Christian Social Engagement:

A Qualitative Study of Volunteering, Theology, and Motives in three Australian Faith-based Organisations

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CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

This thesis contributes to sociological research by addressing how motives, theology, and participation activities shape volunteer experiences in Australian FBOs. This is achieved by investigating the following three research questions: 1) How are theological concepts expressed and manifested within social engagement? 2) What motivates volunteers to become involved with Christian faith-based organisations? and 3) What factors promote or constrain collective engagement activities or participation in faith-based organisations? This thesis is a sociological study that uses practical theology in an inter-disciplinary way.

These research questions are examined through an ethnographic study of three Australian faith-based organisations (FBOs). Each FBO in this research differs significantly in terms of the services provided, intended recipients, organisational structure, and religious and theological emphases. The three FBOs studied in this thesis reflect the diversity of Australian FBOs and welfare delivery services.

This thesis advances research on FBOs by examining volunteer experiences and motives in Australian FBOs. It contributes to the wider theological and sociological literature by providing nuance to the effect of religion and theology on motives; examines how religious and theological factors shape FBO's engagement with refugees, the homeless, and social justice; and examines how volunteers attribute theological significance to the activities of FBOs.

Three original contributions to the study of theology and sociology are offered. First, as theological frames are a tool for theological research within the sociology of religion, they are defined as a framework for the theological interpretation of social life. A conceptual framework and research methodology for constructing theological frames is given. I argue that theological frames can be used to identify theological elements of organisational culture: to better understand organisational structure and relationships; to discern the social theological derivations of social movements; and to extend frame theory to include theological analysis.

Second, ordinary theology mediates social capital through three distinct mechanisms: 1) the ordinary theology of volunteers needs to be agentic, that is, the motivation and expression of their social engagement needs to be explicit within the volunteers' ordinary theology; 2) the social engagement activities need to nurture relationships that hold

theological significance for the volunteers; and 3) the collective engagement activities of FBOs need to be structured and varied.

Third, the concept of a bounded volunteering experience is introduced to describe participation that does not require commitment outside the participation times specified by the FBOs. I suggest that a bounded volunteering experience may be effective for participating in FBOs, but not for engaging in relationship-building with recipients of FBO services.

My research suggests that sustained collective engagement results from the alignment of the individual theologies of the Christian volunteers with the organisational activities of FBOs. This thesis proposes that individual ordinary theologies cohere with individual actions in social engagement. The collective decision making, conflicts, and diversity of engagement expressions found in a group environment, can inhibit the extent to which individual theologies can be embodied in social engagement. A shared theology with established engagement activities engendered positive FBO volunteering experiences.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed..

Date....26/9/2019..

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Volunteering in Australian faith-based organisations (FBOs) and non-government organisations (NGOs) has received significant attention in the academic literature but there has been little consideration of theological expressions in social engagement. Research on volunteering in Australia is broad and includes an examination of the social and economic benefits, historical development, and changes in the funding and professionalisation of service delivery that has coincided with both government and policy changes. Most research on FBOs is situated within research on non-profit organisations. Studies have mostly focused on the history of organisations (Lyons, 1993; Murphy, 2006; Camilleri and Winkworth, 2005; Swain, 2005, 2017), accountability (Booth, 1993; Howson, Langton and West, 2014; Irvine, 2003; Staples, 2008), or the effect of organisations within different political contexts (Staples, 2007; Baulderstone and Earls, 2009; Butcher, 2015; Manwaring, 2017).

However, there has been little emphasis on the 'faith' elements of FBOs, with most Australian research on the relationship between theology and social life being found within studies of church history (O'Farrell, 1985; Thompson, 1994; Kaye, Frame, Holden and Treloar, 2002; Piggin, 2014). The effect of theology on the contemporary activities of FBOs has received little attention despite ongoing research on volunteering in Australia. Current research has not addressed the experiences and meaning-making that occurs in this significant demographic of all Australian volunteers – those involved in Christian FBOs.

This thesis seeks to remedy this oversight through a sociological study of the lived experience of volunteers in Christian FBOs and the theological significance they attribute to this social engagement. The lived experience of volunteers in Australian Christian FBOs is investigated by examining the interrelations between theology, social engagement and relationship development in volunteering. This is achieved through an ethnographic study of three Christian FBOs – *New Family*, *Engage*, and *The Truck*[1]. These FBOs differ in the services provided, intended recipients, volunteer demographics, organisational structure and emphasis on faith. The differences between the FBOs in this research reflect the diversity of welfare delivery organisations in Australia.

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[1] The names of the FBOs, volunteers and associated organisations have been given pseudonyms in this thesis.

The research presented in this thesis contributes to the body of knowledge within the sociology of religion and theology by attending to the following six gaps in the literature.

First, the current research contributes to the literature on volunteer motivation by providing greater nuance to the effect of religion and theology on motives. Much of the research connecting religiosity and motivation for volunteering does not give attention to how theology shapes volunteer involvement and expression.

Second, there are few qualitative studies in Australia that focus exclusively on FBOs, and those that do tend not to focus on the experience of volunteering (Swain, 2017; Knight and Gilchrist, 2015). It is estimated that there are two million volunteers in Australia (p.13), and their volunteering experiences and motives have not been documented previously.

Third, this research examines how religious factors shape the engagement activities, meaning-making, and organisational engagement for Christian volunteers working with refugees. This field of research has not been widely addressed in Australian academic literature.

Fourth, this thesis contributes to the literature on Australian FBOs involved with the homeless through an ethnographic study of the volunteer experience. There is little qualitative research that examines the motives, challenges, and experiences of volunteering with the homeless.

Fifth, there is little research relating theology and engagement in social justice within an Australian context. Many FBOs engage in social justice through advocacy, which is often undertaken alongside welfare delivery (Beaumont, 2008, p. 2028). The experiences and meaning-making of volunteers engaged in social justice activities have not been addressed in literature.

Sixth, this research attends to the ordinary theological significance attributed by volunteers to their social engagement experiences. In much of the existing research on Christian volunteering, the theological significance is outlined by professional theologians rather than those involved in the delivery of welfare.

The current research attends to each of these gaps through a qualitative ethnographic study of three FBOs – *New Family*, *The Truck*, and *Engage*. *New Family* is a Christian FBO that provides support services for refugees and recently arrived immigrants; *The Truck* delivers food and clothing to the homeless; and *Engage* is an Australian FBO with a

focus on social justice. The individual experiences, theologies, and meaning-making of volunteers are examined, as are the collective engagement activities of each organisation. This research provides authentic, articulated and embodied theological expressions by allowing the participants to describe their theologies within the context of social engagement.

An ethnographic approach to this research provides greater nuance to the volunteers' experience than quantitative methods could provide. Specifically, the research question of this thesis is: How do motives, theology, and participation activities shape volunteer experiences in Australian FBOs?

This research question may be separated into three further sub-questions:

1) How are theological concepts expressed and manifested within social engagement?

2) What motivates volunteers to become involved with Christian faith-based organisations?

3) What factors promote or constrain collective activities or participation in faith-based organisations?

Each of these questions is addressed through six original contributions to the body of knowledge in theology and the sociology of religion, as presented below:

First, theological frames are presented in this thesis as a theological tool for social research. Theological frames have been developed in this thesis to better understand lived religion, the different sources of theological influence, and how theology shapes individual actions. They are defined in this thesis as a framework for the theological interpretation of social life.

Second, this thesis shows how theological frames are applied to social research and contextual theology. The contributions to these respective fields are the use of empirical research methods to elicit contextual and ordinary theological expressions that incorporate the four voices of theology. This thesis shows how empirical methods can be used to construct theological frames to understand the contextual theologies of social engagement.

Third, theological frames are used in this thesis to understand organisational cultures. Ethnographic data is used to understand the organisational and theological culture of the

FBOs and compare it to the individuals' theological frames. Group culture was found to be reflected in the common elements of the theological frames.

Fourth, it is argued that ordinary theology mediates social capital through nurturing theologically significant relationships. This research shows that theologically motivated Christian volunteers nurtured relationships with refugees that held theological significance for the volunteers themselves. Indicators of social capital were seen in their relationships through norms, obligations, bridging, and access to networks.

Fifth, this thesis introduces the concept of a *bounded experience* in volunteering. It is defined in this thesis as a volunteering activity that does not require additional commitment outside of participation. I argue in this thesis that *bounded experiences* can contribute to sustained volunteering, but not for engaging in social justice.

Sixth, empirical methods are shown to be beneficial for eliciting authentic contextual theologies. The shared experiences from participant-observation were used to construct interview questions that invited theological reflections about volunteering. This approach engendered authenticity as the participants described theological significance in context to guide my theological understanding and interpretation.

1.2 Research Context

Most welfare delivery in Australia occurs through NGOs (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2017), of which FBOs constitute a significant majority (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018; Australian Government, 2019). Volunteers in FBOs have provided essential services to some of the most vulnerable in society since British settlement (Piggin, 2014, p. 323). Recipients of services have included women and children, refugees, the homeless, elderly, unemployed, or underemployed. The social and economic impact of faith-based services is significant. In 2015, the economic value of volunteering in Australia was estimated to be approximately $200 billion, with 15% of all volunteers citing religious reasons for their engagement (Volunteering Australia, 2015).

Research on FBOs in the literature is dominated by studies from the US, particularly within the context of the welfare reforms resulting from the 1996 Charitable Choice legislation (Chaves, 1999; Kennedy and Bielefeld, 2002; Monsma, 2009). Melville and McDonald (2006) noted in their work on the social, historical and political differences in Australian and US faith-based welfare services that, despite their significant economic contribution to the non-profit sector, research on FBOs in Australia was scarce. They explained:

The insertion of the faith-based discourse into the Australian context immediately raises the debate about whether religious organisations can, and should, run welfare reform. Attendant to this are questions about the *capacity* of small-congregation based organisations to provide comprehensive welfare programmes. (Melville and McDonald, 2006, p. 81)

Even using the term 'faith-based' in Australian research associates meanings particular to a US context and can be unhelpful in understanding the Australian experience (Melville and McDonald, 2006p. 82).

For much of the history of FBOs operating in Australia the relationship between church and state has been strong. Piggin (2014) traced this relationship since the time of the British settlement of New South Wales, in 1788. He argued that the first colony was partly an experiment in evangelical humanitarianism (p. 326). By sending the poor, criminals, and outcasts to the newly created colony an opportunity for social reform arose under an evangelical watch. The appointment of English evangelical Christians in positions of power – such as governors, bankers, teachers, and the media – allowed their values to shape culture, society, and governance (pp. 327-328). The subsequent Church Act, of 1836, allowed state funding for clerical salaries and the building of church buildings. This provided the means for a strong, cooperative relationship between church and state in Australia in the interests of nation building (p. 330).

O'Brien (2014) described how welfare delivery social services were provided by churches with support from the state:

In the Australian colonies hundreds of benevolent societies and church aid societies flourished and remained the main form of assistance for women and children – alongside family and informal networks – until the Second World War. Early in the 19th century Aboriginal people came under its purview through the distribution of blankets and rations. Part appeasement, part compensation, part necessity, they [religious organisations] became entrenched in the colonial moral economy. (O'Brien, 2014, p. 3)

From the time of Federation, in 1901, until the Second World War, the relationship between church and state remained largely the same. Church organisations were funded to provide welfare delivery, social security, and service delivery, particularly during periods of increased rates of child adoption (Swain, 2017, p. 88). Swain offered an important

insight on this matter – the provision of welfare services through government funded church establishments was not the result of policy debate, it was simply the way it had always been in Australia (p. 88).

From the 1960s, increased secularisation in Australia had consequences for FBOs. Progressive social movements and theologies emerged, which caused a reduction in overtly Christian signage and practices to ensure continued government funding (Swain, 2017, p. 89). With the increased professionalisation of faith-based charities, the purpose and alignment of Christian organisations within Australian politics in recent history has become challenging as funding has become more difficult, particularly in the context of increased competition between churches (p. 90). Despite these changes, Swain (2017) concluded that Christian FBOs or affiliations still dominate Australian welfare delivery services (p. 96).

Recent research on non-profit organisations, which included a significant number of faith-based charities, supported Swain's (2017) findings. Onyx, Cham and Dalton (2016) reported that recent changes in the sector have followed a neoliberal agenda (p. 173). They argued that welfare delivery and services increasingly favoured large charities that thrived within this neoliberal shift, particularly those with conservative religious tenets and increased professionalisation (p. 185). Their findings supported earlier research which found a concentration of revenue in larger non-profit organisations affiliated with religious institutions (Dalton and Butcher, 2014, pp.13-16).

Knight and Gilchrist (2015) offered insight into contemporary Australian FBOs based on data taken from the 2014 *Annual Information Statements*. In their research, faith-based charities (including FBOs) self-identified by including 'advancement of religion' as a charitable purpose or through delivering programs considered 'religious' as their main activity. They found that the three most common charitable purposes were 'advancement of education' (34%) and 'advancement of religion' (32%), followed by 'relief of poverty, sickness or the needs of the aged' (27%) (p. 3). Aside from charitable purposes, or perhaps in conjunction with charitable purposes, they also found that the most commonly identified main, and other, charitable activities were religious (25%/27%), primary or secondary education (6%/11%) and grant making (5%/8%) (p. 6). While the data did not specify the denomination or religious affiliation of the organisations, qualitative data from the study indicated that the majority were Christian denominations. This was hardly surprising given the high proportion of the Australian population identifying as Christian

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The data from Knight and Gilchrist's research indicated that social engagement was not considered the main activity for faith-based charities under their definition. The percentage of charities that identified social engagement as 'other activity' was significantly greater than those where social engagement was identified as the 'main activity.' This implied that social engagement was a smaller part of the overarching activities of the organisation and may be subject to funding, staff and resource concerns that might affect their engagement. However, larger FBOs feature social engagement and community building as part of their primary functions (Hoffstaedter, 2013, pp. 137-139).

Knight and Gilchrist (2015) found that most of the charities identified in the data were coordinated by volunteers. Fifty per cent of all charities had no paid full-time staff, while a further 26% had between one and four paid full-time staff members. Similarly, 43% of all charities had no paid part-time staff and 30% had between one and four paid part-time staff members (pp. 10-11). This implied that volunteers undertook most of the charitable work. Of the estimated two million Australian volunteers in faith-based charities and organisations, the median number of volunteers per charity was 15 (p. 13). However, larger FBOs, such as Anglicare, report having 11,000 volunteers Australia-wide (Anglicare Australia, 2018, p. 13).

Knight and Gilchrist (2015, p.17) found that each charity, typically, nominated four beneficiaries of their services: the general community (52%), children (54%), young people (41%), and women (36%). They found that charities which identified as having a 'religious' purpose as their main activity were less involved in services to Indigenous populations compared to all charities and were more committed to communities overseas.

Knight and Gilchrist's (2015) research highlights the diversity of faith-based charities in Australia. Aside from the small number of larger charities, most were typically small, had small budgets, and undertook a range of activities in addition to advancing religion. Most faith-based charities were staffed by volunteers and they were more likely to be operating outside of Australia.

The three FBOs chosen for this research reflect the diversity of Australian organisations: *New Family*, *Engage*, and *The Truck*. Each FBO operated in the capital city of an Australian state[2]. *New Family* offered a range of welfare services for refugees and recently

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[2] The city is not identified due to the number and uniqueness of the FBOs involved in this study. The selection of FBOs in this study was delimited by the number of FBOs willing to partner in this research.

arrived immigrants. At the time of the research, there were three paid part-time positions, equivalent in time and remuneration to a one and a half full-time position. *New Family* was predominantly operated by volunteers, was a recipient of government grants, and supplemented their income through monetary donations from an associated church. Food, clothing, and other household items were donated by the public.

Engage was significantly different from *New Family*. Like many Christian charities, much of their activity was conducted overseas through donations and volunteers involved in community and development projects. However, one arm of the organisation was formed to encourage local advocacy and to provide agency in enacting social justice. The facilitator was a part-time employee of *Engage*, with other members volunteering their time and acting independently to meet the goals of the group. *Engage* differed from many FBOs in that their aims shifted according to the needs of other communities in Australia or in developing countries. This group acted to provide financial, volunteer, or spiritual support for these communities from Australian Christian volunteers. During the time of this research, *Engage* was seeking to become involved in reconciliation[3] with Indigenous Australians.

The final FBO studied was *The Truck,* a subsidiary of a Catholic outreach mission. *The Truck* most closely resembled an arm of larger, professional charities. Although the Catholic outreach mission had a wide range of activities, and was involved in many welfare support services, the activities of *The Truck* were directed toward the homeless. Every night, volunteers would prepare and distribute food to the homeless in the central business district of the capital city. *The Truck* had two part-time staff members who were also involved in other activities of this Catholic outreach mission. Many of the volunteers at *The Truck* did not identify as being religious, let alone Christian. The organisational structure, activity and volunteers of each FBO are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six.

1.3 Delimitations

In this section, the delimitations of this thesis are given, and I situate myself within the context of this research. The research presented in this thesis has four areas of focus, as outlined by the research questions.

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[3] Reconciliation is understood in five dimensions – race relations; equality and equity; unity; institutional integrity; and historical acceptance – between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Reconciliation Australia, 2018).

First, this thesis is primarily a sociological study of volunteering. This research seeks to elicit articulated theological concepts and their expression by volunteers in Australian FBOs. Any theologies of engagement that emerge from the data are limited to the activities of the volunteers in each individual FBO. This research does not seek to determine the truth of any religious belief or theological expression. Rather, empirical methods are used to examine how religious beliefs and theological expressions are manifested in the social engagement activities of these three FBOs. Different theological expressions are compared with each other and across FBOs, but none are examined for their accuracy or validity.

Second, the current research is an investigation into volunteer motives in FBOs. Participants in this research were encouraged to describe their motives in relation to their volunteering activities and FBO participation. This research does not seek to make any judgements on the volunteers' motives or any other explanations offered for volunteering. Participant motives and participation were not evaluated.

Third, this research explores what factors shape FBO participation and the relationship-building strategies used in FBOs. The organisational attributes of FBOs are investigated in relation to the perspectives and activities of the individual volunteers. This research neither considers the perspectives of the recipients of FBO services nor measures the success of each FBO.

Fourth, in this research I take a position of a sympathetic atheist observer. Although I do not identify as religious, I have experience of religious life. I was raised in a church environment and have been employed within religiously-affiliated institutions. The insider/outsider challenges of social research involving religious organisations will be elaborated further in section 5.2.

I have undertaken this research from the perspective that theologies are human constructions that can be examined with empirical methods. Theologies can shape individual and collective actions in social life and, conversely, social life can give rise to diverse theological expressions. In this way, I understand that theologies are socially located and can be investigated using social scientific methods.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis investigates the lived experience of volunteering in Australian Christian FBOs by considering the interrelationships of theology, social engagement and the relationships

formed through volunteering. This research investigates individual and group theologies and the relationship of these theologies to individual and collective engagement. The challenges of organisational engagement will be examined by considering factors that enable or constrain activity as volunteers negotiate meanings.

This thesis proceeds as follows: Chapter Two will survey the development and use of frame theory and frame analysis in social research. The origins and evolution of frame theory will be traced by giving attention to how frames were developed within behavioural psychology. Their transition to sociology will then be discussed. The growth of frame theory into frame analysis for social movement organisations will be considered by examining how meaning, engagement, and experience are investigated using frames. The benefits of frame analysis will be discussed and their effectiveness in social research will be reviewed through investigating their use, critiques of frame theory, and responses to these critiques. Finally, it will be argued that organisational culture can be understood using frames by examining the common elements of frames within an organisation.

Chapter Three will build upon the theoretical grounding of frame theory in Chapter Two, to conceptualise and define theological frames. Definitions of theology and directions of theological research will be examined before considering what theological approaches are appropriate for this research. My research is then located within the sociology of religion using resources of practical theology to study contextual theology. The theology in four voices will be outlined and its relationship to ordinary theology described. The use of empirical methods in theological research will be discussed and it will be suggested that empirical research moves theology beyond reductionist approaches to understanding religious praxis. Theological frames will be defined as frames for the theological interpretation of social life. Finally, the use of theological frames in research will be outlined by considering an ethnographic approach to data collection.

Chapter Four will survey the literature related to FBOs and social engagement relevant to this research. FBO typologies will be reviewed and their benefits and limitations will be considered for the current research. Rather than developing another typology for FBOs, it will be argued that the FBOs in the current research can be located within existing typologies. The literature on social engagement with refugees, the homeless, and social justice will then be investigated as a basis of comparison for the three FBOs in the current research. International studies will be considered and, where possible, Australian research will be examined. Literature relevant to religiosity and volunteerism will be considered, as

well as motivations for volunteering. Lastly, as this research is focused on relationships, a brief review of social capital in social research will be given to provide a framework for the data collection.

Chapter Five will outline the research methodology, research methods, and ethical considerations in this research. It will be argued that a mixed-method qualitative approach is most appropriate for this research, building on the ethnographic methodology suggested from Chapter Three. Participant-observation and interview techniques will be outlined in relation to the current research. Finally, ethical considerations in social research will be discussed and applied to the research.

Chapter Six will provide descriptions of the operation, social context, and volunteer base of *New Family*, *Engage* and *The Truck*. These preliminary findings will provide context for the subsequent chapters about each FBO.

Chapters Seven to Nine will provide the research findings from my ethnographic participation in the three FBOs. The activities, collective engagement, and individual engagement of the volunteers will be discussed. Theological frames will be constructed for the Christian volunteers who consented to be interviewed, and the common elements of these frames will be used to suggest a shared culture or theology. Theological frames will be used to analyse individual and social engagement and the challenges of participation in an FBO.

Chapter Ten will compare the findings between each FBO and with the wider academic literature. The appropriateness of the conclusions reached for each FBO will be contrasted with the other FBOs and the implications of the data will be discussed. Finally, the implications of the current research to practical theology will be discussed, including the limitations of the four voices of theology and ordinary theology in the current research.

Chapter Eleven summarises the main findings of this thesis before suggesting areas for future research and the contributions of this research to the sociology of religion and empirical theology.

This thesis contributes to the body of literature on empirical theology, volunteerism, and FBOs in four broad ways. First, this research introduces theological frames for empirical theological research. The data collection, construction, and use of theological frames is outlined, as well as a methodological reflection on their debut in social research. Second, these findings contribute to an understanding of the continued influence of religion and

theology in contemporary Australian society. Third, this thesis provides nuance in understanding evolving Christian expressions. In Australia, church attendance and religion are changing (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018); however, the data do not indicate how these religious expressions have changed. This research provides details about newer expressions of faith that quantitative research is unable to elicit. Fourth, and finally, this thesis contributes to the growing literature on FBOs in Australia as recent research has not, so far, considered newer manifestations of Christian social engagement and the factors that contribute to bridging activities.

CHAPTER TWO – FRAME THEORY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a theoretical grounding for theological frames by surveying the use of frames as a sociological tool. Frames have, typically, gained attention in research into social movements and organisations and they have been used to analyse both individual and group experiences. The origins and use of frames will be examined before explaining how frames may be used to understand group culture.

First, the pioneering work of Bateson (1972) and Goffman (1974) will be reviewed to understand the origins of frame theory and individual frame analysis. Bateson's (1972) definition of psychological frames will be discussed with an emphasis on how frames establish relevance and shape individual interpretative experiences. Then, Goffman's (1974) use of frame theory in sociology will be examined through his revised definition (pp. 10-11) of a frame. Critiques of frame theory will then be outlined before assessing the contribution of frame theory to contemporary sociology.

Second, the extension of frames from the analysis of individual behaviours to group behaviour will be surveyed in relation to the study of social movements. Throughout this chapter, social movements will be understood as one form of collective action – an activity directed towards an objective by one or more individuals. Institutionalised social movements, in contrast, are known as social movement organisations (SMOs) (Snow, Soule and Kriesi, 2004, pp. 6-7).

Third, the use of frame analysis to understand collective action within social movements will be reviewed by examining the work of Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford (1986). They developed frame alignment processes to understand how social movements mobilise participants towards collective action. Their understanding of frame alignment processes shifted the focus towards identifying factors that affected their successful mobilisation, and then to the collective action frames used by social movements to focus, characterise, and give meaning to social events (p. 137).

Fourth, and finally, it will be argued that for SMOs the common elements of individual interpretive frames may be used to understand the culture of an organisation, understood as the ideas, knowledge, tools and products of social action (Hall, Neitz and Battani, 2003, p. 7).

This chapter on the origins and application of frames in social research provides the theoretical underpinnings for the development of theological frames in Chapter Three. Frame theory and analysis form significant parts in sociological texts (Silverman, 2015; Bernard, 2017) and frame concepts continue to provide sociological insights (Vliegenthart and Van Zoonen, 2011). Notably, Snow et al.'s (1986) research on frame alignment processes has been recognised as one of the *American Sociological Review's* 'highest impact papers' (Jacobs, 2007).

2.2 Frames

The concept of a frame in sociological research is largely attributed to the works of Gregory Bateson (1972). The first explicit reference to a frame was made in his collected essays on psychiatry, anthropology, biological evolution, and genetics (Bateson, 1972, p. 169). However, the concepts that would be used in his development of frame theory were present in his earlier socio-cultural study of the Iatmul, an ethnic group in Papua New Guinea (Bateson, 1958). In this work, Bateson (1958) explained the relevance and importance of society, emotion, and thought in shaping individual behaviour. He explained that "every piece of behaviour is relevant: 1) to society as a whole; 2) to the emotions of the individual; and 3) to the thought of the individual, and we have trained ourselves to think separately about each of these forms of relevance" (p. 250). He then suggested five possible concepts to explain individual behaviour – sociological (promoting well-being in community); structural (keeping consistent with traditions or customs), ethological (driving an emotional response); economic (affecting supply or demand); or developmental (psychological or biological) (Bateson, 1958, pp. 250-251). He then went on to argue that each concept may not be emphasised equally despite being a conscious consideration. Eventually, he integrated each of these five concepts into frame theory as a single coherent theory that emphasised the relevance of each concept in shaping action.

Bateson (1972) explicitly defined a psychological frame as one that forms or delimits a set of messages or meaningful actions (p. 192). Frames define symbolic meanings in exchanges between individuals and can be recognised or represented in vocabulary. In this way, frames serve three common functions related to discourse. First, frames specify importance or relevance by drawing attention to, or excluding, particular elements of discourse. Elements of a symbolic exchange can be emphasised or constrained by individual frames. By including one set of symbolic actions or messages, others may be excluded. Conversely, as one set is excluded another may be included. For example, a

psychological frame provides a hierarchy for their interpretation, with priority necessarily given to a particular set of messages or actions. Second, frames provide a premise for interpretation. By evaluating the relevance of discourse or actions, frames establish a premise for mutual understanding between individuals while also allowing extraneous messages to be ignored (p. 193). Third, many individual frames may be applicable within a single social context. One particular frame may be defined by a more expansive frame that governs the kinds of interactions that might take place. Bateson (1972) used a sculpture as an analogy. A sculpture may be interpreted using any number of frames. However, the structural framing context shapes how the sculpture is interpreted. A sculpture or piece of art in a museum or gallery provides one structural frame for an interpretive function, whereas a sculpture found in a junk shop may not necessarily allow the same functionality (p. 194). In his analogy, the social context provided the basis for interpretation. He argued that it was unlikely that a piece shown in a junk shop would be considered for artistic reflection or provide an appropriate context for specialist art critics. An individual's interpretation of artwork – how it is framed – is determined largely by the five concepts suggested by Bateson (1972). Interpretation is shaped by sociological, structural, ethological, economic and developmental considerations. Although he alluded to structural considerations in his analogy, Bateson (1972) could have just as easily focussed on any of the other four concepts.

Soon after Bateson's definition of a psychological frame, Goffman (1974) popularised the use of frames as a sociological tool in his seminal work, *Frame Analysis*. Goffman (1974) drew on Bateson's (1972) work to operationalise the definition of a frame for sociological analysis. Bateson (1972) defined a frame as comprising the elements through which social events were individually and subjectively organised. Similarly, frame analysis was defined by Goffman (1974) as the examination by social scientists of the experiential elements of frames (pp. 10-11). Both Goffman (1974) and Bateson (1972) understood frames as particular to individuals. However, they each emphasised different aspects of human experience in developing frame theory. Bateson formulated frames within the context of language, learning, play, and socio-cultural psychology, whereas Goffman's (1974) frames were formulated to understand how social context shaped lived experience, and the lived experiences of individuals and societies. Despite their differences, both conceptualisations of individual frames by Goffman (1974) and Bateson (1972) shared an assumption that social life, in all its diversity, impacted the construction and reinforcement of frames.

In the early development of frame theory, frames were understood to be shaped by social life, and a consequence of the cognitive processes of those using the frame. Goffman (1974) began his analysis by introducing the concept of a primary framework as a schema of interpretation – the way in which events were identified, understood and, sometimes, acted upon by individuals in different social contexts to make events meaningful (p. 21). The frame was primary in the sense that functionality was achieved without requiring particular messages to be included or excluded, or being dependent on another frame.

Goffman (1974) further refined primary frameworks into natural[4] and social frameworks. Social frameworks are the most pertinent for the study of social movements, volunteering, and mobilisation (Gamson, 1992; Taylor and Whittier, 1995). Social frameworks, as primary frameworks, refer to the ways in which society provides agency to an individual actor through motivations, expectations, values, or cultural norms (Goffman, 1974, p. 22). Goffman (1974) explained that while social frameworks provide agency, they also restrict action through the imposition of social structures. Social frameworks represented a subtle shift in how frames were understood. Rather than being individual or psychological schemas for interpretation, frames were extended to include the social and structural considerations that Bateson (1958) alluded to in his earlier work (pp. 250-251). The sum of the frameworks of individuals within a social group – the collective primary frameworks – offered an understanding of the culture of the social group. Goffman (1974, p. 27) argued that social scientists elicited insight into social life by analysing elements of frameworks such as values, social structures, and belief systems.

However, Goffman's (1974) *Frame Analysis* was not without its critics, and the most prominent of them were Denzin and Keller (1981). Their criticisms were driven by two main arguments: that Goffman (1974) misunderstood many of his primary sources in his formulation; and that his epistemological formulation was unsound. Both of these criticism will be elaborated, and Goffman's contribution to social research will be assessed.

First, in Goffman's (1974) introduction to *Frame Analysis*, he argued that his work contributed to the analysis of social reality (p. 2). He explained that his understanding of social reality followed psychologist and philosopher William James' (1950 [1890]) work on perceptions of reality[5] and multiple realities. Goffman (1974, p. 5) drew upon the social

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[4] Natural frameworks were defined by Goffman (1974) to be due to the physical environment – those frames were largely fixed by 'natural' determinants (e.g. weather, landscape), with no interference by external agency or individual actors (p. 22)

[5] Goffman (1974) noted that "The important thing about reality, he [James] implied, is our sense of realness in contrast to our feeling that some things lack this quality. One can then ask under what conditions such a

phenomenologist Alfred Shutz (Shutz, 1962) to argue that although participation in reality was affected by structural considerations, participation was interpetive and associated with individual cognition. Denzin and Keller (1981, p. 52) argued that Goffman (1974) had misunderstood both James (1950 [1890]) and Schutz (1962) , who argued for a single, absolute reality and, presumably, an absolute interpretive frame. For them, these apparent misunderstandings undermined Goffman's (1974) contribution in *Frame Analysis* (Denzin and Keller, 1981, p. 52).

Second, Denzin and Keller (1981, p.53) argued that *Frame Analysis* had been presented incorrectly within the symbolic interactionist tradition as a way to understand and interpret social interactions. The symbolic interactionist approach was conceptualised by Blumer (1937) and then later formulated by Blumer (1969) on three premises:

> 1) Humans act towards events and objects according to the meanings they have associated with those events and objects;
>
> 2) meanings are derived from social interactions; and
>
> 3) meanings are attributed or modified through an interpretive process.
> (Blumer, 1969, p. 2)

The organisation and interpretation of lived experience using Goffman's formulation of frames aligns with Blumer's (1969) conceptualisation of symbolic interactionism.[6] Denzin and Keller (1981) disagreed, and argued that frame analysis should be understood as a form of structural analysis. That is, how social activity was determined by rules, practices, and behaviours embedded within social structures that give rise to formal and regular interactions. In this structural understanding, any meanings, purposes, intentions, or transformations were processes within the structures and not the individuals (Denzin and Keller, 1981, pp. 53-54). Denzin and Keller (1981) summarised their critique by arguing that given the limited application of frames as an interpretive method, the contribution of *Frame Analysis* was minimal. Even if Goffman's (1974) work was understood as a means for structural analysis, they argued, *Frame Analysis* contributed little to understanding

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feeling is generated" (p. 2). Reality, then, existed in multiples and frames were developed to answer James' question *Under what circumstances do we think things are real?* (James, 1950 [1890], p. 287).
[6] Other scholars (Stryker and Vryan, 2006; Snow, 2001) have situated frame theory with modified symbolic interactionist premises.

social interactions (p. 59). Given these criticisms, Denzin and Keller (1981) concluded that the work of Goffman (1974) offered little to the social sciences.

The use and importance of frame analysis has been defended since Denzin and Keller published their review of *Frame Analysis* and Goffman's (1974) wider contributions. Goffman (1981) replied to the criticisms by Denzin and Keller (1981) methodically within the same issue of *Contemporary Sociology*, defending his use of frames in the organisation of lived experience and cognition. The details of his response will not be given here, particularly since "it is likely to make for tedious reading" (Goffman, 1981, p. 61).

Other scholars have defended *Frame Analysis* and its epistemological assumptions. Snow (2001) located Goffman's (1981) work firmly within the symbolic interactionist tradition in his discussion of Blumer's conceptualisation. He explained that "Goffman's treatment of frames provides concrete amplification and illustration of the way in which meaning and symbolisation can be culturally constrained and embedded" (Snow, 2001, p. 371). He then argued that frames were not – as a structural understanding suggested – static cultural entities, but rather adapted by individuals for unique interpretations and meaning-making (pp. 371-372). Rohlinger and Snow (2006) later described in more detail how the framing perspective was grounded in the symbolic interactionist approach. Frames could be used to analyse how social conditions, events, and artefacts shaped meaning-making and oriented perspectives (p. 516).

Despite Goffman's (1974) formulation of frames and frame analysis nearly fifty years ago, his work continues to be drawn upon in sociology and the study of social movements. His concepts have seen significant use in research and continue to provide insights into language, social movements, interactions between individuals, and collective behaviour (McAdam, 2000; Karagiannis, 2009; Gillan, 2008). In particular, framing has been used in sociological research about mobilisation. For example, 'human rights' have been used as a frame for mobilisation action on AIDS (Johnson, 2006), gender equality (Richards, 2005), racism (Huber, 2009), and disability (Ward and Stewart, 2008). In the next section, framing research on SMOs will be examined with greater depth by considering the development of frame alignment processes (Snow et al., 1986).

2.3 Frames and Social Movements

The development of frames as a tool for social research has shifted from individuals towards organisations and movements. Most of the development and changes in approach to using frames comes from the work of Snow et al. (1986) in social movement research. Their contributions have been significant in this field, as evidenced by the fact that Snow et al.'s (1986) seminal work on frame analysis for social movements is one of the *American Sociological Review's* most cited journal articles (Jacobs, 2005; Jacobs, 2007).

Definitions of social movements have been refined and adapted in the literature since the study of social movements saw increased attention in the 1990s. Benford, Gongaware, and Valadez (2000) described social movements as:

> collective attempts to promote or resist change in a society or group. The degree of change advocated and the level at which changes are pursued vary across all types of social movements, whether religious, political, or student. Some movements clamour for sweeping, revolutionary transformations, whereas others pursue specific moderate reforms. (Benford et al., 2000, p. 2717)

Research on social movements has elicited three key findings: social movements can be constrained or appropriated through structural considerations; the emergence of movements is shaped by shared individual knowledge and activities; and the culture and worldviews of individuals shaped the interpretation and activities of movements (Benford et al., pp. 2719-2720). In contrast, Jasper (2007) offered an alternative approach to studying social movements. He described the difficulties associated with attempting a single definition of a social movement and, instead, focused on understanding the emergence, dynamics, and effects of social movements, and how research methods could address these aspects of social movements (pp. 4451-4457). Rather than providing a single definition, Jasper (2007) directed social researchers towards different stages of the development of social movements (p. 4458). However, for the purpose of my research, social movements will be understood according to Snow et al.'s (2004) description of social movements as a form of collective action. For them, collective action:

> consists of any goal-directed activity engaged in jointly by two or more individuals. It entails the pursuit of a common objective through joint action – that is people working together in some fashion for a variety of reasons, often including the belief

that doing so enhances the prospect of achieving the objective.

(Snow et al., 2004, p. 6)

This definition is practical for social research as it neither differentiates between institutional and non-institutional collective action, nor emphasises sustained, disruptive, or emotional/dramatic action. An institutionalised social movement is, thus, referred to as a social movement organisation (SMO).

Snow et al.'s work on frames differed significantly from earlier work. Where Bateson (1972) defined frames as cognitive processes to organise messages, and Goffman (1974) developed primary frameworks for individuals, Snow et al. (1986) focused their analysis on the frameworks used by SMOs. They shifted the attention by considering two frames for research on SMOs. First, the frame of a SMO used to present or promote a social issue or cause; and second, the frame of a potential participant in the organisation or individual intended for mobilisation (Snow et al.,1986, p. 465). In this case, the individual frames of potential participants were conceptualised according to Goffman's (1974) development and included individual interests, values, or beliefs.

Snow et al. (1986) provided the theoretical grounding for the frame analysis of social movements through frame alignment processes. For them, the frame alignment process was a strategy to align the frameworks of potential participants or individuals intended for mobilisation with the activities, goals or ideologies of an SMO. If the frame alignment process was successful, then the potential participant's frame and the *raison d'etre* of the SMO would be congruent and complementary (p. 464). Throughout their analysis, frame alignment processes referred to how both the frames and the strategies employed by an SMO might be more effective in mobilising participants.

Snow et al. (1986) formulated four frame alignment strategies: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation. Frame bridging was the connection between separate, but ideologically congruent, frames within the context of a particular social issue or problem (p. 467). This often occurred when sympathetic individuals were mobilised by bridging over a shared grievance in the absence of the organisational capacity or resources to act independently. Frame bridging could occur across a range of social contexts: between individuals or organisations, and where individuals or organisations were given agency, such as in social networks, through technology use, or via media access.

Frame amplification was defined as the "clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem, or set of events" (Snow et al., 1986, p. 469). Frame amplification was often needed as particular interpretive frames required increased attention due to the uncertainty, indifference, or ambiguity associated with a cause or situation. These frames could be delineated from extraneous information or clarified in the activities of an organisation. Snow et al. (1986) further refined frame amplification into value amplification and belief amplification. Value amplification was the elevation of values – taken to be modes of conduct or states of existence – that were determined by the organisation as being worthwhile. Once a particular value was identified, by an SMO within a target group for mobilisation, it could be amplified to motivate the group into collective action (p. 469). This differed from belief amplification, which Snow et al. (1986) understood as the amplification of presumed relationships – either between two elements (people, concepts, objects) or between some elements and a characteristic of it.

Snow et al.'s (1986) description of belief amplification was underpinned by their understanding of beliefs as "ideational elements that cognitively support or impede action in pursuit of desired values" (p. 470). They identified five kinds of beliefs that were found to be relevant for social movements: 1) existing beliefs about the gravitas of an issue and the problem of grievance; 2) beliefs regarding causality and blame; 3) beliefs related to specific target groups; 4) beliefs about the efficacy of collective action; and 4) beliefs about "standing up" (p. 470). Frame amplification as a strategy for SMOs was more likely to be successful if the SMO drew attention to the existing beliefs or values of potential participants, who were then mobilised into action concerning a social issue or cause.

Frame extension was described as the processes whereby an SMO extended the boundaries of its primary framework to be more inclusive of potential individuals for mobilisation. The values, interests, and objectives of the SMO could be portrayed – by frame extension – as being similar to that of a wider audience without the audience identifying as members of the SMO (Snow et al., p. 472). By widening the collective pool of participants within the social movement and, potentially, increasing organisational membership, it was possible that the SMO had a better chance of attaining their goals or objectives.

Lastly, frame transformations were described as the process where a set of events, which were considered to be meaningful within a primary framework, were re-interpreted by the

SMO with a different framework so new meanings could be interpreted from the same set of events (p. 474). Snow et al. (1986) explained that since the objective elements of a situation were fixed, new definitions were often required for different interpretations of experiences. They further refined frame transformations into two types – domain specific and global. Domain specific frame transformations – where normative or acceptable domains (taken to mean broad aspects of life such as diet, consumption, leisure, social relationships, and self-perception) – were re-framed by the SMO as problematic or unjust (p. 474). This contrasted to a global transformation, where a single primary framework transcended all others to become the only framework for the interpretation of events and experiences (p. 475). Global transformations by SMOs tended to reduce ambiguity or uncertainty in individuals as frames were given greater clarity. Snow et al. (1986) used religious conversions and immersion in peace activism as examples of global transformations (pp. 475-476).

Frame alignment processes have been used in the study of social movements since Snow et al.'s (1986) seminal paper and continues to provide insights. For example, Rootes (2006) described how *Friends of Earth*, an environmental movement organisation, shaped itself as a proponent of new environmentalism (p. 773). *Friends of Earth* undertook frame bridging using the four frames of 'environmental justice', 'sustainable economies', 'environmental limits' and 'accountability/participation' to gain support from community groups, trade and development organisations, and aid organisations (pp. 778-779). The frames were also used to shape their organisational structure, identity, and strategy. Similarly, Morrison and Isaac (2012) investigated how frames amplified political messages to enact change (p. 69). Frame extensions continue to provide insight into a variety of social movements, such as gender disparities within class activism (Tsarouhas, 2011), collective religious persecution from individual conflicts (Wagemakers, 2008), and national policy on radioactive waste treatment from a local context (Kang and Jang, 2013).

Frame alignment processes continue to provide insights into the changing nature of SMOs that seek to enact social or political changes (Merry, 2009; Tarrow, 2011; Wald and Calhoun-Brown, 2014). Frames have been drawn upon in research, including understanding ideologies and practices (Dreiling and Wolf, 2001), collective identities (Polletta and Jasper, 2001), objectives of organisations (Sell and Prakash, 2004), discourse analysis (Fiss and Hirsch, 2005), mobilising structures (Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2013), and mobilising outcomes (Cress and Snow, 2000).

The use of frames is not limited to secular social movements, such as environmental or advocacy groups. Frames have been extensively drawn upon in researching religious movements and organisations. Frames have been used to understand what is called 'emerging Christianity' (Marti and Ganiel, 2014), church groups and protests (Fitzgerald and Spohn, 2005), and church groups attempting to cross social divides (Lichterman, 2005). Within the sociology of religion, frames have formed part of the research methodology for understanding political culture (Barnes, 2005), Christian ideology (Wolkomir, 2001), Christian 'callings' (Wilson and Hollis-Brusky, 2014), culture and social engagement (Patillo-McCoy, 1998), and the use of discourse and resources in mobilisation (Chang and Kim, 2007).

Thus, the use of frames and frame analysis in social research on Christian organisations is well established. While the studies outlined, above, cover a wide range of social contexts, analysis of their methods and findings show many common elements. The studies suggest that frame analysis can be used to understand three aspects of SMO activities.

First, frame alignment processes can be used to show how SMOs act in response to changing political opportunities and constraints. As social contexts change, the discursive practices used by organisations develop, and frames can be used to gain insight into the changes in strategy employed by SMOs. Second, although frames may be used by SMOs to mobilise participants, they also contribute to appropriating or reinforcing individual and group identities. Just as political and social opportunities may constrain or promote engagement, so too can conceptions of identity. Third, frames have been used to understand normativity within social movement organisations. The frames employed by SMOs have provided a basis for normative behaviours to be followed by members of the SMO and potential participants.

These studies show the scope and usefulness of frame analysis within the study of social movements. They demonstrate how frame alignment processes may be used to understand the structure, activities, and identities of different organisations and the nuanced relationship between the frames and engagement in different social contexts. The four frame alignment processes developed by Snow et al. (1986) help identify the intentions of an SMO to garner support, increase membership, or evoke sympathy for a cause. In the next section, attention will be directed towards how these processes occur.

2.4 Framing Tasks and Collective Action Frames

The success of an organisation in mobilising participants largely depends on the interconnectedness and development of three framing tasks: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing and motivational framing (Snow and Benford, 1988, p. 199). Each framing task may be extended into an overarching collective action frame, which shapes the experiences of participants in an SMO. In this section, framing tasks and collective action frames will be outlined before discussing some criticisms of frame analysis.

Diagnostic framing is the process whereby a problem is identified, then blame or causality is attributed (Snow and Benford, 1988, p. 200). Snow and Benford (1988) noted that the identification of a problem did not cause many difficulties within a SMO. However, the attribution of blame could be problematic, particularly in achieving consensus within an organisation. Diagnostic framing has largely been used in research about how symbolic devices (such as a metaphor, exemplar, catchphrase, depiction, or visual image) can be used to think about an issue (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989, p. 3).

Prognostic framing is the process whereby solutions to identified problems are suggested and strategies, tactics, and targets developed for action (Snow and Benford, 1988, p. 201). Snow and Bedford (1988) were careful to explain that solutions to identified problems may not simply be responses to the attributed cause. Diagnostic and prognostic framings often had a direct correspondence, and this has been reflected in research on framing tasks (Futrell, 2003; Sandberg, 2006; Snow, Vliegenthart and Corrigall-Brown, 2007). Similarly, while diagnostic and prognostic framings identified problems and potentially developed solutions, action was unlikely to occur unless people were mobilised.

Motivational framing was identified as a third framing task, where a 'call to arms' or 'rationale for action' (Snow and Benford, 1988, p. 202) was presented to encourage individuals or organisations to act. Only through motivating individuals to enact change could the framing tasks move beyond diagnosis and prognosis. Snow and Bedford (1988) warned that motivating individuals to act did not necessarily resolve a social concern. Due to the difficulties surrounding attributing blame and causation, developing solutions that resulted in meaningful change would be difficult if the driving force behind those concerns was not agreed upon. Like their earlier work on frame alignment processes, framing tasks have been widely drawn upon in diverse areas of social research (Scheufele, 1999; Schrock Holden and Reid, 2004; Noy, 2009).

Finally, Snow and Benford (1992) turned their attention towards extending framing strategies towards larger contexts as collective action frames (Snow and Benford, 1992, p. 136). The dynamic nature of framing within social movements was reflected in SMO participants:

> [Movement participants] actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers. This productive work may involve the amplification and extension of extant meanings, the transformation of old meanings, and the generation of new meanings. (Snow and Benford, 1992, p. 136)

As an SMO undertook mobilising activities, individuals and other organisations associated with the social movement attributed meanings and signification. Snow and Benford (1992) described the products of this activity as collective action frames. They explained that collective action frames had two characteristics. First, they served to focus and characterise events; and second, they functioned "simultaneously as modes of attribution and articulation" (p. 137). Together, these two characteristics of collective action frames allowed a situation or series of events to be framed as 'unjust' or 'immoral' while also providing direction for engaging in activities to address causes and develop solutions. Collective action frames met both the diagnostic and prognostic tasks required for effective mobilisation within an SMO.

Collective action frames also serve to determine the relevance and attention given to a social issue, state of affairs, or object of orientation. They are used by social researchers to understand the mechanisms, discourses, and transformations that are observed in collective action (Snow, 2004, p. 384). Collective action frames provide a means for the interpretation of experience for participants in social movements. They shape the perceptions of relationships, the language used, and the narratives told in mobilising individuals for collective action. Gamson (1992) used frames to examine media discourse in four areas: government funding for large corporations; race-related affirmative action; nuclear technologies; and the Arab-Israeli conflict. He identified injustice, agency, and identity as three components of collective action frames for political movements (Gamson, 1992, p. 7). For him, the framing tasks of Snow and Benford (1988) were directly related to these three components of collective action frames. Gamson (1992) explained how injustice as a form of moral indignation in a collective action frame was critical for both agency and identity in collective action itself (p. 58). Using data from media texts and focus

groups, he found sympathetic discussion of collective action arose (p. 82) through framing events as unjust or in identification with those suffering (p. 109). He also explained that none of the three components of collective action frames – injustice, agency or identity – existed in isolation. Each was adopted and provided support to the others as collective framing transitioned to collective action. Gamson's (1992) analysis of framing tasks in terms of the components provided clarity to social movement research and has been used in subsequent studies (Reese and Newcombe, 2003; Vicari, 2010; Goss and Heaney, 2010), including religious social movements and issues (Miceli, 2005; Wright, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2009).

The use of frame analysis to study social movements has not been without its critics. Surprisingly, one of the earliest critics was one of the original authors of frame alignment processes (Snow et al., 1986), Robert Benford (1997), who criticised the focus on independent case studies in most framing research. Instead, he called for a more systematic approach to studying social movements with an increased focus on empirical studies with longitudinal data, or studies that showed similarities and differences across movements. Benford (1997) noted that studies in the literature at the time provided meaningful insights into the nature of the social dynamics of movements but, ultimately, failed to elicit *how* collective action frames affected the mobilisation of SMOs (Benford, 1997, pp. 411-412). He argued that research was needed to move beyond the descriptive and to provide greater focus at various levels of engagement. Further, Benford (1997) suggested that the study of collective action frames needed to be expanded. Studies needed to include multi-organisational fields; move beyond nation-state borders; and incorporate longitudinal studies of frames in order to analyse the shifts in the nature and expression of social movements over time (pp. 416 - 417). His criticisms were not directed towards frames as a sociological tool, but toward how frames were being used in social movement research, as evidenced by his extensive involvement in frame theory (Williams and Benford, 2000; Benford, 2005; Snow and Benford, 2005; Benford, 2013).

Another critique of frame analysis noted the ambiguity of the meaning of 'ideology' within framing. Steinberg (1998) described how Snow et al. (1986) did not clarify if ideologies or belief systems contributed to the construction of frames outside the contexts of social movements and, therefore, they failed to resolve whether frames were merely products of ideologies (p. 847). Steinberg (1998), like Benford (1997), criticised the reification of frames in research. Frames were argued to be dynamic but were being represented as static and structural in the literature. Steinberg attributed this problem to being a

consequence of the stability of the discourse associated in framing techniques (Steinberg, 1998, p. 848). Similarly, Steinberg (1998) criticised the 'staying power' of frames – studies that drew upon framing research assumed that the meanings that individuals associated with frames were more ordered and; thus, more likely to endure in social movements. This assumption, he noted, was left untested (p. 850). After outlining his main concerns with framing research, Steinberg (1998) offered a resolution to his criticisms by arguing for an increased focus on discourse (pp. 859-861). Many of Steinberg's criticisms were not directed at frame theory itself but rather toward how the theory was used in research.

Similarly, frame theory was criticised for obfuscating frames and concepts of ideology by Oliver and Johnston (1999, p. 1). They argued that while frame theory and frame analysis were helpful for sociological research, there were fundamental differences between frames and ideology. Frames could largely be thought of as processes, whereas ideology had a focus on content. For them, the concept of frame analysis in social movements was useful in studying the relationship between the organisations and individuals, whereas ideology was most appropriate to understand the origins of the values associated with an organisation (p. 8).

Snow (2004) responded to Oliver and Johnson's critique and acknowledged that while some social movements had ideological dimensions, the description of social movements as "ideologically structured action" (Zald, 2000) was misleading. Snow argued that this conception of social movements and ideology contained four fundamental errors:

> One is the tendency to assume greater ideological coherence and integration that often exists, the second is the tendency to assume greater ideological unity among participants than is often the case, the third is the tendency to assume greater correspondence between ideology and behaviour that is often the case, and the fourth is the tendency to see movement-related framing activity as merely ideologically derived. (Snow, 2004, p. 397)

Johnston (2002) later discussed the challenges in utilising frame and discourse analysis in social research, particularly in data collection and verification of the conclusions drawn from the data analysis and made a range of recommendations for analysis, including greater clarity of definitions in research (p. 85); specified criteria and restraint in the selection of texts for analysis; and greater standardisation in the use of diagrams in presenting data (p. 87). Other scholars have offered criticisms of frame theory, including the neglect of undisclosed power relationships (Carragee and Roefs, 2004); methodology

(Matthes and Kohring, 2008); and neglect of communicative processes in developing theory (Payne, 2001).

Since these criticisms, research in framing has widened in depth and breadth and addressed many of the concerns that have been raised by scholars. In their reflection on the 25th anniversary of frame alignment processes, Snow, Benford, McCammon, Hewitt and Fitzgerald (2014) summarised some of the challenges, developments and future of framing research. First, they. noted that while early research focussed on the structural aspects of movements, recent framing research has seen increased activity in the ideational and discursive elements of social activism (p. 31) and has incorporated methods and methodologies suggested by critics. Second, while the studies drawing upon framing theory were overwhelmingly qualitative, the data sources have expanded significantly. Studies have included activist speech in interviews, leaflets and websites, and other non-activist sources and secondary sources. Snow et al. (2014) noted an increase in research on the causal nature of framing. In response to Benford's (1997) criticism of framing research as being descriptive, static, and reductionist (p. 409), researchers had begun to more strongly relate frames to theory in social movement research. Research had shown frames as dependent and independent variables, particularly through empirical studies on political and economic outcomes, movement mobilisation, cultural themes, political opportunities, collective identity and dynamic interactions (Snow et al., 2014, pp. 33-34). These researchers summarised their response to critics by noting that many of the early criticisms had been addressed, particularly the effect of political and cultural influence on social movement framing (p. 36). Finally, Snow et al. (2014) noted that recent research has addressed the "simultaneous difficulty *and* importance of creating and sustaining shared perspectives among participants who vary so widely in their life experiences, social locations, identities and priorities" (p. 37).

The framing approach has been drawn upon widely in sociology and continues to elicit insights into the nature, experience, and effectiveness of social movements and SMOs. As noted, above, frames are firmly located within the symbolic interactionist perspective, which holds that meanings arise through interpretive processes. Frames offer a way to identify those processes (Snow, 2004, p. 384). The framing approach is successful in understanding how social movements identify grievances, negotiate senses of identity, and adjust to dynamic social and political contexts (Rohlinger and Snow, 2006, p. 517). The advantages that the framing approach provides makes frame analysis relevant for the study of social movements and organisations and appropriate for this research.

2.5 Frames and Culture

The framing perspective has been used to understand interpretive processes that occur when individuals attach meaning to social contexts, events, experiences, and objects. In this section, I will argue that frames can also be used to understand culture through an analysis of the relationships that are developed through interpretive processes and the appropriation of cultural expressions.

First, use of the term 'culture' must be clarified. A strict definition of culture can be challenging as there is a danger in reifying culture into an object – one that encapsulates a social reality to the exclusion of the nuanced processes and dynamic nature of culture. Instead, several approaches will be discussed before using the inclusive definition of culture developed by Hall et al. (2003).

Swidler (1986) described culture as "symbolic vehicles of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms, and ceremonies, as well as informal cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories, and rituals of daily life" (p. 273). The symbolic forms she described were the means through which behaviours and processes occurred. This definition provided a model for understanding how culture affected the organisation, appropriation, and the construction of behavioural patterns (p. 278). She later focussed on approaches to cultural studies rather than attempting to define culture. Swidler (1995) explained that studies of culture were best approached by considering codes[7], contexts, and institutions (pp. 274-279). Spillman (2002) explained that definitions of culture were diverse across different fields and here was not a singular definition of culture. Instead, she described a range of perspectives and explained that the diversity of definitions across disciplines more often indicated the breadth of methodological approaches rather than insights into culture itself. She described culture in three ways – as features of entire groups and societies; as separate realms of human expression; and as meaning-making (pp. 2-4). Although her work has merit, it lacked the coherence and pragmatism needed for social research.

For this research, Hall et al.'s (2003) definition will be used. They described culture in three ways: 1) the (correct, wrong or unverified) ideas, knowledge, and processes for undertaking action; 2) human tools in social life; and 3) products of social interactions that occur the conduct of social life (p. 7). Their approach to culture is inclusive of both material

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[7] Swidler (1995) describes codes as "deeply held, inescapable relationships of meaning that define the possibilities of utterance in a cultural universe" (p. 32).

and symbolic elements. Therefore, the discursive and structural components of social life can be considered as well, and cultural objects, which may shape how behaviour is appropriated, reinforced and constrained. Hall et al.'s (2003) material and symbolic definition of culture in social life also showed the interdependence of material and ideal culture (p. 8) that other definitions sometimes lacked.

In social research, primary frameworks elicit insights into culture. Here, a clear distinction between frameworks and culture will be given using Hall et al.'s (2003) inclusive definition. Primary frameworks are used in social life to "locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences" (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). The occurrences/times that he referred to comprised material and symbolic representations of culture. His work suggests that culture partly shapes frameworks and that meaning may be found through the alignment of cultural elements as well as individual and collective interpretive frames. It follows, then, that as culture shapes frameworks, the frameworks themselves reflect aspects of culture. Thus, the common elements of individual and collective frameworks within a social movement organisation can reflect a shared culture among participants or members of a group or organisation.

Goffman (1974) concluded his work by suggesting that frameworks, and the overlap of different frameworks, provided a way of understanding relationships (p. 561), given that social contexts, objects, social processes, and other actors shaped frames as an interpretive process. Further, frameworks could be used beyond understanding social interactions to include how frames appropriate cultural expressions through representations of cultural elements (p. 562). Goffman described how everyday life can be the reproduction of values embodied in myth, film, religious texts, or the media. The frames of individuals or groups within a particular social context provide an understanding of the world and lived experience of those individuals. Lastly, frames – and the relationships, social structures and interactions that follow – provide a way for scholars to assess implicit assumptions found in ordinary activity (p. 568). The symbolic meaning of words and action between individuals or groups could be framed to exert influence or power, appropriate culture, or enact change (p. 570). Frames and culture are necessarily intertwined: culture shapes frames and framing activities which, in turn, appropriate those cultural expressions.

Similarly, Fine (1995) argued that the framing activities of a social movement provided insight into its shared culture. He described how the success of an organisation – the

effectiveness of the frame alignment processes – was shaped by the *narrative fidelity* of framing activities (p. 134). The narrative fidelity of framing activities refers to the alignment of the central ideas and meanings – particularly concerning belief systems, ideologies, myths and folktales – between the frame offered by an SMO and potential participants (Snow and Benford, 1992, p. 141). For Fine (1995), the culture and framing activities of a social movement are intertwined, as:

> the process of exemplifying a frame occurs through the stories that members share, through the collective bundle of narratives that are treated as relevant to the movement ideology. The dramatic images provided by these stories, incorporated into group culture, provide a legitimated basis of community and collective action. (Fine, 1995, p. 134)

Narrative fidelity can, therefore, be an indicator of both the success and culture of a movement.

Similarly, the purpose of SMOs can be understood by analysing the common elements of the frames of SMO participants (McAdam, 2000). McAdam (p. 153) described how the framing activities of an SMO both legitimated and motivated organisational activity. In a similar way to Fine's (1995) description of the success of a social movement depending on the narrative fidelity of the framing activities, McAdam (2000) argued that the cultural resonance between the frames of the SMO and the potential participants also shaped the success of an SMO. Framing activities, he argued, could be considered as acts of cultural appropriation by the SMO for mobilisation (p. 255).

McAdam (2000) further described the dynamic nature of social movements. After an SMO emerges, the culture of the organisation adjusts due to changes in political opportunities, participants within the organisation, and phases of collective action. The framing activities of a movement change and develop with the shifting culture of the SMO. As the social locus and perceived effectiveness of the dominant core of a social movement changes, so too does the culture and activities of the organisation. It is rare for the original culture, objectives, and activities of an SMO to be retained throughout its lifetime (pp. 260-262). Thus, the interpretive frames of the participants within an SMO provide insights into the interpretive processes and culture appropriated through organisational activities at a particular time.

More recently, Van Gorp (2007) presented a similar argument to link culture and framing activities. He argued that as an organisation became engaged in framing activities, they did so from within a cultural context. Since the organisation was necessarily immersed within the culture, any activities undertaken would be indicative of that cultural context – even if elements of the culture were not referred to explicitly (p. 62). Cultural phenomena were then appropriated through the activities of an organisation and this contributed to the social reality constructed (p. 73). Similarly, Stolte and Fender (2007) described the interrelation between culture and frames. They proposed that potential participants internalised the frameworks (of an SMO, organisation, media, etc.) simply by being embedded and socialising within the cultural contexts of the SMOs (p. 60).

Social situations were framed using cultural cues, such as elements of language, narratives, and symbols (pp. 61-63) and each of those elements were reflective of the cultural context.

The studies and positions argued by the framing theorists, above, indicate that framing activities and culture are strongly interrelated. This has been argued in three ways. First, the common elements of individual frames of participants within a social movement (including organisations) reflect the culture of the social movement (Goffman, 1974; McAdam, 2000). Culture is embedded within the common elements which provide insight into the social relationships, lived experience, and social structures within an organisation (Hall et al., 2003).

Second, the framing activities of an organisation are more successful if the frames invoked have stronger cultural resonance and narrative fidelity (Fine, 1995, p. 134). Both of these factors can result in greater cultural appropriation. If an organisation undertakes framing activities, which appeal to potential participants' sense of ideology, belief, or meaning-making, then the organisation promotes interpretive processes that reflect both individual and organisational culture (Snow and Benford, 1992, p. 137-138).

Third and, finally, the frames used by individuals and groups emerge from a cultural context (Van Gorp, 2007, p. 62). As a frame is used to establish a social reality, the language, narratives, and symbols in the frame reflect elements the cultural context at that particular time. Even if these elements are not referred to explicitly, they are embedded with the framing activities of an organisation and may be used to understand the culture from which the frame originated. (Stolte and Fender, 2007, p. 60).

2.6 Summary

Frame theory has contributed much to sociology for over forty years. The early frame analysis by Bateson (1972) and Goffman (1974) focused on the psychological and cognitive processes involved in framing activities. Their theories gave social scientists a method for studying how interactions were organised and changed, and how different social and structural forces shaped individual behaviour. Their work is particularly relevant for my research as frame theory helps to address the objectives of this research – to understand what motivates volunteers to become involved with Christian faith-based organisations, and how volunteers understand their participation. Frame theory provides insight into motives for volunteering and volunteer activities in FBOs.

The work of Snow et al. (1986), Snow and Benford (1988), and Gamson (1992) was drawn upon to understand how framing activities shaped collection action. In their seminal work, Snow et al. (1986) focused on how the success of SMOs largely depended on frame alignment processes. For an organisation to be successful in attracting new recruits, or mobilising current members into collective action, one of the alignment processes – frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension or frame transformation – was needed. The success frame alignment processes were due to three framing tasks (Snow and Benford, 1988) – diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing. Frame alignment processes and collective action frames extended the use of frames from individuals to include social movements and organisations seeking to enact social change. This theme was elaborated by Gamson (1992) who interpreted these tasks as related to the themes of injustice, agency, and identity. Framing activities and the collection action frames also are pertinent to one of the aims of this research – to identify factors that promote or constrain collective bridging activities or participation in faith-based organisations. The frames of individual volunteers can be used to understand the meaning-making that occurs in FBOs and the bridging attempts of volunteers and recipients of their services.

Despite some early criticisms, the advantages of using frame theory are well established and have been used to study a wide variety of social movements, SMOs, religious movements, and political debates. The success of frame theory and frame analysis relates to one of the great strengths of frame theory – that it has the means to understand the culture of an organisation both through the individual members and the activities undertaken by the group. Frames and culture are interrelated, and frames may be used to understand the culture of a group through individual frames within an organisation; cultural resonance and narrative fidelity of the framing activities; and the language, symbols, and

narratives employed by an organisation. Each cultural element identified through framing research formed an important element of my research – understanding how theological concepts are expressed and manifested within social engagement.

