this is no longer foreign and unfamiliar territory.

Justification of approach, validity, gaining an insider view and ethical responsibilities

In order to answer my research questions, I decided to utilise qualitative methods to gain a deep understanding of the actions of the people. Ethnography places subjects within a collective context rather than isolating the individual as a unit of measurement. It allows an observation of how groups inhabit spaces, how their actions are enabled or constrained by their environment, and a survey of the organisation of space and time from disparate angles. By the focus on observation within a particular context, ethnography assumes in-context action and thus is a richer way of producing data and viewing the world than alternative methods, making key assertions about subjecthood by positioning individuals not as free-floating, decontextualized entities, but situates them within the social, cultural, historical and economic conditions in which they live.

The ethnographic method was useful to me in a variety of ways. For example, it provided me 'with ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities' (Kawulich, 2005: 3). It also allowed me to check whether the data obtained in the interviews provided by informants were accurate or distorted. Furthermore, ethnography as a method enabled me to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study and to gain a better understanding of its context. Several other reasons for using the ethnographic method for my research were for example to identify and guide relationships with my informants; to help me get the feel for how things are

organized and prioritized; how people interrelate; to find out what the cultural parameters are; it showed me what the cultural members deemed to be important in manners, leadership politics, social interaction, and taboos; it helped me to become known to the cultural members, thereby easing facilitation of the research process; and to provide me with a source of questions to be addressed with participants. In particular, this ethnographic research was used to answer descriptive research questions, to test theory, and to generate and test hypotheses. Furthermore, this sociological method accustoms the researcher to the texture, pace, smell and sound of a place, beyond the confines of text and opens it up to senses (Back, 2007), thus it allows for a creation of a richer, more multi-dimensional picture of the community and the actions of its members.

There are different theoretical stances the researcher can take in field observation. The complete participant (Homan, 1980), who is a member of the group under observation and conceals his/her identity as researcher from the group to avoid disrupting normal activity and to be 'free from disturbance and inhibition' (*ibid.*, p. 46), is an extreme stance, which is also known as covert participant observation. Such stance can be used if the community researched is judged to be highly dis-favourable to the conduct of overt sociological research, like in Homan's case who conducted covert research in a 'community of primitive sectarians described as 'old time Pentecostals'' (*ibid.*). Initially, I briefly considered doing covert participant observation due to difficulties in gaining access and the sensitive and complex nature of the research. However, this stance has several disadvantages, e.g. 'the researcher may lack objectivity, the group members may feel distrustful of the researcher when the research role is revealed, and the ethics of the situation are questionable, since the group members are being deceived' (Kawulich, 2005: 6). Homan notes that ethical issues in regard to morality and feelings of guilt on the researcher's site 'in lying and exploiting relationships with the effects of such methods upon those who practise them may be more of a concern rather than affecting or damaging the researcher's subjects or the standing of sociology' (1980: 57).

Other stances are the participant observer stance in which the researcher is a member of the group being studied, and the group is aware of the research activity. The researcher is more interested in observing than in participating. I have taken a participant observer stance, however as the research topic is too complex and might bring discomfort to the congregation, I adjusted my research topic slightly when I told the gate keeper and the congregation the reasons for participating. I told them that I am doing some research on the OKR and in particular on the churches along the OKR and that I study sociology and that I want to participate to find out what is going on in these churches. This was done to smoothen the process of gaining access to the congregation. I simplified the description of the research agenda but still maintained the general area of interest.

The participant observation in the 'Overcomers' Church' gave me the possibility to collect data of different types, through being on the site over an extended period of time and to familiarize myself with the community, thereby facilitating involvement in sensitive activities to which I generally would not have had access , as well as the gathering of whatever data were available (audio,-video recordings, books and newspapers of the movement, webpages, publications, broadcasts, flyers, signs, etc.). This approach also helped me to develop questions that make sense in the native language or are culturally relevant. It gave me a better understanding of what is happening in the culture and lends credence to my interpretations of the observation. This was combined with formal and informal interviews with church goers and members of the leadership team.

However, there are limitations to this method of inquiry which have been felt as the fieldwork required persistence, patience, flexibility, time and much assuring of respondents by explaining to them my role and the project I am doing, whilst making them feel at ease and comfortable with my presence in their community. Nevertheless, I have endeavoured to provide a valid account by seeking to produce the most plausible explanation to understand the processes my research participants were engaged in. I sought to use rigorous and systematic procedures in order to generate my analysis and to produce a coherent and consistent account. In which way my sample has implications for generalizability in relation to how to

move between the micro and the macro, as individuals' experiences and interactions are the focus of the empirical dimension of the study is the question. How could I move from the micro level research conducted with individuals to the macro patterns the data speak to? For comparability I went to conferences as well as to other church services on the road and watched online recorded services. I would also consider my results in relation to those produced by others in comparable studies. The conclusions drawn in the analysis of the results of this project will not necessarily be predicative of events in other similar settings, but could be useful as a foundation for investigating those other settings.

In this section I want to briefly pick up on the ethical responsibilities involved in this research. In order to fulfil ethical responsibilities in relation to all individuals involved in the research, sound research practices were employed throughout the process. To this end, the research was conducted in line with the British Sociological Association's requirements (BSA, 2017). Formal ethical clearance was obtained by means of the research ethics review checklist from the Department of Sociology prior to recruiting participants for data collection. However, forms and signatures cannot replace an ethics embedded in a continual awareness of your participants and your relationship to others throughout the process. Given my lengthy involvement and my long-term relationship with the participants, I feel a particular responsibility to exercise care.

Given states that 'the concept of "research ethics" extends far beyond the researcher's interactions with human participants. Rather, "ethical practice" is about acting with integrity at all stages of project design, implementation, and dissemination' (2015: 29). In order to adhere to such ethical practice to the best of my ability, I kept a research diary, which enabled me to make notes and to track research decisions throughout the entire research process. From the start, I ensured that my participants understood my reasons for being there. I obtained consent via email by the pastor and orally through an announcement that was made by the pastor and followed by an agreement of the congregation for me to be there. Throughout the period of fieldwork, I made sure to remind the people I interacted with that the primary reason for me to be there was as a researcher and

for research purposes. To those that were recruited to participate in interviews, the implications of taking part in the study including how their data would be stored, analysed, and used (now and in the future) were explained clearly and they were given the chance to ask questions and obtain more information. To this end I used a participant information sheet and obtained consent by asking participants to sign a consent form. I also ensured that my participants remained comfortable with their decision to engage in the study. All participants had the right to withdraw at any time without stating a reason. Participants were made aware how their privacy and confidential details would be treated. This was of particular importance as the data is very personal, including details of participants' lives. Participants' identities were anonymized and protected by assigning pseudonyms as well as by changing or omitting any potential identifying information in the transcript. Consent forms, data and other research materials were stored password protected. Consent forms (the only documents with participants' real names) were stored separately from other datasets.

Next, I will describe the stages of my fieldwork in more detail.

An ethnographic journey – first steps

As outlined in the introduction, there has been limited research directly into this area thus far which I could draw on to guide the investigation. The empirical work related to the topic that has been carried out stems mainly from anthropologists, researchers of religious studies, theologians or insiders of the movement, with a few sociological studies. When I set out to do my research, I got in contact with some researchers in the field who had carried out investigations that could inform my own work. In particular, Simon Coleman, Rebecca Catto and the research team of the '*Being Built Together*' report (Rogers, 2013) have been a source of valuable information. Since very little sociological research has been done in the field, especially in the UK context, the approach I took was exploratory in nature and had to be flexible, going about things in an eclectic, piecemeal, tentative, step by step approach. Although I had drawn up a plan for my fieldwork, what became evident

quite quickly was that I would have to be ready to change, re-think and re-consider. I needed to be prepared for setbacks and challenges on the way and to adapt from the original design of the project to make it richer and more fit for purpose.

The particular area of the OKR was chosen as the focus of my research activity as it had become known as a localized 'hotspot' of this particular phenomenon in London, as outlined in the introduction. Since the prosperity movement is a religious urban phenomenon, a combined method of urban ethnography and ethnography of religion was employed to explore it. Combining these two strands seemed the most sensible way to proceed given the developing and diffuse form of the phenomenon. Through carrying out an ethnography of the OKR and in particular of one church on the OKR, I had the opportunity to study *first-hand* what people do and say in this particular context. The research process involved fairly lengthy contact with people through participant observation in some of the settings in which they operate, and through relatively open-ended/semi structured interviews designed to understand their perspectives, the activities they engage in and the courses of action they adopt, as well as through the study of various artefacts and documents that form part of their lives.

During the first year of my empirical research, I read very widely, pursuing theoretical perspectives that I could connect with what was emerging from my fieldwork and moving through many theories. At the same time, I was utilising grounded theory to organically discern emergent themes/issues within my observation data. During the course of the research, this theoretical knowledge was then further revised to elucidate the processes that were witnessed on the OKR and in the investigated community. I found that some theories offer more explanatory power than others. Thus, in addition to Skeggs' value/s theory which I was employing and testing, this study draws on a range of theorists in the sociology of religion and in urban and migration studies based on their explanatory power to aid my understanding of what was happening during the research. On the one hand, urban and migration studies helped me to understand the macro context, i.e. to identify the wider temporal and spatial social structures that have led to the formation of this community and their value system, and to understand the actions

the participants were engaged in from a non-religious perspective, by identifying a co-ethnic migrant support community. On the other hand, theories of sociology of religion helped understand the micro processes, i.e. how the members of these prosperity churches or migrant networks inhabit different social positions, as well as what is going on in these churches. As such, this also helped me to engage with the lived experience of the participants and to understand the issues around which this community's beliefs and practices were formed. Throughout the study, there was a continuous dialectical relationship between the theory and the research findings.

Another more theoretical challenge I faced was how to incorporate the transnational character of my participants into Skeggs' theory of value/s, in particular her person value model, since the community I am investigating occupies a very irregular position within British society as opposed to the mainly British (Black and White) working-class community investigated by Skeggs. Although both operate from a position of devaluation from the outset, intersections of 'race' and class also had to be considered and given a more prominent position than in Skeggs' work to date. The class divide of British society has a long history, yet the migration waves over the last decades have dramatically influenced and transformed the fabric of British society with immigrants forging their own place in this new society of settlement, despite others' pre-perceptions about what their position in this divided society should be. Nonetheless, both communities form their own value systems which 'come into effect and circulate alongside the dominant symbolic' and both seek to 'make their lives liveable' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012: 472), albeit in different ways.

In what follows I outline my ethnographic journey over the past few years leading up to this thesis, unpacking and seeking to make transparent the processes involved when doing ethnography. However, what follows can only be a partial account as it is not possible to reduce the research encounter into text and convey it completely as so many different things happened over such a long period of time. The journey was not always straightforward, it was divided into different legs and stages building upon and informing each other. Regarding methodological thinking, Lincoln

and Denzin (1994), characterize the present as a ‘messy moment, multiple voices, experimental texts, breaks, ruptures, crisis of legitimation and representation, self-critique, new moral discourses, and technologies’ (cited in Atkinson et al., 2001: 3) which I found could not be more true for what I experienced. However, a sense of social exploration and the protracted nature of this research aided to gain a sound and thorough understanding of the phenomenon as my ethnographic journey allowed me to uncover bit by bit the complex and multidimensional contextual realities and gain an in-depth insider view of the normalities and peculiarities of this phenomenon on the OKR. This hopefully allows me to render both a ‘thick description’ of the phenomenon, as well as to give an insight into my work carried out and research decisions made over the past few years.

Seeing things differently – an ethnography of the OKR

Since this phenomenon of prosperity theology is deeply embedded in the spatial and social context of the OKR and its surrounding area, I began my fieldwork by firstly investigating the OKR area, rather than starting with a particular group of people. When I commenced the project, the OKR had been a travel route for me for a long time, a thoroughfare to get from A to B which usually involved heavy traffic or getting stuck on the bus. With all the superstores along the way, it had often proved quite convenient for running errands, such as picking up some groceries at one of the manifold supermarkets or for inevitable DIY shopping at B&Q. However, with its functional character, I had never paid much attention to the road as a place where people’s lives take place, in and out of communities of different kinds. Starting my research for me meant seeing things differently, as this 1.5-mile-long stretch which lies between my home and university became the focus of my attention for the next few years. As a local resident in Kennington, studying at Goldsmiths gave me the opportunity to use it frequently on an almost daily basis mostly on my scooter. But many times I left the vehicle on the side of the road to explore the area on foot spending a considerable amount of time on the street, walking and taking pictures. I discovered a marginalised local area in south east

London: a busy street with very little attractive public and open space, very functional (e.g. cheap housing and convenient shopping), however neglected, with abandoned buildings, as well as poor condition of shop fronts, a lack of consistency and of redevelopment. This deprived character of the area and the absence of attractive public and open space gave me an impression of dereliction and poverty and an overall rundown feeling.

On the road, as a place in the city that is used by a wide range of people, I encountered a multi-ethnic hybridity, a co-existence of indigenous people and various ethnic minorities. I found a diversity of people working on, living next to and using the street. However, as I popped in and out of the small shops, restaurants, cafes and money transfers, the heterogeneity of the street-level became homogenized as they all seem to cater for their own communities with almost no mixing taking place, marking symbolic lines of separation between people and places. I encountered on the one hand a more fluid permeable global landscape and people living with difference on the street level, but on the other hand a more fixed condition of boundaries in the local urban world with deep spatial and social divides (Newman and Paasi, 1998). At times, I took the bus in the early hours of the morning after a long night in the library. The bus was filled with a low-skilled labour-force, making their way to the city to clean the offices and provide services to make the global city London run. These people were from ethnically diverse backgrounds, mainly of African and South American origin, mixed with some eastern Europeans, revealing the daily lives of some of the residents of the area.

The street-level exploratory fieldwork of my research was combined with studying demographic statistics, and histories of the street and the borough it lies within, with the aim of getting a deeper understanding of the issues of the area. Data from Southwark Council, the archives of the Southwark Council History Library, the Old Kent Road walkabouts and a workshop report where local residents were given the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns rendered information that helped me make sense of my impressions. Throughout the course of my research, I also participated in a series of Old Kent Road community forum meetings that were organized in the wake of the major of London's declaration of the vicinity as an

opportunity area for growth in homes and jobs. In one workshop called '*Old Kent Road-Characterisation Study*' organized by Southwark's planning policy and held in a local Anglican church, tenants who live in and around the OKR area were encouraged to share their opinions on what they think should be protected, what could be enhanced and where opportunities for change and future improvements lie. What struck me was that most of the tenants were White British, although this area has such a mixed community, however a divide between the White British middle-class and working-class was recognizable as they were sitting around different tables. The opinions also differed. The middle-class table embraced these new opportunities for further improvement and engaged in discussion about change. Opinions from the working-class table were mainly voiced by an activist encouraging people to partake in signing a petition in order to keep social housing and to oppose this form of 'social cleansing' (his words). What was also expressed strongly was a fear that the road could become an expensive street. The following meeting was held at the Muslim Association of Nigeria mosque directly on the OKR and therefore attracted a much more mixed crowd. However, a stark segregation between different communities was obvious. The BMCs were hardly ever mentioned in those meetings, only once whilst at the mosque. I will further elaborate on these meetings in relation to the regeneration project in the next chapter on the OKR which provides the context for this research project.

Street based ethnographies that were a valuable guide to my exploration included Suzanne Halls' exploration of the Walworth Road (2012), Anderson's work on inner city street hierarchies in Philadelphia (1999), Liebow's 'Tally's Corner' a study of urban poverty and race in the States (1967) and Whyte's (1943) work on an American Italian slum in Boston's north end, a classic of sociological research and a model for urban ethnography for decades. In general, I endeavoured to follow an ethnographic approach which is rooted in the Chicago School's heritage which has influenced the way ethnography has been employed in sociology in urban studies since the 1920s. Focusing on social worlds on the margins of modern industrial capitalism, it has inspired ethnographic research in the field of urban sociology and the study of small communities in cities, towns and rural settings and in so doing

has 'generated a vital picture of urban life grounded in local studies' (Deegan, 2001: 22). Thus, this research builds upon this history by doing fieldwork in a marginalised local area in south east London on a suburban community.

Through all of this, the road was no longer an anonymous entity but started to become alive for me as I started to pay attention to its social and spatial dimensions. Paying attention meant fieldwork in the sense of acquiring understanding through lived engagement within Les Back's (2009) argument for a 'cosmopolitan method' to the study of the complexity of community paralleled with realities of ethnic and racial segregation. Such approach understands community as a 'moral project as well as a state of affairs or a set of social relationships' requiring a 'research imagination that is supple enough to attend to the interplay between local and global levels in order to find new ways of describing how people live in and across social divisions' (*ibid.*: 201). The outcome of this strand of my inquiry and fieldwork where the field or the local, as Suzanne Hall notes, included 'exposure to a highly subjective collection of lived territories evoked through talk, walk, touch and sight, in which the ethnographer has an explicit presence' (2012: 15) is reported in the OKR chapter which gives vital background information and will also set the scene for the rest of the thesis.

Regarding the church demographics of the area, the '*Being Built Together*' (BBT) report (Rogers, 2013) gave me valuable insights and reported the existence of a plethora of BMCs in the vicinity of the OKR area. I was eager to identify the buildings they used for worship, and to take pictures, etc. To help me, I also used the internet to search for addresses of congregations and as a result ended up in small side streets and adjacent industrial areas to actually locate them. In addition, I looked at the websites of these churches and the megachurches they are offshoots from, and watched videos that had been recorded and made public online. It also became clear that many of the churches on the road belong to wider transnational networks (such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God) – mostly originating from Africa. As I sought to identify prosperity churches and sites related to them bookshops, money transfers, solicitors who specialise on immigration matters, African -barbers, -food shops and -restaurants etc. caught my eye that had never

really caught my attention before, besides diverse banners promising prosperity and success hanging on different kinds of buildings: former Anglican Church buildings and former public buildings, e.g. the former Civic Centre (Everlasting Arms Ministries), as well as former office buildings (e.g. New Covenant Church). Some banners were on small shop units (e.g. Mount Zion) and again some were on vacated properties (e.g. Apostolic Church). In addition, I found banners and signage on industrial properties in industrial parks, e.g. warehouses and industrial units. Many of the buildings are in a very poor state, and give a neglected impression from the outside. Adjacent to some of the churches using these facilities were signage and banners for nurseries that seemed to be connected to these forms of churches.



Figure 3.1: An assemblage of first research impressions along the OKR: Mount Zion church and its nursery, 'Liberty' solicitors, an African cuisine takeaway and Print Ministry, 'Touch of

Grace' clothes shop specialising in traditional African attire with a money transfer sign in the shop window and an Afrikiko bar, restaurant and nightclub

Getting stuck on the bus during the day now meant curiously looking out the window in the hope of 'detecting' new signs and banners of churches. I also started to notice that fellow passengers – women, men, families, teens and youth - were often on their way to or from church events not only on Sundays but throughout the week, carrying their Bibles and discussing church related issues at times involving heated debates or handing out leaflets to invite others to join their congregations. Some churches also use the back of the buses as advertising space for their church events with slogans like 'I will bless those who bless thee' and 'You shall not go empty' with pictures of the leading pastor next to it in bright colours. Outside Burgess Park I sometimes found big banners that were put up to invite people for prosperity related conferences. I analysed the signage that I had identified using visual semiotics (Oswell, 2006; Hall, 1997). This gave me some key initial insights into the message and aims of the BMCs. The results of this analysis appear in the following chapter.



Figure 3.2: Banner advertising a prosperity event

To gain a deeper understanding of the prosperity movement as a whole, I attended several large-scale events. The prosperity movement is often linked to megachurches in the UK, Nigeria, the US and other countries. Attending large-scale events helped me to get an idea of this aspect of the phenomenon and understand the larger religious context within which the specific church I attended (see next section) is positioned. I participated in three big events, two organized by the Redeemed Christian Church of God, where mainly Nigerian immigrants participated. The venue for both of these events was the London Arena, Docklands, with the capacity of up to 50,000 or more participants. The attendance on both occasions was around 30,000 people. The other large event was held in Earls Court and was called 'Mission to London'. It was organized by an American prosperity strand, and also attracted more than 20,000 people, although from a more heterogeneous crowd. This event however was met with huge controversy in relation to monetization, selling of various kinds of material in an aggressive way and exploitation of vulnerable people. In addition to exploring the websites of megachurches and watching videos, attending these events proved very helpful for my general understanding. In the next chapter I discuss the local context of the prosperity movement on the OKR and present my findings from my ethnography of the road and the churches along the road, in particular giving deeper insight of what is going on in these churches through a case study of one of the churches. In chapter five, these findings are then compared and contrasted to the findings from the mega events I attended by looking at the different American and African geographical and theological influences.

Extensive fieldwork – an ethnography of one of the churches

Although my research started by looking at the street as a whole, my research focus came to be one church in particular to which I gained access. This section will discuss the second stage of my research which focuses primarily on that strand of my ethnography and my fieldwork in one of the churches along the OKR. I will discuss how I gained access, to matters of establishing rapport, meaning making, the tension between being a church member and a researcher, and how I gained

access to interview some of the members, as well as the style of the interview chosen.

Using an ethnographic method affords 'access to the "backstage culture"' (Kawulich, 2005: 4). However, this meant that I was firstly confronted with the task of gaining access to one of the churches on the OKR which promotes a message of prosperity. This proved a very challenging undertaking requiring lots of flexibility, creativity and boldness, as well as endurance and persistence. During this time, I also had a chance to jointly interview one of the researchers on the BBT report team, which was very useful to give me more awareness of the issues around this research project. What also became apparent in this meeting was a strong sense of otherness towards these churches and their members and the things they engage with in these churches by some people in the room, advising me not to just pop in to one of their meetings as it could be potentially dangerous for me since I do not know what they are doing inside ('black magic'?). Thus, a division in opinions arose as to how I should proceed. Nevertheless, I decided to go to some of the public church services as advertised on their banners. I found myself among churchgoers in their Sunday best or colourful traditional attire, attending services on Sunday mornings in various churches. I picked up their leaflets and 'advertisement' materials on the way out and had a look at what was going on at some of the events promoted. Starting to be exposed to the exuberant form of worship, to the message preached and themes addressed in the songs and sermons made me more aware of issues and concerns and helped me to gain an insight, a better understanding and feel of what it is all about.

As I mentioned above, I had been eagerly collecting contact information from the manifold signs and banners displayed, from leaflets and flyers, and the internet. During my Sunday morning visits to different churches I tried to identify gatekeepers exploring the possibility of the church as a potential research site. I also tried to get in contact by sending emails as that is what seemed to me to be the most sensible approach. However, the response rate was zero. After a long struggle and through persistence, the issue of access could be resolved as in the process of visiting churches along the OKR, I found one church which I will call

'Overcomers' Church' (this is a pseudonym to protect the identity of the church and its members). At this church, an opportunity arose to develop a good relationship with a gatekeeper, the pastor of the church (at that time the junior pastor) and to negotiate access. I informed him verbally about the nature of my project and followed this up with an explanatory email. As a result, permission to carry out the research was granted by the pastor and through an announcement in the church by agreement of the whole congregation.

Bernard defines ethnography as 'the process of establishing rapport within a community and learning to act in such a way as to blend into the community so that its members will act naturally on the one hand and then on the other hand removing oneself from the setting or community to immerse oneself in the data to understand what is going on' (2011: 178). As such, throughout the process of the research, I focused on both of these elements simultaneously, seeking to maximise the outcome, to 'develop a holistic understanding' (Kawulich, 2005: 4) through pursuing a dynamic interplay between on the one hand immersing myself within the community's activities and on the other hand making notes and interpreting their beliefs and practices using social theory to make sense of these experiences, whilst trying to avoid constructing the researched subjects as objects without agency or as others.

Nonetheless, building trust required persistence, patience, flexibility, and a lot of time. Although my position as a migrant and member of an ethnic minority and my background in theology and familiarity with religious issues already helped to establish a relationship of trust, in order to build rapport and develop good interpersonal relations, I also participated actively and frequently in the community's meetings. My hope was to reduce the incidence of 'reactivity' or people acting in a certain way when they are aware of being observed. This issue was particularly salient in my research as I was the only white person attending the services among more than 150 Africans and as such was highly visible. To reduce the potential for 'reactivity', I attended the Sunday service regularly which is split in two parts, starting with the Sunday school from 10 am to 11 am. This is then followed by the weekly service starting at 11 am, finishing around 1 pm. I also

participated regularly in the Wednesday Bible study meetings which take place in the evening from 7pm till around 8:30pm and night vigils on Fridays and occasionally three days in a row. I was also invited to participate in various social events organized by the men's department of the church, to go bowling, go-carting and a trip to Stonehenge which gave me a chance to get to know some of the members on a personal level and ask questions. At the same time, I was asked to become a member of the greeters' team of the church, which forms one of the various departments of the community. This extended my social contact with an additional group of members, which were predominantly female. These two groups became the resources for my interview recruiting as I had built up relatively strong relationships with some of these members with a strong trust.

At first, everything was still overwhelmingly new and I could not make clear sense of what was going on in the church meetings. From the outside, the buildings used by these churches appear derelict and abandoned. However, inside a very vibrant culture emerged which is invisible from the outside. Standing in a stark juxtaposition to the exterior of the street and their acquired buildings, the interior is warm, intense, exuberant and full of positivity and the display of success and wealth. I sought to immerse myself in this atmosphere so as to understand it as an insider. Spending substantial amounts of time in these new surroundings was crucial for my meaning-making process.

From the start, I received a very warm welcome by the congregation in general. However, I still had to negotiate my being there primarily as a researcher whilst also being a church member. As mentioned earlier, I took a participant observer stance in which the researcher is a member of the group being studied, and the group is aware of the research activity. As a researcher, I was more interested in observing than in participating. However, as the research topic is so complex and might bring discomfort to the congregation, I kept it fairly general when communicating my reasons for participating to the congregation, e.g. by explaining to them that my area of interest was to find out what was happening in the churches along the OKR as part of my sociological research into the area. There was a constant need for me to establish myself as a researcher and to talk about my research as the

congregation was asking my wife to join and saw me more as a member. Although the 'reverse mission'⁶ paradigm (see Catto, 2012; Burgess, 2011; Olofinjana, 2010; Ojo, 2007) has been criticised by scholars as a rhetoric rather than reality and since this community is a very homogenous one and the message and many of the functions of the community are surrounding immigration processes, nevertheless the desire of the leaders and members of the congregation for proselytization was witnessed as they engaged to gain me as a full member of their community and may have had hope that a door could be opened to gain some bridging social capital and access to a wider audience. Another issue was regarding power relations. I had to make sure that I would not be too pushy at every step of the way and show great respect towards every member of the congregation in order not to lose their trust and to be able to gain access to the community and eventually to recruit the pastor of the church and some members for interviews.

In this final stage of my fieldwork, I chose to carry out in-depth interviews (Glassner and Miller, 1997) with some of the church members and leaders. The aim of this was to gain a deeper insight into the experiences, thoughts and feelings of the members of the church I did my ethnography in, to add more breath to the data and to check my findings from the ethnography. However, arranging access proved to be quite challenging. I needed to negotiate access over a long period of time and continue to persevere until I could eventually interview some members of the community. First, I had to gain access to the gatekeeper and negotiate an interview with him. This took a few months. After that I needed to gain his permission to interview some members of the congregation, which again was a lengthy and difficult process of negotiation, since I did not want to lose the trust I had built up over time with this congregation. After long negotiations I was given access to some of the members. It was a sensitive issue and related to trust and power relations.

⁶ Reverse Mission is defined as 'the sending of missionaries to Europe and North America by churches and Christians from the non-Western world, particularly Africa, Asia and Latin America, which were at the receiving end of Catholic and Protestant missions as mission fields from the sixteenth century to the late twentieth century' (Ojo, 2007: 380). Catto adds to this definition: 'Reverse mission, despite persisting structural and socio-economic inequalities, does represent a divergence from the previously dominant understanding of Christian mission as flowing from the civilized West to the 'heathen rest'' (Catto, 2012: 103)

Furthermore, the church leader herself initially agreed to be interviewed but then retracted this.

In order to recruit participants, a convenience sampling strategy was employed, i.e. interviewing any members who were willing to give me an interview. In practice, this meant that I targeted those with whom I had established a longer relationship throughout my ethnography. As mentioned earlier, I had established stronger rapport with the members of the departments I was involved in (the greeters' department and the men's department) and as such was able to solicit interviews from some of these people. Due to these issues, the number of interviews is limited to only nine in full (5 women, 4 men, see Appendix One for an overview of interviewees). If I had pressed any further it would have affected my relationship with the church members. Those interested in participating were given more information prior to the interview through an information sheet and discussions about the research.

In terms of the interview itself and the design of the questions, I had to be sensitive as well. The group I was interviewing are people who have recently migrated to the UK or are settling down in the UK. Interviews with migrants are sensitive due to their immigration status, therefore I chose to focus the interview entirely on their church experience in the setting in which we had encountered each other during my ethnography. In general, migrants are frequently asked to give accounts of their lives by professionals in order to access certain rights or resources within the UK. Immigration officers often make use of narrative interviews to interrogate their subjects. Also many times migrants have become used to 'performing' their narrative, due to knowledge among migrants as to what narrative is deemed acceptable to gain a certain status. As such, many have developed strategies for dealing with constant questioning by social- or immigration workers. Jackson (2015) for example describes how one participant of hers learned to close down lines of questioning in order to get these encounters over with quickly pointing out 'the uneasy relationship between social research and the use of questioning in governing the poor in London' (*ibid.*: 50), what Ann McClintock termed as 'philanthropic surveillance' (cited in Jackson, 2015: 50). By choosing a form of

experimental interview I tried to create a more equal form of exchange aiming for a non-hierarchical form of interviewing. Not focussing on personal lives in the interview questions made it possible to avoid these kinds of power relations and hearing 'well-rehearsed tales of self' (*ibid.*: 52). Instead my aim was to facilitate the interview in a way that the authentic self was revealed in the encounter and to follow Les Back's (2007) advice who argues that maybe the most important quality as a social researcher today is to take the people we listen to as seriously as we take ourselves.

In order to put the participants at ease and allow for further personalisation of the interview process, participants were given the choice of setting for their interviews. This resulted in an array of interview sites. Some invited me to their home, others preferred the interview to be done in certain parts of the church building (office, leisure area), the interview with the church leader was done in a chicken shop next to the church premises with loud music playing in the background and some interviews were conducted over the phone due to the busy schedule of the participants. Focussing on the church experience helped to let them talk and feel at ease about the interview setting, building upon my rapport during the ethnography and not to interrogate them. I realised that all of them were very willing and open to talk about their faith as it is something so integral to their lives, although it seemed that it had been the first time that they were interviewed about their religious practices and I found that some used it as an opportunity to represent and promote their faith. In general, the flow of the interviews went quite well, with me sometimes rephrasing my questions according to the content that emerged during the interview. After each interview, notes were made to capture contextual details, such as the location, whether it was a telephone conversation or was conducted in-person, the atmosphere of the location we met in etc. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim as quickly as possible, usually on the same day and prior to interviewing the next participant. This allowed me to engage in ongoing initial analysis and was useful to inform the following interview as part of emergent design.

I also tried to gain access to a former preacher in the same church who now is a researcher and employed in the mission department of the same denomination in Nigeria, Lagos. I met him in Cambridge and told him about my research and he was very open and willing to engage with me and agreed to an interview, but later although I send him several emails and even called him a few times, this willingness did not manifest in the end. I regretted this a lot since this would have added valuable insight and a comparison between London and Lagos.

The interview process went very smoothly, but it was nonetheless important for me to pay attention to issues of power relations, positioning and reflexivity. These issues, as well as my epistemology and representation, the dialogical process of interpreting my data and the consolidation of themes will be further discussed in the next section.

Doing reflexive practice-epistemic responsibility

This research aims to be reflexive as it seeks to explore complexities of social and cultural processes, meanings and practices of the studied participants in order to grasp their lived culture. In what follows I will first set out a theoretical discussion on reflexivity which is then followed by giving an account of these issues in relation to the researcher' background and attitudes as well as the research site itself. Reflexivity via the author's self-conscious awareness of their position has been frequently advocated to address questions of representation and legitimacy.

As researchers are located in many different ways in terms of nation, gender, ethnicity, class, age, history as well as the economic, social and cultural relations which we study, these positions inform our access to discourses and what we can envisage and perceive. These positions have an impact on representations as well as one's position as researcher, intellectual and writer, attempting to study 'life worlds' of groups, as well as institutional practices etc. Thus, the research is provisional and informed by, as Les Back puts it very skilfully, a 'contingent and modest epistemology that attempts to achieve rigorous forms of reporting

alongside a reflexive consciousness of the codes, textual moves and rhetoric integral to the process of writing ethnography' (1996: 5). Therefore, the limits to authenticity and uncovering the 'real' truth are acknowledged which impacts at the same time on the legitimacy and authority of the knowledge produced. Knowledge production is partial and situated in nature and with our position as mediators in knowledge production, power relations are unavoidable (Skeggs, 1997). A decontextualized vantage point or the disembodied gaze is impossible, as all gazes are inherently embodied and embedded within a context (Haraway, 1991). Nonetheless, our partial perspective should never discourage us from participating in the social world through empirical research as partiality does not devalue empirical research. This project, being written from the vantage point of the researcher in the production of meaning and being aware of my own biases and the limitations of this research and it not being neutral, nevertheless aimed to get an understanding of the lives of the informants and to represent them appropriately and modestly for others to consider.

A critique of using the ethnographic method to collect data is that 'male and female researchers have access to different information, as they have access to different people, settings, and bodies of knowledge' (Kawulich, 2005: 5). It is 'conducted by a biased human who serves as the instrument for data collection' (*ibid.*). To be open minded and have a non-judgemental attitude, as well as being interested in learning more about others are therefore important characteristics for ethnographers' actions. The researcher must be aware of how their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class and theoretical approach can affect the observation as well as the analysis and interpretation. Kawulich contends that practicing reflexivity at the beginning of the research will help the researcher be aware of what may interfere with 'the correct interpretation of what is observed' (*ibid.*: 5). The problem of the researcher's bias has led to a discussion of subjectivity and objectivity with regards to qualitative research. Different views exist among researchers. To this end, 'some researchers believe that one cannot be both objective and subjective, while others believe that the two can coexist, that one's subjectivity can facilitate understanding the world of others [...] when one reflects

on one's biases, he/she can then recognize those biases that may distort understanding and replace them with those that help him/her to be more objective' (*ibid.*: 6).

As McNay argues that reflexivity 'is an irregular manifestation dependent on a particular configuration of power relations' (cited in Skeggs, 2004a: 133), Skeggs observes that 'this makes it possible to see how some forms of reflexivity reproduce, repeat and reinforce existing power relations, whilst others may be challenging and disruptive' (*ibid.*). In consequence regarding epistemological authority, she remarks that the merging of the knowledge of the researcher through their training, experience, ethnographic labours and time, thus having access to explanations and interpretations, with the knowledge of the respondent or participant should produce an explanation of the ethnographic research. She makes one more important point on reflexivity looking at it from a Weberian perspective, that is that 'many forms of behaviour are not open to reflexivity, to attribute certain practices as reflexive may be to mis-recognize the limits of our and other's practices' (*ibid.*: 134). In this way she draws attention to 'the difference between claiming reflexivity as a resource for authorizing oneself (being) and doing reflexivity in practice' and proposes instead 'a turn away from self-telling to paying attention to research practice and research participants' (Skeggs, 2002: 350).

In regard to objectification, Skeggs notes that 'the process of telling the stories of the subaltern has been institutionalized in anthropology and sociology as a mechanism by which the self of the writer or researcher is known. So those excluded from selfhood, personhood, individuality become the object – often objectified – by those who have access to the subject positions of researcher/writer' (2004a: 127-8). She argues further that it is important to be aware of 'positioning or systems of exchange-value and the limits on the mobility of some groups' (*ibid.*: 130) when telling their stories, thus being aware of the implication in the circuits of symbolic violence, promoting a practice 'that understands the relations of production and is aware of the possibilities for appropriation; a practice with an awareness of the constraints of disciplinary techniques and the power relations of location and position, one that does not reify

and reproduce the categorizations of exploitation and symbolic violence. A practice aware that self-constitution is about access to resources' (*ibid.*: 131).

I now focus upon my position as the researcher and how it may affect the fieldwork. In the use of ethnographic methods to study religion, one's position is highly significant. Hence, I discuss my positionality in some detail and its implications for the research here. Throughout the research I remained sensitive to the variety of factors that could shape the data generated and results produced.

Firstly, I acknowledge that I had some preconceptions concerning the research topic. My preconceived biases regarding the prosperity gospel were mainly formed by my theological training, my surroundings and the responses of academics and mainstream Christian leaders whenever the topic came up, as well as by the media which focusses a lot on the monetary aspects of the church leaders and the exploitation of the members. So naturally, at the outset I had some assumptions and expectations about what I would find in the field. However, I assumed a critical and open stance towards the data through questioning my own assumptions, as well as my research process and my personal effect on it (Tonkiss, 1998) and applied and utilised grounded theory to organically discern emergent themes/issues within my observation data. I also actively sought to counteract any biases throughout the research, e.g. by sharing ideas, 'hypotheses', etc. with other researchers who were not involved in the process and could mirror a more 'neutral' stance. This alerted me to my own assumptions which could then be modified. Through this my own position as well as my understandings were not static but rather developed dynamically together with the project resulting in many unexpected insights and surprises. I found a community of adherents to this movement who mainly benefited from the activities in various ways and gained an insider view of the movement on the localised level which has changed my understanding of the phenomenon dramatically.

As a researcher, I was also aware of the fact that my own experience as an adult migrant made me prone to holding certain biases or that this could affect my openness during the research process. Having experienced the fall of the wall in

Berlin and the reunification of Germany and the structural changes it involved for the East and having lived as a foreigner in the UK myself helps me to understand and to have empathy for the position and feelings of migrants adapting to changes and to their country of settlement, how it feels to be a temporary migrant negotiating a different culture, climate, and, for me, though not for all respondents, a different language.

In terms of class, which is also an important aspect of this work, I am aware that, class consciousness is not as strong in Germany as in the UK. However, since I have been living in the UK for several years I have come to be aware of such categories more explicitly and also feel able to reflect critically upon issues of class differences.

Like any researcher, I can only research, and represent that research, from my own position: 'gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, life experience, and one's own religious identity shape what one can learn' (Spickard and Landres, 2002: 6). Using label language: being a 'white, European, German, with a Eurocentric upbringing' contrasts strongly to the people in the communities of the BMCs, the majority of whom are not white, not 'British', and not European. Spickard (1998) regards Western ethnocentrism as dominating the sociology of religion. The question of power is important, especially taking into consideration anthropology's colonial roots (Sanjek, 1993) and my subject matter, which, as we have seen, pertains to post-colonialism. Robertson (2002), who is critical of reflexivity in cultural anthropology claiming that it may only pay lip service to self-reflection and reinforce labels leading to generic fixed categories, argues that such categories are unhelpful. Thus, Robertson asserts that the ethnographer must not leave labels self-evident. Identity is not fixed, it is formed and transformed in interaction and labels cannot be simply ascribed to people.

This leads us back to Skeggs and issues of representation. While acknowledging these considerations, I have no interest in placing myself at the heart of the research and making it a self-reflexive confessional device. I am not interested in self-narration, but in interpretation, inequality and impact. The aim of reflecting upon these issues was to pay attention to how they have potential to influence the

research process itself. An attempt was made to counteract fixing people through labelling through, on the one hand, revealing the external spatial and social structures in which they operate and on the other hand by seeking to meaningfully interpret their actions displaying them as active agents of their own choosing within the limits set from them in the British highly unequal and institutional racist context.

The other side of the coin is that the members of the community under research also had their perspective on me and my work. It was therefore important to endeavour to overcome an outsider status, although working with such a group of people in the fieldwork it is not possible to gain insider status and it would be deeply problematic in itself, losing critical distance. There are a number of things that affect whether the researcher is accepted in the community, 'including one's appearance, ethnicity, age, gender, and class, for example' (Kawulich, 2005: 5). There are also so called structural characteristics which relates to the conventions that exist in the community regarding interaction and behaviour. Kawulich (2005) asserts that 'some of the reasons [...] for researchers not being included in activities include a lack of trust, the community's discomfort with having an outsider there, potential danger to either the community or the researcher'. Reason's for exclusion could be the use of the community's 'language that is unfamiliar to the researcher, their changing from one language to another that is not understood by the researcher, their changing the subject when the researcher arrives, their refusal to answer certain questions, their moving away from the researcher to talk out of ear shot, or their failure to invite the researcher to social events' (*ibid.*). However, after the researcher has been in the community for a while, the experience of a feeling of having been excluded 'at some point of the research process, particular in the beginning' will recede and the community will be 'likely to have accepted the researcher to some degree' (*ibid.*). More importantly is 'for the researcher to recognize what that exclusion means for the research process' (*ibid.*).

For example, in order to identify and develop rapport with respondents, the issue of faith and what it means to be a 'Christian', which is perhaps the most significant, is a key challenge. The insider/outsider debate is highly significant when engaged in

qualitative research on religion, because religion is a value system which shapes people's worlds (Spickard and Landres, 2002: 5). Entering and representing a person's world becomes, perhaps, more difficult if one does not share their value system. My curiosity for Christianity and my familiarity with Christian services, as well as my theoretical understanding of the different strands and theologies within Christianity has helped to build a good rapport with respondents and in understanding what is going on.

Nonetheless, there were times when I felt uncomfortable and out of place or did not do the 'right thing'. This was especially the case during the events or any services e.g. in terms of raising my hands, singing and dancing, interacting with my neighbours as it is the style of the church or speaking in tongues over a period of time and praying loudly etc. However, learning more about different forms of Christian worship through engagement and interrogating my attitudes toward that engagement was a valuable part of the research process and I developed coping strategies in these situations. I would do what I was instructed to do by the service leader, things like raising my hands, singing, interacting with my neighbours etc, however I felt uncomfortable praying aloud and I did not receive the communion. Over time I felt I became more and more accepted by the members and included in the community. This was also due to my theoretical stance as a participant observant, which also brought conflicts in terms of my positioning as a researcher rather than a church member.

Another important aspect is ethnicity – since I am White and was the only White participant in a BMC with over 150 Black participants. However, the congregation as a whole was very friendly and welcoming and I did not perceive exclusion on this basis. Much more, I felt that they saw me as a member of an ethnic minority – just like them, i.e. that none of us are White British. At the same time they welcomed me as a friend into their congregation, although there were always some who seemed to remain suspicious of me.

I was aware of the paramount importance regarding how (and how much) the researcher represents to respondents and the influence this presentation has on

their ability and willingness to tell various sorts of stories (Glassner and Miller, 1997: 103). Therefore, I decided to not mislead respondents about myself: to answer questions openly and honestly, but not to volunteer information beyond the project.

In practice, in order to enable good connections and build up a good relationship with the research participants, similarities were sought to be built upon and differences sought to be overcome. For example we talked about living and working in London and the challenges it brings with it and we exchanged information about our home countries, with some of the members being able to speak some German. I was also open to my participants culture. After the meetings there was usually some snacks for everyone made by some of the members which often included West African cuisine. I always engaged with members in conversations whilst enjoying the traditional cuisine. And I often also brought some snacks to the mid-week services to be consumed. Regarding methodological considerations for position and positioning in the researcher-researched relationship, I have tried to be explicit about my position(ing) and biases so that their impact upon this research can be assessed. However, as I pointed out above, the project is about the research practice and the research participant rather than the researcher. Skeggs notes that 'being positioned by structural relations (sexuality, gender, race, class) does not necessarily give access to ways of knowing' and therefore to 'superior epistemological authority on the basis of where one was located within categorical positions' (2002: 356). This begs questions regarding authorial responsibility, which has often been called a crisis of representation, which is mainly a crisis in authority, calling for a more ethical and responsible research (*ibid.*).

Having considered all of these issues, this research does not assume that experiences or ontology form the bedrock of epistemology or that what I am is positioned as determining what I know and how I know (Skeggs, 2002). Although experiences can give evidence that differences exist, they do not examine how these differences are created or how they function and what effects they have in affirming and normalising categories or labels (Scott, 1992).

The production of this text was a relational process, for example between myself, the literature, the research participants. This raises various issues. Skeggs argues that 'acknowledgement of unequal forms of exchange [...] is not about telling the self but being aware of positioning and the limits on mobility of some groups' (2002: 362). Issues of representation of the subaltern are foregrounded in what follows. As we are always implicated in symbolic violence (Rabinow cited in Skeggs, 2002) what's important is how we play these circuits, which Bourdieu would argue is through practice rather than by reauthorizing ourselves through telling and confession (Skeggs, 2002: 363). A reflexive practice is one 'that understands the relations of production, that is aware of the possibilities for appropriation, that knows about the constraints of disciplinary techniques and the power relations of location and position, and that does not reify and reproduce the categorization that enable exploitation and symbolic violence' (*ibid.*).

Regarding epistemological authority, Skeggs further contends that this must not necessarily entail social/ moral inequality of worth between the researcher and the researched, arguing that the researcher knows some things of the researched they do not know, just as they know things about the researcher that he/she does not. She goes on to say that by virtue of the researcher's training, experience, ethnographic labours and time the researcher has access to explanations and interpretations that do offer some epistemological authority, which however need not contradict moral authority between the researcher and the researched (*ibid.*). As such I argue that in the same vein, the merging between my knowledge and my participants' own knowledge produced the explanations in my research. The aim was not to exploit or use them, but to learn from them.

Reflexivity in the research practice and the participants' accounts and explanations as the source of knowledge is pursued. In terms of the tautology of using categories such as class and race etc. this research seeks to re-signify, modify, and draw attention to reification and their historical constitution rather than reproducing existing categories (Skeggs, 2002: 366). It does so by showing how the research participants were enabled to resist being fixed in place by others in terms of value and position in an exchange rate mechanism and symbolic power relation and

rather position and view themselves as people of vision and aspiration on the move to their destiny of greatness. Just as Skeggs' participants in her *'Formations'* research, my participants did not want to be fixed in place and rendered immobile. They moved between endogenous reflexivity and referential reflexivity and thus made reflexive movements on a daily basis as part of how they lived their lives, as described by Skeggs in relation to her participants. Furthermore, they knew how to counteract being fixed in place. Their referential reflexivity enabled them not just to understand their circumstances, but to engage in improving them (Skeggs, 2002: 366).

As my fieldwork was spread across a long a period, it did not have a clear cut-off point. However, it can be said that the data were collected approximately between mid-February 2014 and mid-July 2016 by means of observation notes, including informal interviews and informal conversations, as well as one-on-one semi structured interviews. The length of the observation and the combination of observation and interviews improved the quality of my data collection and interpretation and also facilitated the development of new research questions and hypotheses (Kawulich, 2005). The data analysis of the observation in terms of interpretation of the meanings, functions and consequences of the individual church goers actions and the church as an institution in the local,- and wider context was a constant feature during the research process and happened in various stages.

To make sense of the many different experiences by structuring and organizing knowledge, I used various techniques provided by the institutional framework. I sought to be aware of and pay attention to the dialogical process in knowledge making, seeking to find appropriate forms of expressions which could adequately express the processes experienced by my research participants and not reproduce them as fixed occupiers of particular classifications. I desired to show a sense of their movement and transformation of boundaries, whilst considering the limits and constraints of structural locations and class and race. Could they transcend them or only occupy them differently like the women in Skeggs' *'Formations'* research (1997)? It was a challenge 'to portray the complexities, nuances,

contradictions and heterogeneity of their experiences' (Skeggs, 1997: 32). The continual tension between generalising theoretically and the multitude of different experiences in practice was a constant feature in this process.

Triangulation of the different kinds of data (observation- and fieldnotes, interview data, artefacts) gathered throughout the fieldwork from the different methods described above was carried out to find how they corroborate one another, using discourse analysis, visual semiotics and textual analysis. For the data analysis of the interview material, discourse analysis was used in juxtaposition to the ethnographic observations to see how participants constructed and negotiated the church experience. Drawing on discourse analysis, I examined how subjects and meanings are created and the social is organised. I did not use qualitative software to code my data, but instead I relied on more old-fashioned markers and pens to highlight and group data together through a repetitive process of reading and listening. In addition, the exploration of visuals was an important part of the research process as visual knowledge extends and relates to other 'sensory, material and discursive elements of the research' (Pink, 2001: 5). Website contents, books, sermons and other material were analysed in terms of their social production-how they are written, how they are read, who writes them, who reads them, for what purposes, with what outcomes etc, using discourse analysis.

In the course of the research process, the theories utilized were further modified in a dialectical relationship with the research participants by asking how do the processes of my two guiding research questions work in sociology of religion studies on the one hand and migration studies on the other and how do these informants do these things. Dealing with numerous in-depth transcripts and notes, the central themes (see outline of the thesis in the introduction) eventually started to emerge and consolidate from this dialogical analysis and my experience of immersion in the research setting. I was constantly learning from the research informants, although I only had access to parts of their lives and could only make interpretations based on this finite amount of knowledge. At the same time, I discussed my findings with my supervisor and other researchers, and compared my research data with different theoretical frameworks. I also found it useful to read

ethnographies in a similar vein to my own, to see how they navigate theory, giving it a vivid format through people's lives and their interactions, but also how they modify and challenge existing theory through their empirical investigations. In this way my interpretations were produced through constant dialogical processes as I was reflecting in every stage on what I was doing. All this aided me towards the goal of my research to employ and test Skeggs' social theory, correlating and corroborating it with my findings.