However, for the study of religious groups and movements, frame theory is not without its disadvantages. Despite frame theory having a long history and connection to the study of religious movements and organisations, there are some important aspects of religious life that have been neglected by frame theorists. In the next chapter, attention will be turned towards theology, and how frame theory may provide a means to better understand Christian SMOs. The effect of theology on shaping individual attitudes, collective identity, and social engagement will be given the attention needed to obtain a more complete understanding of religious organisations seeking to bring about social change.

CHAPTER THREE – THEOLOGICAL FRAMES[8]

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, theological frames will be introduced for research within the sociology of religion. Here, theological frames are conceptualised and developed by considering the significance of social context, differentiating theological influences using the theology in four voices (Cameron, Bhatti, Duce, Sweeney and Watkins, 2010), and the use of ethnographic research methods for collecting theological data.

This chapter will proceed in the following way: First, the diversity of theology as an academic discipline will be outlined. It will be argued that theology in the current research is best understood as inter-disciplinary practical theology. Practical theology addresses how theological beliefs, values, and practices are embodied in the lives of individuals and communities (Miller-McLemore, 2012, pp. 103-104). In particular, my research directs attention to ways in which formative faith experiences shape the contemporary experiences of socially engaged Christians. Hence, the current research is a sociological study of embodied contextual theologies (Bevans, 2002, p. 70) in FBOs. This section will conclude with an outline of theological reflection in social research.

Second, it will be argued that Cameron et al.'s (2010) theology in four voices offers a nuanced understanding of theology beyond the conceptions of lived religion as beliefs and values. The voices of operant theology, espoused theology, normative theology, and formal theology will be described and their use in recent research will be discussed. The use of the four voices of theology will be examined in the context of ordinary theology – the theological beliefs and practices of those who have not undertaken scholarly theological education (Astley, 2002, p. 1). Ordinary theology will be argued to be most closely aligned with the espoused and operant theologies of the four voices. The relevance of ordinary theology in theological research will be discussed, particularly for understanding the theology of socially-engaged Christians involved in FBOs.

Third, ethnographic methods will be argued to be most appropriate for collecting theological data in relation to this project. I will argue that ethnographic methods are necessary for an inductive and deductive approach to understanding contextual theologies. Ethnographic methods provide a means to differentiate seemingly similar and

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[8] An earlier version of this research was published in: Smith, M. (2018). Theological Frames for Social Research. *Journal of Empirical Theology*, *31*(1), 71-92.

geographically proximate religious organisations and to provide insight into the role of social context in the development of theology. In addition, ethnographic methods allow an examination of the Christian and non-Christian influences on theology and they are essential for understanding human experiences of God, as the material object of practical theology.

Fourth, and finally, theological frames are introduced for social research and practical theology. Theological frames are defined as a framework for the theological interpretation of social life and are offered in this thesis, as a new approach for research about lived religion, to analyse theological data. I will argue that theological frames can be used to identify theological elements embedded in culture and to provide insight into the structure and relationships within Christian FBOs and SMOs. Theological frames provide ways to understand the social and theological roots of Christian FBOs and SMOs and to move theological considerations beyond the 'beliefs and values' approach seen in existing frame theory. The section will conclude by outlining a method for constructing theological frames.

3.2 Theology

Theology is a varied academic discipline containing many sub-disciplines with different research approaches. In this section, an overview of theological inquiry will be given before arguing that inter-disciplinary practical theological methods are most appropriate for the current research. Further, authentic theologies are constructed by giving attention to the contextual elements of practical theology, and incorporating theological reflection and lived experience into research on Christian SMOs and FBOs. A contextual theological approach is inclusive of collective and individual experiences, social context, and the experiences of social change.

Theological inquiry draws attention to different aspects of the Christian faith, such as Biblical analysis, church teachings and traditions, language, contextual practices, and transformative experiences (Thomas and Wondra, 2002, pp. 2-4). Migliore's (2014) systematic approach separates theology into four different branches: Biblical, historical, philosophical, and practical. Each branch covers various aspects of Christian life and is subject to theological reflection guided by the following four questions:

1. Are the proclamation and practices of the community of faith true to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, as attested in Scripture?

2. Do the proclamation and practices of the community of faith give adequate expression to the whole truth of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ?

3. Do the proclamation and practices of the community of faith represent the God of Jesus Christ as a living reality in the present context?

4. Does the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ by the community of faith lead to transforming practices in personal and social life? (Migliore, 2014, pp. 24-27)

These questions direct attention to the meanings and expressions of religious life; communities of faith and relationships; coherence; Christocentric narratives; social justice; and ever-changing social contexts.

Another systematic approach to theology draws attention to the study of elements of the Christian faith (referred to as Christian ideas) and includes Biblical hermeneutics, Christian traditions, reason, and experience. This systematic approach emphasises four key areas: the sources; development; coherence; and the application of theology (McGrath, 2016, p. 85). Similarly, a hermeneutic approach to theology draws attention to human experiences of God. In this approach, theology is understood as a discipline to understand the relationship between God and humanity, particularly with respect to God's redemptive work in the world (Erikson, 1998, p. 22). Here, human experiences of God refer to the balance between Scripture and Christian practices. Heitink (1999) argues that the human experiences of God suggest that:

The object of Christian theology, of theology as the science of divinity, is therefore the Christian faith as we know it through its: 1) sources; 2), through its traditions; 3) in its past; and 4) present manifestations of belief (Heitink, 1999, p. 111).

In contrast, practical theology[9] has a stronger focus on culture and the importance of language when undertaking theological reflection (Long, 2008, p. 5). The practical theological approach was formulated by Tracy (1983) as "the discipline that articulates mutually critical co-relations between the meaning and truth of an interpretation of the Christian fact and the meaning and truth of an interpretation of the contemporary situation" (p. 62). This definition directs attention towards the interactions between social context and various interpretations of Christian traditions (p. 63). Practical theology has a stronger emphasis on reflecting the intersection of culture, tradition, and Scripture, across different

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[9] Here practical theology is used interchangeably with empirical theology, following van der Ven's (1988) argument that "[since] the object of practical theology is not biblical or historical, but present religious praxis, empirical methods and techniques are at stake. From this perspective, practical theology is empirical theology in the strict sense of the word" (p. 14).

social contexts (Pears, 2009, p. 49). Thus, practical theology is "the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society" (Heitink, 1999, p. 6) – it is a way of 'doing' theology (p. 106). Practical theology has been further refined into four distinct areas: as a discipline; activity of faith; method; and curriculum area (Miller-McLemore, 2012, p. 100). For her,

> *Practical theology* is a term used in Christian theology for a general way of doing theology concerned with the embodiment of religious belief in the day-to-day lives of individuals and communities. Its subject matter is often described through generic words that suggest movement in time and space, such as *action*, *practice*, *praxis*, *experience*, *situation*, *event*, and *performance*. Its subject is also associated with action-oriented words, such as *formation*, *transformation*, *discipleship*, *witness*, *ministry*, and *public mission*. In its focus on concrete instances of religious life, its object is both to understand and to influence wisdom or faith in action.
> (Miller-McLemore, 2012, p. 103)

Practical theology as an empirical discipline has been largely shaped by the disciplinary boundaries formulated by Johannes van der Ven (practical theology as *intra-disciplinary*) and Leslie Francis (practical theology as *inter-disciplinary*) (Cartledge, 1999, pp. 98-100). Both approaches draw on social scientific methods to collect empirical data on human experience, which forms the foundation for developing theological theory (Heitink, 1999, p. 7). However, each approach differs in the purpose of empirical research and how social scientific methods are used. These differences stem from how the formal and material objects of theology are understood in each approach.

The intra-disciplinary approach prioritises the fundamentally theological nature of practical theology. For empirical research, this means that theological methodologies ought to be used within the social sciences to understand the formal object of theology – the dialectical relationship between religious praxis and what it should be (van der Ven, 1988, p. 18). In this approach, practical theology could only be fully realised if theology was integrated into all aspects of the empirical disciplines. The material object of theology was religious praxis, which can be described and analysed using empirical data. Van der Ven (1988) described that religious praxis is understood as three aspects of religious action. First, religious action is the *human actions* of individuals or groups, including perceptions, attitudes, motivations, and behaviours of believers. Second, religious action refers to the *interactions* between individuals and groups – interactions that are largely grounded in

discourse and communication. Third, and finally, religious action is the *advance of human action* - the outer and inner conditions of religious praxis, which could be technical, hermeneutical or transformational (p. 16). Van der Ven concluded by arguing that the material object of theology, in a broader sense, could be described in terms of religious praxis while a narrower definition referred to the pastoral role in developing the conditions for religious praxis (p. 17).

The inter-disciplinary approach to empirical theology is distinguished from the intra-disciplinary approach by prioritising the variations of human experience within different social contexts. In this approach, practical theology emerges from engagement and reflection on the religious experience of different traditions and communities (Francis, 2002, p. 37). The formal and material objects of theology differ significantly in this approach. For the inter-disciplinary approach, the material object of theology is bound up in human experience, while the formal object is the nature of God understood through human experience. For Francis (p. 38), the divine could only be understood through examining human experience and, thus, necessitated tools from other disciplines.

Francis (2002) offers two arguments to support practical theology as inter-disciplinary. First, the problems, perspectives, and observations of concern to practical theologians were often found using data from other disciplines, such as the historical, sociological, and psychological sciences. The methods and methodologies of other disciplines need to be drawn upon to adequately research and address issues concerning theology, and to investigate social change (p. 44). Second, the work of practical theologians needs to be subject to the same scrutiny and peer review as other disciplines. When using an inter-disciplinary approach, the best research in empirical theology should also be reflected in the social sciences (p. 39). Here, I will apply two arguments that support the inter-disciplinary approach as they relate to my research.

First, the inter-disciplinary approach aligns with the purpose of this research – to understand the experiences of volunteers within Christian FBOs. Volunteers in the current research might not identify as members of a Christian denomination or go church at all. Therefore, an approach to data collection is needed that is inclusive of the varieties of religious experiences and theologies of volunteers outside of a congregational environment. Further, an approach is needed that is sensitive to the human experiences of social engagement. My research addresses both the theological significance attributed to social engagement and the experiences of volunteering/activism that are essential to

participation in FBOs. Importantly, it is necessary to examine the social contexts of religious praxis (Sider, Olson and Unruh, 2002, p. 86; Clarke, 2006, p. 840) to understand the volunteers' lived religious experience in my research. This suggests that an inter-disciplinary approach is most appropriate as the theological influences acting on volunteers cannot be presumed when collecting empirical data. This position is supported by recent scholarly work by Schweitzer (2014) that argued that research on praxis needed to extend beyond the church, traditional teaching, and institutional preaching, and shift the focus from professional pastors to everyday Christian believers (p. 146). This is certainly the trajectory of this current research.

Second, the inter-disciplinary approach provides methods appropriate to understand the motivations, espoused theologies, and discourse on the experiences of volunteers. My research requires empirical methods that make meaningful comparisons between volunteers across each FBO. Such an approach requires consideration of how theology is expressed, described, and transformed in different social contexts. This position found support in Ganzevoort (2004), who argued that theology had three loci centred around the understanding of theological discourse as 'speaking of God' through the Bible, religious belief systems and the praxis of lived faith (p. 56). Each locus requires different approaches, typically, using hermeneutical, interpretive methods or empirical methods, depending on the data collected. The reading, interpretation, and relevance of Scripture in a contemporary social context provides insight into the content and form of discourse, whereas the expression of discourse would be determined through empirical methods (p. 54). Both need to be considered to understand theological influence in Christian social engagement. In particular, as Ganzevoort (2004) argued:

> Practical theology finds its primary locus of first order constructions in the praxis. The inter-disciplinary study of praxis involves academic dialogue with other sciences studying human praxis. The intersection of theological and social scientific approaches forms the primary locus of dialogue for practical theology. Practical theology may investigate ideas and texts as well (even canonical ideas and texts), but they are studied as elements of human praxis. (p. 55)

Taken together, these arguments align with Francis' (2002) delineation of the formal and material objects of theology. The purpose of my research is to investigate the material objects of theology – the human experiences of Christian volunteers in FBOs.

Sociological research on human experience and praxis presents challenges that can be overcome by using the resources of contextual theology and theological reflection. One of the challenges lies in balancing the activity of believers with the production of disciplinary knowledge (Miller-McLemore, 2012). Theologies may be embodied by believers who cannot articulate a coherent theology of practice. The theological significance attributed to engagement is difficult to examine without the participants' ability to articulate precepts for action. In contrast, within the sociology of religion, researchers seek to understand the relationships between belief and practice using methods of the social sciences and literature alongside religious sources, such as Scripture, history, and tradition (p. 109). Each of these elements may be addressed through Bevans' (2002) contextual theology, which incorporates both faith experiences of the past (recorded in Scriptures and expressed in tradition) and experiences of the present (p. 5).

Bevans (2018) argued that contextual theology is not understood as a theological discipline but is, instead, a perspective and method used to construct theologies (p. 44). For contextual theology to be authentic it needs to be mediated by individual and collective experience. The context of theology needs to be inclusive of individual and group experiences; culture; social location; and the reality of social change (Bevans, 2002, pp. 5-6). He suggested six models of contextual theology but only the praxis model will be considered. It is important to note that only the praxis model of contextual theology is understood as practical theology. As Bevans (2018) explained:

> Of the six models that I propose in *Models of Contextual Theology*, the only one that is completely a practical theology is the "praxis model." Based on the idea that the best knowledge is achieved by doing and that by conforming our actions to what we know we open ourselves up for deeper and wider knowledge (and therefore more faithful and effective practice), this model makes use of a "pastoral circle" with the goal of "savvy action" or "reflected-upon practice." (Bevans, 2018, p. 42)

The praxis model of contextual theology is concerned with embodied theology in the context of social change and is underpinned by an assumption that theology may be developed for, and within, particular social contexts. As Bevans (2002) noted:

> When we speak of the praxis model of contextual theology, we are speaking about a model the central insight of which is that theology is done not simply by providing relevant expressions of Christian faith but also by commitment to Christian action.

But even more than this theology is understood as the product of the continual dialogue of these two aspects of Christian life. (p. 72)

The theology that emerges from research data is neither abstract nor aloof, but a contextual activity involving encounters with God – a theology that is lived (Bevans, 2002, pp. 74-75). Hence, the praxis model of contextual practical theology offers a nuanced understanding of the significance of theology in human experience. However, any contextual theology is not simply a description of lived experience. Contextual theology needs to incorporate theological reflection, a term that is often subjective or ambiguous in theological research (Woodward, Pattison and Pattison, 2000, p. 136).

Theological reflection can be understood as an exploration of the intersection between Christian tradition and experience (Killen and de Beer, 1994, p. 57-60). The meaning, value, and purpose of human experience directs attention to God's purpose, interaction, and presence in human lives. The question of living faithfully requires reflection on truth and meaning with respect to God, Scripture, and Christian tradition (p. 18). Theological reflection can be achieved through focusing on an aspect of experience; describing the experience; exploring the experience by drawing on Christian tradition; and using the exploration to identify truth and meaning (pp. 68-69).

Theological reflection can form a significant element of research in the sociology of religion. Thompson and Pattison (2005) noted that:

Theological reflection is of pivotal significance in the entire field of practical theology, since it provides both the means by which a dialogue between practical and academic theology can take place and, perhaps even more vitally the link between the theory of practical theology and the experience of practitioners in the field. (Thompson and Pattison, 2005, p. 8)

Researchers are both 'doing' the theology and facilitating participants' reflection on socially transformative praxis. Graham, Walton, and Ward (2005) offered advice in their work on methods of theological reflection. They described six models of theological reflection that are most pertinent to this research:

1) Constructive Narrative Theology: stories constructed to emphasise significant elements of individual human experience. Narratives serve to understand how Christians shape identities and give meaning to encounters with God (p. 47).

2) Canonical Narrative Theology: the relationship between the story of Jesus, contemporary believers, and their social context. The model has a focus on how Christians embody God's story through the life of Jesus (pp. 78-79).

3) Corporate Theological Reflection: examination of community identity through narratives, symbolic practices, metaphors, and activities. Theological reflection helps us understand how communities engage with culture or nurture a distinctive identity in their social context (pp. 109-111).

4) Correlation: theological engagement with contemporary culture. This has a focus on the exchange of ideas and debates between the Christian tradition and different cultural values, disciplines, and worldviews (p. 138).

5) Praxis: how theological understandings are necessarily associated with practical engagement. This method draws attention to theological imperatives towards social injustice and discipleship in actions (pp. 170-172).

6) Local Theologies: the specific forms of the Christian gospel across cultures, times, and geographies. In particular, how theological concepts are expressed through symbols and language across movements and traditions (p. 200).

Each model directs attention to the varieties of lived experience and is inclusive of the potential diversity of theologies that this research requires.

Contextual theology and the models of theological reflection provide a suitable basis for sociological research on practical theology. Both approaches give appropriate attention to the social significance of theology and the nuances of embodied theology within lived religion. Importantly, the inter-disciplinary practical theological approach directs attention to collecting theological data for analysis on lived experience and theological reflection. In the next section, the theology in four voices will be outlined to delineate theological influences and expressions in social life and to examine ordinary theology.

3.3 Theology in Four Voices and Ordinary Theology

The inter-disciplinary practical theological approach directs attention to the main concerns of this research: to understand meaning and expression in religious life; communities of faith and relationships; social justice; and ever-changing social contexts. However, theologies that emerge from sociological research are also products of experience, reflection, culture, discourse, and social and organisational contexts. This generates the question of how to relate theology and practice. In this section, theological influences will be differentiated using the theology in four voices. The four voices will, then, be applied to the study of ordinary theology – the contextual theology found in the words and actions of Christians without a scholarly theological education. (Astley, 2002, p. 1)

Theology in four voices was the culmination of four years of research to find better ways of relating theology and practice (Cameron et al., 2010, p. 1). This approach stemmed from two observations of Cameron et al. (2010) First, the verbal discourse on God and religious experience had shifted towards the margins of society. Second, the difficulty in using theology to explore Christian practice (p. 5). They began their analysis by observing the relegation of theology as a medieval throwback, even among church goers, where they noted that:

> The preoccupations of committed church people – about, for example, spirituality and/or social justice – come in their own characteristic modes. In spirituality, the mode is 'expressive' rather than analytical. Social justice agencies rely on the socio-economic disciplines rather than the theological. Parents, teachers and clergy fret about the irreligion of the young, and look for effective ways of handing on the gospel truth. Critical theological enquiry might not serve their purpose.
> (Cameron et al., 2010, p. 9)

Theology, at least in speech, had been de-emphasised as secularisation drove social change and increasing attention was given to expressive Christian practice (Cameron et al., 2010, p. 10). Practical theology is best positioned to examine these shifts by drawing on inter-disciplinary research methods from the social sciences and by directing attention to personal experiences and practices, Christian Scripture and tradition, and theological reflection (pp. 22-29). Theological action research – a model grounded in reflection, experience, learning, and action (pp. 49-51) – was offered to understand the connectedness between theology and human experience. Cameron et al. (2010) described how theology must be understood both explicitly and implicitly in Christian

practice. They embedded this perspective in their model of theology in four voices, comprising operant theology, espoused theology, normative theology and formal theology (pp. 53-56). Each of these will be described in turn.

Operant theology is the faith manifested in the words and actions of believers. It is the theology embedded within the practices of a group or individual (p. 14) and the embodiment of faith and action into purpose (p. 54). Espoused theology refers to the articulated theology of the practitioners that arises from reflection and faith awareness. Espoused theology does not have a single source and can be drawn from Biblical passages, church traditions and culture or theological movements (p. 53). Normative theology is an identifying or authoritative theology of a group or denomination. The authoritarian nature of normative theology can significantly influence the operant and espoused theologies of individuals within a group as it often functions to inform and correct praxis (p. 54). Finally, formal theology is that practised by academic or professional theologians. Although formal theology requires a critical examination of theology from the perspectives of historical context and philosophical disciplines, aspects of formal theology can be found within espoused and normative theologies (p. 55).

The four voices may be found verbally or non-verbally in the speech of individuals; choice of written discourse; and through actions and expressions (Cameron et al., 2010, p. 57). They also noted that the four voices were interrelated as each individual voice contained elements of the other three. They warned that if researchers attempted to isolate one of the voices the result would be a less cohesive theological expression (p. 54).

The theology in four voices approach has been used in a variety of theological studies. Three examples from the literature will be used to demonstrate how the four voices can be used to understand both how theologies are implicit within practices and how the voices direct engagement. One of its authors, Catherine Duce (Duce, 2013), analysed the practice of hospitality by an ecumenical group as they provided shelter, food, and services to homeless people. Her analysis focused on the relationships between each of the four voices. She found that in showing hospitality – where belief was lived out by practitioners – authentic and transformative encounters occurred through community, conversation, and shared experience. Another of the authors, Clare Watkins, studied a *Messy Church* (Watkins and Shepherd, 2014) and focused on operant and espoused theologies. They found that the members of *Messy Church* had an espoused theology "to an unknown God" (p. 99) and that their church was a place where "God could be encountered" (p. 100) if the

congregants were prepared to look. They also found that the members' operant theology of Christian community was largely devoid of anything to do with Jesus within their church community (p. 103). Instead, the congregation focused on hospitality and offered an open, seeking community of grace (p.110). Lastly, another of the authors, Helen Cameron (Cameron, 2012), discussed the four voices of theology within the context of FBOs, using The Salvation Army as an example. She noted that "the activist nature of The Salvation Army needs to be complemented by a more reflective mode that engages with doctrine and scripture and produces an espoused voice which while being provisional articulates the theological rationale for the organisation's work" (Cameron, 2012, p. 4). An espoused theology of engagement was developed that was inclusive, compassionate, practical, and encouraged well-being (p. 5). Although these findings are not necessarily relevant to this research, they show how expressions of shared theologies within Christian groups are implicit within their practices. Each study suggested that the theological expressions were not formally articulated within any supporting documents of the groups but were products of practical theological research.

The theology in four voices approach provides a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of theological influences in lived religion by clearly delineating how contextual theology shapes, and is shaped by, social context and culture. This approach offers researchers a structure to investigate how the experiences of past (including Biblical interpretation, preserved and defended Church traditions, and historical practices) intersect the experiences of the present (such as social location, culture, personal and communal experience, language, and social change). For my research, the four voices of theology are well-positioned to develop theological reflections on practice. The activities of volunteers in FBOs can be shaped by churches (either the volunteers' church or churches affiliated with the FBO), other Christian (and non-religious) volunteers, and other social networks and ties. These separate influences necessitate both contextual theological considerations and the four voices of theology for theological reflection. Further, the theology in the four voices model lends itself to examining the ordinary theology of volunteers. The espoused and operant theologies of volunteers provide insight into both the motives and meaning-making of social engagement, and how these relate to FBO activities.

Ordinary theology has been defined as the "theological beliefs and processes of believing that find expression in the God-talk of those believers who have received no scholarly theological education" (Astley, 2002, p. 1). Ordinary theology was developed as an

expression of 'theology in context' found in the words and actions of ordinary believers. Despite its centrality in Chistian theology, religion, learning, and praxis this type of theology has been long ignored in the literature.

Ordinary theology is situated within practical theology as an approach that expresses Christian practice with relevance directed toward practical matters. For Astley, theology across social contexts was far more diverse and nuanced than what was reflected in the literature. He explained that:

> In Christianity such practices encompass a wide range of overtly and implicitly religious activities: pastoral care, counselling and spiritual direction; the forming and maintenance of community; the teaching and learning of religion (and therefore preaching, education, evangelism, and other forms of communication); social and political action; worship and liturgy; responses to moral issues at an individual, interpersonal, communal and global level; and so on. (Astley, 2002, p. 2)

Rather than limiting the study of theology to church activities and systematic theology, theology was to be approached as contextual and in dialogue with human experience, Christian tradition (Astley, 2002, p. 2), and normative Christian texts (p. 104). Theology was socially located and underpinned by experiences or issues while being located referentially to the language, interpretations, meaning, and truth found within the Christian tradition (p. 3).

Astley (2002) was careful to note that while the term 'ordinary' was seemingly prosaic, within theology, the opposite was true. The ordinary theology found in the 'ordinary lives' of 'ordinary believers' was fundamental to spritual health and in understanding what it meant to be human (p. 49). Ordinary theology drew its significance from lived experience, including common Christian practices and evaluative judgements on those practices; reflection on community praxis from within the communities; the celebration of human experiences, such as love, friendship, and childbirth; and immersion within the complicated and unpredictable nature of living (pp. 50-51). Ordinary theology reflects the social nature of theology. The social context of human attitudes, values, experiences and practices shape ordinary theologies (p. 56) as expressions of religious change (p. 87). Ordinary theologies were often developed through Christian practices, such as prayer, worship, and Bible reading but could be extended to include working, living, and reflecting on everyday life experiences (Astley and Francis, 2013, p. 1).

It is important to note that ordinary theology should not simply be a description of Christian self-understanding. Astley (2002) located ordinary theology firmly within explicit religion and summarised his emphasis on theology in discourse as:

1) Religious language as it used by ordinary believers (and, indeed, unbelievers) to speak descriptively or expressively of God, Jesus and other transcendent categories such as salvation;
2) The overtly religious beliefs (beliefs-that and beliefs-in) that are manifested in or implied by such language;
3) The processes and forms of thought and argument that are employed in people's theological reflection on and discussion of explicit religious concepts.
(Astley, 2002, p. 94).

Here, I will argue that the ordinary theology of socially engaged Christians is best understood as the manifestation of espoused and operant theologies. In the current research, attention is directed towards socially-engaged Christians who may be responding to, or participating within, a particular social movement or organisation. As such, it can not be assumed that volunteers participate within the same FBO or organisation (if one exists for the movement), belong to the same church (if they attend church at all), and agree with or follow denominational theological positions or the viewpoints of their local pastor. It would also be unlikely that many socially-engaged Christians would have undertaken academic theological studies. However, some of the volunteers are likely to be 'doing theology' through a commitment to social engagement or social change that is in dialogue with Scripture or Christian tradition. Hence, the theologies of participants in FBOs can be understood using ordinary theological concepts.

Qualitative theological data can be used to investigate the relationship between the lived experience and theology of socially-engaged Christians. The articulation of beliefs, values, and understandings has been argued to form an essential component of analysing ordinary theology (Astley and Francis, 2013, p. 4). However, this is not at the neglect of the relationship of these essential components to the embodied practices of believers as both needed to be studied (Astley, 2002, p. 97). For research on Christian FBOs and SMOs, ordinary theology will be understood as the manifestation of espoused and operant theologies. There are four arguments supporting this approach.

First, Cameron et al.'s (2010) understanding of Christian practice as the embodiment of theological conviction and insight (p. 51) can be drawn upon to understand ordinary

theology. For these researchers, Christian practice included by speaking about God within the context of human experience or action (p. 23). Christian practices (operant theology) were embedded actions that aligned with an articulated (espoused) theology (p. 51). However, ordinary theology as the manifestation of espoused and operant theologies does not preclude expressions of the other voices. Elements of formal and normative theologies may be present in actions or speech even if the volunteers are not associated with a church or institution.

Second, ordinary theology, as espoused and operant theologies, may provide insights into other theological and social influences. Volunteers or activists within SMOs cannot be assumed to belong to a particular church denomination or even attend church at all. Individual theological expressions may have been shaped by church attendance and denominational teachings from their formative years and church teachings may continue to shape their engagement. However, unless volunteers retain strong connections to their church it is unlikely that the volunteers will articulate 'official' church teachings as shaping motivation or meaning-making in engagement. Further, even if volunteers attend church, their degree of participation within the church community could also constrain the theological influences of the church. Thus, any normative theologies of Christian churches cannot be assumed, even if a church administers the SMO or FBO. A Christian volunteer within a Christian SMO may neither be subject to any normative theologies nor show an awareness of any normative theologies. It may also be possible that volunteers may be engaging in an FBO as a reaction against the normative teachings of the church and a way is needed to understand this theological work.

Third, while the formal theological positions may be found in speech or action, it is unlikely that the analytical processes of formal theology, such as the exegetical method, are going to be evident within ordinary theological expressions. Ordinary theology was developed as the theology of ordinary people that was neglected by academic theologians. It would be surprising to find evidence of those processes in ordinary theology, particularly in social contexts involving young, socially-engaged Christians.

Fourth, since volunteers within a Christian SMO cannot be assumed to attend or belong to a church, ordinary theology can only be constructed from discourse and embodied faith: that is, through espoused and operant theologies. As Christian SMOs may operate a range of programs across religious and secular settings, the social context of the ordinary

theology of Christian volunteers provides insight into the physical expression of espoused theology.

The benefits of operationalising ordinary theology, as stated by Cameron et al. (2010) espoused and operant theologies have already been reflected in the literature. Increased attention has been given to this approach, either implicitly or explicitly. Studies that have used this approach to ordinary theology include Armstrong (2011), Jordan (2012), Christie (2012) and Bryant (2015). Despite their different research interests, each study showed similarities in the research methods used. Participant observation and/or interviews were used to collect data and qualitative analysis was used to interpret the data. Each study also showed similarities in theological methods. Participants were given the opportunity for theological reflection and to articulate theological positions and the participants' theologies and views on church, congregation, and leadership were taken seriously. Theological reflection did not involve imposing confronting theological questions nor the spontaneous formation of religious ideas. Rather, the reflections were theologies related to practices and the participants' positions as ordinary theologians were valued, as were the theologies that emerged from the data.

However, care must be taken in using Cameron et al.'s (2010) espoused and operant theologies to study ordinary theology. As they noted, no theological voice exists in isolation and although normative theologies and formal theological processes are less likely to be reflected in the study of ordinary theology, it does not mean that their expression will not be present. For example, an ordinary theological study of life after death consistently found elements of academic (formal) theology in espoused theology (Armstrong, 2013, p. 102).

To summarise, the four voices of theology provides a strong foundation to understand the ordinary theology of volunteers within FBOs and SMOs. It has been argued that the espoused and operant theologies must be considered when describing theological understandings, how these theological understandings relate to praxis, and how theology is embodied. Ordinary theology, as the manifestation of espoused and operant theologies, provides appropriate data for identifying and describing contextual theology. While the four voices offer nuances to understanding lived religion, it is not a methodology for social research. In the next section, it will be argued that an ethnographic approach is the most appropriate to collect theological data in this research.

3.4 Ethnography and Theological Data

The use of sociological methodologies in empirical theology has increased recently, particularly in the fields of ethnographic and practical theology (Scharen and Vigen, 2011; Ward and Campbell, 2011; Wigg-Stevenson, 2017). In this section, I provide five arguments to support an ethnographic approach to collecting theological data. This section will address the general use of ethnographic methods to access ordinary theologies. The specific ethnographic research methods used in this research will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Practical theology uses both deductive and inductive techniques which necessarily draw upon ethnographic methods. These techniques help understand the influence of each of the four voices of theology and directs attention towards the contextual elements of practical theology. The deductive approach is ecclesial and refers to the ways in which concepts are deduced from Scripture and tradition to form a coherent set of 'rules' to regulate church practices. These formal and normative voices are most likely to be reflected in the deductive approach to show how Scripture and Christian traditions shape praxis and speech. In contrast, the inductive approach draws from both Biblical and non-Biblical contexts, and the ways in which believers embody narratives in culture (Fiddes, 2015, p. 9). The inductive approach, therefore, directs attention towards the espoused and operant voices of theology. The theological concepts that emerge from empirical ethnographic data contribute to understanding contextual theology – the relationships between Scripture, church tradition, culture, engagement, and social change. Despite differences in these deductive and inductive approaches, understanding embodied theology and religious life is difficult or impossible without ethnographic methods or findings (Fiddes, 2012, pp. 14-16). Christian praxis is more than the application of existing theological principles or propositional truths. Rather, theology is embodied in culture, relationships, and symbols of everyday experience (pp. 18-19). Ethnographic methods can be used to elicit data that reflect embodied theology.

Similarly, an ethnographic approach to practical theology is essential for understanding the subtleties, differences, and nuances that exist within seemingly similar Christian environments or in geographically proximate social contexts. Ethnographic techniques are useful to study Christian groups, communities, and congregations for two important reasons. First, there may be significant differences between religious groups within a geographical region even if they belong to the same denomination. Second, ethnicity, language, culture, and economics each shape communities differently (Healy, 2012, p.

185). Thus, ethnography can be used to understand the diversity of Christian belief, theology, and expression among an ostensibly homogeneous community or congregation (p. 186).

Ethnographic methods can be used to examine how social context and society shape theological expression. Christian communities and expressions are often the product of Christian influences, non-Christian or secular influences, and the material world (Healy, 2012, p. 187). Objects and tangible symbols can direct attention, provide meaning, and signify agency in social contexts. This material is symbolic of 'being-in-the-world' (Scharen, 2015, pp. 52-54). Theology acts as both a dependent and independent variable in society (Gill, 2012, p. 15), with social context shaping how theology and social life interact. Gill (2012) explained that when theological expressions are investigated, assumptions are made concerning the social contexts where theologies emerge or operate. However, the importance and reliability of assumptions about social conditions command sociological analysis as they are of central importance to understanding the nature of theological expressions (Gill, 2012, pp. 22-23). Similarly, theology can shape cultural expressions, define and reinforce social structures, and promote anti-social and pro-social behaviour (Gill, 2013, pp. 15-20). Hence, it is appropriate for social life to be examined using social scientific techniques, and ethnographic methods can be used to collect data that reflects the theological dimensions of social life (Fiddes, 2015, p. 12). Similarly, ethnographic methods may be used to understand theological and ethical expressions (Scharen and Vigen, 2011). Social life shapes theology and ethnographic research provides an opportunity to understand the embodied knowledge and theology (p. 61). Importantly, ethnographic methods can provide evidence of ecclesial practices even if they cannot be used to determine ecclesial truth (p. 68).

Finally, ethnographic methods provide data to describe the human experiences of God that Francis (2002; 2007) outlined in his conceptualisation of practical theology. Here, human experiences of God are not limited to personal experience but are inclusive of historical context, experiences over time, the study of Scripture and church traditions, and symbols that provide meaning (Scharen and Vigen, 2011, p. 62). Cultural, sociological, theological, and ethnographic disciplines can be drawn on to understand human experience, the nuances across different kinds of experiences, and their relationship to each other. The theological dimensions of social life exist across social locations and each has a distinct voice, interpretation, and expression that may be contested or compared.

To summarise, ethnographic methods are most appropriate for collecting contextual theological data for sociological research on lived religion. Ethnographic techniques can be used to understand the expressions, practices, discourse and social context in social research on embodied contextual theologies. An ethnographic approach can account for a diversity of religious expression within small geographical regions, within churches or organisations, and to understand how theology is shaped by other secular aspects of community life. Further, an ethnographic approach using practical theological resources provides data on human experiences within changing social contexts. Ethnographic techniques are also useful to encourage participants to articulate complex theological concepts and practices within their organisational context and this shows how theology both shapes practices and may emerge from social contexts. However, while ethnographic research methodologies provide the means to collect theological data, no indication is given on how to make sense of this theological data. In the next section, theological frames will be introduced as a tool to move beyond descriptions of embodied theology towards generating theories of social engagement.

3.5 Theological Frames

In this section, theological frames are introduced and defined as a framework for the theological interpretation of social life. Theological frames are unique to my research and are tested in this thesis as tool to examine the embodied theology of Christian volunteers in FBOs. This section differs from Chapter Two by directing attention to specific theological elements of social life. Theological frames are offered as a way to organise data from ethnographic research methods. Where the four voices of theology offer a methodology for understanding different theological influences, theological frames are developed to examine how human experiences are interpreted within specific social contexts. Here, I provide four arguments supporting the use of theological frames to analyse theological data about Christian social movements and FBOs. First, theological frames may be used to understand the theological elements of organisational culture. Second, theological frames can be used to better understand the structure and relationships within an organisation. Third, theological frames may be used to understand the social and theological derivations of Christian social movements. Fourth, and finally, theological frames can be used to move religious considerations beyond the 'beliefs and values' (Snow and Benford, 1988, p. 206) approach seen in existing frame theory. This section concludes with a method for constructing theological frames.

Theological frames are defined here as a framework for the theological interpretation of social life. They have been developed for this research on Christian social engagement activities to direct attention towards the theological elements of social life and lived religion. Theological frames are a way of using theological data to develop coherent theologies. I have developed the theological frames in my research by building on the already-established frame concepts. Existing frame theory has been used widely to study religious movements, albeit, with little emphasis on theology.

Frame analysis was developed using data from two studies of religious movements: the Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist movement (Snow, 1979; 1986) and the Hare Krishna movement within the United States (Rochford, 1985). The appropriateness of frame theory to analyse religious life was made more explicit in later research (Snow and Benford, 1988) where beliefs were described as consisting of highly interrelated elements, equally important compartmentalised principles, or were somewhere between these two poles (p. 205). The need to incorporate elements of religious life into framing research on faith-based SMOs was made explicit by including 'beliefs and values' in the framing activities of organisations (p. 206). However, the approach misrepresented and oversimplified the lived experience of religious movement participation.

Elements of religious life have been included in a broad range of framing research but with little emphasis on theology. For example, Chaves (1999a) described the use of a secular frame of gender equality within movements supporting the ordination of women (pp. 78-81). Wilson and Burack (2012) showed how the US Tea Party movement appealed to conservative Christians by joining secular ideological frames with Christian values frames. McVeigh and Sikkink (2001) discussed how frames invoking religious values gave legitimacy to the conflict strategies used by churchgoing Christians. However, these studies neither incorporated the nuances of lived religion, nor discussed how embodied theology was reflected by the participants through interpretive frames. Instead, their inclusion of religious influences on social movements was constrained by their use of quantitative and survey data, reliance on religious affiliation as an independent variable, and by prompting respondents with theological statements rather than allowing them to develop their own. In what follows, four arguments are given to demonstrate that theological frames are best placed to address some of the elements of lived religion and embodied theology that earlier studies neglected.

First, theological frames can be used to understand theological elements in organisational culture. As discussed in section 2.5, the culture of an organisation may be understood by examining the common elements of the individual frames of participants within an organisation (Goffman, 1974, p. 27). In a similar way, the common theological elements of the theological frames of volunteers within Christian FBOs may be used to understand the shared theological dimensions of the culture of the FBO. Here, attention is directed towards the culture – religious or otherwise – of volunteering, which may be different from the 'official' framing activities of FBOs. Similarly, theological frames can elicit possible tensions between the individual operant theologies and the organisational espoused theologies (or tensions between any of the other voices). Theological frames may be used to describe how the disparate or shared theologies of volunteers affect the culture of an organisation and their social engagement. The theological elements of culture require close examination as cultural factors and processes are significant considerations for facilitating and constraining collective action (McAdam, 2000, p. 254). Cultural considerations shape meaning-making in a way that is just as important as political opportunities found within social structures. Culture is needed to understand social movements, and frame theory can be used to understand culture. Framing activities are an act of cultural appropriation through legitimising and motivating organisational activities – for both the participants in organisations and their intended targets of mobilisation (p. 255). Framing research has helped direct research on SMOs and FBOs away from structural considerations and towards how identity, political opportunity, discourse, and meaning-making relates to organisational activity. Cultural opportunities, such as particular events or processes that encourage organisational framing efforts, can stimulate organisations into collective action (McAdam, 2000, pp. 254-255). Similarly, theological frames may be used to identify elements of culture, and the effect of culture and theology on organisational activities.

Second, theological frames may be constructed to better understand both the structure and the structural relationships that exist within a Christian organisation. Theological frames direct attention towards how each of the four voices of theology shape social life. The voices represent implicit, explicit and embodied Christian practices (Cameron et al., 2010, p. 53), and theological frames provide insight into the structure and power relationships within Christian expression and embodied theology. To illustrate, within a Christian organisation the embodied theological expressions of the practitioners – a combination of the espoused and operant theological voices – is necessarily held within a

power relationship to a normative theological authority. The nature of the social relationships between the theological authority and regular practitioners, in a theological sense, may be investigated using frame alignment processes (Snow et al., 1986) and framing tasks (Snow and Benford, 1988). The extent of alignment, or potential misalignment, of the theological frames, may provide insight into the relationships, transmission of theological knowledge, stability, and power.

Third, analysis of theological frames provides insight into the social and theological derivation of Christian organisations. Theological frames offer a sociological tool to understand the interactions between theology (such as theological content, understanding, practices, beliefs, or values) and social life. Frames do this by enabling an analysis of motivations, theology and praxis in different social contexts. Further, theological frames have the scope to extend comparative theological research (Francis, 2009) across traditions, genders, social contexts, and language (pp. 130-142). While comparative studies are common in theological research (Francis, 1997; Schneider et al., 2011; Wren, 2009), theological frames are offered in this thesis as a tool to provide insights into the social and theological determinants of theological expressions. Theological frames promote comparisons between denominational Christian organisations and diverse Christian practices, and clarify how society responds to the varieties of Christian expression. For Christian FBOs and SMOs, theological frames give more nuance to religious and theological aspects of these movements. Theological frames offer a means to interpret social life theologically, as well as providing insights into the culture of faith-based social movements and organisations.

Fourth, theological frames can be used to elicit religious and theological elements of social life that were not incorporated into earlier frame theory. Many studies (Tarakeshwar Swank, Pargament and Mahoney, 2001; McVeigh and Skikkink, 2001; Mika, 2006; Evans and Hudson, 2007; Sherkat and Ellison, 2007) that used the framing approach to understand religious motives or religious movements reduced theological considerations to 'beliefs and values' or denominational affiliation. In what follows, it will be argued that such an approach misrepresents and oversimplifies the lived experience of religious movement participation. Further, theological frames offer a way to represent how elements of religious life are reflected in the engagement of the research participants – how theology is embodied.

The examination of religious SMOs or FBOs necessarily requires consideration of the social elements of religious life, and not simply data on beliefs and values, such as denominational affiliation. To understand collective action, attention must be given to structural considerations, strengths of ties, and the facilitation of activities. Each of these considerations are intimately related to networks (Snow and Oliver, 1995, pp. 574-575), which may be religious. Further, the dynamic nature of religious and theological influence – as indicated by the varied effects of each of the four voices of theology – changes over the life course. This is especially evident in the transmission, formation, and transformations of beliefs and values, and the influence of intergenerational and intragenerational organisational socialisation processes (pp. 577-580). The framing approach offers much for social movement research, but neither the simplistic reduction of religious life challenged by social psychology (for example, Argyle (2005)), nor the relevance of transformative experiences to all aspects of lived experience have been addressed in framing research. Importantly, as Snow and Oliver (1995) noted:

> The difference in such seemingly diverse cases resides not so much in the causal processes but in the content of the processes and in *the extent to which the new roles, beliefs, and identities are all-encompassing and pervasive in terms of their relevance to the various domains of life.* (emphasis added) (Snow and Oliver, 1995, p. 581).

The relegation of theological considerations in individual and collective behaviour to 'beliefs and values' is inadequate as this approach does not incorporate how theology is holistically incorporated into human experience. Simplistic views of religion and theology within religious movements – such as uniformity and interrelatedness of beliefs, ideology, expression, and objectives – are unhelpful and misrepresent the lived reality (Kniss and Burns, 2004, pp. 706-708). Theological frames can be used to reflect the broad and pervasive elements of theology embedded within social life and clarified by ethnographic research.

Theological frames have been argued to better understand embodied theology, social and structural relationships, and the social and theological derivations of SMOs and FBOs. While the potential benefits of theological frames for social research have been outlined, above, there has been little discussion on how theological frames are constructed. Much of the theoretical grounding and literature on frame theory has focused on the methods of frame analysis, particularly frame alignment processes (Snow et al., 1986). Only Johnston

(1995) has provided a conceptual treatment for constructing frames from discourse. While his approach has been drawn upon in social research (Brubaker et al., 2004; Kaplan, 2008; Edgell, 2013; Vicari, 2010) it has not been used to examine embodied theologies.

Frames can be constructed through an analysis of the discourse of the participants in SMOs (Johnston, 1995, p. 218). Here, discourse does not simply refer to the documents and speech artefacts produced by the organisation, including posters, slogans or pamphlets, but the spoken words of the participants (p. 218) in interviews, or from ethnographic data. Frames and discourse are inextricably linked (p. 219) and the frames of participants within an organisation may be constructed by analysis of interview texts and other data. Further, to elucidate and understand an interpretive frame the textual integrity must be kept intact, and the entire text or data needs to be holistically drawn on to interpret and clarify any frames constructed (p. 221).

Johnston (1995) suggested constructing a visual representation of frames to show important concepts that "orient and shape participants' interpretations of the world" (p. 240). A schematic representation of a frame shows the concepts that underpin the frame; the relationships that exist between those concepts; the basis of those relationships; how concepts are related to participation; and how different circumstances allow for different interpretations (p. 241). Johnston's example diagram is reproduced in *Figure 1*. *Figure 1* draws attention to social and organisational influences, motives, and meaning-making processes. Key themes (networks and solidarity) are emphasised and also how they link to each other. While the details of the frame are not directly relevant to my research, his representation is instructive.

(Johnston, 1995, p. 239)

Figure 1: Frame Diagram Example

Johnston's (1995) approach to frame construction is appropriate for theological frames. This approach can show how belief, experience, and meaning are found within interpretive frames and then reflected in engagement. The key concepts of a theological frame emerge from ethnographic data to reflect individual social engagement, collective action, and organisational experiences within the FBO. Similarly, this approach to frame construction allows for the inclusion of significant narratives that participants have constructed and how the experiences of the participants have been interpreted theologically. Presenting formative and transformative experiences alongside each other allows the similarities between experience, narrative, and theology to be appreciated and this provides insight into the interpretive process used by individuals in the FBOs (p. 236). Lastly, Johnston's (1995) approach to frame construction supports McAdam's (2000) argument that the common elements of individual frames can provide insight into the culture of an organisation. Johnston argued that analysis of the individual frames of participants provides insight into experiential elements of an organisation (Johnson, 1995, p. 235). For FBOs and SMOs, the shared experiences reflected in frames and the similarities or differences in the interpretive process can indicate how theology can shape collective experience. The use of theological frames is new to social research, but the methodological approach is well established. Theological frames extend sociological research on embodied theology away from being purely descriptive, and towards developing theory and explanation (Hermans and Sterkens, 2014, pp. 132-134).

3.6 Summary

This chapter has provided a conceptual framework for theology, a method for data collection, and a method of data analysis for the current research. It has been argued that this research – a sociological study concerned with the relationship between theology and social engagement for volunteers participating in Christian FBOs and SMOs – requires consideration of contextual practical theology. Practical theology addresses the embodiment of religious belief, theology and practices in everyday life (Pears, 2009, p. 49). Further, contextual theology directs attention to the dialogue between faith expressions and Christian action (Bevans, 2002, p. 72). Here, practical theology is understood as an inter-disciplinary field of study using Francis' (2002) formulation. This approach was argued to be most appropriate as the concerns, perspectives, and observations relevant to contextual theology are often drawn from data collected using the methodologies and methods of the social sciences.

Theological reflection was then outlined as operating at the intersection between Christian tradition and experience (Killen and de Beer, 1994). For practical theological research, six models of theological reflection were presented to direct attention towards the diversity of lived experience and theologies that may emerge from research data. Cameron et al.'s (2010) four voices of theology were presented to differentiate theological influence and to further understand how Christian traditions intersect experience. Each voice – espoused, operant, normative, and formal – signifies the different ways in which the theologies of individuals are shaped, articulated and expressed in different social contexts. Each of the voices shape the ordinary theologies of individuals, defined by Astley (2001) as the theology within the speech and practices of Christians without scholarly theological education (p. 1). For the current research on volunteers in Christian organisations, it was suggested that ordinary theologies were most likely to be expressed in engagement. It was argued that while each of the voices may be present in any theological expression, ordinary theologies may be identified from the espoused and operant voices.

Ethnographic research methods were then outlined as a way to collect data to understand ordinary theologies. Five arguments were put forward about the value of ethnographic methods to collect theological data for this research project. First, the inductive and deductive methods of practical theology invited the use of ethnographic methods. Second, ethnographic methods can be used to identify the differences that exist between geographically and culturally similar Christian FBOs and SMOs. Third, ethnographic methods direct attention to the social contexts where theologies emerge from and operate.

Fourth, Christian and non-Christian influences on theology may be identified using ethnography. Fifth, and finally, ethnographic methods direct attention to the material object of practical theology – the human experiences of God.

Theological frames were then introduced as a tool to analyse theological data to understand ordinary theological expressions. The theological frames were developed specifically for this research and were defined as a framework for the theological interpretation of social life. Theological frames applied the earlier work on frame theory to theology, in order to provide nuance to embodied theology and lived experience that other framing research had neglected. Four arguments were presented for this use of theological frames in social research. First, theological frames can be used to understand theological elements within organisational culture, second, theological frames can be used to understand organisational structures, and relationships that exist within an organisation's structure; third, theological frames can provide insight into the social and theological derivations of Christian organisations; and fourth, theological frames move studies of religious organisations beyond the 'beliefs and values' approach that has misrepresented and oversimplified religious movements in framing research. A schematic approach for constructing theological frames was presented to identify the important theological concepts of the participants – such as belief, meaning, and experience – that are then reflected in engagement

CHAPTER FOUR – FBOS, VOLUNTEERING, AND MOTIVES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will survey the literature on FBO typologies, religiosity and volunteering, motivations for volunteering, and social capital. Attention will be given to FBO engagement with refugees, the homeless, and with social justice. It will be established, here, that there are gaps in the literature that will be attended to in this research. Most of the gaps are due to the lack of qualitative research on the motivations, experiences, and relationships that emerge from Christian volunteering. There are few qualitative studies of socially-engaged Christian groups in Australia, let alone studies that investigate the theological motivations of Christian volunteers in Australia. Quantitative research on volunteering has provided an excellent basis for identifying trends and generalisations but gives little insight into individual Christian experience. Many quantitative studies limit theological differences to denominational differences. However, the differences in theological motivations for volunteering are more nuanced than these studies suggest (as described in Chapter Three). International research suggests that there is a strong relationship between religiosity and social engagement. However, further qualitative studies are required to understand the nature of this relationship, particularly given that qualitative research offers insights into volunteer experiences from the perspective of the volunteers, and in generating theories of volunteering rather than descriptive statistics.

The review will proceed as follows: First, an outline of various typologies of FBOs will be given to situate the organisations involved in this research in relation to each other. This will assist in understanding the operation and activities of each FBO, as well as the similarities, differences, and types of volunteers each FBO is likely to attract. Second, the literature on FBOs with similar areas of focus to those involved in this research will be surveyed. This will involve studies of FBOs associated with refugees, soup kitchens and homeless shelters, and social justice movements, as these will offer insights into activities of the FBOs in the current research. The experiences and expectations of FBO participants will provide some comparison and contrast to those involved in this research. Third, the literature relating to the relationship between religiosity and volunteering will be reviewed. While the connection between volunteering and religiosity is well established, the nature of this relationship is complex and differs between FBOs and congregations. The FBOs involved in this research have significant differences, suggesting that religiosity and volunteering will be manifested differently. Fourth, the literature on general volunteer

motivations will be surveyed for comparison with volunteers in the current research, including those who do not cite theological motivations for engagement. Finally, social capital theory will be reviewed, and the relevant social capital concepts will be suggested as indicators of relationships between volunteers and recipients of FBO services.

4.2 Faith-based Organisational Typologies

FBOs have provided support for those in need through religious institutions for a long time. In the West, the activities of Christian FBOs have been largely supported by mainstream churches (Clarke, 2006, p. 836). However, there has been some difficulty in specifying which organisations might be considered as FBOs in contrast to congregations with social programs as well as worship and religious education (Ebaugh, Chafetz and Pipes, 2006, p. 2259). Despite the ongoing difficulties in defining FBOs, various typologies have been developed for social research, particularly with regard to what makes FBOs *faith-based* and distinct from secular organisations. This remains important, given the religious orientations and practices of Christian organisations need to be studied to understand how seemingly similar Christian groups develop different social and political ideologies (Hall, 1997, p. 41). Even for explicitly Christian organisations, there is difficulty in defining what it means for an organisation to be religious, both theologically and in the way that members interact in their social contexts. Organisations that self-identify as religious show significant diversity in how they are faith-based in outreach. FBOs include hospitals, elite schools, international media, and homeless shelters. Each self-identify as religious organisations yet they show little resemblance to one another (Jeavons, 1998, p. 80).

In what follows, a range of FBO typologies will be described to differentiate the FBOs based on four characteristics: emphasis and expression of faith; institutional and organisational attributes; service delivery or objectives; and defining characteristics of organisations. The challenges of using the typologies will be described before outlining how the different typologies will be used in this research.

First, FBOs may be differentiated by the extent to which religious faith is reflected in the purposes, staff, and community of the organisation. Unruh and Sider (2005) developed a typology that directed attention to the six ways that faith was manifested in FBOs: in their organisational attributes; religious practices; personal meaning; values and mission; relationships; and connection with outcomes (pp. 239-241). This typology is summarised in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Typology of FBOs

Faith permeated organisations	Connection with faith evident at all levels of mission, including staff, content and outcomes.
Faith-centred organisations	Founded for religious purposes and connected to a religious community. Religious participation not required at all levels of the mission.
Faith-affiliated organisations	Staffing and support from beyond faith community and contains little/no religious content.
Faith-background organisations	Secular functioning organisation with an historical tie to a faith tradition. No explicit religious content.
Faith-secular partnerships	Partnership where a secular organisation uses volunteers or resources of a faith community.
Secular organisations	No religious references in mission, history or management.

(Unruh and Sider, 2005, pp. 103-114)

While this typology had been well researched and drew upon pioneering work in this field, and it was not without criticism. When the typology first appeared (Sider and Unruh, 2004), the publishing journal contained three criticisms within the same issue. First, the absence of the voices of beneficiaries, and a lack of attention given to how the outcomes of the services were judged, was criticised (Netting, 2004, p. 137). Second, it was argued that the typology drew too heavily on the authors' Protestant Christian origins, particularly in the Protestant separation of faith and works (Jeavons, 2004, p. 142). Jeavons (2004) also warned of the implications for government funding if congregations were considered as FBOs (p. 143). Finally, the typology neglected the moral choices made by both FBO staff as the human service providers that allow FBOs to operate (Cameron, 2004, p. 150). He noted:

In the provision of services, fundamentalist groups desire to 'convert the soul' and so offer well-being through a shared worldview with fellow believers. The human service relationship is put at the service of religious transformation. It is for policy makers and funders to decide if this matters to them. If a religious transformation to fundamentalist worldview results in a service recipient who comes off welfare and complies with the law, has the funder achieved his or her goal?
(Cameron, 2004, pp. 149-150).

A similar typology grouped FBOs according to the activities of the group, considering the influence of faith as passive, active, persuasive, or exclusive (Clarke, 2008, pp. 32-33). However, while this scheme raised important questions about balancing religious and humanitarian principles (Ferris, 2011, p. 616) it had limited usefulness in addressing the advantages and disadvantages of FBO involvement and activity (p. 617) across different contexts.

Second, FBOs may be distinguished from secular organisations in terms of their institutional environment. Smith and Sosin (2001) suggested that FBOs be described as 'faith-related organisations', meaning "social service organisations that have any of the following: formal funding, administrative arrangement or historical with a religious authority or authorities; a historical tie of this kind; a specific commitment to act within the dictates of a particular established faith; or a commitment to work together that stems from a common religion" (p. 652). Faith-related organisations could be influenced and pressured by beliefs, norms, and cognitions of religious institutions, but were often evaluated in terms of structures, procedures and mission – factors which shaped how members engaged within their programs (p. 653). This typology identified six dimensions of faith-related organisations: resource dependency, authority, culture, religious coupling, impact of coupling, and denominations (pp. 654-657). This model suggested that the faith elements of organisations had a significant impact on service delivery and often provided services beyond the scope of secular agencies (p. 665).

More recently, another typology was developed that directed attention to the communities where volunteers and staff of FBOs were sourced (Schneider et al., 2011). This typology drew on a notion of stewardship, which was defined as "the faith community's efforts to maintain its practical theology of justice and charity in the activities of the non-profits affiliated with that religion or denomination" (p. 409). The extent of stewardship was reflected in three different systems: congregational, network, and institutionalised.

Congregational systems were those where the central organising forces were church congregations, although staff and volunteers need not necessarily be drawn from the congregation or, even, faith tradition, and they did not proselytise (p. 410). Network systems were those organised across several congregations that shared a faith-based vision of social or evangelical service. Network systems tended to form faith communities that survived after the founders passed away (p. 411). Institutionalised systems were faith traditions with clear theological expectations of the faith community. Volunteers and staff would be organised from within the local congregation of that faith tradition, while funding, training and management of staff and volunteers was handled by a central institutionalised structure (p. 411).

Third, FBOs may be categorised according to the services or objectives of the organisation. Sider, Olsen, and Unruh (2002) identified four categories of social ministries for FBOs. First, relief was offered by directly supplying food, clothing, or housing to someone in urgent need. Second, individual development included transformational ministries that empowered a person to improve physical, emotional, intellectual, relational, or social status. Third, community development involved renewing the building blocks of a healthy community, such as housing, jobs, heath care, and education. Fourth and finally, structural change was achieved through transforming unfair political, economic, environmental, or cultural institutions and systems (p. 86).

However, this model did not address the complexities of FBOs in international development, particularly those involved in public policy debates; social and political processes; and supporting, representing, or engaging with the poor in developing countries (Clarke, 2006, p. 840). Clarke (2006) offered an alternate typology that recognised five types of FBOs: representative bodies; charitable or development organisations; socio-political organisations; missionary organisations; and illegal or terrorist organisations (pp. 840-844). However, this activity-based typology does not give appropriate attention to the religious elements of organisations or delineated activities that can be interrelated.

Fourth, an understanding of FBOs as being identified in relation to three 'defining characteristics' of religious organisations: the self-identification as a religious organisation; the degree to which the purposes and activities of the organisation were perceived to be religious in nature; and how the purposes and conduct of the organisation reflected religious values and commitments (Jeavons, 1998, p. 81). In this model, each

characteristic was placed along a spectrum and there was not a strict demarcation between secular and religious organisations. The religious nature of FBOs was suggested to be most important in organisational self-identity; among participants; material resources and sources; goals, products or services; decision-making processes; distribution of power; and organisational fields of operation (pp. 82-93). This approach to defining and categorising FBOs indicates that the role of religion organisational structure and activity is complex. The structure, resources and individuals involved within an FBO contribute in different ways and there is nothing specific that defined an organisation as being distinctly religious.

Each of the typologies described above, provides insight into a particular aspect of the activities or organisational structures of FBOs. However, each are inherently limited in their scope. Structure-based definitions have limited use as the internal structures for FBO service programs can be as varied as in secular programs (Netting et al., 2002, p. 263). Religion-based definitions are problematic as even the term 'faith-based' is fraught with difficulty (Hugen and Venema, 2009, p. 407). In the US, UK, and Europe, the term 'faith-based' directs attention to funding and the separation of church and state. However, in Australia, the term 'faith-based organisation' encompasses churches, charities and other religiously affliliated organisations involved in the delivery of social services (Melville and McDonald, 2006, p. 70). The focus, assumptions, or expression of 'faith' differs significantly among the many typologies developed. This should not be surprising given that faith is often understood as a contextual consideration (Ferguson, Wu, Spruijt-Metz and Dyrness, 2007, p. 265) and the ambiguity is simply indicative of the broad range of FBOs that exist (Melville and McDonald, 2006, p. 77). Distinctions are difficult to maintain as many FBOs deliver secular programs, while many secular programs encourage religious practices (Hugen and Venema, 2009, p. 425). In addition, there are challenges in using the term 'faith-based organisation' due to the political context from which the term first entered mainstream usage. The term was introduced in 1966 in the US *Charitable Choice* legislation to connect disparate religious beliefs, organisations and social programs (Ferris, 2011. p. 607). The meaning of the term 'faith-based organisation' is further obscured as it connects US research with broad international research that may have little relevance.

In Australia, research exclusively on FBOs is scarce. There are a few detailed qualitative studies, such as Camilerri and Winkworth's (2005) research on the challenges facing Catholic welfare delivery and Wilson's (2011) study of Australian FBOs and refugees. The

increased secularisation and lack of institutional recognition of FBOs in Australia, along with 'hidden' welfare delivery by religious groups brought on by increased normalisation (pp. 73-75) resulted in less academic attention here than in other countries. There has been a shift within Australian FBOs towards more professional, well-managed services subject to government scrutiny (Howe and Howe, 2012, pp. 326-328). This too may have contributed to less research on the motivations, theology, and experiences of volunteers that that were involved within these organisations.

Recent research on Christian social engagement has expanded from FBOs to include what is known as 'Christian activism' or 'new' evangelical social engagement.[10] This form of engagement differs from other forms of engagement as:

> Evangelical engagement involves not what issues evangelicals seek to engage, but how they engage them. Greater breadth can be seen here, too. Evangelicals articulate an expanded sociological vision, one that recognises the need for a multifaceted approach to social transformation and exhibits a greater openness to seeking social justice. (Steensland and Goff, 2014, p. 11)

The FBO typologies described above do not fit newer manifestations of Christian activism, such as vegetarian activism (Fargo, 2015) and interfaith refugee activism (Campbell, 2014) as these, and others like them, exist outside of organisational contexts. Hence the typologies are inadequate.

The typologies described, above, seek to define FBOs in terms of their organisational or theological structures. However, they do not provide an understanding of the faith elements, experience, or meaning for individuals involved in FBOs. Netting et al. (2006) argued that in addition to the organisational culture of an FBO, it was necessary to understand the assumptions and values of FBOs (p. 278):

> Our findings, additionally, reveal that the underlying assumptions of faith-based programs do not necessarily come from an internal source (e.g., being embedded by a leader or founder) although they can be reinforced by human beings with deep

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[10] The degree to which 'new' activism is new has been criticised by Bielo (2014), who argued that while evangelical activism has broadened to include areas as diverse as environmentalism, gay civil rights, and racial reconciliation, the framing and response to these issues was much the same as it had always been (pp. 233-234).

faith. They often come from an external source that is filtered through the lens of each individual who interprets God's word, internalised through their own worldview. Therefore, there are multiple interpretations. (Netting et al., 2006, p. 279)

This multiplicity of lenses could reveal a shift in the theology, including at sites of 'new' Christian activism, in much that same way that shifts in theology have been documented for queer activism (Mesner, 2010) and environmental activism (Danielsen, 2013) even if the form of engagement is much the same.

To summarise: the application of definitions and FBO typologies remains challenging, particularly for research on Christian social movements and development organisations. Each framework focuses social researchers on a particular aspect of the organisation – be it the religious or faith activities, structural or organisational attributes, effectiveness or outcomes of activities, or demographic variables. No attempt to construct a new typology will be attempted here. Instead, a new approach will be taken that seeks to give appropriate depth to descriptions of each FBO. Each FBO will be described in two stages. First, the activities and operation of each organisation will be given in terms of descriptions provided by the volunteers, members, or advertising of the organisation. These descriptions will be supplemented with qualitative ethnographic data. Second, the attributes of each Christian organisation will be provided by drawing on relevant aspects of the typologies given, above, with attention directed to the religious and faith-based aspects of the organisation, the institutional or organisational attributes of the organisations, and the service delivery or objectives of the organisation. Each of the typologies may be drawn upon to give appropriate attention to each facet of the FBOs studied rather than focusing on a particular aspect of their activities or community.

4.3 Faith-based Organisations and Refugees

This section will survey research on the activities of FBOs involved with refugee and asylum seekers. Given the paucity of literature that focuses exclusively on FBOs, the survey will also include research on congregations and religious groups. I will argue that the literature suggests that religious organisations and institutions generally offer refugees support in three ways: material; non-material; and emotional. The role of faith in FBO activities is not clear and there is difficulty differentiating FBOs from secular organisations both in terms of their activities and outcomes. Each of these three ways of supporting refugees will be outlined before discussing the challenges faced by volunteers working with refugees.