Conclusion

This chapter has described my ethnographic journey, including the challenges I faced along the way. I also described and justified my choices of methods and showed how the research was conducted empirically. Furthermore, I discussed in detail issues regarding reflexive practice and epistemic responsibility. I have produced the interpretations of the study through rigorous and accountable academic practice as laid out above.

Part 2



Figure 4.1: Old Kent Road street sign

Chapter Four: The Old Kent Road: Outside and Inside Its Churches

Introduction

Lefebvre, who anticipated the impact of the expansion of the urban across the planet, which we are now witnessing in the twenty-first-century, had both a deeply dystopian, but also hopeful view of urban space, under the pressure of global capitalism, with human reproduction falling under the laws of capitalist production, and consumerism, exploitation and materialism invading every aspect of human life. Thus for him, a crucial right that belongs to all citizens was the right to a fairer share of material goods and services and the right to participate in the formation of the city, that means to be in some way a producer of the urban, meaning a producer of space that creates the right conditions for life in all its potential fullness for all citizens. This includes the right to renewed centrality for those consigned to the periphery (in Merrifield, 2006).

This study agrees with Chris Baker's (2013) argument that religious citizens from diasporic and ethnic minority communities who deploy the practices and resources of religion implicitly or explicitly claim their right to the city and with it also their right to centrality within the life of the modern metropolis. In his research, which was based on 25 focus groups conducted in 2007 and 2010 across a number of religious and spiritual traditions and both immigrant and non-immigrant

communities, asking the question what benefits members derive from being a member of a religious/spiritual group, he structured his findings around three key elements- 'a sense of 'belonging' that engenders a sense of 'becoming' that in turn can lead to a variety of technologies and performances of 'participating' in the wider community' (*ibid.*: 91). For spaces of belonging he refers to emotionally supportive and nurturing benefits derived from being a member of a religious or spiritual group, which mediate benefits through social contacts and connection, as well as through practices associated with religious experiences. He contends that 'the feelings of deep solidarity, trust and peacefulness engendered by these technologies of belonging help to provide a safe and supportive space'. He goes on to describe the next stage contending that in this way members can negotiate or develop their different identities (religious, cultural, ethnic and gendered) into a functioning whole which then leads to spaces of belonging and becoming to 'provide the confidence and endorsement which often lead to participating in an extending radius or dialogic movement of trust and confidence beyond existing communal and cultural boundaries' (*ibid.*: 92). As such, Baker highlights that through a dialectical engagement of the modalities of belonging, becoming and participating members of diasporic communities are allowed to negotiate a functional and meaningful engagement with a secularised but also religious diverse public sphere. He points out that 'the ability to do this resides not only in the strength derived from belonging to a religious community but also in a belief in the affective and moral power of religion per se, which these religious citizens see themselves as embodying through the ways in which they conduct themselves in public life' (*ibid.*: 101).

This brief discussion of Lefebvre and Baker's perspectives provides the backdrop against which this chapter teases out the context of the prosperity movement on the OKR, i.e. the local context in which this co-ethnic faith community is formed and where the transformation of space occurs, as the churches seek to provide a space for nurture that leads to centrality in the city. This chapter (together with the following chapter) thus functions as a transition to the chapters on my participants'

struggles for value and values where I lay out in detail how the process described by Baker occurs in this movement on the OKR.

The prosperity gospel movement on the OKR is a localised form of Pentecostalism which has adapted in the context of the West African migrant experience in Britain. One road stretching through one London borough, the Old Kent Road in Southwark, has become the centre of a strong concentration of prosperity gospel churches. The OKR also represents a part of the city where large numbers of less wealthy African migrants are situated. A former pastor in one of the churches along the road who happens to be a scholar in the field has suggested that the OKR might be renamed 'church road' due to the overwhelming presence of African Pentecostal churches in the neighbourhood (Adedibu, 2013). This chapter sheds light on the context in which this hotspot of the phenomenon of prosperity in the UK and London occurs, focussing on my empirical exploration of these co-ethnic churches along the road in the midst of cultural and ethnic diversity and urban change on the street level. Thus, this chapter provides a reflection on my immersion into the OKR area and discusses issues of ethnography, diversity and urban space with the focus on prosperity churches comprised of mainly West African background. These churches, which remain largely homogenous (despite members' aspirations to reach out to other parts of the population) are situated within an area representing what Vertovec (2011) refers to as a diversification of urban populations. The Old Kent Road represents a dynamic field of urban multiculturalism and can be seen as an example of everyday multiculturalism being alive and well despite the fact that across Europe, multiculturalism as a public policy has been declared 'dead' (Berg et al., 2015; Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010).

In this chapter, I will juxtapose ethnographic data with official information on demographics. I provide a brief history of the road and a peek into its possible future. I introduce the area it is situated within – Southwark – along various demographic dimensions, notably deprivation, ethnic diversity and religious affiliations. I discuss how the churches fit within this space and I will use visualisation as both an analytic and illustrative process, providing additional layers of ethnographic exploration and explanation, and unpacking the meaning of the

buildings and signage used. Finally, I go deeper inside the churches and provide a detailed description of various key aspects.

Brief history and future prospects of the Old Kent Road

The Old Kent Road in the borough of Southwark in south east London runs for 1.5 miles from the Bricklayer's Arms roundabout to New Cross Street. A major transport route from south east to central London, it forms part of a long history of the city as an important thoroughfare in London, first metalled by the Romans as the road from Dover to Londinium, but also as a medieval pilgrim route to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral.



Figure 4.2: Map of London highlighting the position of the Old Kent Road, Source: Allies and Morrison UP, (2015).

Today, the Old Kent Road still forms an important route into and out of London. What takes place along its length has changed substantially and the nature of the residential communities around it has continually shifted with redevelopment of estates and the successive introduction of different communities. It is currently located in a district of mixed, generally poorer, migrant populations, characterised as a 'hyper-diverse', socioeconomically deprived area of the city (Allies and

Morrison UP, 2015). Known by many in the UK as the least valuable property on the Monopoly board, it comes across as a busy street, though rather bleak and unwelcoming with very little attractive public space.



Figure 4.3: Photo: Old Kent Road, 2015. Source: Allies and Morrison UP, (2015).

All places are shaped by their past. The OKR was late to urbanise compared to growth in London, but its long history stretches back almost two thousand years. The area has been through seismic shifts to its overall form and 'identity'. First, the unprecedented growth and industrialisation in the nineteenth century, followed by wartime bombardment, slum clearance and redevelopment in the post war period which was again followed by the decline of industry and manufacturing and in its replacement with retail and service industries. All these contrasting developments in terms of scale, layout and function have resulted in a fragmented physical form, having been built and rebuilt over centuries. Now the area faces another important challenge but also opportunity through regeneration and growth, though the question is how this will affect the present-day communities.

The Old Kent road largely passed through fields until the 19th century, when building started to occur in irregular spurts with a diverse mix of Georgian terraced houses and villas together with much cheaper housing and factories. In particular, the opening of the Surrey Canal and the development of the South Metropolitan

Gas Works on the east side towards the end of the Old Kent Road, which soon became a major local employer, and the arrival of Bricklayers Arms rail termini and goods depot sited at the top of the Old Kent Road promoted the area's development and attracted a growing population to it (Walford, 1878). The excellent public transport and the density of the residential neighbourhoods contributed to its growth as a popular destination in its own right as a multitude of public houses sprang up in the Victorian and Edwardian period, to which were later added about a dozen theatres and cinemas and numerous other places of entertainment.



Figure 4.4: Old Kent Road, 1905. Source: *Allies and Morrison UP*, (2015).

The vitality of the road started to decline in the 1940s after it sustained heavy bombing and from the 1960s the decline accelerated as industries and entertainment venues closed down, and the volume of motor traffic increased rapidly. Many of the old buildings were demolished and replaced by housing estates. Burgess Park, an important public space in the middle of the Old Kent Road, was created in the late 1960s as a green lung for Southwark, and since the mid-80s the development of retail parks with the building of retail warehouse sheds with large expanses of car parking has been encouraged. As a result, vast parts of the road are now taken up by council estates and huge branches of familiar retail chains like Tesco, Toys R Us, PC World, B&Q, Halfords and Asda, among others. The 1980s saw a general population decline and a neglect of housing and properties,

eight out of the ten pubs along the road were converted or derelict. As part of the modern A2, the road suffers from heavy traffic and poor air quality and a weak public realm.

Since 2011, the OKR area has been targeted by government officials for strategic development. The area's potential caught the eye of the former mayor of London, Boris Johnson, who included the Old Kent Road corridor as an 'opportunity area' in his *'Further Alterations to the London Plan'* (Greater London Authority, 2014), which are a package of proposals that were drawn up to his 2011 London Plan. They outline plans to take a strategic approach to the future planning and development of the area, which is perceived as having significant potential for residential-led development with the aim of delivering significant social and economic regeneration by creating a minimum of 2,500 new homes and an indicative employment capacity of 1,000. Currently this 'redevelopment' is well under way and has particularly in and around Elephant and Castle started to cause a dramatic fragmentation and displacement of the community as well as demographic transformation. This process is part of a rapidly accelerating gentrification of the south London area and part of neoliberal urban governance under the conservative government. Minority citizens are more likely to be victims of displacement, as people are made homeless by demolitions and evictions under the guise of "regeneration". Moreover, the transformation of the Elephant and Castle area is visible in the destruction of community assets such as much-loved markets, nurseries, pubs and small businesses, as well as in the proliferation of more expensive shops, bars and restaurants, and the influx of a non-resident, affluent demographic with new luxury flat developments. In addition, there are plans in discussion to extend the Bakerloo Line from Elephant and Castle to New Cross, which would boost the areas potential and increase its value immensely (Allies and Morrison UP, 2015).

As I noted in the methodology chapter, as part of my research I attended two of a series of three workshops of the OKR community forum meetings organised by Southwark Council to bring people together who either live, work or visit the OKR and its surrounding neighbourhoods. Themes that were discussed included - history

and heritage, businesses and jobs, highstreets/town centres and shopping, cycling and walking improvements. The aim of these workshops was to find out what the residents' opinions were on future improvements, where they thought the stations of the extended Bakerloo line should be and in collaboration to consider options for regeneration and growth in the area as well as to work towards a spatial plan which provides a vision and framework to guide development in the area over the next 15 years. The characterisation study is thus a practical tool to guide decisions about the destiny of the area. to describe the evolution of the Old Kent Road area, to identify the main drivers for change and to use the consultation process to learn about and respond to communal values. This could lead to a major change in the area. How all this is going to affect the Old Kent Road in terms of gentrification will have to be seen, but it can be predicted that it is most likely going to have an impact on the churches and their current use of buildings. It could also have an effect of breaking up communities, due to the dispersal of formal residents.

The two meetings I attended were both held in facilities of local faith organisations. The first one was in an Anglican church and the second one was at the Nigerian mosque on the OKR. In the first workshop we were given an introduction to the project with a presentation covering points on history of the area, heritage and initial findings. We were then divided into three smaller groups. Sitting around tables, we were invited to make suggestions for change and improvement of the character of the area with colour coding pens on a map of the area as depicted in the image below. We also discussed different parts of the area and their day to day functions for the local residents. The groups identified areas that should be protected from change and then put forward suggestions for how a selection of the non-residential areas might be redeveloped with a close eye on revealing some of the assets lost. The event ended with a feedback session, with each group highlighting the key priorities for the area. This workshop provided the recommendations for protection and enhancement.



Figure 4.5: Old Kent Road Characterisation Study. This is an example of the worksheet in which we were to highlight certain areas for development or protection through colour coding.

What stood out to me in the first workshop was the engagement of the different sections of the people who were in attendance. The more affluent White male participants were at ease in pointing out weaknesses and making suggestions for improvement, whereas the more working-class White and Black attendees were more hesitant in their engagement. A constant worry for most of the members seemed to be that prices would go up in the area and that it would not be affordable anymore. There were some who called upon the attendees to resist these planned developments and enrolled people to sign up for a petition against social cleansing/ gentrification.

In the second workshop at the Nigerian mosque the atmosphere was very different to the former which was a coordinated 'White space'. Whilst we were having the workshop on the ground floor, an area that was converted into some communal space, we could see members of the mosque arriving for their evening prayers, washing their feet and hands in the places provided for them and then going up to the top floor for the prayer event. Once the prayer started the workshop was basically put on hold as the sound system on the ground floor was on and the prayers dominated the atmosphere. After the prayer session was finished some of

the members joined the tables where we were discussing further recommendations for changes. The members of this community were quite engaged in the table discussions, especially the younger members (all mostly Nigerian). One young man mentioned that he would like it if there was a leisure centre along the road as young people do not have much space for community apart from this mosque and the Black Majority Churches along the road. This was basically the first and only time these churches were mentioned at all during these meetings. Yet, his voice was swiftly brushed over and the discussion was moved on to other issues by his White male counterparts. All the same, I believe that holding the second workshop in one of the communities of the ethnic minorities along the road was an attempt to be more inclusive and raise awareness of the different communities that use facilities on the road and are part of the wider OKR community.

In any case, as mentioned above 'regeneration' is on its way. On the New Kent Road which connects the Elephant and Castle area with the OKR, a derelict terrace has just been turned into townhouses, which are selling well. Further along the Old Kent Road, next to the famous gangster Thomas à Becket pub, Fairclough has had a sales success with Canterbury Court, a scheme of one and two-bedroom apartments overlooking Burgess Park. The question that remains in the long run is what this will mean for the established communities along the road, most importantly for the local neighbourhood churches that provide places of belonging and contribute to community cohesion. Most likely it will have a profound effect.

Southwark demographics

From a staggering 580,000 persons in 1900, Southwark's population fell to around 200,000 in 1980. However, while the borough will probably never be as large again, the last 20 years saw the population creep up steadily, due to natural growth as well as net migration. The population is relatively young, about 80% of the population is under the age of fifty, with a large proportion aged between 20 and 45. More than half of the population live in rented accommodation, which is more than double that in London (26%) and England (18%), with 42% living in council

homes. Southwark has the 8th highest rate of long term unemployment in England and Wales, with unemployment amongst black and minority ethnic groups being five times the London average (Southwark Council, 2011). The borough faces many challenges associated with meeting the complex social needs of an inner-city population. A Southwark council report, 'Southwark violent crime strategy 2010 to 2015', provides a list of challenges: 'The percentage of the working population claiming benefits in Southwark is 15.6 percent compared to 13.9 percent across London. Gross weekly earnings for both men and women in Southwark are lower than the London average. In terms of violent crime, Southwark records a significantly higher number of violence against the person and robbery incidents compared to the London average. Whilst there have been improvements, the attainment rates for Southwark pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2, GCSE and A levels are below the national average. Teenage conception rates for Southwark are still one of the highest in England' (Southwark Council, 2015).

Geographically, Southwark stretches from the banks of the river Thames in the north to the beginning of suburban London south of Dulwich in the south. Within this stretch there are significant contrasts of poverty and wealth which makes the borough socio-economically diverse. Overall, Southwark moved up to being the 12th most deprived London Borough in 2010 from 9th in 2007 and out of 326 local authorities in England it ranked as 41st in 2010 (compared to 26th in 2007), with 2% (4) of Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs)⁷ within the 10% most deprived in England (compared to almost 10% or 16 areas in 2007) on the overall index of multiple deprivation (IMD) and 33% of the LSOAs in Southwark are on the 20% most deprived in England on the IMD (compared with 48% in 2007). Deprivation is not evenly distributed across the borough; it is rather concentrated in the area between the more affluent strip close to the river Thames in the north and Dulwich in the south. The most deprived areas are in East Walworth, South Bermondsey, Nunhead

⁷ Lower Layer Super Output Areas are a geographical measure, intended to be used for the collection and publication of small area statistics. LSOAs have between 1,000 and 3,000 people living in them with an average population of 1,500 people. In most cases, these are smaller than wards, thus allowing the identification of small pockets of deprivation. There are 32,482 LSOAs in England and 165 LSOAs in Southwark.

and north Livesey. What is important to note is that the area with more deprivation (darker shade on the map below) corresponds geographically with the area with the highest concentration of Black Africans and Black Majority Churches with the Old Kent Road running right through the centre as can be seen in the images below (the green strip on both maps denotes the OKR) (Southwark Council, 2010).

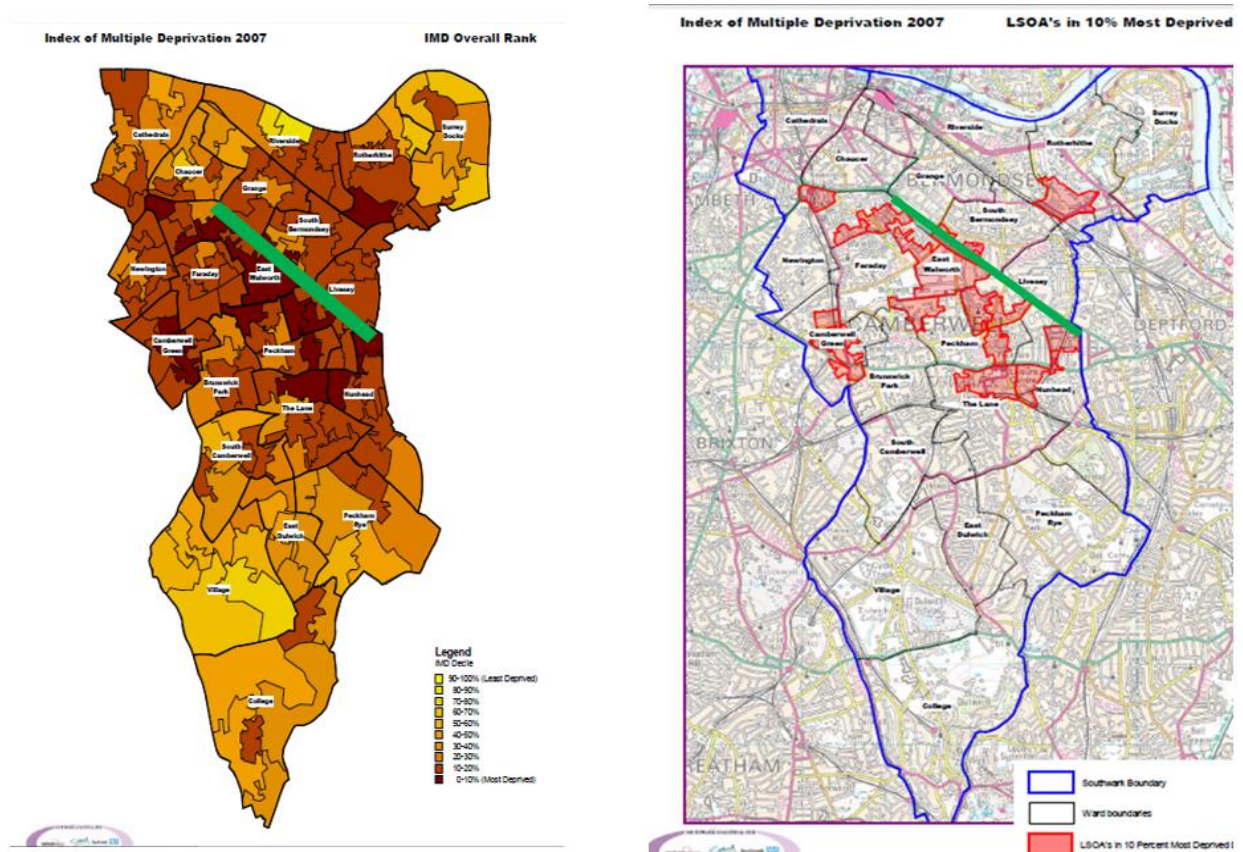


Figure 4.6: Route of the OKR overlaid on maps of Southwark Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Source: Southwark Council (2010).

Southwark’s population is ethnically diverse. In the 2011 census, only 39.7% of Southwark’s population identified as White British (compared to 52.2% in 2001). They are mainly concentrated around Southwark Village, Surrey Docks, Rotherhithe, South Bermondsey and Riverside wards. There is a high proportion of Black Africans (16.4% in 2011 compared to 16.07% in 2001) in the borough. They are mainly concentrated in Peckham, Livesey, Faraday, Chaucer and Camberwell Green wards, which are also among the most deprived areas. According to both the 2001 and 2011 census, Southwark has the highest percentage and number of African residents not only for all London boroughs, but also for any local authority

in Britain. A total of 47,413 African people were counted in the 2011 census in Southwark, predominantly from Nigeria and other parts of West Africa, with about three fifths born in Africa. In the 2011 census, Nigeria is one of the top-ten non UK countries of birth for usual residents in England and Wales, with 58.2% of usual residents born in Nigeria who arrived between 2001 and 2011, 20.2% between 1991 and 2001, 13.1% between 1981 and 1991 and 8.5% before 1981. The proportion of Black Caribbean residents decreased from 8% in 2001 to 6.2% in 2011. They are mainly concentrated in Peckham, Nunhead, the Lane and Camberwell Green. Almost three fifths of them were born in England in 2001 and probably even more in 2011 (Southwark, 2011) The comprehensive BBT report concludes that the different immigration patterns between the two ethnicities are also reflected in church demographics. (Rogers, 2013: 26.).

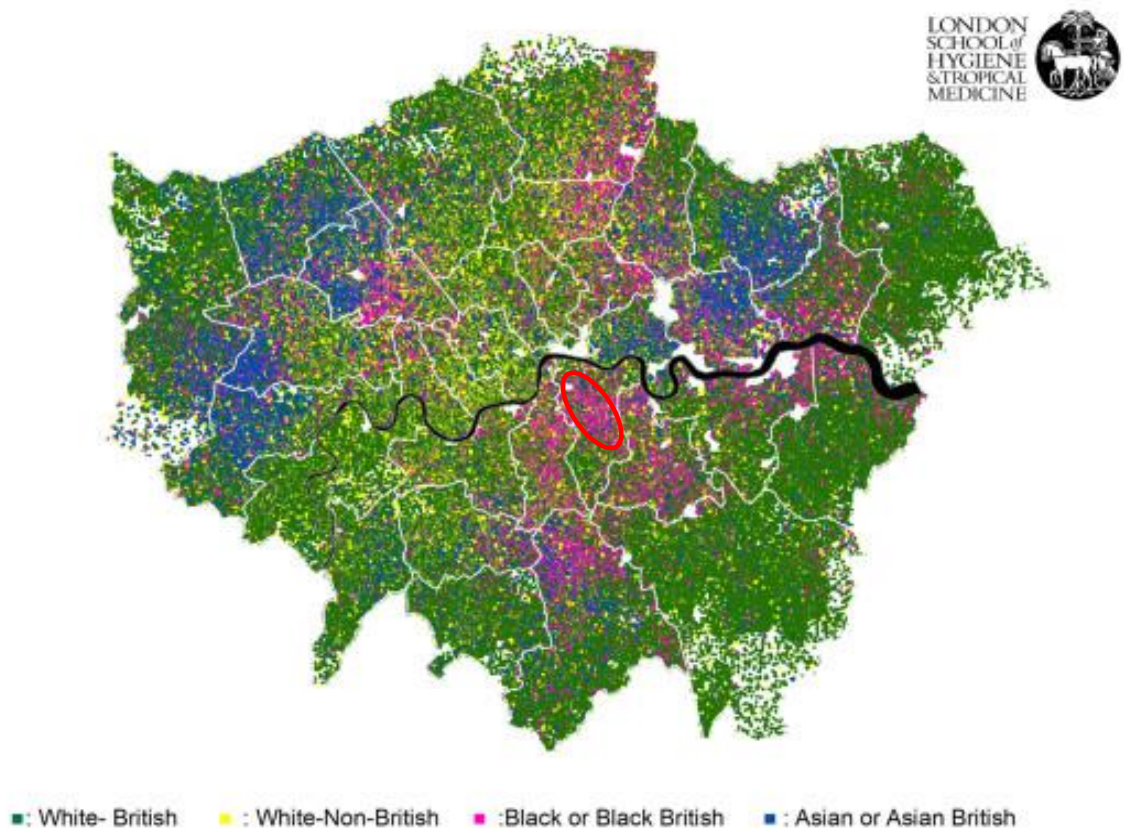


Figure 4.7: A map charting ethnicity in London in 10 person dots, Source: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine [online].

Although Southwark has a high percentage of African and Caribbean immigrants relative to other regions in the UK, a diversification of urban population (Vertovec,

2001) can be witnessed. The OKR is a multi-ethnic street, where on the street level people from different background are engaged in everyday practices. The OKR is at once a global and a local street, 'shaped by the intersection of world-wide migrations and displacement' (Hall, 2012: 31). This multicultural appeal of the OKR is also displayed through the local shops along the road, especially the food retailers and food services serving various communities' needs.

The images below demonstrate the multi-ethnic context that the churches on the OKR are placed amongst, following the notion of visualising a multi-ethnic street proposed by Suzanne Hall (2012) as a mode to display of cultural diversity and amalgamation of social exchange and interactions.



Figure 4.8: Assemblage of people along the OKR

Southwark provides a fascinating case study of relationships between apparently unlike conditions— in particular, between the global and local, and the urban centre and urban margin. Sassen (2001) emphasises the relationship between place, practice and production in the hierarchical organisation of space in the global economy. She identifies 'a new geography of centres and margins' (2001: 4); both the centrality of global cities in the process of economic globalisation, as well as a juxtaposition within the city of prestigious, service oriented spaces of international finance, and marginal spaces occupied by those who have difficulty in accessing this

formal sector. While global cities concentrate these stratifications of urban economies and places, Sassen argues for the need to understand the localisation of these marginal spaces and processes. Here the urban margins and its work environments represent potential spaces of overlap, where a diverse collection of entrepreneurial and social skills intersect, and new urban cultures emerge.

The entrepreneurial pursuits and enterprise is evident in a range of different shop spaces along the OKR, having emerged out of the particularity of its 'marginal' urban setting, in-between central London to the north and the suburbs to the south. This kind of urban space, historically near to, yet perceptually separate from central London, contains both the limits and opportunities of working within the interstices of the city, a place with its own distinct social codes and patterns of spatial organisation.

The collage below depicts remnants of white working-class culture juxtaposed with a variety of cultures brought from across the globalising world, including the transformation of spaces into hybrid or mixed spaces. This represents the visualisation of the overlap of cultures, viewed through the combination of activities and spaces expressed within the arrangement of the small shops and shop fronts. From a use and activity perspective, what was apparent along the OKR was the predominance of independent food shops, both of the retail and restaurant type, from a large variety of national backgrounds, with some of the shops' signage also representing a desire to reach a diverse customer base combining goods and services, culture and ethnicity.







Figure 4.9: Multi-ethnic food retail and food services shop activities along the OKR

To gain an insight in how the area is perceived by the locals, a closer look at the Southwark Council's *'Old Kent Road walkabouts and workshop report'* (Southwark Council, 2013a) proves quite informative. This report, which is used for future planning guidance for the road, focusses on issues and challenges facing the Old Kent Road. The comments of the participants in regard to the overall state, the types of land uses, shops, homes, offices, workshops, etc. which contribute to the appeal and character of the area witness a predominantly negative public perception. It includes complaints about the overall bad state of buildings, the amount of abandoned buildings, poor condition of shop fronts, lack of consistency, lack of redevelopment, impression of poverty and dereliction and an overall run-down feeling. There seems to be a consensus that the road is in a poor state and in need of repair. On a more positive note, results also show that the diversity of businesses, ethnicities and languages on the Old Kent Road is seen as a real strength. Black Majority Churches are mentioned twice, once directly when concerns are raised about the number of churches and problems with parking on

Sundays are discussed and once indirectly when the request is made that signage from upper floors should be removed. A stroll down the road reveals that the only signs put up on upper floors are church signs and banners. The next section will look at BMCs on the OKR in more detail.

Black Majority Churches on the Old Kent Road

In terms of religious affiliation, in the 2011 census, 52.5% of residents identified as Christian, which is above the London average of 48.4%, but below the national average of 59.4% and an overall decline from 62% in 2001. Christian affiliation is highest amongst African residents at 73% and Caribbean residents at 71%. It is suggested that 'religious affiliation in Southwark is less directly significant for understanding BMC demographics, but is nevertheless still suggestive' (Rogers, 2013: 26). Southwark Council (2013b) comments on the religious affiliation of its residents in the following way:

Evidence-based research shows that most residents in the borough engage in some form of spiritual practice and believe that their faith plays an important role in their lives, giving them confidence, self-belief and inspiration. Faith groups are a valued part of the community and provide moral, mental and social support to people in times of need and also bring light and hope to the desperate. They are a key part of the voluntary and community sector and can be important contributors to community cohesion.

According to the BBT report regarding demographics, Southwark is the 'African capital of the UK' (Rogers, 2013: 26) with an estimated 240+ operational Black Majority Churches. The research team of the report identified 252 operational BMCs, but suggests that there actually might be closer to 300 in the borough and furthermore identifies a trend of ongoing growth (*ibid.*: 29) The Old Kent Road and its vicinity were identified as one of the main geographical areas in which a high concentration of these churches can be found. My own findings correspond with the findings of the report and I have identified 26 premises which are currently used by Black Churches, some of them by multiple congregations. There is also one

South American Church, one Nigerian Mosque and one Anglican Church along the road. These have been indicated on the map below.

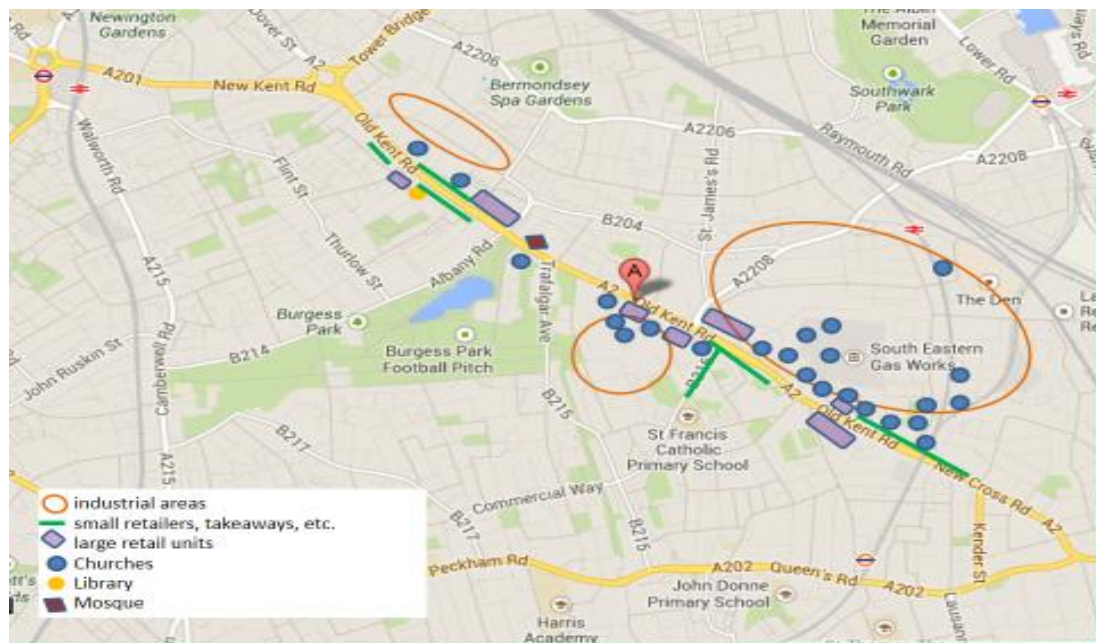


Figure 4.10: Key features of the OKR

These observations fit with arguments in the current scholarship (Martin, 2002) that such kinds of churches flourish in economically deprived areas, where there is a high degree of inequality - mainly in the global South and also among migrants in the global North. Some of these places of worship are relatively visible through their colourful signage and advertisement banners. Others can only be found by following people dressed in their Sunday best or traditional clothing on a Sunday morning or by listening out for the noise of people singing, worshipping and praying. Many of the churches hold regular mid-week evening services or Bible studies and Friday night prayer vigils, but it is also not unusual to find people gathered for prayer at different times of day and different days of the week; on various occasions I encountered groups of people gathered in fervent prayer, for example on a Wednesday in the early afternoon – not particularly something one would expect at such time of day when walking around abandoned looking former industrial sites in between derelict warehouses and vacated houses.

Findings of the BBT report reveal that an estimated 20,000+ congregants attend BMCs in the borough across a whole Sunday, a mix of local, borough, London and

home counties congregants. Thus, the OKR vicinity represent the greatest concentration of African Christianity in the world, outside Africa (*ibid.*: 31, 39).

It is obvious that in the past 50 years this area has experienced a period of decline, both in terms of economic vitality and quality of townscape - at present the Old Kent Road and surrounding area is certainly not one of the most salubrious parts of London. This decline has worked to create a space for a multitude of BMCs. For example, with the industrial works moving out, some parts of the area were left with large tracts of bleak space, the remains of gasworks and other heavy industry, and a pall of underdevelopment. These remains, in particular the area around the former South Eastern Gas Works, are now a hotspot for Black Majority Churches:



Figure 4.11: The South Eastern Gas Works then and now

In 2013, Southwark Council publicised a ‘*Guide for Faith Premises*’ acknowledging that ‘in recent years there has been a rapid growth in the number of faith groups wanting to establish premises in Southwark’ and stating its intention to ‘enable faith groups, with their innate sense of stewardship, to fulfil their obligations as responsible citizens while exercising their right to religious freedom’ (Southwark Council, 2013b). The guide is concerned with the various requirements and regulations in regard to acquiring and operating faith premises, and deals in detail

with issues often discussed in relation to BMCs, such as property misuse, parking and congestion, noise, waste and litter and signs and advertisements on the highway, among others.

Edmund Bird notes in his heritage appraisal of the area that ‘the architectural heritage of the Old Kent Road appears to be particularly poorly protected and its important history seems currently under-valued ... [with] numerous historic buildings that have been overlooked in heritage surveys which are likely to have received protection in other parts of London’ (2009: 65) and which he recommends be considered for listing and protection. Among them are some occupied by Black Churches, for example the art deco building in No. 275 Old Kent Road, currently used by Mount Zion, a branch of the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the former North Peckham Civic Centre in No. 600-608 Old Kent Road which is now used by The Everlasting Arm Ministries (see images below).



Figure 4.12: Historic buildings on the OKR now used by two BMCs

As such, it seems as if this lack of investment into the area and the overlooking of historical heritage might have benefitted the BMCs in their search for suitable places of worship. The BBT report comes to the conclusion that these churches come to Southwark because ‘that is where available and affordable premises are located (relative to other parts of Greater London)’ and suggests further that ‘other likely factors are the religious marketplace cluster effect, the largest population of Africans in the UK, and possibly the borough’s centrality’ (Rogers, 2013: 36).

I have also asked members of the churches along the road why they think that there is such a cluster of churches. Answers were of a varying nature. One member indicated that the centrality of the road with good public transport and lighting was an important aspect in terms of location of the church premises, another indicated that the parking opportunities were an advantage and that on a major road the noise produced through the worship would neither bother anyone on the street-level, nor residents. Other members gave a more religious response fitting with their belief system in terms of expansionism and the transformation of urban space which is especially one of the Redeemed Christian Church of God's (RCCG) vision (one of the major denominations among BMCs with several churches on the OKR, in one of which I conducted my fieldwork). Their mission and vision statement introduces their aim to 'plant churches within five minutes walking distance in every city and town of developing countries and within five minutes driving distance in every city and town of developed countries' (RCCG, 2014). In addition to this, Garbin's (2013) article on '*The Visibility and Invisibility of Migrant Faith in the City: Diaspora Religion and the Politics of Emplacement of Afro-Christian Churches*' provides some salient explanations on the rationale behind BMCs locating themselves within non-traditional places of worship, such as warehouses. Most notably, such spaces provide more potential for 'the possibility of staging and broadcasting the charismatic performance and the intensity of collective prayers' and might thus function as 'machines for praying in' with their auditorium and large stage' (Garbin, *ibid.*: 682). Moreover, they also offer the potential for non-religious purposes such as 'education and training, which help create the encompassing environment necessary for the divine 'covenant' of socio moral improvement and prosperity' (*ibid.*). Interestingly, some scholars also report on a widespread belief amongst African Pentecostals 'that old churches may be 'contaminated' by the historical accumulation of spirits or 'were built in line with occult knowledge and hence would require 'intense spatial deliverance work' (Krause cited in Garbin, 2013: 683).

I will now provide an analysis of the outward expression of the prosperity churches on the OKR regarding the buildings they use and the signage on these buildings.

This analysis draws on semiotics, which has to do with ‘how signs are produced, interpreted and connected to things and each other’ (Oswell, 2006: 13). The interpretation of signs is specific to a cultural context and multi-layered. What’s important to ask is, *who* is the signifier and *what* does the signifier signify and to *whom*, since ‘it is social actors who use conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others’ (Hall, 1997: 25).

The BMCs often use non-purpose-built buildings, occupying a variety of spaces ranging from shop-fronts, office spaces, industrial units and warehouses, old council and other vacated properties, but also traditional church buildings as can be seen in the assemblage of images below:



Figure 4.13: Outer facades of the BMCs on the OKR

What is immediately striking is the contrast to ‘traditional’ churches, such as those used by the Anglican, Catholic, Baptist and Methodist churches, which are purpose

built and thus easily recognisable to English people as a church and which usually have a large cross – a noticeably lacking symbol on the BMCs. This contributes to the invisibility of these churches. Although there is a large concentration of these churches, they are not very visible. A transformation of space has occurred (e.g. from industrial space into church space), but this is not visible from the outside except through the signage, which would not immediately be identifiable as ‘church sings’ to the native British population, with the epic names on them. The names of the churches, however, would be immediately recognisable to West Africans, who would in general be familiar with these large and well-known Pentecostal denominations. The map below provides a list of church names, including such networks as RCGG and Christ Embassy which are well-known in Nigeria.



Figure 4.14: Map of churches on the OKR including church names

These names are specific to Pentecostalism, which has had success especially in the global South and among migrant communities from the global South now living in the global North (Martin, 2002; Corton and Mashall-Fratani, 2001). In particular, most of these names have their origin in West Africa, with the majority coming from Nigeria. The rise of BMCs in Britain is discussed in detail in Osgood (2012), where he

identifies several phases and waves of church growth, and various models that have been put forward regarding the reasons behind the planting of these churches. His analysis demonstrates how the prosperity movement has made its way to Britain primarily through immigrants and missionaries from West Africa. He describes how churches were established by professional African residents who as leaders within their diaspora communities felt constrained to provide culturally familiar fellowship for those looking for support from their fellow nationals, and how in a later stage, many were sent to England to plant churches, breaking new ground and providing a home away from home. This arose out of the revival in Christianity in Nigeria in the 1970s and explains why there are so many Nigerian churches and networks on the OKR. Since the 1980s, students in Nigeria were looking for something that was more in tune with their hopes for self-improvement. In the prosperity gospel, which was gaining popularity amongst America's televangelists, they found an understanding of prosperity that fitted well with their upwardly mobile aspirations. This resulted in a change of West African Christianity with many independent churches being established and also had implications for Britain, with many more people planting independent African diaspora churches in the UK.

As well as directly planting churches in London that belong to the networks of churches that exist in Nigeria, Ghana and other West African countries, the general appearance of the signage used is also very similar. This strong parallel between the signage used by these churches in Nigeria and the signage in operation on the OKR became apparent to me during my research when my interest was sparked by a poster at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) for a photographic exhibition entitled '*The Spiritual Highway: Religious World Making in Megacity Lagos*' (Akinleye and Janson, 2014)⁸. As I visited the exhibition, I learnt that it was part of a project exploring and recording the centres of religion that have become known as 'prayer cities'. In particular, one image from the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway caught my attention:

⁸ This exhibition is a result of the work along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway during the summer of 2013 by Akintunde Akinleye, a Nigerian photographer, and Dr Marloes Janson, a lecturer at SOAS.



Figure 4.15: Church signs on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, Nigeria. Source Akinleye & Janson (2014)

The 120-kilometre long Lagos-Ibadan Expressway connects Nigeria’s economic hub Lagos with the city of Ibadan (the third largest metropolitan area in the country) and is considered to be the most important and busiest road in Nigeria. It was opened to traffic in 1979 at the peak of the oil boom, a period often described as ‘paradise on wheels’ (Akinleye and Janson, 2014), but saw deterioration setting in from the 1990s – its history thus bears some similarity to the OKR, as described above. While it has failed as the artery linking the north and the south of Nigeria, the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway has succeeded as a stage for the performance of public religiosity to the extent that it can be described as a ‘Spiritual Highway’ (*ibid.*). It owes this name to the fact that since the late 1980s numerous Christian and Muslim movements have cropped up along the highway. The prayer cities along the expressway are huge in scale, with congregations of tens of thousands, competing with each other for new converts by offering a range of facilities and services ranging from faith healing, to education and health care. The photo above of the signage used by these churches struck me as being very similar to the ones I was analysing on the OKR. This clearly shows that these signs are culturally specific and intended for a certain group of people, African migrants, who would be familiar with such signage from their home country and would immediately recognise it, although it might be unfamiliar to local British people living around the OKR.

These findings resonate with Simon Coleman's and Katrin Maier's (2013) comparison in their article on '*Redeeming the city: creating and traversing 'London-Lagos'*' where they make a similar connection. They conclude that, if anywhere in the UK, the OKR, a major transport route leading from south east to central London, resembles a Lagos like city space and 'if Redemption City, situated along the Lagos-Ibadan expressway, is adjacent to and yet a material and moral commentary on Lagos, the Old Kent Road and A41 are peripheral to London's centre but also situated on routes that lead to its urban heart' (*ibid.*: 359).

This kind of signage, the fact that churches unexpectedly crop up between other buildings, and the triumphant names that are used can also be observed in the United States, the home of traditional prosperity theology. Kate Bowler (2013) in her book '*Blessed*' describes how these churches and names can be found on 'an inauspicious storefront sandwiched between a nail salon and a payday loan office in a Durham, North Carolina, mini-mall.' (Bowler, 2013: 3). She further describes how this movement, which goes by different names, dominates much of the American religious scene and even some of the largest churches around the globe.

However, investigating these signs further, I also found that they carry new messages that are very much tailored to a specific niche within the UK religious marketplace and to the context of these migrants in the host society. Many of the signs proclaim a message of hope for a better life and opportunities, a breakthrough for this and the next generation as well as relief from current circumstances, and a place where everybody is somebody and respected, rather than tolerated - thus promoting a place of transformation for a successful life, as well as a place of belonging to a community of hope (these points will be further elaborated on in the chapter 'resistance from the margins'). All this stands in stark contrast to the hostile and external circumstances of the segment of the population they are seeking to attract, as well as to the wider local external environment. This is particularly true given the fact that Britain has a low degree of social mobility, which is a strong indicator of the imbalance of power and status within society and the difficulties that many migrants face in their struggle to change their

circumstances. I will now provide a contextual analysis of some of the signs I encountered during my ethnographic fieldwork on the OKR:

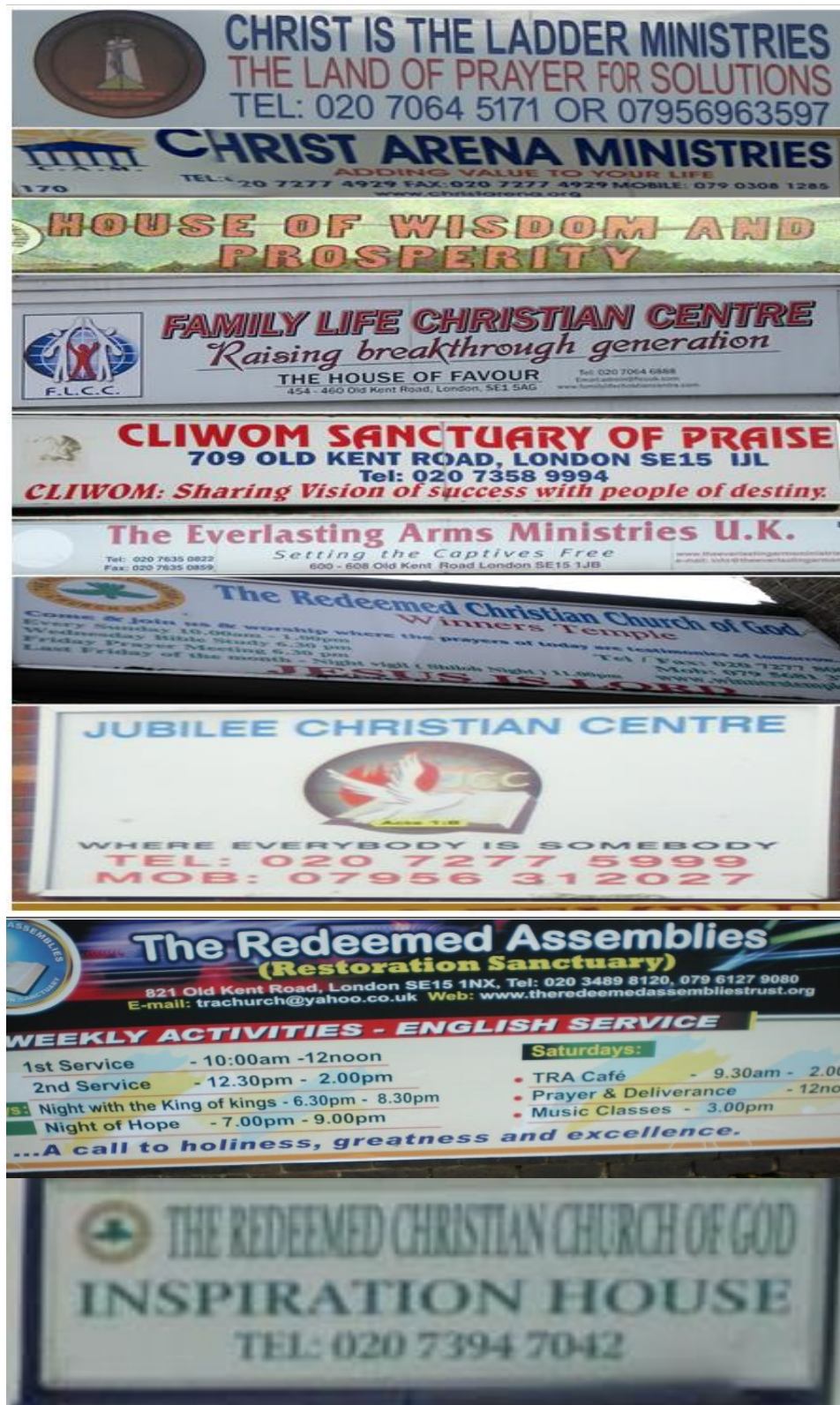




Figure 4.16: Signs on the outside of church buildings on the OKR

Christ the Ladder, The Land of Prayer for Solutions: Jesus said about himself: ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man’ (John 1: 51, NRSV). He was referring to the dream of Jacob (the father of the 12 tribes of Israel) in Genesis 28 which let him see a ladder set up between heaven and earth and the angels ascending and descending upon it and the Lord standing above it promising him the land and declaring to him that he will be with him. Through this dream, Jacob realized that God was with him. Therefore, Jesus referring to himself as the ladder has to do with God being with people. This image is used in prosperity churches for their own interpretation of the Bible to indicate that just as Jacob was a foreigner alone in the wilderness to whom God revealed that he was with him and promised this land he was lying on, in the same way through divine intervention the position of adherents of this movement will be transformed within the host society, offering a divine solution to stagnation.

House of wisdom and prosperity: Indicates the prosperity message being preached.

Raising breakthrough generation: Reveals the suffering and the experience of inequality and social injustice faced by these immigrants in the host country and promises a way out, a ‘breakthrough’, through education in prosperity teachings.

Sharing vision of success with people of destiny: The prosperity message is displayed as a vision of success in a situation of despair and the theodicy and soteriology of

the prosperity teaching is touched upon as God's divine plan for humankind to prosper.

Inspiration House: This represents a place where people can find a new outlook in life, with a new way of seeing themselves and the world around them, enabling them to transform their circumstances.

Restoration sanctuary / Jesus sanctuary / Where everybody is somebody / Where you are celebrated not tolerated: In an environment of economic competition and hostility with the experience of alienation and exclusion, these churches promise a form of identity that gives people dignity and self-respect and acceptance and where people can experience peace and restoration.

Adding value to your life: This church sign stood out to me as this reflects the value struggle of the believers of this movement concisely, these practices will be analysed in subsequent chapters focussing on my participants' value struggles.

Setting the captives free: The promise of power to set people free is given to people who live in an economically oppressed environment, through divine intervention.

Winner's Temple: In one of the services I attended, the congregation sang this song: 'Jesus is a winner man.... Satan is a loser man.... I am on the winner's side.... I'm a winner man all the time', which conveys a promise that people can be on the winner's side through the power of faith in the victory which Jesus brought about on the cross. By professing this over one's life one can erase all negativity and influence of Satan. The churches on the OKR are places where winners congregate.

Divine surgery for the world: This ad expresses the radical transformational approach that can be witnessed within these churches, which I will discuss in more detail in the chapters focussing on members struggle for values and value.

All of these signs offer empowerment in a situation of disempowerment through participation in these community services. This kind of message added to the names or included in the names reveals the capacity of this moment to adapt their

message to their local context, the Bible being used as a manual for a successful life and how to overcome barriers which is not surprising given the fact that they primarily seek to attract a West African migrant population.