The material support offered to refugees refers to the food, clothing, accommodation, or other material resources given to meet the basic needs of refugees. Material support is seen in what has been described as *settling* activities (Snyder, 2011) of FBOs. Settling activities are "person-centred and focus on providing amenities, facilitating access, making referrals and linkages and advocating on behalf of individuals" (p. 570). Settling activities include providing material support through access to computers and essential items, such as food and clothing (pp. 570-571). Australian FBOs offer material support by providing assistance for housing, relief payments, food, and medical care (Markus and Taylor, 2006, p. 46). Australian NGOs, including those that are faith-based, provide essential services to asylum seekers. Without these services, many asylum seekers would go hungry, lack medical care and struggle to find accommodation (p. 51).

The non-material support offered to refugees includes the ways in which individuals and communities provide specialised administrative or legal support, technical assistance, access to social support services, or advocacy. This type of assistance is most needed when cultural or language barriers constrain refugee agency. This too is seen in the settling activities of FBOs. Research suggests that aside from motivational differences, secular and religious organisations are more alike than different in terms of refugee settling activities[11] (Nawyn, 2006, p. 1516). For example, congregations and FBOs in the US provide a range of support for refugees, including housing, job training, education, language assistance, transportation and clothing (Ives, Sinha and Cnaan, 2010, p. 81). This support is not distinctly religious in nature and shows similarities to the support provided by government and secular non-government organisations.

Non-material support was also seen in the *unsettling* activities – those that are "issue-centred and concentrate on the public voicing of concerns, transforming attitudes, advocacy and policy intervention" (Snyder, 2011, p. 571), much like advocacy (Fuller and McCauley, 2016, p. 3). Unsettling activities were largely directed towards outcomes such as awareness-raising, changing public opinion, and influencing political debate and policy (Snyder, 2011, pp. 571-572). Unsettling activities were also described as 'Encounters with Powers', where organisations focused their activities around lobbying, advocacy, and campaigning to implement change through transforming attitudes or social structures for refugees (Snyder, 2012, p. 39).

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[11] This includes both material and non-material support.

Not surprisingly, most of the non-material support for refugees is offered alongside material support. A model that emerged from US research (Eby, Iverson, Smyers and Kekic, 2011) suggested that refugee settlement agencies focused on "the importance of reaching to faith communities in areas where refugees are resettled to help rebuild relationships, establish social support networks, and meeting people who can provide different forms of assistance, including facilitating access to services and employment opportunities" (p. 592). Similar findings were seen in Canadian research with Christian churches, religious groups and FBOs offering material support to refugees through food and clothing donations, accommodation, and immigrant sponsorship. Other non-material support was offered across Canada through English classes, social activities, support for immigrant congregations, and legal assistance (Janzen, Stobbe, Chapman and Watson, 2016, pp. 397-399).

Lastly, emotional support may be offered to refugees through attending to the social, psychological, and emotional needs of refugees. Emotional support is centred around relationships and is reflected in friendships and community involvement. While congregations and FBOs may not have the resources to provide ongoing support for the refugee community, the emotional support offered to refugees is significant (Ives et al., 2010, p. 86). The networks and relationships that develop from FBOs and congregations can be long-lasting and provides important social and emotional benefit. FBOs and congregations provide emotional support alongside other forms of support that address practical concerns (Snyder, 2012, p. 36). Research has found that distinctly religious emotional support was provided for refugees seeking sanctuary within a church (p. 43) and in the context of theological reflection (p. 45). For example, emotional theological reflection has been documented for African immigrants. Asamoah-Gyadu (2016) described the support offered in churches through prayer and reflection:

> At these intensively emotional and physically aggressive prevailing prayer services the name and authority of Jesus or the power of God are forcefully invoked to deal with those representing 'Babylon' and making international travel difficult. (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2016, p. 163)

For refugees, the emotional support provided by volunteers was just as valued – and often to a greater extent – than material and non-material support. This was because emotional support provided refugees with more ways to become involved in different aspects of community life (Eby et al., 2011, p. 593).

There are significant challenges for volunteers in FBOs and congregations trying to meet refugees' needs with diminishing resources. Resettling refugees can be both physically and emotionally demanding with some volunteers required to maintain ongoing organisational participation and take on financial responsibilities (Eby et al., 2011, p. 592). Some communities supplemented government funding for rent, schooling or utilities through community sponsorships as refugee families work towards self-sufficiency (p. 593). Other research has described how volunteers faced bias from government agencies and members of the public towards ethnic and religious groups (Bramadat, 2013, p. 15). Lastly, perceptions of proselytising shapes volunteer experiences as non-proselytising policies need to be clearly outlined to recipients (Eby et al., 2011, p. 594) to avoid suspicion (Ferris, 2011, p. 605).

Summarising, the work of FBOs, congregations and religious communities working with refugees varies across communities. There are differences in the services offered, benefits provided and how the volunteers are involved in the lives of refugees. I suggest that the activities of each of the organisations in providing support to refugees can be grouped in three general ways. The organisations surveyed in the literature provided:

- *Material support*: in the form of food items, clothing, accommodation or other tangible items that are necessary for maintaining home or work life.
- *Non-material support*: including specific or insider knowledge, such as assistance in the form of legal or administrative assistance, or specialised support for refugees to access government or relief organisations in the face of language, organisational, or cultural factors.
- *Emotional support*: in the form of informal social, psychological and emotional support as volunteers offered assistance through friendship, community, networks or other relationships.

Most FBOs engage with refugees using a combination of these approaches. Outside of providing considerable emotional support, the activities of FBOs and religious groups are not easy to differentiate from government and non-government organisations. Even after considering the engagement and practices of FBOs and other religious organisations, the significance or effect of religion or faith in their activities remains unclear in the literature. The effect of differences in faith were significant although the studies did not address specific religious motivations or significance towards refugees in social engagement. Thus,

further attention is needed to address the meaning-making, motivation, expression and their relationships to theology for Christian volunteers assisting refugees.

4.4 Faith-based Organisations and the Homeless

This section will survey the literature about the activities of FBOs working with the homeless with attention given to the differences between faith-based and secular organisations, and the implications for volunteer experiences. Research on FBO engagement with homelessness is diverse and includes professionalisation; motivation; the place of religion and evangelism; and volunteer experiences. Much of the research on FBOs and homelessness is from the US and focusses on comparisons with secular organisations, their effectiveness, and evangelistic activities in the wake of *Charitable Choice* legislation (Ebaugh et al., 2006; Wuthnow, Hackett and Hsu, 2004; Amirkhanyan, Kim and Lambright, 2009; Bielefeld and Cleveland, 2013). Recently, attention has been directed towards the experiences and practices of volunteers in FBOs but not those working with homelessness exclusively (Musick and Wilson, 2007; Garland, Myers and Wolfer, 2009). While international research is extensive, there is little qualitative research on volunteer experiences in Australia.

Faith-based groups working with the homeless may be distinguished from each other in terms of their goals or objectives for engagement. Organisational responses to homelessness are best described as either accommodative or restorative. FBOs with accommodative goals tended to place less emphasis on religion or religious expressions while those with restorative goals emphasise transforming lives alongside service delivery (particularly for evangelical service providers (Sager, 2011, pp. 207-209)). An accommodative response attends to the physical needs of the homeless, such as providing food or shelter. FBOs with accommodative responses, typically, are not looking to solve homelessness but to offer subsistence support, such as food and shelter, for those in need (Snow and Anderson, 1993, p. 79). In contrast, restorative responses address physiological, psychological, or spiritual issues that impede how the homeless function in society (p. 87). The responses, whether restorative or accommodative, of FBOs can be investigated in research by attending to the four elements of welfare delivery. First, by the frequency and variety of religious expression present during mealtimes. Second, the number of interactions between staff and homeless recipients. Third, the number of constraints placed upon receipt of services and, fourth, by verbal statements of the organisational goals by staff and volunteers (Sager, 2011, pp. 204-206).

Regardless of the type of engagement, FBOs working with the homeless have become increasingly professionalised in recent times. Research showed that most organisations were locally run and administered, and delivered social services, such as providing food, rehabilitation, housing, and training. The increase in professionalising services has resulted in the reduction of faith expression in engagement (Cloke et al., 2009, p. 292), increased costs and bureaucracy, and a reduction in job security for employees of FBOs (Buckingham, 2009, pp. 244-246). Increased professionalisation has also resulted in greater competitiveness between organisations, particularly as FBOs work and are evaluated both alongside and in contest with state authorities (Cloke, Williams and Thomas, 2009, p. 293).

The accommodative responses of secular and faith-based services have not changed despite the increased professionalisation and evaluation of FBOs. The aims and ethos of both types of organisations are similar, even if the language used to describe the motivation for engagement differs (Johnsen, 2014, p. 420). The only difference between faith-based and secular service providers is often the inclusion of faith expressions in their activities. While most services focus primarily on delivering food, some attend to the spiritual needs of homeless clients. This has been seen to varying degrees in FBOs – from providing services in a church environment to including prayers, sermons, and inviting conversions as part of the service delivery (Sager, 2011, p. 205). Some FBOs described their faith activities as significant elements in their operation, including faith providing a moral code that shaped the behaviour of young homeless people, offered hope for the future, and provided an inclusive environment for homeless recipients (Ferguson, Dabir, Dortzbach, Dyrness and Spruijt-Metz, 2006, pp. 1523-1524)[12]. To further complicate matters, both types of organisations can include both non-religious and religious volunteers, and religious volunteers can represent a broad range of faith traditions. Religious volunteers have been known to express their faith through secular organisations and conversely, non-religious volunteers donate their time to FBOs (Johnsen, 2009, p. 421).

There is a small, but growing body of literature on the experiences and motivations of volunteers delivering social services to the homeless. The experiences of volunteers can vary significantly, and the literature suggests involvement with the homeless cannot be reduced to a single motivation. Some studies (Harrison, 1995; Lundahl and Wicks, 2010)

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[12] Also Ferguson et al. (2007)

suggest that volunteers did not work with homeless people for personal gratification. Instead, social pressures, perceived control, and moral obligations had a significant influence on volunteer intentions (Harrison, 1995, p. 383).

Faith commitment and personal experiences as service users have been found to be significant motivations for volunteers delivering social and welfare services to the homeless. While churches and congregations provide opportunities to serve the homeless through social networks, research suggests that faith commitments are significant motivating factors (Cloke, Johnsen and May, 2007, p. 1090). Christians have described their work with the homeless as 'God's purpose' or an opportunity to witness (p. 1093). Other motivations for involvement include personal experiences of homelessness. Some volunteers identified with the homeless and wanted to 'give back', while others wanted to be instrumental in bringing about change or transformation in the lives of the homeless (p. 1094). Cloke et al. (2007) concluded that volunteering was a way of bringing ordinary ethics to extraordinary circumstances. It was a way for volunteers to identify and respond to needs and could not be reduced to a single motivating factor (p. 1099).

Qualitative research offers greater depth in understanding volunteer experiences with the homeless than can be given in survey-based studies. The nuances of volunteer participation and interactions with the homeless were seen in Holden's (1997) account of volunteer experiences in a homeless shelter. The volunteers in her study attempted to balance the egalitarian identities they constructed with the inequalities that prohibited meaningful relationships with the homeless. The identities the volunteers created were largely shaped by attempts to position themselves as friends in trying to connect with homeless recipients (p. 127). This included changing their physical appearance and demeanour to reduce the social distance between them and the homeless (p. 130). She concluded that the goals and identities of volunteers could be threatened by homeless clients. However, given the volunteers were in positions of power and privilege, they had greater control in these situations, which may have contributed to maintaining these inequalities (p. 142). More recently, homeless shelters have been described as places where the needs of both the volunteers and the clients were met (Lundahl and Wicks, 2010, pp. 272-273). For example, volunteers in homeless shelters have described how forming connections with homeless recipients and direclty observing the outcomes of their work are desirable in their volunteering (p. 285). FBOs have been encouraged to balance the motivational needs of volunteers and the delivery of social and welfare services to the homeless to retain volunteers. This can be challenging for organisations where volunteers

may be insensitive, push personal values, use drugs or alcohol with homeless clients, or ignore the rules of shelters or soup kitchens (pp. 282-283).

To summarise, the literature on FBOs and volunteer experiences with the homeless is broad. Like other FBOs, homeless shelters and food delivery services have undergone increased professionalisation which has changed the structural conditions and transparency of FBOs. The religious or theological meanings volunteers attribute to engagement with the homeless has been given attention in the literature. Some FBOs provide their welfare delivery in a way that allows for greater interaction between volunteers and the homeless for the purpose of evangelising or to address spiritual needs. The motivations of volunteers has been shown to be diverse and include religious, ethical, and relationship needs. Hence, it is likely that both volunteer motives and opportunities shape participation and sustained involvement.

4.5 Faith-based Organisations and Social Justice

In this section, the literature on faith-based social justice movements will be examined. It will be argued that contextual and structural considerations shape social justice movements more than ideology. Further, there is ambiguity surrounding the term 'social justice', given that FBOs have different understandings and emphasise different aspects of social justice. This section will proceed as follows: First, the emergence of social justice movements in relation to the *Social Gospel* movement in the US will be reviewed to provide context for the current research; second, more recent research will be outlined by describing how FBOs address social justice through a dual approach to engagement – through both welfare delivery and advocacy; third, the ambiguity surrounding the term 'social justice' will be explored; and fourth, and finally, the theological significance attributed to social justice activities by Christian volunteers will be discussed.

The emergence of the *Social Gospel* movement at the end of the nineteenth century in the US significantly influenced what would have been termed FBOs at the time (Adkins et al., 2010). The movement directed attention to the social roots of inequality and took steps to enact systemic change. One of the key figures of the movement, Walter Rauschenbusch (1997), wrote:

> We are only now coming to realise that within certain limits human society is plastic, constantly changing its forms, and that the present system of social organisation, as it superseded others, may itself be displaced by something better. Without such a

conception of the evolution of social institutions any larger ideas of social regeneration could hardly enter the minds of men. The modern socialist movement is really the first intelligent, concerted, and continuous effort to reshape society in accordance with the laws of social development. (Rauschenbusch, 1907, p. 195)

Later, Rauschenbusch (1912) increased his focus on justice and argued that while the United States did not have the aristocratic social structures of Europe, the oppression and injustice caused by wealth and privilege were largely the same (Rauschenbusch, 1912, p. 335). Christian groups could bring about change by addressing the causes of injustice (pp. 340-343) rather than the symptoms. Many elements of Rauschenbusch's (1907; 1912) writings and the greater *Social Gospel* movement are prevalent within contemporary organisations and theologies. Recent research suggests that congregations that deliver welfare often focus on meeting individual needs (Todd, 2011; Chaves, 2004). However, it has been argued that this approach severely limits any meaningful impact on social conditions as change is enacted on an individual basis. Instead, congregations need to become politically engaged to change the social structures that cause injustice (Todd, 2011, p. 207) rather than simply focusing on addressing the symptoms of injustice.

Many contemporary FBOs engage in social justice through both advocacy activities (Beaumont and Dias, 2008; Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010) and welfare delivery. Organisational advocacy promotes inclusiveness and contributes to public debate by drawing public attention to disadvantaged communities (Dalton and Lyons, 2005, p. vii). Advocacy can also be seen through engagement in particular social or political issues to enact organisational or political policy changes (Fuller and McCauley, 2016, p. 3). Many organisations do not have a single community or issue as their main focus but have multiple goals (Johansen and LeRoux, 2013, p. 357) and flexible identities (Bennett, 2015, p. 213). Volunteers involved in advocacy through FBOs are often required to undertake research on the chosen social or political issuer, participate in fundraising and require ongoing contact with communities directly affected by the chosen social issue (Dalton and Lyons, 2005, p. 19).

Many FBOs engage in advocacy alongside welfare delivery. This dual approach has been seen in aid and diplomacy for refugees (Munthe, 2017, p. 178); challenging the social conditions that caused inequalities for asylum seekers, the homeless and poverty stricken, children, the elderly, and disabled people (Cloke et al., 2009, p. 286); and providing housing alongside community development (de Sousa Briggs, 2004, p. 47-48). Other FBO

address social justice by challenging the structures that caused social and economic inequality. Unlike many faith-based welfare delivery service providers, these FBOs focused on both service delivery and the wider causes and symptoms of inequality. Social justice-focused FBOs directed their attention challenging the social conditions that caused inequalities for asylum seekers, the homeless and poverty stricken, children, the elderly, and disabled people (Cloke et al., 2009, p. 286). Some FBOs were involved in capacity building and political action as part of their response to address social and economic inequality (p. 198).

In New Zealand, social justice has gained increased attention from Christian social service organisations and faith-based charities (Conradson, 2008, p. 2121). Like the research from other countries, there has been a shift in FBO activities from offering emergency relief to addressing the structures and processes that cause or maintain social inequalities (p. 2135). In doing so, the nature of FBO activities has changed, with more time allocated to political change through advocacy and lobbying government for action on poverty, welfare, housing, and criminal justice (p. 2136).

Despite increased attention on the social justice activities of FBOs there is significant variance about what is meant by 'social justice.' Much of the research on social justice activities does not define social justice. Most often social justice carries with it an operational meaning with respect to a particular social context (Novak, 2000, p. 1). As Rizvi (2002) noted:

> The immediate difficulty one confronts when examining the idea of social justice is the fact that it does not have a single essential meaning – it is embedded within discourses that are historically constituted and that are sites of conflicting and divergent political endeavours. Thus, social justice does not refer to a single set of primary or basic goods, conceivable across all moral and material domains. (Rizvi, 2002, p. 47)

The diversity of social justice movements ensures that interpretations of social justice are just as varied as the priorities of the movements (Hytten and Bettez, 2011). Similarly, the variety of interpretations of social justice directs organisational activities towards different causes (pp. 16-17). However, in this research, social justice will be understood using Young's (2011) widely used conception of justice as the distributive and "institutional conditions necessary for the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and cooperation" (p. 39). Injustice is understood as a form of

oppression, which can be divided into five categories: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (p. 40).

This definition is seen in the three ways that social justice is understood by religious organisations – as structural and/or individual; as concerned with human rights and dignity; and as related to religious responsibility (Todd and Rufa, 2013, p. 320). The extent that each aspect of social justice is emphasised can be reflected in the engagement of religious groups. Social contexts inform the norms and processes for social justice activities and, typically, congregations initiate programs to benefit those who are removed socially, economically, and culturally from the Christian volunteers (p. 317).

While research on the social justice activities of FBOs is broad, there is less research on their rationale for engagement. Christian faith-based charities in the UK tended to be drawn to locations and projects with a clear parallel to Biblical precepts for action (Cloke et al., 2009, p. 333). Similarly, American Christians cited religious motivations for engagement and also attributed spiritual meaning to their actions. Unruh and Sider (2005) summarised the spiritual meanings to FBO activities as four social ministries – their term for integrating evangelism, social action, and embodied theology (pp. 79-80):

- Dutiful ministry: God mandates involvement in social ministry;
- Empowered ministry: God is an empowering agent of social change;
- Devotional ministry: Social ministry enhances or expresses the spiritual life of the participant; and
- Evangelistic ministry: Social ministry enhances the spiritual life of others.
  (Unruh and Sider, 2005, p. 82)

Aspects of these four ministries are seen in other research on meanings attributed to social engagement by individual volunteers. Volunteers in FBOs have been found to embody the values and principles associated with religious belief through social engagement (Chapman and Hamalainen, 2011, p. 188). As opportunities arose to help the less fortunate, the volunteers perceived themselves as acting as representatives of their faith. This reinforced their sense of religious identity (p. 189). Similarly, theological significance was attributed to engagement as volunteers sought to bring about transformations – either through personal transformation or in transforming the lives of those less fortunate. Engagement in transformational activities allowed the volunteers to reinforce their sense of identity and belonging within their faith community while simultaneously strengthening their personal faith (p. 192). In addition to informing social

justice activities and engagement, theology can also shape perceptions of inequality. (Todd, McConnel and Suffrin, 2014, pp. 117-118)

To summarise, research on FBOs involved in social justice requires careful consideration. FBOs involved in social justice often deliver the same services as other FBOs, but have social justice as other part of their organisational activities. Further, FBOs involved in social justice through advocacy often have multiple goals that address a variety of social and political issues. Many FBOs are involved in social justice activities; however, there can be significant variance in what is understood as 'social justice' in different countries. Importantly, such variety can exist within social and economic contexts that might be close geographically. Here, social justice will be understood as the conditions required for individual and collective capacity, communication, and cooperation (Young, 2011, p. 39). The activities and methods of social justice engagement largely depends on the social context of the volunteers, and if the FBO is overseen by a congregation. The nature of FBOs has changed significantly over the last two decades, with international research suggesting that FBO activity has recently had more of a focus on addressing the social and structural causes of inequality rather than exclusively meeting needs. In addition, FBOs have become more professional and subject to government scrutiny and audit. It has been suggested that this change in the management of FBOs is attributed to secularisation and liberalisation. Lastly, the religious meanings attributed by participants to FBO activities has recieved some attention – either through embodying beliefs, forming identities or seeking transformation.

4.6 Religiosity and Volunteering

In this section, it will be argued that the espoused theologies of Christian volunteers must be given priority when understanding the meaning-making, motivation, and experiences of social engagement in FBOs. This is particularly important as the religious significance attributed to social engagement by professional theologians may be different from volunteers' experience. This argument about the priority of the volunteer voice will be achieved through a survey of the literature, with attention given to how religious affiliation and social engagement are interrelated. While the social networks found within congregations are a strong predictor of social engagement, religious belief has also been shown to correlate with volunteering. This section concludes by suggesting that more qualitative research and, hence, this thesis is needed to understand volunteer motivation and the theological significance of volunteering.

The relationship between religious affiliation and social engagement has been widely researched, with the literature suggesting a positive relationship between the two. Ruiter and De Graaf (2006) used data from 53 countries to show that regular church attendance correlated to higher rates of volunteering (p. 200) and religious volunteering potentially had a spill over effect into secular volunteering (p. 204). However, Ruiter and De Graaf (2006) acknowledged that their findings were appropriate only to Christian volunteering, as only 7% of the data came from non-Christian sources (p. 207). Similar research used data from 140 countries and found that the proportion of the population that attended church correlated with participation in volunteering activities (Lim and MacGregor, 2012, p. 745). Volunteering was highest in secular states with devout populations, and lower in moderately religious countries. Lim and MacGregor (2012) concluded that the national religious context was significant when considering the extent of volunteering (p. 746).

Further, the relationship between religiosity and social engagement was seen in research from 113 countries representing all major religions (Bennett, 2015). This study showed that religiously-affiliated populations were more likely to volunteer than those who were not, particularly those who attended religious services regularly (p. 90). Bennett argued that the religious context, and not simply Christian context, was important in shaping participation in social engagement (p. 92). While these findings suggest a strong relationship between religious affiliation and social engagement, they do not offer an explanation as to why this relationship exists. It cannot be assumed that the engagement of communities of faith and religiously based social networks are shaped solely by faith considerations.

Most of the evidence that implies a strong relationship between religious affiliation and social engagement comes from research conducted in the United States. Through their *Faith Matters* surveys, Putnam and Campbell (2010) found that religiosity had a positive effect on volunteering and charitable contributions (pp. 446-447). Even when other variables, such as age, gender, race, and education, were held constant, regular churchgoers were more likely to give money to charity, volunteer, donate blood, offer a seat to a stranger, and help someone find a job (p. 451). Religious Americans were more likely to contribute to the wider community, belong to community organisations, participate in local civic and political life and press for social reform (p. 455). Other research reached similar conclusions. Lam's (2002) study of religion, politics and social involvement in North America identified four dimensions of religiosity: participatory, private devotional, affiliative, and theological. She found that all dimensions promoted participation and membership within voluntary associations (Lam, 2002, p. 415). Similarly, other research found that

religiosity, as measured by church attendance and theological conservatism, caused people to become more civic-minded, including increased participation in volunteer activities (Gibson, 2008, p. 512). Much of the research, above, is consistent with the suggestion that "the social foundation of formal volunteering is religious" (Wilson and Musick, 1997, p. 710). While the relationship between church attendance and prosocial behaviour has been well established, there have been significant differences in explanations for this correlation. Typically, explanations differed in the attention given to the motivation and capacity for social engagement (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995, p. 3).

Ammerman (1997) described how churches and congregational life generated civic skills as a type of social capital (p. 211). She argued that:

> Every club that plans a special event, every society that needs officers and every congregation that asks its members to teach classes and chair committees provides opportunities for the development and exercise of civic skills. And because congregations are the single most available opportunity for voluntary participation, they are the single most egalitarian imparter of civic skills in this society. By engaging in practices of building up the fellowship, congregations also build up their communities. (Ammerman, 1997, p. 212)

Ammerman (1997) clearly articulated how churches encouraged prosocial behaviour. Her observations were reflected in research that found that the social networks of religious institutions, particularly those that encouraged participation within the congregation, also encouraged participation in secular organisations (Lam, 2002, p. 405). Similarly, active members of church organisations were more likely to participate in community life through civic organisations (Schwadel, 2005, p. 169). The strongest predictor of generosity and voluntarism were social networks, having friends within congregations, and participating in other religious social activities (Putnam and Campbell, 2010, pp. 472-475). Specifically, religious social networks positively impacted volunteering and civic activities (Lewis, MacGregor and Putnam, 2013, p. 340).

Two explanations have been offered to support the relationship between congregational life and increased levels of social engagement and civic responsibility (Wuthnow, 2004). First, he argued that churches supported a range of social service providers but their size and location limited opportunities for members to initiate programs of their own. Consequently, church members were encouraged and supported (morally and often

financially) in their involvement with other, possibly secular, service providers to engage with the community. Wuthnow (2004) argued that "congregations are more like staging grounds for service provision than like actual service providers" (p. 63). Second, he suggested that the social role that churches provided often gave support to social engagement. This was seen in developing civic skills like those described by Ammerman (1997) or through forums to reflect and participate in small groups with the local and wider community (Wuthnow, 2004, pp. 94-95).

The studies, above, suggest that the religious social networks found within congregations are conducive to social engagement. The greater rates of participation by religious individuals within the wider community has been explained through the civic skills developed within a congregation and religious social networks, including friendship circles and small groups for Bible study and reflection. However, while a range of explanations for this relationship have been given, it appears unlikely that a single explanation is appropriate. This is particularly so given churches differ greatly in terms of denomination, ethnicity, and socio-economic location.

On the other hand, religious belief (as distinct from involvement in religious communities) has also been shown to correlate with volunteering. Research on the effect of religious belief and social engagement has largely been focused in terms of the theological grounding for social engagement; personal religiosity and social engagement; and denominational influence. Each of these will be reviewed briefly.

The concept of 'free will' has been suggested to be necessary when considering the relationship between religious belief and volunteering (Haers and von Essen, 2015). Haers and von Essen (2015) investigated Catholic and Lutheran interpretations of 'neighbourly love' within the parable of the good Samaritan. They argued:

> The parable is a call to become neighbours: Our response to the challenge that is set before us reveals our free decision and our humanity…Being or becoming a neighbour, therefore, to Christians means taking responsibility for others out of compassion – not the easy, emotional compassion, but the tough demanding compassion that answers the call to commitment.
> (Haers and von Essen, 2015, p. 26)

They described how Christians, in forming and articulating their relationship with God, had an interconnectedness and interrelationship with creation. They explained:

> Volunteering is, in this perspective, committing to the interconnected world as creation, particularly there where the sense of interconnectedness is broken. Not surprisingly, Christians often want to engage in the struggle against poverty and exclusion or in the attempts to build a more sustainable world.
> (Haers and von Essen, 2015 p. 28)

By comparing concepts of 'free will' held by Martin Luther and Ignatius of Loyola (and consequently the Jesuit Volunteer Corps) they concluded that volunteers derive real meaning from the relationship with God (p. 39).

While Haers and von Essen (2015) provided a theological rationale for volunteering and social engagement, their conclusions on meaning-making were drawn not the voices of volunteers but the voices of professional theologians. Their analysis lacked the empirical basis needed to understand the meaning-making and experiences of Christian volunteers. There may be significant differences between the espoused theologies of Christian volunteers and formal theologies of professional theologians that are not addressed in research. Christians may be asked to volunteer and be provided with opportunities within their church, but that does not mean there is a clear relationship between the message presented from the pulpits and their motivation for action. Without empirical research the relationship between theology, engagement, and meaning-making cannot be properly understood.

The absence of espoused and operant theological data of volunteers is evident in other activism, social engagement and voluntarism research. For example, staff in an international FBO were given a Biblical understanding of Jesus' positive attitude towards women to help shape gender equality policy with the organisation (Tripp, 1999). Tripp (1999) then drew on Biblical resources to argue that Jesus challenged gender relations, promoted female involvement in the public sphere, and addressed female sexual exploitation (pp. 65-67). She did not research the personal beliefs of the staff and; thus, the "basis for mutual understanding and discussion" (p. 65) she described simply may not have existed among the staff. In another context, Biblical teachings were applied to environmental engagement within fisheries (Bratton, 2001). It was argued that Christian ethics could provide a "foci for problem solving, and inspiration to be better care for the environment" (p. 6). Both studies showed the disparity in the normative and operant theologies of professional theologians and the espoused and operant theologies of volunteers involved in social engagement. In these studies, it was assumed that those

involved within social contexts were receptive to, and acted upon, theological imperatives through social engagement because they were Christian. However, there was no empirical evidence that this was the case. To determine the religious and theological meanings attributed to the volunteer experience, the voices of volunteers must be given priority.

While individual theology and volunteering has not seen much empirical research, there has been significant attention directed towards personal religiosity and social engagement. To summarise, the literature supports a positive association between personal religiosity and volunteerism. However, research comparing social engagement and religious denomination has yielded inconsistent findings. Protestant groups had the strongest connection to volunteering, and those who identified as evangelical participate more in both church-related and general volunteering (Park and Smith, 2000, p. 284). Even when considering the four dimensions of religiosity (participatory, personal devotional, affiliative and theological), Protestants were more likely to join voluntary associations across all religious traditions (Lam, 2002, p. 415). In contrast, Catholic and Protestant religious volunteering was compared (Ruiter and De Graaf, 2006) and it was found that Catholics were far more likely to undertake non-religious volunteering (p. 204).

However, other research has suggested that religiosity has no effect on voluntary participation. Instead, education and income (Tang, 2006, p. 382) have been shown to be a more reliable predictor across most studies. Studies have found no evidence to suggest that volunteers have greater intrinsic religiosity than non-volunteers, and there are few relationships between religious beliefs and rates of volunteering (Cnaan, Kasternakis and Wineburg, 1993, p. 48). Similarly, other non-religious factors, such as community size and age, have been found to correlate positively to rates of volunteering (Putnam, 2000, p. 119). As religious and civic associations have declined, the rates of volunteering among those who had never attended church have tripled (p. 129). Importantly, other factors that affect rates of volunteering – such as church attendance, friendships, and gender – vary with age (p. 386). In later life, gender has been found to be a more reliable predictor than religiosity (Manning, 2010, pp. 133-134).

Australian research on Christian social engagement and volunteering has shown a positive relationship between engagement and religiosity. Religious volunteers have been found to volunteer at significantly higher rates than those who did not, and those who attended religious services more frequently were more likely to volunteer (Lyons and Nivison-Smith, 2006, p. 28). However, significant differences were found between volunteers who

identified as religious. For example, highly committed Christians were less likely to volunteer in non-religious organisations and would generally volunteer less time overall (p. 30). Those who identified as religious, but rarely attended church services, tended to volunteer less. However, those who did volunteer would contribute for longer periods (p. 34). However, the research did not examine volunteers' experiences and no suggestions were offered to explain the data.

Similar findings were found in other research. Leonard and Bellamy (2006) found that church attendance correlated with increased rates of volunteering. They suggested that this was due to the structured opportunities for volunteering presented during church services. They also found that high rates of church-related volunteering did not reduce the rates of secular volunteering (Leonard and Bellamy, 2006, p. 23). This research was expanded to include more data on volunteering (Leonard, Bellamy and Ollerton, 2009) and suggested that demographics, such as age, gender, and place of birth, may explain differences in rates of volunteering between denominations (pp. 5-6). Mollidor, Hancock and Pepper (2015) also found increased rates of volunteering among church attendees and differences in volunteering between denominations (p. 28).

A comparative study of religiosity and volunteering in Australia and the US (Bellamy and Leonard, 2015) suggested that religious social networks were not as significant to volunteering in Australia as in the US (p. 137). They argued that this was due either the different rates of church attendance in the two countries or the data for both studies being skewed towards older adults (p. 139). Religious motivations were cited as motivation for volunteering within secular organisations, but respondents were unable to articulate clearly the connection between their faith and their secular volunteering (pp. 139-140).

To summarise, the relationship between religiosity and volunteering is complex. International and Australian research suggests a positive relationship between church attendance and the rates of volunteering. However, the nature and cause of this relationship has not been examined in any great detail. In most of these studies, the experiences of volunteers have not been considered, and the ordinary theologies of Christian volunteers have not been included in any previous analysis. A qualitative approach is needed to give appropriate depth to volunteer experiences and the meanings associated with volunteering. If religiosity is related to rates of volunteering then the basis of this relationship – such as social networks, theology, or other demographics – needs to be given appropriate attention.

4.7 Volunteer Motivation

Volunteer motivation has been well researched over the past two decades. Much of the literature has suggested that motivation stems from either a sense of altruism, self-interest, or from social and institutional connections. In this section, two theories of motivation will be reviewed: one functional, the other sociological. The functional approach is grounded in the assumption that participants become engaged in volunteering to satisfy their psychological functions, such as embodying values or meeting career-related objectives. The sociological approach to volunteer motivation directs attention to the networks, structures and relationships that are conducive to social engagement. The functional approach can explain why people volunteer but not how they became involved. Conversely, the sociological approach explains how people become involved in volunteering, but not why they volunteer (Musick and Wilson, 2007, p. 55). Here, both approaches will be explored, and it will be argued that a balanced approach to understanding Christian social engagement requires both functional and sociological approaches to be considered.

The functional approach to motivation is underpinned by the assumption that people engage in similar volunteering activities to fulfil different psychological functions. Six motivational functions have been identified for volunteering. These motivational functions are values (altruistic concerns towards others), understanding (opportunity to obtain knowledge, skills, abilities or experience), social (engaging in social relationships or activities), career (work for career-related benefits), protective (alleviating feelings of guilt), and enhancement (positive personal development or growth) (Clary et al., 1998, pp. 1517-1518).

These six motivational functions have been reflected in many studies on volunteering. For example, Bloom and Kilgore (2003) found an inseparability between altruistic and self-interested behaviour in their ethnographic study of volunteering. They described how participants in their study felt motivated to volunteer as they had been 'blessed with much' and felt an obligation to 'give back' to the community. The participants in their study described how volunteering provided an opportunity for them to find meaning, purpose and personal growth in their own lives (Bloom and Kilgore, 2003, p. 437). Similarly, motivational functions were reflected in Yeung's (2004) octagon model of volunteer motivation. She described how self-fulfilment, personal well-being, and reward were found in conjunction with recognising special needs, a desire to help, and the provision of interactional support by the volunteers (pp. 33-34). Lastly, volunteer motives have been

found to be oriented to the self or the other but were often found together within the same expression (MacNeela, 2008). MacNeela (2008) gave a typical response from participants that showed the interconnection: "I do it because I think somebody has to do it [i.e., principled, other-orientation], and I like doing it [i.e., self-orientation]" (p. 130). Like other research, participants became involved in volunteering due to pre-existing connections to organisations, institutions, or relationships with people associated with a particular cause (p. 131).

Functional motivations are necessarily interactionist (Clary et al.,1998, p. 1518). The functional approach has been shown to be useful in understanding the processes and experiences of volunteering, particularly for understanding why volunteers initiate engagement and how they measure their satisfaction with engagement (Snyder, Clary and Stukas, 2000, p. 375). Organisations could more easily recruit and retain volunteers if they appealed to each of these psychological functions (pp. 380-382). This is particularly important as functional motivations are reflected in the tasks selected by volunteers (Houle, Sagarin and Kaplan, 2005). Research suggests that volunteers differentiate tasks and treat them differently (p. 342) based on their personal motives (p. 343). They suggest that better outcomes could be found for organisations by allowing volunteers to perform tasks that aligned with their personal motives. Other research suggested that career-related motives decreased with age (Okun and Schultz, 2003, p. 237) while social motives increased (p. 238). Volunteer role-identity has been found to shape motives and sustained engagement (Penner, 2002, p. 463), and this has been shown to correlate with perceived volunteer expectations (Finkelstein, Penner and Brannick, 2005, p. 415). The functional approach has been used widely in social research: for example, in the motivation and experience of AIDS volunteering (Omoto and Snyder, 2002); the relationship between motives and organisational citizenship (Rioux and Penner, 2001); and correlations between motives and gender (Einolf, 2011). However, using the functional approach to volunteers' motivations is not without its challenges. Volunteer motivations can be difficult to determine, even when articulated clearly by participants (Musick and Wilson, 2007, p. 55).

In contrast, the approaches taken by sociologists often differ from psychological theories of motivation in three distinct ways. First, in sociological research volunteer motivations refer to specific outcomes. Volunteers can be motivated towards a desired result that follows from a specific course of action. This differs from general psychological traits, such as 'being generous', 'caring', or 'philanthropic'. Second, reasons provided for volunteering are

treated with scepticism by sociologists. Single reasons for volunteering are unlikely, and some motivations could be unacknowledged or even be unconscious. Lastly, the motivating factors provided by participants may not be sufficient to explain their actions. The acknowledgement of a specific outcome may not explain why a course of action was chosen (Musick and Wilson, 2007, pp. 54-55). Although functional motive theory is well established in the literature, some functions are not specifically related to volunteering (cf. Allen, 2003; Ingledew and Markland, 2008) and may be served through other types of activities (Musick and Wilson, 2007, p. 64).

The sociological approach draws on the assumption that volunteering is a social phenomenon and is subject to the relationships, associations, interactions, and structures within society. Volunteering can be both enabled or constrained by social structures (Musick and Wilson, 2007, p. 218) and developmental stages (p. 229). The children of parents who volunteered are more likely to volunteer themselves (p. 229); youth voluntarism correlated to volunteering in middle age (p. 234); and there is a continuity in volunteering towards later life (p. 264). Musick and Wilson (2007) went on to describe how membership within large social networks – both organisational and informal – tended to result in higher rates of volunteering (pp. 269-270). Membership within different social networks could also explain other attributes associated with volunteering, such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, and socio-economic status (p. 285). Musick and Wilson's (2007) findings were supported elsewhere in the literature. Volunteering has been correlated to education, age, and religious affiliation (Bekkers, 2010, p. 378), and a relationship was found between the use of social media and participation in civic and political life (Boulianne, 2015, p. 534). Gender also contributed to rates of participation (Einolf, 2011; Baldock, 1998).

Rather than using either a functional motivational approach or a sociological approach, some studies have drawn on both approaches to develop a more nuanced understanding of volunteering and social engagement (Bekkers, 2005, 2010; Penner, 2002; Hustinix et al., 2010). Vaisey (2009) argued that both the social and psychological influences needed to be considered when studying the motivations for action (p. 1676) and offered a dual-process model of justification/motivation for understanding the ways in which culture was implicated in action. Similarly, in his review of volunteering research, Wilson (2012) outlined three main foci – subjective dispositions, human resources, and social context. For him, subjective dispositions were used as an overarching term for the motives, attitudes, norms, and values that were used by people to interpret social life (p. 179).

Human resources described the individual characteristics or their status, such as race, gender, and class, that condition volunteerism (p. 183) and social context referred to the networks and structures that enabled or constrained volunteerism (p. 190). Each approach offered insights into volunteering and, collectively, can be used to enrich social research (p. 178).

For research on socially-engaged Christians, both the functional and sociological motives need to be considered. It is not difficult to see that functional motivations may align with theological imperatives to become involved in the lives of the needy. Similarly, for Christians volunteering through an FBO connected with a church or congregation, sociological motivations may be reflected through the social, organisational, or institutional networks formed by a church community. In this research, both the functional and sociological approaches to volunteer motivations will be considered to provide greater depth and nuance to volunteer experience.

4.8 Social Capital

In this section, social capital concepts will be investigated to better understand the relationship between theology and social life for volunteers in FBOs. I will argue that indicators of social capital provide an empirical basis for the relationships articulated by participants. In this section, the origins and use of social capital in research will be reviewed and it will be argued that bridging, defined as activities to develop ties between heterogenous groups (Wuthnow, 2002, p. 670), provides sufficient indicators of social capital.

Bourdieu (1985) was the first to provide a theoretical foundation for social capital as the relationships within social networks. He identified capital as the accumulated materialised or embodied labour within societal structures, which gave actors agency (p. 46). Social capital as one form of capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network or more or less institutionalised relationships or mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 51). By this Bourdieu (1985) meant membership within groups or networks transformed new or established relationships into ones that could develop mutual physical or symbolic exchange and enhance durability (p. 52).

Coleman's (1988) understanding of social capital differed from Bourdieu's (1985) networks by focusing on functionality. Coleman (1988) argued that social capital was of most value

in identifying how social structures facilitated actions – how structures provided agency (p. S98). Social capital was found in the transformative relations between people (p. S100) and existed in three forms: obligations and expectations; information acquisition; and norms and sanctions (pp. S102 – S105).

Coleman's (1988) theoretical grounding provides the most insight into social structures and the motivations of individual actors in groups attempting to enact social change. The relationships between actors inform group norms and sanctions. Hence, the motivations that underpin relationships are essential for the study of social capital (pp. S104-S105). Similarly, the motivations of actors who did not receive any immediate benefit were of particular import (Portes, 1998), as such an exchange embodied the core processes that a study of social capital seeks to elicit (pp. 5-6). The motives of groups mobilised around a cause or movement– those identified as altruistic sources of social capital (Portes and Landolt, 2000, p. 533) – were manifested through the obligations of the individual actors.

While Bourdieu (1985) and Coleman (1988) provided strong theoretical bases for social capital as a sociological tool, it was Putnam (1993) who popularised the term in his studies on civic life and American community life (Putnam, 2000). Putnam (1993) acknowledged the features of social capital identified by Coleman (1988), including trust, obligations, and reciprocity. However, Putnam (1995) placed greater emphasis on social capital as a public good. This was different from Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu's (1985) theoretical grounding. For Putnam (1995), social capital described the networks and norms themselves and not the conditions that allowed these to be developed. He later extended his notion of social capital to include "[the] features of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1995, p. 67). For Putnam (1995), this largely involved networks of civic engagement.

Putnam's (1995) conclusions and the usefulness of his conceptualisation of social capital have been strongly critiqued (Portes, 1998). In particular, the logical circularity of social capital as a cause and an effect undermined Putnam's contribution (Portes, 1998, pp. 18-20). His positive emphasis on social capital has been disputed and it has been argued that he conflated the features and outcomes of social capital. Actions such as voting and volunteering could be indicators of civic engagement and, potentially, outcomes of social capital, but should not be confused with social capital itself, which; for example, could have detrimental effects on types of civic engagement (Paxton, 1999, p. 101).

By the time Putnam (2000) published his famous work, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, most of the criticisms of his definitions and measures of social capital were already well established. Despite the critiques of his methodology and scope of this work, he provided insights into different forms of social capital through refining the notion of bonding and bridging. For Putnam (2000), bonding was exclusive and reinforced group identities and homogeneity. The benefits of bonding included "specific reciprocity and mobilising solidarity" (p. 22). In contrast, bridging was more inclusive. Bridging generated broader identities and reciprocity (p. 23) and allowed for greater access to external resources and information. Wuthnow (2002) summarised bridging as "more likely to consist of less intimate, even "weak" ties, and focuses on relationships that span different groups, linking heterogeneous groups together and providing a means of strengthening the larger society" (p. 670).

The distinction between bridging and bonding resulted in increased research into social capital among civically-engaged groups. Development and policy research suggested that bonding and bridging related to different outcomes within communities (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000) and was better for researching the sources of social capital (p. 226). Similarly, bridging and bonding has been investigated within rural communities (Leonard and Onyx, 2003), between neighbours and communities (Larsen et al., 2004; Agnitsch, Flora and Ryan, 2006), and within both secular and faith-based organisations (Lockhart, 2005). However, much of the research was quantitative and tended to conflate social capital and the outcomes or consequences of that social capital. In contrast, Lichterman's (2005) qualitative study into the challenges of religious and civic groups, when attempting to bridge social and cultural barriers, provided interesting insights without any confusing manifestations of social capital.

The concepts of social capital and bridging can provide an empirical basis for the relationship between theology and social engagement. The extent of theological influences on social life may be seen through examining the indicators of social capital, such as obligations, expectations, and normative behaviours. These indicators of social capital are likely to be seen in the bridging activities of FBOs. As FBOs largely direct their activities toward a disadvantaged or marginalised group, inevitably, relationships are going to be formed between volunteers and the recipients of their services. The degree to which social capital is nurtured depends on the success of the bridging activities – how well resources and information are distributed, and the degree of cooperation and exchange. This research seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of theology in generating social

capital, particularly the role of theology as a motivation for enacting social change through meaningful relationships. This may be achieved by taking a qualitative approach by providing volunteers with an opportunity to describe the motivations, relationships, and meanings attributed to social engagement.

4.9 Summary

In this chapter, four aspects of the literature relevant to FBOs and volunteering was reviewed: ways to understand 'faith-based organisations'; reviewing FBO activities; surveying volunteer motives and opportunities; and using social capital concepts to understand relationships. Further, some gaps in the literature were established and the following research will attend to these gaps.

First, the term 'faith-based organisation' was explored through reviewing research conducted on the activities of FBOs, the significance of faith in FBOs, and the typologies developed to assist such research. It was found that the activities of secular and faith-based organisations were difficult to differentiate in terms of the activities and outcomes of volunteering activities. The use of the term 'faith-based' has been shown to be problematic, as there is no common understanding of how faith elements should be understood within organisations. The differences in theology and social contexts in seemingly similar FBOs highlighted how any investigation into the religious elements of FBOs needed to be able understand the subtleties of religious expression. Aside from issues related to faith elements, even using the term 'faith-based organisation' has been shown to be difficult as definitions vary internationally and over different time periods. Due to the difficulty in conceptualising different elements of FBO activity no single typology was determined to be 'correct.' Instead, for this research each FBO studied will be compared to various models to provide insight into their structures and activities. This review also identified a gap in the current literature – there are few qualitative Australian studies on the experiences of volunteers in FBOs. This research attends to this gap by investigating three FBOs engaged in different types of social engagement activities.

Second, the literature was surveyed for FBOs that focused on similar groups or causes. Australian and international studies on FBOs working with refugees and the homeless were considered along with FBOs with a strong emphasis on social justice. Studies involving FBOs working exclusively with refugees are scarce, so the literature was extended to include religious groups from churches and congregations. Like FBOs engaged in other areas, the activities of religious groups were difficult to differentiate from

secular organisations. Generally, it was found that religious groups offered support for refugees through material, non-material, and emotional support. By addressing each of these needs, religious groups were able to engage meaningfully with refugees to ease their transition into a foreign culture and build communities. However, there were two significant areas that have not been adequately addressed in the literature. First, the significance of faith, theology, or religious expression has not been examined for volunteers working with refugees in FBOs. Second, the effect of theology shaping the meaning-making and expression of volunteer engagement with refugees has not been addressed. This research will attend to both of these by researching *New Family* – a Christian FBO that provides a range of services and support for refugees and recently arrived immigrants.

Attention was then directed towards FBOs involved with the homeless. Research on FBOs involved with the homeless is diverse and covers a broad range of activities related to social engagement. International research has focused on the differences between FBOs associated with different denominations; the types of activities coordinated by different groups; and the consequences of the increased professionalisation of FBOs. Much of the research was quantitative; however, there are a number of qualitative studies that address the motivations, interactions, and identity formation that occurs as volunteers engage with the homeless. Australian research on FBOs involved with the homeless is comparatively sparse, highlighting the need for further study. This research will contribute to the literature on Australian FBOs working with the homeless by providing a more nuanced account of the experiences of volunteers at *The Truck* using a qualitative methodology. The motivations and opportunities for engagement with the homeless will be examined to better understand the motivations, challenges, and experiences of FBO volunteers.

Next, the development of social justice movements was reviewed. Attention was directed towards Christian groups that attempted to bring about social change by addressing the causes of injustice rather than meeting individual needs exclusively. This approach informs the activities of Christian groups engaged with the homeless, poor, elderly, and disabled. Internationally, FBOs deliver welfare services once covered by the state, and engage in actions to bring about systematic change through capacity building and political action. However, despite little change in the broad objectives of FBOs bringing about systemic change, the understanding of what is meant by 'social justice' is diverse, as are motivations to become involved in social justice activities. Despite the attention given to social justice activities in the US and Europe, there has been little research on Christian

social justice movements and organisations in Australia. This research will draw attention to the social justice activities of *Engage*. The challenges, successes, and experiences of the volunteers will contribute to the literature by examining how theology shapes the nature of volunteer engagement and bridging.

Third, the paths to involvement in volunteering were explored by reviewing the literature connecting religiosity and volunteering, and by examining the theories about motivation and volunteering. The connection between religiosity and volunteering has seen significant research, particularly in the US, with studies showing increased rates of prosocial behaviours among regular church attendees. However, the interpretation of the data has been varied. Some studies suggested that faith elements were conducive to volunteering activities while others suggested that the social networks and institutional environments encouraged volunteering. Much of the research that attempted to address the religious or theological elements of volunteer experience either did not move beyond denominational affiliations, or give appropriate attention to faith expressions articulated by volunteers. In much of the research that addressed faith expressions, the theological meanings attributed to social engagement was provided by professional theologians rather than those involved in volunteering. I suggest that the espoused and operant theologies of volunteers need to be given priority to understand meaning-making and the motives for engagement.

Theories about volunteer motivation were also considered. Much of the literature follows two general theories of motivation – psychological functional and sociological. Both approaches were surveyed before concluding that a third approach that incorporates both perspectives is most appropriate. A deeper understanding of involvement in volunteering activities could be developed by considering motives, attitudes, social and demographic characteristics, and social context. The extent and prevalence of functional and sociological motivations will be examined in this research. As the FBOs involved in this research are Christian, attention will be directed to the influence of church-life (where appropriate) and theology. As outlined in Chapter Three, the current research will use theological frames to differentiate theological influences but also draw attention to the sociological elements of motivation. The relationship between church attendance and volunteering has seen little qualitative research and this research will attend to that gap.

Fourth, the relationships developed by volunteers were argued to be identified by observing indicators for social capital. The development and use of social capital in this research was reviewed before arguing that different motivations may be manifested as

bridging social capital. For Christians involved in disadvantaged communities, theology may be reflected in the types of activities and relationships nurtured. The review of the concepts of social capital drew attention to two significant gaps in the literature that will addressed by this research. First, this research addresses a gap by providing qualitative research to understand how religious groups develop social capital through bridging activities. Each of the FBOs in this research directed their attention to disadvantaged groups. The nature of the relationships nurtured through their activities offers further details into how social capital is developed. Second, this research gives theology, social engagement, and relationships an empirical basis using social capital concepts.

CHAPTER FIVE - METHODOLOGY[13]

5.1 Introduction

This research uses an ethnographic approach to further understand the relationship between theology and social life in Australian Christian FBOs. A qualitative ethnographic approach was taken so that the data collected accurately represented the FBOs and their members, and that theory emerged from the data. This approach ensured descriptive, explanatory, and relevant findings while providing a meaningful contribution to this field of research. In this chapter, the research approach, data collection methods, and data analysis will be explained.

This chapter will proceed as follows. First, the ethnographic approach to this research will be explained. It will be argued that a qualitative approach to investigate individual and collective behaviour can be used to understand the practices and meaning-making of volunteers in Christian FBOs. Second, the mixed-method ethnographic approach undertaken in this research will be outlined. Participant-observations and interviews are used in this research and the benefits and challenges of each will be discussed. Participant-observation allows activities to be observed rather than reported and allows a rapport to develop between the researcher and the participants. Similarly, interviews provide a depth and understanding of social interactions, motives, and reflections. Third, the method of data analysis will be explained. The data in this research were subject to thematic analysis drawn from the methods of grounded theory. An iterative approach to data analysis will be described, where the data from participant-observations shape the interviews, which then directs attention to back to different aspects of participant-observation.

5.2 Data Collection and Analysis

In this section, the ethnographic approach, research methods, and data analysis will be described for this current research. First, it will be argued that an ethnographic approach directs attention to the construction and maintenance of cultural meanings in different social contexts. Second, it will be argued that ethnographic techniques provide authentic representations of the actors and greater contextual information than other methods. Third, participant-observation and interview techniques will be described, and the limitations of

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[13] The names of the FBOs, volunteers and associated organisations, have been given pseudonyms in this thesis.

each will be discussed. Fourth, the insider/outsider problem of social research will also be addressed. Fifth, and finally, the data analysis for this this research will be described. An iterative process of data collection and analysis was used to generate theory in this research. In short, this process involved an initial extended period of participant-observations, then iterating the interviews and participant-observations until each consenting volunteer was interviewed. The interview was coded, and memos were made for directions for further research and data collection. Lastly, the entire data were analysed using thematic analysis and theological frames.

Ethnography is the recording of social life or groups that requires both observation and participation in the social worlds of the research subjects (Charmaz, 2014, p. 35). Goldbart and Hustler (2005) described how "[t]he distinctive features [of ethnographic research] revolve around the notions of people as *meaning*-makers, around an emphasis on understanding how people *interpret* their worlds, and the need to understand the particular cultural worlds in which people live and which they both construct and utilise." (p. 16). Social behaviour cannot be limited to definitions about the predicted and controlled 'variables', given that people construct and maintain cultural meanings that affect their actions. Rather, ethnographic research explores the origin and expression of social phenomena and is necessarily qualitative, and this is understood here as "a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). The meanings, functions, and interpretations of human behaviour are investigated (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998, p. 248) for transferable themes across social contexts, to the generalise findings, or to generate theory (Blaikie, 2010, pp. 192-194). Further, ethnographic research is situated in what Spickard, Landres, and McGuire (2002) described as particulariser research:

> [Particulariser researchers] do not look for such general social laws, but seek to understand specific communities of people. They focus on people's intentions: Why do these people say what they do? What are they intending when they pray? What do they mean when they say they are serving "God" or "the gods"? Such questions help them understand individuals and communities rather than explaining whole societies. (Spickard et al., 2002, p. 2)

The ethnographic approach aligns with the research aims of the current research – to understand the world that socially-engaged FBO volunteers construct to explain the cultural meanings, actions, and contexts that are central to their group. Similarly,

98

ethnographic methods are appropriate to represent the voices and meanings of the participants, document group and individual engagement and to investigate the relationships developed by the volunteers in this research.

Most qualitative ethnographic research uses participant-observations and interviews to collect data (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4). Cultural meanings and actions are best understood when researchers have a role as a participant within the group being studied (Robson, 2002, p. 314). The life experiences, social conventions, and symbolism of the group are shared with the researcher as a participant-observer. However, interviews are also required to obtain individual perspectives, and these personal responses give nuance and depth to social phenomena. Other techniques, such as surveys, do not offer the same insights into the feelings, processes, and meaning-making structures that in-depth interviews can (Smith and Denton, 2005, pp. 118-119). Both techniques are used in this current research. In what follows, participant-observation and interview data collection techniques will be outlined. The purpose, benefits, and limitations of each will be discussed before outlining how each approach is used in this research.

Participant Observation

The use of participant-observation methods within ethnographic research is well established and has made significant contributions to the sociology of religion (Tedlock, 1991; Scharen and Vigen, 2011). Participant-observation allows researchers to be immersed in the lives of those being studied. Religious and social practices may be observed directly to obtain insights into the behaviours and interactions within a particular social context (Roberts and Yamane, 2012, p. 30). This approach has three advantages: First, the data collected is what Geertz (1973) described as 'thick'. In doing this, he referred to the incorporation of complex conceptual structures, nuances in gestures and activities, social structures and interpretations of events when collecting ethnographic data (pp. 7-10). Second, data collected using participant-observation methods are, fundamentally, *social* data as opposed to *individual* data (Roberts and Yamane, 2012, p. 30). The social aspects of group activity cannot be found in data collected from individuals using alternative methods. Third, participant-observation allowed social behaviour to be directly observed. The interactions within social systems and organisations, and between individuals in such systems, may be observed and recorded directly by the researcher rather than by asking individuals non-specific questions about a social activity. Participant-observation allows researchers to observe and record nuances and subtleties that could be missed by researchers relying on interviews or surveys (pp. 30-31).

Writing field notes from participant-observation is necessary for ethnographic research. Ethnographic studies must give priority to the phenomena or processes being studied to conceptualise what occurs in terms of lived experience (Charmaz, 2006, p. 22). Field notes should be written that address initial impressions, such as the size, people, and culture of the physical environment and also significant or unexpected events (from both the researchers' and participants' perspectives) that occur in the location; routines and organised activities; and changes over time (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011, pp. 24-29). Nine dimensions of descriptive observations were used in this research. These dimensions draw attention to the space; actors; activities; objects; acts; events; time; goals; and feelings (Robson, 2002, p. 320) in a social location. Observations of religious institutions have a similar structure but with an increased focus on religion, affiliation, symbolic references, and ritual (McGuire, 2002, pp. 331-334).

Prus (1996) developed a guide to study 'generic social processes' in ethnographic research to direct researchers towards the meanings, experiences, and practices of social life (p. 164). His guide offered advice on addressing the significance of the perspectives, identities, challenges of engagement experiences, and how relationships between groups affect organisational activities and cultural context (pp. 151-162). Prus' (1986) guide to generic social processes offers five benefits for ethnographic research. First, they provide coherence to analytical frameworks, theory and research; second, they direct researchers towards inter-disciplinary research; third, they stimulate new areas of research; fourth, they provide a common frame of reference for comparative social research; and fifth, the generic social processes stimulate conceptually coherent and empirically grounded connections across social science fields (p. 165). These have been widely drawn upon for collecting and analysing qualitative data (see Charmaz (2014), Emerson et al. (2011) and Bischoping (2005)) and are appropriate to use in the current research.

Lastly, Charmaz offered a series of questions (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 43-44) for researchers to consider when writing field notes from observations. For the current research, the works of Charmaz (2014), Emerson (2011), Robson (2002), Prus (1986), and McGuire (2002) were integrated into an observation guide for FBOs. These arepresented in Table 2.

Table 2: Observation Guide for FBOs

Location	The physical setting of the organisation, including the uses of space, objects (and their positions), interior and exterior features, and socio-economic identifiers for volunteers/recipients.	What strikes you as noteworthy? How do people become part of the setting? What symbols are observed? How are material resources involved? What resources are needed for action? Who has access to resources? Who maintains, controls, distributes resources?
Social features (members)	The names and roles of volunteers involved in social engagement. Age, gender, ethnicity, social and cultural identifiers to be noted.	
Social features (behaviour and interactions)	How the social behaviours of the volunteers' shape interactions and relationships between other volunteers and/or recipients, including hierarchical differences (including organisational/affiliation). Language and other symbolic exchange to be noted.	What is happening in the setting? What are people doing? Why are they doing it? What is most noteworthy, interesting or telling? What hierarchies can be discerned? On what are the hierarchies based? How do participants use language? What symbols are shared?
Activities (structural and organisational)	The core activities of the organisation – including type, goals, and structure of service delivery; activities of individual actors; regularity of activities; sequence of events; patterns; and changes over time.	What patterns of actions can be discerned? What do different participants in the setting seek to accomplish? To which larger groups or networks are participants and/or their actions connected? What activities are judged as effective? To whom are participants accountable?
Reflection	Recording impressions; significant, unusual, or unexpected events; changes in routine, roles, or membership; positive and or negative experiences; and emotional experiences for the participants and the researcher.	Which actions, experiences, and events routinely occur? What actions, experiences and events are unusual, surprising, and/or cause for consternation? What questions occurred while observing? On what criteria do participants judge actions?
Planning notes	Any of the above observations that require further attention to be noted for subsequent organisational activities, particularly reflection. Any individual interactions that require interpretation or elaboration in interviews to be noted.	

Adapted from (McGuire, 2002, pp. 331-334) and (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 43-44).

Participant observation was used in the current research in three ways. The observation guide and advice from ethnographic scholars (Geertz, 1973; Robson, 2002; McGuire, 2002; Emerson et al., 2011; Roberts and Yamane, 2012; Charmaz, 2014) was followed throughout the research. First, the nature of the relationships between volunteers was observed directly, as were the relationships between the volunteers and recipients of their services. Participant-observation allowed detailed descriptions of the complexity of the interactions, symbols, and exchanges that occurred while volunteering. At each location, the questions, comments, and opinions of each of the participants were noted as well as any textual references (theological or otherwise) and interpretations offered. Significant events or interactions between group members were noted, particularly those in which there was noticeable tension, discord or uniform agreement.

Second, participant-observation was used to collect data on the procedures, routines, and purposes for social engagement at each FBO location. The core activities and roles of the volunteers were recorded, as were changes that occurred during the period of study. Third, participant-observation was used to build trust and rapport between the researcher and the participants so that social data collection could occur more easily and, potentially, be used to deepen the interviews. The data collected from participant-observation was used to develop general interview questions for the participants, and questions specific to the participants and their individual experiences.

Participant-observation was undertaken for a minimum of three months prior to any interviews at each research site. The data collected from participant-observations were used to develop general interview questions for participants, as well as questions specific to the participants and their individual experiences.

Like all methodological approaches to social research, participant-observation is not without its challenges. While participant-observation allows researchers to obtain unique insights into the activities through participation and, possibly, by becoming absorbed into the culture of a group, it may be easy to become distracted from what should be the focus of participation – collecting data. To minimise this risk, note-taking should be consistently undertaken as soon as possible after participation to ensure accuracy (Jones and Somekh, 2005, pp. 138-139).

Further, the presence of a researcher impacts the activities of the organisation. Researchers can cause participants to feel tense, have a heightened sense of performance or, possibly, cease engagement. To minimise this risk, researchers should

attempt to reduce organisational impact by conforming to the culture and context of the participants to signify an equality of status (Jones and Somekh, 2005, p. 140). Similarly, it is often essential for researchers working in different cultural settings to participate in group activities to gain acceptance and develop trust (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011, pp. 34-36). However, some researchers have removed themselves from their research context if they felt they were losing their objectivity or compromising their ability to interpret or analyse data (p. 37).

Lastly, insider/outsider problems can be challenging in researching religious life. Stringer (2002) summarised the insider/outsider problem:

> The 'insider/outsider problem' concerned two apparently conflicting positions. On the one hand, there were those who suggested that there was something in 'religion' that meant that those who did not share a 'religious outlook' could not hope to understand the 'real' nature of religion at all. Alternatively, there were those who argue that researchers who were also members of the religion being studied were so involved in what was happening that they could not possibly hope to understand the religion from a truly 'objective' position. (Stringer, 2002, p. 2)

These conflicting positions pose challenges for social researchers. As outsiders, researchers use sociological tools to study patterns of group behaviour and meaning that is found through empirical data. In contrast, an insider understands the meanings, beliefs, and actions through identifying with the group being studied (McCutcheon, 1999, pp. 3- 6). To further complicate matters, the terms 'insider' and 'outsider' are not mutually exclusive (Livezey, 2002, pp 155-156).