Although immigrants often came to the UK for better life chances, they have frequently experienced marginalisation, alienation, discrimination and prejudice. The results of this can be seen, for example, in the high unemployment rates, high rates of benefit receipt and low educational attainment seen in Southwark, as noted above. Struggling to move economically upstream and seeking to come out of poverty in an experience of social injustice and inequality as well as racial discrimination due to the remaining colonial perceptions of them by the indigenous population and an immobile society, has led many to despair. In this context, the ebullient gospel preached in the prosperity theology movement infuses BMC congregants with new hope, through its theology that counters poverty, disease and despair and its promises for overcoming barriers and to re-position them and the second generation in British society in structural terms. The signs on the buildings and especially the slogans on these signs express this message very clearly. This message of prosperity was also promoted by the church I conducted my fieldwork in and will be explicated in detail in the subsequent chapters in regard to its content as well as style and effect it aims to have.

In what follows we will have a look at what goes on behind the facades and signs visible from the outside by delving deeper inside the churches.

Delving deeper inside the churches

This section aims to further elucidate what is going on in these churches, in terms of church structure, different church services, doctrine, practices, manner of worship with shared emphasis on ecstatic experiences, tithing and offering practices, etc. utilising ethnographic data from my fieldwork in the 'Overcomers' Church'. I will give a more descriptive account of what I encountered during my

immersion into this community before analysing their culture through the value/s framework in later chapters.

After I had identified the BMCs along the OKR which belong to the prosperity movement, I started to attend church services in various churches along the road so that I could gain access to the culture of this community. Upon every church visit, I found a vibrant community (see image below as an example) inside the non-purpose built premises that had been transformed to meet the needs of these communities.



Figure 4.17: Worshippers in a BMC

My first impression was that all the members were very happy and sincere in their actions, engaged in the activities and especially very welcoming towards guests (like me). The first time I attended a service at the 'Overcomers' Church' (where I could eventually negotiate access for my fieldwork as a participant observer), everyone was very friendly and welcoming. As I left, I was even given a welcome present (see image below) - a bag with a soft drink and cookies, a card with information about the different church services (which cannot be depicted as it is not possible to be anonymized) and a CD with a sermon from the senior pastor of the congregation on how to 'keep your hope alive'.



Figure 4.18: Photo of welcome present bag including contents

After I had negotiated access, the pastor announced my presence to the whole congregation and explained that I would come to services and do some research as well. I also visited the website of the church to get an idea of what kind of vision and culture it promotes which I will briefly outline now.

On the website of the 'Overcomers' Church' slogans pop up and then quickly fade only to reveal another one with messages like: 'We love our life', 'success', 'pride', 'progress', 'achievement', 'beauty', 'entertainment', 'self-satisfaction', 'anxiety', 'something is not right, 'missing', 'broken', 'Jesus brings comfort in despair', 'hope in times of crisis', 'joy peace, love'. Scrolling further down, three rubrics emerge: 'Our Mission', 'Our Beliefs', 'Our Vision' each containing a short message. In the 'Our Mission' column, besides 'evangelising nations' and 'building diverse communities with Jesus who is the same yesterday, today and forever', a third goal appears: 'Equip the diverse congregation for success in the society as well as prepare them for eternity as we worship Him in Spirit and in truth.' This indicates the amalgamation of the spiritual with the neoliberal business culture. It can be argued that this style of community building and empowerment is part of a neoliberal paradigm rather than having pure altruistic motivations. In the 'Our Vision' section the message is centred around the theme of family and flourishing in society promoting the church as a family that seeks to build strong and enduring relationships and let both, young and old, flourish within society, 'as well as make it to heaven'.

Although from the outside the premises of these churches look very unattractive - located along a rather bleak looking and derelict thoroughfare road - gazing deeper beyond the surface reveals what is going on inside. All of these churches have performed a transformation of space, e.g. transforming a warehouse or a former office space or shop-front into a church-like setting. Depending on the capacity of the transformed premises the sizes of the congregation differ from 150 to 300. The 'Overcomers' Church' where I conducted my fieldwork has about 150 members.

One thing that became apparent to me was, that regarding the buildings' interior, the megachurches I have observed online display the same kind of set-up that can be witnessed in the churches I have visited along the OKR. They also use modern, expensive and high-tech equipment for sound, lighting and visual equipment and always have a huge stage. As they are reaching out to and seeking to accommodate all age groups - seniors, middle aged people, and young professional families with children - colourful carpets, matching chairs and painted walls in the same colour scheme are used to create a more religious but at the same time warm atmosphere giving it a more home-like feel. In the 'Overcomers' Church', for example, upon entering the premises there is a chandelier hanging from the ceiling in the foyer which creates a distinct atmosphere which I dubbed "elegant dereliction". Members of the greeters' department, dressed in matching outfits, stand at the door welcoming members and newcomers as they arrive and assist them with their coats. After that, members of the ushers' team, also in matching outfits, take over and accompany congregants and visitors to their seats.

All the churches I visited had the same general set-up. In the 'Overcomers' Church' in the front there is a stage; an altar; a modern-looking pulpit for the preacher; a band on one or both sides of the stage with various instruments; a lead singer and several back up singers. This is followed by rows of chairs in the middle, and the technical equipment at the back where at least five people take care of the equipment and are responsible for the smooth running of things in terms of sound, lighting, etc. In the front behind the preacher there is a fixed wall with the image of a globe and different messages, e.g. 'His glory shall cover the earth' or 'Experiencing the power of the Holy Ghost'. In order to increase visibility, there are various

screens installed throughout the room so that congregants can better follow what is going on displaying the Bible verses that are preached about, the preacher in front, as well as various other messages and announcements. Aside from their practical purpose, these screens are also a display of modern technology. The members also use their own Bibles and notebooks to look up the Bible verses themselves and to make notes.

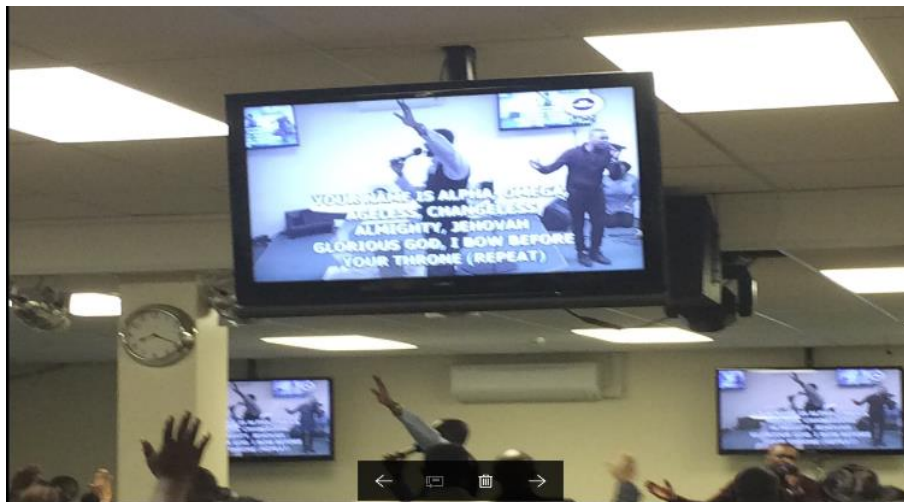


Figure 4.19: The use of technology in the 'Overcomers' Church'

In the front there is also a worship team that leads the congregation through the worship with a lead singer, several other singers and some musicians playing various instruments (keyboard, guitar, saxophone, drums, percussion etc.). The whole congregation gets invigorated through the worship session which leads then over to the main event usually by the preacher taking over as the lead singer during the worship whilst the other singers slowly disappear into the background. Eventually, the sermon begins with prayer and is followed by the message for the day depending on the style of service. The sermon often involves the congregations' participation heavily in an interactive way. As the sermon comes to an end, the members are encouraged to pray according to a few prayer points for some minutes. This is then followed by a song and an announcement regarding offering encouraging the church members to 'give richly rather than sowing the seed sparingly'. To aid with this, envelopes are provided at the back of each seat. Either people put money in the envelopes or they write their card details on the front of

the envelope. Members are encouraged to either come to the front and lay their offering on the altar or to stand up from their seat once they are ready. Then the ushers come with buckets and collect the offering. On Sundays there is always an additional call 'for those whose turn it is' to bring their tithe to come to the front and offer it by the altar, with different members responding to this call every week. After the offering has been made the pastor prays over it. Then the service comes to an end with announcements and with more worship as the congregation slowly disperses.

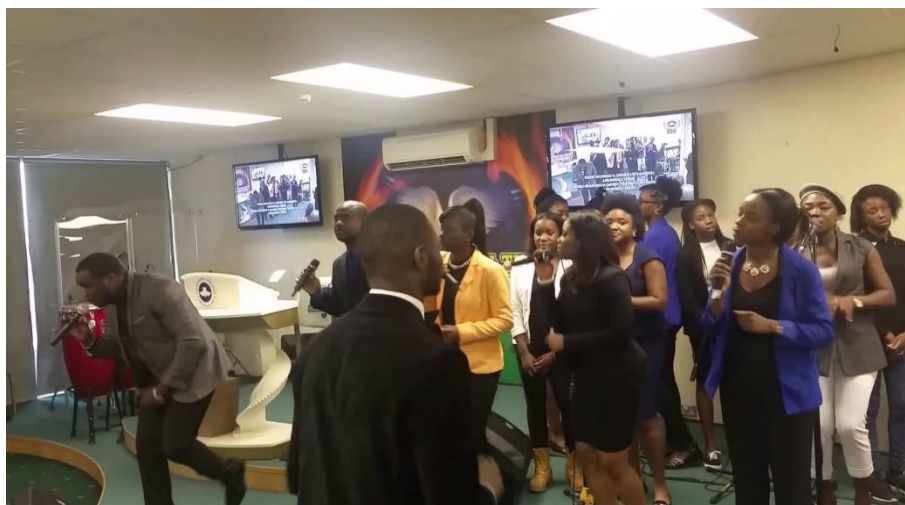


Figure 4.20: A typical worship session

The whole service takes about two to three hours and is followed by some socialising for which some snacks are provided at the back. The members engage joyfully in conversations with huge smiles on their faces. The general impression is that everybody seems to be positively charged, which was also reflected both in informal conversations with members as well as during the more in-depth interviews with some of them which I will elaborate more on in chapter nine where I discuss their altruistic actions and the transformation of negative into positive affects. At the end, everybody is leaving looking joyful and uplifted, appearing to have been empowered, encouraged and rejuvenated.

Going to church on Sundays feels a bit like going to a pop-event; where the pastor seems to be the superstar of the day and the services are characterised by emotionalism. A common feature of the services is the lengthy worship, especially

at the beginning of the service where it lasts for approximately one hour. The worship session, often opened with prayer, is led by the worship team. The services appear spontaneous, experimental and exuberant, they have an eventful quality, with people waiting to see 'what the Spirit will do'. The composition of the worship team varies and depends upon the gifting and available resources within a local congregation. The lead singer often makes statements during the worship to encourage the audience to participate and to be involved, e.g. 'Let somebody shout hallelujah!' or 'Let somebody in the house give him praise!', 'Lift him high!' and so on. The form of worship is modern, with disco-lights and amplifiers – an expressive, dynamic, stimulating, emotive and uplifting form of worship. The congregation is encouraged to dance, clap and express their feelings freely during this kind of action with most of the attendees deeply involved in these activities.



Figure 4.21: Image of worship: exuberant, celebratory with dancing, and clapping

It is also common to observe people falling down, kneeling, lying on the floor, laughing, dancing and speaking in tongues. It is an individualistic kind of worship, with an outpouring of emotions in a desire to draw near to God whilst singing songs that are about praising God as the provider, and the reliable, faithful and mighty king and deliverer.

Within these churches, and to this end also in the 'Overcomers' Church', a strong affirmation of the Bible can be witnessed as the epicentre of this form of Christianity, deeply influenced by African cosmology and neoliberal

entrepreneurialism and consumerism. The type of hermeneutics of these churches is experimental, contextual and pneuma-centric. The pneuma-centrism or pneumatic epistemology is understood by Pentecostals as the Holy Spirit elucidating the scriptures in the reading of the Bible, with the Holy Spirit influencing while reading the scriptures with the Holy Spirit telling the speaker what to say. The scripture approached by members of the prosperity movement on the OKR is intricately linked to previous experiences which include various pre-understandings and presuppositions in the interpretation of the scripture, with the trajectory in finding similar resonance in their personal lives to some biblical narratives or characters, especially the Old Testament. Thus, personal experiences add a distinctive dimension to how members interpret the Bible. Furthermore, this approach to biblical exegesis involves taking quotes and choosing a Bible version to express their own message, and is paramount to appropriating the Bible for their own purposes. In response to this message, an important part of each service is tithing, which is described in more detail further below.

In addition, these churches have successfully appropriated new media technologies such as web streams, internet websites, TV, and interactive technologies in the transmission of their religious ideologies, as a recruitment strategy for new clientele, but also as a way of maintaining links and contacts to members and branches transnationally, helping to compress time and space thus enabling members and viewers to watch and participate in the programme, though virtually. These programmes were frequently promoted during services or during conversations.

The pastors in BMCs are charismatic leaders, either male or female or even a couple (which is also common among American mega-church televangelists), usually middle-aged, from West Africa (appealing to the migrant community and their dispositions). They display strong authority over the congregation. In the 'Overcomers' Church' the role of the senior pastor (the only salaried position in the church) is held by a woman in her mid-50s with her son who is in his early 30s functioning as junior pastor albeit on a voluntary basis. As a matter of fact, the church was planted by the acting senior pastor (who is referred to as the 'mummy'

of the church) some 20 years ago and has been going strong ever since as I have learnt through many informal conversations with various members, at times as we were leaving the church together or catching the same bus.

The congregation in the BMCs participate actively in the sermons by standing up, lifting up their hands, exclaiming 'amen' or reaffirming words such as 'yes, pastor'. They are also encouraged by the pastors to interact with them, as they speak in a motivational and interactive style. Sometimes they demand a 'clap-offering', a 'dance-offering', a 'shout of hallelujah', a 'giving him a praise in the house', or to speak in tongues. Altogether the atmosphere during services is very rich and dynamic, also very colourful which comes partly about through the clothing of the congregation. The departments have a dress code with colours that change each week, and other members of the congregation come in their finery, including traditional African attire.

In the 'Overcomers' Church', almost all adults had been exposed to Pentecostal religious practices in one or several different Pentecostal churches in Nigeria or other countries, such as Sierra Leone, Uganda and a few others before they came to the UK according to what they shared with me in conversations and in the interviews during my fieldwork.

In relation to the ethnic composition of the church, around 90% of the approximately 150 members are Nigerian Yoruba, with the remaining 10% coming from other tribes in Nigeria and other West African countries. A few others are from Uganda or the Caribbean. I collected this information through conversations and some talks with the junior pastor. I was the only White regular attendee. There were occasions when another white person or Asian visitor dropped in. The members of the congregation do not all live locally, but come from a wide-reaching area. Some commute from other parts of London, others had moved outside London and sometimes spoke to me about how long it took them to come to church.

The majority of the members are approximately between 25 and 50 years old. Through informal conversations where topics such as school choices for their children, better areas where to live, or work-related topics came up, I got the

impression that the majority are married couples with young children who are aspiring middle class. This will be discussed more in chapter eight in terms of church members' struggle for social and cultural capital and their investment in children. There were also a number of young professionals.

The longstanding members, or the leadership team, are people who have had a (relatively) successful integration into the host society in terms of their occupation, ranging from a manager in a property company, teachers, a manager of a construction site, young professionals working in a graduate job at a well-respected firm in the City. Others are self-employed for example as a successful barbershop owner, social workers and nurses in the NHS, or working in administrative jobs, e.g. at a university, etc. As far as I am aware, most of them hold a higher education degree. Some young graduates however were unemployed, for example in my interview with one of the members, Chike, I found out that he had been unsuccessful for a while in securing a job in IT and was devoting his skill and time to set up a new cutting-edge church website. Of course, other church members are working in more unskilled and semi-skilled professions, such as cleaning, security etc. These findings derive mainly from my observations during the fieldwork in the church overhearing conversations as well as conversations I had directly with the members, and additionally through conducting interviews with some of the members or through information shared during the interactive church services.

A central component of the church practices is that members tell their 'success story', for example of how they started as cleaners and carers working their way up, slowly integrating and entering into mainstream higher wage and semi-high skilled professions. In this way, new members are taught how to overcome obstacles, how to endure, as well as about various adaptation processes in order to motivate them on various levels and provide information for a successful integration and how to overcome stagnation. At the same time this element takes the function of providing strong emotional support and providing a place of belonging where members feel welcome, valued and at home which will be discussed in detail in chapters seven to nine.

The support that is provided by the leadership team who, as established members have learned what Bourdieu (2000) describes as 'how to play the game' (see theoretical framework in chapter two), is not only in regard to occupational status, but also about housing, education, finding the right place to live, etc. Finding a good kindergarten, school or university was always high on the agenda and thematised often with young families who had just married and had children wanting to make sure they let their children go to the 'right places' (kindergarten, schools). Also, other integration matters played a substantial role, such as immigration status, legal matters, permanent residency and British citizenship. Most of the longstanding members had a 'success story' to share about their own integration experience as well as their children having secured a good university degree or good employment. Others were hoping to get employment, hoping to find a partner and build a family with children, etc. The older generation played a role in the sense as they wanted 'to make sure' that their children and grandchildren would be able to live a successful life and found a place to belong to and people to commune with. To sum up, all generations were cared for through different groups, such as Sunday school for children, youth groups, young men, young women, older men, older women, etc. In this way they all were given a place in the community, they all had their extra-curricular activity/ies and programme/s and they all contributed to the services and/or were celebrated within them.

One of the main features that stood out to me was that these churches successfully demand heavy participation from members, who attend church services, meetings and Bible studies. Such high involvement keeps local churches active and stable. They are run by local people, and do not follow a stiff institutional framework. They are rather characterised by an emphasis on spiritual inspiration and people's talents, as well as voluntarism. They draw from a large pool of potential local talent, with most converts given an opportunity to serve in some capacity, with numerous lay preachers, deacons, and leaders of various men's, women's and youth groups. By letting many members occupy formal roles, these churches mobilise large numbers of local people in their institution-building efforts. Both women and men can receive gifts of the Holy Spirit and can take up positions in the church. Although

the moral is conservative Christian ethics with patriarchal roots, yet within this space, they experiment with voluntarist and egalitarian social relations and develop new skills in leadership, public speaking, organisation and self-help.

Members of the congregation at the 'Overcomers' Church' were actively encouraged to participate in various departments, such as the greeters' department, ushers' department, sanitary department, worship team, technical equipment team, financial support department, family support department as well as several single interest groups to support different categories of people, i.e. youth, women, men, lone parents, childless couples, seniors, and business people. Within the departments, different roles are allocated, with president being the highest. Usually, more senior church members were head of the departments. The worship team, for example, was constituted of young professionals and the youth. The IT team was made up of young professionals. The greeters' department of which I became a member of was mixed and mainly dominated by middle-aged female members as well as young professionals. In certain instances, only the youth were responsible.

All church related work is performed on a voluntary basis with the exception of the senior pastor. The aspect of voluntarism as prosocial behaviour will be discussed in chapter nine which has adherents' non-accumulative altruistic actions as focus.

The BMCs have a yearly, monthly and weekly schedule. 2014, for example, was the 'year of overflow'. The themes adopted always had some attribute of helping people to overcome barriers, for example the month of financial prosperity, a fasting period of deliverance and so on. Every week, the Sunday service has a different theme. The first Sunday of the month is a 'Thanksgiving Sunday', the last Sunday of the month is all about giving testimony of what God has done. In addition, there are also special services where for examples mothers or fathers are honoured. There is also a 'dress-down Sunday', where the men do not wear suits. These themes accompany and fit well with the migration process – carrying the attendees through the weeks, months and years.

The services provided also served different members of the congregation. Sunday services which start at 11am usually focused on the message of prosperity and tried to be particularly appealing to newer members. In addition, the youth was incorporated through drama and once a month there was a youth service focussing predominantly on this age group. At times, guest speakers were invited to talk about various issues, such as addiction and other health related issues. Also, many different members of the congregation were celebrated on Sundays with presents: mothers, fathers, pastors, people who had birthdays etc. Prior to the Sunday service there is already a Sunday school meeting which those members who want to attend. The Sunday school starts at 10 am and lasts for approximately an hour (see chapter three). The focus is on the teaching of biblical principles. A specific Sunday school manual is followed of which each member has their own copy.

As well as the regular Sunday services, which are focused on intoxication and prosperity, there is also a mid-week service on Wednesday evenings, which appeared to be attended more by the longstanding members of the congregation with their families as well as established young professionals. Generally, there are fewer people (around 50) in attendance. The topics were much more focused on social relations, and giving more practical advice. During my fieldwork, one of the series of themes was on 'parenting with Jesus', discussing seven critical stages a child goes through, making people aware of the dangers at each stage and providing advice as how to best avoid them. The style was educational and at the end a prayer was made asking Jesus to repair any damage that may have been made. However, the worship is again a central element in these mid-week Bible studies, sometimes being the only element of the meeting guided by the Holy Spirit, which after a stressful day brought relief and renewal. Before and after the meetings people mingled and shared some snacks, such as tea, fruit, home-made Nigerian chicken, sandwiches, and socialised for a while.

The Friday night vigils which are held fourth nightly on Friday nights are characterized by their focus on prayer, especially for healing, deliverance, fertility and finances. Sometimes three-day night vigils from Wednesday to Friday were scheduled which were very much about liberation from all kinds of things. The night

vigils are very powerful and transforming in nature with some congregation members falling to the floor, hands being laid on members' heads and women's bellies by the senior and junior pastors with aid from other people in case the person falls down and starts convulsing, as does happen on occasion and which I have witnessed. This is all accompanied by a lot of joyful dancing and clapping after the liberation. These issues will be picked up again later and discussed in more detail in the theme '*indefatigability and tenacity*'

Extra-curricular activities such as recreation on some Saturdays provided a chance to socialise in our leisure time and to get to know one another better. This was however gendered. I was in the young men's team. Among the activities we did together was bowling, go-carting and a trip to Stonehenge. This gave me a good opportunity to get to know some of the members better outside the regular church activities and to get integrated into the community more, as well as to have a chance for some informal conversations (as briefly outlined in chapter three).

There were also some other extra events such as singles events or a monthly empowerment meeting for men focussing on strategies to enter the mainstream and to have a successful career utilising the Bible. At times, special guest speakers were invited to share their success story and how they achieved their success with the men in attendance. Occasionally, a 'breakfast for champions' was scheduled to which many new people were invited to. Usually we would sit around a table eating English breakfast which was accompanied by worship and a motivational message from the pastor. Many times, advice for alternative work and employment niches, i.e. IT, entrepreneurship (barber etc.) was discussed in these meetings led by members of the church, who had some form of experience or success in these areas. In addition, advice in terms of cultural knowledge was given reflecting participants' lived experience of having to adapt to changing life conditions and the challenges as well as opportunities this brings with it. These issues will be picked up again later and discussed in more detail in the theme '*adaptation and embodiment*'.

In several churches along the OKR, I witnessed that tithing and offering were an integral part of the services, a ritual that is carried out in a celebratory way,

accompanied by worship music. It was also a central element in the 'Overcomers' church'. This aspect has two sides that are intertwined - on the one hand, it is part of the prosperity gospel which is heavily focused on monetary donations, on the other hand, it sustains the ministry. In what follows, I will briefly discuss the ritual, the principle of faith and the maintenance of the ministry.

In the churches I have visited, I observed a form of 'mandatory tithing' in a very ritualised and celebratory way, using pre-printed envelopes, which people can put their money in to or write their bank details on. The compulsion is implicit but very effective – everyone is encouraged to put their offering in the envelope and then hold up the envelope while the pastor prays over it. The ushers then come with buckets to collect the envelopes. There is music and celebration the whole time because 'God loves a cheerful giver' (2 Corinthians 9:7, NRSV). On special occasions, as I witnessed frequently during my fieldwork, the whole congregation is asked to dance to the front one after another forming a queue and pour or throw their offering onto the altar (whilst everyone else is looking on).

As well as giving offerings, the members of the congregation participate actively in many voluntary services as we have seen above in the form of being members of various teams and departments. In this way, the leaders of these congregations generate and activate voluntarism by creating departments and giving titles to people who carry out a service. This in turn gives the members a sense of importance and responsibility as I have noticed when talking to the church members about their voluntary involvement in these teams. Both, the mandatory tithing and the system of voluntarism are able to generate a considerable amount of financial and human resources.

Also in many sermons that were preached in the church, I witnessed how tithing was identified as being central to the beliefs and practices of the community. For example, in one sermon, the pastor talked about prosperity in the context of migrants living in a foreign country, using biblical figures and narratives to illustrate her points. To this end, Abraham, who is often referred to as 'the first immigrant' in the prosperity discourse (Levitt, 2003) and Jacob were used to show how they

‘prospered in a foreign land’, although they experienced some difficulties which they however overcame and which were identified by the preacher as ‘emptiers of life’. These examples were juxtaposed with another biblical figure (Elimelech from the book of Ruth) who did not prosper because he did not overcome the ‘emptiers of life’. The pastor went on to identify certain ‘emptiers of life’ including ‘not tithing’, thus making the point that if someone doesn’t tithe, this can have negative consequences for their life. Using the experience of Jacob further, she used the example of him seeing the vision of the ladder connecting heaven and earth which resulted in him promising to give a tenth to God, if God would be with him and protect him. She concluded by saying that, ‘of everything that we own, a tenth belongs to God - if one withholds what is God’s, they shut up the gates of heaven’. This was followed by establishing that ‘you might have a different opinion about this – but that doesn’t matter in heaven: God owns our tenth’. However, ‘if you give to God what belongs to God, it shall be well with you’.

She then went on to discuss another key passage from the Bible about tithing (Malachi 3: 8 to 12) which, after naming the promises of the reward that follow tithes and offerings, goes as far as to state ‘Try it! Put me to the test’. Therefore, in the preaching the members of the congregation were encouraged to do exactly this. This verse is a very important reference in prosperity teaching and I came across it frequently, see for example this flyer I received during my fieldwork which has the verse printed on it:

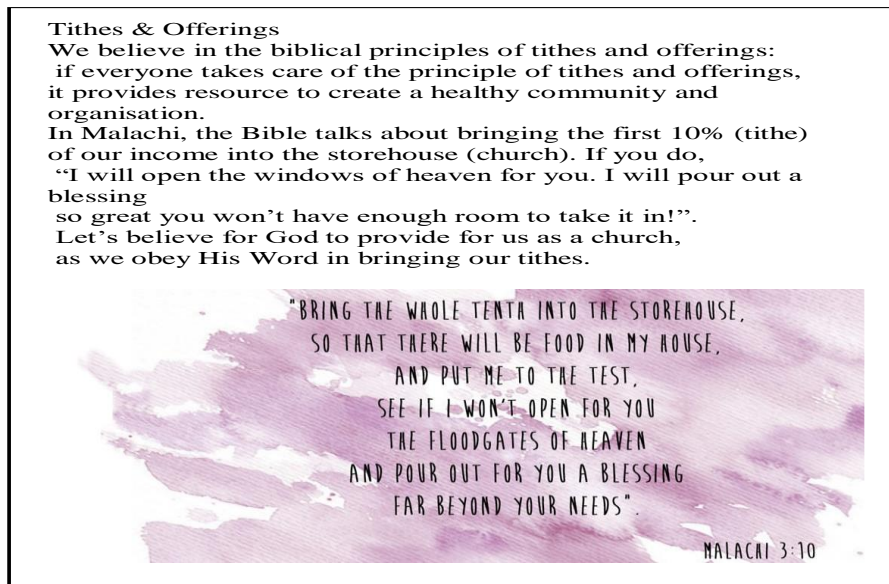


Figure 4.22: Artefact from fieldwork on the principle of tithing

However, apart from the message promising rewards for tithing explicated from the passage thus far, there is another side to it which is also frequently entertained by preachers as they use verses 8 to 9 from the same passage as a warning that 'if you cheat God in something, the heavens will stay closed'. This is also discussed in the book by the leader of the RCCG, Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye, who writes 'When you don't pay all your tithes as God commands you to do, you place yourself under a curse' (Adeboye, 2012:34). This message is preached very widely in the prosperity churches, including mega-churches. It appears that the members of the congregations take this very seriously and are fearful of coming under this curse.

Another aspect of tithing is its importance for the maintenance of the ministry. In one of the interviews, Olu talked about his role as the treasury of the church and what it involved for him on Sundays. He told me what he was doing after the Sunday school finishes and 10:45am till the service starts at 11am:

So people have that time, to say hello, to ... and because I work as the treasury in that 15 minutes window that's when I have to go upstairs and prepare the treasury for the day, to write the cheques that need to be written, to get the keys.

I was a bit surprised by that and asked him what cheques he was writing and he answered:

Olu: I write cheques sometimes, mainly for maintenance, or you can send the expenses to the main xxx [anonymized]

Danny: For the building maintenance?

Olu: Yeah for the building, and that's the time I have to do all this, and then at 11 am the service starts, it starts with the worship ... and then the service ends at 1 pm.

Danny: And then you go?

Olu: No I don't go home, then I go to the office because I have to count the offering for the day, that's when I go upstairs with my team and we count the offering and then I come home.

One Sunday service in the 'Overcomers' Church' was centred around a financial report of the church for the year 2014. As indicated by the images below, the income from the tithing and offering of the congregations are not able to cover the costs of the church, which include cost for the premises, its maintenance, the salary of the senior pastor, which is not very desirable as the junior pastor shared ('you would not want it'), and some other costs. He explained that the day to day expenditure of £353,161 exceeds the day to day income of £324,701, with an operational deficit of the year of £28,460. Even after having included incomes from HMRC and Gift Aid, the last screen reveals a monthly shortfall of £2,371. This transparency of the administration of financial matters reveals the heavy reliance on tithing and offering by the congregation to run this local church community and was intended to stir up members to participate not only in the services provided but to also participate more faithfully in the sharing of the costs. Which was then again reiterated as not only a blessing for the church but also for the individual believer.

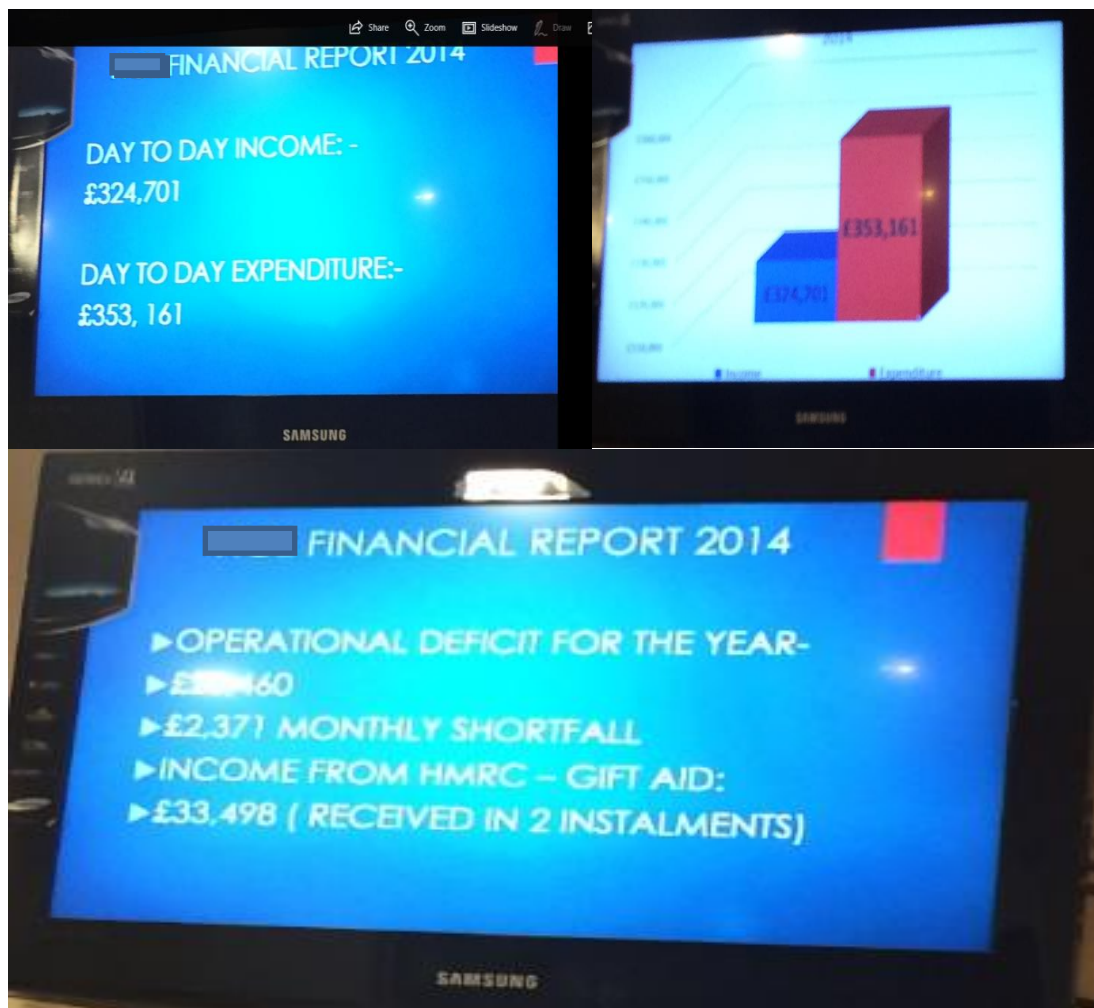


Figure 4.23: Financial report presentation (anonymized)

Offering and tithing is central to the Pentecostal moral economy and serves as a new form of taxation in places where churches, rather than governments, provide most social services. Thus, the requirement to tithe and give offering is another aspect of the neo-Pentecostal prosperity culture that fosters its ability to create and maintain local churches, as tithing maintains the local autonomy of these churches.

This institutional productivity is crucial because many of these churches flourish where there is a lack of traditional churches and similarly where neoliberal forces have eroded the capacity of liberal democratic states to provide education, health and welfare. In such situations, these churches are kept running through voluntarism, tithing and offerings. Locally run and funded churches provide their own manner of health, educational services. The community building success of

prosperity churches on the OKR is of course a mainstay of deprivation and disorganisation. This success is also rooted in the idea of spiritual empowerment, institutional commitment, and religious generosity. All this maintains the participatory, egalitarian features of the movement.

Conclusion

Juxtaposing the outside of the building and the inside demonstrates a clear contrast - the outside looks like a normal public space, with a shabby exterior, whereas on the inside, there is an intimate and intense experience, a vibrant atmosphere, with high-tech equipment, people dressed in finery, and outpourings of emotions. This all represents a clear transformation of space. An urban sub-community is formed in these premises, which would never be recognised from the outside.

These co-ethnic churches can be seen as adapting organisations. There is a marginality inflicted on migrants, with the transitional experience of standing on the borders of two cultural worlds, especially for the first generation as they are not only at the boundary, but also outside or at the periphery of British culture. Thus, in order to re-position the church members from this marginal status, BMCs not only serve as religious organisations, but also as community networks for advice and integration and for the economic and social welfare of the members (Adedibu, 2013). Thus, these churches function to some extent as statutory agencies of the state providing training through educational and empowerment seminars on various issues relating to migration processes (immigration status, education, finance, housing, CV writing, giving advice on niches in the job market etc.), all aimed at eliminating the marginal status of their members.

The discussion thus far resonates with Chris Baker's (2013) argument that religious citizens from diasporic and ethnic minority communities deploy the practices and resources of religion implicitly or explicitly to claim their right to the city and with it also their right to centrality within the life of the modern metropolis as outlined at the beginning of this chapter. These three key elements- 'a sense of 'belonging' that engenders a sense of 'becoming' that in turn can lead to a variety of technologies

and performances of 'participating' in the wider community' (*ibid.*: 91) that co-ethnic faith groups generate is reflected in the transformation of urban space, symbols, discourse and practices of the prosperity community along the OKR. In chapters six to nine I lay out how my respondent do this in detail by investigating their struggles for value and values. The following chapter provides further context to the localized prosperity movement on the OKR by illuminating the American and African aspects of the transnational movement, of which the expression on the OKR is an adaptation.

Chapter Five: Roots / Routes of the Prosperity Theology Movement

Introduction

The localized manifestation of the prosperity gospel on the OKR is part of a global movement. In the localized space of the OKR, we thus see much larger transnational influences. The preaching and practices of the church I examine help to demonstrate how the leaders adopt, incorporate, and make use of these global influences in order to make it fit with the circumstances of the congregation and how the members respond to them. This chapter serves to place the localized manifestation, which is the centre of my concern, within the broader context of the global movement. Chapter one introduced prosperity theology and included a discussion of how it has travelled to the OKR – from the US through televangelism to the countries of the global South, including Nigeria and other west African countries, and then through migration to the UK. This chapter delves more deeply into these issues and elucidates different aspects and nuances that need to be considered regarding the theological, geographical and historical dimensions of the movement. The American and West African roots of the movement as well as their respective place in its route to the OKR will be further elucidated. In particular, this chapter discusses two contrasting mega-events to provide more insight into the varied nature of the phenomenon.

One particular feature of the prosperity movement is the organisation of mega-events, crusades or revivals in countries around the globe where promises of blessings, healings and miracles are promoted. These events, which attract a large number of people and are held in grand venues, such as stadiums and large exhibition and convention centres, play 'pivotal roles in sustaining a global charismatic culture' (Schaefer, 2002: 119, also Coleman, 2000: 34-5; Gifford, 1998: 223). This chapter is centred around two quite different mega-events which I visited, with very different forms of expression. This demonstrates the ambiguity of the prosperity movement and its related mega churches, big events, web-sites, and local churches. This chapter thus provides further context to the following chapters which

will explore the localized manifestation of the movement on the OKR in detail, drawing out the complex intermingling of its material and immaterial aspects, as well as the transnational nature of the phenomenon.

The first part of the chapter examines the American influence. Firstly, the central tenets of traditional Christianity are outlined. The prosperity movement is then discussed in connection to the Protestant work ethic, capitalism and global consumerism. Subsequently, the reactions to the movement – from the media and from mainstream Christianity – are briefly described. This continues to explore the question of the monetization of faith within the prosperity movement and any possible remaining values that persist beyond capitalization. Examining the American influence, I will draw on the ‘Mission to London’ event at Earls Court Exhibition Centre which took place between the 4-9 August 2014. It was led by the famous American neo-Pentecostal evangelist Morris Cerrulo and was attended by over 20,000 people.

Secondly, the analysis of the West African elements of the movement will be divided according to the following themes – colonial roots/routes and attitudes towards commodities and consumption, motivations of adherents and the success of the movement in the West African context including their liberation theology as form of transnational Pentecostalism which provides a transcultural technology of the self. This will show that there is a strong focus on value in terms of goods, commodities and social mobility and gives useful insights into the diaspora phenomenon witnessed on the OKR, about the adherents’ attitudes towards consumption, a spiritual worldview, religious practices, cultural identity and perspectives, as well as their current situation. This section will discuss the ‘Festival of Life’ - an annual event run by a large Nigerian denomination called the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). The event is generally attended by over 40,000 people, mostly African migrants and the second-generation. Some high-profile politicians, such as the Prime Minister or the Mayor of London, are usually invited as guest speakers. I attended this event twice (in 2014 and 2016) and will elucidate my findings.

Prosperity – the American gospel

This section focuses on the American origins and influence of the prosperity movement. Shaped by the neoliberal ideology that undergirds the United States capitalist economic system, the prosperity gospel has also been called the American gospel. The United States has been important both as the original source of the movement and also its primary global marketer. The prosperity movement originated within Pentecostalism, which itself started out in the US as an early twentieth-century revivalist movement among poorer socio-economic groups. It became prominent in the United States during the 1950s and was subsequently spread globally through televangelism in the 1980s (Martin, 2002). The message of the prosperity gospel intertwines the American dream with a religious faith that centres on wealth and material blessing with a clear individualistic tendency (Machado, 2010).

To understand whether the teachings of the prosperity theology movement promote a commodifying, capitalising, and monetising of the faith, we need to firstly look at the teachings of traditional Christianity. The latter has always been seen as focusing on the immaterial, with its ideological focus on spiritual matters, matters of holiness, and the sanctification and salvation of the soul (Simmel, 1997). This concern about the salvation of the soul in juxtaposition to material matters is a main theme in the New Testament of the Bible, which is succinctly expressed in this verse: 'For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?' (Matthew 16: 26, NRSV).

Further Christian ethics include the meaning of the cosmos and the afterlife, and values such as love and selflessness are the most central to all Christian ethics. When asked "'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?'"', Jesus replied "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'" (Matthew 22: 36, NRSV). Most Christian denominations view these two commandments as, together, forming the core of

the Christian faith. The Evangelical Alliance, an umbrella grouping for evangelical Christians in the UK, outlines this by noting that ‘the values of the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus were set by a radical commitment to the double commandment to love God with all one’s being and to love one’s neighbour as oneself’ (2003).

Furthermore, Withrow challenges the mainline churches of the twenty-first century to live out the Great Commandment as the central theme in their social ethics in response to the ‘commodification of all things and people on earth’ (2007: 41) by neo-colonial imperialism. She promotes Christian values of love and care for neighbour noting that ‘love for others [...] creates the preconditions of social involvement: social sensitivity, solidarity in community, and compassion for others.’ (*ibid.*: 39), thus defending the Christian creed in neoliberal times and argues therefore that all Christian morality flows from this commandment of love including justice and faithfulness and so forth. The focus of traditional Christianity on the immaterial is thus a clear trend running through the teaching, ethics and practice of the faith.

A consideration of Christian values also helps to understand the connection between the prosperity movement and capitalism, as the neo-liberal work ethic inherent in prosperity teachings is in some ways analogous to the protestant work ethic – seen by Weber as a driving force for the development of capitalism. It can be argued that Christian values of hard work, diligence, thriftiness and progress (especially found in relation to Protestantism in connection with the rise of capitalism) already indicate a shift from the immaterial to the material, as religion became associated with economic practices. This perspective could be described as *value through values* – success in business, profits and wealth were an indication of favour with God and even salvation, but these were to be achieved through ethical behaviours, especially hard work, savings and delayed gratification. This parallel between Christian values and capitalism has a long history, described by Weber as the ‘spirit of capitalism’ (2008 [1904-5]). He argues that original Christian values of asceticism have been transformed by the shift from non-worldly affairs to the world and worldly affairs, known as the Protestant work ethic. The Reformation

profoundly affected the view of work, dignifying even the most mundane professions as adding to the common good and thus blessed by God, as much as any 'sacred' calling. Weber shows that certain branches of Protestantism had supported worldly activities dedicated to economic gain, seeing them as endowed with moral and spiritual significance. This recognition was not a goal in itself; rather they were a by-product of other doctrines of faith that encouraged planning, hard work and self-denial in the pursuit of worldly riches (in Bendix, 1977: 57).

However, modern day prosperity theology, which comes out of a Protestant tradition (the modernising and Westernising religion that has spread over the globe in concert with the mercantile and industrial expansion of capitalism and the establishment of colonial empires), reveals a further shift from the immaterial to the material, with Christian values becoming a means to achieve value in a material sense. It is characterized by an embracing of the logic of capitalism, striving to enter modernity from the margins, whilst overcoming various disadvantages. Adherents seek to change their position in society through upward mobility, promoting high aspirations, whilst nevertheless still emphasising certain aspects of asceticism, as this movement empowers its adherents to participate in modernity and neoliberal capitalism (Martin, 2002). For Macado this kind of Christianity fully and uncritically embraces capitalism and promotes it as part of a divine plan – it is 'the mixing of Evangelical faith with an uncritical embrace of capitalism that makes these believers a new kind of neoliberal twenty-first century Christian' (2010: 729). With the emphasis being heavily on value in a capitalist sense, it seems the immaterial Christian values have been fully turned into material value. As such it appears that within Christianity, traditional values are being transformed into value in a wholehearted embracing of the logic of capitalism by this movement.

Thus, this study argues that the prosperity movement reveals a revival of the Protestant work ethic, that promotes a work ethic fitting the global neoliberal restructuring of the global capitalist economy. As it provides the right value system for people living on the margins and trying to integrate into the new global economic system, this 'Pentecostal work ethic' (Freeman, 2016) which goes hand in hand with the neoliberal work ethic aids adherents of the movement to adapt to

these global processes and in this way creates the right subjects for this global neoliberal capitalism. The prosperity gospel as a global phenomenon is enmeshed with the aggressive spread of American business and media culture in the process of modernising and globalising the globe, as it is intertwined with the homogenizing influences of consumerism, mass communication, and production in the international market culture by global capitalist institutions, having its origins in the United States and utilizing its powerful evangelization machinery (Brouwer et al., 1996). Consequently, prosperity theology or neo-Pentecostalism is a concept that makes the religious culture compatible with the worldwide commodity culture, as neo-Pentecostal churches form the religious arm of an economic, political, and cultural system (Nahmad in Brouwer et. al., 1996: 11).

The relationship of the prosperity movement to the transformation and globalisation of the world's cultures in general is significant as this rapid religious change is occurring simultaneously with the industrialization of many parts of the developing world and the concomitant commodification of everyday life (Brouwer et al., 1996). It is therefore analogous to the connection between evangelical Protestantism and industrial development on a national scale in the nineteenth century, now a fledging connection between worldwide capitalist expansion and a new form of internationalized Christianity; astute Christian entrepreneurs are successfully selling a new international belief system' (*ibid.*). Their organizations are essentially corporate transnational religious entities under the control of entrepreneurial authority figures.

Can this neo-Pentecostal prosperity movement propel economic development because it is accompanying the global dissemination of American products and Western values? Can it help usher in modern industrial capitalism? Might it now combine Protestantism and capitalism to create a bright era of material prosperity and democratic institutions, thus following the pattern that was played out successfully in England, Northern Europe, and the United States?

Weber argued that the new Christianity of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries helped break the bonds of feudalism. However, the historian Christopher Hill (in

Brouwer et al., 1996: 228) describes the process as it took place in Puritan England: 'But men did not become capitalists because they were protestants nor protestants because they were capitalists. In a society already becoming capitalist Protestantism facilitated the triumph of the new values. There was no inherent theological reason for the protestant emphasis on frugality, hard work, accumulation; but that emphasis was a natural consequence of the religion of the heart in a society where capitalist production was developing'. Brouwer et al. note that 'this faith did not represent a retreat from the world, nor timid piety in a world turned upside down. Rather it braced individuals for an exciting engagement with the world and freed them from the constraints of past social barriers and practices' (*ibid.*). They further argue that 'this core value of Protestant theology, common to the seventeenth century as well as the twentieth, loosens the psychological shackles that keep people from attempting what heretofore seemed impossible' (*ibid.*). Regarding the American gospel they comment that 'enthusiastic members of new churches in various countries, go about their tasks with such a high degree of energy, dedication, and reliability that they often overcome deficiencies in technical skills, language, or cultural understanding. A belief in the self, inextricably linked to God, allows them to persevere' (*ibid.*). This can also be witnessed in the localised transnational neo-Pentecostal movement on the OKR which is discussed later in chapter seven.

Both the requirements of the faith and the parameters of the economic system have changed in terms of the Weberian hypothesis that Protestantism is connected to the spread of capitalism. David Martin (2002) anticipates that neo-Pentecostals will perform a service akin to Methodism in preparing working- and lower-middle-class people for the frugal enjoyment of prosperity, polite public discourse and democratic citizenship. Peter L. Berger (1990) attains a neo-Weberian view that this movement will produce results similar to those of the preceding one, namely the emergence of a solid bourgeoisie, with virtues conducive to the development of a democratic capitalism.

In the poorer nations, rigorous Protestant practice in daily life can help orient newly displaced people toward modern patterns of work and urban living, but the

question is whether it brings economic betterment, as it seemed to do in the nineteenth-century Britain and North America. Although Pentecostals are often recognized as particularly honest and hardworking individuals by their fellow citizens in various parts of the world, no one has demonstrated that these qualities bring actual economic success to the new Protestants. Are the adherents of the movement upwardly mobile or are these rising expectations of economic success of more psychological significance in breaking the pattern of structural inequalities and symbolic violence by the ruling classes? Is their spiritual defiance to unfairness taking effect to change social and structural inequalities? Is there any particular economic achievement? While there has been little or no evidence that that Protestantism has led to upward mobility in the global South, which seems contrary to Weberian visions of a Protestant ethic lifting poor converts into higher social strata, the question arises whether this is the same for adherents of the movement in the global North, which are mainly formed of diaspora communities. Is it more about survival than advancement? These questions shall be attempted to be answered in particular looking at the localised expression of this phenomenon along the OKR. I will analyse how this strong work ethic which is part of the localised expression of the prosperity movement along the OKR as a strategy of improvement and betterment effects the member in more depths later on. For now, let us first look at the reactions from the media and the mainstream churches to this movement.

The UK's secular media representation of the movement has focused on the monetary aspect and the lavish life style of some of the leaders as well as their provocative message and of course the type of faith they promote relying on heavy tithing as a form of exploitation of their members. As such it has centred on exaggeration and sought to identify harmful effects for the congregants. American mainstream churches have criticised the prosperity gospel for having little to do with gospel ideals, focusing rather on wealth and an economic view of blessing with a very clear individualist tendency (see Withrow, 2007). Garber (2008) describes how ministers from mainstream protestant churches are calling the movement dangerous and are appalled by its message. The reaction of the mainline churches in the UK is

somewhat more nuanced as they seek to build bridges with the movement (in a climate of constantly decreasing membership and increasing membership of their counterpart). In terms of the teaching and practices of the neo-Pentecostal churches that embrace the prosperity message, their discussion is centred on the errors but also discusses possible contributions of this message in relation to the original Christian message.