However, advice has been offered by social researchers. McGuire (2008) recommended that any physical note-taking should not be undertaken during worship services as it signals the researcher's role. Researchers should not present themselves to be anything other than their real identity, and clearly explain the purpose of their presence (p. 329). This is particularly important as differences and similarities between the researcher and the participants need to be respected to make communication and relationships possible (Collins, 2002, p. 81). The nature of relationships can change over time, and researchers need to be aware that their experiences may differ from the participants' experiences (Nesbitt, 2002, p. 133). Guest (2002) described his research on Christian organisations and his place as a non-Christian researcher. He explained that he portrayed himself as an

agnostic sympathiser, but noted how his research progressed well because he was open to discuss personal religious beliefs as discussions that arose might not have necessarily arisen without this disclosure. (Guest, 2002, pp. 42-43)

The advice offered above clarified my role as a researcher in two distinct ways. First, care was taken to ensure that data were collected as accurately and carefully as possible. Notes were made immediately after the engagement activities, either in my vehicle or after a short drive if the vehicle was close to the participants. In addition, care was taken to develop relationships that were friendly but did not develop into friendships or other close relationships. Any offers for increased contact outside of the engagement activities were declined in order to remain detached. Second, throughout the research, care was taken to be honest and upfront about my role as a researcher and identification as a non-Christian. Similarly, I did not contribute to political discussions to avoid directing the interactions that took place and to avoid any potential conflict.

Interviewing

The use of interview methods in ethnographic studies is well researched. Interviewing is more than simply a tool for social researchers; it is a means to discern the discursive structures of the worlds of the participants (Barbour and Schostak, 2005, p. 43). Rather than focusing on data collection in context, interviews remove researchers and participants from their shared environment, so social interactions can be reported instead of observed. Interviewing allows participants to give a greater depth to social interactions and interpretations of events and this provides a greater understanding of social life than can be achieved through participant-observation (Blaikie, 2010, p. 207).

Interviews provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on, and articulate, their own views and experiences within an organisation. Interviews can be differentiated into three types: fully structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. The type of interview needs to be chosen carefully as there can be a connection between the style of interview and the depth of response being sought (Robson, 2002, p. 269). Fully structured interviews typically have predetermined questions in a specific order to ensure consistency in patterns and responses. Semi-structured interviews also have predetermined questions. However, the questions can be modified or omitted based on the interviewer's perception of appropriateness as an interview progresses. Unstructured interviews contain no fixed questions and, instead, focus on general topics or concerns. In this way, unstructured interviews are more like prolonged, informal conversations (p. 270). Semi-structured

interviews will be used for the current research and will occur following participant-observation.

Charmaz (2014) described how semi-structured interviews allow for a closer examination of events, views, and feelings. She explained how semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to stop to explore a statement or topic; request detail or explanations; enquire about thoughts, feelings, and actions; and validate the participants' humanity, perspectives or actions (p. 69). Further, semi-structured interviews provide opportunities for participants to tell their stories, reflect on events, share and explain their experiences, and express thoughts or feelings that have been denied in other settings (p. 70).

Interviewing is not without its challenges. King (2004) offered practical suggestions for conducting an interview. He suggested starting with questions that do not overtly cause distress or embarrassment; asking open questions and avoiding ending the interview with a focus on negative experiences (pp. 17-18). King (2004) also offered strategies for dealing with difficult participants, such as uncommunicative, over-communicative, and emotionally charged interviewees (pp. 18-19). He offered a range of reflexive strategies for more effective interviews (p. 20). Robson discussed the practical challenges of interviews including the careful consideration of questions, scheduling and the effect of the length and timing of interviews (Robson, 2002, p. 273).

The current research has specific areas of inquiry for participants to explain and interpret their personal experiences as a volunteer in an FBO. Participants will be asked questions to explain their theological perspectives and this may result in varied interpretations of similar shared volunteering experiences for each member. Similarly, the experiences across organisations are likely to be varied. Interview guides are recommended for semi-structured interviews – a list that contains topics to be covered, probes, and follow up questions to be offered to the participants (King, 2004, p. 15). Interview guides should draw on the relevant research literature, personal knowledge and experience, and informal preliminary work, such as data collected from participant-observation. The interview guide used for the current research is found in Appendix 4. Throughout the research process the interview guide was modified to include new topics that might have emerged from other interviews or by adapting questions in the style of semi-structured interviews.

The semi-structured interviews were undertaken with consenting participants. Each interview started with broad, open-ended questions about engagement, which were then narrowed for further detail as the conversation proceeded. Following Charmaz (2014),

greater depth was obtained as the interview progressed. The pace or ordering of questions was changed to explore particular topics or experiences; questions were re-visited as new contextual information arose; participant-observation data were used to direct questions and discussion; and I showed respect and appreciation for their participation (pp. 69-70).

Each interview was approximately 90 minutes long. Participants were asked a range of open-ended questions, then given the opportunity to reflect on the meeting and to respond to significant events or activities that were undertaken by the group. The interviews were conducted at a location separate from the site of engagement, in a café, coffee shop or public library. The participants were also asked questions developed specifically for them, which were drawn from the field notes. After transcription, memos were made, along with suggestions for further data collection through interviews or participant-observation.

Data Analysis

The current research uses an interpretive, thematic approach to qualitative analysis. This was achieved through an iterative process of data collection, writing codes, developing memos, and further data collection before integrating the memos and concepts into a refined theory (Charmaz, 2006, p. 11). This approach was particularly suited for ethnographic research where data are generated from participant-observation and interviews (p. 21).

The participant-observations and interview data were subject to thematic analysis to examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations of the participants (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84). The analysis was a combination of realist thematic analysis (an exploration of the meanings and lived experiences of the individual participants) and constructionist thematic analysis (how structural conditions shape the accounts of realities, meanings and experience) (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp. 81-85). Before any data analysis, the participants were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and to separate the data from individuals for a more objective analysis.

Braun and Clarke (2006) offered a guide to thematic involving six stages of data collection, coding, and developing themes. as presented in Table, 3 below.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description
Familiarisation with data	*Transcribing, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas*
Generating initial codes	*Coding interesting and relevant features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire set, collating data relevant to each code*
Searching for themes	*Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme*
Reviewing themes	*Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set*
Defining and naming themes	*Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme*
Producing the final report	*The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature*

(Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

Codes and memos were established after the first interview following an initial period of participant-observation. Preliminary codes were developed following the interviews and transcriptions to identify further areas of investigation for participant-observation. These codes and memos were used to examine the social processes at each research site and make comparisons between data (Charmaz, 2014, p. 165). The notes and memos that arose from analysing the codes – and emerging theological themes – became more analytical and precise as I became more familiar with the data and as topics emerged that required greater focus. Any recurring patterns, themes or disagreements were noted for subsequent interviews with other volunteers.

Throughout this stage of the research, theological codes and questions were refined using the four theological voices. This required moving back and forth between data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2014, p. 165) to ensure accurate and authentic representation. As themes and theory emerged from the data, these theoretical categories informed the scope and methods of the subsequent data collection. The codes were then subject to thematic analysis to determine any theological themes that emerged from the data. Theological frames were constructed for each participant. During this stage, significant narratives were noted. The emerging themes and narratives were reproduced

diagrammatically to show any connections and to conceptualise each participants' theological frame. Lastly, the theological frame developed for each participant was compared against their interview and relevant participant-observation data to ensure consistency and coherence.

The research methods used in the current research wove description with explanation using an inductive approach. The data were collected and analysed iteratively; the social processes of each organisation were given appropriate attention; and comparisons were made between organisations. The current research sought to use ethnography and theological frames to discern how theology affected social processes; for comparative analysis; and to understand practices (Charmaz, 2014, p. 15). I constructed theological frames with the emerging themes for each Christian participant to generate theory from the data. The theologies, bridging, and relationships that were nurtured as part of participation were analysed to develop theories of engagement.

5.3 Ethical Considerations

This research was given approval by the Social and Behavioural Research Committee of Flinders University (SBREC) (project 6740). Adherence to the requirements of this application ensured that the organisations and volunteers involved in this research were treated and represented ethically.

Throughout the research – including the data collection and any subsequent publications – ethical guidelines were kept in mind by drawing Bell and Bryman's (2007) eleven general categories of ethical principles, as shown in *Table 4*.

For this research, there was minimal potential harm for participants through the research process. The only site of engagement that may have risked physical harm was with *The Truck;* however, this was not due to the research process. The coordinators of *The Truck* established clear participation guidelines to ensure safety for volunteers in their service delivery. Also, the engagement site was near a police station as an additional safety measure.

Table 4: Ethical Principles

Ethical Principle	Description
Harm to participants	the potential to cause harm through the research process and the need to ensure physical and psychological well-being either of research participants, the researcher, or other.
Dignity	the requirement to respect the dignity of the research participants, researchers or others and avoid causing discomfort or anxiety.
Informed consent	the need to ensure the fully informed consent of research participants.
Privacy	the need to protect the privacy of research subjects or avoid invasions of privacy.
Confidentiality	the requirement to ensure confidentiality of research data where relating to individuals, groups or organisations.
Deception	the potential for deception through the research process, either through lies or behaviour that is misleading.
Affiliation	the need to declare any professional or personal affiliations that may have influenced the research, including conflicts of interest and sponsorship, including information concerning funding for the research.
Honesty and transparency	the need for openness and honesty in communicating information about the research to all interested parties, including the need for trust.
Reciprocity	the idea that research should be of mutual benefit to researcher and participants or that some form of collaboration or active participation should be involved.
Misrepresentation	the need to avoid misleading, misunderstanding, misrepresenting or false reporting of research findings.

Adapted from (Bell and Bryman, 2007, p. 71)

The dignity of the research participants was respected in two ways. First, a rapport with participants was established based on mutual understanding and experience of social engagement (Patton, 2002). This was enhanced, given that I would be volunteering alongside the participants. Any questions were worded in ways that sought to ensure neutrality and avoided sensationalist or exceptionally positive or negative responses. Instead, questions were asked that sought to understand the participants' genuine experience (Patton, 2002, p. 366). Sometimes a situation from the engagement was described and the participants were asked to respond from their perspective. This helped ensure a common frame of reference for understanding and allowed for reflection on a shared experience in a non-judgmental environment.

Informed consent, affiliation, and honesty in the research process and in my role was maintained throughout the current research. Initially, the leaders or facilitators of each organisation were contacted to express interest in the research. Following the initial contact, a meeting was arranged to discuss the nature of the research, the rights of participants, my involvement, and the volunteers' potential involvement in the research. The volunteers were informed that while I had received approval from each FBO to be involved in the organisations' activities, participation in the research was voluntary, the interviews were voluntary, and no identifying information would be published. I also explained that any notes I took as a participant-observer would be confidential.

After spending a minimum period of three months (or twelve engagement activities) as a participant-observer, potential volunteers were asked verbally for an interview, with the request that it would be conducted at a separate location from the activities of the FBO. This ensured that other volunteers were not aware of their consent to be interviewed. During the interview, the participants were provided with a document outlining the purpose of the research in more detail than the initial introductory conversation. The details of the researcher's supervisor were provided in case further clarification was wanted. The participants were also given documentation about their rights. After providing them time to read through the documentation, I reinforced that the participants were able to withdraw from the research and interview at any time; they were free to decline to answer any question during the interview; the interview would be recorded using electronic audio equipment; and participants would be provided with a transcript of the interview. Only after covering these important details, again, was the participant invited to sign the consent form. None of the participants requested that they be removed from the research or have their interviews been removed from the analysis. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher to further ensure anonymity and, after transcription, the participant was asked to sign the consent form to indicate that the transcription was true and accurate.

As noted above, the privacy and confidentiality of the FBOs and their volunteers was maintained throughout the research. Early in the data collection, pseudonyms were given to each of the volunteers both for use in field notes and interviews. The interviews were transcribed and de-identified to ensure anonymity, and to maintain a professional distance when analysing the data using field notes and interviews. Each of the FBOs were given pseudonyms, and the site locations, associated people or organisations were de-identified. To avoid false reporting or exaggerated reporting, the notes from the participant-observation and interview data were read and analysed in context. Here 'in context' means

that, unless specified, participant remarks were considered in the context of volunteering and not generalised or extended to include situations beyond the participant's intent. This is particularly important for social research, where interview questions and participant experiences are intimately connected to social context (Seidman, 2006, p. 93). Any interpretations (including theological interpretations) of participants' experiences are also connected to a particular social context.

During the research, reciprocity formed an essential part of the research process. I contributed significantly to the basic operations of *New Family* and *The Truck*. This involved time cleaning, food preparation, food distribution, and after assisting with minimal notice beforehand. During some of the holiday periods, I was occasionally one of the few volunteers available to deliver services. These two FBOs benefited from having an additional volunteer as active participation was expected. However, with regard to *Engage*, reciprocity was not so simple. The group did not provide a regular service, and much of their time was spent considering a theologically-informed approach to social engagement or becoming involved in social justice individually. This provided another challenge within *Engage*. How to be a participant in the conversations without affecting the direction and decision-making of the group? To keep a professional distance, I spoke to the facilitator and explained that I would be a participant-observer and would only become directly involved in conversations if I were asked, and would avoid offering explicit suggestions for engagement. On several occasions, I responded to questions and suggestions by other members but tried to ensure that I only made general and non-specific remarks.

CHAPTER SIX – PRELIMINARY PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION[14]

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the FBOs in the current research and offers some preliminary findings. The descriptions of each FBO were constructed from data obtained from participant-observation and interviews. The activities, membership, and religious nature of each FBO will be given before locating each FBO using the typologies discussed in Chapter Four. Each FBO will be examined for faith elements (Unruh and Sider, 2005), institutional environment (Smith and Sosin, 2001), activities or objectives (Sider et al., 2002), and defining characteristics (Jeavons, 1998), as appropriate.

6.2 New Family

New Family was an FBO dedicated to social and policy changes related to asylum seekers and refugees, primarily through developing lasting, meaningful relationships between volunteers and refugees. It was a subsidiary organisation run under the auspices of *Refugee Aid* – a larger Australia-wide organisation that provided assistance, advocacy, and support for refugees. *New Family* provided support to asylum seekers, refugees, and recent immigrants through English classes, volunteering opportunities, work experience, material relief, and emotional support through friendships and community networks. There were several *New Family* centres across the city; however, this research focused on one centre, where I undertook ethnographic research from March 2015 until August 2015.

New Family was based in Surreyton, a suburb approximately six kilometres north of the central business district of the inner city. The suburb is located between some of the city's affluent suburbs to the east and the more numerous immigrant populations to the west. At the time of research, the population of Surreyton was largely Caucasian with a slightly higher than usual Chinese population. Surreyton had a higher proportion of 24-40 year-old residents compared to the rest of the state and had a higher than average proportion of people who had attended a university or tertiary institution (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Surreyton had a higher proportion of people working in professional occupations and fewer tradespeople and administrative workers. However, Surreyton had higher than average unemployment and slightly lower personal, family and household median incomes than the rest of the state (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

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[14] As noted in Chapter One the FBOS, volunteers, locations, and associated organisations have been given pseudonyms in this thesis.

New Family started as project connected to *Connect* church, a Pentecostal church. Both were founded by the church pastor, Gary. *Connect* had a strong focus on social justice, personal transformation, and spiritual empowerment. Most of the engagement activities of *New Family* occurred in an old, red-brick building on the same property as *Connect*. The centre has recently been renovated and the couches, toys, tea and coffee, tables and chairs, and a pool table made it family friendly. This family friendly atmosphere changed a few weeks after the official opening as the FBO tended to attract predominantly single males in their twenties. There were only two children at the centre throughout the research. One section of the building had four computers for word processing and internet access. On the opposite side was a mezzanine floor with offices and an interview room. The walls had numerous posters that symbolically reflected *New Family's* position towards refugees and asylum seekers with phrases such as, 'You are Welcome here,' 'Real Australians say Welcome' and 'Common People, Common Dreams.' Despite the shared history with *Connect* and the number of church attendees volunteering at the centre, there were no religious symbols or imagery present in the *New Family* building or publications. In fact, the only religious symbolism or imagery to be found at *New Family* was in the clothing of Muslim women who wore headscarves, and an acknowledgement of Islam during special meals organised for *Iftar*, the breaking of the fast during Ramadan.

While *Connect* remained strongly supportive of the *New Family*, the legal connections between them had been severed. The increased detachment between the two was intentional to ensure that *New Family* could function independently of *Connect* both financially and in terms of human resources. As the building was on the same property as *Connect*, it was regularly used for a variety of church functions. Some of the items within *New Family* were the property of *Connect* and not for use by refugees or volunteers at *New Family*. Occasionally, church members were required to remind volunteers and refugees that some of the equipment was not for their use.

The work by Gary and others associated with *Connect* and *Refugee Aid* to open *New Family* had been difficult. The funding for *New Family* had been disrupted through changes in the Federal Government. The previous government had pledged $160,000 to support its development; however, those funds were cancelled by a new government. Consequently, the funding was raised through donations, the State Government and crowd funding. *New Family* was officially opened in April 2015.

New Family offered a range of services, assistance, social activities and classes for refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived immigrants. Twice a week there were two-hour English classes where refugees could learn to read, write and speak English at their level of understanding. There was also a female-only English class that ran once a week for two hours. In addition, there was *Afternoon Chat* – a program where volunteers were able to learn English in a casual environment outside of regular classes. This involved informal conversations with volunteers, playing card games or pool, or chatting over tea/coffee and light snacks. Computer classes were held occasionally to teach basic word processing. Internet and email services were available. Music classes and a choir were also established one evening per week during the warmer months, with volunteers and refugees learning songs in English and Hazaragi.

Every fortnight *New Family* ran *Family Dinner* – an event where refugees, volunteers, and the local community brought a plate of food to share, while kebabs were prepared, cooked, and sold by refugees at cost price. The *Family Dinners* were usually well attended and often involved people who otherwise did not have any connection with *New Family*. Finally, on Saturdays during winter, *New Family* held a soccer match at a public space in the inner city.

New Family also offered emergency relief for refugees. Volunteers provided food and clothing, household furniture and appliances, general assistance and, often, administrative and legal support when communicating with immigration processing and visa support. *New Family* was a busy place and employed three people in part-time roles. Material donations, such as food, clothing, and furniture, were often received by the staff and volunteers and distributed, as required. Care was taken to ensure that the donations were of a good quality and were dispersed appropriately. When the domestic lives of refugees and asylum seekers were disrupted – such as housing problems, meetings with immigration officials, or contracting service providers – the volunteers at *New Family* were always happy to assist.

The volunteers at *New Family* were similar in terms of physical and social demographics, with a few exceptions. The volunteers who assisted in support and services – such as the English classes, music and computer skills – were largely females in their early twenties to mid-forties. While attendance varied throughout the year, there were nine women volunteers who attended regularly. They had formed strong relationships with the refugees and were involved in the refugee community. All the women were Caucasian, and the

interviews and participant-observation revealed that most had attended university and lived in affluent suburbs of the city. Sandra was the coordinator of *New Family* and was paid a part-time wage. However, her time and work commitments were greater than the part-time equivalent. The other women volunteers worked as teachers, social workers, in small businesses, or were university students. Two of the women in this group had coordinating roles in *New Family* and were not as heavily involved in social activities. Their work included most of the emergency response work. This involved acquiring donations, liaising with the public, and delivering items and services outside of regular business hours. There were also three regular male volunteers. Harold was a retired man in his sixties. He had attended university when he was younger, and now spent time looking after his mother and volunteering at the *Afternoon Chats* and *Family Dinners*. Jeremy was another volunteer. He was a university student and a member of *Connect*. A few weeks after research started at *New Family*, one of Sandra's friends, Corey, joined. Corey was an engineering student who assisted secondary school students in science and mathematics. Many other people volunteered irregularly. Those who did were also largely young, Caucasian females. Most of the female volunteers identified themselves as Christian. A few attended *Connect* occasionally, while others were associated with other churches or did not belong to any denomination or church.

The refugees and asylum seekers who attended *New Family* were mainly single males from Iran and Afghanistan in their early twenties to forties. There were a few older men and a small number of women in their late teens to thirties. There were two children who attended *New Family* throughout the participant observation. Most of the other refugees were very well dressed, had excellent English, and worked hard to establish a sense of community. Many of the refugees had attended university. For example, among the refugees were a computer network specialist, a civil engineer and several former small business owners.

In addition to the volunteers described, above, there were also volunteers from among the refugee and asylum seeker communities themselves. Ten volunteers contributed in ways that were different from the volunteers described, above. They were not responsible for any of the liaison, administration, or acquisition of material goods. Instead, they provided support in ways that maintained community bonds. For example, two of the volunteers, Muaz and Ali, both young men in their early twenties, prepared, cooked and served the kebabs at the community dinners. They also organised and coordinated the soccer games and, along with other men, provided support for moving large items, such as fridges, for

those in need in the community. Others assisted by shifting furniture in preparation for *Family Dinners* or assisting at the tea and coffee station.

This description of *New Family* is not indicative of the other centres across the city. The other centres were visited as part of my research and showed significantly different characteristics. For example, one of the other centres had a strong volunteer base of middle-aged women who provided support, mainly for other recently-arrived older women.[15] Another centre had significantly greater diversity in terms of ethnicity and language among the refugees and asylum seekers.[16]

The *New Family* centre located at Surreyton was chosen as a site for three reasons. First, the founder of *New Family*, Gary, was also the pastor of *Connect*. Gary worked on-site regularly and was available to explain the historical relationship between *Connect* and *New Family* or the purpose of the activities being undertaken at the centre. Second, the Surreyton centre had more volunteers and higher rates of consistent voluntarism than the other centres. Third, the geographical location of the *New Family* centre made the research easier for me due to shorter travelling times. It also emerged during interviews that this location had the strongest links to Christian activism, likely due to the high proportion of young adults who had an association with *Connect* church.

New Family is best described as a *faith-related organisation*. However, the organisational structure, historical context, and volunteer roles at *New Family* defied simple categorisation. Turning to the typologies of FBOs introduced in Chapter Four, *New Family* could be described as a *faith-background organisation* or *faith-secular partnership* due the historical ties and use of the facilities of *Connect* church. However, under Unruh and Sider's (2005) typology it would have been considered a *faith-affiliated organisation*. My initial observation was that *New Family* did not actively promote their Christian origins, given that none of the advertising, activities or statements of their purpose contained any reference to religion. However, many of the volunteers identified as Christian and described their involvement purposively in religious terms. For them, *New Family* was not simply a place where they could volunteer, but a way in which they could embody and express their faith. The religious nature of the activities of many of the Christian volunteers incorporated some of Jeavons' (1998) seven religious aspects of an organisation. However, not all volunteers were Christian and, as the research would reveal (see Chapter

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[15] Participant-observation, 26/3/2015
[16] Participant-observation, 30/3/2015

Seven), many described different motivations or reasons for becoming involved with *New Family*. As a further complication, since *New Family* was originally founded under the auspices of *Connect* church, and continued to be coordinated by the church pastor, the organisation could be described as *faith-related* (Smith and Sosin, 2001). Throughout their regular operations, events and services of *New Family,* the physical resources of *Connect* church were heavily used. The degree of resource dependency of *New Family* on *Connect* had changed through the legal separation, particularly when funding was uncertain. The interviews with volunteers also suggested that *Connect* church was used to recruit volunteers through the pastor's continuing relationship with both institutions and his fostering of a culture of service within the church.

To summarise, the origins, activities, and volunteers of *New Family* made it a suitable organisation to research. The volunteers' commitment to providing assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, and newly-arrived immigrants with material and social support prompts some pertinent sociological questions that address the main research question of this thesis: What motivates participants to volunteer with refugees? Is participation in *New Family* a way to embody theology? Do the volunteers deliver aid or form relationships with refugees? How is *New Family* different from other organisations that work with refugees? These questions will be addressed in Chapter Seven.

6.2 Engage

Engage was an FBO that focused on issues of social justice. The group held meetings to understand Christians' relationships with the poor and disadvantaged through studying the Bible, learning about social issues, and developing a Biblically-informed approach to engagement. *Engage* was studied from March 2016 through to February 2017.

Engage was founded in the 1950s under the auspices of *Evangelical Mission*, an Australian Christian development and relief organisation. The purpose of *Engage* was to raise and direct funds from within Australia towards education projects in the Asia-Pacific region. Unlike other relief and development organisations, *Engage* was established to solicit funding specifically from Christian individuals and organisations rather than the general population. This decision was made for two distinct reasons. First, by restricting potential donors the organisation took on a more 'Christian' character as an organisation run by Christians with a Biblically-informed purpose. For the Christians involved, *Engage* was not simply another FBO with an interest in foreign aid, but an intentional project of discipleship. Second, *Engage* was established to motivate Christians to become engaged

with global concerns and issues. *Engage* offered an alternative route to implement meaningful change through education, advocacy, and development projects.

After two decades of successfully funding projects within the Asia-Pacific region, *Engage* legally removed itself from *Evangelical Mission*. The separation of *Engage* and *Evangelical Mission* was due to differences in their respective core visions and purpose. Like many evangelical organisations of the period, *Evangelical Mission's* statement of faith and values drew upon notions of belief, truth, and living by the example of Jesus. *Evangelical Mission's* statement of faith and values was not constructed as a theology for all members, but as a common basis of understanding that was intended to transcend denominational differences. However, although the members of *Engage* were motivated to live by the example of Jesus, attention was increasingly directed towards bringing about the Kingdom. *Engage's* mission was to become actively involved in bringing about the values and characteristics of the Kingdom of God through projects that changed the physical and spiritual conditions of those in need. *Engage* retained its name, but the legal separation provided *Engage* with greater independence and meant they could expand their activities beyond emergency relief, education, and financial aid.

After becoming legally separate, *Engage* identified three focus areas. First, their activities were directed towards the world's poorest people. Second, *Engage* focused on building and maintaining strong relationships with communities. Through international engagement, the members responded to the changing needs of poor communities by living, working, and learning with those they served. Lastly, *Engage* focused on transforming lives – both individual and community life – through prayer, relationships, and providing and maintaining physical resources.

Engage achieved their objectives through a range of programs in Australia and internationally. Much of *Engage's* work focused on engaging with Australian Christian communities to shape a Biblically-informed response to poverty and injustice, mostly in overseas locations. At the time of the research, their activities included working with communities in over twenty countries in Africa, South East Asia, Central Asia, and the Pacific. This was largely achieved in fundraising for poor communities, or through education and advocacy. *Engage* advocated for fair and equitable social and political structures, and encouraged Christians to act through a range of campaigns. Many of these programs were directed towards young Australian Christians and focussed on sustainability and justice.

In addition to their international programs, *Engage* had several Australian programs. One of the first projects that *Engage* established was to support Indigenous communities. Recently, *Engage* had launched a dedicated support program advocating for the rights Indigenous Australians, health and support services, and improved community development. Another way that *Engage* provided a platform for advocacy and education was through smaller *Engage* meetings – where groups of Christians met regularly to study the Bible; share stories or discuss social issues; advocate for the marginalised; plan and implement social engagement activities; and pray. An *Engage* staff member facilitated the group and organised resources, developed the agenda, and mediated conversations.

For this research, I attended an *Engage* group that met regularly at the home of the *Engage* facilitator, Mark. Mark had extensive experience in development and had spent five years working overseas in community development, teaching, and as a pastor. The *Engage* group membership varied throughout the time of the research, but for most of this time a group of six members attended consistently. All of the group members were Caucasian Christians and the interviews revealed that most had attended university or were studying at the time. There were two couples in the group. One couple, Shane and Margaret, were in their fifties and had worked in development projects overseas for almost two decades. The other couple, Courtney and Tyler, were in their mid-twenties. Tyler was a doctor and Courtney was studying at university. Another female university student, Hannah, was in her early twenties also attended the meetings regularly. Interviews revealed that each of the members lived within twenty minutes of Mark's house.

During the period of research, the group focussed on two areas of engagement – issues surrounding Indigenous Australians and climate change. First, the group attempted to become involved in the reconciliation process. This was achieved by watching and reflecting a series of films called *Australians Together*, a reconciliation series developed as a resource for Christian audiences (Australians Together, 2018). The group intended to take individual and collective action to engage in reconciliation with an Indigenous community or issue. Second, the group attempted to form a Christian response to climate change using a recently published book, *Coming Back to Earth* (Cornford, 2016) as a guide. My research will only consider the reconciliation work of *Engage* given that during this time the group membership was most consistent and most of the interviews were conducted based on data from this time period.

Each meeting followed a similar format. A different member would volunteer to coordinate the discussion at each meeting while Mark offered supported and provided resources. Although the coordinator changed from week to week, Mark presided over each *Engage* meeting. The meetings started at 7.30 pm and occurred every three weeks on a Tuesday evening. Each evening began with a prayer from the coordinator for the week. The opening prayer was related to the content to be covered in the evening. If often took a position of humility with the coordinator asking God to "help us to learn"[17] or to "open our hearts."[18] After the opening prayer, the group watched the film in several sections, then discussed and debated the content. Following the discussion, the group suggested ways to engage with Indigenous issues. The conversations were lively with varied opinions and respectful discussions. When conversations strayed from the focus of the evening, or become stagnant, Mark directed the group back onto the content or steered the conversation in a different direction. Mark reduced tensions if they arose, provided insight from his Australian and international experiences, and used Scripture to deepen the conversation. The meetings ended in prayer and this was open for any of the members to contribute. Mark would mention *Engage* programs and people who would benefit from prayer and raise pertinent points emerging from their discussions that could be prayed for. This structure remained fixed throughout the research. As the meetings were held at Mark's home, his children often attended the meetings and occasionally contributed. At times they were asked questions as participants sought a teenage perspective.

This *Engage* group was chosen as one of the sites for this research for two reasons. First, the group attempted to undertake a distinctly Christian approach to social engagement. Theology was central to the discussions and advocacy work of *Engage*. The promotional materials, participant-observations, and interviews indicated that one of the core objectives of the group was to shape a Biblically-informed way of engagement. Second, the *Engage* group was not concerned with welfare delivery. Rather than providing a service to meet the physical needs of disadvantaged people, the *Engage* group attempted to enact systemic change through advocacy and education. This was sought through raising awareness of poverty, speaking out against injustice, making changes to their own lives, and shaping the behaviours and attitudes of those around them. The *Engage* members described how their understanding of Indigenous issues from the meetings shaped

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[17] Participant-observation, 22/3/2016
[18] Participant-observation, 26/4/2016

changes they made in their own lives and the outreach activities of their respective churches.

Engage is best described as a *charitable or development organisation* according to Clarke's (2006) typology. *Engage* was significantly easier to situate within an FBO typology than *New Family*. Using Jeavons' (1998) defining characteristics, *Engage* self-identified as a Christian organisation. It was founded by a Christian organisation and its members were exclusively Christian. However, the members of *Engage* were not sourced from a single congregation or denomination. The activities and goals of *Engage* were consciously informed, debated, and planned to ensure that this was a distinctly Christian engagement. Similarly, *Engage* was *faith-related* in terms of its institutional environment (Smith and Sosin, 2001). The group drew heavily from Christian resources, albeit those that were not denominationally specific. *Engage* did not share any physical resources with a church or congregation, but often used materials produced by other Christian organisations as a guide to shape their responses to social justice, an environmental issue, or a humanitarian cause. The religious nature of *Engage* and its members directly affected the goals and activities of the group. Although the similarities of Smith and Sosin's (2001) characterisation helps establish *Engage* as an FBO, Clarke's (2006) typology appears the most appropriate. Using his typology, *Engage* would be best described as a *charitable or development organisation*. These organisations were described by Clarke (2006) as those "which mobilise the faith in support of the poor and other social groups, and which fund or manage programmes which tackle poverty and social exclusion" (p. 840). This description accurately reflects the activities of *Engage*.

To summarise, the *Engage* group offers Christians an opportunity to become involved in Biblically-informed social justice through advocacy, education, and bringing about change in their personal lives. Members of the *Engage* group had spent five months developing and attempting to implement a Christian approach to reconciliation with Indigenous Australians. Studying the *Engage* group provides an opportunity to address the questions relevant to the main research question of this thesis. What factors mark the development of a Biblically-informed response to reconciliation? How does the *Engage* group decide on a particular course of action? Do the group members' theologies differ from each other, and how do they shape their perspectives on reconciliation? What motivates the members to become involved in reconciliation? The *Engage* group is examined in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

6.4 The Truck

The Truck was an FBO run under the auspices of a Catholic social outreach mission. Five nights a week volunteers prepared and distributed food to homeless and hungry people at many locations across the state. In addition to providing food, the volunteers distributed clothing, blankets, and books to the needy and occasionally facilitated transport services. My research of *The Truck* was from June 2016 until January 2018.

The Truck started in the mid-1980s when a small number of volunteers began to distribute food to people living in 'squats', driving to and from the location in a station wagon. After a short period of delivering food in an unreliable vehicle and using a private kitchen, the group managed to secure ongoing funding from another social service organisation. This resulted in the construction of purpose built vehicles and an expansion of operations to different suburbs further out from the central business district (CBD). At the time of research, *The Truck* had approximately 550 volunteers across the state and provided hundreds of meals every week. The meals were not only for homeless people, but also for people with mental health issues and addictions, children, and the unemployed and underemployed.

Each of the volunteers at *The Truck* worked on a fixed three-week rotation. This was a decision made by management to ensure that the time commitment of volunteers was minimal and there was sufficient time for volunteers to plan other personal social activities around their volunteering. No volunteer was allowed to participate more than once every three weeks, except for emergencies and during busy periods, such as Christmas. Most volunteeers lived or worked locally, so the commuting time was convenient. The volunteers were organised into teams, with each team grouped largely by age. I was assigned to was the 'youth team', which consisted of volunteers aged between twenty and thirty. Most of the volunteers were Caucasian and in their twenties. Interviews revealed that the volunteers lived in different locations across the city and did not form a homogenous group. The volunteers varied in terms of education, employment, and socio-economic status.

Every three weeks, from 5.30 pm until 8.30 pm, six to eight volunteers prepared food and other items at a site appproximately ten minutes from the CBD. Every evening, approximately one hundred and twenty sausages were cooked, ninety sandwiches prepared, and eighty bags were filled with fruit, cake or biscuits, and other food items (subject to availabilty). Containers were filled with water for cordial, tea, coffee, and Milo.

After the food, drinks, condiments, and other items were loaded onto the truck, two of the volunteers collected two large tubs of freshly prepared hot pasta donated by local businesses. The volunteers then travelled in the truck to Ferris St. in the CBD to distribute the food.

At the Ferris St. location, volunteers arranged three tables while a large line of around seventy people formed. Often, particularly during the summer months, the line had formed before the volunteers arrived. First, the sausages were handed out with the bag of food. Then the pasta was dished into bowls and served. After all the food was distributed the volunteers cleaned and packed away the tables, and provided clothes, blankets, and books if requested. The service at Ferris St. took approximately one hour, after which the volunteers returned to clean the kitchen and dishes, and made preparations for another team for the following evening. The entire activity took three hours to complete. The busyness of the *The Truck* and the intensive involvement during these evenings meant that my participant-observation needed to be extended by six months to develop a rapport with other volunteers.

The Truck was well-known within the city and one of the largest organisations that delivered welfare to the homeless. I was familiar with their activities and had seen the organisation distributing food and clothing prior to this research. This organisation was chosen for the current research as it differed from *New Family* and *Engage* in two significant ways. First, although *The Truck* was associated with a Catholic social outreach mission, the volunteers were not expected to be Christian. Volunteers joined *The Truck* for many different reasons, and all were welcome provided that they could commit one evening every three weeks for at least one year. Second, *The Truck* had service delivery as its central focus. None of the volunteers were expected to develop strategies to address homelessness or implement structural change. The purpose of *The Truck* was straightforward – to provide food to the homeless, hungry, and needy.

It was not difficult to situate *The Truck* as a *faith-affiliated organisation* within Unruh and Sider's (2005) typology. Further, *The Truck* offered an accomodative repsonse to homelessness. Although *The Truck* was an FBO that was overseen by a Catholic social outreach organisation, there were very few Christian influences on their day-to-day activities. The majority of the volunteers did not identify as Christian and those who did explained in interviews that they were not attracted to the FBO as as a means to practice their faith. Hence *The Truck* was *faith-related* to the Catholic social outreach organisation

in terms of its resource dependency (Jeavons, 1998). Most of the funding and facilities of *The Truck* were sourced directly or indirectly by churches but there was little religious influence on how members engaged in their activities. The volunteers at *The Truck* were sourced primarily from outside religious institutions with minimal religious content.

To summarise, *The Truck* offers an interesting contrast for this research. *The Truck* attracted a large number of volunteers most evenings to deliver food and clothing to homeless recipients. Despite being a Christian FBO, many of the volunteers were not Christian and the organisation did not try to bring about social change. *The Truck* provides an opportunity to address questions related to the main purpose of this research, as follows: What motivates non-Christian volunteers to participate in a Christian FBO? Does volunteering with the homeless hold significance for Christian volunteers? Why do volunteers help the homeless rather than other disadvantaged groups? What factors affect volunteers' ongoing participation at *The Truck*? *The Truck* is examined in greater detail in Chapter Nine.

6.5 Conclusions

New Family, *Engage*, and *The Truck* each show significant differences from each other and provide an opportunity to address the main research questions in this thesis:

1) How are theological concepts expressed and manifested within social engagement?
2) What motivates volunteers to become involved with Christian faith-based organisations?
3) What factors promote or constrain collective activities or participation in faith-based organisations?

The FBO typologies from Chapter Four have been used to differentiate the structural, religious, and engagement attributes of each organisation. Each of the typologies used in describing each FBO directed attention towards questions that addressed the main purpose of this research.

New Family was described as a *faith-related organisation* with historical ties to a church and many Christian volunteers. However, the organisational activities showed little Christian symbolism. Any theological concepts that were expressed or manifested in engagement would need to explained by the volunteers. Similarly, the motives of volunteers to become involved in the lives of refugees warrants examination. The volunteers at *New Family* committed to regular contact and involvement with the refugee

community. The factors that shape their participation will be investigated along with how their participation relates to faith considerations.

Engage was described as a development organisation with a strong emphasis on theology. Their purpose was related to social justice and advocacy, but the group did not have any clear precepts for engagement. The theological elements of the *Engage* group will be observed directly as one of the focus areas of the group is discussion of a Biblically-informed approach to engagement. *Engage* also offers an opportunity to study the factors that shape engagement directly as the group learns about reconciliation then develops an engagement approach within the meetings.

The Truck was described as a faith-affiliated organisation with Christian and non-Christian volunteers. While theological concepts may not be as pertinent in this organisation, *The Truck* offers an opportunity to examine the other research questions. The motives of volunteers to participate in an FBO, which they may not have any connection, will be examined. It is possible that the volunteers had a greater interest assisting the homeless that the faith affiliation did not matter. The factors that promote or constrain participation will also be examined as most of the volunteer activity at *The Truck* was not with the homeless recipients.

CHAPTER SEVEN – NEW FAMILY[19]

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, theological frames will be used to investigate the activities of *New Family*. The main argument of this chapter is that ordinary theology mediates social capital through what I term *divine-human-human relationships*. I will argue that social capital was developed at *New Family* due to a shared theology that encouraged the development of theologically significant relationships. The volunteers at *New Family* described what I term as *action-driven theology* – to seek out and assist the disadvantaged, marginalised or oppressed as Jesus would, in a contemporary context. The volunteers explained that their relationships with refugees were tangible expressions of the love they felt in their own relationships with God. In their engagement the volunteers embodied *action-driven theology* and what it meant to be a Christian and not simply hold Christian beliefs.

This section proceeds as follows: First, theological frames will be constructed for participants from *New Family*. Each frame will be represented diagrammatically and explained using data from interviews and participant-observation. Second, the common elements of each of the theological frames will be drawn on to construct a coherent shared ordinary theological expression for the volunteers at *New Family – action-driven theology*.

Third, the organisational activities of *New Family* will be described to demonstrate how the volunteers' shared theology was embodied in engagement and expressed in relationships. I describe the relationships nurtured between refugees and volunteers as *divine-human-human relationships*.

Fourth, it will be argued that ordinary theology mediates social capital. Participant-observation data from *New Family* will be analysed for indicators of social capital. It will be suggested that indicators of social capital were found in the development of networks, access to information, established norms, and bridging.

Finally, the theology and engagement of the volunteers of *New Family* will be compared to other Australian and international research, before delimiting the thesis that ordinary theology mediates social capital. It will be argued that ordinary theology mediated social

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[19] All names and organisations have been given pseudonyms.

An earlier version of this research was published in: Smith, M. (2017). Theology Mediating Social Capital: Ordinary Theology, Motivation and Relationships. *Journal of Empirical Theology*, *30*(1), 87-103.

capital in this context due to three distinct causes. First, *action-driven theology* was agentic – the espoused theological elements could not be removed from the operant theological elements. Second, the relationships that formed were theologically significant for the volunteers. Third, the nature of the activities facilitated by *New Family* were conducive to building social capital.

7.2 Individual Theological Frames

In this section, theological frames will be constructed for seven of the volunteers at *New Family*. The theological frames are constructed using data from participant observation and interviews.

Sandra

Sandra was the coordinator of *New Family*. She oversaw all activities run by *New Family* and facilitated the provision of furniture, food and housing and, occasionally, coordinated legal assistance for refugees. Sandra described how she had had little exposure to religion or the religious life in her childhood. For most of her life, she was an atheist but had recently become a Christian. She explained that her interest in religion piqued after returning from international volunteer trips. The first was to Kuala Lumpur, where she explained she first developed an awareness of religious life through volunteering at a Muslim school. The second volunteer experience was a trip to Christmas Island to work with refugees. On her return, she wanted to help the refugee cause further and found *Connect* – a church that actively supported the refugee community. Eventually, Sandra converted to Christianity and, a year later, she was baptised. Her theological frame followed a theme of *Justice and Jesus;* her theological frame diagram is shown in *Figure 2*.

Sandra described justice as the embodiment of Jesus' life, teachings, and social engagement. The grace and love that Sandra experienced in her own life was expressed in justice-related activities at *New Family*. For her, the outpouring of love towards the refugee community from the volunteers at *New Family* was not simply charitable work. Instead, she explained, the volunteers were doing *justice* work. This, for her, was significantly different.

Conversion experience and interpretation

Justice and Jesus (without Religion)

Third exposure to religion (volunteering at New Family)
- assisting refugees in Australia
- New Family an offshoot of Connect Church
- attendance at Connect, conversion and baptism

Return to Australia
- frustrated with raising money for corporations
- wanting to do more

Second exposure to religion (volunteering on Christmas Island)
- exposed to people that had lost everything
- how can they still believe?
- they had a God that was looking out for them?

Working for large corporations

First exposure to religion (volunteering in Malaysia - Islam)
- in awe of religious life
- how can they be so devoted?

Non-religious home environment

Re-interpretation as a calling
- God was guiding her
- Responding to a call she wasn't aware of
- God talking to her, guiding her when she didn't believe
- everything fell into place

Justice
- Justice is not a charity
- charity is leftovers
- justice is a seat at the table
- don't judge because they look different
- Justice is what love looks like in public

Volunteering
- outpouring of compassion and gratitude that we receive
- it's not because it feels good, it's what we should be doing
- people can find hope here
- I have received love, grace and compassion, I want others to have that too
- don't judge because they worship differently

JUSTICE

Jesus' love
- Love people so much that they wonder why
- maybe they will ask

JESUS

Jesus is how love is portrayed
- If it looks like love, it's where Jesus is
- if it doesn't, God probably isn't present
- if it doesn't look like love, it needs to change

Where Jesus would be
- standing with the vulnerable and the persecuted
- being part of the world and the Kingdom of Heaven
- to be part of the Kingdom is to be bringing about justice
- I'm standing beside my friends, because that's where Jesus would be

FAITH NOT RELIGION

To be God's hands and feet in the world

What I'm doing, does it look like love? Does it look like compassion? Does it look like the Spirit?

Not interested in the Bible: experience is a better teacher than books

Enacting justice is not from a religious motivation, maybe a faith motivation - an outpouring of Jesus' love

Figure 2: Sandra's theological frame diagram

I like the Cornel West quote "justice is what love looks like in public." I think it is a cool way of saying that justice isn't charity...I think charity is giving someone the leftovers, whereas justice is making sure they have a seat at the table. (Sandra, interview, 23/6/2015)

It was unclear how Sandra attempted to provide refugees with a 'seat at the table' at *New Family*. Providing a 'seat at the table' appeared to be reflected in the interactions between refugees and the public; and in the volunteers' advocacy for refugees with the wider community. Like many of the volunteers at *New Family*, Sandra's engagement had three focus areas. First, she attended to the immediate needs of refugees by providing food, clothing, and household items. Second, Sandra worked to help facilitate refugee participation in community life. Third, she advocated for the refugee community. In each case, justice was not simply an abstract concept or a set of ideas about right and wrong, but something that was lived. Sandra explained that her involvement in the refugee cause allowed her to be the 'hands and feet of God' in bringing about change.

Sandra was candid about how her faith was related to justice and where she directed her social engagement. She explained that for her, Jesus was the embodiment of love – Jesus and love were inseparable. Jesus was wherever love was found, and the absence of love meant that God was absent.

I think that if it looks like love, that's where Jesus is. If it doesn't look love, then God's probably not present. I guess that's my kind of way of looking at what I think God would want being done. Does it look like love? Does it look like compassion? Does it look like the Spirit? (Sandra, interview, 23/6/2015)

For her, the recently arrived refugees were not being shown love or compassion and this meant that God was not visible in their lives. Sandra felt that God drew her attention to the plight of refugees and was telling her to become involved in the lives of refugees. It was not clear how Sandra balanced her interpretation of God's absence with the religious faiths of the refugee community. Most of the refugees were religious, and many were Christian. Although Sandra emphasised that she did not want to proselytise, it appeared that she hoped that some of the refugees were receptive to her message of love.

We want *New Family* to be an outpouring of the love that we've received and continue to pour out. And so, as a Christian, you know, looking at the grace and the

> love and compassion that I've received…I want everyone to be open to receiving that in whatever way that looks like. (Sandra, interview, 23/6/2015)

She explained that often people would see the way she was involved with refugees and approach her to ask her *why* she loves so much. This provided her with an opportunity to spread the gospel and encourage others towards Jesus.

> I think the benefit of me growing up without a faith has helped me understand how I can come across to someone who doesn't have a faith background or is maybe thinking about it. By loving people so much that they ask why, being an example of Jesus or Kingdom values and then people drawing that out and going why? Why do you care? I get that question a lot. (Sandra, interview, 23/6/2015)

Sandra's theological frame shows how her ordinary theology related to her engagement in *New Family* in a tangible way. The blessings she received and the love she was shown needed to be embodied in a way that exemplified the life of Jesus. Sandra described how she wanted to live like Jesus and to be an example for others. However, she had very little interest in reading the Bible or learning about Jesus other than in an experiential way. She explained that by becoming socially engaged she was learning more about Jesus than she ever could by reading the Bible. Social engagement made her a better Christian through her experiences and interactions with people.

> I struggle with theology and sitting down and reading books. I like doing that and I want to do that, but I think that [helping refugees] is a better teacher. Experience is a better teacher than books. (Sandra, interview, 23/6/2015)

Her aversion to learning theology in a more structured way was also reflected in the way she differentiated religion and faith. She explained that she would not feel comfortable in a more traditional church environment but *Connect* was different. Sandra described that *Connect* was more about faith than religion, and her sense of love, engagement and justice was motivated by faith. For her, 'religion' represented structure, restrictions and a misrepresentation of Jesus' teachings.

Rachael

Rachael was a regular volunteer at *New Family*. Rachael became Christian through her husband who attended a Seventh Day Adventist Church. At the time of research Rachael and her husband lived in a wealthy suburb. After a period of what she described as being

'a strong Christian' she began to have difficulties with the Seventh Day Adventist Church and eventually they both stopped attending. Her frustration with organised religion was reflected in her theological frame, which followed a theme of *Christ-like action*. Her theology was shaped by Jesus' life and teachings on love, attitudes towards others, and involvement in the lives of others. A diagrammatic representation of her theological frame is shown in *Figure 3*.

Rachael explained Jesus was an exemplar for Christian engagement. For her, engagement defined what it meant for her to be a *real Christian* – to actively follow Jesus using the Bible as a guide. Her aversion to organised and institutional religion stemmed from the discrepancy she saw between the words and actions of churches.

> I met my, now, husband who was Seventh Day Adventist. He was a quite strong Seventh Day Adventist, and I was coming from no religion. And I would say that I went quite far over into it... And now we're married and have been together for a while, we have moved much more centre. Like, we still consider ourselves Christian, but not in the organised way…Christian as in the *real* definition of Christian, but we're not part of a church. We don't have any real desire to be. But we definitely believe in Christ and God. And that means Christian. (Rachael, interview, 18/8/2015)

For Rachael, believing in God and following Jesus' example through social engagement shaped what it meant to live as a Christian. Despite stating that she had no desire to join a church, she described *New Family* as the best church that she had encountered. For her, the people were authentic, and they showed love with their actions. However, where Sandra opted for experiential theological methods, Rachel used formal theological methods. Rachael clarified her theological understanding by drawing comparisons between her Christian praxis and that of 'other Christians'. First, she described or quoted a passage from the Bible, then explained how the central message was reflected in her own life. There were two instances where this structure was most clear. The first occurred when she described how Jesus taught people to love through helping others. For her, Christians who did not become socially engaged were missing the point of Jesus' teachings, and were not following Jesus by living like Christ.

Becoming a real Christian

EXEMPLAR ⟶ CHRIST-LIKE ACTION ⟶ ACTION

Real Christian
- belief in God and Christ
- no desire to attend a church
- no involvement in organised religion
- *New Family* is the best *church*

Experiencing God
- in conversations
- overwhelming joy
- moments of actual love

Left Seventh-day Adventist Church

Difficulties at church
- frustrated with organised religion
- missing the point (Biblically)
- lacking diversity

Volunteering at *New Family*
- refugee children at work
- wanting to help community

Seventh-day Adventist Conversion
- through husband
- became a 'strong '*Seventh-day Adventist*
- slowly moved more centre

Growing up agnostic/atheist
- atheist father criticising Christianity
- age 12 'became Christian'
- age15 atheist/agnostic again

Love
- constant talking about love and loving each other
- John 13:35 (recognising who are my followers)
- Mark 12:30-31 (love your neighbour)

- we love with our actions, it's not passive
- spreading the gospel through love
- spreading the word and presence of God
- works (action) alone is not enough
- you have to have intention to become a better Christian
- the best way to find God

Others
- entire life spent helping people
- sacrificed himself for humanity

- New Family is an authentic place to help and be helped
- there is no piety
- people attend for authentic reasons

Self
- if you study the scriptures, you see Jesus was doing things with people
- Christ told people off who knew better, the Pharisees

- people sitting at home studying scriptures are not actually living like Christ
- Christians who criticise *New Family* and focus on conversions are like contemporary Pharisees

Figure 3: Rachael's theological frame diagram

So, this family that is sitting at home, studying scriptures, is fine, but you're actually not living like Christ. Because Christ was, if you do study the scriptures you find that Christ was always out *doing* things with people. There are so many quotes, by the way that you treat one another you will know that you are my followers. And the most important commandment is "love your God and love your neighbour as yourself..." there are heaps of examples. And I don't think that we love at a distance, as Gary says, we love with our acting. It's not a passive thing. And it's not...it's all well and good to know that we are to love each other, and only surround yourself with people that you are comfortable with, [but] it actually means everyone. There's no except *this* person, except *this* person. (Rachael, interview, 18/8/2015)

A second instance occurred when Rachael described the relationship between Jesus' teachings and social engagement. To live Christ-like was to become socially engaged in a way that resembled the example of Jesus and to be actively involved in social justice by physically and emotionally helping others. Christians who were not engaged in the same way were simply not following the teachings of Jesus. She compared other Christians to the Pharisees, and Gary, the pastor of *Connect* church, to Jesus, as she explained her frustration with the complacency that she saw in other Christians:

However, one thing that doesn't need much interpretation is the constant talking about love, about loving one another. And I think that people find that very hard. It's much easier to have arguments, and to find holes in theology like that, when actually, at the end of the day, Christ - he didn't come here and tell people off who doing the wrong thing, he told people off who knew better. He was putting people back - the Pharisees, you're going too far, you're missing the point, you're missing the point. I think that, if I'm being honest, people who are saying that they're Christian, and therefore dislike what Gary's doing, who are trying to convert people or whatever, I think *that's* like the Pharisees. I think they're missing the overall point, which I believe is about love. (Rachael, interview, 18/8/2015)

Her comparison between other Christians and the Pharisees showed her perception that Jesus' message was directed towards the pious. In a similar way that Jesus encouraged action through engagement, Gary directed his message towards those who chose not to engage. Although the passages were directed towards the Pharisees, in a contemporary context it was directed towards complacent Christians. In both of her instances, Rachael used the Bible to both clarify her theology and reinforce her Christian identity through

comparisons to other Christians who she felt were not living like Christ. Rachael used the actions of Jesus describe what it meant to be a 'real Christian' and to criticise other Christians who studied Scriptures instead of helping the needy.

Rachael's theological frame shows her theology of *Christ-like action*. Jesus came with a message of love and action toward different communities. His message was directed both towards others – your neighbour, the poor, and the needy – and towards 'complacent Christians'. Jesus spoke to those that directed their attention inwardly instead of focusing on the needs of the outside world. For Rachael, love was not a passive emotion but an active imperative. To live Christ was not to be complacent and engage in way that that Jesus would.

Mary

Mary was involved in the operations of *Connect* church and was also a volunteer at *New Family*. Mary's family were Christian and she was raised attending a small church. Much of Mary's theology was shaped by her experiences on a mission ship, the *Yahweh Sunrise.* When Mary was seventeen, she began a two-year missionary trip aboard the *Yahweh Sunrise* where she worked as a cook, delivered aid, and evangelised in East Africa and the Caribbean. The *Yahweh Sunrise* was administered by *Evangelical Catalyst*, a US-based mission and evangelical organisation. Her experiences overseas, and the period of adjustment upon return to Australia, proved to be transformative.

Her theological frame was one of *Empowerment* – living Christ-like in a broken world to help others become more in control of their circumstances. A diagrammatic representation of her theological frame is shown in *Figure 4*. Mary explained that her experiences onboard the *Yahweh Sunrise* showed her parts of the world with the greatest need – areas of extreme poverty, corruption, and bad relationships.

Since leaving the *Yahweh Sunrise*, Mary felt a compulsion towards attending to earthly needs rather than focusing on other-worldly concerns and theology. This contrasted with her experience on the ship, which strongly encouraged evangelism. On returning to Australia, she felt critical of the way that the mission prioritised religious conversion, contributed little to community development, and she questioned the lasting impact of the services they provided.

Narrative of Change/Transformation

Problems with other Christians
- Fairtrade hipster
- claimed straying from the gospel
- supporting same sex marriage
- social justice church / lacking theology

Finding Connect
- a place where there are genuine people
- Jesus loves us and we care about you

Problems with church
- angry with church
- place of women
- conservatism

Return to Australia
- changed worldview
- noticable difference with friends
- transformed

Frustrated with impact
- Ship focussed on proselytisation
- not addressing structural problems
- no evidence of community impact
- anecdote of South African friend
(should have remained in SA
to become a doctor)
- questioning involvement and complicity

Motivated to engage
- Loving as a Christian
- Wanting to help those in need

Joined mission ship Yahweh Sunrise

EMPOWERMENT

BROKEN WORLD

Matthew 6: 9-10
On Earth as it is in Heaven

{ - now, today, not later
- other Christians have too much focus on afterlife
- need to have a greater focus on the present
(on individual needs)
- leave structural problems to God
and his interaction with people }

We are all human

{ - we deserve to be respected and have friendship
- all have necesseties
- Luke 10:25-37 (Good Samaritan) }

God is with me

{ - He helps me to keep working
- there is a point (people are the point)
- individuals right in front of us }

LIVING LIKE JESUS ⟶ ACTION FOR OTHERS

Jesus

{ - did not have preconditions for people
- someone you'd have a beer with
- Jesus was involved in all facets of life
(politics, community, business) }

Living Christ-like

{ - What did Jesus do? Just live like that
- it's not easy to follow Jesus
- I just care about people }

Others

{ - I want people to know God and Jesus like I do
- we love you because we believe in Jesus
- will not judge on religious grounds'
- respect their choices }

{ - I'm a firm believer in empowerment
- empowering refugees to live the good life
- help materially and through Jesus
(moving experience of Afghani Muslim
finding Jesus) }

{ Don't understand why people who say
they are followers of Jesus don't care
about the world }

Figure 4: Mary's theological frame diagram

Mary described how the volunteers aboard the *Yahweh Sunrise* only stayed in poor communities for short periods of time. She felt that a few months were not enough to implement meaningful change, particularly when there was a strong emphasis on proselytising on the ship.

> I want to, especially as a Christian, just love people wherever they're at. Not force the whole religion thing on them. The past couple of years has been different. I used to be so focussed...because of my background...it was all about the afterlife. So… I think of the Lord's prayer, and how it says 'thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven' so I think that's what God wants...he wants this to happen here, today, not up there. And I'm kind of like...I feel like a lot people are so concerned about afterwards, they forget about the needs today. That's kind of changed for me in the last couple of years. Here, now, is the most important, not later. (Mary, interview, 7/6/2015)

Although Mary was critical of the approach taken by *Evangelical Catalyst* through the mission ship, she did not think that she was responsible or complicit in their activities. She explained that at the time she was too young to understand how their engagement affected the communities, and that her real motivation for joining the ship was to experience other countries and cultures. Since returning to Australia, Mary understood that God wanted Christians to bring about a world that resembled heaven through helping the poor and needy through action.

Mary had two areas of focus for engagement – addressing the immediate needs of refugees; and taking action in her own life. She explained that the structural problems in developing countries made eradicating poverty difficult, but these challenges could be left to God's interaction with the world. Mary attended to more immediate concerns in Australia by making stronger ethical choices as a consumer, volunteering with aid agencies and charities, and donating money to programs overseas. Although Mary believed she could not address the structural problems in developing countries, she could drive social change in Australia through her actions. She explained that the difference between the work of *New Family* and other faith-based charities was that of empowerment. The volunteers were not simply providing temporary solutions to immediate problems but driving social change. Mary described her understanding of empowerment as not limited to her work with refugees, but extended to other aspects of her life, such as in her work as a teacher.

This, too, followed on from Jesus as an exemplar who was involved in all aspects of community life.

> I fully believe in empowerment, and if you're empowering other people then you're helping them and doing the right thing. And I see that through the different things that I do. The crux of *New Family* is to empower others. We are empowering people like refugees to come and live here and have this good life… we can help people who live on the other side of the world and we harm people by doing horrible things just by the products that we choose…Jesus was involved in every single facet of life. And if you're wanting to put people first, and wanting to change things for the better, for people, then you've got to be in the system. (Mary, interview, 7/6/2015)

She also described how relationship-building and avoiding proselytising were key to healing a broken world. God was with her and in control – all she needed to do was follow God's lead in social engagement.

> When it gets too overwhelming, and I feel the problems are just too big and it's never going to change... I just stop and give it all up and then keep going because there is a point, and people are the point, and every person is important…I think because, my faith is a large part of it. (Mary, interview, 7/6/2015)

Mary saw Jesus as an exemplar for human behaviour. Following Jesus' example meant becoming involved in the lives of others by nurturing relationships. Mary explained that Jesus' life and teachings were directed towards others, and so she, too, should direct her attention towards others to help and empower. This was particularly important since conservative churches either misinterpreted aspects of Jesus' life or ignored his teachings when it came to enacting social justice. Mary explained that Jesus did not come with rules, commandments, or institutionalised religion. Rather, he came with a focus on relationships.

> Because I just think, and I also when I read about Jesus and what he did, and it wasn't *do this and I'll give you this*. He'd be the kind of person that you'd have a beer with and have a chat with. (Mary, interview, 7/6/2015)

Since Jesus did not come to Earth with a set of rules to be followed, Christians also should not go to poor communities with rules to follow. Mary explained that many of the rules she saw in conservative churches were either irrelevant, Biblically unsound, or did not align with the teachings and life of Jesus.

I think, um, it's made me look a lot more at, just, breaking it down, what did Jesus do? Live like that. Just growing up in a conservative church with so many rules, and you can't do this and you can't do that, and you're such a bad person if you do this, and it's like, actually, none of that matters. (Mary, interview, 7/6/2015)

To live like Christ was to care, form relationships and empower people to make them stronger. However, Mary explained that other Christians questioned her engagement and claimed that she had an ulterior motive – what she really wanted was to convert refugees. She found this attitude frustrating, and another sign of the mistakes made by other Christians or other churches. Mary did not acknowledge that she spent two years aboard the *Yahweh Sunrise* engaged in exactly the types of evangelising activities that she criticised.

We're not judging anybody, we don't care where you've come from, or what you do, we love you and we know that God loves you. The things we do aren't because we want to convert you or save you from eternal hell or whatever, we love you because we believe in Jesus, and Jesus loves us - we *genuinely* care about you. I don't have an ulterior motive. Yes, I believe in God, and yes, I believe in Jesus. If you want to know more about this then I'm happy to answer questions if you want to know why I believe what I do. But if they don't, that's okay as well. (Mary, interview, 7/6/2015)

For Mary, conservative churches affected how she embodied her theology in two significant ways. First, conservative churches had shaped her negative preconceptions towards Christian communities, which made her engagement with disadvantaged groups difficult. Second, conservative Christians criticised her theology, making it difficult to offer the disadvantaged and needy a unified sense of purpose for all Christians. It was only at *Connect* and *New Family* where other Christians shared her action-centred theology that she felt comfortable in her engagement and intention.

Mary's theological frame shows a clear relationship between theology, engagement in the world, Jesus, and Christian purpose. The world is in need of healing, and Christians need to draw on the life and example of Jesus to engage with the needy. To become socially engaged was to develop relationships and empower others to be stronger and more independent – to be able to take more control of their own lives.

Chiara

Chiara was a 24-year-old volunteer at *New Family*. She was raised in a Christian environment as her father worked for their family's church. Chiara had been involved in other advocacy groups, FBOs, and NGOs over the past six years. While she was comfortable in her engagement and activism as a Christian, this was not always the case. Chiara acknowledged that she had wrestled deeply with her faith and sexuality over several years. She explained that much of her outlook and approach to activism and social engagement had been informed by her experiences as a homosexual and the treatment of homosexuals by the church.

Chiara's theological frame showed an understanding of faith as *High Level Gravitas* – with a high degree of seriousness and substance to her social engagement. Within her theological frame three key themes of identity, action and change emerged within a context of justice. A diagram of her theological frame is shown in *Figure 5*.

Much of Chiara's theology was founded on what it meant to live as a Christian. Like the other volunteers, she understood that to be Christian was to follow the example of Jesus. Chiara explained that much of Jesus' life was involved in enacting social change or advocating for social justice.

> I think there's quite a compelling case by Jesus, who is the centre of our faith, about helping people. There's the story of the Samaritan and a half-dead guy on the side of the road and all these people who walk past and, you know, there's this guy who a lot of people hated, didn't think that would help, but did. The stuff about 'whatever you do for the least of these, you do for me' … I think that's almost all you need to hear to feel like you need to do something about the things that you hear that matter. (Chiara, interview, 21/4/2015)

Although Chiara drew upon the example of Jesus and messages within the teachings of Jesus, she also attributed much of her motivation to become socially engaged as a response towards injustices committed by the church. Particularly, she explained, towards homosexuals and minorities.

HIGH LEVEL GRAVITAS

Striving for justice cannot be removed from what it means to be a Christian

IDENTITY — **ACTION** — **CHANGE**

Jesus
- focussed on poor
- not on status / social position
- Luke 10:25-37 (Good Samaritan)
- Matthew 25:31-46 (What you did for the least of these)
- example to aspire to
- if you want to be more Christlike, you need to feel so passionately that you want to take action

Refugees
- personal experience
- political activism
- collating resources

Same sex activism
- focussing on homosexual Christians
- safe space for them

- injustices are prevalent
- need to change policies
- important because people are affected

Church failures
- towards homosexuals
- racism
- refugees
- she (and others like her) have been oppressed

Empowerment
- empowering young people to engage
- empowering to take campaign action
- involvement in fundraising for overseas
- catalyse young people to be change makers

Impact
- changing lives (same sex activism, refugees)
- road trip campaign
- visiting cafe/school in Cambodia (interaction with communities)
- choices as a consumer/vegetarian
- relationships needed to understand issues

Structural change
- trying to advocate for change
- not responding to the way things are
- differences in action (attending rally vs. writing to an MP)

Response
- don't do unto others what has been done unto me
- righting the wrongs and standing up for those that have been marginalised
- frustrated at the current lack of action

JUSTICE
'Break my heart for what breaks yours'

- upholding human rights that she sees allaround her
- Biblical sense of justice
- feeling of being right/tranquility/validates position

- pushing towards the person God wanted her to be
- Christians see justice work as an extension of faith (similar to a calling)

Figure 5: Chiara's theological frame diagram

140

Striving for justice can't really be removed from what it means to be Christian. And I feel incredibly strongly about that. It's partly the sense I have that Christians haven't always done enough to respond to justice issues. And part of what holds it for me is as a person who identifies as gay, and sort of feeling the sense of…hurt...that is within that community at the way Christians have treated them. And sort of not wanting to be part of a group of people...not wanting to be the kind of Christian who is like that to others. (Chiara, interview, 21/4/2015)

Chiara's self-understanding of being both Christian and homosexual were important to her and any social engagement needed to accommodate both aspects of her life. Chiara shaped what she saw as a Christian response to injustice using the example of Jesus and her understanding of what it meant to be a Christian. Her frustrations with what she saw as the church's lack of engagement towards disadvantaged groups led her towards becoming involved in a variety of organisations and starting her own organisation to support young, female, same-sex attracted Christians.

However, for her, engagement needed to be more than addressing immediate needs to be integral in bringing about structural change.

Christian responses to injustice need to interact with the way policies are, because those policies affect people and that's part of what *New Family* is trying to change. (Chiara, interview, 21/4/2015)

Chiara explained that in order to make lasting change, Christian responses should both address the causes of injustice and offer support and love towards the victims of injustice.

In her theological frame, the themes of identity, action and change were grounded on her sense of justice and the relationship between justice and Christian praxis. Chiara explained that, for her, striving for justice could not be removed from what it meant to be a Christian. She described how other socially engaged Christians also saw justice as an extension and part of their faith.

I can never really detach the idea of justice work from Christianity, it's so intrinsic that it's...it doesn't prove anything or change anything for it to be present in my life, it's just part of what it means…Christians there [at *New Family*] see it as an extension of their faith, to do justice work. (Chiara, interview, 21/4/2015)

Chiara explained that as she tried to follow Jesus' example to become involved in justice work across a range of contexts, the issues that she felt compelled towards were often accompanied by a sense of peace and tranquillity from God. These feelings helped her decide if she was responding to a situation that required her intervention or an opportunity that God presented to her. However, her sense of peace and tranquillity was not reflected in her frustration with other Christians. The combination of feeling God's presence, following Jesus' example and remedying the inaction of the church formed the basis of her motivation to become involved in social justice issues.

> I've managed to be quite frustrated at the lack of action that I feel sometimes floats around Christians... But I've also managed to connect with some Christians who feel incredibly strongly about justice as I do, and feel validated in that sense that, you know, we strongly believe that this is what Jesus would do and wants us to do. If it's something I feel that Jesus would do, then doing it is always going to be good and will push me more towards the person God wants me to be. (Chiara, interview, 21/4/2015)

As Chiara became involved in different social issues, she described how she was getting closer to becoming what God intended – someone who was involved in bringing about justice. Chiara's theological frame integrated her sense of identity – as a female, homosexual, Christian, with an imperative to act on social justice issues with the intention of bringing about change. Her theology was informed by the life and teachings of Jesus, and her engagement was often informed by a sense to correct the action and teachings of judgemental churches and Christians.

Jeremy

Jeremy was a 24-year-old volunteer at *New Family* and member of *Connect* church. At the time of my research, he was studying law and international studies at university. He attended a local church in his early to late teenage years where his mother worked as a pastor. However, he had since left the church due to increasing theological differences and what he saw as a lack of church engagement in important social issues. His theological frame followed a theme of *Following Christ* and is shown in *Figure 6*.

Following Christ

Radical

Narrative: Progressive Prophet

Prophet - correcting bad teachings/theology (pastor at church)

More progressive
- steps ahead of mother
- connected to social issues
- love first, ask questions later

Leaving Church:
- making a public stance towards refugees, homosexuals in church
- left in spirit, then physically

Biblical Interpretation:
- beyond words to meaning
- how should I live?
- Biblical progressive moral compass

Critical Enquiry
- critiquing prominent Christians
- becoming more rational
- embracing other perspectives

Faith Exploration:
- Strobel: Case for Christ/Faith (foundational texts for faith)
- confronted with troubling aspects of the Church (discrimination, persecution)

Christianity as a radical moral philosophy ⟶ not seen in the Church

Love informs activism ⟨ needs to be experienced not explained
can't love without an object
want others to love Jesus

The Great Commission ⟨ to spread the word,
which for him is activism

Matthew 18: 12-14 (parable of lost sheep)
- finding the 1% who care

Difference

Difference

FBOs and Church to include
- refugees
- transgender
- homosexuals

FBO youth ambassador experience: East Timor
- promoting narratives of difference to Australians (contrasting Jow, Manda in Timor)

Sister: Disabled
- most powerful expression of difference
- embodiment of have/have not
- different just means different care

Action

Matthew 7:13 ⟶ it is a conscious choice to do the right thing

Matthew 16:24-26
Matthew 4: 18-22 ⟩ Jesus calls to action
Mark 1:16-20
Luke 5:2-11

Luke 19:1-10 ⟶ Jesus rewards Zacchaeus for action

Parable (unclear) ⟨ What is the good of the man?
How has he lived out his beliefs?

Christian as a verb, not a noun - I want to follow Christ

Figure 6: Jeremy's theological frame diagram

Jeremy spoke about the disparities he saw in the teachings of Jesus and the actions and engagement of the church in response to contemporary social issues. He explained that Christianity was a fundamentally radical way of living as Christians put love first and foremost. Unfortunately, for Jeremy, this was not reflected in how the church interacted with local, national, and international communities.

> It's just that Christianity is very, very radical as a moral philosophy and I don't see that very much at all in the church, it's really pretty conservative…like, when Constantine changed the Roman religion to Christianity in about 300 AD, that...it was really interesting because that really killed off a lot of Christianity because it was no longer this radical, ideological tradition, it was now just the state religion and you could just kind of plod along with it and get mixed up with all kinds of earthly powers - Jesus came to the world to disrupt those earthly powers.
> (Jeremy, interview, 15/4/2015)

What made Christianity so radical, Jeremy explained, was that love and engagement were two interrelated aspects of what it meant to be Christian. Eventually the difficulty he found in reconciling the teachings of Jesus and the lack of social justice engagement of his church led him to leave that church and attend *Connect*. *Connect* was much more socially inclusive and engaged in the issues that Jeremy felt most strongly about. The messages and activities at *Connect* reflected his understanding of radical love and engagement – something that he explained that most Christians didn't quite understand. Jeremy explained that even the word 'love' was both misused and misunderstood among Christians. He saw that Christians often spoke of a general, non-specific, and abstract love. Jeremy believed this was ultimately flawed. Instead, love was not an abstract concept, but required an object – and Jesus explained that the object was other people.

> Love is where I think activism comes in from, and you can't love from a distance, you can't love from a concept, you have to love a person… The idea of loving someone is very different from the act of loving someone, and you can't love someone without knowing someone and if you can't understand their experience…And so, it's impossible to actually live out that second thing that Jesus said - love other people - unless you have someone to love, unless you are actually seeing a human being. Because if someone's a number, you can't love a number, but you can love a human. (Jeremy, interview, 15/4/2015)

For Jeremy, to be Christian was to love real people in real communities and be engaged in social justice. He went on to explain how he determined where he should direct his love. For him, love was directed towards those with a sense of 'otherness' – people who were fundamentally different from him. He described three types of otherness which helped shape his engagement. First, he spoke about difference that was linked to his own experience. His older sister, Miranda, was disabled and required significant assistance. The differences he noticed between himself and Miranda did not depend on social circumstance but were the most prominent example of a have and a have-not within society.

> I guess understanding that people were different was something that occurred to me really, really young, and also the understanding that people who are different are equally valuable. The one person who was different was Miranda, who is disabled, that's my older sister by two years. For me, and I think it always will be, the ultimate expression between a have and a have-not. The fact that me and my sister, we're from the same family, but she was born without a brain that works and I was born with a brain that works pretty well. Growing up, that was the ultimate thing. I saw that most people are pretty much the same but there are people who are not even in the same race. (Jeremy, interview, 15/4/2015)

Second, he saw otherness in social disadvantages. In particular, he saw that refugees, LBGTI communities, and other minorities were not provided with the same support in society that he enjoyed. Jeremy described how during communion at his former church, he was given an opportunity to address the congregation. He delivered a message of LGBTI inclusiveness that did not resonate well with the congregants. Jeremy left the church shortly after this incident. Third, otherness was seen in structural and economic differences. This sense of difference grew stronger through his increased involvement and volunteering with overseas aid programs, FBOs, and *Connect* missions in Southeast Asia.

Jeremy explained that it was not good enough to simply love, or even have an object of love, unless it was followed up with action. He explained that this was consistent with Biblical(adjective) /the Bible's (noun) teachings as Jesus often called upon his followers to become socially engaged. He used a range of different passages to explain his position, aware that to become socially engaged was difficult and required sacrifice. First, he described how change was difficult, but necessary, as Jesus encouraged his disciples to

leave their nets and take up their cross to follow him. Second, he further explained the relationship between making a decision and enacting change.

> Zacchaeus climbs the tree and Jesus rewards that first act of taking a step. There's the example of the priest who sees someone on the side of the road, and he says a prayer for them. He says 'God be with you and bless you' - whatever it is - and Jesus says 'What's the good of that man?' Like, how has he actually lived out his beliefs? He hasn't. He just coated them with nice words and then did the same thing that everyone else does. Fundamentally for me, Christianity is something that you do - I don't even like to consider myself a Christian, because Christian is like a noun, whereas I like to think of Christian as verb - I want to *follow* Christ. It's easy to be a Christian. It's as easy to be a Christian as it is to be a McDonald. You can be born into a certain tradition, but that doesn't mean that you live out the values of that [tradition]. (Jeremy, interview, 15/4/2015)

Jeremy was forthright in interpreting the central message. To be Christian was to embody belief and be actively involved in social justice with a focus on the 'other'. For him, to be Christian was to express who you are through your actions.

Jeremy's theological frame of *Following Christ* was grounded in three interrelated themes – radical, difference and action. Christianity was not simply a set of beliefs, but a lifestyle: to be Christian was to be actively involved in helping those without. Social justice and engagement could not be removed from what it meant to be Christian and was embodied in finding an object of love – for Jeremy it was a refugee, a member from the LBGTI community, or sibling.

Gary – founder and visionary of *New Family*

Gary was founder of *New Family* and pastor of *Connect* church. Gary's theological frame emphasised a theme of an *Expansive Faith*. He explained that his theology was more inclusive of all aspects of life, creation, and relationships than he saw in other churches. He understood his involvement in *New Family* and *Connect* as moving away from what he perceived as the exclusive practices in other churches. For him, the signs of being a true follower of Christ were not found in adhering to doctrinal truths but reflected in action and relationships. To live like Christ was to be part of a community and part of the Kingdom of God – eschewing hierarchical church models, inviting others to be part of the journey, and

engaging with needy communities to build better societies. The diagrammatic representation of his theological frame is shown in *Figure 7*.

Gary's theological understanding of following Jesus through engagement was shaped both by his upbringing within the Brethren Church and a traumatic event that he witnessed as a young adult. He described the Brethren Church that he attended until his teens as fundamentalist – silence was expected, women were required to wear hats, and a literal Biblical interpretation was strongly encouraged. As he entered his late teens, Gary became increasingly frustrated at the disparity between the espoused theology of the church and what he saw in practice.

> We were taught we had the most important message in the world, and that it was the most powerful message in the world...and that, essentially it was transformative and world changing. And I guess I was, like, I don't see any evidence of that. It's like, if I look at our city or our country, it's like, I don't think we're doing anything transformative, we're just gathering every week. You know, deepening our Bible knowledge rather than changing anything. (Gary, interview, 30/9/2015)

Eventually, Gary left the Brethren Church and became a youth pastor in a school. During the first few weeks working as a youth pastor, a student took their own life on the school grounds in front of his office. He explained that he's felt under-prepared to work with the responses of the students and staff to this traumatic event and eventually left the school to pursue better ways to engage with communities. He explained that while he disagreed with the theology and practice of the Brethren Church and found the suicide confronting and traumatic, they both contributed to shaping a theology of living like Jesus to reach the most vulnerable in society. He found that traditional churches did not encourage their members to live like Jesus, and so he started *Connect* church to develop a community of Christ-following activists.

> It was the idea that, for me, the idea that if following Jesus was going to church on Sundays, then screw that, what's the point of that? I didn't see that that matched up with anything Jesus asked us to do, or that he modelled in his own life, so to us, gathering on a Sunday is still important, but it's not the epitome of the Christian experience. It serves a bunch of purposes, but mostly that it shapes the community into what it's intended to be rather than…it's not church, rather that it helps the church be the church. (Gary, interview, 30/9/2015)

EXPANSIVE FAITH

The gospel is the renewal of relationships, the Earth, society and all things.
- it's a much more expansive pciture of what it means for Jesus to be the saviour of the Eath

Returned to Capital
- started Connect church
(community of activists)
- started New Family

Moved to Wollongong
- work in a community church
- intended strong engagement
- reality didn't match expectations

High school chaplain
- saw a student suicide
- ptsd
- alcoholism and suicidal

Youth pastor
- ended badly

Leaving Bretheren Church
(20 years old)
- discrepancies between
theology and practice
- division with other
Christians

Fundamentalist
Bretheren upbringing
(Capital City)

Follower of Jesus

- Jesus did not emphasise
notions of belief and doctrine
- Jesus asked people to do things
Luke 9:23 (take up cross and follow him)

- all aspects of life can be drawn
from Jesus

- who was Jesus with? LGBTI / Muslims
(anecdote: Leaving Connect)

Kingdom

Church

Engagement

Kingdom and Community

- Kingdom of God is a society that perfectly
reflects God's character
- we are about being the Kingdom of God
or looking like the Kingdom of God
- inviting people to join and go on a journey
- non-evangelising

- church not the epitmote of Christian experience
- traditional church does not align with Jesus' life
(anecdote: church on Sunday, capitalist on Monday)
- church shapes community; helps church become 'the Church'
- other churches do charity after everything else, for us it is
our core business
(anecdote: monocultural church)

- essential expression of what we're about
(anecdote: Family dinner as embodied theology)
- should not replace church
- can be church, but not in fullness
- not advertising religion
(anecdote: Only Islamic religious expressions)
- approach as equals
- we serve each other
- what the Kingdom of God looks like
- best way for building societies

Figure 7: Gary's theological frame diagram

148

Connect church was to be a community that looked like the life of Jesus in their actions and encapsulated the values of Jesus in their theology. For Gary, this meant directing attention to the most vulnerable in society and standing alongside them to achieve justice. He explained that justice formed a core part of what it meant to be Christian, and when other churches treated justice as a ministry instead of being foundational to their faith, they were misrepresenting Jesus' message. At the time, there were three groups that drew Gary's attention: refugees, Muslims, and the LGBTI community. Each were reflected in the mission of the church. *Connect* members regularly volunteered at *New Family*, attended marches in support of same-sex marriage, and attended inter-faith forums and activities. In addition, many *Connect* members wrote opinion pieces, which were circulated among the church community via email covering a range of justice-themed topics. Gary's vision of a community of the church as a community of activists was reflected in these activities. So much so that Gary eventually reduced his pastoral involvement to facilitate these engagement activities.

Gary explained that while he engaged with marginalised groups he was not interested in proselytising. Rather, he directed his attention to making the Kingdom manifest through being an example of Jesus. Gary explained that through relationships, an inclusive attitude, and a progressive agenda, the church community would attract more people.

> We want our community to be a picture of how the world could be, and people go, yeah, I want to be part of that as well, because that looks awesome, kind of thing. So I guess we don't have that evangelical drive in the same kind of expression that other people do, we're about being the Kingdom of God or looking like the Kingdom of God, and inviting people to join in and to go on a journey.
> (Gary, interview, 30/9/2015)

Gary explained that the older approach of trying to engage non-Christians using a direct, reasoned approach was inappropriate and largely non-convincing. Instead, non-Christians could understand the life and values of Jesus through the community of *Connect* church. This approach was reflected in his interview as he rarely used Biblical resources to qualify his theology. In fact, he only quoted Scripture once to emphasise that Jesus did not ask people to adhere to a particular belief but, rather, he asked them to follow him and act by 'taking up their cross.' Gary explained that while the community he was trying to create sounded idyllic it was difficult to live like Jesus in contemporary society. The sacrifice, persecution, rejection of materialism, and hurt from other Christians, was not easy.

To summarise, Gary's theological frame followed a theme of an *Expansive Faith*. For him, the themes of following Jesus, building community, embodying the Kingdom and the Church were interconnected. To live like Christ was to follow Jesus' actions and instructions to engage with the most vulnerable in society. By engaging with communities, Christians were manifesting the Kingdom and Kingdom values, and exemplifying an authentic expression of what it meant be part of the church that Jesus intended. Gary summed up his position, integrating the aspects that were used to form his theological frame:

> I have a much bigger picture of where the gospel is. It's not individual souls escaping to heaven when they die, it's the renewal of all things, turning the world right in terms of relationship with God but also includes the renewal of the Earth and the healing of relationships and the betterment of society. It's just a much more expansive picture of what it means for Jesus to be the Saviour of the Earth. (Gary, interview, 30/9/2015)

7.3 Shared Theology

In this section, the shared theology of the volunteers at *New Family* will be outlined. Each of the volunteers at *New Family* described a shared ordinary theology which I call *action-driven theology*. *Action-driven theology* is derived from what the volunteers interpreted as the central message of Jesus – to actively seek out and help those who were disadvantaged or marginalised. They shared a theological imperative to find and assist those who they thought Jesus would identify with most strongly in contemporary Australian society. The volunteers at *New Family* were compelled to make a difference in the lives of those within the refugee community. In this section, *action-driven theology* will be developed by examining the common elements of the theological frames and using the four voices of theology (introduced in Chapter Three) to articulate the shared theology of the volunteers at *New Family*.

This section will proceed as follows: First, I will argue that the theologies of the volunteers push against the espoused and normative theologies of church practices; second, I will outline that the volunteers used formal theological methods to construct a theology based on the life, character, and message of Jesus.; and third, I will describe how the formal theologies of the volunteers gave meaning to their volunteering and shaped the espoused and operant elements of their shared theology. I then suggest that the misalignment between the volunteers' theological frames and church theology stimulated their

involvement with *New Family*. Lastly, the elements of the formal, espoused, and operant theologies, will be combined to explain *action-driven theology* and the theological elements that were not included in the shared theology will be described.

My understanding of this shared theology was constructed from the theological frames and interview data of the volunteers in four steps: First, the themes common to each of the theological frames were identified; second, each of the common themes were elaborated for each participant using their interview data; third, each of the themes were summarised into coherent theological statements as shared theology; and fourth, the shared theology was compared to each of the theological frames and interview data to ensure consistency and to note any significant elements from the theological frames that were not included in the shared theology.

The shared theology of the volunteers at *New Family* showed elements of each of the four voices of theology. Most of the volunteers were antagonistic towards the normative practices and espoused theologies of both historical and contemporary churches. This antagonism was particularly evident among those the volunteers saw as conservative and the churches they attended during their teenage years. Throughout the interviews and during participant-observation the volunteers referred to 'the church' as an aggregate of historical and contemporary churches whose theologies and practices they did not share. In this section 'the church' will be used in this sense – as an imagined representation of churches as understood by participants, rather than a particular church.

Each of the volunteers described how they perceived oppressive institutionalised practices in historical and contemporary churches and how these practices did not reflect what it meant to live as a Christian. Gary was not as openly inimical to church practices as the other volunteers – his main frustration was the discrepancy between theology and practice, and the lack of engagement on social issues. In particular, he questioned if the practices of churches reflected Jesus' life and teachings. Gary conceded that his attitude towards normative practices and preaching at *Connect* had jeopardised his future with the church. Rachael was also disillusioned with 'the church'. She became frustrated with 'the church' soon after becoming Christian. Like Gary, she explained that Jesus' teachings were not seen in church practices. 'The church' was too conservative, antagonistic towards other religions, and the Christians found in them were too pious. Similarly, Mary described how she used to feel constrained by what she saw as a conservative church imposing rules and regulations without any reason. After returning from the mission ship,

Yahweh Sunrise, her frustration with normative practices intensified. She explained that it was not only conservative churches that were at fault but *most* churches. This was most strongly reflected in what she saw as oppressive historical church practices and the place of women in 'the church'. Chiara also found the espoused and normative theologies of the church difficult and described church practices that failed refugees, ethnic minorities, and homosexuals as oppressive. The hostility of the volunteers at *New Family* towards 'the church' meant that many of the volunteers did not attend a church. Instead, the Christian volunteers explained that they chose to express their faith in other ways, such as by volunteering at *New Family* and other FBOs.

The volunteers challenged the normative and espoused theologies of 'the church' using formal theological methods. Although the volunteers were not undertaking formal theology with the same rigour as in academic theology, there are some similarities in both theological processes. I will develop this argument in more detail by examining the volunteers' descriptions of the life of Jesus and their use of Scripture.

Each of the volunteers examined the life, character and message of Jesus using parables and quotes from the Bible to construct a formal theology of Jesus as an exemplar. Rachael explained that Christians were given clear instructions for human conduct in the words of Jesus and could live as God intended by simply listening to what Jesus said in the Bible. For her, Jesus' message was focussed on love and loving your neighbour. Gary also found the words and actions of Jesus instructive. He explained that all aspects of human experience could be shaped by the life of Jesus. Christians could gain insight about how to live as God intended by examining how Jesus participated in community life. This view was shared by Mary, who explained that since Jesus was involved in all facets of social life – such as politics, business, and community – Christians ought to express his values in all aspects of their own lives. Since Jesus was humanity's best example, Christians should strive to emulate his life and actions as closely as possible.

The formal theological methods were reflected in the theological frames of the volunteers. Each of the volunteers used Scripture to illustrate their points. For example, Jeremy explained that Jesus rewarded Zacchaeus[20] for taking action; Gary described the engagement and action embedded in Jesus asking others to 'take up their cross and

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[20] Luke 19: 1-10

follow him'[21]; Rachael interpreted action in recognising followers of Jesus[22]; and Mary saw lessons in the parable of the Good Samaritan.[23]

The volunteers at *New Family* used recognised theological methods, but in a different way to how Cameron et al. (2010) described the formal theological voice. Many of the volunteers either did not attend a church at the time of research or saw their participation at *New Family* as being 'church'. In both cases, the volunteers did not appear to feel subject to historical church practices or church authority. This is particularly pertinent given that many of the volunteers expressed discomfort at contemporary or historical church practices. The volunteers articulated their theology through a critical enquiry into the form and expression of faith and in ways that create distance from 'the church.'

The formal theologies of the volunteers gave meaning to their volunteering and shaped the espoused and operant elements of their shared theology. I suggest that a misalignment between volunteer theological frames and church theology stimulated this engagement. The relationship between theology and engagement was particularly clear in Chiara's theological frame. She explained that not only was Jesus an example to aspire to, but also a source of love and passion that inspired Christians into action. For Chiara and the other volunteers, 'the church' was complicit in promoting injustice, and it was the responsibility of younger Christians to correct church failures. Many of Chiara's frustrations with normative theologies were shared by Jeremy. He, too, felt an obligation to correct espoused and normative practices. He best summarised the antagonism of the *New Family* volunteers towards normative theologies as he described the decline of 'the church' as a moral authority and the place of volunteers like him to correct church teachings.

> I think that for all of the history of Christianity, there's been this real importance of the prophet - so in the Old Testament the prophet was somebody that came and brought correction and teaching to what the church was doing. I think that prophecy is an important part of Christianity, to bring correction to bad teaching within the church. I'm very passionate about it, because the church does hurt millions of people across the world because of...bad theology...and people not having the courage to stand up to that. (Jeremy, interview, 15/4/2015)

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[21] Luke 9:23
[22] Mark 12:30-31
[23] Luke 10:25-37

Jeremy described how belief, alone, was not enough for Christians. Jesus called his followers into action and so they, too, must be compelled into action. For Jeremy, being a Christian was not a title, but an expression of a life lived.

This espoused theology of the inseparability of belief and action was seen in the theological frames of the other volunteers. The espoused theology of the other volunteers showed some differences, but the inseparability of belief and action was clear: Sandra saw Jesus' actions as outward expressions of God's love, and Christians like her ought to spread love to the places in society where love was absent; Chiara worked to correct historical church practices against the oppressed; and Mary tried to express her faith in all facets of social life. The shared theology of the volunteers integrated the formal theology of Jesus as an exemplar with an espoused theology of belief as action. The theology of the volunteers gave meaning to their engagement and provided a basis for enacting change against the church.

The formal theological voice was also found in the espoused and operant elements of *action-driven theology* – to live as a Christian was to become actively involved with the *other*. Each of the members described in theological terms how their actions needed to be directed towards those in need, particularly those who were different from wider society or who had been perceived to be oppressed by 'the church'. Mary explained that for her, all people on Earth were loved by God and deserved respect and friendship. Her engagement drew on her interpretation of how a contemporary Jesus would act and the kind of issues that would be most important to him. For Mary, the message would have little in common with what she saw in conservative churches. She was helping do God's work on Earth by supporting same-sex couples in church, refugees, and the disempowered. Chiara had a similar sense of helping the *other*, although this was more focused on the marginalised. She described how she tried to make a difference in the lives of those she felt had been betrayed or failed by the church, either through oppressive practices or disinterest, such as ethnic minorities, homosexuals, and refugees.

Similarly, Sandra described how she should be standing with those that a contemporary Jesus would be standing with – the persecuted and the vulnerable. Her portrayal of the *other* as the poor and the needy was shared among the volunteers of *New Family* and reflected the theological commitment of the volunteers to engage with those outside of their social circumstances. Finally, Gary explained that the activities of the volunteers at *New Family* were the essential expression of the theological underpinnings of the

organisation. The formal theological voice was found within the espoused and operant elements of *action-driven theology* through the life of Jesus and in recognising the *other.* The volunteers were also seen to embody the formal and espoused theologies in their activities at *New Family*. The engagement of the volunteers will be given in more detail in the next section, but an outline will be provided here.

The formal and espoused theologies were reflected in how the volunteers participated in engagement. Before volunteering at *New Family*, many of the participants had little involvement with refugees or with Middle Eastern communities. At *New Family*, the volunteers did not attend to deliver welfare services but to become actively involved in the lives of the refugees. Many arrived and left with refugees, organised to have meals at each other's houses, and met outside the times scheduled by *New Family*. Many of the volunteers had committed a significant portion of their time to work at *New Family*. Despite most having full-time jobs, many of the volunteers attended *New Family* three times a week, for at least ninety minutes on each occasion. In addition, most of the volunteers had financially supported or advocated for international aid programs, travelled internationally on mission trips, or been involved in campaigns against poverty. This type of engagement further emphasised the divide between affluent, white, Australian Christians and the *other* – those who needed support overseas who looked and sounded different.

The common elements from the theological frames of the volunteers at *New Family* can now be integrated to form a coherent shared theological expression. I have called this shared theology *action-driven theology* – to actively seek out and engage with those who were marginalised or disadvantaged. *Action-driven theology* was a shared ordinary theology unique to *Connect*. Their theology was not argued or formulated, but descriptive and instructional. This was not surprising given the sense of scepticism or disdain that many of the volunteers showed towards those that prioritised Biblical studies over social engagement.

Action-driven theology was derived almost exclusively from the example of Jesus and his actions, and from how the volunteers imagined that Jesus would act in a contemporary society. They understood that Jesus was actively involved in the lives of those whom society had rejected and were different – the sick and the poor – and so they too needed to follow his example. However, for the volunteers, preferential treatment was given to the *other*, not exclusively the sick and the poor, but those who were marginalised, or significantly different from 'regular' society or fundamentally different from their own

cultural contexts. For these volunteers, the *other* that Jesus would have supported were those from the refugee community. *Action-driven theology* was not a set of beliefs or doctrine, but active participation in a lifestyle that emulated Jesus' example. Their theology was a lived theology and was not subject to what most of the volunteers saw as the conservative, oppressive, and irrelevant aspects of organised religion.

However, there were four elements of the individual theological frames that were not included in the construction of action-driven theology: Kingdom, Identity, Empowerment, and Radical. A theological understanding of the Kingdom was found in Gary's and Mary's theological frame as a formal theological element. I did not include this in my analysis as understanding the Kingdom required more critical examination and reflection on Scripture than was suggested by the other volunteers.

The sense of identity in theology was too diverse to include in a shared theological expression, particularly as identity formed strong elements of some of the theological frames. For Chiara, identity related to being both homosexual and Christian; Jeremy and Gary identified as progressive Christians; and Rachael identified as a 'real Christian'. While many of the volunteers described empowerment in their theological frames, their descriptions were ambiguous or were different from the other volunteers. Chiara's description of empowerment in terms of motivating young people contrasts with Mary's empowerment as living the 'good life.' For the other volunteers, empowerment was related to action, which proved to be a stronger overall theme for their shared theology. Lastly, Christianity as a radical faith was most evident in Jeremy's theological frame, while Gary spoke of activists and a community of activists. However, it was not clear how their expressions were radical, or significantly different from other Christian expressions, so they were not included.

7.4 New Family Engagement

In this section, the social engagement activities of the volunteers at *New Family* with the refugee community will be described. This study focussed primarily on two *New Family* activities – *Afternoon Chats* and *Family Dinners*. The *Afternoon Chats* were informal sessions where refugees could practise their English skills or obtain administrative assistance. *Family Dinners* were large events where volunteers, refugees, and local residents provided food to share in a social, community building environment. In this section, both of these activities will be described and it will be argued that each provided an opportunity for the volunteers to embody their *action-driven theology*.

Afternoon Chats

The *Afternoon Chats* occurred every week on a Tuesday afternoon. The volunteers explained that there were four reasons for establishing the *Afternoon Chats.* First, to give refugees and asylum seekers an opportunity to practise speaking English in an environment outside of formal lessons. This largely occurred through playing card games, pool, or simply sitting and having an informal conversation over a hot drink and biscuits. Second, it provided the refugees and asylum seekers with organisational and administrative assistance for integrating into Australian society. During these times, volunteers helped refugees learn computer skills, develop their resumé, assist with school or tertiary studies, or offered advice about seeking work. Third, it provided an opportunity for refugees or asylum seekers to obtain food, clothing, or other household items they needed from the donations to *New Family*. Lastly, the *Afternoon Chats* served to enhance the sense of community among the refugees and volunteers. During the warmer months, a choir was established from the volunteers and refugees; sports days and activities were organised; and school-holiday programs were run for younger children. One of the volunteers explained that since the visas of many of the refugees and asylum seekers prohibited them from undertaking any paid work, the *Afternoon Chats* provided an opportunity to simply leave their houses and socialise in order to break routines and boredom. Five volunteers attended the *Afternoon Chats* regularly and another three attended sporadically. Each of the volunteers typically coordinated a similar activity every week.

The *Afternoon Chats* were described by the volunteers as an open, inclusive environment. However, most of the volunteers directed their attention towards a particular group of refugees – those who were young adults, male, and Middle Eastern. Other refugees were offered assistance but were treated differently. There were three occasions where this was seen most clearly. First, one of the volunteers, Corey, assisted a teenage, female refugee, Mirena, with her schoolwork once a week. For four weeks, Corey and Mirena established a weekly routine. However, as Corey became friendlier with other newly arrived Afghani refugees his attention to Mirena wavered. When Corey arrived on the fifth week, he played pool with the Afghani refugees instead of assisting Mirena, who was completing her schoolwork alone. After half an hour, Mirena asked Corey for assistance and mentioned that she had been waiting for him. Corey walked towards their usual location, with the pool cue still in hand, but stopped halfway to address her question. Corey mentioned that he had not noticed her and asked if she needed any further assistance. He spoke briefly to

Mirena, then returned to the game and played for another twenty minutes. His involvement over the next few weeks became more social and he was repeatedly asked by Sandra to stop socialising with the other refugees and assist with school work.[24] Eventually, Corey's involvement became largely social, with tuition forming a minor part of his engagement.

Second, during one of the *Afternoon Chats* a recently arrived French immigrant, Julien, arrived at *New Family*. He explained that he had found out about some of the services *New Family* provided and was interested in taking some English lessons. Despite explaining his position, the volunteers offered him little assistance and continued socialising with the male Afghani refugees. Surprisingly, the volunteers expected him to spend time with some of the other refugees as a volunteer rather than being a recipient of their services.[25] Julien did not return to *New Family*.

Third, occasionally *New Family* had visitors who attended once every six to eight weeks to volunteer. During these times, the regular volunteers would have very little interaction with the visitors. Although the regular volunteers appeared to recognise them, there was no chatting, instructions, or advice given. Similar behaviour was observed towards new volunteers who attended occasionally for a 'tryout' session during the *Afternoon Chats*. If the new volunteers did not have existing social connections to the regular volunteers, then these interactions were minimal. During the time of research, three new volunteers attended an *Afternoon Chat,* but none became regular volunteers.

Each of these examples illustrate how particular the sense of *other* was to the volunteers at *New Family* in their engagement. The volunteers became increasingly involved in the lives of the male, Afghani refugees but many of the other attendees were not afforded the same attention. Volunteers were often ignored, and the refugees appeared to be treated differently, depending on their social relationships, despite the centre existing to provide a service.

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[24] Participant-observation, 3/6/2015.
[25] Participant-observation, 10/6/2015.

The *Afternoon Chats* provided an opportunity for the volunteers to embody their action-driven theology. The volunteers were able to become involved with refugees by teaching them English, providing administrative assistance, delivering food and clothing, and building community. In each case, the volunteers were actively involved with refugees and embodying their espoused theologies of living like Jesus to help the *other*. However, the disadvantaged and marginalised other within the *action-driven theology* of the volunteers appeared to be quite specific as often priority was given to the one particular group of refugees – those who were young adult, male, and Middle Eastern.

Family Dinner

Every second Thursday evening, the volunteers and refugees at *New Family* made preparations for the *Family Dinner*. Approximately 50 to 80 people attended regularly, including most of the volunteers associated with *New Family* and many refugees and their families. Attendance also included people who lived or worked nearby, local council members, and politicians. Most people brought a plate of food to share, while a group of refugees cooked Iranian kebabs over hot coals. Tea and coffee were prepared by the refugees or volunteers, and it was often difficult to determine if those serving were volunteers, refugees, a local resident, or perhaps all three. The tables were arranged in three large, wide rows in the centre of the room, with smaller café style tables on one side of the room that catered for extra people. There were no reserved places, nor regular seats for any of the guests.

The *Family Dinners* served to strengthen relationships between people and to break down the social boundaries between refugees and the wider community. This was achieved through the mixing roles between refugees and volunteers at the dinners - the refugees were often those who served the food, prepared tea and coffee for guests, and coordinated the logistics of the evening. While the volunteers assisted in cooking, cleaning and shifting furniture around, there was no single person 'in charge' or giving instructions. The evenings were not intended as charitable gestures to refugees – each person or family provided a plate of food to share and not all of those who gave and received food were disadvantaged. Rather, the *Family Dinners* were seen by the volunteers as a tangible expression of community. Gary described the purpose of the *Family Dinners*:

> I think sharing a meal together and having fun together is the way that you build real relationships, or a way, a really good way. And you know, *Family Dinners* are especially built around a real equalising, you know, we all just bring food, we all

> share it, it's not like soup kitchen where you line up to get your free food from the kind volunteer. You know, we all chuck our food on the table, we're all in. And there's no hierarchy. (Gary, interview, 30/9/2015)

Gary's comments were reflected in the observations of the *Family Dinners* to an extent. Both volunteers and refugees were involved in preparing the building for the *Family Dinners*. The *Family Dinners* had a fixed starting time, but no finishing time was specified. The dinner progressed over approximately two hours and volunteers, refugees, their extended families, and members of the public arrived throughout that time. The movement of people ensured that the types of food and seating varied throughout the evening. Hierarchies were reduced with the absence of a fixed structure for the evening, the variation in food and seating due to the continuous movement of people throughout the evening, and the fact that people were not given direct instructions about how to participate. However, this is not to say that hierarchies were completely absent. While both volunteers and refugees were involved in the organisation of the *Family Dinners*, the roles that were undertaken by each indicated differences. The volunteers tended to have more authoritative roles, such as welcoming guests near the entrance, ensuring that *Connect* church equipment was not used, and interacting with the public. The refugees tended to be more involved in preparing food (such as cooking kebabs), arranging food that was brought, and tidying up.

The operant elements of *action-driven theology* were observed in the *Family Dinners*. The involvement of the volunteers and other members of *Connect* church appeared to help bridge the cultural and language barriers and foster strong friendships between the refugees and the volunteers. The *Family Dinners* were a tangible expression to living as a Christian through action – in this case the promotion and maintenance of community. Similarly, the espoused theology of seeking out the *other* was also manifested in the *Family Dinners*. Here, the expression of the other was seen most clearly in how the volunteers interacted with the public. Each of the volunteers described how the *Family Dinner* provided an opportunity to challenge some preconceptions about refugees and asylum seekers, and Sandra explained they provided an opportunity for advocacy:

> I think it's been a really good space for volunteers who have friends who are a little bit iffy about the asylum seeker issue, or think that asylum seekers are queue jumpers or whatever myth they decide to sign themselves up to, to bring them along and go 'now what do you think' now that you've met someone and had a

conversation face to face, and really enjoyed it, and go 'do you know he arrived by boat?' or 'you know he's on a bridging visa?' or 'you know that family you really loved talking to, they fled their country and that's why they're here.' (Sandra, interview, 23/6/2015)

Her comments were seen in the activities of the volunteers. I observed the volunteers having conversations of this nature with members of the public throughout the research. However, these kinds of interactions appeared to form a tension between the operant theological elements of building a community and active expressions towards the *other*. The attention of the volunteers was separated between two different social groups – a specific refugee community and the public. The evenings attracted the wider friends and families of refugees, people who lived locally, and occasional guests. It was difficult to see how each of these wider groups could be attended to by the small number of volunteers. During the busier evenings the volunteers appeared to be facilitating community building with the refugees rather than participating in the community themselves.

The *Family Dinners* and *Afternoon Chats* were just two examples of how the theology of the Christian activists contributed to shaping social behaviour. Their beliefs and interpretations of the message of Jesus informed how they interacted with the refugee community and shaped the social context where those interactions took place. The volunteers explained how their theological motives for engagement were able to be embodied both by attending *New Family* to provide assistance and in building a community through the *Afternoon Chats* and *Family Dinners*. In addition, the volunteers at *New Family* ran other social events, including Saturday soccer matches, English classes, and informal social gatherings, but the *Family Dinners* encouraged the most people and engaged broadly with the local and extended community. Through these activities, the volunteers established and maintained strong relationships with the refugees. The volunteers' activities reflected the espoused and operant theological elements found in their theological frames as they sought to embody God's love through their actions and develop relationships founded on love.

7.5 Divine-Human-Human Relationships and Social Capital

This section will address how theology shaped the social life and relationships for Christian volunteers at *New Family*. I will argue that ordinary theology mediates social capital through theologically significant relationships for the volunteers. This relationship will be described as a *divine-human-human relationship*. It consists of two important components:

the relationship between the volunteer and the divine; and the relationship between the volunteer and the refugees. The volunteers described how the relationships they formed with refugees (*human-human* relationships) were prioritised in their activism. Similarly, the volunteers described how their relationship with God (*divine-human* relationship) formed the basis of relationship-building with refugees. By showing love to refugees, the volunteers understood themselves as spreading God's love and bringing others closer to God.

This section will proceed as follows: First, it will be argued that there were indicators of social capital being developed at *New Family*. Data from participant-observation suggested that social capital was developed through bridging activities, transformative relationships, and networks. Second, it will be argued that the ordinary theology of the volunteers mediated the social capital that was developed, with the *action-driven theology* of *New Family* mediating bridging social capital through the development of theologically significant relationships which I describe as *divine-human-human relationships*. *Divine-human-human relationships* will be outlined using interview data from the volunteers and also observations. Third, it will be argued that the mediation was due to the operant elements of the shared theology of the volunteers and that their embodied practices held theological significance for the volunteers.

Social capital was observed to develop at *New Family* throughout the research. Although the volunteers discussed relationships during the interviews, indicators of the development of social capital were observed through participant-observation. Observation data was used to establish if the interactions and activities of the volunteers were conducive to the durable networks described by social capital. The data showed evidence of bridging, transformative relationships, access to social and institutional networks, along with the establishment of obligations, expectations and norms for volunteers and refugees.

The most prominent indicator of social capital at *New Family* was through the bridging activities of the volunteers. Many of these bridging activities occurred during the English classes or during *Afternoon Chats.* To illustrate, over a period of three months some of the volunteers organised a singing program, where the refugees taught the volunteers their language through songs.[26] These songs were then performed at the official opening of the *New Family* centre.[27] The singing program provided a shared activity for both the refugees and volunteers and allowed the volunteers to gain an insight into Hazara culture through

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[26] Participant-observation, 26/3/2015.
[27] Participant-observation, 30/4/2015.

language. The program was significant as it symbolised a change in the nature of the relationships that were formed. Rather than the refugees being treated as those in need, it was the volunteers who needed to be taught. The refugees offered support and patience as the volunteers struggled to pronounce Hazaragi. This connection was so compelling for Mary that she decided to travel to Kabul as part of an exchange to learn more about Afghani culture and language. For Mary, her work was not simply providing a service, it was transformative. After the singing program ended, she continued to learn and speak Hazaragi with the refugees and this changed the way she interacted with them.

Social capital was also seen to be developed through the establishment of norms. The interactions between the volunteers and asylum seekers appeared to be closer and involved more physical contact than I had observed at the other *New Family* sites. This was most noticeable to me when observing the interactions[28] between the female volunteers and male refugees. During the first few participant-observations I noted that the refugees and volunteers were giving and receiving massages during the *Afternoon Chats*. The massages only occurred between male refugees and female volunteers. Other kinds of interactions suggested that norms had been established between volunteers and refugees that went beyond service provision. The volunteers became significantly involved in the mundane and social aspects of lives of refugees. The volunteers described how they would spend Friday nights and weekends with the refugees and regularly had meals together throughout the week.[29] Some volunteers were involved in ordinary activities, such as, grocery shopping and tidying houses.

The engagement of the volunteers at *New Family* also provided the refugees with access to a range of networks. Through the *Family Dinners*, volunteers were able to facilitate interactions between refugees and local council members, refugee lawyers, business leaders and, occasionally, members of the State or National Parliament. The dinners gave refugees an opportunity to access services, information, or meet others within the community. The presence of these key people within networks provided the refugees with immediate access to a broad range of services, information and advice. During my participant-observation I noted some refugees gained free access to legal services and advice. Others established small businesses with the assistance of the local council and

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[28] Participant-observation, 22/4/2015.
[29] Participant-observation, 22/4/2015.

business leaders or found pathways for tertiary study. Many of these instances were a direct result of access to the networks that the *Family Dinners* provided.

Another noticeable indicator of social capital being developed at *New Family* were the changes in role for some refugees. Many of the refugees who were recipients of the services provided by *New Family* became volunteers themselves. They volunteered their time as they helped allocate and transport furniture to other refugee families, prepared food for the large number of guests at the *Family Dinners* and assisted other refugees in finding employment. As the roles of the refugees changed, the volunteers ceased to be service providers. Instead they formed close relationships with the refugee community. As the status of the refugees and volunteers became less demarcated, the relationships between the Christian volunteers and the refugees became stronger. These changes in roles then provided support for the establishment of social capital – relationships were transformed, new expectations and obligations were formed, and many of these changes occurred through the bridging activities of the volunteers.

The volunteers were able to successfully bridge with the refugees through the range of structured activities run by *New Family*. As the volunteers and refugees became more socialised, these relationships transformed into ones where the volunteer/refugee boundary no longer appeared adequate. For many of the refugees and volunteers, *New Family* became less like an FBO where services and advice could be sought, and more like a social club. Social capital at *New Family* was manifested by the bridging and transformed relationships that were developed over time between the refugees and volunteers. Further, through activities coordinated by *New Family*, refugees were able to gain access to information and networks that led to tangible or symbolic exchanges – the foundations of social capital.

The shared ordinary theology of the volunteers at *New Family* mediated social capital through the development of theologically significant relationships with refugees. *Action-driven theology* was embodied in the engagement of volunteers as they sought out and became involved in the lives of refugees. As noted above, *action-driven theology* was not simply a set of principles of beliefs that the volunteers held but, rather, a way to live faithfully as a Christian. The volunteers found imperatives within their shared ordinary theology to seek out and assist the disadvantaged in meaningful ways. This was observed at *New Family* through theologically significant relationships, which I term *divine-human-human relationships*. For the remainder of this chapter, the theological significance of the

relationships will be illustrated using descriptions from the interviews and themes from the volunteers' theological frames.

Mary's theological frame showed a connection between living like Jesus and becoming engaged in the lives of others. For her, Jesus was more than a moral exemplar. Her relationship with Jesus directly affected her volunteering within the refugee community. First, she described her engagement in terms of compassion as she genuinely cared for refugees because Jesus cared for her. Second, Mary explained that she wanted others to experience the love that she felt in her relationship with the divine and, ultimately, get to know Jesus like she did. However, she was careful to emphasise that rather than evangelising, she wanted to reflect her relationship with God through action. Mary explained that God loved all people, regardless of their situation, but not all relationships with God were the same.

Similarly, Sandra's theological frame showed strong indicators of how her relationship with Jesus affected her interpersonal relationships. Like Mary, Sandra felt blessed that she had been shown love, compassion, and grace through Jesus. Since she felt strong in her relationship with the divine, she wanted others to know that they too could experience the love that she had. Sandra made a strong link between *action-driven theology* and the *divine-human-human relationships* as she described how she understood her engagement with Muslim refugees. She had already spoken of her engagement as an outpouring of the love of Jesus, but further explained how that affected her relationships.

> So, a lot of our response is love people, not judge them because they worship differently or judge them because they *look* different. Or they choose to do things differently, but loving people because of the differences and learning from the differences as well. Which, again, seems like a common-sense thing, it doesn't seem like this controversial thing…standing beside Muslims. Whereas for me, it's standing alongside our friends, and that's where Jesus would be. (Sandra, interview, 23/6/2015)

Jeremy, too, described how his relationship with the divine shaped the relationships that he formed in his social engagements. He first explained that his relationship with Jesus shaped all aspects of his life through love, which was seen in all facets of his everyday experience.

A big aspect of who I am as a person is wanting other people to love Jesus. The best way to live your life is by having that love that's *so* radical that Jesus would die...just to help you out...because that's what you need. (Jeremy, interview, 15/4/2015)

As he described how Jesus' love and his relationship with Jesus were most important, Jeremy explained that he also wanted others to share this love. To do this, he needed to develop significant and meaningful relationships with other people. Similarly, Rachael explained that, for her, engaging with refugees was a way of spreading God's love. She described how her relationship with God and her intentions to become a better Christian through social engagement allowed her to develop relationships within the refugee community. By becoming involved in the lives of others, and forming relationships, she was spreading God's love.

Because, I think it's like the scriptures *by the way that you show love to your neighbour, the whole world will know that you are my followers* and so you don't actually need to get on your pedestal with your little microphone and blast people's ears off and tell them that *they're* going to hell, and *those people* are going to hell, because that is going to turn people away... By just doing kind things, you are spreading the gospel through love. You're spreading love, you're spreading God. (Rachael, interview, 18/8/2015)

As a final illustration, Gary framed the *divine-human-human relationships* using his idea of what the Kingdom of God would look like. For him, the Kingdom of God was this-worldly and looked like *New Family*.

So I guess we don't have that evangelical drive in the same kind of expression that other people do, we're about being the Kingdom of God, or looking like the Kingdom of God, and inviting people to join in, and to go on a journey rather than, like, *make a decision and cross the line!*...and from a community engagement perspective, that's the best way to go about building better societies as well. (Gary, interview, 30/9/2015)

The relationships that the volunteers developed with the refugee community were a natural consequence of their *action-driven theology*. Their theology provided the motivation for social engagement and found a tangible expression in the relationships formed with refugees. The shared *action-driven theology* motivated the volunteers to become actively

involved in the lives of the refugees. Here, the volunteers were observed to embody their theology – *living* as a Christians – by forming theologically significant relationships with refugees. The *divine-human-human relationships* that the volunteers established with the refugees allowed them to embody and spread God's love – to manifest the love and compassion they experienced in their own relationships with the divine.

For the remainder of this section, I will examine how the *action-driven theology* of *New Family* mediated bridging social capital through the development of theologically significant relationships. This mediation will be argued to be a consequence of two key findings from the data. First, *action-driven theology* was necessarily operant. Second, the embodied practices held theological significance for the volunteers. Together, ordinary theology and embodied practices provided a basis for developing social capital.

First, the shared theology of the volunteers was not simply as set of beliefs or values, but a way of faithfully living as a Christian. For the volunteers at *New Family*, Jesus' message was agentic – the motivation to become socially engaged was implicit within his teachings and explicit in the expression. Each of the volunteers described how Jesus' message and example was instructive for their lives. *Action-driven theology* motivated the volunteers to step outside of their usual surroundings and become involved in the lives of refugees. Jeremy suggested that this part of their theology directed Christians away from the church, an attitude that was reflected by the other volunteers.

Many of the volunteers did not attend church and harboured misgivings about historical and contemporary church practices. Instead, the volunteers directed their attention towards living as they thought Jesus would. The volunteers believed that their engagement accurately reflected how Jesus would act – through sacrifice, helping others, critiquing unsound Christian practices, and paying attention to what was important. The formal and espoused theological elements provided a coherent conceptual theology for these volunteers, yet, without these operant elements, the volunteers would not be following Jesus' example. The volunteers needed embodied practices or else they would be subject to the same criticisms they held about other Christians. I would argue that the volunteers' ordinary theology – *action-driven theology* – mediated social capital as the espoused and operant elements of their theological expression were inseparable, and directed towards enacting social change.

Second, ordinary theology was found to mediate social capital through the theologically significant relationships that the volunteers formed with the refugees. As relationships

within networks form the basis of social capital, the fact that these relationships were layered with theological meaning is significant for mediation. The relationships, which I have termed *divine-human-human relationships,* were expressions of how *action-driven theology* would be manifested in society. The relationships the volunteers developed with the refugees were tangible expressions of the love they felt in their relationship with God. By showing love to the refugees the volunteers were spreading God's love by embodying their understanding of what it meant to be Christian – to *live* like a Christian, and not simply hold Christian beliefs. Many of the volunteers described how *New Family* was not just a place for service provision, but also an accommodating space for relationships to be nurtured. This was also reflected in the participant-observation data as social capital developed between volunteers and refugees throughout the time of the study. Together, *action-driven theology* and *divine-human-human relationships* provided a basis for developing social capital. For the volunteers, the theological meaning-making of social engagement, the commitment to forming relationships, and attributing theological significance to these relationships, led to the networks, norms, and exchange described by social capital concepts.

To summarise, the engagement of the volunteers at *New Family* suggested that their ordinary theology mediated social capital. By analysing the theological frames of the volunteers, a shared theological expression – *action-driven theology* – emerged, which promoted theologically significant relationships between volunteers and refugees. I described the relationships the volunteers formed with the refugees as *divine-human-human relationships*, where the relationship between the volunteer and the divine (*divine-human*) shaped the relationships between the volunteers and the refugees (*human-human*). The theological significance attributed to these relationships was found to mediate social capital between the volunteers and the refugees. Evidence of bridging social capital was found in the activities of *New Family* through its participation in networks, increased access to information, the establishment of norms, and transformational experiences. Finally, it was argued that the operant elements of ordinary theology and the volunteers' embodied practices provided a basis for developing social capital.

7.6 Discussion and Conclusions

In this section, the findings from *New Family* will be compared to Australian and international research, with attention given to the similarities and differences in the

theological expressions of *New Family* and other research. First, theological motivations for engagement in the literature will be compared to the theologies at *New Family*. Second, themes of solidarity and justice will be compared between *New Family* and other organisations. Third, the differences in espoused theology between *New Family* and other FBOs will be identified. Fourth, and finally, the mechanisms for ordinary theology mediating social capital will be discussed.

The shared theology of the volunteers at *New Family* showed similarities to the theological motivations described by Christians in other research on refugee engagement. This was not surprising given that the theological motivations of FBOs are distinct from other organisations, particularly for those involved with refugees (Miller, 2015, pp. 24-25). The strongest parallels were in their theological understandings of the stranger and hospitality. Miller (2015) noted that "[t]hemes of hospitality, welcoming the stranger, exile, assisting the poor and marginalised and loving one's neighbour are common to most major religions, and especially Christianity" (p. 3121). The most common metaphor for church-based refugee engagement is 'welcoming the stranger.' This metaphor promotes hospitality, has a long history of use in church traditions, and directs Christians towards engagement (Goheen, 2012, p. 125). 'Welcoming the stranger' is found in a range of Australian and international studies involving Christian engagement with refugees (Wilson, 2011; Bramadat, 2014; Grace, 2018; Thomson, 2014). In her study of Christian FBOs involved with asylum seekers, Wilson (2011) described how theological concepts of hospitality provided a way to understand the activities of FBOs (p. 550). She explained that the theological understanding of offering hospitality was grounded in a shared common experience as Christians once being 'strangers' in a 'strange land' (p. 551).

Other Christian organisations have described how representations of God in the world have shaped their volunteering. For many Christians, every human is made in God's image and deserves care and respect (Pohl, 2006, p. 87), including refugees (pp. 90-91). This concept has been reflected in research on Christian volunteers working with refugees. Wilson (2011) found that Christian volunteers were motivated by "a commitment to the innate dignity of every human being because they are made in the image of God, as well as seeking to emulate the life of Christ" (p. 553). The 'image of God' has been used in the discourse of other Christian organisations that assist refugees (Sundström, 2017; Bauman, Soerens and Smeir, 2016; Spiegel, 2005). Similarly, Christian volunteers have sought to follow Jesus' example by working with refugees (Woolnaugh, 2011; Cloke, Beaumont and Williams, 2013).

The espoused and operant theologies of the volunteers at *New Family* also showed similarities to the wider academic research. *Action-driven theology* directed the volunteers towards engagement with the other – those who they saw as marginalised or oppressed by society. The volunteers at *New Family* saw the other in the refugee community. The theme of emulating the life of Jesus, showing hospitality, and welcoming the stranger was found in each of the theological frames and espoused theologies of the volunteers. In this research, the concept of welcoming the *stranger* will be taken to mean welcoming the *other*. For example, Jeremy interpreted Christianity to the other in different social, structural and economic conditions; Chiara described the other as those the church had marginalised or oppressed; Rachael described herself as following Jesus' example; and Mary showed hospitality through welcoming refugees into community life. However, while theological concepts of 'welcoming the stranger' and 'hospitality' were seen in the words and practices of the volunteers, the concepts were not used to recruit volunteers. Volunteers were largely recruited from the social networks of existing volunteers. This differentiates *New Family* from other faith-based refugee settlement agencies, which used rhetorical constructions to emphasise similarities and differences between refugees and volunteers.

Christian volunteers in the literature have described their work as a way of embodying justice and standing in solidarity with refugees. Australian research about volunteers involved with refugees showed that friendship and the embodiment of social justice principles can be significant motivators for volunteering (Sawtell, Dickson-Swift and Verrinder, 2010). Further, some Christian volunteers developed friendships with the refugees and distanced themselves from bureaucracy to nurture a sense of shared community (p. 549). Similarly, other research has shown that Christian volunteers saw themselves as agents of renewal and hope, and welcoming hosts for refugees (Goheen, 2012, p. 103). Goheen (2013) also described political agenda as a motivation. The volunteers in her research distanced themselves from state sovereignty and, instead, claimed a higher authority that compelled them to engage with refugees (pp. 103-104). Similar findings have been noted for other Christian organisations (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2006; Fleischmann and Steinhilper, 2017).

The volunteers at *New Family* also described justice work and solidarity in their social engagement. For many of the volunteers, justice was either a natural extension or a necessary part of what it meant to be Christian. Sandra described justice as an embodiment of Jesus' teachings; Chiara described striving for justice as what it meant to

be Christian; and Gary described achieving justice as a tangible expression of Jesus' message.

In contrast, many of the theological themes present in other research were absent for *New Family*. Other studies /by religious organisations described how refugees were portrayed as 'uprooted' and 'vulnerable.' The refugees were characterised as being needy and displaced (McKinnon, 2009, pp. 320-322) with the churches or FBOs having a central role in their resettlement, and social, and emotional support. McKinnon (2009) argued that this representation of refugees by the volunteers failed to accurately represent refugee camps and the skills – occasionally advanced university degrees – that some of the refugees possessed. Other motivations included groups suggesting that they were being 'challenged' to engage with refugees and the changing social environment that followed (McKinnon, 2009, p. 397). These themes were not present at *New Family*. Volunteers spoke of how capable the refugees were; the impressive qualifications some possessed; and the need for friendships and community rather than church support.[30]

The strongest theological motivators described by the volunteers are similar to other research. The data in this study suggests that there are few theological differences in their espoused, operant, and formal theologies between the volunteers at *New Family* and other Christian social engagement organisations. Similarly, the volunteers' sense of justice and empowerment showed few differences from other organisations. However, the ways in which the volunteers described how justice ought to be manifested in the lives of refugees was not as clear. This was most clearly seen in Mary's description of wanting to empower refugees to live the 'good life' in Australia. Where other research suggested that structural change was best placed to address social justice (Lundy, 2011, pp. 29-30), social problems (pp. 86-87), and empowerment (p. 95), Mary's response suggested that empowerment corresponded to reduced social and economic differences.

The volunteers' theological frames and shared theology emphasised action and relationships with the other. Just as Wilson (2011) described how a theological understanding of 'hospitality' provided insight into FBO activities, so too does the ordinary theology of *New Family*. Here, the volunteers sought to bring about meaningful societal change as an expression of what it meant to live like Christ through embodying *action-driven theology* by building relationships and developing social capital.

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[30] Participant-observation, 18/3/2015

In contrast, the most significant difference in the findings from *New Family* and the wider academic research was how the volunteers described themselves in contrast to other Christian groups, such as conservative Christians and complacent Christians. This was also evident in how the volunteers described a symbol of 'the church' that historically oppressed and marginalised communities.

To summarise, this chapter offers five key contributions to this thesis. First, individual theological frames were constructed for the volunteers at *New Family*. The frames were represented diagrammatically to show the key theological themes, narratives and theological influences. The frames showed how espoused, operant, and formal theological voices have contributed to forming a coherent theological expression for each of the volunteers.

Second, the common elements of the theological frames were examined to identify a shared theology for the volunteers of *New Family*. The common elements formed what I termed *action-driven theology* – to seek out and assist the disadvantaged, marginalised or oppressed as Jesus would in a contemporary context.

Third, the engagement activities at *New Family* were analysed. I argued that social capital was developed through the activities held at *New Family*, including the *Family Dinners* and *Afternoon Chats*. Indicators of social capital were also evident in the development of networks, access to information, established norms, and bridging.

Fourth, I argued that ordinary theology mediated social capital. The *action-driven theology* of the volunteers found a tangible expression in what I termed *divine-human-human relationships* – where the relationships between the volunteers and the divine shaped the nature of the relationships between the volunteers and the refugees. As the volunteers' *action-driven theology* necessitated relationships with the other, those relationships held theological significance for the volunteers and provided a basis for developing social capital.

Fifth, and finally, the theological expressions of the volunteers at *New Family* were compared and contrasted to other expressions in the literature. I argued that while the volunteers' theological expressions showed strong similarities to other organisations, there were some differences. In particular, the ways in which the volunteers at *New Family* criticised the theology and practices of other Christians, usually those they saw as conservative or complacent.

CHAPTER EIGHT - ENGAGE[31]

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the theology and engagement of *New Family*. Attention will now be given to the activities of *Engage*. In this chapter, the meetings, culture, and activities of the *Engage* group will be discussed. Individual theological frames will be constructed to understand how the attempted collective engagement, individual engagement, and individual theologies are interrelated. The data and analysis from the *Engage* group offers three contributions to this thesis. First, theological frames can be used to indicate how social engagement activities may be manifested; second, the ordinary theology of volunteers shapes social engagement; and third, the existence of a shared theological culture is not sufficient for collective bridging activities. The *Engage* meetings were established with three areas of focus: to engage in reconciliation; to form relationships with Indigenous communities; and to articulate a theological basis for that engagement.[32] In meetings, members often referred to 'healing wounds' and 'moving forward' with Indigenous Australians, and how this could only be achieved if the group could foster relationships with Indigenous Australians to enact change. The theological motives of each member were prominent during every meeting and were reflected in the prayers and discussions. Theological understandings of relationships were embedded within the members' individual theological frames and contributed to the shared theological culture of the group. This chapter will proceed as follows:

First, the collective engagement activities of the *Engage* group attempted will be described. The group decided on two activities to bridge with Indigenous Australian. One involved a prominent Indigenous leader's visit the group; another to build a relationship with an Indigenous church. Conflict was clearly evident in the planning, execution, and reflection on the bridging activities attempted.

Second, the shared culture of the *Engage* group will be outlined. Two shared elements were observed throughout the research: a contrarian culture; and a culture of Biblical reading and interpretation. Each of these cultural elements will be discussed and I will argue that the shared culture contributed to the conflicts in their attempts at collective engagement.

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[31] All names and organisations have been given pseudonyms.
[32] Participant-observation 9/3/2016

Third, individual theological frames will be constructed for each of the members who consented to an interview. The frames will be shown diagrammatically and explained using the interview data. This section will conclude by showing how the shared culture of the *Engage* group can be seen in the common themes of the individual theological frames.

Fourth, the individual engagement activities of the *Engage* group members will be discussed. I will argue that the individual actions of the group members aligned with their theological frames. Outside the group environment the individual theologies of the members shaped their agency in individual engagements.

Fifth, the findings from the chapter will be discussed in relation to the wider literature. The effect of the contrarian culture on individual engagement will be discussed. I will argue that the social structure of the relationships intended to be formed with Indigenous Australians was reflected in each of the individual theological frames and differed for of the members. Hence, although the contrarian culture of the *Engage* group inhibited collective engagement, it also helped shape individual engagement.

8.2 Collective Engagement

In this section, the collective engagement activities of the *Engage* group will be described. I argue that *Engage* group did not have a shared theology but it did have a shared culture of contrarianism and a theological culture of Biblical reading and interpretation.

This section will proceed as follows: First, participant-observation data will be used to argue that conflict early in the group's preparation for engagement suggested that a bridging activity would be challenging. Second, the visit by an Indigenous leader, Helen, will be described and the responses from individual *Engage* members will be discussed. Helen's visit was divisive as some members responded positively to her message while others criticised her arguments and her ability to represent Indigenous Australians. Third, the group's attempt to engage with an Indigenous church will be discussed. In preparing for the visit, there was little discussion on what roles the *Engage* group would take to nurture relationships. The visit did not eventuate, and further contact was not pursued. Fourth, the group's reaction to expert advice on Indigenous engagement will be examined.