In terms of the monetisation of the faith, the Evangelical Alliance (2003), for example, puts the argument forward that the prosperity movement does not transform Christian values into value, but adds a value dimension through an over-realised eschatology. What is important to note is that the teaching of the prosperity theology movement is not only assessed in terms of exegetical and theological concerns, but an effort is made to also account for practical and historical factors, looking at the origin of the philosophy and the hostile circumstances that led to the development of the prosperity message in the way it did. Although the rhetoric of the prosperity movement might appear flashy and superficial to mainline churches, it is important to understand its underlying purpose by looking into the functions within the context of this ministry. The Evangelical Alliance acknowledge that it is easy to jump to wrong conclusions about what is happening on the other side of an unfamiliar culture (*ibid.*). Indeed, the very goal of my thesis is to make this unfamiliar familiar by investigating in more detail the beliefs and practices of the localised expression of the movement in London. The mainline churches' report pays attention to the precarious position of the adherents existentially and psychologically. Although they indicate how the belief of the adherents and the promotion of the leaders in a powerful and intervening God functions to counteract the disadvantaged and marginalised position of the followers in society, promoting a fundamentally positive outlook in life infusing the adherents with exuberance and confidence through a hopeful trust in a loving and generous God, they fail to detail the concrete historical and structural conditions that led to their precarious position. This is the story I tell in this monograph. I will also elaborate in more detail how these mechanisms function within the movement from my findings. How the vocabulary of overcoming, breakthrough, victory and

abundance are counteracting terms for the experienced hardship of the believers will be explored throughout as a form of resistance to how they are positioned.

Through the lens of a mega-event - Mission to London

The 'Mission to London' event at Earls Court Exhibition Centre between the 4-9 August 2014 was advertised as the final event in a series of crusades that had been taking place annually for the past twenty years. Advertisements were displayed on billboards throughout the capital as well as in tubes and buses. It was heralded by the organisers and leaders of the movement as the premier event in the capital with thousands being swept into the kingdom of God, with Morris Cerullo's message being linked to having been giving birth to hundreds of churches and ministries that have been continuously influencing the UK and Europe. Other famous prosperity preachers such as Kenneth Copeland and Creflo Dollar were also invited as speakers.



Figure 5.1: The Mission to London event: advertisement, venue, and its famous preachers

Morris Cerullo, the leader of the Mission to London movement, is one of many American neo-Pentecostal evangelists, who has travelled extensively around the world for his ministry, a world mission organisation called Morris Cerullo World Evangelism (MCWE) with its own network channel. He is the TV-host of 'Victory Today', a daily televised program based in the US, and has published numerous books and other material. However, many critics consider him (alongside so many

other leading figures within the prosperity movement) as controversial. Concerns have mainly been raised about his financial practices, advertising practices and healing practices. The gift of healing is particularly emphasized in Cerullo's message referring to physical, emotional, and financial forms of healing (Schaefer, 2002: 107). During the Mission to London event one article in 'The Independent' was critical about the way how this event offering free admission already netted £100,000 even before the event began due to the large amount of people who registered for an accompanying training event called the European School of Ministry (Gallagher, 2014). As mentioned earlier, critical voices like this are a well-known accompanying effect of the global neo-Pentecostal/prosperity phenomenon.

Having read about these critical voices and controversies beforehand, they also became part of my experience first-hand. As I came to attend the last meeting of the crusade on the evening of the sixth day, I learnt that it had been cancelled. No reason was given for the cancellation. Instead of gathering inside Earl's Court exhibition centre, adherents of the movement who had come with great expectations to the final meeting flocked together outside, wondering what had happened. In place of the prosperity preachers preaching on stage inside, there was a street preacher with one partner opposite the venue, just outside the underground station with banners and posters all around him warning with a megaphone against Morris Cerullo and the associated preachers:



Figure 5.2: A street-preacher warning of Morris Cerullo and a close up of one of his banners (pictures taken with permission).

During the crusade, I went to several of the evening meetings. As I partook in the events I noticed a clear emphasis on the monetary aspect and dimension of the meetings. Upon entering the Earls Court Exhibition Centre, I encountered an area in the foyer with many stands from different churches and international movements representing their literature and advertising for their church venues and/or products. The images below represent just a few examples of the stands. Altogether it felt like a shopping centre for Pentecostal prosperity merchandise.



Figure 5 3: A variety of stands in the foyer of the Earl’s Court exhibition centre promoting prosperity products

The books on sale were mostly from famous mega church preachers of the prosperity movement, especially from America, such as Joel Osteen, Benny Hinn, etc. The literature was all about the message of prosperity and deliverance as can be seen in the images below, featuring the movement’s typical rhetoric, such as

'God wants you to prosper', '200 secrets of financial blessing' and 'Why is the tithe not working for some?', 'The School of Money: How to make, manage and multiply your money – the entrepreneurs blueprint', 'The Pathway to Wealth', 'How to establish financial security', 'The Blood – Experience the power that brings salvation, healing and miracles' amongst manifold others. These titles, phrases, and slogans are just a snapshot of the message promoted by the movement, however, they sum up its chore very poignantly.



Figure 5.4: A selection of books and materials on offer, all promoting the prosperity message

Immersing myself in the buzz of the prosperity marketplace, I also purchased (as I had been given a special offer alongside a wink and a smile by the merchandiser) a 'typical' prosperity guide including a book and CDs – 'Your 10-Day Spiritual Action Plan for Complete Financial Breakthrough' (see image below). Looking at the table of contents which gives a detailed overview of the chapters reiterates the points raised above concerning the main emphasis of the message that 'God's Will is Prosperity', 'Prosperity is our Inheritance', 'God Can Turn Your Situation Around'. The contractual and transactional nature of the faith that is promoted is further elucidated in 'The Truth about Tithing', 'Giving and the Law of Increase' and 'The

Secret to Receiving’ with more practical guidance provided in the appendices containing explicit prosperity prayers, confessions, and scriptures. The last chapter of the book deals with the topic of ‘The Economy, the Enemy and the Believer’ – reiterating the materialisation and monetisation of the Christian message and belief as promoted by the movement. As I completed my purchase I was given ‘a special gift’ of CDs with 40 more broadcasts of prosperity teaching, again promising to be ‘life changing’.

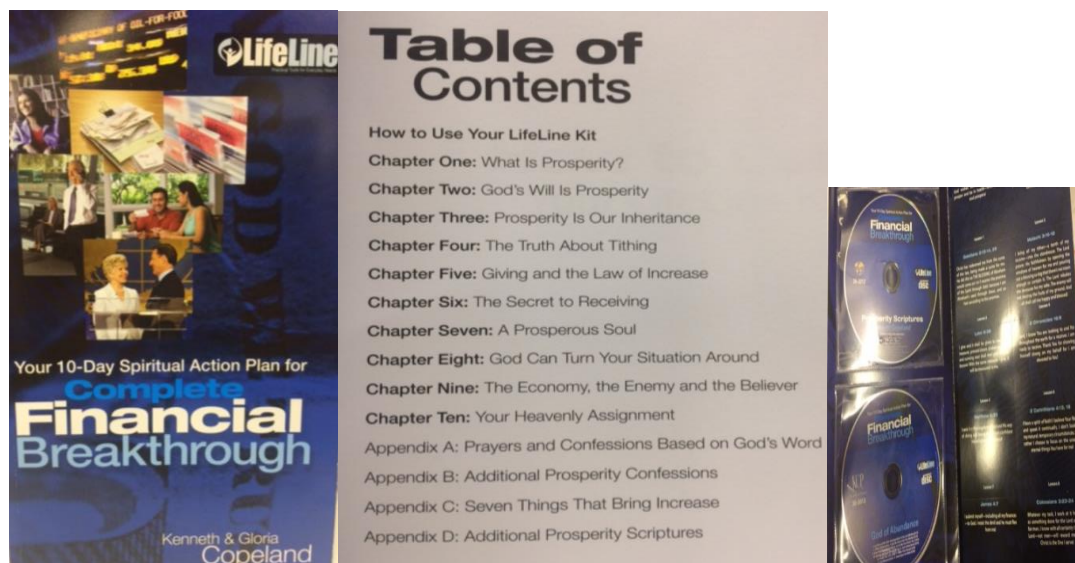


Figure 5.5: A typical prosperity publication outlining the principles of prosperity and a set of CDs with sermons

What one has to do in order to have such ‘breakthroughs’ or ‘life-changing experiences’ became even more obvious throughout the actual events held inside the auditorium. The hall was filled with about 5,000 people each evening. It was a mixed audience, although more than about 80 percent were Black (all these members were potential donators and buyers of the products on offer). The strong emphasis on monetary donations was undeniable. Although it was to some extent also about worshiping together, saving and healing people, giving hope, etc. it was made clear that gifts, donations and monetary offerings played a crucial part in the experience and were welcomed throughout the meetings as the so-called ‘seed faith’ was promoted heavily. Within the prosperity movement, these monetary donations, gifts and tithes are seen as a seed that is being sowed which God can

and will multiply if one has faith. A few different preachers shared a message each evening mostly in a very dramatic and motivational style encouraging people throughout to donate and buy some of their books, which were 'on sale' at the moment. Morris Cerullo himself asked the audience 'who is giving a minimum of 50\$?', acting like an auctioneer for blessings.

One of the preachers from a Nigerian background held a deliverance service. In his sermon, which included an altar call (this is where people come to the front), he used the Bible to explain that the altar is a place of exchange, where one should bring five things. Once one does so, anything is possible. The five things stated were, number one thanksgiving, two tears, three talents, four time and most importantly five their treasure (money). All of the five points were elaborated upon through various Bible verses. Illuminating the fifth point in more detail, he went on to share a testimony about one of his church members back home who had come to him with a huge amount of money in an envelope telling him that her husband had been made redundant. He then went on to tell the audience how he advised her to go to the altar with the envelope and meditate for a while. After that he told the incredible success story of how the husband's redundancy fate was turned around through God's intervention including a double promotion and everything. This story fired up the crowd in the auditorium to praise God who is Lord and alive, to proclaim their faith in God confessing their conviction that he can turn around their lives for good. This was then followed by the preacher's encouragement to the audience to bring 'these 5 things' to the altar – the altar being the stage in front of the preacher. They were ensured that God was going to hear them or reply them using more examples from the Bible. The enthusiastic response of the audience to this altar call can be seen in the images below depicting a happy crowd bringing their offerings in the form of envelopes filled with money, thus 'sowing seeds' for future blessings and success.



Figure 5.6: The 'altar call' as described above with numerous envelopes brought by the audience

In summary, what was most striking to me about the Mission to London crusade events was the merchandising of the literature and other products in the reception hall, the advertisement made for it during the meetings, the kind of churches that had stands and the sort of literature that was advertised – everything bluntly marketizing the faith and seemingly uncritically embracing the logic of capital, entrepreneurship, and self-made success, promoting and receiving a message of financial prosperity.

Afterwards I went to the Morris Cerullo website (MCWE, 2014) and was struck by its overall appeal resembling the website of an online retailer, the kind of products on offer and their price tags – the prosperity marketplace I had encountered at the crusade has a powerful online presence globally available 24/7 to its consumers. The all-so-familiar promise of sowing seeds is made available online by signing up to a monthly partnership including a monthly donation and the promise that Morris Cerullo 'will sow back into your life. You will receive his powerful DVD messages preached when he was under an awesome prophetic anointing!' The ad further states that these revelation teachings will equip you to 'stand your ground and overcome obstacles in every area of your life' (see image below). And, as expected, special bonus gifts are advertised as well. For example, one ad reads 'For a limited time only (in bold red letters) when you become an automated monthly God's Victorious Army partner with Morris Cerullo, you can choose one of the bonus gifts below'. This is made possible by setting up a direct debit to let the monthly donation automatically be withdrawn from one's account.



- Every month, Morris Cerullo will sow back into your life. You will receive twelve powerful DVD messages preached while he was under an awesome, prophetic anointing! These revelation teachings will equip you to stand your ground and overcome obstacles in every area of your life.



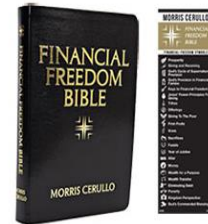
For a limited time only, when you become an automatic monthly God's Victorious Army partner with Morris Cerullo, you can choose one of the bonus gifts below:

Choose between:

1. *The Financial Freedom Bible* is the leading authority in the marketplace today on biblical economics. This bible is filled with pages and pages of revelatory material to show you how you can step into your new life of financial freedom.

To choose this bonus gift today, [click here](#), complete your credit card or bank information.

You authorize your monthly donation to be automatically withdrawn from your account. Receive all of your GVA benefits quickly and easily. Become a GVA automatic monthly partner today!



OR

Figure 5.7: The advertisement and instructions for signing up to the monthly partnership with MCWE

Continuing to look at the arsenal of items and the prices I could not believe what I saw, e.g. a *'Financial Freedom Bible'* for \$1000 (advertised for as *'the leading authority in the marketplace today on biblical economics'* and *'the result of Dr Cerullo's more than 60 years of intensive Biblical research on finances'* (see images above and below), CD and DVD sets for up to \$300 with all the items being about prosperity, deliverance or healing in some way, including *'God's Prophetic Financial Plan for Your Life'* or the *'School of Healing Package'* (see images below).

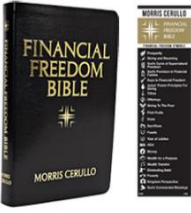
Throughout the course of my research I visited many websites from comparable ministries devoted to the prosperity teachings, but this encounter was unique in its pure aggressiveness in terms of the financial aspect of prosperity. As such, the examples presented here cannot be seen as typical and fairly representative for the movement and its operations. Nevertheless, they reiterate a point on the ambiguity of this message and its different manifestations, with this particular ministry being very much centred around financial prosperity.

Home → Books

COMPARE PRODUCTS

Books

You have no items to compare.



Financial Freedom Bible and Bookmark

The *Financial Freedom Bible* is the result of Dr. Cerullo's more than 60 years of intensive Biblical research, study and prayer. It will be the best study Bible that you have ever owned. Every word of this study Bible has been written to lead you into a lifetime of supernatural financial miracles. This Bible also comes with the *Financial Freedom Bible Bookmark*. [Learn More](#)

TV6152

\$300.00

[Add to Cart](#)

[Add to Wishlist](#)

[Add to Compare](#)



Financial Freedom Bible, Bookmark, & Celebrating More than 50 Years of Ministry to Jews Worldwide

This winning combination package is the result of Dr. Cerullo's more than 60 years of intensive Biblical research on finances. Plus, walk through more than 50 years of Dr. Cerullo's ministry outreach to the Jews in the Middle East and around the world. This is a one-of-a-kind coffee table book with stunning pictures of Dr. Cerullo in Israel. [Learn More](#)

TV6153

\$1,000.00

[Add to Cart](#)

[Add to Wishlist](#)

[Add to Compare](#)



God's Prophetic, Financial Plan for Your Life - 12 CD Set

The messages contained in these anointed twelve CDs will enable you to wage war against the devil's war on your finances and break his cycle of financial defeat in your life...

[Learn More](#)

CD1020A

\$40.00

[Add to Cart](#)

[Add to Wishlist](#)

[Add to Compare](#)



School of Healing Package

Through the Morris Cerullo's School of Healing, you will experience the same mighty release and flow of God's healing power with the same miraculous results!

School of Healing DVD Series
 Seven DVDs containing core healing messages preached in crusades around the world...

[Learn More](#)

PA1127

\$195.00

[Add to Cart](#)

[Add to Wishlist](#)

[Add to Compare](#)

Figure 5.8: An arsenal of prosperity products advertised on the Morris Cerullo website.

All these experiences very strongly testify of the monetization of the Christian message and the realm of faith by the prosperity gospel with its associated preachers, tele-evangelists, crusaders, adherents and merchandises. If we only include this perspective shown thus far, it clearly testifies to the fact that this form of Christianity has converted all values into value with a strong focus on financial prosperity. Yet if we look at other manifestations of the prosperity gospel, other issues emerge. The mega-event discussed below, the Festival of Life, run by the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) – a Nigerian (Yoruba)-led denomination with a large membership in the UK, has a very different expression. The church my fieldwork was conducted in is part of the RCCG and as such my participants were regularly visiting this annual event.

The West African prosperity movement in London

The prosperity movement on the OKR is heavily concentrated among West African immigrants. This section explores how the prosperity gospel flourished in West Africa and subsequently made its way to the UK. The roots of this process – including Christian missionary influence during the colonial period and the synergies between prosperity teachings and traditional African religion will also be illustrated.

The uncritical embracing of capitalism within Pentecostalism and particularly its offshoot prosperity theology can be understood from a historical perspective. Meyer (1998) traces the history of the movement of Christianity from England to West Africa and back again, examining the complementarity and disjunction between the colonial project and missionary idea during the colonial era where Christianity had a huge impact in Africa. She concludes that these roots/routes of the attitudes towards commodities and consumption of Western goods and living a Western lifestyle, with clear individualist tendencies, are clearly connected to the colonial missionary history as they were part and parcel of the missionisation of the indigenous population, who desired these Western goods and through trade were able to obtain them. This resulted in the construction of a new modern identity, as

modern consumers. However, through a decline in the economy at home, the desired goods from the global market which had become increasingly common in their markets and shops became unaffordable, only stimulating dreams of a better life, therefore migration became virtually the only way to make money and to gain access to these goods. West African migrants, arriving in the UK from the 1960s and 70s onwards, encountered difficulties, financial problems, unemployment and migration issues in a hostile economic environment. This kind of environment is one where a form of Christianity that is not otherworldly, but emphasises success, achievement and wealth here and now, flourishes, providing motivation in circumstances where it is also easy to despair.

This understanding of the roots/routes helps illuminate how the 'American Gospel' could have such a strong impact on people living in West Africa. Martin therefore argues that Pentecostalism in Africa 'is a collective raft pointed with determination towards modernity' (2002: 152). It benefited from the cultural radiation of the USA, including some appropriation of the prosperity gospel. He adds another dimension of reasons why this gospel could be incorporated so easily into the Christian view suggesting that it needed little prompting in that respect, since African religion was already concerned with 'goods'. In this way, he looks at pre-Christian roots and spirituality that have also furthered this gospel to take effect in this context. Thus, he points out that the prime appeal of Pentecostalism (and of associated movements) was to 'groups who were anxious to share in what modernity has to offer but through the lens of a spiritual and inspired understanding.' (*ibid.*: 154). Similarly, Gifford (1998; 2001; 2004) also argues that when liberation theology (related to the idea that missionaries to Africa did not bring the full gospel, but that the full gospel is now being preached which includes prosperity) came in from America in the 1970s, it fell on fertile ground because it builds on traditional preoccupations, since Africa's traditional religions focus on goods and material realities. The faith gospel from America proclaimed that all victory is won in Christ, especially through confession of faith, resulting in health and wealth. In regard to elements of West African faith expressions, Gifford further comments that churches place their emphasis on experience, on ecstatic worship, visions, healing, dreams

and joyous bodily movement rather than on philosophical reflected theology. It is therefore through songs and prayers, sermons and testimonies that their symbolic cosmos and belief can be established.

Another important synergy between the prosperity gospel and traditional African religions is the concept of the 'seed faith' introduced earlier. Gifford (2004) observes that from the members' side of these churches, their willingness to contribute is understandable given the necessity of paying for spiritual services in traditional African religion.

A third important element is deliverance which was introduced in the 1980s and 1990s. Gifford contends this came in later since the faith gospel was insufficient by itself to bring about the reality of health and wealth, and as such other 'blockages' had to be sought and addressed. The basic idea is that 'a Christian's progress and advance can be blocked by demons who maintain some power over him' (*ibid.*: 85-86), but to diagnose and to exorcise such force requires skill. The man of God, a spiritual diviner, is therefore important as he, through special anointing, is able to identify and destroy the blockage. African religion is concerned with a prosperous life e.g. a long life, healthy offspring, success, wealth, jobs, promotion, visas and so on. People would go to a diviner to solve their problems which they believed to lie in the spiritual realm as they think the physical realm and the realm of the spirit are not separate to each other but are bound up in one totality. Understanding of causality can thus be discerned firmly in the spiritual realm, hence the important role of diviners to achieve material prosperity through spiritual means. We can see how Pentecostal teaching has become incorporated into West African Christianity as it fits well with the preoccupations in African pre-Christian religion and has come to serve as a holistic liberation theology for these churches. It also explains why the members are so attracted to these teachings and the leaders of the movement.

On the other hand, education and motivation are also significant elements of liberation theology. The religious entrepreneurs seek to use these elements to change deep-seated dispositions of Africans themselves from more traditional thinking which make them stagnate and give a feeling of inferiority, to a forward-

propelling mentality embracing modernity, as they encourage them to get education, build a strong work ethic and gain confidence. The emphasis on motivation and empowerment through education also points to the important role of breaking with an old cultural view and relationships and bonds that hinder them to move forward in a new globalised world whilst simultaneously gaining self-esteem, ambition, confidence and self-belief and the right ethos and cultural skills to negotiate and to be equipped for the new neoliberal economic restructuring and the processes of globalisation in order to progress in it, rather than to stagnate in their old ways of thinking and living.

Here we see, as discussed earlier, the twin movement of neoliberal restructuring of the capitalist world economy and urbanisation processes which demand a new cultural value system to traditional beliefs as well as social relations to let people become effective subjects of this 'modernity'. These have emphasised progress and hard work, sweeping away all old ways and traditional relations, letting people move from rural areas to urban centres and leaving behind their former life style and relations, just as it happened in the industrial revolution in the West. These Pentecostal churches play an important role in accommodating this process and catering for these subjects as well as providing a new fictive kinship for their dis-embedded members.

Following the revival in the 1970s, which resulted in the establishment of Pentecostal churches peopled by relatively disadvantaged social groups, and which emphasised a doctrine of holiness and anti-materialism, the new wave of Nigerian Pentecostalism and its organisations placed themselves firmly in the world (fancy clothes, expensive commodities, modern media). Adherents are 'typically young, upwardly mobile, relatively well-educated' (Marshall-Fratani, 2001: 85) from the struggling middle classes. This gospel of prosperity 'offers a doctrine of morally controlled materialism, in which personal wealth and success are interpreted as the evidence of God's blessing on those that lead a 'true life in Christ'' (*ibid.*). It offers a form of secure social relations which former networks may not provide any more. 'The old forms of community – ethnic, kinship, professional, home town, neighbourhood- have proved unreliable sources of support'. The new Pentecostal

networks offer an overarching sense of belonging and common purpose. At the same time, they 'provide material benefits such as employment opportunities, exchanges of goods and services' (*ibid.*). Conversion involves an assimilation of other identities within a complex of discourses and practices governing all aspects of social, cultural economic and political life subsumed within a collective system of representations.

This kind of mentality and the preoccupation with faith teaching and deliverance, the importance of the man of God who caters for the needs of the common man, and the role of education and motivation, is also evident in the diaspora churches on the OKR as witnessed in my fieldwork, although in the churches visited in the fieldwork, these elements have been adapted and developed in a new context in regard to West African migrants struggles to integrate into a Western society. Having examined the African context, I will now give a brief overview of the history of Black Majority Churches in the diaspora. This will show how and why these churches have been increasing in number and in membership in the context of the UK, where BMCs are a growing phenomenon.

From the 1960s, poor governance and economic decline in former colonial African countries (such as Ghana and Nigeria) combined with a relatively liberal immigration policy in the UK resulted in a large African Christian migrant community in Britain in pursuit of education, employment and a hope for a better life with a sizeable number of West African migrants living in urban areas and a great presence in the capital. White European perceptions of these migrants and remaining colonialist dispositions may have acted as a barrier for the integration of these migrants into society. They encountered individual and institutional racial discrimination in the workplace as well as discrimination and cultural differences and unfamiliar church styles in British churches (Burgess, 2012), and a general feeling of alienation and exclusion and thus started to form churches of their own. At the same time, Christian denominations in Africa commenced establishing branches in Britain to cater for the social and spiritual needs of their members in the diaspora (Osgood, 2012). For these reasons, Black-led churches have been increasing in number and in membership ever since.

These migrant churches are becoming more and more visible in the public space as they acquire their own buildings, such as industrial units, shop units and vacated properties (Burgess, 2012) and through media and their use of signage with banners and signs promising success and proclaiming the messaging of prosperity, such as 'Winner's temple', 'Sharing vision of success with people of destiny', 'A call to holiness, greatness and excellence', 'Adding value to your life', and 'House of wisdom and prosperity' (own findings). As the language of these signs indicates, these churches are members of the prosperity theology movement.

The various factors described above show how the prosperity movement made its way to Britain and what the salient features of these transnational churches are, moreover it provides insights into the struggles this group of West African migrants face as a minority within British society. More detail on these aspects can be seen through a case study of a mega-event run by one of the largest prosperity denominations in the UK.

Out of the ashes we rise: The Festival of Life

This section will further explicate the themes introduced above by examining an annual event run by the the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). The church I have been visiting for my fieldwork also belongs to the RCCG network. RCCG is a Nigerian (Yoruba)-led denomination and is considered to be the largest and fastest growing BMC in Britain. Burgess, in his book chapter: *'African Pentecostal Growth: The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Britain'* (2012), discusses their growth and popularity. The factors he identifies as being crucial for the success of this denomination include their appeal to migrants and focus on the African diaspora, providing a social and religious support network, together with their holistic approach and concept of salvation and their special focus on prosperity teaching, 'inculcating some of the core values of western society, such as materialism, success, careerism and human potential' (*ibid.*:133), as well as their commitment to human dignity and social justice and a certain charismatic leadership style enabling

and empowering the laity, and their ability to reinvent themselves in response to modernising trends.

The RCCG meets in London twice a year in the EXCEL Exhibition Centre in East London, with regular attendees of around 40,000 each time. Starting in the evening, it runs throughout the night and takes up to ten hours. It is called 'The Festival of Life' (FoL). The flavor and atmosphere I witnessed there was quite different from the 'Mission to London event', not just in scale, but also in its general feel. Most notably there was less aggressive marketing of the movement's own literature, and preaching of the message of financial prosperity, although both elements played an integral part in the events. Overall, it felt much more like a big family-event, the gathering of a close-knit network. It is more homogenous in its appearance, representing a particular ethnic minority with a certain religious and cultural value system, as well as their lived experience as immigrants and settlers into the country. The leader - known as the General Overseer (GO) - of this Christian group who, is also the founder of these Festival of Life events, resides in Nigeria but always comes to attend the events in London. He and his wife are called 'daddy and mommy GO'. They are the main figures of the event with both giving speeches and carrying out prayers – however, 'daddy GO' undeniably takes center stage. This will be elucidated further below. In Nigeria, such events are held monthly with a multitude of between half a million to a million adherents attending. As such, the FoL is an expansion of the Nigerian version of this Holy Ghost service. The FoL in London has recently (October 2016) celebrated its 20th anniversary. Throughout the years, it has developed in terms of scale, but always remained within the limitations of the ethnic minority. In recent years, the FoL was also held in other cities like Cardiff, Manchester and Belfast. As I describe the different features of this event, I will touch upon aspects that will be analyzed in later chapters by looking at the movement along the OKR in detail.

The financial aspect and the taking of offerings for the event play an integral part during the first part of the evening. The entry to the FoL is free; the costs of organizing the event in London in recent years have amounted to £500,000 (with resources coming from RCCG churches' contributions and especially partners of the

FoL which are recruited during the FoL bi-annually as well as other organizations). The collecting of offerings is always accompanied with songs and prayers. At one of the events I attended, one announcer used a Bible passage to encourage that at least one thousand members give £1000 as that would add up to £1 million. This was accompanied by the affirmation that God would not forget such and that it is like planting a seed. After that, he encouraged to give £200 or less as donations as well alongside a prayer that the Lord would open the gates of financial blessing as the adherents give this seed. Ushers come to each row in the arena to collect the offerings. During and after the meeting participants are also given the opportunity to move around freely in order to go to the stands at the back, where they can buy food and drinks or some prosperity literature and other merchandise. In many ways, this resembled the practices I had witnessed at the Mission to London event as previously described. However, they were executed in a less aggressive way and there were other salient themes foregrounded at the events in addition to the financial aspects (see below). Also, the call for donations and offerings seemed more connected to practical costs involved in organising events and maintaining and expanding the ministry. At the same time, it is very unlikely that most of the members had great resources and that such a call to give great amounts would have probably discouraged the congregation from giving too little, and maybe encouraged wealthier members to donate more for the ministry, so that costs can be covered.

The name 'Festival of Life' is a very good illustration of what the event is about. Although it primarily refers to the experience of the Holy Spirit, the whole night is about a successful life (in Britain). The themes and topics covered throughout the night reflect the lives of the adherents of the movement which is characterized by many obstacles with it economically, in terms of dis-embeddedness from one's kinship network and in terms of culture clash, integration issues, mental and physical health, and of course social mobility in a situation of structural inequality and discrimination and so on - a life against the odds for which miracles, blessings and God's intervention are needed.

In general, the atmosphere at the festival is very celebratory with lots of songs led by choirs and great lighting and colours. The following song from one of the events provides a more explicit example to reiterate the points raised [emphasis added].

‘Water you turned into wine, opened the eyes of the blind,
there is no one like you.
Into the darkness you shine, *out of the ashes we rise*.
There is no one like you.
Our God is greater, our God is stronger,
our God is higher than any other,
our God is healer, awesome in power, our God.
And if our God is with us, what can be against us
and if our God is for us then who can be against us’.

There is an abundance of praising and giving thanks to God for what he has done in the lives of the members in terms of immigration papers, jobs, promotions, marriages, children, salvation, healing, deliverance. The ambience is very charged in terms of emotions, and rich in expression for example through drama, and worship and many different colours which radiate through both the dresses worn by performing choirs and the stage lighting as well as a unified and warm and joyous expression of the audience. It made me think of religious eroticism and intoxication as outlined by Weber and Durkheim.

One focal point is certainly the sermon of the GO and his prayers which are about more deliverance, healing and prosperity now and in the future, as well as for a continuing support of this ethnic minority in this country, and revival. He comes to the podium about six hours into the event - the man of God, the prophet who is the central figure of this night and this movement. He is introduced with a big buzz and a solo saxophone performance of a hymn. His sermon is two hours long with testimonies including personal testimonies and prophecies, a message of salvation, healing, deliverance, joy, miracles and prosperity convicting the audience of God’s intervention ‘tonight’. In between, converts are called to the stage (for an altar call) to be saved while the GO is slowly counting to ten with the rest of the members.

Everybody is being encouraged to clap their hands constantly as this night is a new beginning, in the words of the GO 'everything will become better for you'. Hundreds are flocking to the stage, a prayer of salvation is made, they are then led to a side room to fill in some forms before they come back to the main room five minutes later.

Each FoL event has a list with specific prayer points (see Appendix Two) covering topics of praise, asking for healing, deliverance, financial freedom, promotions, blessings, revival, miracles, etc. in a bold and straightforward manner. Rather than focussing only on the financial aspect, the points relate in more detail to the members need as an ethnic minority settling in the host country further revealing the events' more holistic approach to prosperity. Both times the interactive prayer sessions lasted around thirty minutes which was followed by testimonies of what the Lord had done. After the testimonies, the GO comes to the stage again and addresses the audience. In October 2016, he asked the audience to shout 'hallelujah' like they had never done before. He then stated 'because the Lord has told me that all the blessings he has stored up for you will be released from tonight'. This is then followed by a thanksgiving offering, as the audience is encouraged to show God that 'you' are thankful. As the audience and the GO prepare the thanksgiving offering the choir worships God. The event then draws to a close with worship and praise. The audience goes peacefully and orderly back to their homes everyone seems to be filled and content, rejuvenated and joyful (including myself). The functions, the sermon and prayers, as well as the worship and the testimonies during the events in relation to restoration, renewal and a positive outlook for the future will be discussed in detail in the themes that came out of the case study of one church on the OKR.

During the first part of the meeting there are various speeches held by invited guest speakers ranging from leading figures within other Christian mainstream denominations, the overseer of the Evangelical Alliance to politicians, such as the Mayor of London or the Prime Minister. This can be seen as displaying important bridging and linking social capital beyond the bonding social capital of the co-ethnic group that is gathered. Through their partnerships to wider outward looking social

networks, signifying the crossing of boundaries and the building of bridges and links with others in civil society, they are enabled to move beyond the 'thick' bonding of close communities to a 'thinner' but more connected civic life (Putnam 2007; Furbey et al., 2006; Gilchrist 2004; Bourdieu 1980, 1986). Looking at it from the perspective of the guest speakers especially from other Christian mainstream denominations, the motivations seem similar in nature, although they come from another starting point. In one of the FoL events, the Archbishop of Canterbury gave a speech which included a prayer for forgiveness for excluding the first immigrants who came with the 'Windrush' generation from the British churches therefore having to form their own. Another example would be Hugh Osgood's speech, the president of 'Churches Together' in England (representing a third of the churches in England), who has a strong connection to the BMCs and has been a strong supporter of these independent churches over the decades. His preaching was on having crossed the river to the other side and now seeking to build a bridge back to the other side, asking for the help of this growing church in the UK. In a time which sees the mainstream churches in a constant decline whereas the BMCs are the only growing Christian denominations in the country (Goodhew, 2012), Osgood asked for the congregations support. This seems to go beyond a mere call for unification and partnership denoting more of a desperate appeal for help in saving the mainstream denomination's impact on the country in terms of membership.

From within the political spectrum, David Cameron, Boris Johnson and others have also attended the FoL over the years, coincidentally before elections. In personal conversations with adherents of the movement and regular participants at the FoL, Boris Johnson has been described to me as 'a regular' at the event. I heard David Cameron's speech in 2014 in which he thanked the community 'for their hard work for the country' and praised them for their 'aspirations'. He went on to encourage them further stating that 'maybe soon one of you might be the next prime minister'. The BBC 2 documentary '*Will Britain ever have a black Prime Minister*' (Harewood, 2016) which was first broadcast in November 2016 put this into more perspective. Taking two children born in the UK today – one Black and one White – the research for the programme presented by David Harewood came to the

conclusion that the Black child is twelve times less likely to become prime minister. At the time of the documentary, out of the 650 members of parliament only thirteen were Black; there were no Black Supreme Court or High Court judges in the country and no Black generals in the army. In addition, the programme presented research showing that Black students with the same predicted grades as White students were less likely to be offered places at top universities. The fine words that leading politicians have delivered at this event contradict the real-life situation of the followers of this movement. They are stuck structurally and desperate to belong, but whilst the politicians seek their vote, they offer little in the way of real structural support. There is a cruel irony in the spectacle of politicians coming in search of votes, despite often being perpetrators of the structural order which has entrapped the people they are addressing.

Conclusion: global – local – glocal

The 'Mission to London' event and the 'Festival of Life' are two of the more important mega-events of the prosperity movement in the UK context. Looking at the movement from the point of view of these large-scale events has facilitated a better understanding not only of its globalised nature and local impact and expression, but also its roots and routes, and the type of message it spreads and promotes. Although they had some similar features, the two events were very different in expression and style. Especially the MTL event seemed to be very aggressive in terms of the monetisation and commodification of the message through a very aggressive advertising campaign of literature, CDs and other material surrounding the message and its promoters; whereas the FoL seemed to be much more about a transnational community in the UK, and especially London, who are seeking to establish themselves in the higher spheres of society. This speaks to the diversity and ambiguity of the movement. The media coverage of the movement has focused on scandals, the extreme wealth of the mega-church pastors and the possible exploitation of followers. Although such elements are clearly evident, especially in the MTL event, delving deeper below the surface – through the FoL event and more

strongly in the localized churches as will be discussed in the following chapters – shows a different side of the movement that has received substantially less public attention.

As highlighted by my research in this chapter, this form of Christianity with its theology and practices is well adapted to the modern cultural condition, and they can be considered as belonging to the present age (rather than the afterlife) (Coleman, 2000). The movement can be viewed in the light of the globalisation theory to which the flux of capital around the world, ‘worldwide media systems or the articulations of cultural identities in relation to humanity as a whole’ (*ibid.*: 4), and transnational flows of religious culture (Appadurai, 1996) are implicit. This can be seen in the findings presented thus far. This religious form of transnational activity in the space of the global is neither homogeneous nor neutral in its constitution, but includes a realm of possibilities and is dynamic yet fragmented with often competing versions of global consciousness and practice. It represents an enchanted version of the globe with its spiritual battles over the possibilities of a ‘good life’, constructing a place of their own, ‘a specific arena of action and meaning, within the shifting, liminal, chaotic space of the global’ (Coleman, 2000: 8). This reveals that processes of globalisation do not simply happen to believers, but that they also create them in their own image.

On the one hand, an engagement with the movement allows each individual to perceive themselves as an actor in the global enchanted universe mutually reinforcing each other. On the other hand, the leaders of this movement have found ways to localise their message in order for it to particularly resonate in the context of their society, whilst at the same time adherents find comfort and encouragement that they belong to a movement which is transnational in its scope which extends their immediate social-cultural and economic-political hostile environment. This means that not only the global, but also the local and national context has to be considered when analysing the beliefs and practices of believers adhering to this theology.

Having looked at the global or glocal expressions through the mega-event perspective as well as having highlighted some relevant historical and cultural elements of neoliberalism, colonialism and African traditionalism, in the subsequent chapters, I will discuss my findings of my participants value-system and practices on the localised phenomenon on the OKR through the value/s framework, in particular the person-value model. The following chapter discusses the position of the movement's adherents on the margins of society and their resistance to this positioning. This is followed by two chapters which examine the members' reactive and proactive strategies against this positioning from the perspective of 'value' and a further chapter which draws out the 'values' elements of the adherents' lived experiences.

Part 3

Chapter six: Resistance from the Margins

Introduction

The previous two chapters provided a context for my analysis. Firstly, the localised context of the OKR itself and the borough of Southwark it sits within were discussed. Secondly, I examined the broader prosperity movement focussing on two mega events and elucidated the American and African influences on this localised phenomenon. This chapter will now show the adaptation of the prosperity discourse and its related practices to fit the needs of the members of this localised movement on the OKR. This chapter thus sets the scene to apply Skeggs' value/values theory as my theoretical framework, by investigating the phenomenon from a post-colonial perspective as a community empowered by transformative collective resistance to overcome marginal positions. I will show that the localised adapted prosperity discourse promoted on the OKR functions as a form of liberation theology and in this way as a form of advanced 'just talk' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012). This is promoted by prosperity preachers with the goal of letting the adherents of the movement reimagine themselves and to reposition them within the British socio-economic structure, in the face of devaluation and fixation resulting from prevailing perceptions of colonial history and the transatlantic slave trade. The leaders of the movement seek to empower the agency of members of the localised prosperity movement on the OKR, whilst attaching them to a community of support, and providing emotional coping mechanisms whilst also fulfilling a therapeutic function to help them deal with their adverse circumstances.

Firstly, this chapter will discuss the members' position within society as Black migrants drawing from post-colonial perspectives which among other things expose the neo-colonial relations linked with the global expansion of neo-liberalism grounded in the division between the West and the Rest which also entails the making of a new subject of value. It will then explicate how liberation theology is used to re-position them and re-imagine the community. Furthermore, I will describe how this plays out in the localized prosperity churches on the OKR. This

chapter draws on data from the movement's literature, the contents of sermons, songs, testimonies and activities observed in the 'Overcomers' Church' as well as the contents and symbols used in advertisements for various events. This material is structured according to a 5-step 'breakthrough' strategy promoted by a life-coaching agency, as the role of prosperity pastors as life-coaches is revealed to be very significant. Thus, this chapter lays the foundation for the following chapters which will firstly examine their struggle for value and subsequently explore their struggle for values.

Positioning, re-positioning and re-imagining

Foucault (1980) gives a useful definition of the positioning of people through historical processes accompanied with discourses in connection to power. He contends that 'not only is discourse always impacted in power; discourse is one of the 'systems' through which power circulates'. Thus, by the power exerted over many generations, the Europeans stood, *vis-à-vis* the Others in a position of dominant power. Foucault notes that 'the knowledge which a discourse produces constitutes a kind of power, exercised over those who are 'known'. When that knowledge is exercised in practice, those who are 'known' in a particular way will be subject (i.e. subjected) to it. This is always a power relation' (*ibid.*). What I have witnessed in my fieldwork on the OKR among immigrants from West Africa is a form of resistance to dominant discourses that limit people and fix them in place.

Only by looking at the larger context can we understand why this community has formed and what is going on in these churches/communities, as value(s) struggle and strategies in the UK are informed by a cultural and embodied history, structural limitations and the conditions they encounter in the UK. Firstly, this section introduces the current (since the terrorist attacks in 2005) political climate of the contestation of multiculturalism that this phenomenon can be placed within. This is followed by a brief history of post-war immigration from new commonwealth countries and their reception by natives. Subsequently, I will explicate the reasons behind these reactions by investigating the history of colonialism and the

transatlantic slave trade, its material and immaterial effects for my participants as well as their reaction towards these forces. This brings out their collective struggle aided through the liberation discourse and its related practices as promoted by the leaders of the movement, which seeks to change the position of adherents of the movement by empowering them to re-imagine themselves with a focus on their future.

As we have seen thus far, the Black Majority Churches on the Old Kent Road constitute a suburban community mainly comprised of West African immigrants and promote the prosperity gospel. Part of this message is a push to be liberated from the discourse of being primitive, backward, or otherwise inferior, to overcome the structural inequalities resulting from historical processes and their discursive representations, and to try to be integrated into their new society, in other words to reposition themselves.

This takes place within a political climate in which the always contested and multivalent discourse on multiculturalism has been replaced by representations of society that emphasise fluidity, hybridity and cross-fertilisation. Accompanied by a shift in government and wider policy thinking in relation to the challenges posed by multicultural communities in Britain, migrants who were once encouraged to organise themselves when cultural difference was more accepted are now expected to practice community cohesion (Herbert, 2008). Although still 'valuing diversity', the UK government's agenda is now much more focused on building 'shared values' and a 'sense of belonging' among migrants and Black and minority ethnic populations (Cantle, 2008). Ethnic diversity is again being constructed as a problem in public and political life and following on from various terrorist attacks since 2005, multiculturalism is seen as having failed to foster a shared sense of nation and community cohesion. In this context, Wills et al. argue that 'the focus on consensus-building through changing values tends to ignore the racism and structural inequalities that have often created a lack of social and community cohesion in the first place' (2010: 136). They go on to say that by ignoring inequalities due to structural problems, the responsibility has been shifted from the state on to individuals. Whilst migrants often desire to integrate, in practice, their structural

position and the wider economic and social exclusions that arise from the structural location prevent them from doing so (*ibid.*).

Looking at the history of post-war immigration, before the *Empire Windrush* brought a small number of Black citizens from Jamaica in 1948, there had been a large number (150,000-200,000) of eastern European immigrants fleeing the imposition of Communism through the European Voluntary Workers programme. Yet the very small number of the 492 passengers of the *Empire Windrush* sparked much greater public concern. Caribbean immigrants arrived to settle in a hostile territory and were seen as rivals for women, welfare and work resulting in riots in various parts of the country. The response from the government was tighter controls through the establishment of various Immigration Acts in order to put a limit on immigration from the new Commonwealth (see Hatton and Wheatley-Price, 2005). As a result of such naked hostility, Black immigrants mainly settled in areas of declining white populations and where diasporic communities in inner-city locations were growing (Herbert, 2008). Over time these communities developed their own civil society infrastructure, including faith institutions. According to Wills et al. (2010), the struggle for Black Britons to secure their rightful place in British society has been dynamic as they remark that 'black was an identity that reflected a shared experience of colonial oppression at home and racial discrimination abroad' (2010: 166).

Black people in Britain have a long history which as Peter Fryer (2010) for example shows in his *Staying Power: The History of Black People living in Britain* is marked by racism. He argues that racism 'not only justified plantation slavery and, later, colonialism, but also poisoned the lives of Black people living in Britain. It is still doing so' (*ibid.*). Undeniably, histories have their real, material and symbolic effects and historical events and intellectual discourse have formed great structural inequalities as well as ideas about superiority and inferiority in people's minds. Looking back at the historical processes provides insight into the concept and the reality of 'the Rest in the West'. This is critical for understanding the phenomenon of the prosperity churches on the OKR.

Whilst the cultural category of 'race' is a social construction which was produced in combination with the history of colonialism and the emergence of the slave trade and its accompanying theories to justify and rationalise slavery as a particular way of some people talking about themselves and others, race still has real material effects in the lives of people through institutionalized practices of preference and discrimination. Socioeconomic factors, in combination with early but enduring views of race, have led to considerable suffering within disadvantaged racial groups. Skeggs (2004) shows how certain attachments and inscriptions become fixed on bodies by pointing out that people with African heritage 'are always inscribed and read as black in our Western colour-coded visual economy' (Skeggs, 2004: 1), generated through a system of inscription in the first place stemming from a complex cultural history. Thus 'some forms of culture are condensed and inscribed onto social groups and bodies that then mark them and restrict their movement in social space' (*ibid.*: 2).

Indeed, throughout the history of humankind, the dominant culture has assigned identity based on race, both as a means of distinguishing one group from another, but more importantly as a means of diminishing their status and maintaining control. Often, this distinction is made simply on the basis of simple skin tone. Through this mechanism of assigning identity, race becomes a political weapon of the majority that has several limiting effects on the oppressed group, including determining their freedom of movement within the society, limiting upward mobility from class to class, prohibiting or minimizing economic gain, and a psychological impact on how the oppressed individual perceives them self and exists within the confines of the limiting social expectations that have been imposed upon them as subjects of constant devaluation (economically and symbolically) (Skeggs, 2014: 13). Skeggs, in terms of the market position of marginalised groups in society remarks on 'how birth into categorisations, known and recognised through inscription, representations, discourse and narrative, but also institutionalised and surveilled, sets limits on the potential for exchange' (2004: 77), thus revealing a theory of positioning and showing that the market is not a neutral playing field, but an already divided historical entity, 'premised upon

classification with historically generated value' (*ibid.*) into which people enter with different access to different types of resources. In this way, Skeggs promotes 'an understanding of a symbolic economy, of the significance of representations and categorisations in attributing value that sticks to certain bodies, fixing some in place and enabling others to be mobile' (*ibid.*). This reveals the institutionalised value processes beyond the economy by looking at the cultural elements embedded in them. She makes the point here that only some can utilise their culture, therefore having different access to becoming a subject of value. Following on from this we can see how these processes not only reveal the value struggles of my participants but how this also affects their struggles for values.

This shows how deeply intertwined the struggles for value and values are within the prosperity movement on the OKR and how they come into effect and circulate alongside the dominant symbolic. Just like Skeggs' White working-class women, my participants dissimulate from their position, repositioning themselves in a more future oriented way, always seeking to optimise and improve themselves, investing in themselves to become a legitimate subject of value. In terms of their values struggle they are engaged in changing the discourse of the dominant symbolic through an alternative value system that gives meaning to their circumstances and repositions them as valuable and possessing dignity, which improves their outlook, rejuvenates them and instils them with hope to break through the wall of being fixed into one place. This movement is a movement of empowerment on an emotional level in the first place, but also on an economic level. Yet the question is, to what extent will they be able to change their future position in the British society?

Hall (1990) grapples with this question as he argues that 'black people whom colonialization and slavery distributed across the African diaspora' have been positioned by these processes with their accompanying discourses, yet he notes that it is salient how one positions oneself within these narratives. Going on he contends that 'the ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subject-ed in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation' (Hall, 1990: 225). As

mentioned above, Foucault (1980) reminds us that every regime of representation is a regime of power formed by the fatal couplet 'power/knowledge'. Hall continues to comment that 'it is one thing to position a subject or a set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge'' (Hall, 1990: 226)

Hall remarks that the experience of slavery and colonialism, which uprooted Black people from their past and positioned the black subject within the dominant regimes of Western or European representation, has also unified them through this experience across their differences. He notes 'vis-a-vis the developed West, we are very much 'the same'. We belong to the marginal, the underdeveloped, the periphery, the 'Other'. We are at the outer edge, the 'rim', of the metropolitan world – always 'South' to someone else's El Norte' (*ibid.*: 228), indicating that the common history of slavery and colonisation has been profoundly formative, unifying Black people across their differences. Having been positioned, Hall reasons what matters is whether one takes this positioning as natural and permanent or as strategic and arbitrary. He goes on to say that 'there is always something 'left over' (*ibid.*: 230), revealing that it is possible to rethink the positionings and repositionings of cultural identities. Thus, the presence (as a minority in the West or Europe or America) marks a moment of exclusion, imposition and expropriation as an extrinsic and Hall argues also to some extent intrinsic force, as this power has become a constitutive element. Hall exemplifies the fixating power of the dominating European presence by saying: 'this 'look', from – so to speak – the place of the Other, fixes us, not only in its violence, hostility and aggression, but in its ambivalence of its desire' (*ibid.*: 233). It's a dialogue, he asserts, of power and resistance, of refusal and recognition. Hall asks 'how can we stage this dialogue so that, finally, we can place it, without terror or violence, rather than being forever placed by it? Can we ever recognise its irreversible influence, whilst resisting its imperialising eye?' (*ibid.*). He concludes that it requires the most complex cultural strategies. He is searching for a form of representation which is able to constitute 'us' (the Black subject) as new kinds of subjects and thereby enable 'us' to discover places from which to speak. In regard to his point on the unifying of the Black

subject through historical processes, Hall summarises this with a comment on Benedict Anderson's imagined communities: 'Benedict Anderson argues that imagined communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (*ibid.*: 237).