Having outlined this section, we now turn to examine the life of Engage during my time of participant-observation. Over eighteen weeks, the group watched each instalment of the *Australians Together* (Australians Together, 2018) series. After the first instalment, the *Engage* group felt unprepared for collective engagement. The members that felt they were

both socially and geographically distant from Indigenous populations and issues. After some discussion the group decided that to authentically engage with Indigenous communities, they needed to develop a shared approach to reconciliation. Their decision stemmed from conversations about 'posture'. Was *Engage*, as a Christian group, standing alongside (actively working towards reconciliation with Indigenous Australians)*,* standing towards (understanding Indigenous history and intending to engage), or standing away (wanting to engage but needing education on Indigenous issues) from Indigenous Australians? These terms were adapted from an *Australians Together* resource kit.[33]

The group was unable to agree on which posture suited them best. Most of the disagreement surrounded whether the current 'posture' of the group should be used, or the ideal 'posture' of the group should be used. Some of the group members were unhappy with the term 'standing away' as they felt it misrepresented their intentions. Despite the group feeling unprepared and uneducated on Indigenous issues, the majority of them decided that they should be 'standing alongside.' This debate surrounding the 'posture' of the group suggested that the individual members shared neither an understanding of how to become involved in reconciliation nor an agreement on the appropriate collective engagement strategies. I observed that each of the members intended to develop relationships with Indigenous Australians, but the nature of the relationships or how they might be sustained was not discussed.[34]

In the following meeting, the group decided that they needed to engage with Indigenous Australians in a tangible way involving real people in real communities. After some discussion, the group settled on two activities for collective engagement. First, the group would invite a prominent Christian Indigenous leader to speak to the group and provide insight into Indigenous culture and challenges facing Indigenous communities. Second, the group decided that they would visit a nearby Indigenous church to build a relationship with another Christian community. Both activities proved to be difficult for the group.

 The group decided to invite an Indigenous leader to visit the group. It was hoped that the Indigenous leader would discuss some of the issues facing Indigenous communities and provide advice on how their group should proceed. One member, Margaret, had heard, Helen, a prominent Christian Indigenous activist, speak at conferences before and thought that she would be an ideal candidate to visit the group to discuss reconciliation. It was

[33] Participant-observation, 1/3/2016
[34] Participant-observation, 22/3/2016

hoped that Helen might suggest how *Engage* could be involved in the reconciliation process and answer any questions they might have.[35] Helen had worked with different Indigenous communities around Australia for over four years and served on several boards that sought to improve outcomes for Indigenous communities. Mark contacted Helen and it did not take long for her visit to be confirmed. On the evening of her visit, Helen brought three additional people to the meeting to open conversation and to offer a variety of perspectives. Following the opening prayer, Helen explained how to engage Indigenous people in conversation. She suggested that the group should first ask if 'they have language' and ask who their 'mob' is. The purpose of these two questions was to ascertain if they were part of the *Stolen Generations* or where they were from. The group responded well to the advice and suggestions, but slowly the evening became more uncomfortable.[36]

The conversation soon turned towards the differences between Indigenous Australians, particularly those in remote communities, and those that Helen described as "white middle class Australians"[37] – the demographic of the *Engage* group. Helen argued that there were not any major differences between the two groups. Another *Engage* member, Shane, disagreed and offered his own explanation about why they were different. He explained that for him, people in the West were born into a culture that was largely based around a 'lie' that 'money will make you happy'. He described how most Western people were not aware of this fact, and simply went about their everyday lives with this 'lie' interwoven into their existence. However, since Indigenous Australians were not born into this Western culture they did not become indoctrinated into this way of thinking, and were, therefore, not exposed to the 'lie' of the West.[38] For Shane, this was the fundamental cause of the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and explained why many Indigenous populations faced difficulties integrating or assimilating into wider Australian society. Shane felt that his position and explanation was respectful and positive, and was vexed when Helen rejected his suggestion. He later described his frustration at the meeting:

> And it wasn't really that she disagreed, it was almost like my job wasn't to think, it
> was to listen. Do you know? And I find that profoundly frustrating. I have to then

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[35] Margaret, participant-observation, 22/3/2016
[36] Participant-observation, 24/6/2016
[37] Helen, participant-observation, 24/6/2016
[38] Shane, participant-observation, 26/4/2016

engage and so, I'll try to fit that into my framework, and she'll say don't try to fit it into your framework. Just listen and accept it. (Shane, interview, 1/11/2016)

Shane was not the only group member who appeared to have difficulties during the meeting. Later in the evening discussions arose about the challenges facing remote Indigenous communities, and another *Engage* member, Courtney, brought up an issue of drug and alcohol dependency. Courtney suggested that having rehabilitated addicts return to remote communities to be with their friends may not be appropriate if the drug and alcohol culture within those communities had not changed. Courtney concluded by stating explicitly that, "They should not be able to return to those communities."[39] Helen strongly disagreed and appeared to be frustrated at Courtney's suggestion, and argued that it was the same for former addicts in any community. If they were rehabilitated then they should be able to return to their homes and family. Courtney disagreed, again, but did not pursue the argument any further.

Later, Courtney discussed the involvement of Indigenous Australians in the First and Second World Wars and referred to some Indigenous Australians as "half-castes." This term was popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries but has since been considered a derogatory term. Helen did not directly address the use of the term; however, it appeared to me that the atmosphere of the meeting changed after this interaction.[40] Helen's responses became short and to the point. At a later time, Mark described his dismay at the language used throughout the evening, saying that it "could have been done better."[41] The evening concluded with Helen explaining that her work with Indigenous communities was connected to "the foot of the cross."[42] She explained that God allowed Aboriginal people to be saved, and churches must, therefore, help these communities. The group agreed.

During subsequent individual interviews, the members reflected on the evening. Many of the members were critical of Helen's message and the style of her delivery. Shane felt that Helen tended to place too much emphasis on Indigenous issues. He described his frustration when Helen related social issues back to Indigenous' perspectives and reconciliation when he felt they were inappropriate or not directly relevant.

> She was very passionate...but she was very emotive, a bit like Margaret, but in Indigenous stuff. And every issue ties back...even if we are talking about leprosy in

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[39] Courtney, participant-observation, 24/6/2016
[40] Participant-observation, 24/6/2016
[41] Mark, interview, 5/1/2017
[42] Helen, participant-observation, 24/6/2016

Zambia...she will somehow bring in Indigenous issues. And... seriously? Seriously? And that kind of annoys me. (Shane, interview, 1/11/2016)

Another *Engage* member, Tyler, also felt frustrated that Helen's presentation did not allow many opportunities for disagreement or dissent. He explained that the evening was significantly different from other *Engage* meetings, and did not provide an opportunity for the level of interaction that he expected.

Having her come and talk; I don't remember that being excellent for me. I thought a lot of what she had to say was great, but I also found that there was no room for questioning or dissension. (Tyler, interview, 7/8/2016)

Despite the intention of the evening to be part of a learning process about the experiences of Indigenous Australians, Tyler felt that there was no room for him to disagree or debate Helen's perspective. This was not Tyler's only criticism. For him, Helen was too critical of "white Australia", including the policies and attitudes of both colonisers and contemporary Australians. Tyler explained that those who were largely responsible for the *Stolen Generations* may have been acting according to what they thought were the best interests of the Indigenous population and that Helen's hard-line approach was a little unfair[43]. Particularly, he explained, because "Helen is white", alluding to aspects of Helen's European ancestry. He continued to suggest that she probably "grew up white" and was too far removed from remote Indigenous communities to be able to speak on their behalf.[44] For Tyler, it did not make sense for Helen to criticise white Australia, given she was a part of that culture. Courtney agreed, and disputed Helen's claim to authentically represent Indigenous Australians.[45]

Other members of the *Engage* group were more responsive. They defended Helen's style and passion. Margaret acknowledged the tensions and disagreements from the meeting, but firmly supported Helen's presentation.

I know Helen has quite a strong personality, but I also believe that she speaks out against what she calls the crap. And as an Indigenous person and as a young woman, I know that she doesn't get listened to and respected properly, and if she speaks out, I think we should listen. I mean, you can disagree with it, but don't think she's going to be quiet, and think about it, and process it for a while and come back to you politely. She'll say it then and

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[43] Tyler, participant-observation, 24/5/2016
[44] Tyler, interview, 7/8/2016
[45] Courtney, participant-observation, 7/8/2016

there. So, there is room for discussion, but they are actually confronted with someone who can respond to white superiority frankly. (Margaret, interview, 14/9/2016)

Mark also supported Helen and explained that Helen had spoken to groups for several years, and if she was given an hour and a half to discuss important Indigenous issues, then she will present her best material unapologetically.

> Helen came in without any context, or with limited context. And also, she probably doesn't feel like she has the time to go through all of our 'white fella' angst, every time she gets together with a group. It's like, spare me, I've been there, I've done it all. I know what you need. If we're expecting Helen to get up to speed with all of our history, and all our personal foibles and all that, that's too much to ask someone who's already a marginalised, busy, flat out, and highly sought-after leader. (Mark, interview, 5/1/2017)

Mark did not see Helen only as a person who could provide insight into Indigenous culture and issues. He also saw her as a bridge between 'white Australians' and Indigenous Australians. For Mark, Helen was an insider in both groups and, hence, was able to understand both perspectives and enable engagement.

> One of the bits that came out of the research that I did about the oppressor is the concept of the conscientised friend. That's a person who, by demographic and historical rights ought to be an oppressor, but for whatever reason they've chosen not to be. And so, yeah, I kind of think that there's a space there for Helen to be a 'conscientised oppressed'. So, she, by all rights and reasons, ought to be oppressed, but for whatever reason she can get inside our head, and those people, another term that's used. is a bridge builder - someone who can go between two communities and operate fairly seamlessly in both communities. (Mark, interview, 5/1/2017)

Mark's projection of Helen as an insider to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and to "operate fairly seamlessly" was not reflected in the other *Engage* members' criticisms of Helen and her presentation. The visit from Helen did not result in the kind of bridging the group had intended. While the group intended to bridge through an Indigenous leader, and some of the group was responsive to Helen's message, other obstacles appeared to be too great. There was a disjunction between the group's stated intention to learn and hear an authentic voice representing Indigenous Australians and the

179

responses to the presentation. The *Engage* members' criticisms of Helen were similar to the issues of Indigenous representation and perspective that she sought to promote in her presentation. For some of the group members, her preoccupation with Indigenous issues and the presentation of issues affecting Indigenous communities did meet their expectations of the visit. Further, Helen's ability to speak authentically as an Indigenous Australian was questioned and whose use of inappropriate language inhibited potential bridging resulting from the visit. Despite these criticisms, some of the group members responded well to her approach and willingness to engage with the group, praising her directness, and sympathised with her as someone who was Indigenous, female, and oppressed.

Visiting an Indigenous Church

The group also decided that they would like to connect with a nearby Indigenous church. Mark knew the pastor of an Indigenous church who might facilitate a group visit. The purpose of the visit was fourfold: to authentically engage with an Indigenous Christian community; to focus on the parts of their lives that were not so different from their own lives; to understand how Indigenous Christian expression differed from theirs; and to help overcome the challenges that Indigenous communities faced. The idea was met with some resistance within the group.

Shane was the first to oppose the idea of visiting the church. He stated that by doing so the group would essentially be acting as tourists. He explained his perspective by recounting a story from a holiday in Albania, where the tour group that he was with visited a church where some women were making scarves. He found the experience to be inappropriate and he left the tour group for a short period. For him, the women were being marketed as tourist attractions and he did not see people as objects for tourists. He linked this back to the Indigenous church by showing the similarities between the two situations – the *Engage* group would stop, look, and move on like tourists. For Shane, this would be particularly problematic if it was a single visit.[46] Mark agreed with him, in principle, and made it clear that the group would not be taking any photographs or acting like tourists. Rather, the visit would be the first step in developing a longer relationship with the church.

The group asked for Helen's advice on visiting the church during her presentation. She too was opposed to the idea and agreed with Shane when he explained his position again.

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[46] Shane, participant-observation, 22/3/2016

Helen suggested that if the intention of the *Engage* group was not to visit as a single event or end unto itself, but was the beginning of an ongoing relationship with the church, then it might be a good idea. She explained that the *Engage* group should be there primarily to offer assistance as many Indigenous churches required help. Afterwards, the *Engage* group could then develop an ongoing relationship with the church. Other members of the group disagreed with Helen and argued that there would be very little they could do to assist. Finally, Shane asked her directly if she thought it would be a good idea to visit the church. After a long pause, she reiterated to the group that if they were going develop and sustain relationships then it would be beneficial.[47] This advice was welcomed by some of the members of the *Engage* group and they decided to visit the church. I wondered how the group was going to form an ongoing relationship with the congregation due to the time involved in maintaining a relationship and in light of the internal tensions within *Engage.*[48] For example, Courtney explained that it would be good for her understanding of Indigenous communities, as she felt that the information she obtained from the media was different from that from a church. She felt that the *Australians Together* series provided information, but direct experience would have been more beneficial for her.[49]

Similarly, Margaret looked forward to the visit as she felt that the "privileged and white" *Engage* group had much to learn from the Indigenous community.

> And I think too, there's definitely a relational side to them [the Indigenous Australians]…which we don't have so much in our Western culture. And, so, I understand that other cultures are a lot more relational, and a part of our learning process as Westerners is [that] we need to understand that. (Margaret, interview, 14/9/2016)

After the decision was made to visit the church, Mark contacted the pastor at the church, Pastor Frank, and a date was decided. The *Engage* group would visit the church on *Reconciliation Sunday*, during *Reconciliation Week*,[50] at 6.00 pm. On morning of the visit, the group was advised that they would be guests for the service, and were invited to participate in communion and a meal after the service. At 5.10 pm on the evening of the visit, Pastor Frank let Mark know that the evening was cancelled, and the visit would not go ahead. The group expressed their disappointment at the cancellation at the next

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[47] Helen, participant-observation, 24/6/2016
[48] participant-observation, 24/6/2016
[49] Courtney, participant-observation, 22/3/2016
[50] National Reconciliation week is a week dedicated to learning and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history in Australia and runs from 27th May – 3rd June (Reconciliation Australia, 2018).

meeting, but they did not appear to be surprised. The group did not attempt to reach Pastor Frank to secure a second attempt at visiting his church and the matter was not discussed again in any subsequent meetings. The lack of follow up and discussion was surprising for me. The group had discussed at length during the meetings that they wished to be involved with an Indigenous community. However, a single setback appeared to be sufficient for the group to stop pursuing a meaningful relationship. I wondered if the group was genuinely motivated to engage in reconciliation, or if the group did not pursue the visit due to the earlier conflict about this particular activity.[51]

The two major bridging activities of *Engage* did not progress as the group intended. Helen's visit emphasised the disparities within the group about what it meant to engage with Indigenous issues, while the visit to an Indigenous church failed to eventuate. As the group worked towards the final session on engagement and reconciliation, they were met with a surprise. Towards the end of the *Australians Together* series the presenters offered advice for Christian groups engaging with Indigenous communities. After listing a number of activities that groups could undertake to engage with communities, the video actively discouraged two courses of action: having an Indigenous leader visit the group; and visiting an Indigenous church. It was not recommended to invite Indigenous leaders to groups like *Engage,* as the Indigenous communities were directly impacted by their reduced time with community leaders. Similarly, visits to Indigenous churches were discouraged, as those within the communities had their own concerns and having people visit only disrupted how those issues were being addressed. These were the two bridging activities that the group had attempted.

After hearing this advice, the group discussed their involvement in reconciliation. Most of the group thought it was amusing as they had spent so much time planning and coordinating these activities only to find they probably should not have been doing them at all. Afterwards, the group members reflected on their bridging attempts, and found that they largely disagreed with the advice they were given in the video. Tyler explained that since Helen was not living in a remote community the group wasn't really removing her from her other work.

> So, as for having her come and talk, I still think it was a good idea. And... taking her way...I don't feel like she was...taken away from something. She's a busy person,

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[51] Participant-observation, 23/8/2016

but I didn't feel like we were extricating an Aboriginal from their cultural context and making them talk to us. (Tyler, interview, 7/8/2016)

For Margaret, the group had learned much from Helen's insights. Helen was a voice for those who would be otherwise unheard.

The group also disagreed with the advice discouraging visiting an Indigenous church. Mark explained that while the advice might be true for other parts of Australia, it was not necessarily true in this city or suburb. For him, it was inappropriate for general advice to be offered when each context and community was different.

> There's also [the] Indigenous communities, and why they set themselves up and what they're hoping to achieve. So ... if they want to invite people and they want to offer hospitality, they feel it's a really significant thing that they can offer. Now whether they're misguided or not? I don't know, should we even try to second guess them? If they're keen and they want to do it, then I don't feel bad about that. (Mark, interview, 5/1/2017)

Shane explained how he felt relieved that the church visit did not eventuate, particularly after his early criticism. He was interested in how Indigenous churches differed from those he had experienced, but didn't want to intrude on their context.

> I really didn't want to be a tourist and you know, sitting at the back row and pointing at people and say, look, this is what the Aboriginals do. But I get the reason for doing it. If you could be there as a fly on the wall that'd be great, but there was something uncomfortable about it. I was kind of relieved. (Shane, interview, 1/11/2016)

Tyler, too, did not see anything wrong with the group's course of action and disagreed with the advice they were offered. He explained that since the *Engage* group presented itself as a group of people wanting to learn, and not intending to change the Indigenous church, then there should not have been an issue.

> Yeah, we're a bunch of tourists, but as long as we come with the proviso that we're a bunch of dumb white people wanting to know more, they shouldn't care. As long it's not something that ends up...being so regular that it detracts from their actual gathering together. I wouldn't have a problem. And even though we were recommended not to do it, it was a bit funny, as long as generally, we don't go out

183

and pin down that one church and, you know, turn it into a white church. But having a bunch of people poking their heads around, so often that's what they appreciate. (Tyler, interview, 7/8/2016)

The reactions of many of the *Engage* group members to the advice provided to groups wanting to engage with reconciliation was indicative of their collective engagement throughout the time. They felt that the advice did not apply to them, and that they were correct to proceed in a way that best suited them. This attitude was reflected in the criticisms of Helen and her insights into Indigenous experience, and in the debates surrounding the visit to an Indigenous church. The attitudes and conflicts from the attempted engagement provided insight into the shared culture of the group. This will be addressed in the next section.

8.3 Group Culture

In this section, the culture of the *Engage* group will described. It will be argued that the *Engage* group had both a contrarian culture and a culture of Biblical reading and interpretation. In what follows, these two interrelated cultural aspects of the *Engage* group will be described using data from participant-observation. I will suggest that both the contrarian culture and the diversity in Biblical interpretation precluded the development of a shared theology for the *Engage* group.

Contrarian Culture

The contrarian culture of the *Engage* group was observed throughout my participant-observation. During the meetings, individuals within the group appeared to take what they perceived as unconventional positions on social issues. At other times, group members themselves identified as part of a marginalised social group. This was very obvious to me on three occasions. The first occurred at the beginning of the research. During one meeting, a discussion arose about how racist attitudes have shaped the experience of Indigenous Australians in everyday life. To my surprise, Margaret stated that she had experienced the same racist attitudes as Indigenous Australians. She claimed that her insight into Indigenous experience came from her mother. Although neither she nor her mother were Indigenous, she explained that her mother had olive skin and sometimes was mistaken as being Indigenous.[52] Tyler also expressed his experiences of racism in Australia and how, as a Canadian citizen, he was not eligible for the same support and

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[52] Margaret, participant-observation, 22/3/2016

services of Australian citizens.[53] Both *Engage* members suggested they had a better understanding of racism from their personal experience, unlike the rest of the group.

The second occurred after a discussion of the *Stolen Generations*.[54] The group had watched a film showing the devastating social effects of removing Indigenous children from their families. Courtney mentioned that Indigenous children were still being removed from their families. However, unlike the *Stolen Generations*, she explained, the children were being removed from their families because it is the "best thing for them."[55] The rest of the group agreed. I was surprised that none of the other members of the group acknowledged the parallel between Courtney's comment and the attitudes in the film. The final instance occurred during a meeting when a discussion of inclusive LGBTI programs in schools arose. Throughout the conversation, most of the group members spoke of their support of the program, and framed their position in opposition to "conservative Christians."[56] Tyler and Courtney were the only members, who did not support the program, and who also placed themselves in opposition to the wider society. They described how private institutions should not be subject to the moral positions taken by governments. Here, Christian groups were portrayed as those being oppressed by having their "traditional relationships being eroded."[57]

In each of these examples, the group members either identified themselves as marginalised or oppressed, or offered the perspectives they saw as contrary to the wider society. I noted that during meetings that the attention occasionally shifted from the social inequalities facing Indigenous Australians towards their perceived personal experiences of injustice. The contrarian culture was also reflected in their collective engagement attempts.

The group were critical of both the message and presentation of Helen. As noted in section 8.2, during Helen's presentation many of the group members did not respond positively to the advice given. Tyler was critical of the lack of opportunities to disagree and to debate with Helen; Courtney attempted to argue with the policies developed for Indigenous communities; and Shane described how there was too much focus on Indigenous issues. In a later meeting, a discussion arose about using the advice offered by

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[53] Tyler, participant-observation, 22/3/2016
[54] "The Stolen Generations are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who, when they were children, were taken away from their families and communities as the result of past government policies. Children were removed by governments, churches and welfare bodies to be brought up in institutions, fostered out or adopted by white families." (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2019).
[55] Courtney, participant-observation, 22/3/2016
[56] Shane, participant-observation, 28/6/2016
[57] Tyler, participant-observation, 28/6/2016

Helen to interact with Indigenous Australians. Helen had suggested asking Indigenous Australians about their ancestral heritage and geographical location, but most of the group appeared unconvinced. Several members argued that it would be odd for a similar process to occur in Poland, particularly if Russian, German, and other national influences were acknowledged. Shane argued that if it would be strange in Poland, then "why should it be the case in Australia?"[58]

Similarly, the group disagreed with the advice offered in *Australians Together*. They felt that the advice was not appropriate for them as the geographical and cultural contexts discussed in the films were fundamentally different from those in their local communities. The group concluded that the differences presented in *Australians Together* were over-emphasised. Courtney explained that people have much more in common than is often recognised[59], and Tyler remarked that there were greater differences between him and his neighbour than him and Indigenous Australians[60].

To summarise, the contrarian culture of the group permeated the meetings in a variety of ways. The group disagreed among themselves, about the educational programs, and with the visiting Indigenous leader. Not only did the contrarian culture shape discussions and action on reconciliation, but also the use and interpretation of Scripture.

Theological Culture of Biblical Reading and Interpretation

The *Engage* group had a shared culture of Biblical reading and interpretation. However, the group showed diversity in their interpretations of Bible passages and theological bases of engagement. Biblical reading and reflection formed key parts of the meetings of the *Engage* group as the meetings often opened and closed with an examination of Biblical passages. The centrality of Bible reading and interpretation was observed by me most clearly in one of Margaret's closing prayers. She prayed that the group would receive guidance in interpreting Biblical passages that were appropriate to the situations they discussed.[61] The meetings were run by different group members, usually with their spouse, and each had an opportunity to engage with Scripture and offer an interpretation. Each will be described, below.

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[58] Shane, participant-observation, 24/5/2016
[59] Courtney, participant-observation, 28/6/2016
[60] Tyler, participant-observation, 28/6/2016
[61] Margaret, participant-observation, 22/3/2019

The meetings that Mark ran tended to have a Jesus-centred reading and interpretation of Scripture. He explained during one of the meetings that the New Testament, particularly life of Jesus, was needed to correct the bad teachings of the Old Testament.[62] To illustrate, he explained that Isaiah 34 was not an accurate representation of the message of Jesus, and so he often ignored that passage.[63]

In contrast, the meeting run by Tyler and Courtney had a stronger focus on living Christian justice. Tyler opened with reading of Matthew 23:23, and followed by a prayer asking for help to not "make [God] angry through piety."[64] Later in the meeting, Courtney read Amos 5:21-24, and used the passage to suggest that any approach to meeting the needs of Indigenous Australians should follow a model of both providing material assistance and "telling people about Jesus."[65]

Lastly, when Shane and Margaret ran a meeting they focussed on the Christian Kingdom. Margaret opened with a reading of 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, and followed up the passage by arguing that any lasting outcome of reconciliation would be a single community – one that resembled the Kingdom. Shane agreed, and suggested that an Australian context would require the assimilation of Indigenous culture.[66] Courtney and Tyler agreed with the interpretation, and disagreed with the us/them dichotomy that was portrayed both in *Australians Together* and the media.[67]

The contrarian culture and Biblical reading and interpretative culture of the *Engage* group were prominent and interrelated during the meetings. The conflict during the meetings and attempted collective engagement tended to appear during discussions involving the interpretation of Scripture and how Christian groups or individuals should act. The oppositional stance of the individuals in the group was reflected both in how they saw themselves in relation to engagement, and in the way that Scripture was read and interpreted. Both these cultural features precluded the presence of a shared theology for the group.

It appeared to me that most of the contrarianism was a type of extreme individualism – where everything was being questioned. Group members questioned Helen's advice and

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[62] Mark, participant-observation, 22/3/2016
[63] Mark, participant-observation, 22/3/2016
[64] Tyler, participant-observation, 24/5/2016
[65] Courtney, participant-observation, 24/5/2016
[66] Shane and Margaret, participant-observation, 28/6/2016
[67] Tyler and Courtney, participant-observation, 28/6/2016

authority, the advice provided in Australians Together, the uniqueness of Indigenous experiences of racism, the benefits of separate cultures, and the rights of governments to influence private institutions. Similarly, the group questioned Biblical interpretations and Biblically-informed suggestions for change. Mark ignored sections of the Old Testament, Tyler questioned piety without actions, Courtney felt that she should be able evangelise alongside delivering welfare to Indigenous Australians.

Throughout the participant-observation, the group rarely agreed on Biblical interpretations, the place of Christianity in engagement, or how successful reconciliation would appear in practice. Similarly, the contrarian position appeared to be prohibitive for both collective engagement and meeting the educational and empathetic aims of the *Australians Together* series.

8.4 Individual Theological Frames

In this section, theological frames will be constructed for four members of the *Engage* group. There were six regular members of the *Engage* group and four consented to be interviewed. There were other attendees at the *Engage* meetings; however, their sporadic attendance and lack of engagement on Indigenous issues limited what data could be collected. The section will conclude by identifying the shared cultural elements within the individual theological frames.

Tyler

Tyler was in his late twenties, male, and Caucasian. He had emigrated from Canada after completing a degree at a Christian university to study medicine in Australia. At the time of this research he was training to become a doctor. He and his wife, Courtney, joined the *Engage* group with the intention of becoming involved with refugees in Australia. Soon after, they were told that this was not to be the focus of the *Engage* group, but they both decided to remain with *Engage* when they learned that the focus of the group would be on reconciliation. Throughout the sessions, Tyler was comfortable in sharing his views, which were often in disagreement with the rest of the group.

Tyler's theological frame and approach to social justice was largely underpinned by his family's involvement in the Mennonite Church in Canada. Although he did not attend a Mennonite church in Australia, and did not describe himself as an active Mennonite Christian, he explained that his theological outlook was heavily influenced by his upbringing within the church. This continued to inform his theology. Further, he described

how his understanding and family involvement within the Mennonite Central Committee (a Mennonite relief, development and peace agency) shaped his mindset and approach to social justice.

Tyler's theological frame could be expressed as a theme of *Action in an Impure World*. His frame centred on three significant, interrelated themes: *Biblical Imperatives*, *Action,* and *Christian Community Challenges*. A diagrammatic representation of Tyler's theological frame is shown in *Figure 8*. These three themes formed a tension in balancing revelation and Scripture against reason and culture.

For Tyler, his theological understanding of needing to remain pure and removed from worldly influence was a major challenge for his social engagement. He explained that while he wanted to help those in need materially and spiritually, he was concerned that those he served unwittingly influenced his behaviour and attitudes. To keep himself 'pure' some boundaries were required.

Tyler's theological approach to social justice was grounded in Biblical imperatives, which both directed him towards those in need and instructed his response. The gospel required him to engage with those in material and spiritual need, and those who were lacking in Christian character. He explained that this was part of the unfolding of God's law: the progression from prioritising Jewish people as described in the Old Testament to including the entire world with Jesus in the New Testament.

> And, with that, we see the gospel going to the poor, the needy. That is actually foolishness - to the Greeks. Foolishness to those who build their arguments on logic, foolish to those that have it all, and we see this...inversion, the upside-down Kingdom. God then moving away from his focus on just the Jews to the prominent, the well-off...the people most well-off and having it sorted - the Pharisees. They are the ones he gives the hardest time to. (Tyler, interview, 7/8/2016)

ACTION IN AN IMPURE WORLD

REVELATION/SCRIPTURE ←——→ REASON/CULTURE

BIBLICAL IMPERATIVES

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

Gospel directed towards those:

in need:
- gospel received before needs met (Matthew 4:1-11 - Jesus' temptation)

without character
- Paul

Balancing freedom from discrimination and freedom of religion (anecdote: Canadian Christian University)

Balancing revelation/reason and scripture/culture. Progressive Christians tend towards reason and culture

Religious law as revealed in stages (OT to NT)

Only one path to God: Jesus' sacrifice

Compassion and action-driven service
- manifestations of appreciation for God's work

Those suffering

Those who suffer in helping

Disadvantaged will find advantage (Matthew 20:16)

Christian institutions and faith in practice (anecdote: Christian praxis in Christian schools) (anecodote: conservatives in progressive (worldly) churches)

Matthew 25:31-46 - how we will be judged

Social justice as God ←——→ God of social justice

Engaging in social justice ——→ losing purity and holiness

ACTION

James 1:27

unstained from the world ←——→ social justice

Zero sum (social justice and purity)

Addressing social justice issues as God's task

Any approach must be gospel centred
- justice cannot be achieved without grace

To do the will of God is then to gain insight into the heart of God

Faith integration and Biblical imperatives

MENNONITE

MCC shaping Mennonite mindset

Social justice

Pacifism

Removed from the world

Figure 8: Tyler's theological frame diagram

Tyler explained that this message was a self-evident truth of Paul's New Testament narrative. Paul was successful, a scholar, and had all his material needs met. However, the gospel was undeniably directed to him – and possibly to a greater extent than the poor – as he needed grace. For Tyler, the gospel continued to direct Christians towards both the poor and those without Christian character, and therein was the imperative for him to deliver the gospel. Through social engagement he could help others meet material and spiritual needs, and reform character. He drew upon Matthew 25:31-46 to describe the kinds of actions that Christians would be judged against but acknowledged that it was not intended to be an exhaustive list – he noted that there was no mention of domestic violence or racism. Tyler was careful to explain that while he had a Biblical imperative to help those in need in material ways, his engagement was not at the expense of sharing the gospel. He used Matthew 4:1-11 to explain how Jesus' trial in the desert showed the imperative to spread the gospel was bound up in meeting physical needs.

> Jesus…when he is pursuing the Lord and goes out into the wilderness, and there's temptation, and he has none of his needs met. And yet that is his trial. Maintaining that holiness despite nothing being met. And we see that with pursuing goodness, we often lose our needs. And so, I think it turns it upside down in the fact that although we shouldn't write off people's needs as important, you don't need to get someone perfectly socially before you give them the gospel. (Tyler, interview, 7/8/2016)

Tyler's theology of assisting those in need, in whatever form that took, provided the basis for the construction of his theological frame. However, to use his frame to understand and analyse his participation in social engagement, the relationship between his theology and his actions needs to be clarified.

Tyler described how in his social engagement, usually social justice activities, he was not only meeting religious obligations, he was also deepening his understanding of what it meant to be a Christian. He explained that Biblical imperatives provided not only the reasons to become socially engaged by identifying those in need but were also motivated by the engagement itself. He argued that any approach to engagement must be gospel-centred and fully integrate theology and social justice appropriately. To engage with the poor and the needy through social justice programs was to undertake a task from God and, by doing, so was able to understand God and gain insight into the heart of God through suffering.

But it's not just by serving, because to do the will of God is then to gain insight into the heart of God. But it's not just by seeing others suffering, getting down with them, that we see that. But, in the suffering ourselves, either by empathy, or by putting ourselves in that path…And so, it's in that suffering, even the little bit of suffering, that we can, kind of, we generally lose sight when we're suffering, but experience a little bit of what God experienced. (Tyler, interview, 7/8/2016)

Although Tyler found the theological motivation to engage in social justice issues, he was concerned with the potential dangers of engaging in a secular world. For him, there was a balance between staying pure and unstained from worldly influence, and engaging in the consequences of fallible human nature. He explained his position using James 1:27:

And we get this twofold nature of what pure religion is like. One, orphans and widows, service, social justice; and the other is unstained from the world, personal purity and righteousness, pursuing righteousness and holiness…and I find a lot of churches don't find a balance between these two...they've now lost the personal, pure side of their religion for a lot of the social justice…There's this huge push for this social justice and social justice is being their God instead of having a God of social justice. (Tyler, interview, 7/8/2016)

This passage formed the core of what he understood as the challenge facing Christian communities – to engage and affect the world without the world influencing and affecting them. For Tyler, this was not simply a problem related to social justice and engagement, but a challenge for wider the Christian community. He described how different churches had fallen under a worldly influence and this affected the theology and engagement of churches deleteriously. He summarised his point by using his involvement and attendance at a local church to illustrate.

They try and balance revelation and reason or scripture and culture...they end up siding more with reason than with culture, with the world than with revelation. So, that's kind of... that balance you can pretty much describe any denomination, any religion actually, on how they balance the spiritual and the physical. And they...I think the Church has often...to consolidate, to unify, they end up often with reason over revelation. Rather than trying to hold them in tension or putting one above ...putting revelation above reason, scripture above culture. (Tyler, interview, 7/8/2016)

Not surprisingly, he described how he and his wife, Courtney, felt like outsiders within their church and within the *Engage* group. His theology saw him in disagreement with other group members on a range of issues, including homosexuality, indigenous religious expressions, and the place of evangelism.

To summarise, Tyler found that the expansion of God's law to include the entire world Biblical imperatives directed Christians to assist the poor and the needy. This required Christians to attend to both their material and spiritual needs. By taking steps to assist those in need he was both meeting obligations and ensuring his reward in heaven. Tyler described how engagement in social justice provided him with an opportunity to spread the gospel, but he was wary of being influenced by some of the negative aspects of society. He had observed such unfavourable characteristics manifested in contemporary churches. These elements formed the basis of his theological frame, which followed a theme of *Action in an Impure World*.

Shane

Shane was the oldest member of the *Engage* group. He and his wife, Margaret, had spent nearly twenty years working in community and development projects in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Cypress. Both Shane and Margaret attended church. Shane's theological frame followed a theme of *Faith Pragmatism*. A diagram of his theological frame is shown in *Figure 9*. He described the relationship between faith and action simply – if it was true, then do it. Shane explained that he had a very pragmatic view of life and a cognitive commitment to justice. To illustrate his point, he described how if truth and love formed a dichotomy of a Christian worldview, he would be closer to truth than to love. For him, truth and action were inseparable.

Shane described himself as a conservative evangelical, which he understood as holding the belief that the entire Bible was true – not necessarily historically or factually true – but that there were moral truths within allegories. Consequently, every passage of the Bible was important, and each passage was relevant to current social contexts. It was simply a matter of working out how each ought to be applied.

FAITH PRAGMATISM

Conversion experience

Holy Spirit entered

Resonance

Illogicalities had structure

Need for consistent structure
(not necessarily rational)

University - talking philosophy/meaning

TEAR

Strong and Earthy integrity
Faith and operation
built on justice

Practical ← → Ideal

If it is true, then do it

Truth ← → Love

Truth   Action

Kingdom idealised
{ God is King
{ God has rules which are followed
{ Justice and good relationships   ⟹ { cognitively committed
                                         { action follows from cognition
                                         { open to compromise

God
{ God not necessarily nice
{ God's actions unclear to humanity
{ Humans do not listen and write as God intended   ⟹ { Working towards a magnificent end
                                                         { Trying to make a people (bride)

⟹ { Everything applies to now
     { - just need to work out how
     { - look for implicit meaning (anecdote: headcoverings)

Bible
{ All is true
{ (non-literal)   ⟹ { pragmatic
                        { plan and conclusion
                        { in control

Prayer
{ despair and prayer
{ prayer and thankfulness
{ beyond control   ⟹ { embrace diversity in Christian expressions
                         { recognise privilege
                         { recognise fixation on money and happiness

Western Christianity
{ non-spiritual
{ oxymoron
{ flawed

Figure 9: Shane's theological frame diagram

194

Shane illustrated his approach to Biblical interpretation with an example taken from Scripture and social life.

> I believe God's word is true, you know, not in a silly sense, you know, every word is. If you read a passage of scripture and you say well that doesn't really apply to now, I feel that's weak and unhelpful. We can say it applies to now, let's just work out how it applies. (Shane, interview, 1/11/2016)

His theological frame of *Faith Pragmatism* – truths leading to action – was found in other aspects of his religious life. For example, he considered his approach to prayer was pragmatic and needed to have purpose. Shane explained that he would pray more often when he was experiencing emotional difficulties and used prayer to give those problems to God. On the other hand, he described the difficulties he encountered with praying to God for guidance on specific, real-world problems.

> I'm very physical-solution oriented. And part of that is if there's a problem, I'll think my way through it and I'll step through and plan and get to the conclusion. Which seems to be, not a contradiction, but it makes the idea of praying for that conclusion kind of irrelevant. Because that's the plan. Do you know what I mean? Maybe if things go wrong, you pray about it. But really, you just *do it* rather than just praying about it. (Shane, interview, 1/11/2016)

Shane's theology of *Faith Pragmatism* not only provided him with the motivation to engage in social justice and community issues but also him gave guidance about prioritising his needs. Much of his understanding of having needs met was based on his interpretation of the Kingdom.

For Shane, the Christian Kingdom is an idealised place where God's laws exist in an explicit sense. He explained that in the Kingdom these laws are followed, and "justice and good relationships abound."[68] While this was an idealised conception of the Kingdom, Shane explained that it was up to Christians to exemplify Kingdom values with the understanding that the Kingdom will *never be realised*. For Shane, the Kingdom values of justice and good relationships held significance by providing agency – Christians needed to work towards the Kingdom. His pragmatic imperative to enact Kingdom justice allowed

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[68] Shane, interview, 1/11/2016

him to have a 'bigger picture' approach to social engagement, overlooking moral ambiguities in seeking to achieve just solutions to a problem.

He explained what this meant in practice during his work on a development project with an agency, *Global Voice*, in Bangladesh.

> A good example is corruption in Bangladesh… *Global Voice* won't accept any non-receipted payments. You've got a receipt for everything that comes in. And when wheat comes in off the docks…we would not pay money, bribes, to get the wheat. So, we would hire agents. Those agents are paying bribes left, right and centre, do you know what I mean? (Shane, interview, 1/11/2016)

For justice and good relationships to be upheld, Shane explained that earthly moral challenges needed to be subverted. If people were in desperate need for food, as they were in his development experience, then steps needed to be taken to ensure that their needs were met.

To summarise, Shane's theological frame of *Faith Pragmatism* showed how he used his faith in everyday life. For him, Biblical truths were not simply statements of fact or pieces of moral wisdom, but rather directives towards action. This theme was common throughout Shane's experiences of religious life, including social engagement, prayer, and the nature of the Kingdom. It was not surprising that Shane's previous involvement in community development was focussed on achieving practical objectives, as it aligned well with his pragmatic approach to theology.

Margaret

Margaret's theological frame was very different from the frame of her husband, Shane. Her theological frame followed a theme of *Inclusive Relationships*. Her frame is shown diagrammatically in *Figure 10*. For her, relationships were an expression of Kingdom values, although she was reluctant to claim that these values or even salvation were exclusively Christian. Margaret explained that she was heavily influenced by her upbringing as the daughter of missionary parents where she was exposed to a variety of religious expressions. In particular, she explained that she learned from an early age that religion, politics, and conflict were often intertwined.

Inclusive Imperatives

Narrative

ENGAGE

- work, faith and relationships
- represent values on issues of importance: community consultation. peace-building, faith
- respectful and seek ways to understand and live Biblically
- Intends to help Christians understand relationship and peace
- Importance of scriptural interpretation
- Attends church ——→ does not identify with a single denomination
- Parents: Free Presbyterian / Church of Christ
- Conflict { Religion / Politics
- Third Culture
- Missionary parents

Biblical imperatives to engage ←→

- Matthew 10:34 ——→ Jesus with a sword causes division
- Matthew 25:31-45 ——→ How to build relationships
- Amos 5,6 ——→ Call for social justice
- James 2: 14-26 ——→ Faith needs to be embodied
- Corinthians 13 ——→ Scripture needs to be used lovingly
- Luke 17: 11-19 ——→ Action needs to be taken without knowledge of outcome
- David not splitting the Kingdom (theological elaboration)

Inclusive Relationships

Christian living {
- Exploring Biblical teachings without division
- Living strong ideas respectfully

Heaven as relationships {
- People as the body of Christ
- Relationships must be prioritised

- Embodied in lifestyle
- Relationships, food, money, recycling

Kingdom values {
- No 'cheap grace'
- Engage in social justice issues
- Conversations and relationships with wider community

no Christian cultural authority {
- The Church includes all cultural contexts
- Arrogance of Western Biblical interpretation
- Western meanings mis-align with original meanings
- Justice as lived relationship changing balance of power
- Aversion to authority

Universal {
- Romans 1:20 interpreted as general/specific revelation
- different religious understanding of God
- relationships with God from different angles
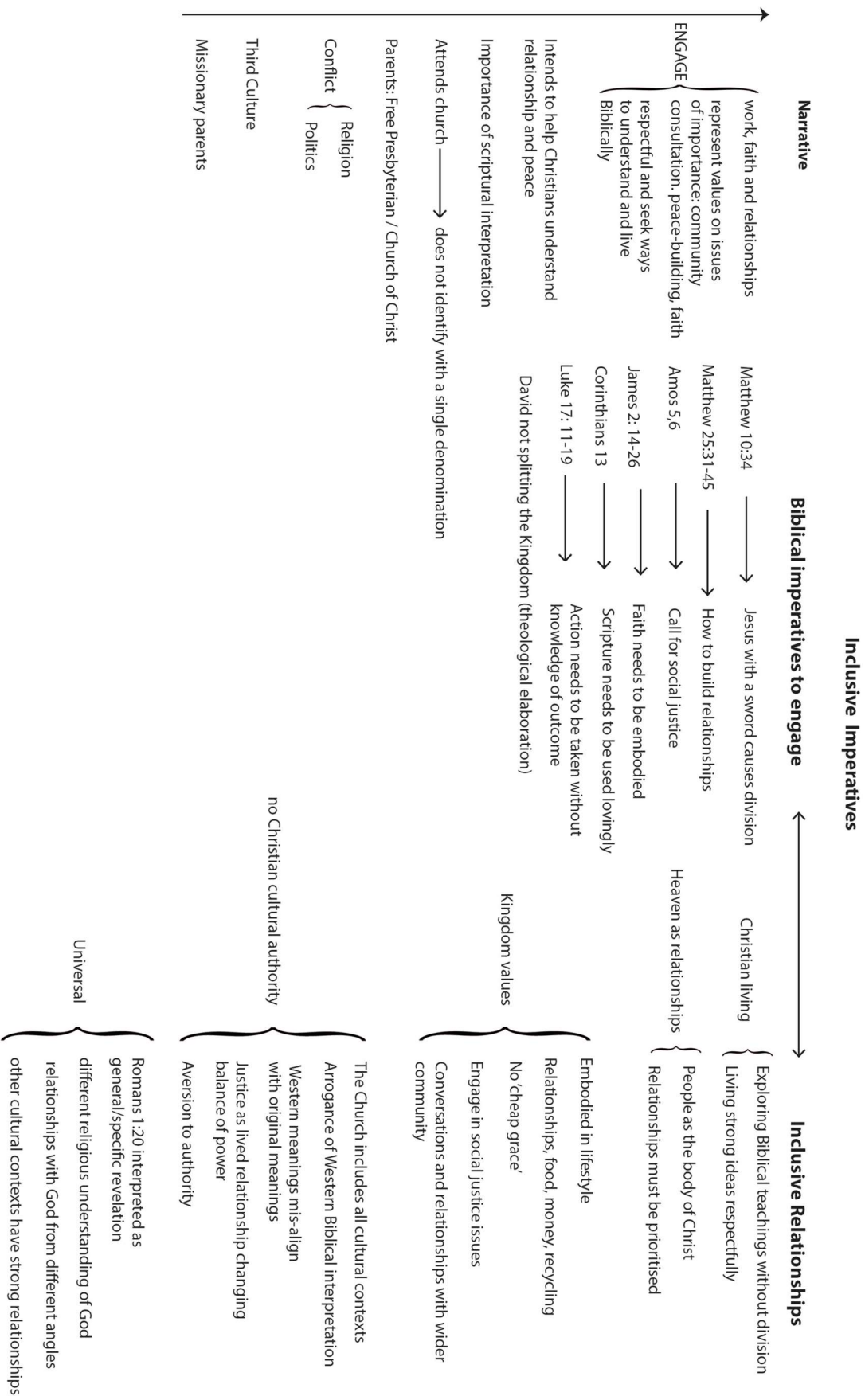- other cultural contexts have strong relationships

Figure 10: Margaret's theological frame diagram

197

Right from a very early age, it was very obvious for me that there can be conflict in religion. I don't associate it necessarily to one faith, or one ideology, but I certainly know and believe that Christians can use it as a weapon and it can become a divisive thing. So that has shaped my theology. So, for me, it's really important that Christians understand that peace role, or the relationship side of faith. Because interpretation of scripture is everything, and we can divide a nation based on it. (Margaret, interview, 14/9/2016)

Although Margaret attended church she did not identify as belonging to any particular denomination. For her, Christian living involved building and maintaining relationships, and bringing about peace. She drew upon Biblical resources to describe the imperatives she found to engage in relationships. Like Tyler, Margaret also drew upon Matthew 25:31-45 to explain her theology.

However, Tyler and Margaret differed in their interpretations. Tyler read the passage as a list of inappropriate Christian actions that Christians would be judged against. In contrast, Margaret read the passage as instructions for Christians to form relationships. She explained her interpretation was a natural consequence of 1 Corinthians 13:1-2, which outlined that Scripture needed to be understood and used lovingly.

Margaret used this approach to interpret a number of passages, which shaped her theology and contributed to explaining some of the themes in her theological frame.

The first was Luke 17:11-19, a passage that described Jesus healing ten men with leprosy. The narrative concluded with only one of the men, a Samaritan, returning to thank Jesus. Margaret explained that the central lesson in this story was not the need to be thankful for the blessings of God but, rather, that Jesus healed without knowing *who* would be thankful for his actions. Therefore, contemporary Christians should use the same approach and engage without knowing who, if anyone, would be thankful. Margaret explained that this passage showed that action needed to be taken toward those in need to change the balance of power without knowledge of the outcomes.

Margaret also used passages from the Old Testament to explain her position on relationships. While the passages she referred to were unclear, the message was apparent in her interpretation.

One lesson from Scripture if we're thinking about this kind of stuff, is that if we look at the life of David, from the Old Testament, so when he was considered a man

198

after God's heart was when he was younger… in his early days, you know, the days when God picked him as that leader over Saul, he wasn't a man of war. And you hear that discussion of his followers, saying, why don't you go and claim your title? You've been anointed as God's chosen one. And he says something really interesting, he says...there's a ... you can go back and look at it...there's a discussion about who is God's leader, and he says "I will not split the Kingdom." (Margaret, interview, 14/9/2016)

Margaret appeared to draw from I Kings 11:11 to explain that conflict should never be an option, even if divinely sanctioned. Relationships must always take priority. She noted from the story that even though David was the rightful heir to the Kingdom his claim to the throne would have caused conflict between nations. So, this was not an option for him. Margaret's love-centred understanding of how the Bible should be read gave rise to imperatives to form relationships. To live as a Christian was to explore and embody the teachings of Jesus – to live strong ideas respectfully. In this sense, relationships needed to be prioritised, and include different cultures and religions. Particularly, she explained, since the way that Christianity was practised in the West was arrogant, and that Western Biblical interpretations did not align with the original meanings of the Biblical texts.

I understand from my lived experience overseas, traditional Indian Christian communities, and Cyprus, which is [an] Orthodox faith, that those cultures are Christian and are just as valid as ours. And their faith doesn't stem from Roman, Western, thought. And so… why...how arrogant of us to consider that they're not part of this… I guess arrogance is not an excuse when people interpret the Bible, but when you sit down and sometimes look at the original meanings, it's not what you think it is. Especially if you take off the Western lens. (Margaret, interview, 14/9/2016)

More broadly, she explained her more Universalist position on salvation. God's relationship with humanity was not limited to Western conceptions of Christian belief. Particularly, since Romans 1:20 explained that 'men were without excuse' which Margaret understood as a general revelation to humanity.

Scripture talks about how men are without excuse. So, I believe that God can have a relationship through general revelation, and not specific revelation. And even our understanding of Christ, which is a Western interpretation. So, if we're talking about

specific revelation, even our interpretation of Christ has changed over the centuries. And I'm not saying that because I'm progressive. (Margaret, interview, 14/9/2016)

Margaret understood the passage implied that God would provide opportunities for everyone to have a relationship with him – something Margaret explained was often misinterpreted by "white, Western churches."[69]

To summarise, Margaret's theological frame was one of *Inclusive Relationships*. She found within the Bible imperatives to engage in social justice, build relationships and embody Kingdom values. This led her toward a more open understanding of what it meant for humanity to have a relationship with God, and that Christians must refrain from making judgements about other Christian expressions and cultures. The variety of cultural and religious expressions may be part of God's relationship with humanity. If Western Christians criticised other religious traditions, then they were possibly making a judgement against God.

Mark – facilitator of the *Engage* group

Mark organised and hosted the meetings for the *Engage* group. His theological frame contained three interconnected themes of *Authenticity, Marginality* and *Relationships*. His theological frame diagram is shown in *Figure 11*. Mark explained that his work as a missionary and church planter in Ukraine shaped his current understanding of Christianity and transformed the way he approached social engagement. Mark had come to regret many parts of his engagement in Ukraine, despite his good intentions at the time. He felt that his approach in Ukraine was largely spiritual and had neglected the various social and environmental problems that resulted from the fall of the Soviet Union. He attributed much of this neglect to his alignment with a Pentecostal church that prioritised experiential spiritual Christianity rather than addressing structural problems. In a similar way to Margaret, Mark explained how his time overseas helped him understand the varieties of Christian expression. He used a Ukrainian understanding of Jesus to illustrate his point:

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[69] Margaret, interview, 14/9/2016

Authentic

Jesus {
- the best way to know God
- foundation for Biblical interpretation
- reflected in the direction of attention
}

authentic {
- representations of community
- opaque cultural expressions
- representation of disadvantage
- within own tradition
}

Only one way to God but many ways to that one way

Understanding the Kingdom {
- your will be done
- as an ideal trajectory
- as experience
}

Missionary (5 years) in Ukraine

Relationships

Luke 12:48
if you have been given much, then much is expected

Christian experience {
- to become fully human
- decentralised
- in relationship
- interconnectedness
}

influenced {
- understanding of Christian faith
- transmission of Christian faith
}

transformational {
- too spiritual focussed
- did not consider social and environmental impacts
}

Marginal

Margins {
- where salvation is found
- where Jesus calls us to
- where Biblical voices are found
- where life works
}

Decentralised {
- not the voice of middle class white outrage
- there is no white Jesus
- the West is complicit in disempowerment
- the West is part of the problem
}

Genesis 9:7 - populate and spread
Arrogant to say God is not communicating with the rest of the world

Action {
- double victory
- win the argument
- win the people who argue against you
- justice found in relationship with others
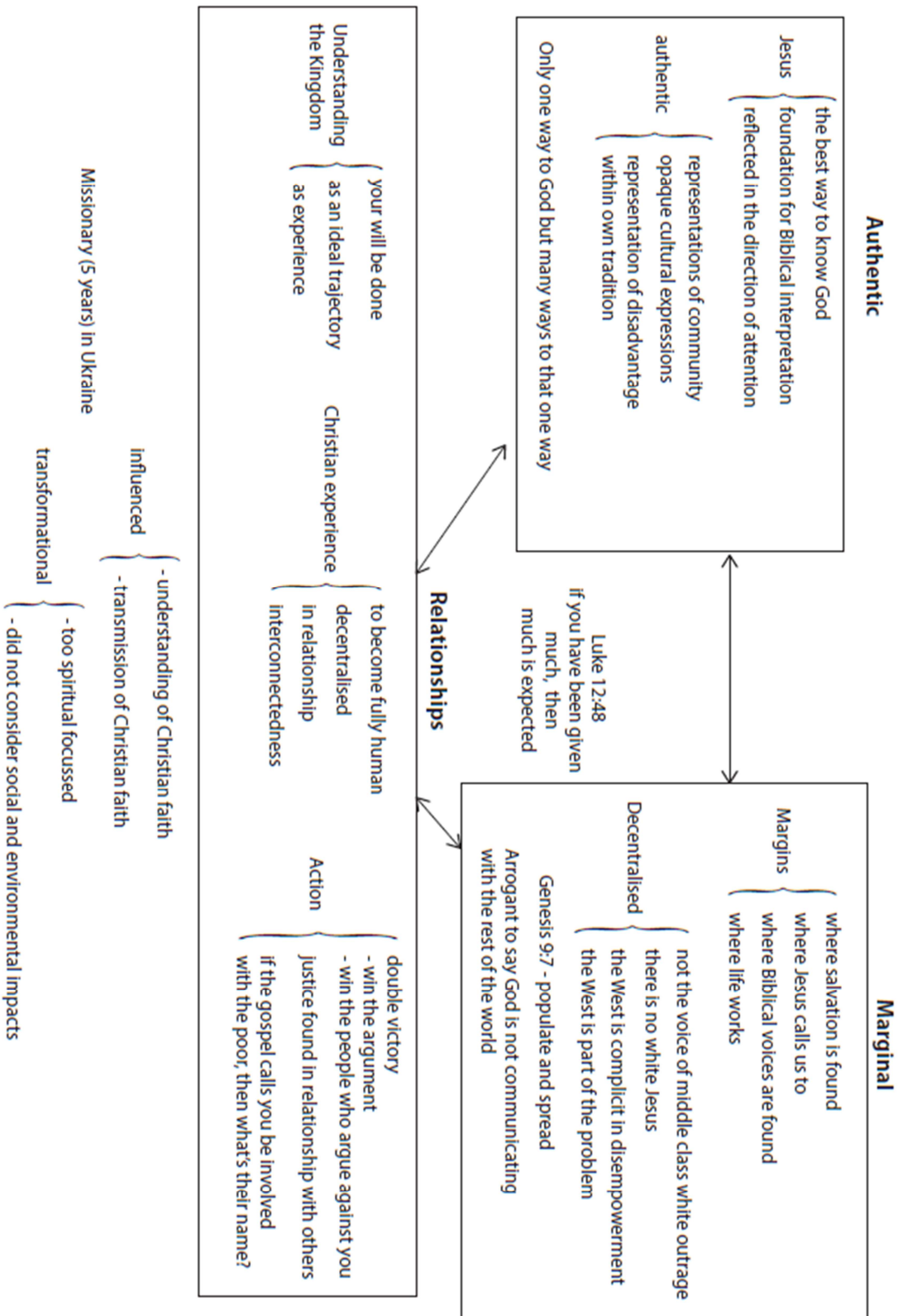- if the gospel calls you be involved with the poor, then what's their name?
}

Figure 11: Mark's theological frame diagram

201

> So, Jesus doesn't speak English. Which means that he does speak Ukrainian - so
> when an Ukrainian talks about the best expression of humanity that they can
> imagine, and impose that on Jesus, then Jesus looks like a Cossack on a horse.
> Yeah? And he drinks vodka. Not wine. You know what I mean? It's the truth at the
> end of the day which sets us free. Can we try and hold all of the truth, or to be so
> arrogant to think that God is not communicating with another group of people or not
> revealing himself to them? (Mark, interview, 5/1/2017)

Mark's understanding of the plurality of Christian expressions and representations of Jesus from his Ukrainian experience shaped the theme of *Authenticity*. Authenticity formed an essential part of his theological frame for Biblical interpretation and Christian expression.

Mark regularly read Bible passages and ended at a point where he understood Jesus would end. He explained that this method of reading the Bible was the most authentic expression of the word of God as the best representation of God is documented in Jesus, so the best insight humanity has of God is by following Jesus' conduct in social engagement. For him, to be authentic was to follow Jesus' example of social engagement both in his actions and how the recipients were treated. Mark explained that he reflected this approach in his advocacy work where he attempted to represent disadvantaged communities authentically using their own expressions of their experiences rather than a "white, middle-class interpretation."[70]

The second theme of Mark's theological frame was *Marginality*. For him, marginality was a consistent Biblical theme that shaped how he engaged in social justice. Mark explained that the Biblical narrative, and most of the voices found within this narrative, were those who were marginalised. Since Jesus called the faithful towards the margins, socially-engaged Christians should also direct their attention toward the margins.

> You read through the Biblical story, and try and find any other voice that comes
> from the centre. They're always marginalised. Almost. There's rare exceptions, like
> in Esther, but even, then, in tight constraint for that particular story, she was on the
> edge. I think for me, provoking people to realise that we don't sit comfortably within
> the Biblical story, as people who are in the centre, and that things that we...like
> white Jesus doesn't exist… And if we are going to do an authentic analysis of

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[70] Mark, interview, 5/1/2017

justice, and we can actually say that it has to work. It has to work for the margins for it to be useful. (Mark, interview, 5/1/2017)

This comment was particularly interesting to me as throughout the study the group was directed towards passages discussing the Israelite Kingdom and David, a prominent Biblical figure who was at the centre of an empire. I wondered if Mark's marginalisation affected how the New Testament corrected what he saw as the bad teachings of the Old Testament.[71] Like Shane and Margaret, Mark was uncomfortable with the West claiming a monopoly on authentic Christian expression. However, where the others focussed on the West as assuming priority in Biblical interpretation and expression, Mark described the West as complicit in the structural conditions of marginalisation. For him, being born in a Western society made you complicit in the structural conditions of inequality. He described how Christianity's place at the margins was a natural progression of God's instructions to Noah to go forth and multiply after the flood in Genesis 9:7. This was not a message of population, but rather a message of decentralisation.

The final theme of Mark's theological frame, *Relationships*, connected his understanding of authenticity and marginalisation. Without relationships, the authentic expressions at the margins could not exist. Mark grounded relationships theologically as part of Christian experience and as an embodiment of the Kingdom. Mark interpreted the Lord's prayer, 'your Kingdom come, your will be done' as the intentional embodiment of an idealised Kingdom. The Kingdom was grounded in Christian experience, which, for Mark, was a combination of the interconnectedness and justice to be found in relationship with others. To incorporate Kingdom values in Christian expression was to become decentralised, go to the margins and form relationships. He understood the Kingdom as authentic, inclusive, and attainable.

> [The Kingdom] is attainable, I'm really confident that it's not going to be anything like I could imagine. I'm under no illusions that I can even begin to describe or circumscribe what it might be. I suppose it's my best attempt at an ideal trajectory. And I'll be quite selfish and say that I often call myself a humanist. As in I want the best experience as a human. And I think that's what God designed me to be. To live a fulfilled life as a human. And, so, the Kingdom for me certainly sits within

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[71] Mark, participant-observation, 22/3/2016

experience for myself, but knowing that it's not just a hedonistic, selfish

introspection. It's for everyone. (Mark, interview, 5/1/2017)

To summarise, Mark's theological frame was grounded in the three interconnected themes of *Authenticity*, *Marginality* and *Relationships*. He explained that there was a theological case for Christians to form authentic relationships at the margins, and to allow those at the margins to have their needs met authentically. By engaging in relationships at the margins, Christians were able to embody the Christian expression of Kingdom values. For Mark, this Kingdom was attainable, but he explained that the Kingdom as a living reality was likely to be different from his understanding. Mark appreciated the plurality of Christian praxis which developed within him a self-awareness about the effect of social context on Christian expression. For him, the Kingdom was for everyone and he understood that God called on him to spread this message to the margins.

Shared Culture

Both the contrarian and theological cultures of Biblical reading and interpretation of the *Engage* group were found within the theological frames of the participants. This is represented diagrammatically by placing each of the theological frames alongside each other and identifying the elements common to the culture of the group. Both of these shared elements are shown in *Figure 12*. The prominent cultural elements of the *Engage* group are seen within the individual theological frames and this gives support for their use in analysing group culture.