This leads us to think about forms of collective consciousness, collective imagination and mobilisation and helps to make sense of the prosperity movement on the OKR with its discourse and accompanying practices. Through 'an accident of birth' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012), my participants find themselves caught up in devaluation and negative representation as a collective group, which has concrete material effects on them leading to marginalisation and often exclusion. However, the prosperity discourse repositions them as valuable and possessing dignity and provides a positive self-image. New immigration research focussing on the outcomes of the immigrant generation and their offspring often entails a strong focus on culture as denoting the difference between success and failure. Bashi (2007), for example, asks what the cultural legacy is that the first generation of immigrants gives to the second generation. The re-imagining of the community through the prosperity discourse allows parents to leave behind a more positive legacy for their children. In such a way, they actively engage in the struggle to enable their children to achieve a better position in the society and a brighter future outlook.

Repositioning and re-imagining on the OKR

Against this backdrop I will now explicate how these struggles over the re-imagining of community and re-positioning of a collective group were witnessed in my fieldwork as a form of transformative resistance from a marginal position among adherents of the prosperity movement along the OKR. I experienced how the prosperity preachers on the OKR try to counteract this form of devaluation and marginalisation resulting from colonialism (and the transatlantic slave trade) with its remaining material and immaterial effects. They use their liberation theology of prosperity as a form of resistance to this positioning by the dominant culture and to

dominant discourses that limit people and fix them in place as they engage in the struggle to re-position their adherents. In trying to let their adherents see themselves as people who have a great future, rather than focussing on the past or the present with its structural and symbolic inequalities, they present God (and Jesus Christ, as well as the Holy Spirit) as an advocate for oppressed people claiming that it does not matter where you come from but where you are going.

This is reinforced through a theology which emphasises making a break from the past, promoting discontinuity and individuality (Daswani, 2010), followed by the construction of one's vision of life in a new way. To this end, the neo-Pentecostal localised practices and ideologies are a vehicle for shaping the personal desires, life strategies, and biographies of the adherents of the community. Key to achieving this was the process of a personal transformation which followed conversion and which had real effects in the lives of adherents of the movement, particularly in terms of having a feeling of empowerment and enhanced agency. Thus, church members are provided with an ethical framework for positive change, which emphasizes an enhanced status, individual choice, and economic betterment, where they no longer see themselves as victims of circumstances beyond their control. It allows the members to better cope with the multitude of life's problems including unhealthy relationships, and helps them move toward an improved socio-economic status and increased geographic mobility.

As an ideological discourse about personal change, this form of transformation is indexical of a discontinuity with a negative past they are trying to leave behind and continuity with future ambitions and aspirations for economic mobility, regardless of the actual outcome (*ibid.*). This ideology of rupture is central to understanding this movement, which functions as an ongoing process that is never complete and through which adherents are constantly negotiating old and new worlds. Paying more attention to narratives on discontinuity does not necessarily mean that adherents of this movement literally make a complete break with the past, as Daswani (2010) found in her research among members of a Ghanaian Pentecostal Church in Ghana and London. Instead, it is, as she remarks, 'the promise of transcendental certainty amid a world that is changing that is attractive to

members and gives meaning and a coping mechanism to their circumstances' (*ibid*: 445). To this end, church members of the localised prosperity movement on the OKR engage in a meaningful dialogue with social, economic and cultural changes and pragmatically address both personal and wider social changes. At the same time, this movement on the OKR provides a rich ritual life that caters for new forms of stability and social continuity. Thus, it helps congregants to navigate their lives in a meaningful and structured way, as discontinuity with traditional kinship structures is also replaced by a new neo-Pentecostal family. This ethical framework could be understood as a religious model of change. This kind of theology builds upon the agency of the individual to change their lives from a current dissatisfying state to a good and 'normal' or 'successful' and fulfilled or 'prosperous' life. In this way, those members of the prosperity movement along the OKR who have been positioned as marginalised by the dominant symbolic generate alternative ways of making value. It can be argued that they engage in what can be termed 'just talk', talks of fairness and kindness against devaluation and delegitimization, fostering solidarity (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012), through the localised liberation theology of prosperity.

This form of resistance has been typified by de Sousa Santos (2014) as 'epistemologies of the south' signifying the production and validation of knowledges anchored in the experiences of resistance of all those social groups that have systematically suffered injustice, oppression and destruction caused by capitalism and colonialism. He argues that the diverse experiences of the geographical and non-geographical south give rise to knowledges (epistemological south) born in struggles, or counter-knowledges. This allows oppressed social groups to represent the world as their own and in their own terms, for only in such a way will they be able to transform it according to their own aspirations. Thus, the epistemological south is likewise to be found in the geographical north in many of the ongoing struggles against capitalism, colonialism as well as patriarchy. Wills et al. (2010) also recognise that the creation of social and community networks among co-ethnic and co-nationals often acts as a critical bulwark against exclusions and

discrimination, 'being part of an arsenal of survival tactics in London' (Wills et al., 2010: 136).

Liberation theology- prosperity theology that seeks to re-position their members

As discussed in the introduction prosperity theology fits within liberation theology—a movement in Christian theology which conveys the teaching of Jesus Christ in terms of liberation from unjust economic, political and social conditions. It is an interpretation of the Christian faith through the poor's suffering and their struggle and hope for better life chances. As we have seen in previous chapters, prosperity theology comes in multiple forms, whereas some emphasise the financial side, other branches of liberation theology emphasise race, gender or other issues. The churches along the OKR offer biblical solutions to poverty and dismay, frustration and depression. The Bible is used as the manual for being successful and as a form of counteracting external limitations through structural barriers and coping with internal negative affects produced through historical processes of devaluation. Prosperity is promoted as a divine plan for humanity, with prosperity churches 'proclaiming the message of 'God's goodness and human potential' (Bowler, 2013:7) with clear individualistic tendencies. However, the social niche is a socio-economic ethnic-minority who have identified their position and have formed a collective conscience. The problem-solving approach and success orientated theology which links faith and prayer with expectations of material prosperity and success appeals to those migrants who came to Britain for better life-chances and reflects the preoccupation with individual progress.

This message of prosperity is promoted in the 'Overcomers' Church' which is part of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) network, one of the biggest Nigerian denominations in and outside of Nigeria with its European headquarters in London. The leader of this Nigerian Pentecostal denomination is Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye, the General Overseer of the RCCG. He holds a PhD in applied mathematics and as an academic, is a senior lecturer at the University of Lagos, Nigeria. He has written a book '*The Anatomy of Greatness*' (2012) which is a guide

for greatness and gives a very good insight into the theology of the RCCG. I will therefore give a brief outline. The main message of this book is his claim that 'everyone is born to be great'. He uses the focus of crisis and open doors and examples of various characters of the Bible (e.g. Abraham, Joseph, Samson, David). What they have in common is that although they started from a point of crisis, they experienced divine help to increase in possessions and/or position. Using these examples, he makes many prophesies that in unexpected situations God will open a door for the reader, using his own and other people's examples in addition to the biblical characters. He continues: 'What are the things that don't matter? First, your present situation. It doesn't matter your present situation, where God is taking you, is where he is taking you. [...] Your present situation does not matter. Your past does not matter.' (Adeboye, 2012: 12, 40). He then goes on to say that God is the 'decider of destinies' and that destinies can be changed, eventually revealing that: 'Your destiny is in your hand' (*ibid.*: 43). This is followed by a concrete guide to how this greatness can be achieved through various strategies e.g. positive confession as well as changing one's thinking, outlook and actions, thus preparing for greatness since 'once God says you are going to be great, you better prepare' (*ibid.*: 78). After having listed different categories of greatness he concludes: 'Prosperity has principles. Once you follow these principles, you would be ranked among the great. This is an eye opener and a master key with which you can unlock the abundance of the treasures of heaven. You can flourish. You have been commanded to flourish. You will flourish as you obey the commandment of God' (*ibid.*). This quote in the book reveals that as part of this theology of prosperity a manual is provided that one must follow in order to flourish. Thus, this book reflects the transformative interventionist approach to reposition the adherents of this movement. This is further reiterated by the fact that it also advises on strategies of improvement, which I will discuss in detail in the next chapter in relation to the localised expression.

The same approach was witnessed in the sermons given to the congregation of the 'Overcomers' Church' during my fieldwork which focussed on various aspects of this theology. The vision of re-positioning the members of the church was constantly

reinforced through various teachings and preachings using examples from the Bible as well as other historical figures. This was accompanied by additional strategies of empowerment, such as educating adherents about their current structural position and life style and showing how transformation could and should be achieved (intrinsically and extrinsically). These same themes are also reflected in the banners and signs that are displayed on the exterior of the churches on the OKR discussed in chapter four (see images on pp.127-8), for example: *'Setting the captives free'*, *'Winner's Temple'*, *'Raising breakthrough generation'*, *'Sharing vision of success with people of destiny'* and so on, revealing the transformational approach of the prosperity movement in a context of deprivation and devaluation.

At this point I would like to draw attention to an invitation to one of the churches along the OKR focusing on a change through divine intervention, promoting the theme of *'Prevailing Against All Odds'*. Throughout the course of my fieldwork I have collected a plethora of such invitations, flyers, etc. that are frequently handed out by church members on the street or in front of shops and supermarkets. The one displayed below is a very typical one:



Figure 6.1: *'Divine Turnaround'* - An invitation to one of the churches along the OKR

The theme of a divine turnaround and prevailing against all odds poignantly reflects the collective struggle of my members for re-positioning in the face of what I have discussed so far in this chapter. I would also like to highlight the following song 'Yehovah turned my life around!' to sum up this point. This song was sung frequently and accompanied by enthusiastic dancing and constant turning around three hundred and sixty degrees , again and again:

Who has the final say? Yehovah has the final say!

Yehovah turned my life around!

He makes a way where there seems no way

Yehovah has the final say!

The lyrics of this song as well as the embodiment of it in terms of their collective turning during the song also succinctly capture the collective struggle of my participants to re-position themselves by re-imagining themselves through the liberation theology promoted by the leaders of the movement. Through my fieldwork I got an insight in this complex and dynamic struggle characterized by church members' first-hand experience of the global and local inequalities and the toxic ideologies of superiority and inferiority, living the conditions of intensified devaluation. They are constantly struggling to integrate themselves into their new society and reposition themselves due to prevailing institutionalized ethnocentric and 'racial' perceptions and discrimination that function to limit others and fix them in their social space. At the same time, they experience a lot of negative affects in this struggle of settlement. In order to counteract this positioning, being fixed into place and being positioned as marginal by the dominant symbolic.

In what follows I will illuminate this situational application of faith further by outlining the way it draws inspiration from the concept of 'life-coaching'.

Life-coaches as agents of change and life-coaching strategies

The concept of 'life coaching' gained popularity in the US in the 1970s as many self-help workshops sprang up. These were part of the broader human potential movement which developed in the 1960s in order to cultivate wellness and personal transformation. Integral to the concept of life coaching are, on the one hand, so called 'agents of change' as people who bring about change and, on the other hand, rules that bring about change⁹. I myself was not aware of this concept at the start of my fieldwork. However, once I came across it, it helped me a lot to understand what was going on in the meetings and to de-code the terminology and the strategies that were utilised - a mixture of neo-Pentecostal Bible interpretation enmeshed with an approach that is based on the idea of self-improvement and self-empowerment. The concept became salient during the interview with the junior pastor of the church as he referred to it in relation to his role in the church, positioning himself as a life-coach, an 'agent of change' when I asked him about how he prepares for the different meetings during the week:

JP: ... I relate everything to where my people are, and where I think they're trying to go and where I think God would like them to with their lives, so like a message on Sunday it's all about people making progress not just living life from day to day, constant through the motions, make sure you have a plan, you wanna achieve something, and then you go about it and then this way you push people to do better, *a bit like a coach*

Danny: Yeah, it's a bit like coaching

JP: mmh, it's not your best friend but it pushes you to achieve better, and that's what I would like to do ... *a life coach for people in the congregation that I lead*

Later on in the interview I came back to the topic:

⁹ Thomas Leonard is associated with popularising and globalising the discipline of coaching. This approach draws inspiration on Gladwell's 'tipping point theory' (2000) which describes three different types of agents of change and rules that bring about change.

Danny: You have touched upon being a coach, you see yourself as a life coach; so what is your role towards the members, especially what you just said in terms of coaching

JP: It's to empower them and then primarily one of my core passions is to empower people to maximise their potential in life whilst going on the heavenly trajectory.

Positioning himself as a life coach relates to the holistic approach to liberation promoted in the church and here the junior pastor shows how the message that is preached is focused on improving life in terms of societal life. This was also mentioned by him when I asked him about what motivated him to become a leader of the church. He told me about how he trained after being called by God and then made a comment about what motivates him:

JP: ... because I also work and have a career in the professional industry ... I see the problems ethnic minorities have, I see the society problems I see the problems everybody has and then I try to make sure that in my Christianity reflects society and how to be better in the society ... cause it's not just about heaven, heaven is the ultimate aim but before we get there we gotta deal with this world.

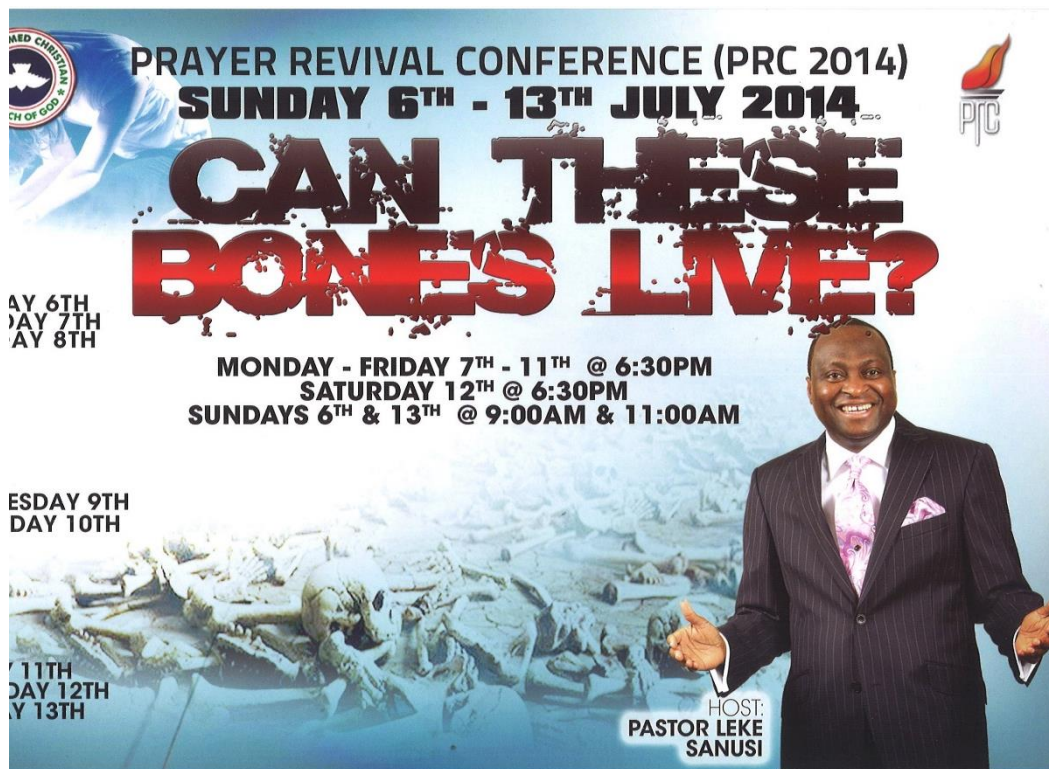
This reveals how the approach and style is very much related to the needs of a particular community in society who are struggling to integrate themselves successfully. This community experiences problems related to society as they are positioned as marginal and the pastor, as a role model and agent of change, is seeking to re-position them within society which resonates well with the idea of a 'coach' put forward on by the Life Coach Hub (2017) as any form of tutor and which is an extension of the idea of transporting people from one place to another. Throughout my fieldwork the crucial role pastors play as agents of change became more and more evident.

Mäkinen (2014) argues that although practices of coaching vary they have common characteristics. First is a preoccupation with the self and second is an aim of

empowerment by which it is usually meant that the coached person is empowered so that they can advance in their personal life. This approach fits very well with the approach to liberation promoted in the prosperity discourse adapted on a local level among my participants, as the practices of coaching are focused on self-improvement. This means that the self occupies a central position in these practices. This reflects the re-engineering of my participants, fitting with the neo-liberal enterprising self, the individual who 'makes their own future' and pushes forward in the world, trusting that the uniqueness at the centre of the self will secure that self in the changing circumstances, an individual full of capacities and in possession of a seemingly limitless willpower. Thus, this approach to change the circumstances of my informants suits their circumstances, building upon their agency to change their position in society and functions as a counteracting mechanism to stagnation and devaluation as members of the movement believe that they have the power to change their destiny. Thus, against this background I will now introduce the pastors of the localised prosperity movement as agents of change and show how this approach has been integrated by the pastors to re-position the members of the localised movement on the OKR.

During his sermons and motivational speeches, the junior pastor frequently gave himself as an example to the congregation by talking about his immigration experience and trajectory. After graduating from a university in Lagos, Nigeria he migrated to the UK where he started as a cleaner and later worked as a nanny. However, it was in this job where he met a person who would help him to get a more highly skilled job which then propelled him further to his current occupation in property management. Using his experience, he reminded his audience not to despise small job opportunities but to be problem solvers and show a good work ethic since these opportunities can open up doors in their life. To this end, his own trajectory made him an example of someone who made it against the odds. In addition, he is married and has three children, which was further used to depict him as a role model for others whilst giving him the drive to empower others and to encourage them to overcome all obstacles as well.

These credentials which an agent of change supposedly has to display to be accredited and respected as someone who can give advice are a reoccurring theme on flyers and invitations to events in the many prosperity churches on the OKR. The two images below depict a rather typical one which I received during my fieldwork. The overarching theme of this particular event was 'Can these dry bones live?'. On the front we can see the main agent of change next to this message smiling and welcoming people. On the inside of the flyer the other guest speakers, all pastors themselves, are introduced. Next to each one's picture there is a profile, or short resume, outlining their achievements and social standing, including impressive career titles such as barrister and solicitor, doctor, university lecturer as well as titles and positions held within the church context, such as pastor, senior pastor, etc. At the end their successful marriage with the number of their children is mentioned.



M I N I S T E R S

**HOST:
PASTOR LEKE
SANUSI**

**GUEST SPEAKER:
PASTOR BROWN
OYITSO**

**GUEST SPEAKER:
PASTOR EZEKIEL
O. ALAWALE**

**GUEST SPEAKER:
REV. DR. MOSES
ARANSIOLA**

A Barrister and Solicitor, successfully practiced law for over a decade before God called him to pastoral ministry in 1997. He is passionate about seeing people set free from all manner of oppression and afflictions of the enemy. He is a contagious prayer warrior, speaking to thousands of audiences around the world, God confirming his words, with signs and wonders following. He pastors The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Victory House in London, U.K., which has birthed over seventeen other churches under his pastorate. He also serves as Provincial Pastor to RCCG Province of Scotland, U.K., which has over forty churches. He has authored many bestselling books including the Command Series: Command Your Morning; Command Your Fruitfulness; Command Your Enlargement; Command Your Deliverance and Commanding 2014. Leke Sanusi lives in London with his beloved wife, Bola and their miracle sons, Tobi and Tomisin.

Pastor Brown Oyitso is a Provincial Pastor of the Redeemed Christian Church of God and Chairman, Central Missions Board. Pastor Brown Oyitso trained as an Economist and also has an MBA degree. He is a Centre for Management Development (CMD) Lagos certified trainer. He worked with a firm of Consultants handling World Bank Projects and also engaged in Business until recently. He is a member of the Nigerian Economic Society and an Associate member of the Nigerian Institute of Management. He also holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Theology. Pastor Oyitso is an ardent Church planter, foreign missions enthusiast and a motivational speaker. He fervently believes in efficiency, effectiveness and in excellence. As a dynamic preacher of the word, and as a conference speaker, he has travelled on many occasions to preach the word in the U.S.A., U.K., Italy, South Africa, Kenya, Uganda. Pastor Oyitso is married to Pastor (Mrs) Helen Oyitso and they are blessed with three sons, Efe, Ejiro and Ese.

Dr. Ezekiel Olusegun Alawale is a practicing General Practitioner. He holds two fellowships in both the West African College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland. He is the Senior Pastor of God's Vineyard Church (GVC) which was founded in March 2001 in Nottingham, UK. From a humble beginning in 2001, God's Vineyard Church now has 7 Branches in different cities in the United Kingdom. In August 2013, GVC held the inaugural meeting of her Branch Church in Lagos, Nigeria. In 2003, GVC started a dynamic and vibrant Youth Fellowship, popularly known as 'The Radical Youth'. A Christian youth fellowship that has touched and transformed the lives of many youth who came to study in the UK. The Radical Youth fellowship is presently established in 20 University Campuses across the UK. 'To God be the glory!' The mission statement of God's Vineyard Church is 'Empowering Lives, Building Society'. In line with this, GVC is actively involved in transforming, impacting and adding value to the society through The Prison Ministry (which transforms and rehabilitates offenders) and The School Ministry (which instructs and inspires the young ones) Dr. Alawale is a man of prayer and has intense love for God. He is very passionate about sharing the gospel with everyone. The teaching of Dr. Ezekiel will open your mind and captivate your understanding of the word of God; it will empower you to overcome every challenge that may come your way. Dr. Alawale is married to Pastor Funmi and they are blessed with three children.

The ministry of Rev. Dr. Moses Aransiola has spanned more than 30 years, since God called him to lead the Ibadan Varsity Christian Union (IVCU), then Africa's largest campus fellowship. The following year, God also permitted him to lead the Nigerian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (NIFES), the world's largest Christian Students' body as the National President. Dr. Aransiola also served the national body (NIFES) as its National Prayer Secretary for six years. As a minister primarily called of God to be a Revivalist, Teacher, and Intercessor, God founded through him the Gethsemane Prayer Ministries. Today, the scope of the ministry is worldwide. Dr. Aransiola is an alumnus of the famous Haggai Institute of Advance Leadership in Singapore. He ministers in at least five of the six continents of the world on a regular basis. Dr. Aransiola is currently the National Director of two National Prayer bodies: the 'Nigeria Prays' - a national prayer mobilization initiated by General Dr. Yakubu Gowon, Nigeria's Ex-Head of State and the National Committee on Repentance, Reconciliation and Prayer Mobilization. Dr. Aransiola has a Ph.D. in Fisheries Management and was a University of Ibadan lecturer for many years. He is married with children.

Figure 6.2: 'Agents of change' on a flyer advertising an event

In this context I would like to briefly state the gender relations in this form of Christianity. Marriage is based on very traditional hetero sexual Christian values. The focus is very much on the nuclear family. Pentecostal belief has been shown to bring about a dramatic restructuring of families, as believers loosen ties with the extended family and focus on the nuclear family as the central unit of production and consumption. Women's status is often enhanced by the equalising power of the Holy Spirit – available to anyone – and the gifts that it brings, although ultimate gender ideologies tend to remain rather conservative, with women entreated to remain subservient to their husbands. However, women are able to minister as they too can experience the Holy Spirit and been given spiritual gifts, empowering women as mouthpieces of God (recognised and celebrated), as I have witnessed in my fieldwork in regard to the senior pastor of the church. Nonetheless, in practice, the number of male pastors far outweighs the number of females.

Furthermore, the pictures below taken from signs, websites and flyers reveal that imagery of people in suits is a recurring theme - a demonstration of power, wealth, and success with a strong business appeal in the context of suffering.



Figure 6.3: Suits as a display of power, wealth and success

Rather than depicting a position of marginalisation, a position of power is portrayed. Thus, in a climate of constant devaluation and being positioned outside the dominant symbolic, these advertisements and figures of success and power run counter to despair and poverty. ‘Showing off’ their credentials make these pastors and leaders worthy to be agents of change and to offer advice and rules to their congregations as the keys to transformation and finding a solution. This is reinforced through various strategies that seek to modify the behaviour of the adherents, acting as a guide to discipline and to increase their confidence and enable them to cope through a psychological transformation and also a greater entitlement to social space through lifestyle changes.

A while into my fieldwork and not too long after the interview with the junior pastor mentioned above I saw an advert about life coaching on YouTube which

appears to have been sent to me based on my browsing history looking up Pentecostal churches and their leaders. After requesting some information, I got bombarded with emails containing promotional videos trying to let me register to become a life coach. Here is one of the manifold messages I received:

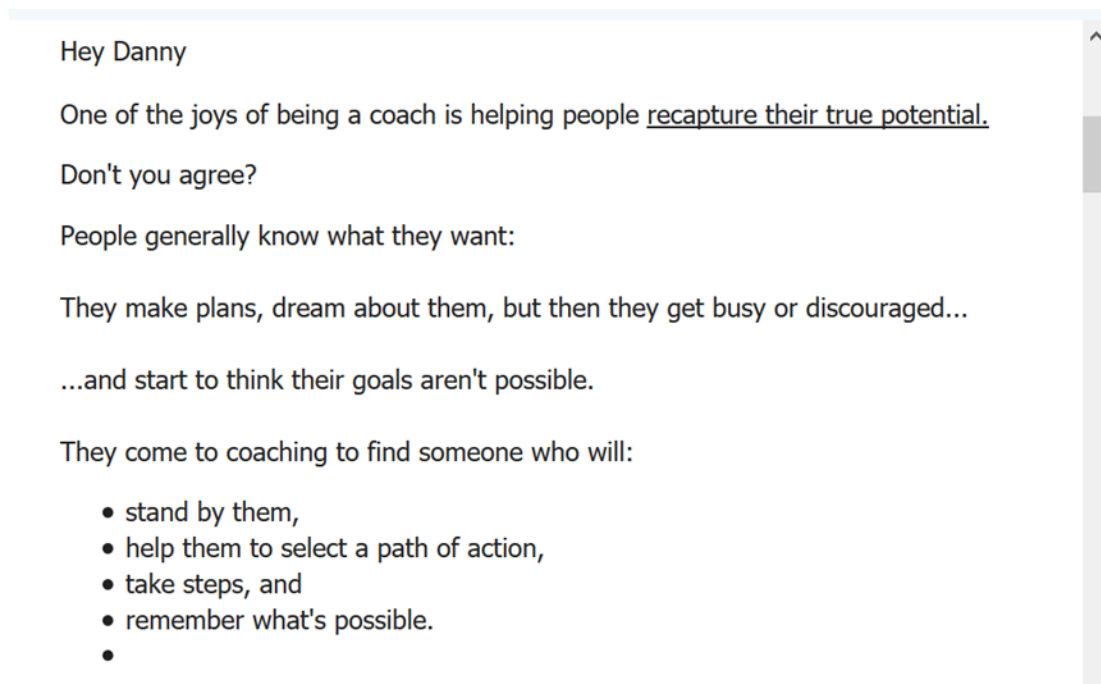


Figure 6.4: An email from the life coach agency

The content of this email resonates well with how the leaders of the prosperity movement build upon the agency of the church members and the ways in which they try to re-focus and motivate them by using the liberation theology of a God who is for them, how they provide a plan of action and concrete steps and strategies to achieve success whilst constantly reminding them through the worship songs that with God everything is possible. In that way the thinking that things cannot change and are impossible is resisted and replaced by a transformation of feelings of desperation, frustration and depression into a can-do attitude. This positive message is then further reinforced through testimonies and various success stories and a strong Pentecostal work ethic (which I will discuss in depth in the next chapter). To this end the leaders presenting themselves as agents of change

together with their liberation theology seek to reposition the members on an emotional as well as material level through their liberation theology and the additional strategies. We will now look at some of the life coaching strategies employed by the agents of change in more detail.

As I looked at the websites and videos about life coaching, I immediately recognised the terminology as well as images that had been used in the church. In what follows, I would like to take you through some images (see below) which I gathered from various emails and presentational videos which the Life Coach Hub sent me after I requested more information. In this way, I will explicate the concrete approach to transformation and empowerment that I observed during my fieldwork along six strands: create positive change, a result oriented approach, giving focus to members, giving meaning, providing strategies, a holistic understanding of prosperity.



Figure 6.5: Image 1 of the Life coaching breakthrough strategy, Source: Life Coach Hub (2017).

The content of this image was also part of the church's liberation theology and one of its constant mantras. A breakthrough and change were continually on the agenda and predicted to 'arrive today, tomorrow, this week, this month, this year'. This also resonates with the analysis of the Mission to London mega event and the respective web-analysis (presented in chapter five) as this was found to be one of the key themes in their merchandises, see for example the 10-day spiritual action plan to a 'complete financial breakthrough' on p. 164.

In addition, this expectation for intervention and change was also sustained through the worship songs that were sung frequently. One of them is entitled 'Miracle Worker', with the following lyrics:

Miracle worker, come and do a miracle, a miracle today
Destiny changer, you are a destiny changer, come and change a destiny today
Your name is Yahweh, you are a miracle working God, your name is Yahweh
Powerful healer, you are a powerful healer, come and heal so powerful today
You will heal so powerful, so powerful today
Let us see your power flow, your power flow tonight

Let us now see what the next slide from the breakthrough strategy for life coaches offers:



Figure 6.6: Image 2 of the Life coaching breakthrough strategy, Source: Life Coach Hub (2017).

The same pragmatic and result oriented approach displayed in the image above was pursued by the leaders in the 'Overcomers' Church' and other congregations I visited during my fieldwork through utilising stories from the Bible about characters who, despite some form of hardship, failures, hindrances, and disadvantage in their lives, became very successful in the end. Prominent examples were Abraham,

Jacob, Joseph, Mephibosheth¹⁰. They all were able to defy common sense beliefs about positions and experienced divine intervention that made their life work out in the end as they reached to greatness. During the sermons or motivational speeches for that matter, the preacher or agent of change also included success stories of change not only from their own life, but also from celebrities in the business world, political world or other sectors, who started from a position of disadvantage or with failure but did not give up and became very successful. For example, in one of the sermons Abraham Lincoln was described as someone who experienced 'eleven major set-backs or failures but he kept on trying and two years later he ran for president'.

This focus on results was further consolidated through the spaces during the services which were centred around testimonies of the members. Their stories were about positive things they had experienced recently which demonstrated the power of God, and the effectiveness of faith and thus instilled hope in other members and a wish for a positive change in their lives as well. During my interviews with some of the members this came up frequently. One of the members, Chike, when asked about the role the church played in his life also discussed the inspiration he received from the message preached in the church and from successful people and how this was motivating for him:

It's changed the way I view life, I see life, ... it keeps me going ... yeah cause like it might not be fair but I see the church helps me. I's like I'm constantly reminded that I should be good.

A little bit later we continued talking about the topic of change:

Chike: I try to better myself and learn something, I wanna change the world

Danny: Change the world

Chike: I wanna change the world and I wanna help, I wanna make so much money enough for me to impact a change

¹⁰ The stories of these characters can be found in the book of Genesis and 2 Samuel of the Bible.

Danny: I see

Chike: That's my dream. It might be taking me a long time to accomplish this but I know I will get there. I don't wanna be president of a country, no, but I *want to be like* a president of a country, I want to have that power, cause the only way they can change is to have power. I want to have so much power to change the world.

Danny: That's quite ambitious

Chike: Yeah, it's quite ambitious but it's worth it ... I look up to people like that, [...] like I say if your dream does not scare you then it's not a dream

Danny: Okay, do you have role models

Chike: Yeah, Mark Zuckerberg the owner of facebook, yeah, and Bill Gates and this other guy I just read about recently, he's a Nigerian and he's a senator ... that's the kind of people for instance

In addition to the songs and the sermons, the use of drama in the first part of the Sunday service when the youth and also adult members of the congregation prepared a small play was also utilised to show how despite adverse circumstances one must not give up hope and how God would eventually come through in a miraculous but unexpected way. Usually a scene of misery and lack was acted out by a few members in the front in a skilful and humorous way which was accompanied by cheers and laughter from the audience. One scene for example depicted a family who had no more food and had lost their job. As they were using different techniques to overcome their situation accompanied by fervent prayer, the situation first got worse, but then, in the most hopeless situation there was a divine turn around through an unexpected encounter with another person who brought them good news and other good things. Through small plays like this the belief system of the congregants was strengthened and their expectations towards real life outcomes were maintained.

Let us now *focus* on the next step of the breakthrough system:



Figure 6.7: Image 3 of the Life coaching breakthrough strategy, Source: Life Coach Hub (2017).

Focus, another key theme of the meetings, was given through the motivational speeches in terms of an alternative vision for church members' trajectories in society as well as prayers that helped to internalise what was learned or emphasised by repeating a certain goal through some kind of command or positive confession. In one session, for example, each member of the congregation was given a key printed on a sheet of paper (see image below). It followed on from a sermon about using the key of David that gives the power to change one's own life.

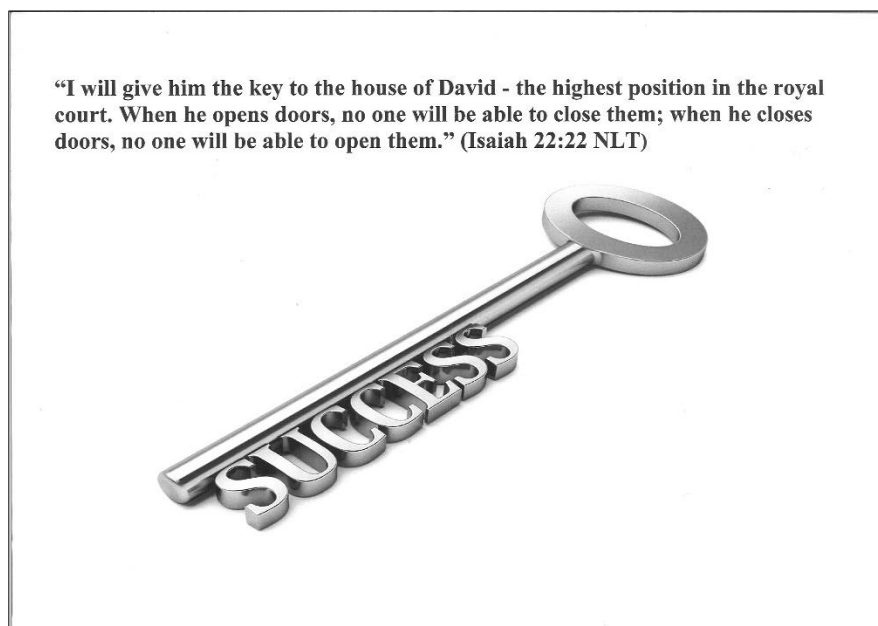


Figure 6.8: Picture of a key to success distributed during a Sunday service

The members were asked to use this key to open every door in their life that is closed. They then had a time of about 15 minutes of intense prayer whilst everybody was walking around the room with their keys in their hands opening closed doors in their lives as they were proclaiming and shouting out loud things like: 'I open the door of a job promotion in my life!' or 'I open the door of marriage in my life!', and so on. This activity or exercise was quite striking in its intensity and the way it produced a collective experience of not giving up whilst focussing everybody on what they wanted to change individually. Other techniques that I observed which were meant to produce such an effect were positive confession and fasting which was frequently used to reiterate the importance of pursuing a goal whilst giving focus and more discipline to the members. These issues will be picked up and elaborated on further in the following sections.

The next slide reveals the third move in the breakthrough system:



Figure 6.9: Image 4 of the Life coaching breakthrough strategy, Source: Life Coach Hub (2017).

During my fieldwork, I experienced how the liberation theology was used to give meaning in terms of putting a floor under the members' circumstances by showing both their current position as well as where they can go and how they can get there. This was accompanied by the 'God wants you to be great' mantra. For example, the introduction to the book of the General Overseer which was

introduced above states: 'God does not do anything without a purpose. Everyone is, therefore, born for a specific reason. There is really nothing like an accidental birth. Everybody that has come into this world has a precise role to play. You were born to fulfil a certain assignment. [...] The unfortunate fact is that millions of people never discover the purpose for which they were born [...] Whatever the purpose of your birth consider it a unique opportunity to positively affect your generation. And if you are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, one truth stands out: you were born to be great and can look forward to a glorious destiny in the world' (Adeboye, 2010: 4-5). Afterwards the book lays out how it is possible to fulfil one's purpose.

Let us move on to the next slide which shows the fifth step of the breakthrough system:



Figure 6.10: Image 5 of the Life coaching breakthrough strategy, Source: Life Coach Hub (2017).

The steps of giving meaning to the adherents of the movement through a new vision and focus are then reinforced by various strategies to improve the achievements of their vision. These strategies include a strong work ethic, positive thinking and confession, learning the right cultural codes, and advice on how to improve the individual's institutional and cultural capital as well as bridging and linking social capitals, etc. These will be discussed in more detail later on in chapter eight.

Whilst going through the material of the Life Coach Hub, another slide with the caption '*Are you ready to discover your deeper strength?*' caught my attention (see

below) as the junior pastor had used it in one of his sermons/motivational speeches. During this sermon, it was displayed on the inbuilt screens. The accompanying message was very encouraging and motivated the members of the church to make that decision to change their story and was part of a series of preaching on overcoming poverty, building upon the agency of the members. This was accompanied by songs that reinforced this message and the atmosphere was very exuberant and empowering. This signifies the valour and tenacity encountered and constantly reproduced, which I will discuss in subsequent chapters.



Figure 6.11: Image 6 of the Life coaching breakthrough strategy, Source: Life Coach Hub (2017).

Furthermore, there was another image that appeared all too familiar. It shows the different areas this life coach approach can be applied to and resonates with the holistic approach to prosperity that I encountered on the OKR:

Wellness	Communication
Relationships	Career
Financial habits	Professional image
Personal organization	Spirituality
Happiness	

Figure 6.12: Image 7 of the Life coaching breakthrough strategy, Source: Life Coach Hub (2017).

This also fits with church members' disembedded, disadvantaged, marginalised, and often penalised experience of immigration with all its consequences, thus affecting every area of life. These points are picked up again and elaborated on in detail in the subsequent chapters that present the different themes on the struggle for value and values which I observed during my fieldwork.

What I found quite interesting was to compare this image to the plethora of flyers and advertisement materials used by the churches on the OKR. The image below depicts one example, the back of a bus used by one of the prosperity churches in the area to advertise one of their events:



Figure 6.13: Advertisement on the back of a bus 'Time to move forward'

The picture shows the agent of change next to a list of areas which might be in need of transformation (e.g. sickness, marital problems, barrenness, poverty, failure and stagnancy) closely resembling the list I came across on the Life Coach Hub website.

During the interview with the junior pastor we also touched upon the approach to prosperity promoted in the church as I asked him about what he thinks is unique or different compared to the other churches along the OKR:

We are not a prosperity preaching church in the sense that all we wanna talk about is money. No. We believe money is good and we want everyone to be rich and we will teach principles about prosperity but that's not our central focus, our central focus is about maximising potential through the power of the Holy Spirit, impacting the world, impacting yourself and then if you do these things and the Holy Spirit is with you he'll give you ideas and these ideas will lead you to be successful in whatever endeavours you do. Yeah you don't have to be rich to a point, you don't have to be stupidly rich, you can be successful in an area that you want, and then money will come, that's what happens.

This again resonates with the holistic approach to prosperity and the parallel to the principle of life coaching that I have outlined thus far and that I have observed as being put into action within a climate of disempowerment and marginalisation.

Conclusion

Thus, one of the key functions of the churches on the OKR is a holistic re-positioning of their members, away from the margins and into a successful life. In the context of racial discrimination and the migrant experience, pastors preach an encouraging message of liberation and use life-coaching techniques to empower the church members. Engaging them in 'just talk' as speech acts where issues of justice and injustice, equality and inequality are discussed can be a powerful means for church members to work through their experiences of devaluation. They can provide a platform for transformation and empowerment and increase the members' agency. Positive role-models and examples of success serve to further enhance the agency

of the church members, acting against the feelings of hopelessness they may have experienced previously.

By illuminating the movement's members' position on the margins of society and the overarching aim of the movement of letting adherents reimagine and reposition themselves within the British socio-economic structure, this chapter has set the scene to apply Skeggs' value/values theory as my theoretical framework. Chapters seven and eight will examine the 'value' dimension of the movement, by examining the reactive and proactive strategies for repositioning the members of the movement within the British society. Chapter nine discusses the 'values' elements - how members are attached to a community of support, empowered and provided with emotional coping mechanisms which fulfil a therapeutic function to deal with adverse circumstances. These two strands will then be brought together in the conclusion.



Figure 7.1: Integral part of a church banner along the Old Kent Road

Chapter Seven: Value: Indefatigability and Tenacity

Introduction

As discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, migration denotes far more than a crossing of geographical borders. It also means the transition between societies or social fields with inherent subfields facilitating wide ranging transmissions and transformations in social, economic, and cultural terms. As such, a person's position in social space - which is determined both by the value and the weight of their capital portfolio - is reassessed. In this chapter, Bourdieu's thinking tools shall be applied to the transnational sphere as we will take a closer look at cultural processes and the reproduction of class positions in the transnational migration processes the members of the 'Overcomers' Church' find themselves confronted with.

Undoubtedly, migration accelerates thoroughgoing changes of one's self, it raises considerations that reach beyond who one is and includes questioning where one fits and what present and future positions and roles are possible within the new society (Gold and Nawyn, 2012). However, within the transnational migration experience, new patterns of inequality, prejudice, and segregation arise which confront migrants with structural barriers (Anthias, 2012). Especially when he or she embodies other signs - for example, skin colour, foreign accent, and cultural taste - that may count as symbolic deficits in the host society. Thus, in transnational movements, newcomers may have acquired cultural capital that they have difficulty converting into symbolic capital because there is a perceived mismatch between the distinction of their symbolic capital and their racial identity, which may be

associated with low social value in the host group. This form of ethnicization and racialisation of migrant populations result in disadvantage.

As we saw earlier, migrants are characterized by different social hierarchies, on the one hand within the migrant population itself which is a hierarchy of nationalities, whilst on the other hand migrants are also in a social hierarchy in the society in the country of settlement as a whole in relation to the native population (Sayad, 2004). These stratifications and hierarchies mediate the complex process of migrants' transnational positioning (Anthias, 2012). To this end, the opportunities migrants can forge for themselves in transnational spaces and local settings like London and the way structural barriers play out in their lived realities differ greatly on the individual level. As a result, they often occupy irregular spaces and segmented positions.

In this chapter, I will focus on the value struggle of my participants as witnessed in my fieldwork as they engage in a holistic discourse and practices and strategies which aim to modify, in a deep and lasting fashion, their worldview and practice. In doing so, they lay significant emphasis on the embodied experience and practical mastery with the goal to overcome individual, social and structural, as well as cultural barriers to personal development, thus seeking to re-position themselves within the society. In asking the question of *how* this radical transformation, discussed in the previous chapter, is brought about, I will show various interlinked processes of change through the themes identified below. For this purpose, I will utilise the findings from my observation of church activities during my fieldwork in combination with the semi-structured interviews I conducted as well as informal conversations I had with participants during that period.

The theme of this chapter focusses on ***indefatigability and tenacity*** as dispositions that enable my informants to keep going, by mapping out various techniques including vision and aspiration, positive thinking, and positive confession, testimony, worship, focus and strong work ethic. These techniques function as reactive tactics in order to respond to challenges they are faced with. Further coping mechanisms that counteract stagnation, as a form of proactive tactic with

the aim of increasing economic, social and cultural capital and improve their future situation will be discussed in the following chapter in the third theme ***adaptability and embodiment***, which involves various techniques for accessing and increasing what Bourdieu formulated as the right social capitals; creativity and entrepreneurship; and especially to embody these cultural capitals, with the goal of achieving distinction. These will be assessed carefully as they are crucial to the project of my participants of re-positioning themselves structurally. Yet as these themes reveal a holistic approach to adapting to and embodying the middle-class culture of the land, it must not be forgotten that this vision and their related struggle is limited by their actual resources and access to them, as well as them being marked as Black subjects within the British post-colonial society and economy. It is therefore taken into account that the role of personal effort in effecting social change is limited by economic and structural realities, yet the argument is that this provides members of the movement with fitting dispositions to survive in this new environment and to adapt to their new circumstances, thereby putting a floor on them. Yet in this way a culture of possibility is nurtured despite current occupational status, breaking the link between current situation and future attainment also for the next generation.

Transformation/re-structuring of habitus

As migrants are challenged to negotiate and adjust ingrained life scripts whilst navigating their complex migratory processes, their sense of self is put on the line. They are forced to reconstruct and redefine themselves, both for their own sense of ontological security (Giddens, 1991) and the positions ascribed to them by others in their new surroundings. However, the quest for ontological security is in reality often met by insecurity that unequal relations produce (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012) resulting in internal struggles over redefining who one is and where one belongs. In Bourdieu's theory, instead of a model of the self, the habitus is proposed as an 'internal organizing mechanism which learns, as a result of social positioning, how to play the game' (Skeggs, 2004: 145). In the transnational field, the question of habitus adjustment is a key consideration. To what extent this is experienced as a

smooth process or whether a field/habitus disjuncture occurs impacts on migrants' ability to exercise agency. This can lead to different outcomes and influence the way migrants perceive their place and position in the wider social context.

If one accesses the website of the 'Overcomers' Church' on the OKR and scrolls down to 'our mission', the following quote can be found: 'Equip the diverse congregation for success in the society, as well as prepare them for eternity, as we worship Him in Spirit and in truth'. If one then clicks on 'our vision', one key aspect of the two is revealed: 'Through fellowship and discipleship building marriages as well as strong and enduring families, so that the young and the old are fully equipped to flourish in the society, as well as make it to heaven'. On the one hand, this shows how agents of change who are seeking to effect social change from below, focus on changes in the attitude and behaviour of individuals in order to equip members to flourish or succeed in society. On the other hand, this also signifies the power of the born-again community to become a collective force for social change. This is echoed in Martin's and Marshall's (1990) analysis of neo-Pentecostalism as they both argue that this form of Pentecostalism symbolises a personal and social reformation. Martin's observation (in the Latin American context in which neo-Pentecostalism occurs) leads them to conclude that conversion to this form of Christianity represents a revolution within the self: 'an ecstasis, a breaking beyond the static' (1990: 202-3), in many cases literally breaking down and breaking through the structured nature of social boundaries and the settled limits of ordinary received behaviour, beginning at the level of culture and extending beyond external structures to restructuring the habitus of adherents through the prosperity discourse and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This idea is taken up by this research and will be discussed in this chapter by outlining the mechanisms utilised.

Therefore, this chapter will especially look at the aspect of the transformation of habitus as a counteracting strategy of members of the prosperity movement on the OKR in the encounter of structural barriers in the new field, as well as a restructuring of their habitus to overcome a mismatch and initial hysteresis

(Bourdieu, 2000; 1999; 1977) due to migration and to better adapt to new social fields in order to integrate into higher echelons of the host society.

Techniques employed in the struggle for value

The first technique to re-position members of the prosperity movement by letting them re-imagine themselves discussed here will be called vision/aspiration, which creates a culture of resistance. This is key to understanding the trajectory and motivation of members of this movement who are encouraged to transform their way of thinking, their way of relating to others and their actions. The goal of all this is successful integration into society and to empower them to overcome barriers on the way. Subsequently I investigate the counteracting strategy of positive thinking and positive confession that acts to reaffirm the new vision and aspiration acquired, affirming a culture of resistance. After this I bring out the night vigil events and three-day 'fire for fire' events arguing that they help to reinforce the newly acquired disposition of vision/aspiration, reinforcing a culture of resistance. This is followed by testimonies of success as motivation and proof of success and God's provision. I go on to illuminate the role of the worship in sustaining the belief in change. Next, I show how the Holy Spirit is utilised as a tool of empowerment from above in the endeavour of my participants. To put these interlocking mechanisms into practice, church members' ethic for hard work and discipline will be discussed afterwards in relation to the Pentecost work ethic and the neoliberal work ethic as a driving force and form of behaviour that fit especially well with the prevailing neoliberal capitalist system, thus elucidating how my participants act out the newly acquired habitus of resistance and aspiration. This will in particular shed light on how that enables them to stay focussed, endure hardship, overcome, counteract deprivation to eventually achieve economic success. In addition, fasting as a related technique to stay focussed and disciplined will also be considered in connection to the work ethic of my participants.

Firstly, I will now focus on vision/aspiration as dispositions of resistance that create a culture of resistance in my participants. This technique focusses on bringing about

dramatic changes in subjectivity and empowerment for development. The attention is on a fundamental transformational experience of the self in which a person begins to see herself and her life in a whole different light and starts to act accordingly. In particular, vision and aspiration refer to the ability to hold onto hope in the face of structured inequality and often without the means to make such dreams a reality. Yet, aspirations are developed within the church context, often through linguistic storytelling and advice that offer specific navigational goals to challenge (resist) oppressive conditions. Thus, this disposition of resistance can be seen in those who allow themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances, although they might not actually have the objective means to attain those goals. This kind of aspiration and resistance can be witnessed in the BMCs on the OKR through motivational sermons which give hope as well as through stories of people who came from low backgrounds but achieved great things, because of their persistency.