The discursive and structural elements of Hall et al.'s (2003) definition of culture (from Chapter Two) are seen in the shared culture of *Engage*. The knowledge, ideas, and processes for human action that they referred to in their definition of culture (Hall et al., 2003, p. 7) was seen at *Engage*. Both of them shared a theological culture and the contrarian culture contained elements that shaped how group behaviour was appropriated, reinforced, and constrained during their collective engagement attempts. While the individual group members differed in their espoused theologies, there was an alignment in the central purpose of the group: to develop a theologically informed approach to social engagement. The diversity in the theological methods of the *Engage* group also contributed to the contrarian culture. The narratives, theological influences, and social
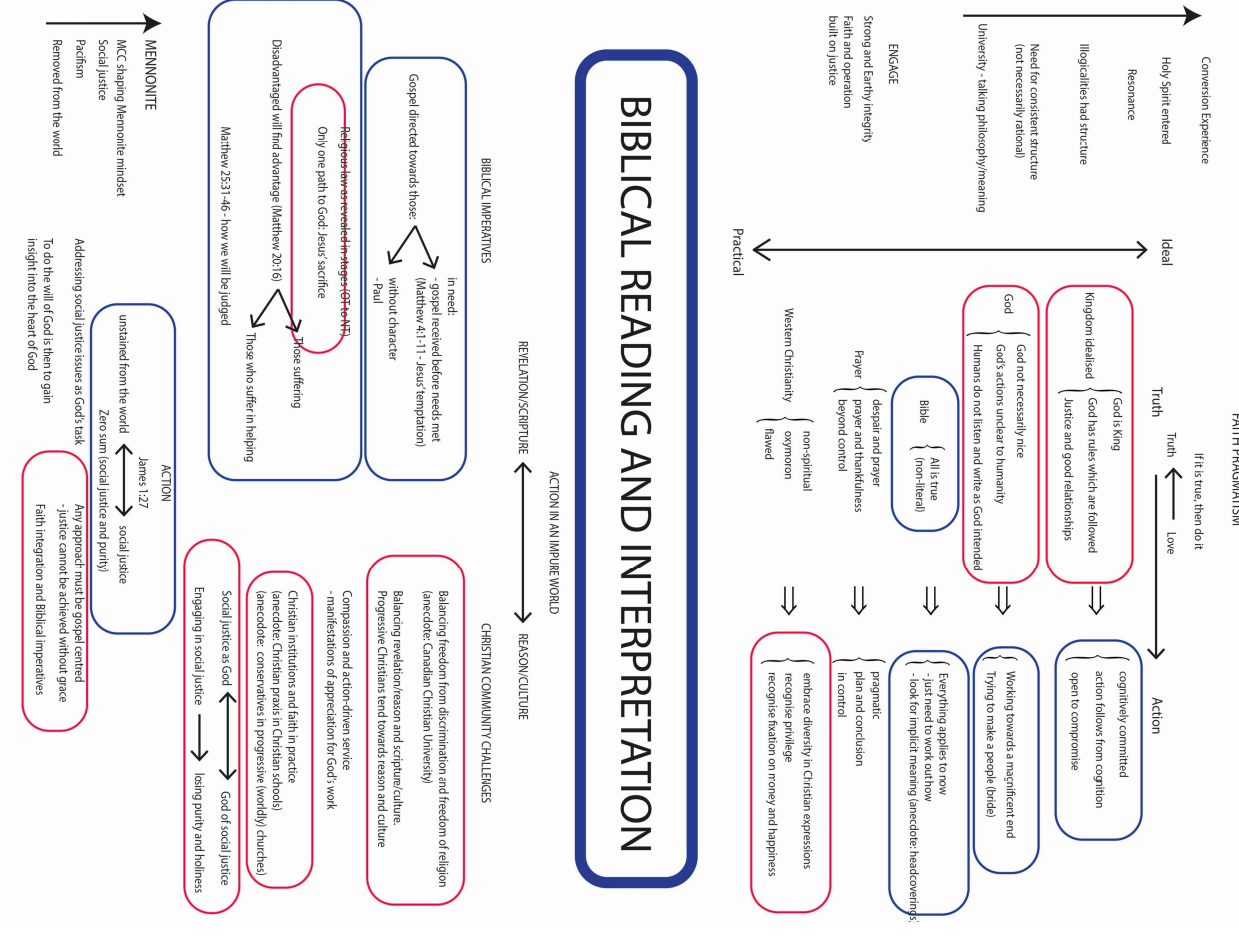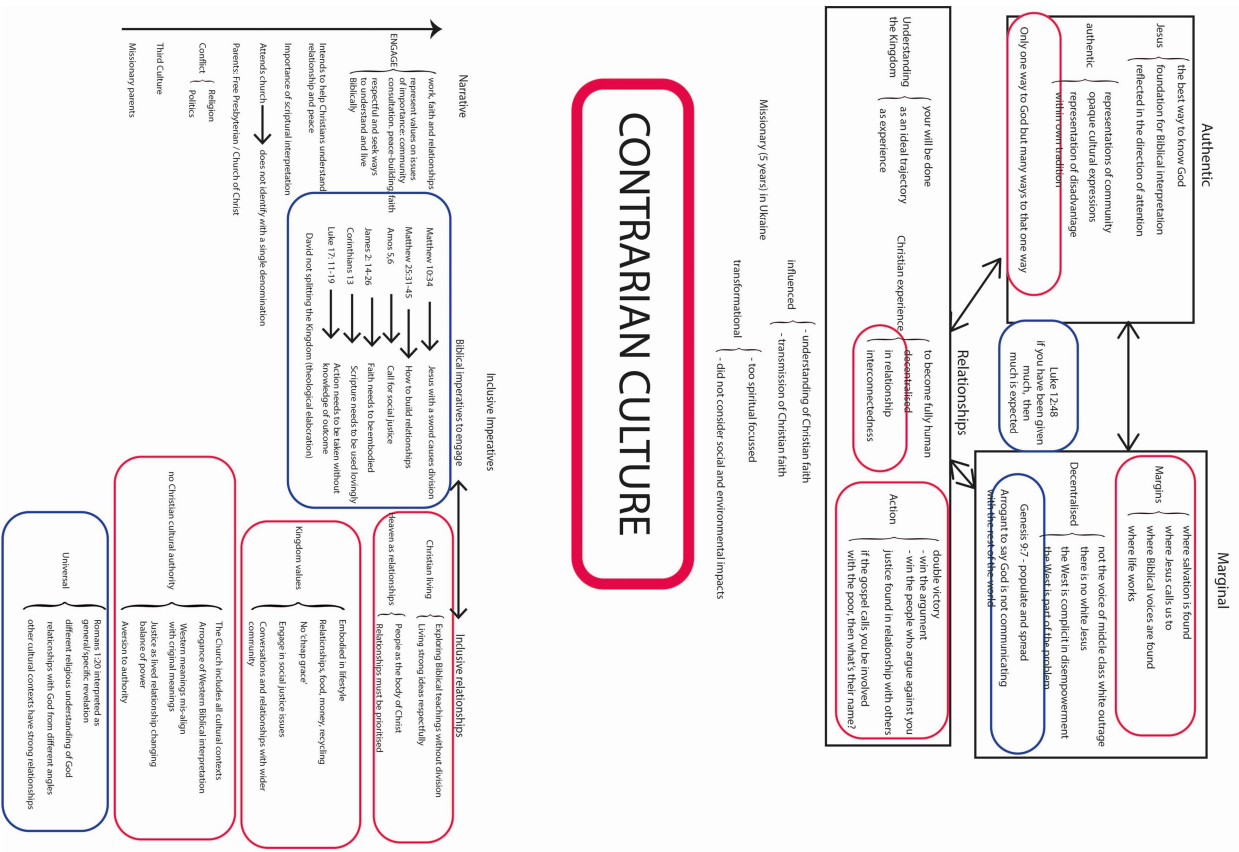
Figure 12: Shared Contrarian Culture and Theological Culture

CONTRARIAN CULTURE

Authentic

Jesus { the best way to know God
foundation for Biblical interpretation
reflected in the direction of attention

authentic { representations of community
opaque cultural expressions
representation of disadvantage

Only one way to God but many ways to that one way
within own tradition

Marginal

Margins { where salvation is found
where Jesus calls us to
where Biblical voices are found
where life works

Decentralised { not the voice of middle class white outrage
there is no white Jesus
the West is complicit in disempowerment
the West is part of the problem

Genesis 9:7 – populate and spread
Arrogant to say God is not communicating with the rest of the world

Luke 12:48 – if you have been given much, then much is expected

Relationships

Missionary (5 years) in Ukraine

Understanding the Kingdom { your will be done
as an ideal trajectory
as experience

Christian experience { to become fully human
decentralised
in relationship
interconnectedness

Influenced { – understanding of Christian faith
– transmission of Christian faith

transformational { – too spiritual focussed
– did not consider social and environmental impacts

Action { double victory
– win the argument
– win the people who argue against you
Justice found in relationship with others
if the gospel calls you be involved with the poor, then what's their name?

Narrative

ENGAGE { work, faith and relationship
represent values on issues of importance community
consultation, peace-building faith
respectful and seek ways to understand and live
Biblically

Intends to help Christians understand relationship and peace
Importance of scriptural interpretation
Attends church – does not identify with a single denomination
Parents: Free Presbyterian / Church of Christ

Conflict { Religion
Politics

Third Culture
Missionary parents

Biblical imperatives to engage

Matthew 10:34 – Jesus with a sword causes division
Matthew 25:31-45 – How to build relationships
Amos 5,6 – Call for social justice
James 2, 14-26 – Faith needs to be embodied
Corinthians 13 – Scripture needs to be used lovingly
Luke 17; 11-19 – Action needs to be taken without knowledge of outcome
David not splitting the Kingdom (theological elaboration)

Inclusive Imperatives

Christian living { Exploring Biblical teachings without division
Living strong ideas respectfully

leaven as relationships { People as the body of Christ
Relationships must be prioritised

Kingdom values { Embodied in lifestyle
Relationships, food, money, recycling
No 'cheap grace'
Engage in social justice issues
Conversations and relationships with wider community

Inclusive relationships

no Christian cultural authority { The Church includes all cultural contexts
Arrogance of Western Biblical interpretation
Western meanings mis-align with original meanings
Justice as lived relationship changing balance of power
Aversion to authority

Universal { Romans 1:20 interpreted as general/specific revelation
different religious understanding of God
relationships with God from different angles
other cultural contexts have strong relationships

BIBLICAL READING AND INTERPRETATION

FAITH PRAGMATISM

If it is true, then do it

Truth ⇄ Love → Action

Conversion Experience
Holy Spirit entered
Resonance
Illogicalities had structure
Need for consistent structure (not necessarily rational)
University – talking philosophy/meaning

ENGAGE
Strong and Earthy integrity;
Faith and operation
built on justice

Ideal ⇄ Practical

Truth

God { Kingdom idealised { God is King
Justice and good relationships
God has rules which are followed
open to compromise

Humans do not listen and write as God intended
God's actions unclear to humanity
God not necessarily nice

Western Christianity

Prayer { despair and prayer
prayer and thankfulness
beyond control

Bible { All is true (non-literal)
non-spiritual
oxymoron
flawed

Action

Everything applies to now
– just need to work out how
– look for implicit meaning (anecdote: headcoverings)
Working towards a magnificent end
Trying to make a people (bride)

cognitively committed
action follows from cognition

pragmatic
plan and conclusion
in control

embrace diversity in Christian expressions
recognise privilege
recognise fixation on money and happiness

BIBLICAL IMPERATIVES

Gospel directed towards those:
in need:
– gospel received before needs met
(Matthew 4:1 -11 - Jesus' temptation)
without character
– Paul

Religious love as revealed in stages (OT to NT)
Only one path to God; Jesus' sacrifice

Disadvantaged will find advantage (Matthew 20:16)

Those who suffer in helping
Those suffering

Matthew 25:31-46 - how we will be judged

REVELATION/SCRIPTURE ⇄ ACTION IN AN IMPURE WORLD ⇄ REASON/CULTURE

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

Balancing freedom from discrimination and freedom of religion (anecdote: Canadian Christian University)
Balancing revelation/reason and scripture/culture;
Progressive Christians tend towards reason and culture
Compassion and action-driven service
– manifestations of appreciation for God's work
Christian institutions and faith in practice
(anecdote: Christian praxis in Christian schools)
(anecdote: conservatives in progressive (worldly) churches)

Social justice as God ⇄ God of social justice
Engaging in social justice ⇄ losing purity and holiness

MENNONITE

MCC shaping Mennonite mindset
Social justice
Pacifism
Removed from the world

ACTION

James 1:27
unstained from the world
Zero sum (social justice and purity)
social justice

Addressing social justice issues as God's task
To do the will of God is then to gain insight into the heart of God

Any approach must be gospel centred
– justice cannot be achieved without grace
Faith integration and Biblical imperatives

influences found in each of the individual theological frames provided insights into their shared culture.

However, there was little narrative fidelity between the different theological frames. This absence inhibited the extent that the shared accounts of experience could form a common framework for understanding (Fine, 1995, p. 134). The differences in the theological frames appeared to have cultivated a contrarian culture. Conflicts arose within the group when individual members challenged theological perspectives and strategies for effective engagement that were offered by other group members. For example, Tyler's detached theology of engagement was inimical to Margaret's inclusive relationships; Shane's understanding of the entire Bible being as true opposed Mark's description of the bad teachings of the Old Testament; and the conflicting understandings about the Christian Kingdom among group members challenged each member's theological perspectives and rationale for engagement. To summarise, the findings from the individual theological frames and shared culture support Fine's (1995) suggestion that the narrative fidelity of the frames can indicate the success and culture of a social movement. For the *Engage* group, the absence of a narrative fidelity inhibited the group's ability to collectively engage in reconciliation.

8.5 Individual Engagement

As described at the beginning of this chapter, those committing to *Engage* were expected to integrate as a group and as individuals. We have looked at the two attempts by *Engage* to work as a group. We now turn to look at how each member of *Engage* sought to integrate what they had learned and discussed during the meetings to bridge with Indigenous Australians in their personal lives, individually. In this regard, the *Engage* group showed more progress than in their collective bridging attempts. In this section, the individual engagement activities and the individual theological frames of the *Engage* group members will be compared and then two arguments will be made. First, it will be argued that the actions of individual members cohered with their individual theological frames; and second, it will be argued that the theology of the individual group members shaped agency to engage in social justice activities outside of the collective decision-making of the *Engage* group.

Shane's engagement with reconciliation was largely focussed around what he described as "low level advocacy." Shane found he was able to advocate for Indigenous Australians

pragmatically by engaging with people socially, and in the workplace, on issues concerning Indigenous Australians. His objective was to make a difference in the lives of white Australians who may have misunderstood or misrepresented Indigenous Australians.

> I have a number of times gone into bat on Aboriginal issues against the majority. And it's been possible simply because I could say, well, did you know, here is a fact, how does that fit with what you've just said? So very low-level advocacy. So now, with some level of integrity, I can stand up for Aboriginal issues, on Aboriginal issues. (Shane, interview, 1/11/2016)

Shane's theological frame of *faith pragmatism* aligned well with this social engagement in a form of 'low level advocacy'. His focus on truth and action within his theological frame was reflected in the way he was able to engage with social justice in his personal life. For Shane, advocating for Indigenous Australians meant that he was able to share his knowledge and act in a way that aligned with his Christian praxis. Further, Shane understood his engagement with Indigenous issues as pragmatic – advocating for Indigenous Australians was a way to enact justice and work towards good relationships. By advocating for Indigenous Australians, he was improving understanding between Indigenous and white Australians, while also building relationships between him and those that he engaged with. The theme of 'cognitive commitment to justice' in Shane's theological frame was reflected in his advocacy, as by advocating for Indigenous Australians, even at what he described as a 'low-level', he was able to embody his sense of justice.

Margaret was also able to engage in reconciliation in her personal life. However, her engagement was quite different from the ways that were discussed at the group meetings. She explained that she wanted to maintain a 'posture' of standing alongside Indigenous Australians, and decided to engage with Indigenous communities through a topical issue at the time - the storage of radioactive wastes. At the time, the government was searching for potential locations to store nuclear materials. Margaret launched a campaign opposing the nuclear storage facility with the help of her church and Indigenous artists. This campaign highlighted the importance of Indigenous culture while simultaneously standing in opposition to the storage of radioactive waste alongside Indigenous Australians. The central theme of respectful relationships in Margaret's theological frame was reflected in her appreciation and respect for the connection between Indigenous Australians and the land. Her intentions to stand alongside Indigenous Australians and nurture relationships

contributed to both promoting reconciliation and opposing the government's plan of where to store nuclear waste. She explained that while she was strongly opposed to the nuclear storage facility, it was engaging in respectful relationships with Indigenous Australians that was most significant for her. Margaret engaged alongside Indigenous Australians by advocating for her church to display a mural in their car park to symbolise the relationship of the Indigenous people to the land. The mural was an Indigenous artist's depiction of an Indigenous shield, symbolising the protection of the land and waterways by the Indigenous population. Margaret explained how the idea first started:

> You know, there's the nuclear waste dump, one thing I've been exploring and trying to work through with the church is if we can use art to do something. So…I was wondering if we could do a community action, perhaps several, in different locations where we'd draw these big designs or trails on the ground that maybe lead to a point of information. And it can be a community engagement learning process as well as an educational thing for people who come past. But I understand completely that it has been done in partnership, and permission with Aboriginal artists and leaders. (Margaret, interview, 14/9/2016)

The structure of the intended relationships with Indigenous Australians from Margaret's theological frame was reflected in her in a way that was not possible within the *Engage* group environment. Without the restrictions imposed by a group environment, relationships were nurtured as an objective of engagement. Margaret was able to become authentically involved with reconciliation, and at a greater depth than was possible with *Engage*. Her engagement aligned with her theological frame and allowed her to act on two significant issues for her – standing alongside Indigenous communities and opposing the storage of nuclear wastes.

Tyler, too, was able to engage with reconciliation in a way that aligned with his theological frame. His theological frame had a strong theme of Biblical imperatives to act while still retaining a distance from worldly influences. For him, this was easiest to embody by delivering a service or attending to needs. He explained that he found it quite easy to apply what he had learned to his everyday life through his work as a doctor. A large proportion of his patients were Indigenous, including people from the city or from more remote communities. By attending the *Engage* meetings and learning more about Indigenous culture, he found that he was able to gain a greater sense of empathy for Indigenous patients while retaining a professional distance.

I think it's really, it's certainly made me a little more patient, and I think that's the empathy, and perhaps I'm more comfortable with it, because to just be comfortable with the uncomfortable there for a minute, and then ask a little bit more, and then...it's...I've got an extra step, because I'm the doctor, and I can just resort to clinical questions, and just forget about the cultural differences for a bit. But it has made me more patient. And a little bit more feeling. (Tyler, interview, 7/8/2016)

He has also found that he was able to engage with reconciliation on a spiritual level. He explained that during the time of the study, one of his patients was an Indigenous pastor, and he was able to use his knowledge and understanding to engage in reconciliation with a more Christian focus.

And then I had another guy, he was a patient for too long... two weeks. He's an Aboriginal pastor that's retired. And we had a great time chatting, and it was kind of parallel to the study, so I got a good chance to ask him about his journey as a Christian and Aboriginal. (Tyler, interview, 7/8/2016)

After the sessions on engaging with reconciliation, Tyler and Courtney decided to move to an Indigenous community in Northern Territory to work. While their decision to move may not have been a direct result of their time with the *Engage* group, they explained that their experiences with the group had helped them to understand Indigenous issues and how they could engage with Indigenous Australians in a way that was aligned with their theology.

Mark had described how he had hoped that the group would have been able to follow up their discussions with more collective action, but this did not eventuate. However, he was also able to individually bridge with Indigenous Australians outside the confines of the group in two ways. First, after the group had moved onto studying a theological response to climate change, Mark contacted the creators of the *Australians Together* series to become involved in the organisation; and second, he approached several airlines to promote establishing an *acknowledgement of country*[72] when landing at sites around

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[72] 'Acknowledging Country' can be done at the beginning of any meeting. Some organisations, for example, begin staff meetings with an acknowledgement. An 'Acknowledgment' might be; for example "I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land we're meeting on today, and acknowledge my gratitude that we share this land today, my sorrow for some of the costs of that sharing, and my hope and belief that we can move to place of equity, justice and partnership together" (Reconciliation Australia, 2018).

Australia. As he described his engagement with reconciliation in these individual initiatives there were parallels to his theological frame. Mark's engagement was linked to his understanding of decentralisation by shifting the attention of the relatively affluent towards the margins. He explained that being able to shift attention to the margins was of particular importance, as injustices within Indigenous communities was an issue that he cared about even though he was not directly affected. If he was to act, then he would need to become involved with Indigenous communities or leaders. If successful, it would allow him to embody his theology.

> If you're doing something on behalf of a group of people, then you've met with the group of people, you've met with a group of people within that group of people with authority to make decisions, and you've agreed on something, and they've agreed that you're doing it on their behalf…And so, as others have said, if you're doing this, you're allowed to do this for us. Because you are a nice person, you are a respectful person. This is the way you would like to be treated. And so, you're allowed to do this for us. And so the reason that it's significant for me is because it reflects on who I am. (Mark, interview, 5/1/2017)

To summarise, while the *Engage* group found collective engagement challenging, away from the group environment the members showed some progress in reconciliation. The members of the *Engage* group engaged in reconciliation in their own lives in a way that reflected each of their theological frames. Without the constraints imposed by a group environment, and away from collective decision-making, each of the members' theology provided agency to engage in social justice. Shane's theological frame of *Faith Pragmatism* was reflected in his description of 'low-level advocacy.' For him, reconciliation was the context through which the relationship(s) between truth and action could be manifested, and he engaged in a way that he felt delivered tangible results. Margaret's frame of *Inclusive Relationships* was also reflected in her personal engagement with reconciliation. For her, social engagement and activism were not only found in correcting misunderstandings or delivering a service but also in standing with Indigenous Australians against a common interest. In his work as a doctor, Tyler too was able to engage with Indigenous Australians. As he delivered a service, he was able to maintain a professional and distanced relationship, allowing him to engage in culture without the possibility of becoming influenced by worldly values. Lastly, Mark's theological frame of *Marginality, Decentralisation and Relationships* was reflected in his personal engagement. He was

able to engage in social justice in way that shifted focus from what he saw as the white, middle class centre to Indigenous Australians on the margins through prominent businesses.

The personal engagement in reconciliation of the *Engage* group members was reflected in their theological frames. Although the theological frames certainly could not be used to predict the actions that each member undertook, this study suggests that their theology shaped their agency for social engagement.

8.6 Discussion and Conclusions

In this section, the wider implications of the findings from the *Engage* group will be discussed. First, the significance of the contrarian culture of the *Engage* group on their collective and individual bridging attempts will be discussed. I will suggest that the contrarian culture inhibited collective engagement but also contributed to individual bridging activities; and second, the *Engage* findings will be discussed in relation to wider literature; and third, and finally, three conclusions will be offered:

1) Theological frames can be used to indicate how social engagement activities may be expressed;
2) Ordinary theology shapes social engagement; and
3) Some shared theological cultures are not sufficient for collective engagement.

While the contrarian culture of the *Engage* group formed a significant barrier to engagement, this theme has not been addressed by the literature on motivation and social engagement. The diversity of perspectives offered during the *Engage* meetings highlighted the range of bridging activities that could be undertaken. The discussions in meetings, the planned visit to an Indigenous church, and Helen's presentation on engagement directed the group towards engagement with Indigenous Australians in a way that nurtured meaningful relationships. The group spent five months developing relationship-based engagement activities with Indigenous Australians; however, what was not discussed during this time was how the social structure of these relationships would be manifested in practice.

The social structure of the intended relationships was significantly different for each group member. These differences are seen in each of the individual theological frames and are underpinned by the ordinary theology of each group member. Shane's theological frame of *faith pragmatism* suggested a type of relationship that was focussed towards reaching a

material objective. In his theological frame, the relationships he developed in social engagement were not objectives but rather a consequence of a more tangible goal. Helen's visit and the intended trip to the Indigenous church did not have a tangible objective or goal; thus, no relationship could result. Similarly, the themes of *Biblical Imperatives for Action* and 'remaining unstained from the world' in Tyler's theological frame did not lend themselves to fostering relationships with Pastor Frank's church or through Helen's presentation. For Tyler, relationships were manifested in social engagement through providing services or evangelising. The collective engagement activities suggested by the *Engage* group were neither evangelical nor delivering social services and this did not align with the kinds of relationships that Tyler intended to develop. In each case, the intended relationships – and, thus, the engagement activities – were shaped by the ordinary theologies of each group member.

On the other hand, Margaret and Mark's theological frames suggested that any relationships formed with Indigenous Australians would be mutually beneficial, cooperative, and non-hierarchical. Margaret's theological frame of *Inclusive Relationships* acknowledged the variety and multiplicity of Christian expression, and, thus, relationships were to be embraced as a manifestation of a relationship with God and humanity. Her approach to developing relationships with Indigenous communities showed significant differences compared with Shane and Tyler. For her, the relationships nurtured would be based on mutual understanding, respect, and learning rather than a consequence of another activity. This perspective aligned with Margaret's positive response to Helen's visit and her enthusiastic support to visiting the Indigenous church. Similarly, Mark's theological frame of decentralised religion and Christianity on the margins prioritised balanced power relationships. He understood that the marginalised and disadvantaged were vulnerable, and he did not want to exploit this vulnerability. For him, the intended relationships would be ones that benefited those on the margins both spiritually and materially. Engaging with decentralised and marginalised Indigenous communities aligned well with his theological frame. Like Margaret, his support for Helen and his desire to visit the Indigenous church reflected his perspective.

However, while there were difficulties in collective engagement and relationship-building, the contrarian culture of the *Engage* may have contributed towards shaping individual engagement. The disagreements between group members, and the reluctance of the group to follow the advice offered by experts, often gave rise to conversations about Christian engagement. The conflicts and discussion highlighted how Christian engagement

could be diverse and meet different purposes. Each of the group members were motivated to become engaged, and outside the collective decision-making of the group, their individual actions cohered with their theological frames. In this respect, the *Engage* group undertook reconciliation activities in ways that were supported by their theologies, and in a way that reflected their theological understandings of relationships. Although the group's collective engagement attempts did not eventuate, it appears to me that the group environment was necessary for planning and refining the members' individual engagement. It seems unlikely that individual group members would have been able to shape a personalised Christian approach to engagement without the *Australians Together* series, group discussion and conflict, and Biblical reflection.

The theological motivation of the *Engage* group draws parallels to other research on socially-engaged Christians. Slessarev-Jamir (2011) investigated a range of groups with a religious commitment to justice. In her work, Christian organisations were engaged in social action as diverse as citizenship rights (p. 90), justice for workers (p. 108), immigrant rights (p. 140) and global justice (p. 209). Like the *Engage* group, her work saw these groups focusing on the 'other' – building solidarity between the disadvantaged or marginalised and the privileged to enact social change (p. 232). Here, the *Engage* group followed a model of engagement that mirrored Fuist's (2017) Theological Model of Engagement – where faith is integrated with social justice in discourse. This model described how the religious beliefs and practices of religious groups and individuals are applied creatively to contemporary social situations (p. 329). This was most evident in the individual engagement where the alignment between theological frames and individual actions was seen most clearly. The contrarian culture of *Engage* also drew parallels to those in Fuist's (2017) study. The groups in his study used counter-cultural and radical rhetoric to integrate political beliefs and behaviours with theological understandings (p. 344). In a similar way, the *Engage* individuals used oppositional rhetoric to locate themselves on the margins, both socially and theologically. The theological differences were also seen in their bridging activities.

The motivation and bridging strategies used by FBOs and SMOs in the wider literature reflect the diversity of the approaches discussed and used by individuals in *Engage*. Belcher and Deforge (2007) described how volunteers at one faith-based charity drew on the concept of 'Christian witness' as a motivation for volunteering, whereas volunteers at another site viewed volunteering as a place to develop and maintain friendships (Belcher and Deforge, 2007, p. 14). The conflict and disagreements over the expression of

Christian engagement also drew parallels with Lichterman and Williams' (2017) discussion of inclusivity in collective engagement. They described how engagement, which meaningfully included all individuals within an organisation, can be challenging and complicated when FBO individuals differed in religious outlook (p. 124). Similarly, the different theological perspectives within the *Engage* group also proved to be challenging for meaningful engagement.

The *Engage* group's planning for engagement in reconciliation has been argued to be inhibited by both the intended relationships that were to be developed with Indigenous Australians and the contrarian culture of the group. Three conclusions may be drawn from this engagement site and the use of theological frames. First, theological frames may be used to determine how social engagement may be manifested for socially-engaged Christians. Theological frames may be used to determine how social engagement may be manifested. In this case, the theological significance of relationships and the social structure implied by the intended relationships provide insights into how each of the members were likely to engage.

Second, ordinary theology can shape agency for social engagement. The ordinary theology of each group member shaped agency that was reflected in their activities outside the group environment. However, this conclusion must not be overstated. In each case, the diverse theologies of the group suggested diverse manifestations of relationships and this needs to be held in tension with the group objectives to form relationships. It was not clear if this would be the same if the group were to engage in another form of social action (such as climate change). Here, ordinary theology shaped agency with an alignment between individual theology and individual action for each of the members.

Third, the existence of a shared theological culture is not sufficient to also ensure collective bridging activities. Collective engagement proved challenging despite the shared culture of Biblical reading and interpretation at *Engage*, and the individual intentions to engage in relationships. The group did not develop effective collective bridging activities as the contrarian culture discouraged agreement and a uniform approach to reconciliation. Each of the members envisioned a different social structure for engagement, and this diversity limited the effectiveness of their shared attempts at activity. This conclusion also comes with several caveats. There were a number of factors outside the group's control. The group decided collectively to engage in reconciliation with Helen and Pastor Frank, although both activities encountered difficulties. The visit of Helen received a mixed

response from the group. The visit to Pastor Frank's church had an uneasy consensus but, ultimately, it was Pastor Frank who cancelled the visit. The lack of discussion, follow up, or motivation to try again was significant in interpreting the commitment of the members to engage in this way.

To summarise, while theology is a significant factor for Christian social engagement there are other more complicated factors that contribute to successful engagement. For Christians who intend to foster relationships with another group – be it a disadvantaged or marginalised group, another kind of 'other,' or a theologically or demographically similar group – it is not only theology and theologically understood relationships that is important, but also the social structure of those relationships. For success, each of the members must not only have a shared theological motivation but also a shared understanding of the structure, power and nature of the relationships developed about social engagement.

CHAPTER NINE - THE TRUCK[73]

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the motivations and participation of the volunteers at *The Truck* will be investigated. Theological frames will not be constructed for volunteers in this chapter for two reasons. First, many of the volunteers did not identify as Christian; and second, those who did identify as Christian were reluctant to associate theology and religious life to their volunteering. The volunteers' participation and perceptions of the homeless at *The Truck* were underpinned by what I argue is a *bounded experience*. I define a *bounded experience* in an FBO as a volunteering activity that does not require any additional commitment outside of the fixed participation times specified by the organisation. The activities of *The Truck* differ from both *New Family* and *Engage* both organisationally and in the services provided. The support offered by *New Family* for refugees was described in Chapter Seven, and the attempts by members of *Engage* to become involved in reconciliation, were described in Chapter Eight. Throughout this chapter, the term 'participation' is used instead of 'engagement' to better reflect the activities and commitment of the volunteers. Although *The Truck* was involved in welfare delivery, it does not appear accurate to describe the volunteers as engaged with homelessness as a social concern.

This chapter will proceed by first investigating the motivations of the volunteers of *The Truck*, which are then compared with other research on volunteer motivation. The engagement and perceptions of the volunteers of *The Truck* will then be explored and analysed. The chapter will conclude by reviewing the implications of this research for other organisations that provide food and clothing services to the homeless.

I argue that the *bounded experience* shaped volunteering at *The Truck* in two ways. First, the volunteers were less likely to nurture any meaningful relationships either with the homeless recipients or other volunteers due to the extended time between their scheduled participation times. The attention of the volunteers was mostly directed towards distributing food and clothing, and the few relationships that were developed had negative consequences for service delivery. Second, the *bounded experience* of volunteering constrained the voices of the homeless. Although volunteers described how their stereotypes towards the homeless changed soon after engagement, the absence of

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[73] All names and organisations have been given pseudonyms.

meaningful interactions with the homeless led to further misrepresentations of the homeless. The chapter will conclude by suggesting that *bounded experiences* can positively affect the service delivery of FBOs and NGOs. However, organisations need to ensure that both the activities and goals of the organisation are clear, and that the volunteers' motives need to align with organisational activities for sustained participation.

9.2 Motivation

Each of the volunteers at *The Truck* described what motivated them to become involved in preparing and delivering food to the homeless. A broad range of motivations were provided and there was little overlap between participants. In this section, the motivations of the participants of *The Truck* will be reviewed and compared with each other. The motives described by the volunteers reflected much of the established literature on motivation. Both sociological and functional elements of motivation theory were found among the volunteers.

The volunteers involved in the study were assigned to *The Truck's* 'youth team.' The three volunteers who identified as Christian were quick to point out that their involvement with *The Truck* was separate from their Christian faith and their faith did not influence their decision to become involved.

Wayne

Wayne was a 22-year-old volunteer of Asian descent. Wayne lived with his parents and worked from home. He attributed his involvement with *The Truck* as part of his "personal development and ethical framework."[74] Although he identified as being a Christian, he explained that his religious beliefs and practices were separate from his involvement in volunteering. In addition, he did not refer to his religious beliefs or practices when discussing his motivation. Instead, he explained his involvement with *The Truck* from the perspective of mutual benefit. For Wayne, *The Truck* provided an opportunity for him to make a meaningful contribution to society while he developed social networks with the other young volunteers and formed a stronger sense of identity. He hoped that by joining *The Truck*, his own experiences would provide meaning by helping him understand what was really important in his own life. Wayne explained that working from home limited his contact with other people, particularly those of a similar age. By volunteering he hoped to

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[74] Wayne, interview, 7/8/2017

benefit from forming meaningful social connections with other volunteers. This meant that his involvement with the homeless was for his material benefit. It was to be a mutually advantageous relationship.

> I think it's because I've just finished uni, had a bit of free time, and I think it was important for like, personal development, I guess. Sort of an understanding of how, like, volunteering organisations work and stuff like that…There was some sort of like, ethical, moral situation going on, but I sort of wanted to find myself as a person. So, a lot of my ethical theory is sort of a utilitarianism approach sort of thing. I think that sort of potentially this is an area where I could provide more utility than others by doing something like this, especially since I would get utility by talking to people. (Wayne, interview, 7/8/2017)

My participant observation concluded that Wayne's engagement appeared to be consistent with his stated motives. He joined *The Truck* shortly after the research commenced and this provided an opportunity for me to observe any shifts in his behaviour. Initially, he was enthusiastic and attended regularly. However slowly his attendance became more sporadic. He did not appear to develop the kind of relationships with the other young volunteers that he expected. Indeed, I observed that most of the conversations he had with the other volunteers were superficial or limited to small talk. During an interview he explained that he was not forming strong social connections with the other volunteers as they were significantly different from those in his other social networks. Further, he questioned the efficacy of the organisation and the contributions of the other volunteers:

> I'm not really sure how much value like each individual volunteer provides to the thing, and I'm also not sure how much I actually get out of it…I don't know how this entire thing, how professionally done this entire operation is. Like, when I first came here, I was like...I wasn't 100% sure whether this was the most efficient way to provide for the homeless people with the resources that are provided. (Wayne, interview, 7/8/2017)

Towards the end of the study, after Wayne had been absent for an extended period of time, the group organised an end of year celebratory Christmas meal at a pub in the central business district. No-one had Wayne's contact details to invite him, but Wayne and I crossed paths coincidently in a store in the city. I mentioned that the group was having a meal together and, despite the short notice, busy holiday season, and financial

considerations, he attended the meal even though he had not volunteered with the group for several months. Throughout the meal there was minimal interaction between Wayne and the other volunteers, and it did not appear that he was enjoying himself. This was the last time that Wayne attended any of the events with *The Truck*. He did not notify the team leader, Anna, of his departure and, eventually, it was accepted by the group that Wayne's participation had ended. It appeared that the social benefits that he expected were not being met, and his utilitarian arguments were not sufficient to continue to motivate his volunteering.

Sean

Sean was a 23-year-old, Caucasian university student. For him, volunteering with the homeless was intimately connected to his sense of justice and the inability of the State to implement justice. He described homelessness as a local problem that ought to be addressed using local ideas and resources. Sean explained that local organisations like *The Truck* should attend to social problems due to their proximity and connection with the homeless people themselves.

> The government can't implement justice…it's up to community standards to be able to define how things are done. On a community level, it can be done appropriately and be achieved more rapidly. But for government, it's a system that is dislocated from a lot of the services that it provides to a lot of the communities that it has no relationship with. I lived in a community where...the nearest police station was four hours away. There were times when justice was implemented on its own. I saw that the government literally did not deliver anything to the people it was trying to, waste so much in terms of what able what it should, and in no way, shape, or form encourage people to take control of their own lives. So that's why I do *The Truck*, because of that basis of that belief that it should be on a community level. People should be involved and it needs to be localised. (Sean, interview, 18/3/2017)

Sean understood that the volunteers and the homeless formed a community – one in which material aid, such as food, drinks, and clothing could fulfil the immediate needs of the homeless while bringing about justice in a way that the State could not achieve.

Halfway through the study, Sean left *The Truck* due to a commitment with the student radio station at his university. He then returned, unexpectedly, after twelve weeks. However, his attendance was sporadic, and he did not attend during the last three months

of this research. Anna could not confirm that he had officially left the group, but his attendance was not expected.

Toby

Toby was a 23-year-old Caucasian volunteer. His motivation for becoming involved with *The Truck* was functional, given he wanted to join the Police Force but felt that he did not have the required "life experience"[75] required of potential recruits. He explained that by becoming involved with the homeless, he was being exposed to the types of people that he suspected he would encounter in his work in the Police Force. For Toby, volunteering with homeless people made him more employable and offered experience for life as a police officer.

> It was in the process of initially starting for the Police Force. At the end of year 12, I realised maybe I didn't have enough life experience, and needed to just live a bit more so they can hire me, basically. If I can show to the police that I have been in examples that might happen...I know they deal with a lot of homeless people. (Toby, interview, 26/4/2017)

Like Wayne, Toby's motivation was reflected in his engagement. He attended regularly and was enthusiastic about the service that was provided. However, he was hesitant to commit to *The Truck* outside of his intention to join the Police Force. Unlike Wayne, Toby did not attempt to build relationships or ties with other volunteers and did not feel a sense of obligation to *The Truck* or volunteering. For him, volunteering was a necessary inconvenience that helped him move into his chosen career path.

> If I put the police out of the scenario, it would be nice...if I was closer to the people going it wouldn't seem as much of a chore or a job… it's hard to say, the police is definitely a big part of it, it's hard to say if it wasn't for that if I'd still continue. (Toby, interview, 26/4/2017)

Toby's description of a functional motive to be involved with *The Truck* was reflected in his actions. At the end of the study, Toby was accepted into the Police Force and his involvement with *The Truck* ended.

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[75] Toby, interview, 26/4/2017

Carly

Carly was a 27-year-old, Caucasian volunteer. She joined *The Truck* after becoming dissatisfied with her volunteering at the children's charity, *Little Stars*. As she become more involved within the management of *Little Stars*, her contact with children was gradually reduced and her volunteering largely consisted of administrative duties. As the distance between her and the recipients increased, she started to harbour negative feelings towards the charity and, eventually, left *Little Stars* to join *The Truck* after hearing about it through one of her clients. Volunteering at *The Truck* allowed her to be closer to those she was serving without the administrative requirements.

> I've always wanted to feel like I'm helping. Ever since being a child. So, I was like, great, this is for me. So I joined *Little Stars*, um, and I liked it, and I did it for about three years and got to the point where it's not as much contact with the kids as you'd think…I wanted to something where I was more in contact with the people that I wanted to help, and not just an office slave. (Carly, interview, 6/11/2017)

Carly explained that she had always been motivated to undertake volunteer work and cited the sense of making a difference and the reward as significant motivating factors.

> I like the feeling that it gives me, it is nice to feel like it helps. And it's nice to feel like you're bettering our society in a way, like, I think there's so many selfish people in our society, and like, our country could be way better, but a lot of people don't really [care]. And I'm not doing a great deal to help, but it's something… it's feeling like you're making a positive change. (Carly, interview, 6/11/2017)

Carly volunteered regularly throughout the time of the study and was friendly and enthusiastic. She arrived on time and was apologetic if she was unexpectedly absent. For Carly, volunteering for *The Truck* was mostly functional but not in the same way as it was for Wayne, Sean, and Toby. Rather, it was an expression of her sense of values.

Jason

Jason was a 26-year-old, Caucasian volunteer. At the time of study, he had returned to high school with the intention of joining the Defence Force. Jason explained that he had joined *The Truck* because he had always wanted to become involved in volunteer work and, in particular, wanted to help homeless people.

I've always wanted to do volunteering with the homeless. Mainly with food. Because I hate being hungry. I honestly think that most people should volunteer a little bit, to get a sense of community. Working hospitality didn't allow me to do that…I didn't think I'd find it as rewarding as I do, but I don't feel like self-entitled about it. (Jason, interview, 17/10/2017)

Like Carly, Jason's volunteering was an expression of what he valued. Although Jason described a sense of community with *The Truck*, it was different from Sean's understanding. Sean saw the homeless and the volunteers as part of a community. However, Jason experienced community only in relation to the volunteers. Jason was enthusiastic and organised throughout the time of study, and quickly become second in charge. Eventually, he left the group because his application to join the Defence Force was accepted.

Anna – Team Leader of *The Truck*

Anna was the coordinator of *The Truck* and she attended consistently with her husband, Greg. Anna was the only participant at *The Truck* who was a paid employee. Both Anna and Greg were in their forties and had spent most of their lives in the local area. Anna described herself as Roman Catholic. She had attended Catholic schools and church growing up, but now only attended church sporadically. Anna was involved in a range of initiatives implemented by the Catholic social outreach organisation but spent most of her time with *The Truck* and *Hanging Out* – a program where she and others would take children and parents out on a social activity for the day.

Anna and Greg's involvement with *The Truck* did not stem from wanting specifically to help the homeless, but arose from their employment with the Catholic outreach program. Before joining *The Truck*, they were both involved in budget development and education for struggling families. Anna explained that she was unhappy with some aspects of her work and asked to be shifted:

It was actually just my finance background. It was an area that they really needed some support in and then that sort of evolved into community work, which I didn't really enjoy at all. It wasn't something that I felt comfortable doing. And when I spoke to the coordinator, I said no, this is not for me. Now I couldn't imagine life any other way. It's a part of who we are and what we do. We do The Truck and we do Hanging Out. (Anna, interview, 17/4/2018)

Both Anna and Greg had been involved in a range of other activities through their work as well as other volunteer activities over the past twenty years. However, they both explained that their involvement in *The Truck* and *Hanging Out* was different as the engagement was more personal. Instead of working behind the scenes to meet outcomes for the needy, they were forming the connections themselves.

Most of the volunteers used mostly functional motives to explain their involvement with *The Truck*. The motives were diverse and showed similarities to the wider literature. Both Toby and Wayne's descriptions were characterised by simultaneously providing and receiving benefit. The time commitment that each invested to benefit the homeless resulted in different advantages for each of them: Wayne hoped to develop social connections; and Toby intended to improve his employability. Functional motives were also seen in the descriptions by Carly, Sean, and Jason. However, their motives were directed towards meeting a social benefit rather than personal benefit. These three suggested their involvement was guided by ethical values: that no-one should be hungry; to bringing about meaningful change; and build stronger social connections through community involvement. *The Truck* provided an opportunity to embody these values through feeding the homeless. Although the motives of most of the volunteers were functional, the volunteers did not describe their intentions or activities with *The Truck* in terms of 'outcomes'. Many of the volunteers understood that their activities were unlikely to provide any structural or long-term solutions to homelessness.

However, in addition to functional motivations, sociological factors were also evident in the participants' responses. Anna and Greg described how their involvement stemmed from network ties related to their employment. Carly described how she first heard of *The Truck* through a client in her workplace, and Sean's family had volunteering connections. Most of the participants had undertaken some other type of volunteering activity in school. Only Wayne and Jason surveyed the volunteering opportunities that were available before settling with *The Truck*.

The functional motives of the volunteers showed similarities to other research. The volunteers' motives revealed the inseparability of altruistic and self-interested behaviour that was consistent with wider research (Bloom and Kilgore, 2003; Clary et al., 1998). Similarly, Stebbins (2009) observed that that volunteers were rewarded with "social interactions, self-enriching experiences, and feelings of contributing to group success" (p. 156). These same rewards were observed for volunteers at *The Truck*. In particular, the

social interactions between volunteers in this research were consistent with those in MacNeela's (2008) study. She described the social benefits of volunteering as mutually compatible "pragmatic and other-oriented benefits" (p. 132). The data from *The Truck* also demonstrated how volunteers motivated by employability seek structured volunteering activities (Holdsworth, 2010, p. 434). Lastly, social context (Wilson, 2012, p. 190) proved to be a significant influence for many of the volunteers. Many of them lived or worked nearby, lending support to Wilson's (2012) suggestion that volunteers are more likely to offer their time if they have formed bonds with the local area (p. 191).

However, there were some deviations from the literature. There was little evidence that the volunteers provided any justifications for their engagement instead of motives. Swidler (2001) described the difficulty of people providing consistent reasons for their behaviour. She suggested actions were justified by motives rather than directing the actions themselves (p. 148). This was not observed among the participants at *The Truck*.

To summarise, the responses provided by the volunteers reflected both functional and sociological motivation theories of involvement. Their motives showed little difference from those identified in the literature. None of the volunteers described their engagement in terms of objectives or justification. Perhaps the most significant finding from the interviews with these volunteers was the lack of uniformity in their motivations. Most of the volunteers were similar in regard to demography: they were of comparable age, cultural background, and education, yet their involvement in *The Truck* demonstrated a common interest in social volunteering.

9.3 Engagement

In this section, the engagement and relationship development of the volunteers will be examined. First, it will be argued that the structured activities of *The Truck* constrained opportunities for relationships to be nurtured between volunteers and the homeless recipients, even if those relationships were desired. I describe the engagement of the volunteers as a *bounded experience* – where volunteers were only required for fixed and intermittent time periods. No further commitment was required outside those times. Second, I will describe how the processes of the group were affected deleteriously when volunteers started to develop relationships with the homeless recipients during food distribution. As these limited relationships were developed, the sense of equality and fairness in distributing food was broken as some recipients were needlessly given preferential treatment.

The nature of the engagement of the volunteers at *The Truck* did not allow them to develop relationships with the homeless recipients. This may have been due to the repetitive nature of the volunteering. I observed no changes to organisational processes throughout the time of study. After the preparations were completed, the group drove the van to Ferris St. and arranged the tables in fixed locations. Initially, a table for sausages and bags of food was prepared, while another table for hot drinks was placed a few metres away. The homeless recipients formed a queue for sausages and bags of food, and then formed a separate line to receive a hot drink. There were typically 60 to 80 regular homeless recipients.

The interactions between the homeless and volunteers were minimal, although variations were observed. While most interactions were polite, some of the homeless spoke little, seemed angry and frustrated, and avoided eye contact. For most volunteers, the interaction was limited to providing food items; asking for sandwich or condiment preferences; and requesting people to shift the placement of the queue for food to reduce interfering with the other lines. The need to get through the queue was a priority for the volunteers and, likely, also the homeless recipients. Hence, there was little attempt at anything more than superficial conversations. In subsequent interviews, each of the volunteers described how the time constraints and busyness of the service delivery did not allow for any meaningful interaction with the homeless. Jason explained how the number of volunteers limited the time for conversations to occur.

> I don't know people's names. The problem is, you don't have enough time. It'd be nice to have a couple more extra people so you could actually go out and have a conversation with them. They say you're there for a talk, but you're not. If there's six people, you don't really get a chance to talk. (Jason, interview, 17/10/2017)

Similarly, Carly found that taking orders and preparing and serving drinks occupied most of her time and left little opportunity to interact with the homeless.

> At the moment I'm just thinking, thinking, thinking. What am I doing? And not really concentrating on them...I don't look at people all that much, I'm like, okay, four sugars, two Milo, stuff like that. I'm still very much in the mode of wanting to get the job done, to do it right. (Carly, interview, 6/11/2017)

Jason and Carly's comments also were evident in the activities of the other volunteers. The focus of the volunteers was on delivering the food, remembering orders and generally

moving the line along. I observed that the queue would regularly be held up by long and complicated drink orders, and these were not conducive to making conversations or building relationships. Having the homeless recipients forced to wait in line appeared awkward for both the volunteers and the homeless.

The lack of meaningful interactions was also reflected in the service delivery. At the beginning of the evenings, sausages were given to approximately 70 homeless recipients, and the queue would cycle through three or four times. I observed that the volunteers asked what condiments were preferred, some of the homeless would respond with "same again." When the volunteers had to specifically ask again, the homeless recipients appeared to be annoyed.[76] I noted similar interactions at the drinks station. Most of the time the volunteers would neither remember their previous orders, nor recognise if a particular homeless recipient had ordered earlier in the evening. There appeared to me to be a discrepancy in the expectations for interaction and the relationships between the homeless and the volunteers. Like Jason and Carly, other volunteers described how they were too busy simply 'getting through' the food and drink orders to pay attention to smaller details.

I would describe the participation of the volunteers at *The Truck* as a *bounded experience* – one that does not require any additional commitment outside the fixed participation times specified by the group. The volunteers were only required one evening every three weeks for three hours and this included food preparation time. The total time spent with the homeless amounted to less than one hour every three weeks. This was not an onerous schedule and required minimal commitment from the volunteers. Most of the volunteers described how the light schedule was a significant factor in their retention. The volunteers were not expected to undertake any preparatory work in their own time, and the volunteering activities were sufficiently spaced out that it was unlikely that strong bonds would be formed with the homeless recipients or between volunteers.

Anna explained that the three-week rotation at *The Truck* served two purposes and I would suggest that these reinforced the *bounded experience*. First, volunteering once every three weeks allowed the volunteers to connect with the homeless, albeit not enough for the volunteers to experience discomfort or feel like the volunteering was a burden.[77] Second, if there was any negativity or issues related to the service delivery it was likely to dissipate

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[76] Participant-observation, 5/9/2016
[77] Anna, participant-observation, 6/6/2016

after three weeks. Conversely, it was just as likely that any positive experiences between the homeless and the volunteers would also be forgotten. Anna explained the purpose of the three-week rotation:

> I guess, at the time that it was set up, it was often enough to connect, but not too often that people burn out or feel like it's too much. And I definitely feel that way. I think once every two weeks would probably be a bit much… and I guess it's enough so that whenever, for security, it's enough to dissipate before it's enough to go back. (Anna, interview, 17/4/2018)

The *bounded experience* was further emphasised through the clearly defined roles, behaviour, and expectations of the volunteers. *The Truck* advertised their service as the provision of a hot meal and I observed that the homeless recipients did not appear to expect anything more than food, while the volunteers appeared to maintain a distance. This distance could have been a physical barrier, such as standing behind a serving table or being part of the line. It could also be a social barrier. Each of the volunteers explained that they did not intend to form a relationship with any of the homeless recipients outside of *The Truck*. The differences in age and demography between the homeless and the volunteers were also not conducive for meaningful relationships. Toby explained that for him, the boundaries formed helped him deliver services effectively and minimised any misunderstandings about expectations. He appreciated that many of the homeless faced different challenges in their lives but was not willing to offer additional support outside *The Truck* or other welfare delivery services.

> I like to have that line defined and know that that's my limit. And obviously I would like to help out, but you feel once you help out one person, why not help out all of them? Having that line is nice. (Toby, interview, 26/4/2017)

Sean described how he would place boundaries on the conversations that arose on rare occasions with the homeless. During one of the evenings, he did not travel back to the kitchen but instead walked to another location from Ferris St. As he walked, a homeless man happened to be travelling in the same direction. Sean explained that while they had some common interests it was not enough for the boundary to be broken, even when making small talk.[78] He reflected in an interview that conversations with the homeless often satisfied his own curiosity about the life experiences of the homeless.

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[78] Sean, participant-observation, 28/8/2017

It's nothing that I really expect, it's good when it happens because you get to meet people and you get to hear their stories...in a professional way. You keep your distance. (Sean, interview, 18/3/2017)

Jason had a pragmatic approach to his engagement where the boundaries and objectives were clear. He explained that he was not there to make friends with the homeless, nor try to alleviate their social conditions. Rather, he was there to provide them with food and that was all.

This is food. This isn't getting people jobs, houses, steady stable lives. This is just feeding them once a night. (Jason, interview, 17/10/2017)

Wayne described the boundaries between the volunteers and the homeless most clearly. In their engagement, the volunteers were subject to insults and manipulation from a small number of homeless recipients. The volunteers described how some evenings could be unpleasant with yelling, verbal abuse, or arguments between the homeless recipients or, occasionally, with the volunteers. In other circumstances, these kinds of interactions might be a source of tension and be detrimental to relationships. However, for the volunteers, these unpleasant interactions did not affect them personally. Wayne attributed his resilience to the infrequent contact with the homeless.

There are a couple of them who are, like, unpleasant to deal with...I assume that if I had to transact with them on a regular basis then it would be different, but as I said, no matter what they do, it's kind of like, it has very little impact on me. It's hard to get frustrated. (Wayne, interview, 7/8/2017)

The *bounded experience* of *The Truck* shaped the volunteers' experiences of participation. Any interaction with the homeless recipients was largely impersonal. The focus for the volunteers was on service delivery. The large number of homeless recipients attending *The Truck* reduced opportunities for discussion or remembering names. Each of the recipients needed to be served quickly to meet the main objective of the service – that of delivering a hot meal. As the line progressed, only brief interactions were possible and those that occurred were mostly related to food preferences. The volunteers did not see the impersonal nature of their engagement as an adverse element of their participation. Rather, it aligned with their expectations and allowed them to deliver their service efficiently. The distanced, bounded, and predictable nature of the service appeared to sustain volunteers' participation. The large number of homeless recipients were served

228

without the distraction that might result from the development and nurturing of stronger relationships.

While arguments were generalised throughout the study, there were some exceptions. During the period of research, there were some regular homeless recipients at Ferris St. Some of the volunteers came to recognise and expect these regulars during the service. For a small number of the regular attendees, some of the volunteers made connections that differed from the other homeless recipients. For example, the names of some regulars were remembered; some homeless recipients offered information about their personal lives; and, if time allowed, some of the homeless engaged the volunteers in conversation.

However, there were negative consequences for service delivery as the volunteers started to develop relationships with the homeless recipients. I observed that most of the resulting issues were related to failing to maintain the clear expectations and outcomes of the service. During the study, Jason had submitted his application for the Defence Force and was awaiting acceptance and confirmation. He noticed that one of the homeless recipients, Antony, had military markings on some of his clothes. Antony explained to Jason that he used to be in the army and after being discharged was unable to look after himself and became homeless.

Jason's service delivery changed after his conversation with Antony. Instead of following the established procedure of 'first in, first served' to distribute food, he kept a bag of food separate for Antony so that he did not miss out if he arrived late. Jason did not do this for any of the other homeless recipients. As always, the bags of food ran out, but Antony had a bag kept for him even if other homeless recipients asked for one, and without Jason even knowing if Antony would be attending.[79]

Similar behaviour was shown by other volunteers as they formed started to develop relationships with the homeless. At the beginning of the service, the line was usually long for sausages as they were the first hot food item delivered. One of the regular homeless recipients was Joey, a friendly Italian man who appeared to be in his late fifties. As Carly handed out sausages to the homeless, Joey often stopped and started a friendly conversation with her. After a few evenings of pleasant conversation with Joey, she looked out for him as he usually arrived a little later than everybody else. When Carly saw Joey approach, she allowed him to move to the front of the line without having to wait. I

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[79] Participant-observation, 30/1/2017

observed that this often caused the other homeless people in line to become disgruntled and they complained to each other about having him cut in.[80]

As a final example, Wayne mentioned that he liked Scott, another of the regular homeless recipients. Scott was in his twenties, confident, talkative and articulate. He often told rude jokes to other homeless recipients and joked with the volunteers. As Wayne regularly spoke to Scott, he started to allow advantages that were not provided to the other homeless recipients. First, he allowed Scott to cut to the front of the line, which often caused many of the other homeless people waiting to become upset. They yelled and voiced their concerns to each other but rarely complained to the volunteers. Then Wayne started to provide Scott with additional food so he did not have to wait in the queue twice. Other homeless people waiting in line did not receive those benefits, even if they mentioned that Scott had been given additional food to them previously.[81]

Although the volunteers nurtured relationships with those within the homeless community, the effectiveness and 'fairness' of the service delivery was negatively impacted. This caused an unusual tension for the group. The individual bridging of volunteers appeared to strain the *bounded experience* of the group. Each volunteer described how they wanted the service to run effectively and fairly, and appeared to want to remain distanced from the homeless. However, at the same time, they appeared to enjoy the individual bridging that occurred as they became more familiar with the homeless community. The *bounded experience* did not allow opportunities to develop relationships with the homeless as the focus on service delivery precluded time for socialisation with them. The only opportunity for socialisation was during service and, when this occurred, it caused disruptions to the operations and disgruntlement among the homeless.

To summarise, the volunteers' engagement with *The Truck* was typified by a *bounded experience*. The three-week rotation of the volunteering schedule, clearly defined roles and expectations, and absence of any further volunteer activity outside the prescribed times, defined the volunteering and inhibited the development of any meaningful relationships. The volunteers did not view the *bounded experiences* offered by *The Truck* as a negative feature of their engagement but, rather, as a positive aspect of their work as it allowed them to deliver food effectively without interruption. The *bounded experiences* were sometimes interspersed with short interactions between the volunteers and the

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[80] Participant-observation, 18/9/2017
[81] Participant-observation, 17/10//2016

homeless. The effect of these relationships was largely negative in this context. The sense of fairness towards homeless recipients from the volunteers was lost, and there were negative interactions between the homeless, as a result of this preferential treatment.

9.4 Stereotypes and Perceptions

In this section, the volunteers' stereotypes of the homeless and their perceptions of the causes of homelessness will be discussed. First, volunteer stereotypes of the homeless will be examined, and I will argue that the stereotypes of the volunteers changed throughout their participation. Some volunteers came to describe the homeless as 'normal people' but still drew on their earlier stereotypes of mental illness and substance abuse to explain why some homeless people were not as 'normal' as others. Other volunteers went further to describe the homeless as more caring and considerate than the wider population. Second, volunteer perceptions on choice as a cause of homelessness will be discussed. The volunteers at *The Truck* came to suggest that homeless recipients could alleviate their social conditions without assistance by simply having the motivation and self-awareness to change. For the volunteers, homelessness was a choice. Consequently, the volunteers questioned if the homeless needed the food and clothing. Third, the volunteer perceptions of *The Truck* as maintaining the conditions of homelessness will be discussed. As many of the volunteers described homelessness as a choice, they began to wonder if the activities of *The Truck* reinforced homelessness by providing disincentives for the homeless to bring about change in their own lives. Consequently, the volunteers felt that despite their contributions they were not making any differences in the lives of the homeless, and many felt they were perpetuating homelessness as a social problem. Fourth and finally, the perception of perpetuating homelessness will be discussed in relation to volunteer motives and participation.

The brief interactions between the volunteers and the homeless were enough for the volunteers to feel like they understood the experience of homelessness a little better. Most of the volunteers acknowledged they had existing stereotypes of the homeless before they started at *The Truck*. The volunteers described how their stereotypes of homeless people changed within the first few weeks of volunteering with *The Truck*. They had expected the homeless recipients to be violent, predatory, and lazy. In addition, they assumed most would have drug or alcohol addictions and suffer from mental illness. The volunteers described how they thought that they would be sworn at, intimidated, and be witnesses to violence. This view was perpetuated during the induction training at *The Truck*. My

experience of participating in the training included watching Anna explain the administrative and organisational processes involved in the operation and warn of the dangers involved in distributing food to the homeless. I was advised to be constantly vigilant of my surroundings, not to walk among the homeless unaccompanied, and to be prepared to call the police and leave the site quickly in violent situations.[82] It appeared to me that the emphasis on the dangers of the homeless could reinforce new volunteers' stereotypes of the homeless. When interviewed, many described how after the induction to *The Truck* they felt apprehensive about volunteering. The volunteers described how they expected to be mugged or assaulted as they distributed food.

Carly explained her surprise at the difference between her expectations of the homeless and her experiences in volunteering. She expected that the homeless would be angry and unpredictable instead of being polite and well-mannered.

> When I started there, I was definitely surprised...people were polite and smiled. You always get people that might be on drugs or had a bad day, so they're grumpy. And then you get some people that just want to keep to themselves, and that's fine too. But so many of them are just like, please, thank you, great manners, ask how you're going, look at your name badge, use your name. It was quite surprising, actually. I guess I thought it would be a bit off the rails, there would be rowdiness. Actually, do you know what I thought? I thought that people would be more sleazy to me. (Carly, interview, 6/11/2017)

Jason also expected greater violence at Ferris St. and was surprised at how ordered and calm the people were. He became frustrated that the organisers of *The Truck* had perpetuated the stereotype of drunk and violent homeless people.

> I thought there'd be more fights. I expected there to be more aggression, not all the time, but I just expected flare ups. But no-one's thrown punches. I haven't even seen a punch thrown. I've seen someone get pushed and that's been about it... Even Anna, when she is walking out and is like, be careful out there, be careful. Far out. How long have you been doing this for? Has anything ever happened? The twisted perception of some of the people that are involved, it's a bit warped. (Jason, interview, 17/10/2017)

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[82] Participant-observation, 6/6/2016

Toby also described his surprise in interacting with the homeless. He expected to be treated rudely and for the homeless recipients to show little gratitude for the food or the time commitment of the volunteers.

> In general, they're all really thankful for what we do, that's what I found really surprising about it. Not that I thought that they wouldn't be thankful, I just expected them to be a bit more rough [rougher] and bit more...I don't know...you build up a stereotype in your head about what it's going to be like. They're all beautiful people… That's the thing about those people, they are so generous. I think because they value what they have, and they know what to truly value. (Toby, interview, 26/4/2017)

Although Toby described how his stereotype of the homeless had changed, he would occasionally refer back to his stereotype of mental illness. If the homeless recipients were not as polite or well-mannered as Toby expected, he suggested that "maybe they've got an issue going on in the brain somewhere."[83] His description of the homeless as 'beautiful people' was similar to how Greg described his change in perspective. For him, instead of being outcasts of society, the homeless were normal people and they also contributed to community building.

> The stereotype I had was when they used the word 'vagrant' a lot. Like, someone who's dirty and smelly and everything. However, when I got there, it was the complete opposite. They'd strike up a conversation with me about politics, the latest football match, or something like that. And, you thought, this is just a normal, everyday person who's finding it tough. (Greg, participant-observation, 17/10/2016)

Greg went on describe how when he first started with *The Truck* he read a story about a group of homeless people creating a music CD and raising money. Instead of being 'vagrants', the homeless were raising money for charities. Anna also had different expectations of the homeless from when she started with *The Truck*. However, she did not expect the violence and intimidation that the other volunteers described, but more of a sense of hopelessness, self-interest, and apathy.

> You know, as stupid as it might sound, I expected people that were...that have no drive, no ability to think forward, or future plan, that had no desire to do anything for themselves. That was my stereotype for these people. Or just wanted to go for a

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[83] Toby, interview, 26/4/2017

free ride and not try and get out of the situation themselves. And that sounds really horrible when I say that to myself now, but that was genuinely what I expected to see on the street. (Anna, interview, 17/4/2018)

The descriptions of the volunteers contrast their stereotypes of the homeless from their experiences of interacting with homeless people. For Toby and Greg, their view of the homeless were transformed from being vagrants and drunks into seeing them as beautiful and generous members of society who raised money for charity. The other volunteers described how their stereotypes changed and that the homeless were "just normal people."[84]

The volunteers occasionally discussed the causes of homelessness or questioned why particular individuals were homeless. During these times, I observed that no-one alluded to the structural conditions of homelessness nor to the over-representation of Indigenous Australians among the homeless at Ferris St. The volunteers continued to find ways to reinforce the differences between them and the homeless, despite the homeless being "just like you and me."[85] Many of the volunteers ascribed the differences between them and the homeless in terms of motivation, choice, and willingness to change. The experiences of the homeless were rarely discussed, outside of a curiosity about how individual people became homeless. Some of the volunteers drew on their own experiences and personal challenges as a way of explaining how the homeless could change their conditions if they wanted to.

Sean described his own experiences of 'couch-surfing' at friends' houses. He attempted to connect his experience with the homeless recipients and argued that since he had been in similar circumstances and had overcome homelessness, those he encountered on Ferris St. could also choose other options. For him, the problem of homelessness was related to positive thinking.

> I guess I see them as different phases of a cycle that I went through, one that I never actually completed, because they're going through a virtual cycle that is a lot stronger than I what I had to go through. I had this idea that I could succeed at life, and that I would be able to break the cycle. A lot of these people might be ignorant

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[84] Toby, interview, 26/4/2017
[85] Greg, participant-observation, 28/8/2017

of their own cycle...they don't see themselves as having the ability to change. (Sean, interview, 18/3/2017)

Sean explained how he was able to overcome homelessness through a strong sense of self-awareness and control, and concluded that the homeless people at Ferris St. must have resigned themselves to their situations. According to Sean, if the homeless people could just believe that they could change, then, perhaps, many of their difficulties could be overcome.

Jason, too, felt that much of the homelessness he observed was the result of poor motivation and an unwillingness to change. For him, homelessness was not a result of structural conditions but a lack of individual motivation to overcome obstacles. Since he, like Sean, had overcome several personal challenges during the previous twelve months, so, too, could the homeless.

> Well, mental illness and drugs aside, I believe that anyone can change their own surroundings. I mean, I've done it. I got kicked out of home this year, and done school, got my As, got into the army - just the drive, I guess. That's just personal character. (Jason, interview, 17/10/2017)

Carly also felt that some of the recipients were homeless as a 'lifestyle choice.' As she reflected on her own life, she found it difficult to understand how homelessness could occur. She concluded that since some situations were so far removed from her own experience, some must have sought homelessness.

> I often think that as well...how did this happen? How did this come about? Sometimes I wonder if...do these people want to be homeless, some of them. Is this a lifestyle choice? And I assume for most people that it's not. But I do wonder, did you have the chance to get a job or have a relatively successful current point in your life. Is this a choice for you? (Carly, interview, 6/11/2017)

Like Carly, Toby emphasised the place of individual choice in overcoming homelessness. For him, homelessness was a conscious outcome of homeless people making poor or cynical choices in their lives.