Bourdieu's theoretical work explains the stability and durability of social order: how field, habitus and symbolic violence form an interlocking whole which ensures the reproduction of existing hierarchies and social orders. However, there is an implication that under certain conditions the social order can be challenged. For example, the potential of a contradictory habitus, to generate dynamics of change represents the flexibility of freedom for (collective) action aimed at reopening spaces of possibles through which determinism of structure can be challenged by imagining alternatives. Burawoy (2012) points out that Bourdieu's explication of symbolic power implies a 'margin of freedom' between habitus and field, a space for interpretation and therefore contestation, where the meaning of social structure remains open to several interpretations. At the same time, agents are capable of multiple ways of understanding their actions. To this end, both habitus and field become sites of uncertainty in which a group can mobilise to shape the future. Thus, Burawoy argues that Bourdieu was grappling with the different possibilities for disruption and change available in different locations within the interlocking system of concepts with critical consciousness on the side of the dominated resting on the ability to imagine an alternative future, in the

indeterminacy of symbolic order. To this end, 'imagination calls forth a potential agency beyond the determinism of structure although {...} it has to call on dispositions and structural possibilities that already exist in the world' (Von Holdt, 2012: 199). If we look at the prosperity movement on the OKR we can find a form of collective agency to imagine a different future and disrupt the social order with the belief that it is possible to transgress the limits imposed, especially the most inflexible ones, which are set in people's minds. As Bourdieu reiterates, this symbolic transgression of the 'social frontier has a liberatory effect in its own right because it enacts the unthinkable' (2000:236).

As we have seen in the previous chapter, a form of Black consciousness, as symbolic counter-discourse to racism in connection with the prosperity discourse provides a social mobilisation of adherents for symbolic struggle in a religious veneer. To the extent that these assertions of agency involve habitus, the crucial factor for symbolic struggle over the definition of social reality affords first activists (neo-Pentecostal agents of change), and then a growing number of supporters (adherents of the prosperity movement), to re-imagine themselves, drawing on the prosperity discourse and related (religious) practices. This collective form of symbolic transgression and mobilisation on the OKR among the adherents of the prosperity churches is profoundly embodied, through ritualised practices of exuberant worship and dance which focus on transformation and overcoming barriers and victory and interactive sermons where members are encouraged to respond to the preacher or one another with affirmation ('Let all the winners in the house shout hallelujah' or 'You are moving forward', 'You will get there', 'You will soon become a newsmaker', 'You shall prosper', 'You will be victorious', 'You will advance, go forward, even overtake them' - or if saying to oneself it is rephrased into 'I am', 'I will' etc.). Through these collective gatherings, such rituals weld 'phalanxes' (Holdt, 2012) of resistance and insurgence. Every meeting strengthens the community's unity and refusal to submit to symbolic violence. It could be said that a new habitus composed of dispositions of resistance, bravery and defiance is forged out of these embodied performances. Such a habitus is necessary for the church members to face their struggle for value in the hostile socio-economic

environment. At the same time the various services and performative actions provide an arena in which a new symbolic universe is forged which is ordered around the ideas of human potential, equal rights, non-racialism as God's providence and will. This creates a culture of resistance in the hearts and minds of the members.

These dispositions of resistance are instilled through the prosperity discourse. As I first attended a Sunday service in the 'Overcomers' Church' on the OKR, the junior pastor was giving a sermon on the following verses of the Bible: 'And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry' (Habakkuk, 2:2-3, KJV). The speaker utilised a flip chart to illustrate various points made. He spoke that 'We need a vision' relating it to the ability of sight, taking the verse first of all quite literally, arguing if we lose our sight we cannot function properly. After having given examples of people who could improve their impaired vision through technology, he goes on to iterate his point by citing another passage from the Bible: 'Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he' (Proverbs 29: 18, KJV). Having made his point that vision is critical, he continues to say that there is a relationship between what you see and what you become. Using the flip chart to illustrate his point and to recap, he wrote down the following three equations:

No Vision = Destruction

No Vision = Slow Progress

No Vision = No Progress

He continued to capture the audience's attention by asking questions of purpose and intention with the goal for action, saying if someone wants to win in football, a striker is needed, and so on.

He then made the second point that vision informs action. The next passage to support his argument was: 'And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art

northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever' (Genesis 13:14, KJV). Thus, what you see is what you become. He interpreted these verses: 'Until Abraham saw nothing he was nothing, but when he saw something he became something' (see nothing = be nothing, therefore see something = be something). Throughout his explanations, he indicated that the Holy Spirit was leading him. By utilising even more Bible passages and stories to support his point that what people see is equal to what they produce, he argued that this is 'the power of vision'. He continued to make this link on the flip chart using the equation see = produce.

Going back to the main passage in Habakkuk to interpret the second verse, he encouraged the audience not to be sleepy and unbelieving for as verse 3 says 'though it tarries one day it will come'. Driving the point home, he cemented his argument saying that what one sees drives action, pointing out that this was a fair analysis of likelihood of success. At the end he encouraged the members of the congregation to have a vision, a goal, an end-result and be driven by these to reach to success, to be problem solvers for 'they will bypass people who are doing it for long'. 'For what you see is a reflection of how you behave'. In conclusion he gave a concrete example of an interview he conducted as part of his job as a manager with an applicant for the position including some practical tips.

The goal of this sermon was towards bringing about dramatic changes in the subjectivity of the participants of the service. During the interview with the junior pastor I asked him how he prepared for his sermons. Tailoring his message to the audience was key for him. In relation to the Sunday service he stated:

So even with that in mind I relate everything to where my people are, and where I think they're trying to go and where I think God would like them to with their lives, so like the message on Sunday it's all about people making progress not just living life from day to day, constant through the motions, make sure you have a plan, you wanna achieve something, and then you go about it and then this way you push people to do better...

In another section of the interview regarding his motivation for doing pastoral work he added:

Because I also work and have a career in the professional industry I see the problems that ethnic minorities have, I see the society problems I see the problems everybody has and then I try to make sure that in my Christianity reflects society and how to be better in the society, cause it's not just about heaven...

This also shows, that a particular focus of the sermons is on how a modern believer is to be transformed and developed into a proactive and goal-oriented agent (Van Dijk, 2012) in a hostile environment. Actually, all the sermons witnessed during my fieldwork were focussed on transformation and a re-formed subjectivity, either from one's current understanding of the self and related position to a future imagined self, or bringing about encouragement in the related struggle seeking to overcome disappointment, frustration and despair and bringing about tenacity with an instilled hope for change and future success. Especially the Sunday sermons were very much focussed on envisioning a future self and empowering people to embark on the journey of self-development, letting members discover a strong sense of their agency to improve their situation.

During several informal chats with longstanding members of the congregation the importance of the message preached became salient. So, when I asked why they had been coming for so long, they answered that the message was the most important thing for them. This came also up in the interviews with other members. For Susan, for example, the message was a very strong element in her life as well:

Susan: I go to church, mmh, mainly it is the church which actually gives the message, and the message I do receive, the message is quite practical, the message is quite helpful in terms of my progress in life, in the area of my faults, in the way I perceive things, so by going to church I can receive the message. The message does encourage me, and it brings strength and enrichment and boldness to go out with no fear. And also, the message helps me in the way, I communicate, in the way I associate in the community.

Danny: What in particular encourages you about the message?

Susan: So that is the impact of, that is what the message does to me because when I receive that message I take it practical. I take it as practical and when I go out I put it in practical and it does work and I've seen miracles out of that [...] The first time I went into this church and I heard the message it really brought me together. As Christian you have to remain focussed and going forward ...

Here we can see how significant the message is for this member of the church and how it has impacted her life in terms of going forward and to be courageous.

Another member, Chike, who regularly travels all the way from north London to attend church activities, explained his reason for coming to this church:

It's changed the way I view life, I see life. It's also helped me with a couple of things in life, like struggles I had in life and also made me know that there's someone there that cares also know that there are people there that care about your situation...it keeps me going.

Being faced with an often harsh and hostile social urban environment in London, including their structural position, many members might be faced with emotional challenges, such as low self-esteem, feeling wretched, despised, hopeless, lost and bewildered, powerless in relation to their situation and at the same time exhausted, in short symptoms that might be called depression.

Therefore, the church services and meetings, which are very empowering due to the style of worship and preaching, are aimed to radically change these people's sense of themselves and their place in the world. They encourage people to be courageous, to aim high, to take risks and follow their dreams. Through the engagement with the pastors and other church members and the related discourse and activities, the attendees begin to see themselves as valued individuals, part of God's people, a somebody rather than a nobody. Most important of all is that through these church services and engagement with the pastors and members of the congregation 'changes the way they view life', as Chike pointed out. They come

to realise that they have agency in their lives, moving beyond a passive fatalism (Freeman 2015) to an awareness of the significance of their actions and the potential of their own efforts to bring about social and economic changes they desire. This eventually leads to a shift from seeing themselves as a victim to seeing themselves as a victor. This prominence of success and victory is also reflected in the names of the churches (i.e. 'Winner's Temple', 'House of Victory', etc.). Furthermore, it is manifested in common terms or phrases that are used repeatedly, such as: 'This year is the year of overflow', 'this year is the year of breakthrough, freedom and victory', 'this month you will receive a double portion' or 'as this month ends today all your challenges will expire today;-God will open a new chapter concerning you and your families', the names given to every month (i.e. 'month of new life', 'month of resurrection' or 'month of financial prosperity') and different groups within the church (i.e. 'daughters of destiny', 'women of purpose', 'women of vision', 'Gideon's army', 'champions in Christ') and so on. Despite their often rather bleak circumstances, members of the church begin to feel much more hopeful about the future. And with Jesus on their side they feel empowered - believing anything is possible, which raises their confidence. In the discourse of prosperity, every member is a guaranteed winner, no matter their current situation. The question is to what extent these subjective transformations can really change my participants position in the British society due to the actual structural barriers that limit their actions? By attending services, new members find inner strength, hope and purpose (this transformation in terms of negative to positive affects will be discussed in more depths in chapter nine on the values struggle), and become motivated to work or study hard and to improve their lives. Thus, the imagined trajectory for the congregation as well as the individual members is one of expansion in and across places. The orientation is one that looks forward from a position that is not confined by the immediate limitations of one's surroundings or one's past. What is being mapped out in the sermons is a world of possibility that has relevance to the microcosm of the church on the OKR, but at the same time rendering the ethnic encapsulation of the church as irrelevant.

However, the question is whether or to what extent such experiences make possible a fundamental rupture in the social order and then lead to the possibility of the establishment of a new order?

This habitus of resistance is strengthened through other techniques of the prosperity discourse, such as positive thinking and confession, which I will now discuss in more detail.

This section discusses positive thinking and confession to reaffirm the new acquired vision/aspiration, affirming a culture of resistance. Positive thinking and positive confession is an integral part of this movement worldwide (see Bowler, 2013; Coleman, 2000) and the localised movement on the OKR. I have witnessed this constantly, both in the sermons and the conversations of the members. I would like to elucidate the notion of positive thinking and confession, by firstly focussing on sermons from prominent leaders of the movement in the US and then sermons, services and conversations among and with members that occurred during my fieldwork.

This concept is also linked to Merton's self-fulfilling prophecy. Self-fulfilling prophecies are expectations by a source person that when communicated lead to behaviours of a target person that would not have occurred had the prophecy not been made (Merton, 1948). Overall, literature on the topic concludes that there is a clear indication as to the existence of a self-fulfilling prophecy effect, however, evidence is limited. Max Weber pointed out that life chances are to a certain extent subjective— what an individual thinks of one's life chances will affect their actions, therefore if one feels that one can become or is a respected or valued member of society, then it is likely to become a reality and results in one being more successful and respected than someone without this conviction (Weber and Maximilian, 1947). According to Weber, one's life conduct – values and beliefs, social skills, free-will and choice of behaviour, are factors one has control over. In his analysis of power, he argues further that it lies within a person's ability to get their way despite the resistance of others. Through positive thinking, one can have power over one's life (*ibid.*).

These ideas of Weber and Merton are linked to prosperity theology which in part grew out of the positive thinking movement in the US in the time of the Great Depression. Bowler (2013) has also documented positive thinking in prosperity churches which teach that 'positive thoughts yielded positive circumstances, negative thoughts yielded negative situations' (*ibid.*:14). As such, positive thinking, or confession, and repetition is the key to success and the principle is 'change your words, change your life' (*ibid.*: 125). This means that mind power provides Christians with a supplemental set of tools to solve problems and truth has become techniques waiting to be applied. In this way, the gospel has been remade into a forceful tool for achieving health and wealth. Joel Osteen, a prominent prosperity preacher in the US writes: 'Every day we should make positive declarations over our lives. We should say things such as, "I am blessed. I am prosperous. I am healthy. I am talented. I am creative. I am wise"' (2007: 109-10). Osteen teaches that these words build self-image, 'for as those words permeate your heart and mind... eventually they will begin to change the way you see yourself' (*ibid.*) and 'As you speak affirmatively, you will develop a new image on the inside, and things will begin to change in your favour' (*ibid.*: 111). This indicates a renovation of the mind, a change for the better. This kind of approach is the change of one's dispositions to impact on one's life conduct and future position in society rather than on changing circumstances in society. It reveals the transformation of the self and a formation of personhood in tune with the capitalist society.

This discourse around positive thinking and confession as outlined above is also an integral part of the prosperity discourse and practices in the 'Overcomers' Church' on the OKR. As church members are faced with challenges in their daily lives, at work and in society in general, they might easily get discouraged or have a negative attitude towards life and start to complain. In the church they learn to have a positive outlook on life matters (vision) and to be grateful for the things that God has given them. In one of the services I attended, the junior pastor told the congregation that if people ask them how they were, they should say 'blessed' rather than 'okay'. He told them to see 'God at work in whatever they do', quoting

a verse from the Bible (Romans 8:28) which states that all things will work for good for those who love God.

The junior pastor then held a sermon on making declarations and pronouncements over members lives saying 'it will come to pass', prompting members to 'tune into the frequency of heaven or of faith'. He then asked all members to stand up and to decree into their lives that 'from today it has changed for the better'. He then quoted another Bible verse from Joshua 3:5 using two different Bible versions: 'And Joshua said unto the people, sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.' (KJV) and 'Then Joshua addressed the people: 'Sanctify yourselves. Tomorrow GOD will work miracle-wonders among you.' (MSG). Afterwards he again asked all members to stand up and pray for 'this will be your story'. This utilising of Bible passages and relating them to the members' circumstances followed by decreeing things into their lives happened a few times during that sermon. Another instance was this verse: 'When all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and the Canaanite kings along the seacoast heard how God had stopped the Jordan river before the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts sank; the courage drained out of them just thinking about the people of Israel' (Joshua 5:1, MSG). It was followed by the members decreeing this into their lives: 'This day marks the beginning of miraculous things. Every river standing between me and {...} (blank is filled in by the members themselves according to their needs) may dry up.' or 'All the walls of Jericho fall down in my life. In Jesus' name. Amen.'. At the end of the sermon the pastor pointed out that this month was the 'month of new life' which he followed with making prophecies into the lives of members: 'From today a new life of greatness, power, promotion will start, and all the enemies will be gone' and so on. He further encouraged the congregation by saying that 'if God presses the reset button all past experiences of bad choices which represent failed opportunities and nursed regret are nullified'. The aim of all this can be seen as trying to bring about a radical transformation of the subjectivity of the members using the beginning of the new month. Members were supposed to make a fresh start with the belief that as God owns everything and wants them to be great they now only need to believe. This was further affirmed with the

quotation of another Bible verse: 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new' (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV). Thus, he motivated members to not define themselves through their past experiences and mistakes but rather make a break with the past. For God has said: 'Forget about what's happened; don't keep going over old history. Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new' (Isaiah 43:18, MSG). Furthermore, the preacher argued 'let the people talk, your story is not complete, they don't know the trajectory of your movement'. The service ended with a 10 min decreeing session with a few prayer points focussing on making a break with the past and to look forward and take action. The preacher illustrated these points by sharing stories of people who had changed their destiny from a bad situation into a success story.

This technique had a strong influence on members, i.e. I saw two members (male in their mid-20s) greeting each other with correcting the other to use 'I am blessed' rather than some common response of 'I am good or okay'. Smiling happily at one another, they applied the technique of positive thinking and confession they had been introduced to in the sermon outlined above to their daily outlook on life. In another instance one of my colleagues in the greeters' department, a fervent and faithful member of the church, shared with me her motivation for taking up a Master course in some kind of psychological therapy. She was working as a nurse, but told me that she wanted to do this specific master degree in order to help people to have a more positive outlook on life, changing their perceptions of themselves, and so on. It was quite obvious that this discourse of positive thinking had really influenced her own life and outlook and now she was inspired to improve her own circumstances with the goal of improving other people's mental health. During the course of my fieldwork I found out that she did not manage to complete her studies, but she stayed inspired throughout as an active member of the congregation.

This section teases out the night vigils and three-days 'fire for fire' events, that I argue help to reinforce the new acquired vision/aspiration and reinforce a culture of resistance. Every second Friday, the church gathered together for night vigils.

Sometimes there were even events held three nights in a row which focused on deliverance and healing. Members of the congregation had the habit of coming to these events dressed in camouflage as they were taught to 'fight the spiritual fight against evil powers'. At the beginning of the meetings the senior pastor imitated a general who was instructing soldiers, using military language, with members saluting etc. Phrases used were for example 'today the church is a camp to fight the spiritual battle', 'there is no retreat, until the banner of the Lord Jesus Christ is lifted up', or 'a military man is never a coward, he is bold, we have a territory to defend, we must conquer', 'the winner takes all'. Often a sermon on spiritual battle was the centre of these meetings sometimes with guest speakers who were 'trained warriors' being invited to deliver the service. Key phrases were that 'the spiritual determines the physical' and 'prayer is a key to living a victorious life on earth'. During the sermon members were heavily involved constantly reaffirming the statements of the preacher with 'Amen'. Sometimes there were performances of laying on of hands whilst a team surrounding the pastor walked along the congregation. Often the sermon was followed by the whole congregation praying for a long time according to some key points, such as removing every oppression, breaking every yoke, binding the mind-binding spirits that bring confusion and don't allow members to think straight. The members were encouraged with slogans like 'whoever may have gone ahead of you, you will catch up with them and overtake them, you will no longer be static, you will move forward' and 'forget about your environment where you are, see your future'. As already illustrated in the previous chapter on resistance from the margins, in one instance members were given a sheet of paper with a 'key of success' printed on it which they used for 10 minutes to open every door in their lives that was closed as they were told to 'no longer accept any limitations'. They were motivated and spurred on by phrases like 'As from now on you will prosper in the land, your endeavour will be fruitful, you will receive favour, you will become a force to reckon with, you will increase, God will bless you and you will be a blessing, you will not be stagnant, you will not be limited, you have the key, go open doors, enter in'. These sessions were very powerful in style and had a strong liberating effect, reinforcing this form of resistance to simply accepting their current circumstances but rather see

themselves beyond their situation and to look ahead with a vision and aspiration. At the core was the aim of changing the minds of the adherents from a passive and despairing mind-set to an active agent that is strongly motivated to change their circumstances, with courage and confidence, overcoming every feeling of oppression, fear, and emotional burden. The sessions usually ended in a victorious worship session, proclaiming victory over every situation and enemies with songs entitled for example 'I shall prosper in the land of God' and the speaker in the front shouting 'let all the winners in the house shout hallelujah', answered by the whole congregation with shouts of hallelujah.

Another important aspect of the church services on Sundays are the testimonies of the members which function as a form of motivation and proof of success and God's provision. I have witnessed this in various congregations. In one church, members were encouraged to come to the front and share what God had done in their lives recently. The stories were often about miraculous job promotions, buying a business and selling it again for three times the price, finding a job and other career related stories, getting into university, but also how God protected from a car accident, or gave a healthy child. Some of these stories sounded incredible and unbelievable, but they instilled a hope of success in the other members. In the church I did my fieldwork in, the ritual was different. At one point during the service, members were encouraged to come to the front and join if they had a testimony which was always followed by many coming and joining others in the front. This then was prayed over to be covered by the blood of Jesus Christ so that Satan may not attack these testimonies. Then everyone went back to their place. Also during the sermon, examples of success stories were frequently used to illustrate points from the business world, political world, and also the religious world. During the Festival of Life (see chapter five), the General Overseer also shared many personal testimonies that encouraged the believers to believe in God's extraordinary interventions and instilled in them a hope in a better and successful future, rather than focussing on their current often limited life circumstances.

The worship songs I encountered during my fieldwork also reflect a positive attitude towards the future despite current circumstances with the hope that God, i.e. church attendance and related practices, would have a transforming impact on members' lives. The themes of the songs are very much focussed on God's intervention in the current hardships of the members (i.e. 'Deliverer for real', 'Destiny changer come and change my destiny today', 'Who has the final say, Jehova has the final say', 'You turn my life around, Jesus turned my life around', 'I'm a winner-man', 'Because God's mighty power has helped us to make it thus far'). These songs aided to sustain the belief in change among my research participants.

The emphasis on the Holy Spirit was very prevalent - in every performance during the service as well as for guidance and a source of strength in the daily lives of the members. The atmosphere during the services was also always very uplifting and coming out of the church onto the street level I also felt very joyful and empowered. In the interview the junior pastor also emphasised the effect the Holy Spirit has on the members:

JP: ... and the Holy Spirit is a very significant factor because Jesus when he left he gave the Holy Spirit to be with us, to help us through life

Danny: yeah

JP: to maximise our potentials, do the things we need; and I think that's exactly the same, that's what we are trying to do [...] our central focus is about maximising your potential through the power of the Holy Spirit, impacting the world, impacting yourself and then if you do those things and the Holy Spirit is with you he'll give you ideas and these ideas will lead you to be successful in whatever endeavours you do

This indicates that the Holy Spirit is seen as a tool or helper that empowers believers as they go about changing their destiny. Speaking in tongues which is a gift from the Holy Spirit is another interesting aspect in this regard. In one service members were encouraged who had not yet received the gift of speaking in tongues (glossolalia) to come to the front to let the Holy Spirit come over them.

They were then prayed for and assisted to just speak out without thinking, to just let it flow. During the services as well, the pastors and members constantly spoke in tongues in their prayers and everybody was actively encouraged to do so. As I observed this I felt that this gave my participants a form of power and a way of expressing themselves that empowered them.

For the members I interviewed, the Holy Spirit was also an important element of their personal life. In response to the question whether she could summarise her faith for me, Susan told me about the importance of the Holy Spirit in her life:

So, the Spirit of God is when I believed in Christ. When I believed in Christ I received him through the Spirit of God. So, the Spirit of God has become my comforter, has become my guide, has become my instructor and the Spirit of God strengthens me to do things and he brings hope to go forward. It does not mean I don't face challenges, I face a lot of challenges but there's a strength in me, in my spirit, that strength no one can give it to you other than the Spirit of God. He gives you courage to keep going and to keep believing and keep looking forward, expecting more positively than negatively. And seeing tomorrow more positive.

This came up frequently in the interviews, for example with Timi when she talked about her experience of changing church from a more traditional Anglican church to the current one partly due to the greater emphasis on the Holy Spirit there:

Danny: Interesting, you touched upon the Holy Spirit. What is your faith about the Holy Spirit?

Timi: Oh, he's my friend. He's everything actually. I have a relationship with God and through the help of the Holy Spirit, I believe. Before I was in bondage, but now I am no more. I need him I don't think I can do anything without him ...

Toni also shared his belief in the Holy Spirit:

When Jesus died and was living again he sent down the Holy Spirit, as a comforter, to direct us so that is why according to our faith, the Pentecostal faith, the Holy Spirit is very prominent, because we believe that with the help of God nothing is impossible for us, that is our faith.

All these different strategies mentioned so far were instilling confidence and resistance against a hostile external environment and to cope with pressures and hardship and to counteract stagnation, depression and marginalisation. This habitus of resistance within the prosperity movement has been described by Simon Coleman (2000) as 'Christian body-building' which was reflected in a statement of the pastor when he outlined the benefits of coming to church:

Well I think it helps them. One, we believe that Christianity is a way of life that gives us firstly an ability to reach our heavenly goal and secondly whilst doing that it allows us to impact our world and receive the benefits from God on earth, *so coming to church is a bit like an athlete going to the gym.*

This section has shown how the Holy Spirit functions as a tool of empowerment from above to enable my informants in their endeavour to re-position themselves. The next technique and strategy is very much focussed on bringing concrete change to the congregants' situation with the focus on action through a promoted work ethic and self-discipline that brings about the disposition of tenacity and indefatigability.

The role of members' spiritual discipline cannot be over-emphasised in terms of dealing with all the physical and psychological challenges they face. In one of the mid-week services, we watched a video of a monkey trying to crack open a coconut. This took some time, but the monkey did not give up and refused to be discouraged. Rather he endured until he managed to crack it open and he could fulfil his desire. This was then applied to the members' situation as a source of inspiration in an interactive session asking members what they could learn from this. The themes that came up were: refusing to be discouraged or frustrated;

perseverance; endurance; persistence; patience; at the end successful; through hard work in life one will succeed; not getting distracted, do not look at others, but stay focussed. In short, if one has a desire, one must not only have the desire, but do the same as the monkey - take action and start to work diligently. At the end of the service members were prompted to learn from the monkey and to take a metaphorical stone to hit their issues with it, not giving up until their breakthrough- which is near- had come. This was a very practical session revealing the work ethic that is promoted in this movement and in the 'Overcomers' Church'.

This form of work ethic is a further technique of the holistic prosperity discourse, which is employed to put the habitus of resistance and the belief in success into action. As discussed earlier, the prosperity movement has spread around the globe in tandem with processes of neoliberalisation and manifests itself as a moral economy with a strong neoliberal work ethic centred around the idea of the subject of value. This work ethic was encouraged in this localised expression of the movement witnessed during my fieldwork. As seen above, the message of vision is accompanied with various other messages and techniques that support these new visionaries on their way to succeed and to let God's plan of greatness for their lives become fulfilled, whilst using different narratives from the Bible as examples to not give up, to endure, and to overcome obstacles on the way, with the promotion of a certain work ethic.

In what follows I would like to tease out this work ethic through various teachings, services, songs and documents from the movement which I encountered during my fieldwork. When I first participated in the Sunday services of the 'Overcomers' Church', I also went to the one-hour Sunday school provided for adult members of the church before the actual service started. Every week we would go through a Sunday school manual created by the denomination's European arm. A new manual is printed every year. The student's manual has 53 chapters for the 52/3 weeks of the year each with its own topic which was applied each Sunday in an interactive fashion. Overall, the 53 lessons reveal the theology of the church, including different techniques. I have identified 16 lessons directly related to the movements' work ethic. Five lessons are reviews of other lessons, this means that 16 out of 48

lessons, a third of all the lessons for the whole year, are about hard work and endurance.

I will give a short summary now of what kind of messages were discussed in these sessions. After having established the relationship between God and the believer in lesson 10 of the manual, e.g. that the believer must be fixed on God and his word and can expect rewards in return, the believers are admonished not to rest yet, since it is not yet time. As God created the earth in six days and afterwards rested on the seventh day, believers must follow this example and only enjoy rest after their labour. This is reiterated further by utilising other Bible passages as well. The focus of lesson 12 is on conversion and the transformation it involves, encouraging believers to 'embrace the change' in terms of habits, attitude, etc. 'Making the necessary adjustments' is seen as a prerequisite for being able to rise up now and be successful. Lesson 16 is in the same vein with the topic 'Be Consistent'. Focussing on the advantages of consistency, it states that 'it is never easy to catch up with a man who never stops moving forward' or 'the journey of a thousand miles starts with a step' and 'therefore, if you are consistent, if you keep moving forward, if you keep improving steadily, you will soon leave your competitors behind', also 'you will make a mark if you are consistent and persistent'. These statements are accompanied with a warning using biblical examples of people 'who stop moving' and the negative consequences they faced. Lesson 25 covers the theme of 'Patience'. The definition given is: 'Patience can be described as endurance or perseverance. To be patient is to continue striving in spite of oppositions, trials, temptations and difficulties. It can also be described as godly response to all afflictions and pressures of this life'. A guide about how to acquire patience is given and the conclusion of the lesson is that 'with patience, one can ultimately reach the goal'. In addition, a series of lessons focused on keeping the believers motivated can be found in the manual, for example, lesson 29 is about 'The danger of complacency' motivating the adherents not to be lazy or stagnant, not to have a false sense of security and to examine themselves. After having given reasons why people become complacent and outlining the dangers of such trait, such as 'being slow or delayed progress', 'poverty', and 'lack of fulfilment in life' through utilising

various Bible passages, the session is concluded by stating 'attitude determines altitude'. Lesson 30 goes on to warn the believers of complaining and lesson 31 entitled 'avoid distraction' encourages believers to be determined. The lessons that follow are on memorising Bible verses which are chosen in particular to keep believers going and as a formula to be successful. In lesson 36 we learned about the parable of the four soils in Matthew 13 concluding that 'there can never be harvest without seed sowing'. In lesson 41, the traits of dedication are discussed in order to achieve promotion; this is followed by lesson 42 on 'good works' which offer divine rewards and are essential additions to a true faith. 'Maximising your time' in lesson 44 reminds us to make every minute count and to avoid procrastination, to reconsider leisure time, to adopt a daily check list and to make a plan of every day, week, month and the whole year, thus to make the best of every day. The last two thematic sessions 51 and 52 summarize the work ethic focussing again 'on the power to get wealth' and on 'watch and pray' revealing necessary principles, e.g. faithfulness, diligence, preparedness, not to be left behind, watching one's thoughts, words, actions, character, habit - in this way preparing the believer for success in this life as well as for 'heaven'.

These sessions were carried out by different pastors in the church employing an interactive mode. Throughout, all participants were highly engaged in discussions and expressed to me in personal conversations afterwards that were greatly rejuvenated and encouraged through them. They shared practical issues, using examples to make their points. Some contributions could at times be very challenging, but at the end a solution to the problem was found either by a member of the group or the leader of the session. The Sunday school sessions demonstrate that the work ethic is a very integral part of the theology of the movement seeking to enable believers to keep going with full confidence and vision, despite oppositions and disadvantaged positions and to endure to the end. This fits well with the situations the members find themselves in as immigrants who experience penalties due to migration and structural inequalities due to racism but can counteract these with a strong work ethic.

Topics such as procrastination and laziness were also constantly covered in other meetings and members were reminded again and again to move into action and to persevere. In addition, various figures from history and the Bible who through perseverance kept going and achieved success were used as examples, for example Abraham Lincoln who although he had failed several times never gave up and believed in himself eventually becoming president. Or Joseph from the Old Testament who despite his circumstances worked hard and kept going even though things seemed contrary with the result of eventually getting promoted. Other motivational words of wisdom and advice were offered, e.g. 'not everybody who is on the top is the best, but they got there through hard work'.

Although my insight into the lives of the members of the church is limited, I am aware that most of the longstanding members are in various occupations and are either young professionals or parents with careers in different sectors like nursing, social work, teaching, engineering, various office and administrative roles, occupations related to finance, real estate, etc.; others were employed in some more unskilled service sector occupations. Many had degrees in higher education, but some struggled to find employment in their field, again others were self-employed. It seemed as if during the weekly meetings many of the members would come straight from work and timing was arranged to suit this schedule (and free parking after 6.30pm). On the other hand, I witnessed a strong commitment by longstanding members to participate in the meetings diligently often arriving early before the meetings started. Sometimes there were several events held in one week which most of the members tried to come to. On Sundays, the Sunday school started at 10am (for some 9am was the time to prepare with prayer for the day) and was followed by the regular Sunday service at 11am. The commitment of the members was indeed astonishing. Even at times a period of fasting was announced during the day, with the expectation of a reward which was observed by many members as an additional form of self-discipline (fasting was defined as abstinence from food and any practice that gives pleasure to the body, with the goal of subduing the flesh, to bring it under control). All this indicates an ethic of hard-

work, diligence and self-control not just in terms of worldly economic activities, but also towards the commitment to faith and communal activities.

These rituals were accompanied with advice on changing consumption patterns as members were called on to abstain from alcohol, tobacco and drugs in general. Also in terms of spending patterns adherents were urged not to spend their money on wasteful consumption or on unproductive endeavours, but rather reoriented towards investment and accumulation. In sermons statements such as ‘in the future you will not borrow but you will lend money’ were frequent. In terms of bank account management, the advice not to overspend or take up any credit was given. All this reveals some form of frugality. In terms of earning, the requirement that members give generously to their churches may prevent substantial accumulation, however the economic ethos stressed by the movement functions more as a coping mechanism to avoid extreme poverty and ill health, rather than aiming to produce great prosperity. This form of asceticism often allows converts to meet goals even in difficult circumstances and has been described by scholars as an adjustment to converts’ life chances (Robbins, 2004; Maxwell, 1998).

Pentecostals place a strong emphasis on moral purity and ethical behaviour. They refuse, in principle and often in practice, to give or receive bribes or to engage in other forms of corruption. They observe strict injunctions against theft and lying, and place particular emphasis on honesty and reliability, clean and smart appearance, and marital fidelity. While not everyone can live up to these high standards, it is widely believed, both inside and outside Pentecostal communities, that Pentecostals are in general more honest, trustworthy and hard-working than other people (see Freeman, 2016). The emphasis on ethical behaviour and the practice of frugality was also witnessed in the interviews as members constantly talked about how the church ‘keeps them on the right track’, reminds them ‘to be good’ and ‘to keep going’.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated *how* the movement equips its members in their daily and life-long struggle for value. Transformation and restructuring of their habitus are key to breaking with the past, and the message taught in the churches enables them to change their perspectives and gain a vision of themselves beyond their current circumstances. A culture of resistance is created and affirmed through techniques such as acquiring a clear vision and aspirations and positive thinking and confession, as well as various church events. Testimonies of the success stories of others serve to give hope that change is indeed possible, and the worship songs are proclamations of faith that sustain their belief in positive change. The power to change comes through the Holy Spirit, on the one hand, as well as a strong work ethic, spiritual discipline and self-control, which allow the members to put their hopes and wishes into action. Many members talked about the positive impact these techniques have had in their day to day lives and noted that the message preached is the main reason they continue to attend the services.

Having discussed the reactive strategies members of the prosperity movement employ to resist and counteract the situation of disadvantage and stagnation, the next theme ***adaptability and embodiment*** focusses on pro-active strategies that these members employ to improve their situation in the future.

Chapter Eight: Adaptability and Embodiment

Introduction

The churches along the OKR function to a large extent as social and religious support networks to assist their members in negotiating the migration process, becoming incorporated into British society and re-positioning themselves within it. The previous chapter discussed reactive tactics along the theme of *tenacity and indefatigability*. This chapter will discuss other counteracting strategies to stagnation, namely proactive strategies which I call *adaptability and embodiment*.

An important aspect of the migrant experience relates to the question of transnational capital validation and their convertibility into other resources with the effect of securing advantage or overcoming disadvantage. Given the fact that capitals are context specific, their value is reassessed in the process of transnational migration. If someone cannot validate their capital in a new environment, they may experience social exclusion and be faced with symbolic struggles over the assessment of their capital. In this chapter, I will further elucidate the struggles for value of the members of the prosperity movement along the OKR by firstly considering the notion of social capital and adaptability. This is followed by the struggle for cultural capital including embodied, objectified and institutionalised cultural capital as well as creativity/entrepreneurship. Finally, investment in children as a strategy of improvement shall be discussed.

These issues have been integrated into the localised prosperity discourse that I encountered during my fieldwork, as this discourse was centred around the discourse of improvement and strategies to overcome their structural positioning which does not enable access to productive resources. This chapter also exemplifies how social and cultural positioning generates resistance to being fixed rather than adjustment to their position. I will mainly draw on data which I collected in the form of fieldnotes during regular and theme specific meetings in relation to the prosperity discourse, as well as some observations and conversations with the members of the congregation at the 'Overcomers' Church'. In addition to regular

services which generally provide the flow of information in regard to adapting to the new environment, special meetings with titles such as 'breakfast for champions', 'supernatural turnaround banquet' or men/women empowerment meetings are provided. These meetings have the particular aim to address such questions and give practical support in order to counteract limited access to the desired middle-class position based on the congregants' current position. This all seemed to be a necessity due to the severely limited access to primary labour market jobs. The informants seemed to have clear knowledge of their 'place', nevertheless they were clearly struggling to change it, signifying movement from the category of Black racialised disadvantaged subjects occupying the lower or marginal echelons of British society, through improvement and adaptation. The prosperity discourse was constantly based on breaking from past relationships and habits that limit them on the one hand and on generating, accruing, and displaying social and cultural capital on the other hand. They were involved in improving their appearance, their mind, their relationships, their education, their occupation, their future, investment in their children and displays of distinction through their bodies, appearance, and objects of possession. Their experiences were dominated by exclusion from areas to trade inherited and acquired capitals. This point is crucial when it comes to migrant and minority ethnic groups and the role played by racialisation and discrimination, as these might block the ability of certain groups and individuals to mobilise their resources to gain advantage, as well as to access certain resources in the first place, as is the case with members of the prosperity movement along the OKR.

Struggle for social capital affecting adaptation

Social capital is important for understanding the ways in which individuals are positioned in the field. Social capital in the form of access to social networks and social information is a key component of the migratory experience. These valuable resources can positively influence migrants' position-taking and provide leeway in symbolic struggles. As discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, relying on or

engaging with co-ethnic communities is a strategy and part of migrants' 'self-organizational' skills (Erel, 2010) thus playing an integral part in counteracting downward trajectories, attempting to countervail barriers, to be better equipped for struggles of various kinds and to create opportunities to exercise agency when settling and integrating in their new surroundings and country of settlement.

These social support networks provide a space with a sense of community and security for its members in the sense of 'bonding social capital' within their close-knit groups (Gilchrist, 2004: 6), giving them an opportunity on the one hand to reproduce their cultural and linguistic heritage and capital (Cederberg, 2012). As such, they can play an important part in counterpoising a field/habitus disjuncture within the country of settlement as they can provide a field where migrants feel like 'a fish in water' due to the habitual similarities within them (*ibid.*). On the other hand, these communities provide social capital that is basic to enhancing adaptability and to foster the acculturation process into the host society by learning the rules of the game. Networks can rapidly disseminate new and updated information that are crucial in enabling adaptation responses. This shows that social capital is essential to the successful implementation of adaptation measures, which also increases the effectiveness of collective action.

These co-ethnic social (and religious) networks affect many aspects of the migration process and play a significant role in these migrants' lives as they help them to migrate, get jobs, and adjust to society. The importance of these faith communities on the OKR that also function as migrant networks in affecting outcomes for migrants, their families, and their communities cannot be overstated.

Thus, above all these churches or co-ethnic migrant communities along the OKR provide access to a stock of social capital necessary for successful integration, hence these churches function as adapting communities, whilst at the same time being a surrogate family, or fictive kinship of believers for disembedded subjects, separated from traditional extended family networks and thereby dislocated co-ethnics in the diaspora. These churches function as a home away from home or a

safe haven, and thus as a buffer between itself and British society (Coleman and Maier, 2013), providing a safe, shared environment to forge relationships in.

The approach of making a break with the past in terms of encouraging adherents to make every effort to separate themselves from former social and religious associations, networks and individuals which hinder social development and progress, including to actively shun certain traditional cultural practices, is a major aspect of the message. This demands and legitimises radical behaviour change, including the restructuring of families, communities and social relations.

In terms of family relations, constructions of family life in the localised urban prosperity discourse on the OKR correspond with a broader cultural shift towards the individuated nuclear family system. Thus, the focus of the neo-Pentecostal believer is on the nuclear family as the central unit of production and consumption (with concentration of expenditure on the nuclear family), restructuring family relations by loosening ties with extended family, relieving members from the burden of kin obligations, which fits well with the migrant context and aids members of the movement to focus on the integration process in the host society, rather than investing their time and effort in two directions (i.e. remittance, travel etc.). The emphasis of the discourse is on social change that contrasts 'traditional' family relations with 'modern' Western models and posits the rapid growth of the latter at the expense of the former. There is also a concomitant reformulation of gender relations. With alcohol consumption, smoking and extramarital relations cast as immoral, many neo-Pentecostal men are effectively 'domesticated' and they turn the focus of their energy and resources to their family (Soothill 2007; Van Dijk, 2002; Maxwell, 1998) and are encouraged to fulfil their role of the good provider. In this way, men's values and goals are redefined so that they are realised through his attachment to the family; the man remains the head of the household, but his aspirations change to coincide more closely with those of his wife. Although the woman is subordinate to her husband in the home, he has responsibility to respect her and treat her with consideration. Married couples are encouraged to work as partners in the domestic sphere. The changes themselves in family relations tend to make the families more like Western middle-class families, reducing traditional

characteristics which have previously distinguished them from families in the West in terms of material culture and style of life.

In one of the empowerment for men meetings, the role of men including in relation to family responsibility was made the topic of the session. It was entitled 'arise and shine' with the following subtitles providing the structure for the session: 'arise from ungodliness', 'arise from failure', 'arise from in-action', 'arise from the ordinary and stand out' focusing on the transformation of manhood and masculinity according to the ideal model for manhood and family by the movement. On Mother's Day the women in the church were celebrated and honoured as mothers and mothers-to-be emphasising the nurturing role they play in the church. The senior pastor being the 'mother' of the church held a sermon on neo-Pentecostal ideals of womanhood and motherhood utilising the breast as focus to firstly talk about the biological difference of women to men, secondly about the effect of breasts in terms of attraction with the goal to provide a husband and thirdly to nurse a child. In sum, this discourse on parenthood indicates a shift from an understanding of the family as an extended kinship group to a nuclear family system.

This approach to making a break with past relationships that hinder development was a constant feature and part of the holistic discourse of prosperity. For example, on a sermon about 'destiny and destination', one of the key points made in terms of negative decisions or actions that may impact where one ends up diverting from one's destiny was in relation to other people, as they can play a role in the direction you travel. This could include family members, business partners, friends or teachers who made negative pronouncements. Furthermore, a mid-week service sermon I attended was on the topic 'We are people of influence'. As usual, the setting took an educational and nurturing form. The focus was on relationships aiming to reverse any bad influence members may have experienced or been brought into, so as to rather let members become people who influence others (children, husband, wife, members of the church, people around them) positively. A key focus of the sermon was on advising members to 'be careful who you associate with, because influence is inevitable'. At the same time, members were encouraged

through good practice to be people of influence, thus transforming their mind-set in terms of agency not to be affected by the surrounding but to change their surrounding for the better, instilling confidence in the members.

Again, another sermon was on the biblical figure Jonah¹¹. Among several points that were raised, one was on relationships that have a bad influence on one's progress. Using the allegory of Jonah in the ship with other people, who brought misfortune to the rest because of his life-style, it was asserted that the adherents of the movement must be careful not to be in the same ship with certain people, and, until they separate themselves from such associates, i.e. business partners, things will not go right. The speaker summed this point up through utilising the idiom: 'One bad egg among many good eggs spoils the whole batch'. At the end of the sermon, one of the various prayer points that could be taken from this session was: 'Every Jonah that is rocking the ship of our lives, may he be thrown out'.

At the same time, members of the movement were encouraged to participate actively in church activities. One example that was used to illustrate this was Simon Peter's experience when Jesus used his boat as a platform to teach the multitudes¹². The interpretation in terms of significance for the members was that Simon found himself in church: 'by divine guidance he found himself in a church service. God intervened in Simon's life. If Simon was not in church that day he wouldn't have been noticed. If you skip church, you will not be noticed. I pray that the day your visitation will come you will not be missing'. In this way the church was promoted as a place where one's life could be turned around for the better.

In addition to promoting the church as a form of bonding social capital, another element of the prosperity discourse was more future oriented. This was focussed on strategies to increase the members' linking and bridging social capital which can be utilised as a resource for integrating into the wider society, as well as gaining

¹¹ The prophet Jonah is the central figure of the book of Jonah in the Old Testament. He was called by God to travel to the city of Niniveh, however, he is unwilling to go and boards a ship to Tarshish instead which gets caught up in a storm due to him being there. He then orders the sailors to throw him overboard to quiet the sea down.

¹² This account can be found in the book of Luke 5 in the New Testament. Jesus makes use of Simon's boat as a platform to preach to the multitudes from. After finishing his preaching, Jesus asks Simon to let down his nets for a catch. Simon points out that they have just had an unsuccessful night of fishing, but still does as asked by Jesus. As a result, they caught fish in abundance.

access to native cultural and economic capital. Again, I would like to use my fieldnotes from the sermons and speeches during various meetings to elucidate how this played out.

The story of Joseph in the book of Genesis in the Old Testament of the Bible is very popular among the members of this movement. This story is fitting to make connections to my informants' own life circumstances as well as to learn from and take away some strategies from his story. After Joseph had a dream and shared it with his brothers, he was sold by his brothers to strangers because of jealousy and found himself in a foreign land (Egypt). However, in the new land he was able to succeed both through hard work and his problem-solving approach no matter what job opportunity presented itself to him. Additionally, he built good relations with everyone and was helpful to those around him. All this, eventually catapulted him to become the prime minister of Egypt. In one meeting the members took three points from this story. The topic was on God's faithfulness and what a man should do in the process. Firstly, one needs to be careful and wise with whom one shares one's dreams, as the brothers of Joseph became jealous of him and this caused him many problems. Secondly, we looked at how Joseph experienced slander working in the household of his master in Egypt and subsequently was thrown into prison. However, in time he became like a manager, which let him meet people from the palace guard to whom he presented himself helpful. This in turn eventually led him to become prime minister. The sermon emphasised that believers also should learn 'when life throws you lemons to make lemonade' and make the best out of every situation, to 'get on with it'. Thirdly, another point that was raised was that believers should be helpful to others, as 'you never know if this is the missing connection [bridging, linking social capital] to your glory', just like in the example of Joseph. Referring to his own experience, the junior pastor made connections to the development of his own life trajectory since his arrival in Britain drawing similarities between his and Joseph's story: although he had acquired a Bachelor in Science back in Lagos, Nigeria, upon his arrival in London in the UK, he started to work as a cleaner, then as a security guard, at times even doing babysitting work. However, had he refused this job he would not have met the person who propelled him to his

destiny. The pastor shared that while he was doing the babysitting job, he met a man who recognised his potential and thus became an important link for him to get into his current occupation in property management where he is working now in the capacity as a manager. In another empowerment meeting for men, several key points that can be learned from Joseph's story were raised. Two of them were: 'Always be on the lookout for new relationships and be a blessing' and 'It is human nature for men to be disappointed, but even in disappointment keep relationships, never burn bridges'.

During a Sunday service in which the message was on 'kindness', the theme of building new relationships was picked up and contrasted to the harsh (and racialised) urban environment in the host society. The topic was introduced by declaring that kindness is one of God's attributes and he expects his children to be kind. This was juxtaposed by stating that the world is unkind, cold, harsh, inconsiderate, inhuman, unsympathetic and that everyone is only concerned for themselves. 'That is the nature of the world we live in' the preacher pointed out and 'to be kind is seen as being gullible as the motto is 'everyone for himself''. A definition of kindness was then put forward as a quality of being warm-hearted, considerate and sympathetic to others. This was followed by the overarching question to be answered during the educational sermon: 'Why should I be kind?'. Three arguments were made by the speaker. Firstly: 'Kindness demonstrates that you are a Christian and proves that you belong to Jesus Christ'. Secondly: 'In Matthew 5:7 it is stated that the kind will reap kindness, following the principle of what you sow you will reap'. And finally: 'Acts of kindness can propel you into your destiny'. This clearly indicates the strategic approach to increasing one's bridging and linking social capital as a form of resource and access to a successful life. The pastor then argued that: 'A lot of us are still where we ought not to be because we minded our own business'. He made the point that members may have lost opportunities because of a lack of warmth. He talked about how other ethnicities negotiate their difference through kindness and then compared it to the African heritage. Using a Bible passage on kindness and forgiveness, the pastor remarked that although people may at times be harsh to you and provoke you, members of

the movement of prosperity should not react or respond to it but rather be kind with their words, asserting that if you want to actualise your destiny you need to be careful with your mouth and so on.

Furthermore, in one of the empowerment meetings for men a guest speaker was invited who presented himself as a human capital development expert and inspirational speaker (with a long list of credentials). The topic of his talk was 'Networking and Communicating for the Next Level'. He started the talk with explaining that he would be speaking about 'personal branding', 'expanding networks' and 'communicating your brand'. He gave a variety of practical advice on how to dress and look presentable (he himself was dressed in a three-piece suit), and on how to create opportunities. He motivated the audience to be creative and be comfortable in their own skin, for example saying things like 'you may speak with an accent, but you don't think with an accent' or 'human beings are incredible, they can turn nothing into something'. He then shared his own experience of how he overcame disadvantage, connected with famous people and established a network. (He also mentioned something like 'if people check you out online what do they see?', so afterwards I googled him and found the only connections he had were to other BMCs, giving similar talks). This talk also indicates the awareness of my participants of their racialised bodies, their lack of the right embodied culture capital and how they counteract it through nurturing confidence. However, this talk in particular was a very aggressive approach to increasing one's bridging and linking social capital utilising a lot of practical tips and the speaker's own story to motivate the audience. The aggressiveness of his approach reveals the intensity of the symbolic violence experienced due to limited access to these resources and the need for belligerent counteracting strategies and confidence building to bridge the gap and to gain access to these spaces. This also speaks to the desperation sometimes felt in the face of these multiple barriers and limited access to forms of social and cultural capital and also their strong determination to overcome these barriers and reposition themselves. Overall, the different elements and messages in the sermons and speeches clearly show the approach of the churches to promote

prosperity in terms of engaging members in strategies to build bridging and linking capitals to create opportunities.

Struggle for cultural capital

Cultural capital is implicitly or explicitly present in the immigration process: explicitly in the institutionalised form of 'human capital' credentials; and implicitly in regard to racism and racialisation processes through which embodied cultural capital is devalued and denigrated. Cultural capital refers to the symbolic assets that a person possesses. This might be in the form of institutional cultural capital (for example, university degrees), embodied cultural capital, referring to 'long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body' (Bourdieu, 1986: 243) (for example, accents, 'race', mental schemes and action orientation, language, competencies, mannerism, tastes), or objectified cultural capital (for example, dress, physical equipment, cars). In each case, these are assets by which an individual is judged in the labour market (and in a variety of other settings). What is conventionally treated as 'human capital' in economic analyses, and narrowly taken to mean skills and qualifications, is thus a part (but only a part) of an individual's cultural capital, which may also include embodied markers based on gender, class, and 'race' (Skeggs, 2004).

However, what distinguishes mere cultural resources from cultural capital is that the latter is convertible into other forms of capital. This section focusses therefore on the struggle of position-taking and is concerned with how actors seek to get into the field. The very act of migration disrupts ideas of linear reproduction of cultural capital, since migration means that the conditions of production of habitus are not homologous to its conditions of functioning. If the state holds the monopoly of symbolic power, as Bourdieu (1990) asserts, racialised and ethnicised migrants experience a further discontinuity of their cultural capital as incongruous with the legitimate symbolic capital of the state they live in. Knowledge about customs and lifestyles, language skills, professional qualifications, etc. often do not fit or are undervalued in the process of migration, with migrants having limited power over

the rules of the game. Yet migrants do not only unpack cultural capital from their rucksacks, instead they also create new forms of cultural capital in the countries of residence, using resources they brought with them and others they develop in situ to create quite distinct dispositions. Thus, the notion of cultural capital usefully captures some of the more subtle processes of inclusion and exclusion in/from different social networks. This section reveals how my participants navigate the labour market of London through the prosperity discourse and related practices, given the constraints associated with their immigration status and varying degrees of familiarity with local practices and conventions.

Institutionalised cultural capital such as educational titles that are foreign-gained are not equal to national titles, or not recognised at all. Institutionalised cultural capital is usually applied in national contexts, and its value or relevance tends to diminish through migration (Nohl et al., 2006). Highly qualified migrants thus are often employed in less qualified jobs, due to the devaluation and lack of recognition of their educational qualifications obtained in their country of origin and due to structural and institutional discrimination, as well as a lack of the right language skills. Even where 'foreign qualifications are formally recognised, employers invoke criteria such as lack of local professional experience, turning apparently neutral job specifications into national capital' (Hage, 1998) which enables privileged access to skilled jobs for those considered properly part of the nation (not migrants).

Many of my participants migrated to the UK after their studies in West Africa, mainly Nigeria. Upon their arrival in the UK they experienced a devaluation or non-recognition of their degrees, which has an impact on their agency and subjectivity. Despite having acquired a degree in their home country, many of my participants thus obtained new degrees in the UK post migration in order to improve their prospects. Additionally, despite having acquired the right institutional capital, the validation of these capitals is limited due to the constraints put on West African immigrants due to the colour of their skin and the racial hierarchies that locate them as subordinated subjects and mark them as outsiders, as discussed previously. Many thus experience downward social mobility, compared to their social position in their home countries.

In addition to these obstacles, the legal status of my participants restricts their access and hampers their progress in the British labour market and obstructs their economic integration. Some come to the UK on a student visa and gain credentials in the UK education system, which are more likely to be recognised in the job market, yet due to visa restrictions they struggle to convert their newly gained institutional cultural capital. So, what I have witnessed is that again and again my participants prayed for the Home Office and for people in the Home Office. This was an especially strong feature during the whole Brexit campaign and Nigel Farage's statements made on immigration control. During one midweek service, we all came together holding hands and prayed for 10-15 minutes for documentation and related issues. It was also a constant feature of the positive proclamations made during the services. At first, I did not understand what this referred to, but in time it became clearer to me that it was probably concerning getting post from the Home Office. The statement made was something along the lines of: 'Tomorrow or when you come home tonight you will have good news or receive a letter with good news'. These documentations could also be some form of credentials for my participants in their struggle to integrate themselves into the British economy and society moving from one status to another, e.g. from a student visa to a work permit visa to a permanent residence to a British citizen.

Once they enter into a desired occupation, mobility within the job is very limited likely due to a lack of the right embodied cultural capital. Ergo the quest for promotion was a constant part of the prosperity discourse in terms of advising people to be problem solvers so that in time although people will not like you they will have to promote you. To pray for promotion was also a key advice as God can move other candidates out of the way due to exceptional circumstances in their lives or moving to another job or pregnancy etc. In one of the empowerment for men meetings advice on promotion was given on point four on the theme 'arise and shine', which was called 'arise from the ordinary and stand out in the market place or in your field'. During the speech the pastor spoke about promotion and he said and I quote: 'if your boss hates you, if you solve a problem, although he hates you in time he has to notice you...if you do not stand out you will be mashed with a

crowd. ... what extra are you providing? These are principles to get us to another level. You are called to be different'.

In addition to facing credential devaluation, racial discrimination and a habitus mismatch, immigrants may fail to navigate the labour market effectively or may even inadvertently communicate to British employers that they are not culturally competent for an advertised job. In the face of such difficulties, migrants often display a great deal of creative agency. For example, migrant workers who find employment outside the field of their training and experience. Ethnic networks can in such circumstances become a significant resource to newcomers in the UK, by producing employment opportunities in ethnic niches or providing further ideas, guidance and support to other migrants, for example to start their own businesses. British immigrants may decide to become entrepreneurs not because it is their first choice of employment, but because opportunities in the waged employment of immigrants in London's labour sector are blocked. Self-employment in the UK has long constituted an important strategy of (skilled) migrants (Nowicka, 2010).

In the 'Overcomers' Church' as part of their special events in regard to integration matters I attended a business and career seminar where some successful longstanding members of the church gave presentations on 'starting and marketing a business' followed by Q&A. One presentation was on how to set up a business with focus on training entrepreneurship. In this presentation members were encouraged to engage in enterprises, including ethnic enterprises and given a guide on how to approach such a start-up. The advice provided was very concrete and helpful, for example members were advised that they first need to have a good business idea (car wash and barbershop were cited as examples) as well as knowledge about demand for the product and the profit margin. Moreover, further suggestions were made in terms of attitude, to have a can do attitude and to be a problem solver, to be consistent and so on. This was picked up in the Q&A session afterwards on a question on failure. Simon Cowell was given as an example to not give up and to try it again. This seminar showed the practical side of the co-ethnic network as a support network to aid members in the transition into the new economic environment.

A further element of my participants struggle was concerning embodied forms of cultural capital/habitus and objective cultural capital to display distinction. This has to do both with their race (since tacit national capital contains elements of embodied cultural capital) and their status as migrants. When a field changes abruptly, the habitus might be lagging behind this change, it might misfit the field. A misfit of habitus may lead to weak labour market positions of migrants. This mismatch between the agent and the field requires the agent to adapt and change their habitus to the new field. Within 'definite boundaries', habitus can be 'practically transformed' (Bourdieu, 1990: 116). This embodied transformation of the migrant into an inhabitant of the country of settlement by acquisition of a new habitus is often limited for the first-generation, but through a socialization process within the national educational system that functions as an agent of cultural reproduction, the second-generation fares much better at adapting to and embodying the new culture.

Habitus regulation (a consciously regulated process that results in the matching of altered habitus with the new structures) is crucial for developing the competence to successfully operate within a new society and culture and hence for migrants struggles for positions. Habitus is central for the process of adaptation processes as it is displayed on the body in the sense that they know how to act, feel, talk, hold one's body, etc.

Whether one's habitus (embodied cultural capital and dispositions), which is acquired through long socialisation and educational processes and therefore cannot be changed so easily, matches the new field is crucial for the experience of one's self and one's place in the wider social context and the possibility of playing the game successfully in the new field. One possibility, as noted by Lusia and Kelly, is the option of a seemingly unambiguous transnational experience meaning that an 'individual could occupy multiple habitus simultaneously' (2006: 846), thus adjusting or 'transnationalizing' their practice depending on the rules of the game and the evaluation of capitals in different contexts. During my fieldwork I noticed how the junior pastor who has been living in the UK for more than 20 years was able to switch from one accent to another and when he related to people he could also

adjust his behaviour according to the person he was talking to. This indicates the embodiment of at least two distinct cultural habitus. During meetings in which he wanted to be more relatable to the audience, for example during Sunday services where most of the newcomers attended, he often switched to his Nigerian accent sharing anecdotes that were fitting to their habitus. On many other occasions he displayed his eloquent British accent and mannerisms.

The mind-set of members to adjust their habitus to the new culture was a strong feature of the church meetings and of members' attitudes. The services were held in English with most of the worship songs sung in the English language, including some traditional English hymns. Members of various departments had a dress-code which reflects middle-class professional appearance, haircuts were often Europeanised etc. In one of the 'breakfast for champions' meetings on a Saturday morning, which I believe was to gain access to a new batch of members by giving advice on employment strategies, we all sat around round dining tables eating English breakfast whilst on the stage some speakers shared information about various employment strategies. This was accompanied throughout by prayer and worship and rounded up by a motivational message from the junior pastor. During the breakfast I asked one of the new attendees sitting next to me, having noticed that the majority were from the same background, why we only ate English breakfast since I thought this may not have been the obvious choice of many. She answered my curious question by saying: 'If you move to Rome and live there you need to learn how to behave like a Roman'. For me, this one sentence summed up the attitudes and actions of the members of the localised prosperity movement and has since stuck with me becoming a key conversation in my fieldwork to understand their actions.

The prosperity discourse with its transformation of habitus seeks to reposition the movements' adherents in the British society. I will now illustrate this by teasing out some examples from sermons. The underlying theodicy and soteriology that 'God is great and that he is in a class of his own, none can be compared to him, but as God is great he wants to make us great' reveals this agenda. The comparison of a seed illustrates this point. 'The seed of something will become this something. The seed

of God as well, it does not matter what the issue is, but at the end of the day it will be great as well'. This mind-set was reflected and elaborated on in depth in a series of sermons on poverty. These sermons sought to reposition the members of the movement from a situation of poverty to greatness through making their dispositions and behaviour more attuned with the dominant symbolic.

The pastor started by saying that Satan has hindered some people to come and that the poor attendance on that day was due to the topic, because 'Satan does not want the members to hear it', thus reiterating its importance. He then started with introducing the topic as an issue that has plagued humanity for a long time and that he is annoyed about poverty and that no one is enjoying it, claiming that poverty is the root of every problem of this world. He then addressed the audience by saying: 'Poverty is leaving your house'. He went on: 'Poverty lets people do evil things. We must be rich, I must be rich'. This was the setting provided to the topic which was then followed by making the audience aware that poverty is not only about money, but also about attitudes and behaviour. He declared that the number one enemy is everyone themselves and that the members of the congregation needed to have an understanding of rich people's lives. The speaker then revealed his agenda by saying: 'You must be delivered'. After asking people what they think poverty was, he offered a definition himself: 'The state of having nothing, little or no money and few or no material possessions'. He went on: 'Poverty is a plague, some say a disease. If the head of the family is poor it becomes generational. A lot of families have failed because of it. [...] Money is not evil. Poverty is evil. It's a lie, it's a plague, in church it is also in existence. Satan has deceived Christians telling them poverty is righteous. Don't let anybody tell you that! [...] Until you realise you have an issue the solution cannot start. You might think it's ok. You have been conditioned to think like this. We need to understand how poverty works, it's conditioned'. He then talked about three levels of poverty. The first level is the lowest level, the level of lack, the level of beggars, it's the level where people lack basic things in life (food, clothes, shelter, cannot pay utilities). He then talked about poverty in the UK context saying that poverty has been sensationalised in the UK and sanitised. 'If poverty hits you, you think you are okay, they make it appealing, housing benefits,

some have multiple children. You need to understand the symptoms of poverty. They struggle for the necessities of life'. At this point, everyone in the audience was listening intently as they started to relate to the sermon. He argued that this level of insufficiency was the level the majority of the society lives in. He then said: 'You have to be angry! You have to get out of this! And the third level he argued was when one has to make the right choices and calculate their offerings.

In the next sermon in the series he continued his liberation approach to poverty. He aroused the emotions of the members by saying that there was anger in this church, encouraging the audience that if they want to get out of poverty they needed to understand the causes, state of it and then a solution could come. He continued to give a list of triggers of poverty, including parental factors (accident of birth, single parent, upbringing), challenges in habitat, conflicted priorities, mismanagement of resources, command of the language, command of written English. His analysis was very thorough and sociological. He said that these things were not because one is stupid. It could be that one is even more intelligent but these things are rather a manifestation of the social divide and therefore these foundational problems of poverty must be dealt with. He elaborated further that these issues were not a matter of the pocket using the example of a working-class person who had won the jackpot in the lottery but subsequently lost all and was again in the same position in society, indicating that these things are rather a matter of the mind (dispositions). He gave the audience the following piece of advice: 'Have interaction with people of higher status, imitate them, change your class'. Again, what we can see here is the transformational approach that addresses the members where they are and is seeking to transform their attitudes and thinking or their dispositions and behaviour to become more attuned with the dominant symbolic in order to reposition the members of the movement, revealing a holistic approach to social liberation.

During that time the 'Overcomers' Church' had its 25th anniversary and decided to celebrate it in a venue on Park Lane with an entrance fee of £50 per person. Members were strongly encouraged to participate, to dress up and to see themselves in such environment, to feel comfortable in it. Unfortunately, due to my

student status I was not able to attend this celebration. The series of sermons presented, and the anniversary celebration of the church can be seen as an example for how, on the one hand, members' internal attitudes are transformed and on the other hand how the church seeks to externally change their place in society trying to let members gain confidence in such places through exposure.

As mentioned earlier, the encouragement to learn the legitimate language and to adjust one's accent was a constant feature in the meetings. Meetings were held in English rather than in their native local languages (e.g. Yoruba), members were encouraged to speak to other members in English as guests may not understand them, and the junior pastor deliberately changed his linguistic habitus in different situations switching between a Nigerian and British accent. In addition to this I observed how the way speaking was drawn attention to within the prosperity discourse, i.e. comments like: 'Try to get to know the right people and learn to speak like them'.

Spoken language is an 'essential part of the deployment of national capital, the discursive strategies which involve "attunement" to the demands of dominant language conventions, and thus underwrite its social and linguistic hierarchies' (Hanks, 2005: 74-75). The question of linguistic capital as a form of embodied cultural capital and a marker of distinction is an important point to consider when applying Bourdieu's thinking tools to migration phenomena. The ability to articulate in what Bourdieu (1991) has coined the 'legitimate language' is one of the central social codes and cultural tools. A specially classed form of speaking is a key tacit requirement to be incorporated into the higher echelons of social life and into professional occupations, as it is intrinsic to the somatic norm in the professions, qualifying people to rise in particular occupations and professions. Language is central in how the dominant enforce their codes of social differences, being one attribute that is especially important in marking 'distinction' across all forms of social spaces as it carries symbolical power. Thus, to possess the right language skills, the theoretical norm against which all linguistic practices are objectively measured (Bourdieu, 1991) is absolutely key to the performance of public positions (Puwar, 2004).

In relation to 'race' and language and social measurement in the colonial and post-colonial contexts, the power dynamics of linguistic encounters need to be considered, as in institutionalised settings the imperial legitimate language enables racialised bodies to become 'honorable', 'civilised' humans (*ibid.*: 112). Puwar remarks that this 'is absolutely critical to the inclusion of black bodies in the white 'civilised' spaces of the professions. When established institutions open their doors to postcolonial bodies, they have a strong preference for those who have assimilated the 'mother country's' legitimate language. Pronunciation acts as a marker of difference, reflecting the power relations and the struggle of racialised bodies to integrate themselves into the higher echelons of society and helps understand why the acquisition of linguistic capital is such a key concern for the church members on the OKR argument.

Members were also very engaged in improving their appearance. Erel (2010) argues that 'resources and assets such as language knowledge, accent or light skin can be converted into 'national capital' to legitimise belonging' (Hage, 1998: 53). I would like to add that in addition to that, a European hairstyle can aid in the same manner, as this was witnessed as an important element of adaptation and embodiment of the national culture among my participants. Men were encouraged to cut their hair short and keep it neat whereas women straightened their hair and changed the colour of their hair or added some colours to it in order to (I believe) fit in better with the overall population.

Another aspect of this negotiation among my informants was to adopt Western styles of dress, in particular professional smart attire of the middle classes, including designer clothes as a sign of the assimilation to the British professional urban culture. For instance, in most African neo-Pentecostal churches in Britain, including in the 'Overcomers' Church, the 'workforce' (pastor, ministers, heads of departments as well as members of the departments) must adhere to a dress code: suit and a matching tie for men while women are expected to be attired in skirt suits, at times with matching hats. After I had joined the greeters' team in the 'Overcomers' Church' I was sent a 'greeters' rota & uniform' document for the year

which listed the weeks of the year and showed the respective dress code for female and male members of the department, for example:

BLACK SUIT/WHITE SHIRT & GREEN SCARF; BROWN DRESS, (co-ordinated with YELLOW SCARF; JEANS & SKY-BLUE T-SHIRT (Youth Service); NAVY BLUE & FUCHSIA PINK (Thanksgiving); GREY & WHITE TOP (TRS/SKIRT/DRESS); CREAM & BLACK DRESS; WINE/MAROON & WHITE (Thanksgiving); BROWN DRESS/SKIRT/ TROUSERS/CREAM TOP; NAVY BLUE & RED BLACK SKIRT/TROUSERS & LILAC & BLACK WAISTCOAT; JEANS & LILAC SHIRT; WHITE DRESS & ROYAL BLUE SCARF/ACCESSORIES BLUE (THANKSGIVING)¹³

It was impossible for me to keep up with these colour codes, yet every week most of my team members managed to stick to the dress code. Other departments were also wearing the relevant colour and attire of their rota which never clashed with the diverse departments in the church and created a strong atmosphere. The church helped me to be able to be better prepared every week and to keep up with the dress code of my department by providing some free ties for me. Often text messages or what's app messages were sent before services to remind us of the dress code of that Sunday. Furthermore, I noticed that members of the ushers' and greeters' department were standing and conducting themselves in a certain manner. I was made aware of my posture several times and quickly learned to adopt the 'right' posture and manners during the services. On Wednesdays, members who came to the midweek service from work were also quite smartly dressed. Others who were not coming from work displayed a fashion sense which reflected designer clothes style. In addition, in terms of food consumption, advice was given during meetings which focussed on a healthy diet, avoiding coffee, alcohol and fast-food. The body was part of the improvement project of the members. They constantly sought to improve their appearances. These forms of social presentation were based on displaying cultural capital, as they are read, often critically, as embodied cultural capital. As Bourdieu argues (1986) bodies are physical sites where relations of class, gender, race, sexuality and age come

¹³ Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide a copy of the rota as it comes with the names of the respective members who are 'on duty'. Hence, it was impossible to anonymize it.

together and are embodied and practiced. Members of the prosperity movement on the OKR signify through their transformation of their bodies and attire that they care as it is the body which is recognised for what it is, a disciplined and respectable body dressed up to display distinction signified through the elegance and sophistication required to be part of social and cultural exchanges.

However, it also deflects classification and deters the flow of cultural capital from the body as the surface of racialised bodies is marked by their non-whiteness in regards to national capital. The ethnic capital of my participants functions as a form of cultural capital which can or cannot be converted into symbolic capital. With Black Africans, a partial devalorisation of their ethnic capital, and consequently a reduction in its symbolic value, has occurred due to the history of slavery in combination with colonialism and persisting racial perceptions of the native British as well as other minority populations, making its ethnic capital lose some or all of its symbolic value. Consequently, different ethnicities acquire different symbolic value in the 'field of ethnicity' (Hage, 1998) depending on their assessment by the dominant authority and its compatibility with the policy directions of official multicultural and ethnic affairs. For this reason, 'ethnicity' is more often than not an object of struggle and negotiation between the dominant culture and the state (as the ultimate source of symbolic value) and the community representatives of the ethnicity. Ethnicity as a specific form of capital can be understood analytically as the sum of ethnically sanctioned and valued social and physical cultural styles and dispositions (ethnic culture) adopted by individuals and groups, as well as valued characteristics (ethnic types and ethnic character): looks, accent, demeanour, taste, ethnically valued social and cultural preferences and behaviour, etc. Now these are not to be understood simply as 'negative' capital in the field of White belonging, as Hage (1998) would argue, nor as capital that is esteemed within an 'ethnic community', but as forms of capital that position people as "ethnic" within the field of ethnicity, the sub-field of national belonging. In its attempt to maintain its dominance, the state sets limits on the various forms of ethnic capital which operate within the ethnic field of power. In this process, it grants recognition to specific ethnic styles, dispositions and characteristics, including what Bourdieu calls

'legitimate discourse' (Bourdieu, 1977: 650), and transforms them into ethnic symbolic capitals. Ethnic characteristics which are not recognised by the state as part of ethnic capital end up being devalorised and used as markers of exclusion and disempowerment for those who claim their possession.

Embodiment of our social location manifests 'in our actions, our modes of appearance and through abodily hexis or bodily bearing posture, manners, ways of speaking for example' (Noble and Watkins, 2003: 522). It is precisely because of their embodied nature that habitus and hexis have the capacity to induce in us affective responses to inter-subjective encounters with those around us and to interactions with our environment. Ethnic embodied cultural capital, in a word 'Blackness', becomes in the migration process a set of dispositions that are devalued in a new 'British' habitus; and this cultural devaluation translates into economic consequences. Hence, Black people remain among the most occupationally segmented and lowest paid of all minority immigrant groups in London. As appearances are experienced immediately they signify the worth of the person. Thus, the improvement of my participants in their bodies and appearances is a counteracting strategy to obtain a better fit with the national capital and to deflect and deter from associations of negative (ethnic) value in the British society. Investment in Western haircuts and elegant clothes are a means to display distinction and taste, seeking to position themselves and to gain the value and legitimacy of a respectable middle-class subject.

The interior of the church is also an important site, though it is unobserved by the wider population. The carpet, furniture, chandelier, technical equipment, etc. are all displays of cultural investments. The car is another site of investment. Most members with families and some young professionals come to church in their cars parking them on the street level outside the church premises. Thus, I often saw members of the church arrive and leave in their cars. For some congregants, their car functioned as a particular means to display distinction. One member who originates from Nigeria but grew up in Switzerland had moved to the UK for his studies and found employment in the financial sector in the City. He arrived every week in his silver Mercedes Benz together with his fiancée who was doing a

Masters in HR at the time. In one instance, another member who had just bought a Land Rover was praised by the junior pastor in front of everybody and used as an example to them as someone 'who has made it'. This announcement caused a stir in the congregation with approving comments and gestures. All of this shows that my informants seek to display taste and distinction through every object and every aesthetic display, every appearance.

Investment in children – counteracting deprivation and stigmatisation

Another major aspect of the improving strategies of my participants was an investment in their children by making sure they can get the right social and cultural capital, so they can be positioned socially appropriately. The focus on the second generation played a big part in the church meetings and there was a strong recognition in the church of the importance of parenting for children's educational attainment, future employment opportunities, and ultimately on intergenerational mobility or reproduction (see Bourdieu, 2003).

During the mid-week services, families with children were encouraged to attend and there were a variety of series on parenting e.g. twelve sessions on 'parenting with Jesus' or several sessions on 'infancy and childhood' or on 'Christian morality'. These meetings were held by the senior pastor who is the mother of the junior pastor and who is herself a teacher. She is also called the 'mummy' of the church. The focus of these sessions was on parenting practices in the congregants' day-to-day activities to support their children's development. In particular, parents' involvement in their children's education was a key element aimed at transmitting information, perspectives and values used to attempt to enhance the life chances of the next generation. Parents were advised on multiple ways in which the process of parenting affects their children's development and outcomes, such as through the transmission of social and emotional competencies, self-confidence, mental health, educational achievement, and ultimately future employment and life chances. The aim was to better equip them to let their children to develop a positive racial self-concept, helping them cope with racism and discrimination, and

affecting future attitudes by promoting higher self-esteem. At the same time, Christian conservative moral values were promoted to be passed on to the children to protect them from moral decay and losing their faith in a secular but also pluralist society with liberal values; to protect them from getting on the wrong track (criminal activity or drug abuse or sexual immorality). The approach taken was what Michela Franceschelli et al. (2017: 9) call 'retrospective parenting'. It took three main forms: restorative (making up for missed opportunities), preventive (preparing for experiences of bias and discrimination), and progressive (focusing on the future to avoid 'wrong turns'). Parenting in the migration context is crucial in supporting the second generation of ethnic minorities to build up certain levels of persistence and to support the capacity to attain positive outcomes even in the face of adversity (see theme tenacity and indefatigability) and thus enabling positive adaptation.

Once a month the Sunday service was focussed on the youth. Usually the children and the youth would have Sunday school upstairs, but on these occasions, they all participated in the main service during which they performed a song, a dance or a drama according to a particular theme. This theme was then discussed interactively involving the youth, but also the rest of the congregation and the following sermon was in the same line and style whilst the whole congregation supported the session. In one of these services at the end of August 2015, the senior pastor announced that the second generation had achieved good educational success this year with good GCSE results, being accepted in good secondary schools, good universities, as well as having achieved good university results.

I also overheard cheerful conversations between female church members before and after the meetings during this time concerning their children's acceptance into nurseries, primary and secondary schools and how they had managed to get their children into their first and second choice kindergarten or school. One of the female members of the greeters' team told me about how she had taken her children out of an outstanding school in central London because of its 'bad reputation of having too many Black children'. I used to meet this family frequently as they lived in a tower block in the same area as I and the school her children used to go to was next

to where I live. She told me that they had now moved to Kent and that she had placed her children in another very good school there which I assume is more 'White'. I also noticed that other young families utilised the same strategy, once they had children they would move out into the suburbs (Kent) commuting daily to work in London by car. They were sometimes complaining to me about their long drives. However, this made me aware that residency became central to the congregants once they had built a family, with clear middle-class aspirations. These things show how the church is actively engaged in the struggles for the parents to provide the right educational capital for the second-generation.

The musical talent of the youth was also fostered by letting them partake in the worship choir. Also, almost every Sunday there was a ten minutes drama which mainly the youth group performed in front of the whole congregation where different types of narratives were mobilised. The aim of this was to arm the children with the motivation and persistence to face future life challenges, including discrimination, criminalisation, drug abuse and so on. The dramas' general focus was on not giving up in hard circumstances, or other forms of resistance and confidence building and was usually juxtaposed between becoming a juvenile offender or an investment banker, thus working towards raising educational and occupational aspirations.

The findings of the 'Southwark violent crime strategy 2010 to 2015' report discussed in the OKR chapter help to put these narratives in context, but without mobilising the 'Black crime myth' as a necessary explanation. Southwark records high unemployment rates, low wages and a significantly higher number of violent crime incidents compared to the London average. In particular, the youth face challenges such as below average educational attainment rates and high teenage conception rates (Southwark Council, 2015). Furthermore, McMahon and Roberts (2011) consider ethnicity, harm and crime in an article on 'Truth and lies about 'race' and 'crime''. In this article they point out that Black people suffer an enduring 'ethnic penalty' that has left them at the wrong end of almost every social indicator including higher rates in poverty, worse educational outcomes, higher rates of unemployment and so on. They conclude that there is a misrepresentation of Black

people through discourses in policy, media and other public bodies and that for example the overrepresentation of Black people in criminal justice is not an outcome of a specific problem in the 'Black community' but a product of socio-economic and historical forces. This sheds light on the challenges faced by members, especially the youth of the local prosperity churches in terms of a disadvantaged position, but also issues representation and how they seek to counteract these through various strategies and church activities.

In terms of appearance, the clothes the children and the youth wore were well adapted to the British upwardly mobile youth culture. Their hairstyles were similarly adapted to the European context. In addition, through the socialisation process in British educational institutions, they also had adapted the legitimate British accent, with some of them sounding very 'posh'.

In the interviews, the role and possible benefits of the church for the second-generation were thematised. Asuma remarked:

The benefits is a lot because they do a lot of activities. The benefits is about showing these children that they have a future, they have a life ahead and they are able to make it and they can make it and also showing them that they need to trust their God and become responsible for their lives... So they give them a future.

I then asked how they could continually be motivated. Part of the answer was:

...they have to make them feel that when they go out they can be able to influence others and not being influenced

Chike who had just finished his studies in the UK focussed on the transformational aspect the church can play for the youth coming to church:

...and some people do that just to keep in check, yeah ... so make sure they ... don't you know what I mean like ... some people they don't go to church for months, they're trying something else, they start doing drugs and stuff, yeah,

some people are like that, some people need to go to church like their own AA meeting. Do you understand?

In another interview with Fola and Olu, a couple, the benefits for the children were mainly seen in that the church prevented them from going astray. Olu asserted that it was 'very easy to go in the wrong direction' [in the UK, which is very diverse] because' the freedom is just too much here'. Fola added to this:

I think a major place where they can really learn is the church, parents are too busy these days, they don't have time for them [...] some don't even know what is happening where their children go to but the church can help them.

The junior pastor also established during his interview that it was very important for the second-generation to come to church. When I asked him what he thought the potential benefits for the youth to come to church were, one of his answers was:

JP: We believe that when you have a relationship with God you're able to be a better person, you're able to achieve more and maximise you potential [...] They can start maximising their potential very early'.

Danny: aha

JP: if you start, and you don't know God till you're 40 or 50 you make a lot of mistakes, but if you know God when you're ten then in your life making mistakes will be less ... therefore you may maximise your life better... that's why we're trying to catch them younger.

Danny: 'So do you think this is also a reason for many parents to come? They want to bring their children into the church?

JP: Yes

Danny: To not let them derail and let them have positive life chances or something?

JP: Yes, yes, absolutely, yeah, absolutely

This interview excerpt in particular as well as the other aspects I have mentioned show that an investment in the children for their future life chances is a central element of the members of the local prosperity movement. These findings helped me to understand the significance of one of the slogans displayed on the outside of a church on the OKR: *Family Life Christian Centre - Raising breakthrough generation* (see image below). The churches along the OKR contain young or middle aged aspiring middle-class people and families, with some of the churches having their own accredited nurseries. This dimension of the church as a family space where the second generation can be raised up so that they can overcome disadvantages and counteract deprivation and other challenges (e.g., gang activity, teenage parenthood and single motherhood, stigmatisation) and 'break through' the structural barriers thus becoming fully fledged participants in the host society is a very salient one within this phenomenon and is a key aim of the churches and their members.



Figure 8.1 Sign displayed on the outside of one of the churches on the OKR

Conclusion

Throughout my fieldwork I observed that the speakers/pastors, as well as longstanding members who have attained some kind of influence in society and the co-ethnic community as well as guest speakers function as cultural mentors for other members of the co-ethnic community, especially for new arrivals who often undergo experiences of post-migration hysteresis and a mismatch between habitus and field. The cultural mentors or agents of change seek to bridge the gap to juggle

the 'cleft habitus' or 'habitus clivé'¹⁴ (Bourdieu, 2000) and navigate the dissonance between the norms and practices acquired prior to and post migration. They are thus actively involved in re-shaping and adjusting the habitus of their adherents and explaining the rules of the game until the habitus slowly becomes fitted to a new field which in turn may enable a mastering of one's daily life and more active participation in the new field.

The churches on the OKR that function as co-ethnic support communities provide bonding forms of social capital and are important as suggested by Putnam (2000) in 'getting by'. At the same time, they are engaged in liberating members from relationships that limit and block their success in the new social environment. Furthermore, they also promote strategies to increase bridging forms of social capital, which, as Putnam argues, are more important to 'getting ahead' in society. They are extensively engaged in building these forms of social capital to enable upward mobility for their members and to re-position them as a whole within the society of settlement. However, due to social exclusion through institutionalised discrimination practices, members of the movement are severely limited to achieve these commitments (Gilchrist, 2004). In the sense of social networks as ties, it can be argued that these BMCs produce strong ties between their members, but lack in weak ties with people with whom they have less in common and who are different from themselves, i.e. the wider world. Nonetheless, "bonding' social capital is an essential basis from which we can begin the more difficult project of 'moving out' and relating to people who are unlike ourselves' (Furbey et al., 2006: 8). On the other hand, Furbey et al (2006) contend that 'if we derive our social capital simply from within our own circle, we cut ourselves off from the wider experiences and resources needed to maximise our social capital' (*ibid.*). Thus, 'systems with low levels of connectivity and high homogeneity ... become stagnant, because they are unable to adapt'' (Taylor, 2000: 1032). The question that arises from this context is how these faith communities along the OKR and their members can move beyond 'bonding' to the demanding task of building the connections of 'bridging' and 'linking'? These communities or migrant networks with the localised prosperity

¹⁴ a sense of self 'torn by contradiction and internal division' (Bourdieu, 2000: 16)

discourse can be seen to function as a support system when other social arenas and avenues are closed down, as they operate in the context of disadvantage. Whatever their limitations, they fulfil important functions by providing support and some opportunities for people experiencing exclusion from various aspects of the majority society.

In addition to the struggle for social capital, the members of these churches are also engaged in a struggle for cultural capital. To this intent, the churches provide help and advice which aim to allow the participants to adjust to the new society and to overcome the structural barriers they face. Although many members possess institutionalised capital, for example in the form of university degrees, this has often been devalued in the process of migration and due to racialized stereotypes. The members of these churches resist this positioning and creatively use their agency to overcome this through various strategies, such as gaining further qualifications or starting their own business.

A display of distinction and sites of investment are produced through bodies, appearance, credentials, cars, and the interior of the church premises. My participants also make an effort to adapt their habitus to the White British middle-class habitus despite limited access, including improving their linguistic skills in order to re-position themselves in society. The second generation however due to their access to the institutional education system and therefore to another native social clientele are able to embody the national embodied capital and are the possible benefactors of the struggle of my participants. There is a strong focus on the second generation with the aim of supporting the youth to avoid negative outcomes and to be successful. Thus, investment in the youth is a primary strategy.

However, to what extent my participants and especially the second generation may be able to adapt into the higher echelons of the British society relates to the issue of the convertibility of their social and cultural capital as symbolic capital since their bodies are marked as Black despite their national capital and educational capital. Thus, the experience of West African immigrants complicates the picture regarding the effectiveness of accumulation strategies and convertibility of their cultural

capital as symbolic capital as they run up against regimes of racial difference and hierarchy. Ong suggests that 'limits to cultural accumulation, then, are especially apparent to immigrants when there is a mismatch, from the hegemonic standpoint, between the symbolic capital and its embodiment' (1999: 92). Therefore, the blending of a racialised person with a certain set of symbolic capital must be read as acceptable by the receiving society before any social prestige can accrue such an embodiment of 'correct' taste and accomplishment. This shows clearly that there are cultural limits set by cultural norms, modes of ruling and nationalist ideologies, as my participants are being perceived as culturally, linguistically, and racially Black African and therefore 'out of place' in the British ethno-racial hierarchy, locating African subjects as a deficient and subordinated minority.

These findings demonstrate that individual and collective agency are important for creating new cultural resources in migration processes. However, in the symbolic struggles of my participants regarding the value of cultural resources and their effort to reposition themselves in society, ethnic discrimination decisively shapes the symbolic value of cultural capital.

These findings also show how the churches and the members seek to adapt to a British middle-class subjectivity as the future-projected, strategizing, capital accruing self in order to improve their lives and re-position themselves within the society and to overcome disadvantages in relation to the migration process and their racialised bodies. From being positioned in a way that provides no real chance to accrue valuable capitals or to convert the capitals they possess, there is an overarching struggle to gain convertible symbolic capital and attach value to themselves in the face of continuous symbolic violence.

I would like to sum up the analysis of the struggle of the members of the localised prosperity movement for exchange value with a quote from the junior pastor. He commented on the possible contribution of the church to the lives of the members:

We believe that we're committed to empower our people. It's not so much about exploiting them, we don't wanna exploit people we wanna empower them so when they come to us by the time they look at their lives in a year

from joining if there's a difference, they've been empowered, and they've been motivated, and they've bettered their life, they're doing the right thing, to make the right choices ... that's what we should be about and what we are trying to achieve. It's difficult, but with the help of God we do it ... but we wanna make sure that by the time people leave us, if people have been with us for six months they can say I was this when I joined and now I'm doing much better because I've been inspired to do anything. We're not gonna do it for them, they've got to do it themselves, but we want to put the spark, the drive in them to achieve better and that's what, that's what we wanna do.

Whilst the prosperity movement is well known for its mega-churches accompanied by various scandals, the localized prosperity phenomenon on the OKR has quite a different flavour – it is much more about aiding members to overcome the barriers they face, adapt to their new society, counteract the symbolic violence they experience, get the right information and resources, and transform their habitus. The aim is to benefit them, and the benefit they are aiming for is strongly aligned with neo-capitalist / Western ideals of success in a consumerist society where value is based on position and possessions.

Nevertheless, the use values dimension of these co-ethnic communities is also critical. Having presented my findings related to the church members' struggles for value by discussing the themes 'resistance against being fixed' in combination with 'indefatigability and tenacity' as dispositions that enable them to keep going, as well the theme 'adaptability and embodiment' which addresses the members' proactive strategies - thus, bringing out the exchange value aspect of their beliefs and actions - the next chapter will elucidate my participants struggle for use values by investigating their actions beyond accruing capital and also by analysing their affects.

Chapter Nine: Values: Affective Community and a Culture of Reciprocity

Introduction

The previous chapters brought out the struggle for value of my research participants - firstly, how they seek to re-imagine themselves with the goal to re-position themselves as described in the theme *tenacity and indefatigability* as dispositions that enable them to keep going, and secondly, their struggle to improve themselves through various strategies as laid out in the theme *adaptability and embodiment* which addresses the members' proactive strategies. These two chapters demonstrated the exchange-value aspect of their beliefs and actions to counteract marginalisation. This was carried out through the adoption of individualist techniques, but as a collective community. In this chapter, I will now seek to elucidate their struggle for values and the use-value aspect of their beliefs and actions in their resistance against marginalisation. I will examine how the liberation theology of prosperity plays a role in this by looking in at the relational and emotional dimensions of the lived experience of members of the localised prosperity movement on the OKR and particularly of the members of the 'Overcomers' Church'. I will utilise my fieldnotes from the observations of the sermons and the actions of the members of the 'Overcomers' Church' as well as data from the interviews with some of the members.

The theme of *solidarity and reciprocal altruism* forms the first part of the chapter, focussing on community as a place of belonging in a global, diverse, anonymous city to counteract experiences of alienation, dis-embeddedness and exclusion, and bringing out my research participants' non-accumulative actions. The church provides my informants with a community environment to support each other in alien surroundings. This theme draws on Skegg's person-value framework focusing on use-values, where she considers 'action as an act of altruism or connection to others' (Skeggs, 2014).

The second theme *vitality, valour and effervescence*, which is very much intertwined with the relational aspect of the church community, reveals the other

aspect of the use-values or relational values of the person-value theory, which is affect. Affect can be defined as the circulation of feelings, with a focus on social relations rather than the individual cognition of the feelings these relations generate (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012). The particular focus here is on how the message transforms negative affects into positive affects and on worship as a form of intoxication. Affect, as a key aspect of the person-value theory, offers a broad understanding of the struggle of my participants produced through their material conditions, living on the margins of society. It helps to comprehend what life feels like when people are trying to survive on the margins and to seek better conditions, and how through their participation in the church new affects that empower them are produced as 'ugly' feelings are reversed.

Solidarity and reciprocal altruism

Membership of a church clearly played an important role in the lives of my informants in the context of migration which often entails a sense of loss, loneliness and lack. Participating in a church was thus important because it meant an opportunity to feel part of a community and experience a collective form of belonging. These churches provide a familiar space as a cultural resource for migrants, a space where they can forge a positive sense of identity for themselves in London, with a sense of belonging being created primarily through ethnicity, but also through the attachment to a fictive kinship of believers as a kind of surrogate family, a space in which members of the church help each other. Thus, a sense of community and trust was created by members in the church. The church also functioned as a space where they were able to gain some recognition and social status. The important role that the church plays in the lives of the members is also reflected by the amount of time and energy they devote to it. These contributions are carried out on a voluntary basis without remuneration as I briefly described at the end of chapter four on the OKR regarding the structure and the participatory approach of the churches on the OKR.

The way that members invest their time in each other with genuine care and affection is a key aspect of the church community. These non-accumulative actions go beyond exchange value, as Skeggs has observed: 'caring that is offered as a gift beyond exchange relations is of a different form to the relations established to promote and reproduce the logic of capital' (Skeggs 2014: 13). She goes on to say that 'caring offers us a different way of being in the world, relating to others as if they matter, with attentiveness and compassion, beyond exchange' (*ibid.*).

This aspect was clearly brought out in one of the mid-week services, where a sermon on church attendance thematised the purpose of coming together, emphasising the advantages and benefits. This sermon can be seen as a key sermon on this issue. One benefit proposed was 'being renewed, revitalised and fortified through hearing the word of God'. Other advantages discussed were: 'fostering unity, encouraging one another, a chance to be in God's presence, and strengthening faith'. Also, the church was described as a place where emotional healing, relationship healing and physical healing take place, emphasising that 'the word of God is a healer'. Additionally, the church was referred to as a place designed to keep people from loneliness, rejection and depression, 'where you are able to interact with friends and brethren, even if you live alone'. In terms of depression the senior pastor elaborated further: 'Maybe you are hit by the circumstances of life, you get overwhelmed, get depressed, but when you come to the fellowship you share. It takes care of the depression'. A further element emphasised was to keep members accountable to one another in the fellowship and also to be corrected and 'stay on the right track' through instructions, admonitions and teachings. For example, 'We're each other's keeper. It is dangerous to be in a position where nobody can talk to you. We should be accountable for one another and take care of one another'. These findings show that the church functions as a place where members relate to one another through care. The pastor continued by encouraging members to share their worries, fears, needs and burdens with each other and the fellowship was announced to be a place where 'they can lay their burdens down'. This will be explored further in the following section exploring the affect dimension of the person-value model.

Members were told that when they come to the meetings ‘stress goes and joy comes’, utilising particular Bible verses, e.g. ‘You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.’ (Psalm 16: 11, NKJV). The church was also described as a place where bondages are broken. All this reveals that the members of this community experience extreme emotional strain in their daily lives on the one hand and on the other hand how they can counteract this through building a community of trust and care.

At the end of this talk the attributes of a healthy community were established starting with the following Bible quote: ‘For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another’ (1 John 3: 11, NKJV). To love one another, the senior pastor argued, is a commandment and a priority over every other thing: ‘It gives us more strength. We become formidable, powerful’. This displays the building of an affective community of solidarity and reciprocal care and altruism, as well as emphasising co-responsibility. The senior pastor then talked about essential ingredients for a healthy community including forbearance, forgiveness, compassion, and giving. This was juxtaposed to elements that would destroy the community, such as unforgiveness, back biting, being judgmental, disobedience and a lack of love.

The community building on a co-ethnic level could also be witnessed during my fieldwork through meetings that were particularly focussed on the native culture of the participants. The members were encouraged to come in their native attire, during the services worship songs were sung in the native tongue, and traditional food was consumed after the services. This shows how the members of the BMCs are navigating two worlds – on the one hand, they use English as the dominant language and eat English breakfast (for example) to try to gain cultural capital in their new land (as discussed in the adaptability and embodiment chapter), but on the other hand, they still have an emotional need to connect with others from their homeland. As such, the church also functions as a home away from home and fulfils this emotional and relational need.

I would like to draw attention to the fact that participation in all church services as well as various duties, especially those performed by the various departments, were all based on voluntarism. Members of the church were actively engaged in them several times during the week in their leisure time. The whole community was based on the prosocial behaviour of the members. All throughout my fieldwork I was struck by the time and energy the individual members invested in order to keep the church running. This was also thematised during the interview with the junior pastor.

In the interview with the junior pastor, I asked him about what was involved in being the leader of a church. He shared his weekly schedule with me and revealed that although he is working full-time, he also is engaged 'full-time' with the church activities - communicating with church leaders and the senior pastor sometimes on the phone at work, or having some additional appointments related to church on top of other church services including regular mid-week services and Sunday services, monthly empowerment services on Friday, as well as night vigil services - the list is endless. He was also telling me about plans to start a new youth service after the regular Sunday service and a women's empowerment meeting. As already mentioned in previous chapters, there are also other meetings on Saturdays which focus on employment related issues, such as advice about job opportunities. Other activities during the week include praying for the Sunday service, preparing for the meetings and so on. However, according to him, most of it is enjoyable as he likes to help people and it helps him as well. In short, it is 'part of his life'. He told me how he felt called by God to become a minister in the church and that he has been through extensive training and undergone various processes to become a pastor. At one point during this conversation the junior pastor said:

It's impacted my life, it's given me a lot of responsibility.

Then he went on to talk about the voluntary nature of his commitment, stressing that it is only possible with the help of God:

It's also made me very focused ... because I know that I have to be an example, I got to realise what I do has an impact on others whether I want it to or not

and ... but I also feel that God has helped cause it's a big responsibility, I couldn't do it by myself only God could have helped me to, but he's helped me thus far and I believe he will help me in the future because it's very tough managing people, leading people voluntarily cause they are not paying them, you're the leader but it's a voluntary position ...

The other members of the church also told me about their diverse responsibilities during the week when I interviewed them. I was able to have some of the interviews on the church premises outside the regular meeting times in the church office and there were always some members there occupied with administrative tasks. Chike, a young male who had just finished his studies but had not yet found a job, was dedicating his time to design a cutting-edge church website and showed it to me after the interview.

Asuma, another longstanding member of the church, is the head of the sanitation team which basically is responsible for cleaning the church premises. I sometimes helped her to Hoover the carpet after the meetings. In addition, she teaches the children on Sundays and does activities with them and she also volunteers as the secretary for the junior pastor making appointments with members who would like to meet with him (including me).

Dayo, the head of the greeters' department who works as a social worker in a hospital, revealed her additional church responsibilities to me:

My responsibilities are towards the members. As you know I'm a leader, I lead the greeters' department and I've got two other teams that I lead as well. The greeters' team is the welcoming team and the other two teams are the welfare team and the follow up team. All these three teams are very important in the church. The welfare team is kind of silent but very important, because the welfare team, the welfare team is the department that actually looks after the welfare of the members of the church. If anybody is unwell, we look after them, we visit them. In church, maybe if they're unwell and they're not able to cook we provide that, we kind of cook, buy food, we provide them especially if they do not have family. If ordinary members don't come to church it doesn't

get unnoticed, the greeters' team we have to be at the door, we welcome them into the church it's very crucial, it's very important. The follow up team is the team when new members come to church, we call them, we telephone them, we send letters to them, we follow them up to make them come back to church again. And if there's any member in the church we have not seen in a couple of days or weeks, they haven't been to church we follow them up, we call them to find out how they're doing if they're OK, if there is anything. Yeah, that's my role in church because nobody is indispensable. Anybody can do it, but the role itself, it is very typical and important in the running of the church.

These comments show the members' voluntary involvement in the church activities and their responsibilities. I have observed that the church functions as a place where members can find recognition through the things they do inside and outside the church (voluntarily). The members were using the skills they had gained through their education and professions for their responsibilities in various departments, and these seemed to function as a form of capital in the church. Through this they could gain recognition and respect within the community and feel valued. It might be that they don't have a position or receive acknowledgment for their skills in the wider society, but within the community they are respected. Nonetheless, the key aspect of my research participants' actions, was their enormous investment of time and energy relating to one another on the basis of care.

During the interviews I also asked about what role the church played in my interviewees' lives. For example, one married couple, Fola and Olu, both talked in a lengthy way about the positive impact the church community and the fellowship have on them. They emphasised the fact that they really enjoy it and that they feel fulfilled and also that it helped going through difficult times. In response to my question about the importance of the church for them, Olu answered:

Okay, so as a member the Bible says love your neighbour as you love yourself and inasmuch you look after your brothers and sisters in church you have looked after him, that's what it says in the Bible. So, in church I try to look after

my brothers and sisters. On some days, not always, I will also send people a text if I haven't seen them and that's my own little way of caring, sending a text or what's app message to show them that someone cares for them and looks out for them.

This elucidates how members of the church interact with one another based on a relationality of care.

I further asked the couple about the church as a place of belonging and they answered:

Fola: For example most of the friends I have are from the church so when you have your party and all that most of the people you invite are from the church, most of the programs we go to are from the church because we share the same faith, we go to the same church we see every Sunday, after Sunday we see on Wednesday, so when you have a party or something those are the people you think first or they will have heard about it, so it's like your family, you don't really have a large family here, your family is far away so the church is like your family.

Olu: Because if you want to do anything the first people that come to mind are the people in church and because if I need any help the first people I ask are church members because we see each other one, two times a week and sometimes we even meet outside church. The connection is just there, we just click once we see each other. It's easier to go to them than to go to a complete stranger, so the first people we think of are the people in church, it's just like a second home, a second family.

When I asked Asuma about the importance of the church for her she simply said: 'I love it'. She explained to me that all her friends are in the church, that she has been in the church for 18 years now and that the church is like a family to her.

Timi, who does a lot of administrative tasks in the church and also acts like a secretary to the senior pastor explained how she sees herself in the church, her role

towards other church members and her relationship to other church members in the following way:

Brothers and sisters. We are sisters, brothers, friends, part of the same family.

I often heard how members addressed each other not only by their names but also as brother or sister so and so. In addition, the use of social media aided the communication among the members throughout the week between meetings. This occurred, for example, through sending encouraging messages, sharing and exchanging information with one another, congratulating on birthdays or the arrival of a new baby, sending condolences to those who were bereaved of a loved one and so on. All these examples show how the members of the church relate to each other through trust and solidarity based on reciprocal altruism and care, strongly feeling that this is a responsibility they have towards other members. At the same time, it can be seen that the church plays a very important part in the lives of my research participants as a form of surrogate family or fictive kinship, an affective community of belonging.

This resonates with Skeggs' observation that relations based on care go beyond the logic of capital. The members of the church definitely relate to one another 'as if they matter, with attentiveness and compassion, beyond exchange' (Skeggs 2014: 13). The time and energy invested in the church in various ways, as demonstrated above, is truly remarkable. The members of the 'Overcomers' Church' are connected with one another on the basis of their lived experience of alienation, discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation as co-ethnic Black subjects struggling to integrate themselves into the British society which is institutionally racist, fighting together against their marginalized position. As such, the church is a necessity in their lives and functions as a support network, in which they invest with great zeal and devotion.

In summary, members of the church had an adherent, emotional, reciprocal relationship with one another and were connected through a sense of belonging informed by experiences and the emotions they produce. These findings resonate with Abby Day's research on '*Believing in belonging*' (2011) where she argues that

people's beliefs derive from the social and that their beliefs are centred around relatedness and sociality with a common theme of belonging to adherent, reciprocal, emotional relationships. The churches on the OKR thus function as close knit communities that help adherents to adjust to their new environment, but also shield them from society's discriminatory blows. This will be brought out in the next section by investigating the affective dimension of the community further.

Vitality, valour and effervescence - embodying the conditions of inequality and injustice differently

In what follows, I will analyse my research participants' affective practices, which lead to various patterns of reversal of affects (negative to positive), as witnessed in my fieldwork. These practices have a ritualistic nature such that in time the patterns become solidified and habituated. This reflects a re-imagining and re-engineering of my participants personhood through the interventionist approach taken by the agents of change with the agenda to imbue the movements' members with dignity and confidence but also to mobilise them to re-position themselves in structural terms. The reversals thus function on every level. This section brings out the participants' lived experiences and how they make their lives liveable in the face of systematic exclusion and adverse circumstances.

In relation to migration processes, newcomers often experience sensuous and affective reactions related to the ruptures and disjuncture of a previously well-fitted habitus, thus a misfit of habitus and value orientations which in turn can lead to a precarious position in society and a weak labour market position. This then often leads to initial reactions to hysteresis like shock and anger, critique or rejection of a new situation (see Nowicka (2015) on Bourdieu; also Sayad's (2004) *The Suffering of the Immigrant*). However, an initial reaction might also be one of novelty and positive engagement with the new situation, but might then be followed by discomfort or insecurity, a negative judgment of the new condition, and a sense of out-of-placeness which can be bridged by cultural mentors and replaced by reorientation and a re-shaping of habitus, which in turn enables a more

active participation in the new field and a mastering of the daily life more akin to the others in the field (*ibid.*). This was evidenced through my interviews with church members, since when I asked about church membership, most of the interviewees answered this question by stating that they began attending the church after their arrival in the country or after becoming dissatisfied with mainline denominations, joining at a later stage as it was more fitting with their circumstances. This indicates a strong correlation between the challenges faced by my research participants due to migration processes and the experience of incorporation into highly unequal and unjust socio-economic settings, which they lived as a structure of feeling, and the importance of joining and participating in the church.

The co-ethnic faith communities along the OKR with their liberation theology and practices fulfil several important functions for their members. They provide a space where a re-shaping of habitus takes place by those more acquainted with the new culture, as I have also outlined in the value chapters. At the same time, the life coach approach to breaking through limiting emotions, as described in the resistance from the margins chapter, helps to address the circumstances of my informants. The agents of change appropriate the life-coach approach to counteract and transform negative affects into positive ones. Thus, through participation in the church community, new feelings are produced, and 'ugly' feelings are reversed. In particular, the transformational approach of the prosperity discourse and practices, especially the message and the worship, convert negative affects of fear, frustration, anger, anxiety, restlessness, despair, pessimism, being disenfranchised and miserable etc. into positive affects of joy, strength, endurance, thankfulness, confidence, assurance, love, peace, hope, optimism, happiness, etc. This had a huge positive impact on the well-being of my research participants. Thus, going to church services can be seen as a prevalent coping and enduring strategy of members of the movement in their experience of precarious and stressful life circumstances on the margins as immigrants living in a hostile urban environment and the affective impact of socio-economic and political conditions. Thus, the church has become a central part of the lives of my participants in the UK and a place of belonging from which they navigate their lives in the host society.

In this section I will firstly focus on the approach taken by the leaders including the use of the Bible with the emphasis on mental health, including anger management, followed by a concentration on empowerment through the re-imagination of personhood. I then lay out the role of worship in transforming feelings of weariness to emotions of rejuvenation and joy in combination with a section on creating feelings of accomplishment and gratitude. Finally, I will introduce and conclude with the affective emotions circulating in the congregation and my research participants' evaluation of their church experience.

Looking at the reversal of 'ugly' feelings into positive feelings, providing emotional support that stabilises immigrant mental health, I would like to start with one mid-week service meeting as it shows some of the issues plaguing the members as they attend the meetings from their daily life during the week, but also shows the approach to empowerment and transformation taken by the leaders. At the beginning of the teaching session (after a lengthy worship session which I will also talk about later on) the senior pastor said that she would like to start with an ice breaker and asked the audience a question: 'If God was here physically and you had one question you could ask him, which question would you like to ask him?'. Then she said that for a Christian there are many unanswered questions, and some arouse fear knowing the answer, others cause frustration. On this invitation the audience actively participated in this session. I have jotted down eight of their questions in particular. They range from: 'Why did God allow Satan to live?' and 'Since God knew the impact of evil why did he allow it to happen?' or 'Why is it although I pray and fast, but my problem is not solved' to 'Why do some receive more favour than others?' and 'Why do evil people get away with evil?' or 'Why are there Black and White people?'. These questions display to some extent the struggles of my research participants as they navigate their lives through the British society.

After allowing her audience to pour out all their anger and frustration, the pastor answered: 'Since I'm not God I can only pray that he will answer you'. However, this gave the backdrop to the topic of the teaching that day which was 'God is sovereign' utilising the experience of the biblical figure Gideon which correlates

with my informants' experience. Gideon lived in a time in Israel when they were occupied by another nation. He felt angry and dissatisfied. Suddenly an angel appeared to him telling him that God was with him and addressed him as a mighty man of valour. However, Gideon answered in a similar way to how the audience reacted to the question of the senior pastor asking why all this was happening to his people if the Lord was with them. Nevertheless, the angel did not go into his question but told him to go in his might to deliver the Israelites out of the hand of the oppressor. The pastor then used Gideon's story to change the members' way of thinking and feeling about their situation. She made comments like 'sometimes when you pray and fast the situation gets worse and questions may come whether God is real'. She said: 'Gideon saw the oppression in the land and concluded that God was not with them'. Then she discussed several reasons why God does not bless people. The first reason she mentioned was sin as it also depicts in the beginning of Gideon's story that the Israelites were evil in the sight of the Lord and she asked the audience to check their lives, saying it is difficult for God to bless a person in such a condition, but not because he enjoys it. The second reason she gave was that God may want to test the steadfastness of the believers. Thirdly, God may want to reveal his power and finally God may want to toughen and strengthen 'you', as God wants a person to become a tough and powerful fighter as God had addressed Gideon in this way. Eventually she rounded up with another passage talking about how some difficulties are allowed by God so that believers can be trained by them. This demonstrates the transformational approach taken by the agents of change to empower members of the church and to put a floor under their circumstances and give meaning to their struggle. All the while, she was also encouraging members saying: 'Whatever you are going through right now, God has given you the grace to go through it as he is a loving Father and deals with us in the right measure and does not overload us'. Affects of frustration, anger, despair, confusion and fatigue were transformed into positive affects of hope, joy, thankfulness, courage, valour, strength and endurance.

In these services, there was a constant appropriation of biblical stories where the characters experienced some hardship but overcame and at the end gained from

the experience and came out stronger. These messages could give meaning to my research participants struggles and empower them and let them persevere through their struggles to set up a life in a new country and to confront their circumstances rather than complain or give up.

In one mid-week service, the focus was on the inconsistency of feelings and the word of God as a way to recharge their emotional batteries. This brings out the transformational approach of the agents of change, utilising the Bible as a manual to deal with the adherents' negative feelings. In this way the Bible is not only utilised as a manual to establish themselves and be successful but to keep adherents going during the process on an emotional level and to bring about emotional restoration. The pastor compared two verses from two different Psalms in the Old Testament written by the patriarch David:

‘The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?’ (Psalm 27:1)

and

‘Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.’ (Psalm 56:3).

The pastor summed up that there are seasons when you are strong and seasons when you are weak. The pastor then concludes that human beings are fickle, changeable, and inconsistent in their feelings and in their emotions, ‘at times we are very confident in the Lord, on top of the world, but because we are human beings feelings can creep in’. Then he proclaims that ‘feelings are liars, but God is constant, he does not change even when we go through a period of life when confidence fails’. Using the analogy of a mobile phone battery which can be fully charged but in time runs low on battery power and needs to be recharged, he made the comparison saying that in Psalm 27 the battery of David’s emotions was fully charged, whereas in Psalm 56 it was low but as the verse says it can be recharged by trusting in God. Then he encouraged the members of the church to come to church and to hear the word of God when they get afraid in order to top up their confidence in God. He then utilised another Bible verse to make a few more points

to reiterate his message. Firstly, he pointed out that 'you are undefeatable and at no point in your life will the enemy gain the upper hand to defeat you, as long as you live no individual, group of people can successfully come against you, your family, your neighbourhood, school, place of work, against your progress, promotion, marriage - in every aspect'. Secondly, he assured the audience that 'the presence of the Lord eliminates all fear' and thirdly that they 'can be confident because the Lord is faithful and will never abandon them'. Rounding up the session he said: 'We need to constantly charge our battery with the word of God, because the word of God is our life, that's what we depend on'. This displays the counteracting strategy to transform ugly feelings that arise in the migration process and due to structural barriers and devaluing discourses through the focus on the Bible as a guide or tool to 're-charge' their emotional battery.

Another key sermon that was hosted by the senior pastor (or the mummy pastor) of the congregation was on 'holding on to the promises of God in times of despair' utilising a passage from the Genesis account from the Bible and the experience of Abraham who is depicted as 'the first immigrant' in the prosperity discourse (Levitt, 2003). Abraham came out of his home land but after he had been in the promised land for ten years and God had not fulfilled his promises to him, the passage shows how Abraham was upset with God. This passage fits very well with the members' life stories. As immigrants to the UK, they are trying to establish themselves, but due to various penalties and barriers, they are often still lagging behind in many aspects of their lives compared to the native-born population.

The senior pastor asked the audience whether they could tell her what state of mind of Abraham would have been in since God had given him a promise and since then there had been a gap of ten years. Members' contributions all reflected different kinds of 'ugly' feelings like frustration, discouragement, being tired of waiting, having lost hope, snappy, anger, resentment. After she had set the scene she started to utilise the approach of a life coach to transform the listeners thinking and feelings, drawing on additional Bible passages to bring about healing, restoration and a transformational experience in her audience. She asserted that 'every sick heart will be made whole', thus using the Bible to counteract feelings of

anger, resentment, losing hope, faith, feeling discouraged, doubt, anxiety (all these were mentioned by her). Asking her audience how such feelings could be overcome, in what followed she used an interactive style to let them feel at ease and relaxed. She engaged with them and produced moments of laughter. The whole room was filled with laughter on several occasions. This happened frequently during my fieldwork in this church and I realised that this is another coping mechanism to counteract the bleak and precarious conditions of their struggle to integrate their lives in the cold urban environment.

Using several other Bible verses she then commented: 'The situation you are going through today is here today, gone tomorrow'. This was then followed by a dramatic example of a woman who was running from immigration officers but now has a British passport. Then she emphasised again: 'Whatever it is you are going through it will not last forever. Whether it is concerning having a child, finding a partner, getting a British passport - God is dependable'. Prompting the listeners to not entertain thoughts of despair and discouragement but rather look beyond the situation she closed the loop and came back to Abraham who experienced how God brought him out and extended his faith. 'Hold on to him. His faith became strengthened - tonight your faith becomes stronger to hold on to God's promise'. A few more verses from the Bible were used to encourage the audience further and also a statement made by her: 'You may not have papers today but in time you become the next prime minister' (I believe she was alluding to former US President Obama). Then everyone sang a song about God's faithfulness, with joy being rejuvenated to 'keep going'. Thus, she counteracted the feelings of despair, frustration, weariness and let the audience feel at ease and express their troubles, whilst creating a joyful atmosphere filled with laughter in which the audience could relax. At the same time, she led them be strengthened in their belief, hope and endurance. Here we can also see how tenacity works on an emotional level to deal with the challenges of life during the migration process.

The church members inhabit precarious positions in society which can often result in mental stress. On the topic of peace, the explication of the name of Jesus described in the Bible as the 'prince of peace' was utilised to counteract feelings of

mental stress. The speaker first gave a definition from the dictionary of the word peace: 'the absence of fear or freedom from dispute, absence of mental stress and anxiety'. The pastor then shared with the audience that God knew that we needed Jesus badly. 'People are under severe pressure; the issues of life cause us to be distressed. Stress of money, family, legal matters, one unfulfilled dream or other ... panic comes in, mental stress comes.'

Utilising different Bible passages to give meaning to their circumstances, the pastor continued: 'no matter what you are facing it is not bigger than the prince of peace, a prince is a ruler, he has power to control, he is a controller, he is the ruler and controller of peace'. This continued as other examples were given to counteract the feeling of powerlessness and stress. Also as Jesus is the prince of peace, this meant that there is absence of war and as Jesus is a warrior the audience was then empowered to pray that all the troublers of their life would be muted. After the prayer session, everyone appeared to be very free, joyful and empowered.

There are many other examples of how feelings of worrying and sorrows were tackled through the approach of transformation and reversal by letting adherents not look at their present situation but focus on the future and trust in God's promises and his faithfulness as he is a covenant keeping God. In my interview with Susan I asked her what she would be missing if the church was not there and she talked about the message she receives in the church:

If I did not receive the message I receive in church, I am ... I would be one of the depressed persons. I would have been someone who is quite ... well, living with fear, living with being in doubt, living in depression.

This indicates that the way the church leaders directly addressed the mental stress of the church members and sought to counteract it helped to bring peace to them and had a beneficial impact on their mental health.

I also witnessed several sermons on anger and aggression and how to deal with it during my fieldwork in the 'Overcomers' Church'. As I feel that this is one of the 'ugly' feelings produced due to my research participants structural position and the

constant devaluation and discrimination they are exposed to as well as the precariousness of their status as immigrants I would like to briefly display the approach taken by the agents of change to deal with such a powerful emotion.

In one sermon the pastor asked: 'Do you easily get irritated?' then adding 'Anger is sin'. Then he claimed there are two ways to experience anger and shared about the principles of turning anger into a productive force. Another sermon during a Sunday service was on 'Attitude'. The session was about the difference between reacting and responding. Members were encouraged to be conscious of their reactions and turn them into responses rather than unconsciously react as this shows incompetence, whereas a conscious response signals a reflective competence. The style was educational. He said that when one is in danger it is natural to have either a fight or flight response, but the difference is the attitude. Since reactions are immediate and not planned 'they are usually aggressive, excessive, they cause damage - a response is a function of your intellect. We react when we perceive someone is taking advantage of us to show that we are no pushovers ... Jesus said: 'Father forgive them' ... don't fight with a pig... you react out of emotion, because you are afraid or your dignity has been attacked. Responding brings peace and builds good relationships ... A lot of times we react because we are already under pressure'. Then he suggested to his audience to control their emotions and firstly to carry out an outcome analysis and to ask themselves what Jesus would do.

One key impact of the transformational approach was a re-imagining of the members' personhood, from being disrespected and undervalued, to seeing themselves as people of influence and authority. Or similarly, the reversal of feeling powerless and subjugated to feeling empowered and in charge. This was supported by statements made by the preacher like: 'God will reverse the irreversible for you'. A passage from the book of Daniel for example illustrated this point of the preacher. Daniel was delivered into the lions' den, but God protected him and at the end his destiny was reversed by the king as he was not only delivered but also promoted and his enemies thrown into the lions' den and devoured. Then the preacher commented that: 'Our God is faithful, if you serve God faithfully he will never abandon you no matter what.' The king was actually tricked by his ministers

to decree a law that led to Daniel being thrown into the lions' den, but God had reversed it. The point that was taken from it was relating to their legal status due to immigration and that God's authority supersedes human authority and that he has given his people power to change the situation through prayer. The effect was that my research participants felt no longer subjected to the legal apparatus and authorities of the host society but in charge of their destiny.

Other Bible passages sought to reverse the financial positioning of my research participants through particular passages in the Old Testament of the Bible claiming:

'For the LORD your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.' (Deuteronomy 15: 6, NRSV)

or

'The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none.' (Deuteronomy 28:12, NRSV).

These passages were utilised to reverse the feeling of powerlessness and dependency and inability to move through social space living as migrants in the country to a position that gives them the power to control one's own and other people's lives and to influence them (positively). These promises were given to the Israelites according to the Bible as they were without a land wandering through the desert on the way to the promised land, depending on the hospitality of the nations on their way, which fits very well with the migratory experience of my informants.

Another example which relates to the re-imagining and empowering of members of the movement relates to the concept of 'reverse mission' (the idea that Europeans first brought the gospel to Africa but Africans are now bringing it back to the now secularised Europeans, as discussed in chapter three). The reverse mission rhetoric that can be witnessed among the Black Majority Churches in the UK and more specifically the prosperity movement on the OKR can be argued may serve as a compensatory religious status to support the members in alien surroundings as well

as being a pride mentality, in order to boost the self-image of postcolonial nationals in the diaspora, and BMCs in the UK. Christian morality and the lack thereof among natives in the secularised host society enables members of the movement to reverse the effect of racialisation and marginalisation and subjugation experienced in the UK and gives them the feeling of being 'superior' rather than inferior, therefore not powerless but in power, not in a position of having no control over their lives with no positive self-image in the host society, but feeling morally superior and having a duty and responsibility and therefore a purpose for being in the country. Despite that fact that there has been no success in proselyting White native inhabitants, and very limited success in converting other minorities in the country to their movement, this rhetoric provides mechanisms to negotiate the hardship and deprivations that individuals encounter in the process of establishing themselves in Europe and the UK. This reversal and re-imagination serves to give moral value to my participants and gives them respectability. This idea of being responsible for converting their neighbours also came up in the interviews presented as trying to be a good role model to colleagues so that when they ask you about the reason for the good conduct they could tell them about their Christian faith.

These examples and sermons reveal the approach to re-engineer or re-imagine the personhood of members of the prosperity movement in order to change their story and imagination of themselves and to imbue them with respectability and dignity, as well as self-confidence. This was even actively suggested by the agents of change in one sermon in a series of sermons on how to maintain a life as an overcomer. The first sermon was on a major attribute of an overcomer which was confidence. At the beginning of the second sermon of the series the pastor said: 'Last week we looked at ways to overcome, programming our minds through studying and meditating on the word and past testimonies and by making bold declarations with the goal to reconstruct your imagination'.

Another sermon on what it means to be a leader also helps to see the reversal effect as members of the movement are encouraged to see themselves as leaders and people of influence, rather than helpless and exploited. The pastor said to the

congregation at the beginning of this sermon: 'We are people of influence'. Then he held a talk on what it means to be a leader in terms of being a role model and to associate with the right people, but also to be a person of good influence rather than bad influence. This also reversed previous negative influence they might have experienced or given. The skill was then applied to parenthood and members were encouraged to become a good influence and leaders for their children as well. The metaphors of overcoming, fighting, and being a leader fit very well with the precarious situation my participants find themselves in and seeing themselves as warriors and victors and people of influence rather than suffering and powerless. This gives them dispositions to endure hardship and to keep going and to establish their lives in the new society despite adverse circumstances and to create a positive self-image for themselves rather than being defined as valueless or lack/'Black' (racialised bodies - racially inferior agents), as they inhabit social relations differently, living the relations of injustice and inequality.

The worship also played a pivotal role in the weekly services as it not only supported the reversal of 'ugly' feelings into positive ones with the thematic accompanying songs sung during the meetings, but also created an atmosphere in which members could relax and feel rejuvenated. The technical equipment carried the instruments and the voices of the choir and the lead singer to all the members and the whole room and the period of worship often lasted at least an hour before the message was delivered and also continued after the message. The worship itself was very uplifting and joyful. Members of the congregation were actively engaged in the worship, dancing to the melody and clapping to the rhythm and showing an outpouring of emotions, sometimes kneeling for a while in prayer or lifting their arms to God. Sometimes during the mid-week service, the worship would just continue for hours without any message. Members would come in after a busy day at work alone or with their children and just join in. The church provided a space for their members to feel good and to leave their stress and troubles behind and to get revitalised and return to their mundane life refreshed and strengthened. At the end of the lengthy worship sessions, the pastor would say a few words to encourage

adherents, saying that the Holy Spirit had led us today to worship him and 'God turns our mourning into dancing'.

The role of worship in turning feelings of tiredness into feelings of rejuvenation and joy is very salient for this movement, this includes celebrating and dancing. In one sermon on 'It's time to dance' the topic was made explicit. The pastor asked, 'What is dancing?' And then defined it as an expression of worship, leaping and skipping for excitement and emotion. She then gave three reasons from the Bible to dance, the first one was being joyful, the second one was celebration, the third was dancing after a great victory and the fourth was to welcome important people. The session was finished with a lengthy session of dancing and rejoicing. In a night vigil where members come dressed in camouflage, after a sermon on spiritual battle and engaging the audience in proclamations of victory over every enemy in their lives and proclaiming the 'battle is over', members were encouraged to celebrate and dance. The atmosphere was something like after a great victory in battle and everyone was dancing and skipping. And during the song 'You turn my life around, Jehovah turns my life around' everyone was turning around 360 degrees several times and they taught me to do the same, this went on for a while then everyone was encouraged to come one after another to the front and dance in the front together. It was a very jubilant atmosphere, full of excitement and happiness. This highlights the significance the worship plays as a collective experience to support the message preached, giving them a space to pour out their emotions and renewing and rejuvenating the members for their daily life.

I would also like to pay attention to another salient feature of the localised prosperity practices, namely the fortnightly thanksgiving Sunday services which centre around the transformation and reversing of affects of discontent to contentment and gratitude. This was accomplished by the focus on the achievements of adherents and their small successes or the blessings from God in their lives. Members were encouraged to look at what God has done for them and to be grateful, although they may not be bankers or have had huge success in their businesses or a breakthrough in their finances, but instead members were encouraged to thank God for the little things and for things they took for granted.

Prayers were made thanking God that they are alive, that they are healthy, that they have food to eat, but also to protect them and their children from harm. Songs were sung about restoration and giving thanks to the Lord. Members came to the front and gave testimonies about what the Lord had done for them. And then they had a thanksgiving celebration of life and proclamations were made like: 'Whatever has been slowing down your process, the hand of the Lord will be with you today' or 'You will advance' or 'You will go forward, even overtake them'. The emphasis of the sermons was on God's gracious hands being in their lives. This was an opportunity for my research participants to look back at how things had been in the past and then at their present situation and be appreciative of where they have come and what they have. Through this, feelings of satisfaction, achievement and contentment were produced along with hope for further progress and a successful life.

I would now like to sum up my findings on this dimension with some examples of my research participants answers during the interview on the question whether they could describe to me a time when they could remember they felt happy or unhappy in church.

Toni: I feel happy all the time but I wanna be specific ... that's a tough one, when I feel happy, I feel happy all the time when I come, that's what makes me come, that's what brings me all the time, that's what brings me all the time.

Then he told about the only time when he was unhappy which was when they had to change the church location because the landlord there was not responsible in terms of maintaining the building which made them pay 'heavy' rent, so they had to move out and temporarily had no place. Then he added: 'So that's the only time.'

Let's have a look at another few members:

Timi: I'm always happy in church. I'm always happy.

Asuma: I'm very happy all the time. I mean the church is a place of peace.

Dayo: Some people outside call us a happy-clappy people, church is always an exciting place. What I cannot remember is a time when I was not happy, so I'm always, well it's a happy environment.

Also another member shared in more depths about her experience:

Susan: But I'm always happy. From the time I joined this church. It's not about the church people, it's about the message.

Danny: Okay, alright.

Susan: From the time I joined this church my happiness came, confidence, peace and up till now it is like a going day by day. Each time I go to church I increase in a bit more joy.

Danny: Yeah, yeah. What about the worship?

Susan: Yeah that's what I'm saying each time I go to church and receive the message I am increasingly more confident, more happy, more positive. I have more energy to go out and do the work.

Danny: Alright. And can you remember a time when you were not happy in church and describe this for me?

Susan: The first day I entered the church and received the message I was happy and from that day I and I mean it my happiness is increasing day by day. I haven't, I can't remember, because I even lost my sister in 2010 but I want to be honest with you, yes I miss my sister, I had a lot of anxiety in me but because of the word I remain strong and because of that I am still strong. And I'm not seeing it as a loss. So that's what I'm saying, my happiness, that is what I can remember from the day I got in and how I changed and from that day on day by day it's an increase of joy, of peace, each time I go to church.

Susan's example is the embodiment of all the affects that have been described above as well as the effectiveness of the approach and the church as a place of

positive influence and transformation for members to cope with their everyday lives in London.

Conclusion

The members of the localized prosperity movement on the OKR have manifold struggles and difficulties due to the migration process as well as the poisonous discourse around ethnic minorities and the stigma of blackness and in the structural barriers faced, all of which which limit their access to any resources. On the basis of the shared experience of alienation, discrimination and exclusion, a community and collective consciousness have formed. Members of the movement were attached to an affective community that fulfilled a cohesive function for dislocated and dis-embedded subjects, intensifying social relations through the regular meetings and producing solidarity. The members of the church were knit closely together through kindness and care for one another. My fieldwork demonstrated that this community is formed and based on values of care rather than exchange, with orientations and dispositions of respect, support and care given to others that made up their relationality. Voluntarism and prosocial behaviour form the foundation of this community, with the members investing copious amounts of time and energy not only in the pursuit of success in the society but also in caring for each other.

The approach of the teachings was centred on transformation which also included a reversal effect, counteracting feelings of being anxious or fatigued to feeling confident and filled. Or feeling abandoned to feeling God is able and faithful and a mighty deliverer renewing members hope and motivation. Or from feeling distressed to feeling calm and composed because everything is in the hands of God. Members are set free from their 'ugly' feelings as negative affects are transformed into positive affects. The message thus provides emotional support that stabilises the mental health of my informants, with emotional repair and healing taking place during the meetings on many levels. The assemblies also reinvigorated members

and gave them strength for their mundane everyday lives, reenergising the migrant community to integrate themselves into and adapt to the British society.

A reengineering of personhood that enables the members to cope with the consequence of their structural position and that gives them a positive self-image and respectability was implemented by the agents of change of the localised prosperity movement along the OKR. The prosperity gospel functions as a form of liberation theology and repositions them as valuable and possessing dignity, which improves their outlook, rejuvenates them and instils them with hope to break through the wall of being fixed into one place, empowering members on an emotional level in the first place. As such, members could gain confidence by no longer looking at their situation or listening to what other people say but accepting what the Bible says as the truth, believing in a God who is higher than the situation and other people and influences in their lives. This belief was constantly reinforced through encouraging adherents to 'face the book' or to 'study before the Lord' and to not trust in their emotions as Satan can attack them, but to ask the Holy Spirit to guard their emotions.

The lens of affect (the circulations of feelings) and (non-accumulative) action as part of the person-value model of Skeggs therefore lends itself as a very powerful perspective to capture the immaterial dimension of the struggle for values my research participants are engaged in. This chapter has elucidated various key elements of the localized form of the prosperity movement and the lived experience of the members which would remain invisible if the lens of exchange values were the sole perspective. The investment of time and energy on the basis of care, as well as the importance of the emotional support for the members' well-being, through the transformation of negative affects into positive ones, are key elements which are fundamental to the essence of the movement.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

This thesis has provided a thorough exploration of the localized prosperity theology movement on the Old Kent Road in London from a sociological perspective. With the aim of understanding the lived experience of my informants, the **micro** processes of the localised movement have been examined in combination with the **macro** processes of neo-liberal restructuring of the globe leading to international migration flows especially from the global South to the global North - the engine of this capitalist neo-liberal transformation of the global economy - and a history of colonialism and its discourses around race and its related structural barriers experienced on the **meso** level (national, local) by my research participants. I have found the discourse of the prosperity movement on the localised level to be about re-positioning and re-imagining a group of people within the broader society who have experienced de-valuation, racialisation and the precarious neo-liberal job culture. My research shows how they live and make their lives liveable in different ways.

The two main research questions I have addressed in this thesis are as follows:

RQ1: Is Prosperity Theology materialising Christian faith, such that the focus is on value rather than values?

RQ2: Are there any immaterial values remaining within prosperity theology churches, and if so what are they?

I would now like to summarize my research findings in answer to these questions. On the website of the 'Overcomers' Church' there is a statement of their mission and vision, which says that their aim is 'Equip the diverse congregation for success in the society as well as prepare them for eternity as we worship Him in Spirit and in truth.' The agents of change are thus striving to let their members attain goals related both to this life and the life to come. Materially, the focus is on members' socio-economic needs, as well as desires for an overall successful life focusing on immigration issues, finding a partner and having children, buying a house and a car,

and attaining a job with promotions etc. Nonetheless, they are Christian believers and the material, this-worldly aspect is built on a foundation of traditional beliefs in spiritual matters, the sanctification and salvation of the soul and the afterlife. This resonates with the findings of the Evangelical Alliance (2003) who have argued that the prosperity movement does not transform Christian values into value, but rather adds a value dimension through an over-realized eschatology.

In terms of the message and practices that can be observed in their meetings, the focus is definitely on their lives in the here and now. This appears to be due to the severity of their situation and the many challenges they face, including issues of acclimatizing to a new culture as immigrants, institutional racism and discrimination, limited labour market opportunities, and structural barriers as discussed in the 'resistance from the margins' chapter and throughout the thesis. Thus, although traditional Christian teachings are also included in the preachings, the precarious and difficult life circumstances of the members lead to a foregrounding of the more material aspects. As such, the Bible is used as a manual for achieving a successful life and overcoming obstacles. Words such as Overcomer, Victor and Breakthrough are prevalent and always refer to the concrete daily struggles the members face. The theology can be considered as a form of liberation theology, which claims that it does not matter where you come from but where you are going. In addition, the church leaders also provide practical support, for example in the form of workshops on careers and self-employment where members can receive helpful advice. The churches promote various strategies for self-improvement alongside a strong work ethic, which has become known as the Pentecostal work ethic. The goal of all of this is to reposition the adherents in society through improving their material situation and helping them achieve upward social mobility.

Nonetheless, although the material aspects are strongly emphasized, the immaterial aspects still remain. In particular, the core Christian values of love and care for one's neighbor are very evident, as discussed in the chapter on 'affective community and a culture of reciprocity'. The atmosphere among the members of the community is very warm and they make great efforts to care for and support

one another. In addition to this, further immaterial values can be found, beyond traditional Christian values. The collective identity that has formed is also related to their shared identity and experiences as West African migrants in the UK. In particular, the racialization of 'Black bodies' has created a collective consciousness as the common history of slavery and colonisation has been a strong force to unify Black people across their differences.

The value and values elements of the movement are intertwined in complex ways. The churches are an affective community, full of love and care, which clearly speaks to the values aspect of the framework. However, they have been brought together in collective resistance to their positioning by the dominant discourse and the symbolic violence they experience. They have identified their collective situation in the British class structure and are collectively reacting against the limits placed on their life trajectories. This has to do with value. It is hard to say that the collective consciousness exists beyond monetization as the reason they have come together as a collective is because of their lack of access to various forms of capital, and the aim of their community is to gain access. This duality therefore provides support for Skeggs argument that 'values and value are always dialogic, dependent and co-constituting' (Skeggs, 2014: 4).

This is also true of the 'affect' element, which sits within the 'values' domain. One of the key aims of the meetings is to transform negative affects into positive ones. Negative affects of fear, frustration, anger, anxiety, restlessness, despair, pessimism, and being disenfranchised and miserable are converted into positive affects of joy, strength, endurance, thankfulness, confidence, assurance, love, peace, hope, optimism and happiness. The message and practices of the movement, including the effervescent worship, thus fulfil a therapeutic function and provide members with a coping mechanism on an emotional level. Nonetheless, the goal of these rituals and processes is also to give the members strength to continue to fight their daily battles and progress toward upward mobility. As they are rejuvenated and uplifted, they find new hope and are enabled to press forward. There is therefore also a 'value' element to the transformation and reversal of affects.

Furthermore, the re-imagining of the community is very important in terms of their values struggle. They are engaged in changing the discourse of the dominant symbolic through an alternative value system that gives meaning to their circumstances and repositions them as valuable and possessing dignity. But by the same token, they are adapting to a British middle-class subjectivity as the future-projected, strategizing, capital accruing self, always seeking to optimise and improve themselves, investing in themselves to become a legitimate subject of value. Thus this movement is a movement of empowerment on an emotional level in the first place, but also on an economic level. The re-imagining, re-engineering and re-positioning of the members is key to their goals and motivations, and this too shows how, in this phenomenon, values and value are deeply intertwined.

My findings in regard to tithing are also much more nuanced than what is generally perceived of the global prosperity movement, as portrayed by the mainstream media. The emphasis on tithing is a clear monetization of faith and tithing is indeed a significant and important part of the movement, for example through the teaching of 'seed faith'. However, this comes in various forms. The mega-event run by Morris Cerrulo, 'Mission to London', was the most extreme manifestation I experienced, with its aggressive focus on financial prosperity and offerings. By contrast, the tithing in the local church where I have done my fieldwork is much more for the maintenance of the church and to pay for expenses such as the rent of the building. In regard to financial compensation for the leadership team, the Junior Pastor is involved on a voluntary basis and the salary of the senior pastor (his mother) is apparently moderate (as indicated by her son). The junior pastor said in our interview that 'we believe money is good and we want everyone to be rich' but also 'that's not our central focus' and 'you don't have to be stupidly rich'— this is clearly less extreme than the Morris Cerrulo version, but nonetheless stands in contrast to the teaching of the Bible which says that 'the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil' (1 Timothy 6:10, NKJV).

Whilst mega-church leaders have been involved in various scandals and have been accused of exploiting their members, the aim of the 'Overcomers' Church' is clearly to help and benefit the members. As the junior pastor said in our interview: 'we

don't wanna exploit people we wanna empower them so when they come to us by the time they look at their lives in a year from joining... they've bettered their life'. Their concept of help is clearly focused on material benefits – a genuine desire to provide 'value' to their members. An important question is thus – is this effective? Are the members truly improving their position in society? Or is it more about survival than advancement? My research has demonstrated that the church leaders attempt to help members adjust their habitus to fit the new society, and do foster individual and collective agency which are important for creating new cultural resources in migration processes. However, it is the second generation (the children of immigrants) who are the likely beneficiaries of this struggle, since they experience a socialization process within the national educational system and therefore fare much better at adapting to and embodying the national capital. Nonetheless, ethnic discrimination decisively shapes the symbolic value of the cultural capital of both parents and children in their efforts to reposition themselves in society. The parents therefore want to equip their children to be able to construct a positive and resilient identity for themselves in the face of institutional racial discrimination and give them the right resources to overcome various obstacles related to their disadvantaged family circumstances and structural position. My interviews revealed that a key motivation for members to participate in these churches is to provide a better future and future outlook for their children. Investment in the children and youth is thus a very important strategy of the church for achieving the successful life these families are striving for. The church is very focused on the youth, for example having one Sunday service each month dedicated to them, with the participation of the whole congregation. To what extent the trajectories of the children are indeed positively affected by their membership of the church is a hugely important question, but one which lies outside the scope of my research. This could prove to be a very fruitful area for future studies.

A further important question I have explored is the role of religion amongst migrants in the city. Given the difficult circumstances that confront African immigrants making a life in London, faith functions to sustain them psychologically, helping

them to adjust to their new situation and to face the challenges they encounter. The prosperity message provides these members with a mechanism to make their life more valuable to themselves and give meaning to their circumstances through a liberation discourse and strategies that aim to empower and emancipate adherents to forge a positive identity and position within their society of settlement. Religion thus plays a significant role in the structuring of migrant life in the contemporary metropolis facilitating the adaptation process, promoting their incorporation into the new society and helping them in various ways to cope and adapt and meet their social needs. These religious organisations are places where new immigrants find their feet, providing an all-encompassing system of belief, as well as a community where immigrants gather and form networks of mutual support with co-ethnics; they provide a psychological ballast helping to ameliorate the traumas of early settlement and frequent encounter with discrimination and function as a pathway into the mainstream.

In summary, the localised prosperity discourse on the OKR with its associated practices functions as a form of resistance to dominant discourses that limit people and fix them in place. Through 'an accident of birth' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012), my participants find themselves caught up in this form of devaluation and representation as a collective group, and this has concrete immaterial and material effects on them. In this thesis, I have discussed how the prosperity discourse and related practices of this sub-urban community of the localized prosperity movement materializes in terms of the agents of change being actively engaged in changing the discourse of the dominant symbolic through an alternative value system (the localised prosperity discourse) that gives meaning to the circumstances of the members of the movement and repositions them as valuable and possessing dignity, which improves their outlook, rejuvenates them and instils them with hope to break through the wall of being fixed into one place, empowering members on an emotional level in the first place.

This prosperity discourse that functions as a liberation theology in this way functions for this community as a type of 'just talk' as suggested by Skeggs and Loveday (2012) and as a form of representation which is enables members to re-

imagine and inhabit their personhood with a new positive self-image rather than as 'us-the Black subject', and thereby empowers them to discover places from which to act and speak. The church therefore functions as an imagined community centred around the mobilisation of its members to take their rightful place in society and imbues them with moral value and dignity. Members also gain a feeling of empowerment and enhanced agency, as well as an ethical framework for positive change where they no longer see themselves as victims of circumstances beyond their control. This allows members of the localised prosperity movement on the OKR to represent the world as their own and in their own terms, for only in such a way will they be able to transform it according to their own aspirations and to better cope with the multitude of life's problems relating to their circumstances. Thus, this community acts as a critical bulwark against exclusions and discrimination, 'being part of an arsenal of survival tactics in London' (Wills et al., 2010: 136). At the same time, it provides a rich ritual life that provides new forms of stability and social continuity that helps church members to navigate their lives in a meaningful and structured way, as discontinuity with traditional kinship structures is also replaced by a new neo-Pentecostal family.

Implications and policy recommendations

My research has greatly benefited from the use of Skeggs' person-value framework, which resulted in a very thorough and multidimensional exploration of the phenomenon at hand. At the same time, my research has also served to modify and expand the framework to include the transnational aspect as well as the religious aspect of the localized prosperity phenomenon. Skeggs is looking for an alternative value system for people who are excluded from the dominant symbolic. Her framework has to date been applied primarily to the (mainly white) working class. The group I examine - African migrant members of prosperity churches - is also clearly outside the dominant symbolic, but differs in significant ways from Skeggs' examined segment of the British population. Although both operate from a position of devaluation from the outset, intersections of 'race' and class also had to be

considered and given a more prominent position than in Skeggs' work to date. The class divide of British society has a long history, yet the migration waves over the last few decades have dramatically influenced and transformed the fabric of British society with immigrants forging their own place in this new society of settlement, despite others' pre-perceptions about what their position in this divided society should be. Nonetheless, both communities form their own value systems which 'come into effect and circulate alongside the dominant symbolic' and both seek to 'make their lives liveable' (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012: 472), albeit in different ways. Thus, the application of the person-value framework to the localized prosperity phenomenon on London's OKR has validated the framework whilst also extending its reach. This study then proposes that value and values as a model extended to and including the transnational and postcolonial dimensions can be paired with other approaches to the sociology of religion, anthropology of religion, religious studies, sociology of migration or migration studies, resulting in a more systematic investigation and very thorough multidimensional exploration of various phenomena and comprehensive understanding of these. The value/s lens provides a robust framework and useful toolbox of analysis as it helps to untwine domains of value and values and the role race plays whilst uncovering alternative value systems which lie outside the dominant symbolic.

This study also contributes to the debate on how migration is changing religious landscapes and altering the physical religious geography of the city (see Garnett and Harris (2013) *'Rescripting Religion the City'*) as it made visible the lived experience of the collective endeavour of my participants. In particular, the way they live their diasporic life in their suburban community through the devotional practices of their religious faith has illuminated the nuanced complex worlds of urban life. This has also brought out the intersections of class, 'race', migration and religion of this phenomenon in the context of the cultural diversity of the multicultural contemporary metropolis. Furthermore, the relationship between migration and religion but also between both of these and the notion of the 'city' in relation to my participants who now inhabit a particular transnational urban space in London has been displayed by looking at their struggles for value and values which resonates

with Chris Baker's (2013) argument that religious citizens from diasporic and ethnic minority communities deploy the practices and resources of religion implicitly or explicitly to claim their right to the city and with it also their right to centrality within the life of the modern metropolis.

Another impact of this research relates to aiding a shift in the perspective on immigrant religion functioning as a bridge to inclusion, in the face of exclusion, rather than as a barrier to inclusion. Whereas in the United States immigrant religion is seen as facilitating the adaptation process, it has been viewed as problematic and often as a threat to values and integration in Western Europe and the UK. The literature on the subject has tended to stress the problems and conflict engendered by immigrants' religion and the difficulties that religion poses for integration as the marker of a fundamental social divide, with overwhelming concern with the Islamic presence. Furthermore, immigrant religion is often simply overlooked by conventional forms of politics and academic analysis (Foner and Alba, 2008). However, the academic and public imagination is slowly changing with more empirical studies engaging with this topic and depicting a more nuanced picture. Thus it is important to add to this literature as only through this can settled assumptions be de-stabilised and new ways of thinking about and understanding religion and migration be supported.

In my research, the beliefs and practices of my participants are seen to contribute to integration and inclusion. Indeed, my research shows the overwhelmingly positive role religion plays among my participants in smoothing and facilitating the adaptation process, helping them to cope and adapt in a variety of ways. This study thereby contributes to the changing discourse of racialized perceptions of immigrants in the social science literature, providing an account that does not seek to discuss negative stereotypes of religion and institutionalized discrimination. There is also considerable evidence of socioeconomic disadvantage and even of discrimination endured by my participants, including those of the second generation who have grown up in the UK. The second generation could be expected to face significant disadvantage in the educational sector and labour market, however these churches provide them with the right emotional capital and coping

mechanism to overcome such barriers. The involvement in the local churches on the OKR is helping young people move ahead and protecting them from neighborhood gangs and “immoral” influences; it strengthened their integration into the ethnic community and reinforced parental aspirations for educational achievement. A bottom-line conclusion in my research is that religion helps to turn immigrants into active citizens and gives them and their children a sense of belonging or membership in the UK. These religious communities on the OKR are precisely the places where new immigrants gain their feet and become attached to a community of support, which nurtures community cohesion.

As these churches provide a ‘safe haven’ for new arrivals and have many positive social functions and are valuable for the borough, this research recommends that more spaces for community provision should be created by the borough of Southwark in relation to faith premises solutions, and that the current premises should be made protected spaces. This research also argues that in the climate of a negative image attached to immigrant churches and BMCs in particular, positive action in terms of ‘blowing the trumpet’ is needed to show how the BMCs greatly benefit the community. Neighbourhoods should be made aware of the many positive contributions the BMCs are making to local communities.

In addition, this research proposes that inclusion and exclusion must be understood as relational social processes, generated by the perspectives and practices of both church members and those who are not members, since although these church congregations are typically dominated by one nationality, they aspire to be international.

Finally, it is important to recognize that neighbourhood regeneration can lead to the breaking up of communities that are critical for neighbourhood support and cohesion. As such, at a time when the Old Kent Road area is being redeveloped, a clearer collective voice should be given to such communities regarding local issues and it is recommended that local officials communicate with local faith leaders for mutual engagement and conversation on various issues.

This thesis has also highlighted structural inequalities within the society and the way they impact on the lives of marginalized individuals. There is a clear need for well-designed policies to facilitate greater social mobility through changes to education and labor market systems. On the one hand, there is a need to change the discourse in regard to immigrants; there is also a need to create better opportunities through concrete policy changes.

I would like to end with two quotes from one of my participants (Susan) which I believe captures the essence of the movement:

If I did not receive the message I receive in church I would be one of the depressed persons. I would have been someone who is quite ... well, living with fear, living with being in doubt, living in depression.

And ...

The first day I entered the church and received the message I was happy and from that day I and I mean it my happiness is increasing day by day ... I even lost my sister in 2010 but I want to be honest with you, yes, I miss my sister, I had a lot of anxiety in me but because of the word I remain strong and because of that I am still strong. And I'm not seeing it as a loss. So that's what I'm saying, my happiness, that is what I can remember from the day I got in and how I changed and from that day on day by day it's an increase of joy, of peace, each time I go to church.

Appendix One: Interviewees

Pseudonym	Age	Country of Origin	Background information	Role in church	Place of interview
JP (male)	Mid 30s	Nigeria	Married with three children, works in property management, started as a cleaner and babysitter in the UK	Junior Pastor	Chicken shop near the church
Susan (female)	40s	Uganda	Not sure about her marital status, has children, one goes to university; she works as a nurse, tried to do a Masters previously to set up her own counselling service but failed	Part of the greeters' team	Telephone interview on her way to work
Dayo (female)	Early 50s	Nigeria	Married with children, whole family comes to church, one of her sons is married to another church member; previously in US, came to the UK through connections with the senior pastor, works as a social worker	Head of various departments: greeters' team, follow-up team, welfare team	On the church premises at the end of one Sunday service
Asuma (female)	Mid 30s	Sierra Leone	As far as I know she has no partner or children, got a Land Rover during my fieldwork which was 'celebrated' in one service, did not talk about her occupation to me	Head of the sanitation team, 'secretary' of the junior pastor, involved in Sunday school	Telephone interview

Timi (female)	Mid 50s	Nigeria	Not sure about her marital status, has a few children which she seems to bring up by herself, used to be Anglican, then Baptist, but changed to the 'Overcomers' Church' as she feels it meets her needs better	Assists the senior pastor with administrative tasks	In the church office
Fola (female)	Mid 30s	Nigeria	Married to Olu, no children as far as I know, works full-time, not sure about her occupation	Involved in the children's ministry and Sunday school	Together with Olu at their home in SE London
Olu (male)	Mid 30s	Nigeria	Married to Fola, no children as far as I know, works at a university in an administrative capacity	Church treasurer	Together with Fola at their home in SE London
Toni (male)	Late 40s/ early 50s	Nigeria	Has been in the UK for a long time, his occupation is related to construction, but in a higher position, maybe as an engineer	Longstanding member and involved in a lot of things	On the church premises
Chike (male)	Mid 20s	Nigeria	Single, just finished his IT studies at university level, travels all the way from North London to attend church activities	Created a cutting-edge church website which he now maintains	In the church office

Appendix Two: Prayer Points from the Festival of Life

The prayer points from the FoL in April 2014:

- 1 Praise him
- 2 Father your word says that I can have everything along with Jesus, please give me all I ask for tonight
- 3 Father I am not asking just for healing, but let me enjoy divine health for the rest of my life
- 4 Father I don't want just to be free, I want you to use me to set captives free
- 5 Father I don't just want to be debt free, I want to be able to lend to nations
- 6 Father I don't just want to be promoted, I want you to use me to elevate others
- 7 Father I don't want to be just sorrow free forever, I want you to use me, to wipe away tears
from the face of others
- 8 Father I don't just want to be blessed, but become a blessing to millions
- 9 Father make me a great vessel of revival in this land
- 10 Own individual request

The prayer points from the FoL in October 2016:

- 1 Father, before this year ends let all my problems be over (physical, marital, material, spiritual, career)
 - 2 Father, before the end of this month let me shout for joy
 - 3 Before the end of one week send help to me oh Lord
 - 4 Father, before this time tomorrow let me begin to share my testimony (Special category GO prays for extension of life of certain people of age with a prophesy and revelation from the GO given by God 'now')
 - 5 Father, settle my case now
 - 6 Father, before my neighbour gets out of here settle his case (prayer points 1-6 are related to the reason that some miracles take a year, a month, a week, a day...)
- One more prayer point is added before the event comes to a close:
- 7 Give me 20 mighty miracles between now and the same time next year (at the end God revealed to the GO to tell the audience to laugh, then the audience laughs for a period of time, then the GO reveals God asked them to laugh because 'better days are ahead')

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