> Obviously, you wonder what their life is like outside of *The Truck*, are they living off the dole, are they taking all this stuff for free, and they don't care because they enjoy it? I think it depends on what they want to do in life. Maybe his priorities aren't

getting a job, and that's what he wants to do, and you don't know what goes on outside…if they could, I'm sure they could get their act together. (Toby, interview, 26/4/2017)

Most of the volunteers at *The Truck* appeared to have a similar understanding of the causes and perpetuation of homelessness. The volunteers all described a comparable stereotype of the homeless before their engagement – they would be violent, drunk, and angry, and show little regard for the volunteers. This stereotype soon changed after they engaged, but another formed. Instead of being substance abusers, the homeless were perceived mostly as people who made poor choices, lacked motivation, and had little sense of control in their lives. Ultimately, homelessness was understood as the fault of the homeless. This attitude was reflected on one of the evenings on the drive back from Ferris St. in the van. One of the volunteers, Abby, commented about one of the homeless recipients, Bec. Abby noted her surprise that Bec, a pleasant, articulate, and enthusiastic woman in her late twenties or early thirties, was always concerned with the issues of other people. Despite having no official role in the operation of *The Truck*, Bec micro-managed the line to ensure that it moved smoothly and that no-one pushed in. She assisted the other homeless people by providing information on the procedures of *The Truck,* and asked that some of the food be put aside for latecomers. As the volunteers drove back to the kitchen they discussed how 'normal' Bec seemed and how similar she was to people within their own social networks. Abby asked members of the group why they thought she was homeless. Abby remarked "She's was so nice and friendly. Why doesn't she have a job?"[86] The volunteers could not come to an agreement and discussed how homelessness must have been chosen.

As the questions of choice and motivation arose during the trips to and from Ferris St., occasionally the conversation turned towards a theme of deservedness. Some of the volunteers questioned if the homeless really needed the food they provided. In winter, with fewer attendees, some of the volunteers took excess food home so it did not go to waste. However, during the busier summer months, the showbags of food, sausages, and pasta would be exhausted during the service. During these busy times, the food distribution was altered to ensure that a greater number of people received a meal. On one of these evenings, the volunteers' interactions and perceptions of the homeless recipients changed. First, the volunteers started to question if the homeless needed the showbags, or if they

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[86] Abby, participant-observation, 17/10/2017

simply wanted one. One evening, as the number of showbags reduced, Wayne started to question the homeless recipients directly asking if they really needed a bag. As the homeless people approached Wayne for a bag, he asked the recipients to state on a scale from 1 to 10, how much they really needed one. Not surprisingly, all the homeless recipients responded with 10. This appeared to annoy Wayne. He stopped asking the question after he continued to receive the same response.[87]

Carly also described her frustrations at handing out the showbags when there were more people than usual at Ferris St.

> When are running low, sometimes I don't want to give one out. I feel like I should say to them, have a look around, do you *really* need it? Same with the blankets. (Carly, interview, 6/11/2017)

Jason spoke about how he did not feel that all the homeless needed to be fed. In one of his previous jobs he worked in a pub with a large gaming area and had seen some of the homeless recipients playing poker machines. He had observed that they often spent large amounts of money.

> I worked in a pub…I've seen some of them put a lot of money in them [gambling machines], you know? So, you got that angle of it as well. It's like...I've seen you put thousands of dollars down, and you're eating this food. What are you doing? (Jason, interview, 17/10/2017)

For Jason, many of the clients had the financial means to support themselves but simply chose not to. They did not need the food, but wanted it so that they could spend their money on poker machines, drugs or alcohol.

The bounded engagement, minimal relationship-building, and perception of choice and complacency increased the sense of social distance between the volunteers and the homeless. Wayne described the challenges he found in attempting to empathise with the homeless and the difficulty in generalising his empathy to other communities with social and material disadvantages.

> One thing I consider a lot of the time is that if I apply this logic to this group of people, how do I apply it to Africans and stuff like that. So, I think I do have, like, a

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[87] Wayne, participant-observation, 3/4/2017

decent level of empathy for these people, I do feel bad that everything sucks...I do feel a little bit distant from them. (Wayne, interview, 7/8/2017)

The significance of choice, motivation, and deservedness of the homeless also shaped how the volunteers perceived their own involvement with *The Truck*. As they attributed homelessness as a choice of the homeless people themselves, it was not surprising that in their engagement they began to feel that they had made little difference. They were frustrated that their participation did not alleviate homelessness and many felt that rather than providing a means of escaping homelessness, *The Truck* contributed to perpetuating it.

The volunteers described how *The Truck* met many of the material needs of the homeless, but this did not provide an incentive for the homeless to make changes in their own lives. Carly explained that she felt that the stability of the regular meals they provided only increased the difficulty in breaking out of homelessness. She reflected in an interview with me about how if being homeless allowed you to be provided with regular meals, why would a homeless person put themselves through the bureaucracy of government agencies to find work for minimal changes in their lives.[88] Jason too felt that *The Truck* was not making any meaningful differences in the lives of the homeless. For him, this was the only negative aspect of his volunteering. Instead of providing a solution to the symptoms of homelessness – lack of food – Jason wanted to address the cases of homelessness so that there were fewer people requiring *The Truck's* services.

I think people would starve if there isn't free services like *The Truck*, but contributing to making a difference - are we getting people off the street? We aren't doing that. If anything, we'd be perpetuating it… All I can do is help feed them, I guess. (Jason, interview, 17/10/2017)

The volunteers' feelings of being part of an FBO that perpetuated homeless related to their understanding of the causes of homelessness. The volunteers felt that as they became more involved in delivering food and clothing to the homeless this removed the incentives for change. By having service providers like *The Truck*, homelessness became a more attractive option for people than making the choice to change their social conditions.

However, the volunteers' perception of being complicit in sustaining homelessness did not appear to have any impact on their motivation or participation at *The Truck*. Although the

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[88] Carly, interview, 6/11/2017

volunteers had developed stereotypes of the homeless, they still saw the homeless as real people with real needs. The volunteers' perception of *The Truck* maintaining the conditions of homelessness, and of making few long-term differences to the lives of the homeless, suggests that their motivations were functional. This is most clearly seen in the volunteering of Wayne and Toby - Wayne stopped volunteering after his social needs went unfulfilled, and Toby discontinued after finding employment in the Police Force. The participation of the other volunteers also appeared to align with functional motives. When I questioned the volunteers about their continued participation, they often replied that doing something is better than doing nothing. If there were hungry and homeless people in the city then why shouldn't they helped?[89]

Five motivational functions (values, understanding, social, career, and enhancement) were seen in both the interviews with the volunteers, and also in their sustained participation. It appeared to me that the group was neither given an opportunity to address the causes of homelessness, nor were they interested in doing so. The organisational structure of *The Truck* appeared to reinforce the sense of the functional motives in the group. Aside from informal conversations after cleaning up, there were no forums for volunteers to reflect on their experiences and the operations did not have any objectives outside food and clothing delivery. Instead, homelessness was perceived as a social fact and the volunteers were provided an opportunity to alleviate effects of homelessness as best they could.

To summarise, the volunteers at *The Truck* changed their perceptions and stereotypes of the homeless throughout their participation. Before joining *The Truck*, they had expected the homeless recipients to be violent, aggressive and deviant. However, while this image of the homeless changed early in their participation, it was replaced with another. The volunteers perceived many of the people they encountered during their services as homeless by choice. The volunteers described that aside from those with mental illness or drug dependence, homelessness was a product of individual choices. If the homeless were simply more motivated or had different priorities, then perhaps they would not be homeless. During the busier times, the place of choice for the homeless resulted in the volunteers questioning if the homeless recipients needed the food or if it receiving it was simply less effort than making meaningful changes in their lives. Some of the volunteers felt the homeless could make a difference in their lives if they wanted to. The volunteers emphasised the role of choice and motivation in becoming, and remaining, homeless, and

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[89] Participant-observation, 1/1/2018

this explained why they did not feel as if their participation made any significant difference. If many of the homeless were making choices to become homeless, then providing food and clothing only served to accommodate their choices. By providing the homeless with the provisions to sustain the lifestyle they had chosen, groups such as *The Truck* were perpetuating homelessness instead of working to solve the causes of homelessness. However, the sustained participation at *The Truck* – despite perceptions of perpetuating homelessness – suggests that the volunteers had functional motives for volunteering.

9.5 Discussion and Conclusions

In this section, the data from *The Truck* will be discussed and contrasted with the wider academic literature. I will argue that the *bounded experience* provided by *The Truck* shaped volunteer participation and inhibited the voices of the homeless in participating. I will contend that *bounded experiences* contribute to sustained engagement but do not challenge stereotypes of the homeless. I will also suggest the sustained participation and perception of *The Truck* contributed to perpetuating homelessness, as indicated by the habits of the volunteers. This section will conclude with three implications for FBOs and NGOs: that *bounded experiences* may positively affect service delivery operations; that volunteer motivations need to be clear and related to participation; and that reduced interaction and the absence of the voices of the homeless can promote unhelpful stereotypes.

The engagement and activities of the volunteers was largely shaped by the *bounded experience* that *The Truck* provided. This detachment was largely maintained as those who participated had limited opportunities to develop relationships. The *bounded experience* of the volunteers was shaped by *The Truck's* organisational processes, which promoted detachment in two ways.

First, the minimal time commitment reinforced detachment with the homeless recipients and between volunteers. The three-week separation of participation activities was sufficient for volunteers to remain emotionally detached from the homeless recipients and socially detached from other volunteers. Many of the volunteers described how they were not affected by any of the negative interactions that occurred with the homeless due to the prolonged time between volunteering activities. By this time any negative interactions were forgotten or did not appear to matter. On the other hand, the extended time between attending *The Truck* was sufficient to ensure that relationships did not develop between the volunteers and the homeless. I observed that positive interactions appeared to be

forgotten, or ignored, and many interactions between the homeless and the volunteers were repetitive. Similarly, the interactions between volunteers were minimal. Once on location at Ferris St. the initial rush of setting up the tables, the hurried distribution of food and the return to the kitchen, did not allow for extended interactions.

The volunteering schedule also inhibited relationships between volunteers. This was evident most clearly during the preparation and cleaning at the kitchen. I observed that volunteers often left early, forgot each other's names, and mostly declined requests for social activities from other volunteers, and from Anna, as team-building exercises. The volunteers were content to use the time allocated to volunteer and return home without any further interaction until the next service. When the volunteers were asked if they had considered forming social connections with other volunteers, the replies were always hesitant – they stressed that while they did not dislike the other volunteers, they were not the sort of people that they would typically socialise with.

Second, the *bounded experience* provided by *The Truck* included eliminating the voices of the homeless during participation. Most of the volunteering activity occurred away from the homeless recipients at a preparation kitchen in another part of the city. As the food was prepared at the kitchen, discussion was restricted to speculation about the homeless recipients and the causes of homelessness. The limited interaction did not provide an opportunity for the volunteers to understand the experience of homelessness from the points of view of the homeless recipients. Consequently, the *bounded experience* contributed to both changing and limiting the volunteers' perception of the homeless. The earlier volunteer stereotypes of the homeless as 'dangerous' changed to the homeless as 'choosing homelessness.' Both misunderstandings might be reduced if the voices of the homeless were more prominent in the organisational activities of *The Truck*.

The volunteering experiences at *The Truck* shows both similarities and differences with other research. Charities and FBOs have recently seen increased professionalisation and a 'business-like' approach to service delivery (Buckingham, 2009; Beaumont and Dias, 2008; Cloke et al., 2007, Musick and Wilson, 2007). As FBOs move towards maximising efficiency there is a greater sense of professional distance and a more corporatist organisational structure (Cloke et al., 2007, p. 1091). Consequently, the volunteering experience is fundamentally altered. Beaumont and Dias (2008) noted that this trend forced FBOs to cease holistic approaches (p. 386) – ones that tended to be based on relationships – and, instead, focus on transparent organisational structures with clear

241

outcomes. The detachment between volunteers and homeless recipients at *The Truck* reflected these trends. *The Truck* advertised service delivery; the organisational processes were efficient and impersonal; but I observed little interest or promotion of relationship development.

The activities of *The Truck* also showed similarities to organisations investigated by Bekkers (2010, p. 375). The volunteers described how short, infrequent intervals of engagement were preferred to longer, more frequent volunteering. However, while she found that reduced social distance between volunteers and recipients increased rates of volunteering (p. 378), findings from *The Truck* indicate that increased social distance was the key to sustained engagement. One possibility is that the lack of emotional or social commitment reduced potential strain on any relationships. The volunteers indicated that they did not want interactions beyond the volunteering times. Another possibility is that the fixed timing of the engagement activities was easier to negotiate with respect to the volunteers' work and social lives outside of volunteering. Again, the volunteers indicated that *The Truck* was suitable for them because of the rostering. In this regard, *The Truck* shows similarities to other non-profit organisations. This includes those that promoted volunteering opportunities with socially distant recipients (Henderson, Huang and Chang, 2012, p. 224) and the change in the nature and rate of volunteering that results from maintaining a professional distance with increasing time demands (Musick and Wilson, 2007, p. 388).

There were also similarities with the literature abut volunteer perceptions of homelessness. Shields (2001) showed that the homeless have been historically represented as suffering from mental illnesses. This is despite significantly lower rates of mental illness among the homeless compared to that portrayed in media coverage (p. 203). Similar findings, using more recent data, have been reported (Calder et al., 2011; Cross, 2004; Ottati, Bodenhausen and Newman, 2005) as well as the mental health stigma associated with homelessness (Corrigan, 2000). The volunteers often referred back to mental health problems when discussing the causes of homelessness or when the homeless did not behave in a way that aligned with their stereotypes.

Similarly, the stereotype of 'choosing homelessness' was similar to the rational and deviant perceptions of the homeless (Parsell and Parsell, 2012; Lee and Farell 2003; Cronley, 2010). The rational choice perception of homelessness is grounded in the idea that the homeless are free to make informed and calculated choices to optimise their

comfort and leisure (Parsell and Parsell, 2012, p. 422). In contrast, deviant choices are understood to be choosing to become involved in things like drugs or the sex-trade. This results in homelessness even though homelessness, itself, was not chosen (p. 423). Both rational and deviant perceptions were observed at *The Truck*. The volunteers suggested that homelessness was either an 'easy option' or a consequence of poor decision-making. In each case homelessness was chosen directly or indirectly.

Lastly, the motivation of the volunteers reflected Cloke et al.'s (2007) description of habitual volunteering with the homeless. They explained that while volunteers may derive social and emotional benefit from volunteering, it "can become unreflexively habitual" (p. 1099). These findings by Clark et al. (2007) have also been observed in the wider academic literature (Holdsworth, 2010; Rochester et al., 2016) and in the volunteering at *The Truck*. The volunteers' motivation for volunteering did not appear to be affected by their perception that their work was contributing to perpetuating homelessness, suggesting that *The Truck* suited their individual functional motives. The volunteering was sustained despite a perception that their actions were harmful to the social concerns the volunteers sought to address.

This study has demonstrated the effect from the *bounded experiences* of volunteering at *The Truck*. The *bounded experiences* offered by The Truck are significant for FBOs, in general, given the increased professionalism being demanded of FBOs (see Chapter Four). The time commitments, and absence of relationships and voices of the homeless, affected both the operations of delivering food and the perceptions that the volunteers develop of the homeless. Here, three implications are presented for FBOs and NGOs.

First, *bounded experiences* may have positive consequences for meeting the goals and expected outcomes of charities and NGOs. If the outcomes were directed towards delivering a service to the homeless rather than focusing on the volunteer experience, then an absence of meaningful relationship nurturing can be beneficial in sustaining motivation. A professional model of engagement with minimal scope for relationships, can engender sustained volunteer participation.

Second, charities need to ensure that the motivational needs of volunteers are clear and are being met. The expectations of volunteers need to be clear from the beginning of their participation so they can determine if the activities will address their motivational needs. The *bounded experience* of *The Truck* allowed volunteers to participate in a way that maintained social and emotional distance. While this type of engagement mostly led to

sustained group participation, it is possible changes to this routine may discourage volunteering. Similarly, the level of socialisation and interaction with other volunteers needed to be clear. Most of the volunteers did not join the group with the intention of forming social connections while the volunteer who actively attempted to socialise with the homeless, ultimately, left the group as their motivations were not being met.

Third, and finally, the data suggest that minimising relationships between volunteers and the homeless can promote unhelpful stereotypes of homeless people. Although pre-existing stereotypes of the homeless changed early in engagement, the bounded experience of volunteers served to reinforce newer stereotypes. The homeless need not only to be seen in volunteering but also be heard by volunteers. The homeless did not have an opportunity to present their experiences of being homeless, leading the volunteers to speculate on the causes and continuation of homelessness. I am not suggesting that FBOs and NGOs should have relationship development as part of their goals. Rather, the voices of the homeless may be presented as part of an induction program or as information being made available to the volunteers.

CHAPTER TEN – THEOLOGY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND ENGAGEMENT

10.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings from each of the FBOs in the current study will be compared alongside each other and then located in relation to the wider academic literature. First, the organisational attributes of each organisation will be compared and contrasted. I will argue that experiences of volunteering were shaped by the time commitment, recruitment methods, and established organisational programs. Second, volunteer agency will be discussed. I will suggest that opportunities for group consensus and diverse theologies can both promote and inhibit volunteer agency. Third, individual theological frames and relationships will be investigated. Theological frames will be related to the goals of *Engage* and *New Family* and their efforts to develop relationships. Fourth and finally, the empirical methods of the current study will be discussed and located within practical theology. I will argue that using empirical data for theological reflection helped construct authentic contextual theologies.

10.2 Organisational Attributes

The organisational environment of each FBO shaped the nature of their social engagement and the experiences of the volunteers in each organisation. This study found that the time commitments allocated to volunteer engagement, recruitment methods, and participation in existing programs were all significant factors in shaping volunteer experience. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

First, the time allocated to volunteering activities by each FBO shaped the engagement experience and impacted on the bridging that could occur. *The Truck* and *Engage* both had a fixed schedule to be followed by each of the volunteers. As discussed in Chapter Nine, *The Truck's* three-week roster contributed to developing a *bounded experience* of engagement. The busyness of the activity, the lower proportion of time with the homeless, and the large number of recipients contributed to inhibiting bridging within the constraints of a three-week schedule. Volunteers were only required to participate for one hour per week, on average, which included twenty minutes per week, on average, with the homeless.

Similarly, *Engage* had a fixed schedule of meetings every three weeks, but with additional time required outside these meetings. The participants were asked to coordinate meetings and undertake engagement in their personal lives outside the confines of the meeting schedule. The time taken to prepare meeting materials and engage in reconciliation, while balancing personal and work commitments, was more challenging than the three-week roster of *The Truck*. Both the three-week schedule and the additional commitments of the volunteers appeared to obstruct bridging activities for the volunteers. The volunteers at *Engage* spent approximately two hours per week on reconciliation-related activities, including reading, watching videos, or individual engagement.

New Family had a different schedule from both *The Truck* and *Engage*. Instead of having a volunteer roster, an activity roster was provided. The volunteers did not have regular meetings to discuss planning or upcoming activities. The volunteers were free to participate in any activity they desired, but there was no obligation nor record-keeping. The volunteers suggested during participant-observation and the interviews that the roster was not seen as a list of 'volunteering activities' but opportunities to "hang out with different people."[90] The volunteers' comments aligned with the activities offered – volunteers could participate in sport, sing, sit and have coffee, or learn sewing skills. The volunteers at *New Family* tended to contribute between two and four hours per week with most of the time dedicated to activities with refugees.

Second, the recruitment methods differed for each of *New Family*, *The Truck*, and *Engage*. *New Family's* recruits were largely drawn from the social networks of the existing volunteers. Hence, potential volunteers already understood the commitment, responsibility, and expectation. They also had established relationships and social ties with other volunteers. The relationships were observed to contribute to the smooth operation of the larger activities, such as the *Family Dinners*. Task allocation, food preparation, and the organisation of new activities were efficient due to the strong rapport between volunteers. The activities and time commitment of the volunteers promoted many opportunities for bridging. Social ties were observed to be reinforced rather than be formed through volunteering activities throughout the research.

Both *The Truck* and *Engage* recruited volunteers similarly, and in a different way from *New Family*. The volunteers found out about *The Truck* usually by searching online. The volunteers enquired directly via telephone or email and each volunteer was given a trial

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[90] Mary, interview, 7/6/2015

shift to see what would be involved. During the time of study, three new volunteers were allocated trial shifts. None of the new volunteers had social ties to the existing volunteers for that evening.

The recruitment at *Engage* was similar to *The Truck*. Each of the volunteers found *Engage* through searching online and potential volunteers were required to register interest online using a form through the *Engage* website. After indicating their postcode, the form was delivered to the closest coordinator in that region. It was unlikely that the volunteers had social ties to each other, and potential volunteers knew little about the expectations and outcomes of their participation.

Third, FBO volunteering activities and programs shaped how demanding the volunteering was, and the experiences of the volunteers. Both *New Family* and *The Truck* coordinated established programs with clear objectives. Volunteers were neither expected to implement new initiatives nor modify existing programs. The volunteers at *New Family* were not expected to develop new programs. (Although they had the opportunity to offer new activities outside the fixed times of the existing programs.) A range of activities, including English classes, computer literacy, resumé writing, *Afternoon Chats* and *Family Dinners* were well established and advertised as regular features of the operation of *New Family*.

Similarly, most of the volunteers at *The Truck* had no role in how the organisation was managed. It operated according to a roster that was overseen by the Catholic outreach organisation; food and clothing donations were delivered by employees of the Catholic outreach organisation or their partners; and food was acquired in conjunction with local businesses. The volunteers were neither able to implement any changes, nor were they expected to be involved in the coordination or management.

In contrast, the structure and activities of *Engage* were significantly different from *New Family* and *The Truck*. There were neither established programs nor suggestions about how volunteers ought to participate. Instead, volunteers learned about a social or environmental issue – perhaps one that they had little interest or experience in – and then contributed towards developing an engagement activity. Volunteers were asked to implement changes in their personal lives and participate in collective engagement. It appeared to me that the volunteers had some understanding of the type of activities they would be undertaking, perhaps through conversation with Mark, but this understanding was not at the same depth as *New Family* and *The Truck*.

The work required by volunteers at *Engage* to engage in reconciliation was significantly more demanding than *New Family* and *The Truck*. The *Engage* volunteers needed to implement new initiatives as part of the main activity of the group according to three general themes – the poor, building relationships, and transforming lives. Without established programs and with fewer members than *New Family* or *The Truck*, reaching consensus on engagement proved to be difficult and volunteer agency was limited.

The time commitment, recruitment, and organisational programs of FBOs each shaped their experiences of volunteering. Each of these factors can promote or inhibit bridging strategies depending on the objectives of each FBO. The organisational attributes of *New Family* appeared to both sustain volunteering and encourage bridging activities. The social ties between volunteers and the types of activities offered did not appear to be as onerous on volunteers despite the more demanding time commitments. I would suggest that this observation aligns with the objectives of *New Family*. While the *New Family* advertised a range of services, the volunteers emphasised that *New Family* was trying to "build a community."[91] Opportunities for bridging and reinforcing social ties are essential for community building and seen in their activities. However, there appeared to be negative consequences of these organisational attributes. New volunteers from within the social networks of the existing volunteers did not appear to have many difficulties when assimilating into the culture of *New Family*. In contrast, I observed that this was not the case for potential volunteers who did not have existing ties. These volunteers often had little interaction with the existing volunteers, and many did not return to become regular attendees. The inclusive and open community appeared to extend mostly towards refugees and those within the social networks of the volunteers.

In contrast, the organisational attributes of *Engage* appeared to constrain opportunities for bridging with Indigenous Australians. Without clear expectations and programs, I observed the *Engage* meetings became opportunities for education, discussion, and debate. Despite promoting the meetings as occurring once every three weeks, after the first meeting, it was clear that there was an expectation to undertake further work outside of those times. The demands of preparation, reading, and attempting to engage in reconciliation between meetings appeared to be onerous for the volunteers. Aside from spouses, the volunteers had no previous social ties and described how they did not intend to develop relationships with the other volunteers. It is difficult to see how an organisation without social ties

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[91] Gary, interview, 30/9/2015

between volunteers could effectively undertake successful collective engagement activities with Indigenous Australians who might have significant differences in culture, language, and expectations of the relationship.

Finally, the organisational attributes of *The Truck* appeared to reduce opportunities for bridging and contributions to sustained engagement. *The Truck* did not promote any activity beyond providing material assistance as part of their service. The volunteers were not expected to bridge with the homeless, and the time commitments and recruitment appeared to work well with these goals. The work of the volunteers at *The Truck* was physically demanding and there was little opportunity to bridge with the homeless or other volunteers. The lack of social ties did not appear to affect the operation of *The Truck* deleteriously, as all that was required was a willingness to work during those activities. Volunteer agency across the FBOs studied was shaped by diverse theologies and group consensus. In this section, both factors will be discussed for each FBO. The findings from each FBO suggest that group consensus relates to both the organisational attributes and collective engagement of each FBO. Both *New Family* and *The Truck* provided little opportunity for group consensus, and both showed volunteer agency in different ways. In contrast, the discussion and debate at *Engage* – often from diverse theologies – inhibited group consensus and limited volunteer agency.

Group consensus was not a significant element in the activities of *New Family*. Since many of the *New Family* activities were established there was no requirement for volunteers to meet and discuss a collective engagement strategy. Many of the established activities of *New Family* were ongoing, and there was no need for volunteers to discuss their continuation. It is likely that new volunteers were aware of the ongoing activities and what was required due to the social ties with existing volunteers. However, if a volunteer wished to implement a new program or event, all that was required was approval by Sandra, the coordinator of *New Family*, and a willingness to commit to a schedule. If the activity was approved, it was added to the list of activities. This was observed throughout the time of study as new sports, choirs, and classes were introduced to the roster of activities. Most of these new activities depended on the weather.

The absence of fixed meetings precluded any opportunities for a group consensus. In this way, the collective engagement of the volunteers at *New Family* appeared more like a large group of individuals and very small group engagements. Throughout the period of the study, I observed the volunteers be alone with a group of refugees or, occasionally, in

pairs. Although the volunteers had social ties to each other, they had little interaction at *New Family*. It is possible that the social networks outside of *New Family* reduced the need for interaction. Indeed, many of the volunteers described separate social events with other volunteers during participant-observation and the interviews.

The diversity in theologies of the volunteers at *New Family* did not appear to inhibit engagement. As noted in Chapter Seven, I attribute this to the existence of a shared theology for the group. The shared theology of *New Family* appears to be authentic, given there were no scheduled times for meetings for the volunteers. This suggested that there were few opportunities to discuss theology collectively, and many of the volunteers did not attend church. The differences found in the theological frames of the volunteers appeared to me to have little effect on volunteer agency as the shared elements directed the volunteers to act. Also, the collective engagement of the group as a series of individual engagement limited opportunities for discussing theology. Many of the volunteers had formed relationships with refugees, many of whom were non-Christian, and volunteers were specifically asked not to discuss religion and politics during *New Family* activities. The absence of the need for a group consensus or a shared theology appeared to be advantageous for volunteer agency. The volunteers appeared to be sufficiently motivated to commit to volunteering and were free to act on their own ideas for potential volunteering activities in addition to established programs.

The *Engage* group members' agency was constrained by the diverse theologies and in achieving group consensus. Both factors were evident in the shared culture of the group. The contrarian culture of *Engage* promoted discussion and debate but impeded the ability of the group to decide on a course of action for reconciliation. Each of the volunteers was asked to offer an opinion and the other volunteers responded in kind. Much of the time was spent debating the merits of engagement and if a particular response was theologically sound rather than on developing bridging activities. Unlike *New Family*, group consensus was a significant element of that group's agency. However, as group consensus was rarely achieved, the group proceeded with the majority or with Mark's encouragement.

The diversity of the theologies of individuals also appeared to discourage group consensus. Most of the volunteers' theologies showed significant differences and this shaped how they approached social issues and engagement. As discussed in Chapter Eight, this was also seen throughout the meetings. Although the diversity of perspectives

may have encouraged individual agency, the collective agency of the group was impeded by the diversity of theologies. It appeared to me, that the three-week cycle was an insufficient schedule for what the group was trying to achieve, as the majority of the time was spent examining issues related to reconciliation and formulating a theological response. Given the obstacles faced by the volunteers to participate in social engagement activities at *Engage*, it was hardly surprising that they found collective engagement challenging. However, the volunteers were able to engage with some success outside the group environment when the restrictions of the group were absent.

The established schedule of *The Truck* also negated the need for group consensus. Theology also did not appear to be a significant factor as most of the volunteers were not Christian, and those who were did not describe any theological motivations for participating in *The Truck*. The service had been in operation for over thirty years and it did not appear that the organisational attributes of *The Truck* were likely to change. There was very little decision making required by the volunteers. The tasks the volunteers undertook during preparation were usually dependent on the order the volunteers had arrived in, and none of the volunteers complained about their tasks. Before leaving for Ferris St., the team leader, Anna, allocated the tasks to each volunteer and there was little disagreement. The volunteers were usually allocated the same task. Like *New Family,* the absence of a group consensus appeared to be advantageous for *The Truck*. The volunteers appeared to be content with their roles and understood the limits of what they could achieve by their participation. The volunteers had agency to act through the activities of *The Truck*, even if the possibilities for participation were limited.

10.4 Theological Frames and Relationships

In this section, the individual theological frames and relationships of *Engage* and *New Family*[92] will be compared. This section will proceed as follows: First, I will suggest that the members of *Engage* were more interested in different Christian expressions than in forming an ongoing relationship with an Indigenous church. Here, I use theological frames to argue that both factors significantly reduced the likelihood of establishing any ongoing relationship between the *Engage* group and the Indigenous church, let alone an authentic one. Second, I argue that the theological frames of the volunteers at *New Family* aligned

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[92] *The Truck* will not be discussed in this section as theological frames were not constructed for the volunteers. Many of the volunteers at *The Truck* did not identify as Christian. The Christian volunteers at *The Truck* did not attribute theological significance to their participation.

with the goals of the organisation. Third, and finally, I discuss the differences between *New Family* and *Engage* in developing relationships.

Margaret and Mark's theological frames showed the strongest alignment with the intended objectives of the *Engage* group. Margaret's frame of *Inclusive Imperatives* and Mark's themes of *Authenticity, Marginality and Relationships* appeared to align well with reaching out to an Indigenous church. However, closer examination suggests that this may not be the case. Mark described how Christian experience was found in authentic relationships with those at the margins but, reflection on this approach, with the objectives of the *Engage* group, highlights the challenges associated with establishing authentic relationships. First, it was unlikely that any kinds of authentic relationships were going to be established when driven by one of the parties. This is particularly so if the relationship was decided by the *Engage* group without considering the needs, wants or time commitments of the members of the Indigenous church.

Second, some of the members of *Engage* argued that the visit would not necessarily be the start of a meaningful relationship but, rather, an experience of learning about different Christian expressions. Again, while this may have been an admirable goal their curiosity was unlikely to result in any deeper connection. Similarly, Margaret's theological frame emphasised the importance of inclusivity, of building balanced relationships and being willing to understand God from multiple perspectives.

While this view suggested that a meaningful relationship with the church could develop, it did not, in fact, take the perspectives of those in the Indigenous church into consideration. There was neither a discussion about an intentional relationship with the members of the Indigenous church, nor about how the intended relationship with the church might grow. The pastor of the Indigenous church had spoken to Mark on a few occasions, but there was no evidence of collective decision making with the church, nor with the *Engage* group. Even with Mark and Margaret's best intentions and alignment with their theologies, the lack of a coordinated effort inhibited this bridging activity. For Shane and Tyler, there was even less alignment between their theologies and collective engagement. There was no tangible objective for Shane, and no opportunities for Tyler to evangelise or deliver welfare. For the *Engage* group, the collective engagement did not provide an opportunity for the members to embody the theologies of their individual theological frames. Further, the absence of a shared theology of engagement precluded developing a relationship with the church that held theological significance for the *Engage* members. Instead, they were

ushered towards an activity with Indigenous Australians without a clear purpose or expectation.

On the other hand, the theologically significant relationships developed by volunteers at *New Family* was supported by the alignment of theological imperatives and FBO outcomes. The activities established by *New Family* were far more numerous and diverse than *Engage*. As described in Chapter Five, support was offered to refugees through the delivery of material items, non-material services, and through community building. *New Family* was not simply another welfare delivery service but offered a place with a judgement-free welcome for refugees and recently arrived immigrants. The individual theologies and shared theology of the volunteers showed considerable alignment with these services. Notably, each of the *New Family* theological frames emphasised that being a Christian was to embody theologies in action rather than simply hold Christian beliefs.

Embodied theology was seen in *action-driven theology* and was also found in the individuals' theological frames. Rachael explained that the gospel was spread through love and that Christians show love through their actions. Mary described how Christians needed to devote their time and attention towards individual needs, and not the afterlife. Jeremy portrayed Christian love as something that cannot be explained but can be experienced through engagement. The theological imperatives found within their individual frames; therefore, show a direct relationship to the activities of *New Family* – to be *doing things* for, and with, refugees. Similarly, each of the individual theological frames demonstrated a preference for the poor and disadvantaged, interpreted in a contemporary context as the refugee community. To illustrate, Gary asked Christians to consider who Jesus stood with, and who Jesus would support now, Chiara described the plight of refugees as an injustice of the church and one that needed correcting by standing up for the marginalised, while Sandra explained that Jesus would be with the vulnerable and the persecuted. The alignment between the individual and shared theologies of the volunteers was reflected in the bridging activities of the organisation and how relationships were manifested in engagement.

There were significant differences between the volunteers at *New Family* and the members of the *Engage* group that affected relationship development. First, *New Family* was an open organisation that provided support for a disadvantaged community. However, *Engage* did not have a single focus on engagement and did not always direct its attention towards communities in need. Although the members of *Engage* described how they

wanted to nurture good relationships, this was neither translated into collective action nor seen in their organisational structure. Second, the volunteers at *New Family* did not view their engagement as an intellectual exercise. The volunteers were attracted to the organisation to support the refugee community, specifically, through service delivery. Many of the participants in the *Engage* group saw the organisation as providing both an opportunity to learn and develop an approach to bringing about change in their personal lives. Although each of the members intended to become engaged in reconciliation, the focus on identifying and selecting approaches for the group and each individual themselves was grounded in discussion, debate and theology – and not in action, itself.

In Chapter Seven, I argued that ordinary theology mediates social capital. The data from both *Engage* and *New Family* suggest that mediation was related to the existence of the theologically significant relationships between the volunteers of the FBO and the recipients of their services. For the volunteers at *New Family*, the shared *action-driven theology* led to the development of *divine-human-human relationships,* which engendered social capital. In comparison, the collective engagement attempts of *Engage* did not eventuate despite the group intentionally forming to engage in reconciliation with Indigenous Australians.

In Chapter Eight, I argued that *Engage* was not successful due to the absence of a shared understanding of how the intended relationships with Indigenous Australians ought to be manifested. In this way, *Engage* appeared to be driven towards action but lacked a shared theology for engagement. However, each of the volunteers at *Engage* described their efforts in social engagement outside of the group environment. For *Engage*, the individual ordinary theologies did not mediate social capital between the volunteers and Indigenous Australians. There was no collective engagement of the group with Indigenous Australians, and there was no common understanding of the relationships that develop through collective engagement. Similarly, the successes of members of the *Engage* group in their personal lives did not lead to strong social ties with Indigenous Australians as their activities were not based in relationship. The individual engagement described by the volunteers at *Engage* were single events, had a limited time span or did not involve Indigenous Australians. For example, Margaret's action against radioactive waste storage ended shortly after the campaign; Tyler's engagement with Indigenous patients was temporary and constrained by his work life, and Shane's advocacy did not involve Indigenous Australians at all. In each case, the absence of a relationship between the

Engage members and Indigenous Australians suggested that social capital was unlikely to develop.

The findings from the current study indicate the importance of the operant theological voice in developing social capital. This research has shown how the espoused and operant theologies of *New Family* were manifested in their social engagement. The existence of a shared theology, and not just a shared theological culture, is necessary for bridging with marginalised groups. In contrast, a shared theological culture that encourages espoused theologies and uses formal theological methods, like the *Engage* group, is unlikely to develop social capital without a shared operant theology for collective engagement. The diverse and, possibly, conflicting theological expressions of the individual volunteers were unlikely to embody the obligations, expectations, and norms that would result from the development of social capital. Further, without a clear understanding of the relationships between volunteers and recipients, these indicators of social capital are likely to be inconsistent. Hence, a shared ordinary theology is necessary to stimulate bridging social capital. This research has shown that theology mediates social capital, but also suggests that the operant theological voice is perhaps more significant for bridging than the other three voices. Espoused theological motives for engagement do not lead to social capital on their own. Rather, it is how the espoused theologies are embodied in volunteering activities that develops social capital. This research has shown that theological significance can be attributed to relationships via a shared theological rationale for engagement, but volunteer agency and action needs to be prioritised for bridging.

10.5 Empirical Methods, Theological Reflection, and Praxis

In this study, empirical methods elicited authentic socially-located theologies of engagement. The socially-located theologies of engagement were constructed through both participant-observation and interviews, which allowed the participants to describe and explain the connections between their volunteering, motives, and theology. The empirical methods used in this research offered two benefits to sociological research on contextual theology. First, the shared experiences of both the researcher and the researched participants clarified the theological interpretations offered by participants; and second, empirical methods elicited theologies that moved beyond theological description. Each of these will be discussed and the implications of the current study to practical theology outlined.

The participation of volunteers in Christian FBOs was investigated in the current study to determine theologies of social engagement. Any emerging theologies of engagement were necessarily contextual and required participant-observation to understand the social context and to construct interviews for theological reflection. During the participant-observation stage of the research, data were collected based both on the observations of social engagement and the interactions also between volunteers at each FBO, and between volunteers and recipients. Some of these interactions were either directly observed or involved me personally as an engaged researcher. This provided a common frame of reference between me and the participants. I sought to describe the operant theologies of the participants, and the common frame of reference helped to generate the espoused theology of the participants in relation to their social engagement. The existence of a shared experience allowed the volunteers to articulate the theological significance or meaning-making in their social engagement in context during the interviews that followed participant-observation. The shared experiences I participated in were used to develop specific questions at each research site to encourage theological and sociological reflection.

Using the same questions for all participants at each site provided an opportunity for volunteers to discuss matters of sociological significance from the same social context. One question developed for the *New Family* interviews emphasised how the two different cultural groups – volunteers and refugees – often had different perspectives towards religious expressions, which, then, shaped the volunteers' behaviour and language during their engagement.[93] For the *Engage* group, anecdotes from the participant-observation provided an opportunity to discuss their engagement with Indigenous minorities who might not share their religious orientation. Like *New Family*, the activities and language of engagement may be shaped by social and theological differences.[94]

In addition to using these anecdotes from participant-observation to stimulate contextual conversation, shared experiences allowed for comparisons between perspectives and an enhanced understanding of the significance attributed to social events. This is best illustrated with an example from *New Family*. During one of the *Afternoon Chats*, I was involved in a conversation with Rachael and a group of refugees. After a while, the

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[93] Can you describe any times where the values or attitudes of volunteers have contradicted or been opposed in the refugee community? How do you minimise disagreements? (interview question for *New Family*)

[94] Can you explain your interpretation of a theologically-based approach to reconciliation? How would that affect reconciliation with non-Christian Indigenous people? (interview question for *Engage*)

conversation turned towards comparisons between concepts of beauty in Iran and Australia. One of the refugees, Farhad, mentioned that, in Iran, many of the women wore what he saw as too much make-up and gold accessories. He described how, for him, Rachael was attractive because she looked 'simple.'[95] I interpreted Farhad's comments as meaning 'modest' or 'unembellished', but not offensive or suggestive. However, Rachael reacted quite negatively towards Farhad's comments and explained tersely to him that comments like that were inappropriate in Australian culture. Later that day, Rachael commented on the conversation:

> I guess when someone says something that's not quite right, you just pick them up on it gently, and say that's not really...that's telling me that I look like I've got a mental problem. (Rachael, participant-observation, 13/4/2015)

However, the significance of the interaction was clarified during the interview when Rachael explained that Farhad had a history of making sexually suggestive comments, inappropriate contact, and had attempted to form unwanted personal relationships with volunteers at *New Family* (Rachael, interview, 18/8/2015). Without the interview this interaction would have been open to misinterpretation. The interviews also highlighted some of the challenges that volunteers faced in their engagement.

In a similar way to how participant-observation and interviews worked together to understand the social significance of engagement, theological reflection on social engagement also helped to construct accurate representations of the volunteers. By asking volunteers to describe the meaning-making and theological significance of their volunteer work they were invited to articulate their espoused theology and how it related to action. Instead of asking volunteers to 'describe their theology' in abstract terms without referring to social contexts, volunteers could be directed towards constructing a contextual theological position that encompassed particular elements of their social life. By providing a context for discussion – one that was relevant and meaningful to the volunteer – the theological interpretation of social life could be articulated *by the volunteer*, and not by the researcher. In this way, participants were accorded an accurate representation in documenting the theological elements of their social life. This approach to data collection suggests that perhaps the action-oriented operant theologies are best understood through action-oriented research methodologies. Individual and collective experiences are needed to construct a contextual theology of engagement that is authentic (Bevans, 2002, p. 5).

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[95] Participant-observation, 13/4/2015

Sociological research on contextual theologies of volunteering, therefore, needs to include data that incorporate these experiences into an espoused theology. Ethnographic research methods have been demonstrated as a possible way to incorporate these experiences into espoused theologies in the current research.

The empirical methods used in the current research provide a way to respond to some the challenges of theological reflection. Graham et al. (2005) described theological reflection as "an activity that enables people of faith to give an account of the values and traditions that underpin their choices and convictions and deepens their understanding" (pp. 5-6). However, they noted that in doing so, participants often gave incoherent descriptions of church history, Bible passages, that were unrelated to theological formation (pp. 6-7). In the current study, participant-observation gave priority to espoused and operant theologies and, then, each of the four theological voices (Cameron et al., 2010) emerged in theological reflection. The operant and espoused elements observed in social engagement reflected the lived contextual encounters with God (Bevans, 2002, p. 74) described by participants in interviews. The interview questions used in this research located theological reflection within a particular social context and invited participants to explain theological formation. This method of theological reflection then opened the possibility of incorporating the four voices of theology into a more coherent expression. The volunteers' responses to the questions were varied and drew on different theological voices. I would suggest that this method of theological reflection promotes more authentic theologies. Participants were encouraged to explain their theologies, and then the limits of their theologies were explored through reflection on social engagement. In this way, more authentic theologies were constructed with minimal interpretation required.

The use of empirical methods and theological frames in this study have contributed to both practical theology and lived religion. As discussed in Chapter Three, the praxis model of contextual theology that integrates Christian expression and Christian action (Bevans, 2002, p. 72) underpinned the current study. This approach contributes to practical theological studies by investigating Christian praxis as the actions of Christians (Ganzevoort and Roeland, 2014, p. 94) in FBOs. Theological frames were used to construct a shared theology for *New Family*, and this reflected the theological culture found in the participant-observations of *Engage*.

The methodologies used in this research have shown theoretical sensitivity to praxis, following Ganzevoort and Roeland's (2014) description: "The notion of praxis, however,

includes more than practices alone…A praxis should rather be considered as a field of practices with aims internal to that field and with a variety of actors." (p. 94). When used alongside the four voices of theology, Christian praxis is understood both in terms of the collective actions of Christians and theological reflection on those actions. My involvement as a participant-observer also showed sensitivity to praxis through shared experiences, participation, and reflection. In the current study, the meaning-making and theological reflections that underpinned actions were combined to understand the theologies of engagement. Theological frames were used to relate theology to engagement in a way that was separate from reducing theology to a 'motivational factor' and, instead, was an integral element of lived experience.

To summarise, empirical theological methods were used for theological reflection and to construct contextual theologies of engagement. Empirical methods contributed to understanding the theological significance of social contexts. This is in contrast to participants constructing an abstract theological position, which may not have had a direct connection to their engagement activity. Participant-observation provided a context for participants to reflect theologically on the significance of their actions. During the research interviews, shared experiences were shaped into interview questions to promote theological and sociological discussion. The methods used in the current study proved to be beneficial for the construction of the theological frames and to understand the sociological elements of engagement. These empirical methods for theological reflection have suggested integrating the four voices of theology, contextual theology, and the study of Christian praxis. For practical theology, the shared experiences of participant-observation have promoted contextual theological reflection, which moved beyond description towards reflection on praxis.

CHAPTER ELEVEN – CONCLUSIONS

11.1 Summary of the Original Contributions

In this section, the six original contributions to the sociology of religion contained within this thesis will be summarised. The contributions in this thesis are both methodological and theoretical. This study of three different FBOs – *New Family*, *Engage*, and *The Truck* – has provided nuance regarding the experiences of volunteers in FBOs. This was achieved through analysis of both the individual and collective activities, the challenges from participation, and the theological significance of different expressions of social engagement. This research has culminated in the following six original developments and conclusions.

First, theological frames are a theological tool for social research. Theological frames were developed in this thesis by integrating frame theory (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974; Snow et al.,1986) with the theology in four voices (Cameron et al., 2010) to produce a tool for researchers to understand how different theological influences shape action. Theological frames were then defined as a framework for the theological interpretation of social life. The theological frames were constructed for three distinct purposes: 1) to better understand individual theological expressions; 2) to gain insight into shared culture; and 3) to generate theory relating theology and social life. My unique contribution of theological frames offers a new approach to understanding lived religion, to better incorporate personal and social influence on theological expressions, and to direct research towards explanations, products and concepts.

Second, theological frames are advantageous for both social research and contextual theology. The success of theological frames is due to the ability of empirical research methods to elicit theologies in context, to accurately represent ordinary theologies and to incorporate the four voices of theology. The use of participant-observations and interview techniques to construct theological frames was shown to be effective and appropriate for this social and theological research. These methods allowed me to observe embodied theologies and gave an opportunity for participants to articulate and explain any theological significance. Participants were able to describe, explain and attribute significance to their social engagement in ways that offered depth and nuance. Importantly, the participants were able to discuss theology in context. Hence, the emerging theologies of the participants were contextual theologies of engagement. I have

demonstrated that empirical methods can be used to construct theological frames to understand contextual theologies. In this research, they have been used to articulate contextual theologies of social engagement.

Third, theological frames can be used to understand culture. Both the contrarian culture and the theological culture of the *Engage* group were reflected in the individual theological frames. The data from participant-observation were first used to understand elements of the culture of the *Engage* group. Then, the common elements of the individual theological frames were identified and found to reflect the observations from participant-observation. My unique contribution is that theological frames may be used, at least in part, to determine elements of the theological culture of Christian FBOs.

Fourth, ordinary theology can mediate social capital through developing theologically-significant relationships. My original contribution in this research was to outline how ordinary theology mediates social capital through theologically significant relationships. The theologically motivated volunteers in the current research developed social capital as the relationships between volunteers and recipients were prioritised in social engagement. These relationships were both socially and theologically significant for the volunteers.

For the volunteers at *New Family*, ordinary theology mediated social capital due to the shared operant theology of the volunteers. The shared theology of the volunteers at *New Family* was *action-driven theology*: to seek out the disadvantaged and marginalised who they understood Jesus would have assisted in a contemporary context. The volunteers at *New Family* developed what I have argued are theologically significant *divine-human-human* relationships with refugees, where the relationship of the volunteers with God (*divine-human*) shaped the relationships that they nurtured with these refugees (*human-human*). The theologically significant *divine-human-human* relationships engendered social capital. Social capital was seen through bridging, greater access to networks, and the establishment of obligations and norms. The social capital observed at *New Family* was not reflected at the other sites of engagement. The volunteers at *Engage* were unable to initiate relationship-based collective engagement, while *The Truck* did not actively pursue relationships in their activities. Hence, while ordinary theology can mediate social capital through developing theologically significant relationships, the differences between the three FBO's researched shows that care needs to be taken to ensure that this conclusion is not overstated.

Fifth, I have introduced the concept of a bounded experience for volunteering. Participation was shaped by what I termed a *bounded experience* of volunteering – a volunteering activity that does not require additional commitment outside of the participation times. This research suggests that bounded experiences can nurture habitual volunteering. My unique contribution to this research is the concept of a bounded experience of volunteering and how sustained volunteering can result from an FBO providing a *bounded experience*. However, *bounded experiences* need to be treated with care. The volunteers at *The Truck* perceived that their work contributed to perpetuating homelessness but they continued their participation regardless.

Sixth, contextual espoused and operant theologies were elicited in this research using empirical methods. The contextual theologies were authentic in the sense that they were mediated by individual and collective experiences (Bevans, 2002, pp. 5-6). Participant-observation allowed opportunities for the volunteering experiences to be shared between the research participants and me. These shared experiences were then used to construct interview questions that invited participants to reflect theologically on their engagement activities. The emerging theologies were contextual and authentic as the volunteers explained the theological significance of their individual and collective actions within the social context of the FBO. Theological reflections were not broad, abstract constructions by the volunteers, rather, they were particular to a social context. In this research, I have suggested an empirical approach to theological reflection that alleviates some of the challenges faced by researchers in developing coherent and authentic theological reflection.

11.2 Implications and Suggestions for FBOs

FBOs continue to form a significant part of Australian welfare delivery. Many of these organisations are operated, in part, by volunteers who are motivated to work with the disadvantaged for diverse reasons. In this section, five suggestions are offered for FBOs that follow from the findings of this research.

First, the individual theologies of Christian volunteers need to align with the activities of the organisation for successful engagement. The individual theologies of volunteers at *New Family* cohered with the collective engagement of the organisation. Using theological frames, it was shown that the activities of *New Family*, including the *Afternoon Chats*, *Family Dinners* and sports, provided an opportunity for the volunteers to embody their ordinary theologies. Similarly, the ability of the volunteers at *Engage* to become involved in

reconciliation in their personal lives saw a strong alignment between theology and the engagement activities. Their individual engagement activities aligned with their theological frames and allowed them to embody their theological expressions.

Second, FBOs need clear and coherent bridging strategies for volunteers to form relationships with the recipients in collective engagement. The data from each FBO supported this conclusion. The relationships and community building were implicit in the shared theologically significant relationships that followed from engagement between volunteers and refugees at *New Family*. However, the *Engage* group was not able to collectively bridge with Indigenous Australians. The group did not discuss the nature of the relationships to be developed between the volunteers and Indigenous Australians, and there were disparities between volunteers about the expectations and purposes of these intended relationships.

Third, *bounded experiences* can lead to efficient service delivery in FBOs. The volunteers at *The Truck* prepared the food off-site, delivered food and clothing quickly, and then returned to clean up. The intense service delivery and number of homeless recipients limited the interactions that could occur between volunteers and the homeless, and between volunteers. The three-week roster at *The Truck* also reduced any ongoing social difficulties between the volunteers or with the homeless as there were no obligations on any of the volunteers outside the rostered time. This type of engagement resulted in efficient service delivery.

Fourth, FBOs require a clear purpose for successful social engagement. *New Family* and *The Truck* were successful in providing services as volunteers approached each organisation to participate within established programs. For both organisations, the core task of the FBO was well established and did not require any initiatives from potential volunteers. For *Engage*, the shared culture of fostering relationships was not sufficient for successful collective engagement. Each volunteer was required to develop an approach to reconciliation, which was then discussed and debated in a group environment. Even with fewer numbers than the other FBOs, the obstacles that each volunteer faced *before* any

11.3 Research Challenges and Further Research

In this section, the challenges of the research process will be outlined, and the limitations of the current study will be described. This section will conclude with suggestions for

further research that was not possible due to the time constraints and word limits of this thesis.

Although the ethical guidelines and procedures were adhered to throughout the study, there were three challenges that were not able to be overcome. First, two of the FBOs tended to have either a relatively high turnover of volunteers or volunteers whose attendance was inconsistent or sporadic. For these participants, it was difficult to follow up any conversations, clarify interview responses, or ask for their reflections on the activities of the group as new situations arose. Further, most of the volunteers who ceased engagement did not provide contact details to the remainder of the group, which further limited contact during the study.

Second, during the engagement with *New Family*, there were challenges with forming relationships with refugees. As the volunteers worked closely with refugees and their families, they developed strong connections and some volunteers became closely involved in the lives of the refugees. As my involvement with *New Family* was for a comparatively short time period, there was a danger that I might become emotionally invested in the lives of refugee families. All the volunteers were aware of the difficulties and challenges that refugees faced – material, social, and emotional – and care needed to be taken to ensure that refugees were treated with respect and consideration. To ensure that unrealistic expectations of relationship were not implied in engagement with refugees, I attempted to keep interactions to those based on service delivery. This was a difficult undertaking as many of the activities at *New Family* were underpinned by strengthening relationships and community.

Third, religious beliefs and identity proved to be challenging when working with *Engage*. As a Christian FBO for almost exclusively Christian volunteers, there was an assumption that I, too, was Christian. I do not identify as Christian, although I have some experience of the contemporary church and Christian life. The difficulties arose during times of prayer where it was assumed that I would participate. However, following the guidance of McGuire (2008), I did not want to present myself as anything other than my 'real identity'. It did not take long for the other participants of *Engage* to forget that I did not identify as Christian – which led to some uncomfortable silences during prayer times and, occasionally, some awkward questions during meetings.

This thesis was limited by both the scope of the research and length requirements. For these reasons, two areas were not investigated using theological frames. First, the

narratives constructed by participants were not explored in detail; and second, the use of interpretive approaches to Scripture and its relationship to social engagement was not examined. The restrictions in word limit in this thesis meant that the theological frames were not used to their full extent. In particular, theological frames were useful in identifying the theologically significant narratives. These narratives formed parts of many of the theological frame diagrams, but their significance was not explored as this was secondary to the aims of this thesis. In *Table 5*, some suggestions are offered for exploring the theological significance of the narratives described by the volunteers.

Table 5: Narratives

Volunteer	Theological frame	Narrative	Theological significance
Shane (*Engage*)	*Faith pragmatism*	*Conversion experience*	*- Nature of God* *- God's plan for humanity (Kingdom)* *- Structure in lived Christianity*
Margaret (*Engage*)	*Inclusive imperatives*	*Conflict to relationships and peace*	*- Hermeneutic method* *- General and specific revelation* *- Kingdom and Heaven in Christian living*
Rachael (*New Family*)	*Christ-like action*	*Becoming a real Christian*	*- Conversion experience* *- Challenges from church* *- Experiencing God and living like Christ: separate from church*
Mary (*New Family*)	*Empowerment*	*Transformation*	*- Mission experience and legacy* *- Transformed worldview* *- Challenges with church (structure) and other Christians (belief)*
Jeremy (*New Family*)	*Following Christ*	*Progressive prophet*	*- Maturation of faith* *- Leaving church* *- Progressive Biblical teachings* *- Prophet: correcting bad teachings*
Sandra (*New Family*)	*Justice and Jesus*	*Conversion experience*	*- Exposure to religion* *- Witnessing faith in God in the face of horror* *- Social engagement and conversion* *- Re-interpretation of God's guidance*
Gary (*New Family*)	*Expansive faith*	*Working with community*	*- Faith journey/maturation* *- Theology and practice in religious life* *- Challenges in building Christian communities*

The table provides an outline of how theological frames can be used to link narratives and theological experience within the context of social engagement. I would suggest that theological frames be used to explore how social contexts of engagement shape the construction of narratives that demonstrate the distinct theologies of the volunteers.

Narrative research using theological frames may provide insight into how the organisation of theologically significant experiences provide a means for interpreting departures from social norms (Bruner, 1991). Bruner's (1991) emphasis on narratives was not on the structure or construction of narratives, but rather how narratives served as an instrument for human experience (p. 6). Theological frames offer a way to investigate this human experience within the context of lived religion.

Similarly, the current study did not explore the use of Scripture found in the theological frames. This, too, was secondary to the aims of the research and would have required further data collection that focussed on reading and interpretive techniques. Many of the volunteers used similar Bible passages to describe their ordinary theology. Further research could address how varied interpretations of Scripture shape different approaches and expressions of social engagement. In this research, theological frames were constructed to show how volunteers interpreted Scripture, but no further comparative analysis was undertaken.

The findings from the current study indicate possible directions for further research. Here, suggestions for this research will be made regarding theological frames, the findings from the current research, and the FBOs.

Theological frames could be used in further research to investigate with greater depth the relationship between theology and other sociological concepts. While theological frames have been used in the current research to investigate ordinary theology, they could also be used to give greater depth to the other elements of the four voices of theology. The theological frames that were developed to better understand the relationship between theology and social life, were only used within the context of FBOs. It would be worthwhile to determine what theological frames have to offer in church-related contexts. Using theological frames for theological research in church environments would allow an investigation of the normative and formal aspects of lived religion and their effect on embodied theology. Theological frames may also offer insight into the similarities or disparities between the theological expressions of regular churchgoers and the ministers, priests or pastors whose messages they hear or whose advice they seek.

Similarly, while the current research has used theological frames to investigate theology and social engagement, the frames have shown that there is greater scope for sociological investigation than was undertaken in this study. Theological frames are offered as a way to investigate how other factors of sociological significance, such as gender, organisational structures, power, language, and authority influence theological expressions. I would suggest that theological frames offer a unique means to demarcate the spheres of influence that these factors have on ordinary theological expressions.

This research has posited that shared ordinary theology mediates social capital in social engagement. This warrants further research. It was found that the mediation was related to the development of theologically significant relationships and in contexts where theology provided agency to Christian volunteers. It is recommended that this relationship be investigated further with other FBOs or Christian social movements.

The concept of a *bounded experience* in volunteering was introduced in this thesis. It would be worthwhile to examine if other FBOs or NGOs offer a *bounded experience* of volunteering, and how different *bounded experiences* shape volunteer experiences. This research showed that *bounded experiences* can lead to sustained volunteering, but this conclusion requires further examination using further case studies.

Lastly, the effectiveness FBOs require further examination. This research addressed the volunteering experiences within FBOs, with attention given to embodied theologies and relationships. I would suggest extending this research to include the organisational effectiveness of social engagement. Similarly, the relationships developed between volunteers and recipients warrants investigation from the perspectives of the recipients of the services. This would give further insight into the meaning-making and perceptions of relationships involved in the organisational activities of FBOs.

11.4 Further Implications

This research on the theology, experiences and social engagement of volunteers within Christian FBOs has implications for sociology, the volunteers and FBOs. It has been shown that despite claims that religion is receding (Chaves, 2017; Houtman and Aupers, 2007), secularisation is increasing (Zuckerman, 2014; Baker, 2015; Zuckerman, Galen and Pasquale, 2016), and that Christianity is in decline (Brown, 2009; Hall, 2002), religion continues to play an important role in social life. Assistance to the disadvantaged and marginalised in contemporary society is often offered by Christian volunteers or Christian

FBOs. Many of these organisations or volunteers are guided by theological imperatives towards social engagement to make a difference in the lives of those who are less fortunate. The nature of engagement by these organisations vary significantly, and this study has shown that theological expressions contribute towards the motivation, effectiveness of service delivery, and the shared experiences with the recipients of the services.

This research has shown that volunteering experiences can be enhanced both organisationally and through participation. Organisational processes influence volunteering experiences through their recruitment methods. If social networks are used for recruiting volunteers, then support must be offered to volunteers who join by other means. New volunteers should not be made to feel like outsiders, particularly if they are involved in trying to develop relationships with recipients who are disadvantaged, marginalised, or otherwise appear different from the volunteers. Further, the expectations and goals of volunteering activities need to be made clear. FBOs should not only have established programs for new volunteers but also provided opportunities for long-term volunteers to develop programs of their own, if desired. Similarly, the bridging strategies used by volunteers in an organisation need to be clear and consistent if ongoing relationships are to be formed with recipients. The processes, outcomes, and involvement of volunteers in an FBO should be made clear when volunteers join so the FBOs can develop a consistent approach to social engagement and relationship-development, if appropriate.

This research also has further implications for theology and sociology. As noted above, this thesis has contributed to the literature on the relationship between theology and social life. This research has shown that theology continues to act as an independent variable in social life and remains relevant in contemporary Australian society. The study has also drawn attention to the significance of theology in the delivery of welfare services. Hence, this research has made a contribution to the literature about ordinary theology.

In addition to providing various accounts of ordinary theological expressions and their relationship to social life, a methodological approach of theological frames for researching and representing ordinary theology has been provided. This approach can form a basis for comparative research on the influence and expression of the four voices of theology across a range of contexts.

To summarise, the objective of this sociological research was to understand how motives, theology, and participation activities shape volunteer experiences in Australian FBOs. This

thesis sought to investigate how theological concepts were expressed and manifested in social engagement, what motivates volunteering in Christian FBOs, and what factors promote or constrain engagement activities. These questions have been answered in this thesis using qualitative ethnographic research methods to study three Christian FBOs. The experiences of volunteering were examined using participant-observation and volunteers described the significance of their participation and any meaning-making during the interviews that followed. The motives of volunteers were explored by considering the functional, sociological, and theological influences on participation in an FBO. Theological frames were developed for this research to examine the contextual ordinary theologies of Christian volunteers. Attention was then directed towards the connections between volunteering and the ordinary theologies of Christian volunteers. I examined how theological significance was attributed to both engagement activities and the relationships the volunteers formed with recipients of the FBOs services.

Finally, the findings from this research introduced five concepts for use within the sociology of religion. First, the shared theology of engagement for New Family was described as *action-driven theology*. Action-driven theology is described as the theological imperative to seek out and assist the disadvantaged, marginalised or oppressed, as Jesus would, in a contemporary context. Second, it was posited that ordinary theology mediates social capital through the development of theologically significant relationships. Fourth, theological frames can be used to understand shared theology and shared culture. Fifth, and finally, the concept of *bounded experience* in FBOs was introduced. A *bounded experience* was defined as a volunteering activity that does not require any additional commitment outside the fixed participation times specified by the organisation.

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APPENDIX 1: GENERAL INFORMATION SHEET

Flinders
UNIVERSITY

Michael Smith
School of Humanities
Tel: 8416 8421
smit1200@flinders.edu.au

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dear …………………,

Thank you for considering being a part of this study of Christian social engagement. This document is to give you some information on the study, the interview process and your rights if you choose to a part of the interview process.

This study intends to explore the relationship between social outreach and Christian faith, with two areas of focus. The first is the lived experience of Christians in social outreach programs – how people prepare, participate and provide ongoing support for the community. The second area is how meaning making is constructed through participation in social outreach programs. This will explore the ways in which friends, family and church are related to the connection between faith and social engagement.

This research has three research questions which will be answered from my role as a participant and through the interview process:

1. *How is participating in social outreach for Christians perceived to be meaningful?*

2. *How do social outreach programs contribute to meaning making structures, Church involvement or individual faith exploration?*

3. *How do religious and personal ideas or values shape involvement in Christian social outreach programs?*

Your participation in the interview process is completely anonymous and you will not be able to be identified in any data analysis or future thesis, publication or report on the research findings. There is no obligation to be part of this study, and if you choose to become involved, then you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and any responses from the interview will be removed and deleted. We can organise a time and location for the interview at your convenience, however, complete anonymity cannot be given as the interview would take place at a public location.

Please feel free to contact me for any further clarification or the study or if there are any questions about the study.

If you wish to be involved in this study by participating in an interview, please contact me at smit1200@flinders.edu.au and sign and return the attached consent form.

Thank you for time,

Michael Smith

Department of Theology

APPENDIX 2: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FOR PARTICIPANTS

School of Humanities and Creative Arts
Department of Theology
GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001
steve.taylor@flinders.edu.au
CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is to introduce Michael Smith who is a PhD student in the Department of Theology at Flinders University. He will produce his student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity.

He is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of Christian Social Engagement.

He would like to invite you to assist with this project by allowing him to join ##### for a period of approximately six months and agreeing for members of your organisation to be involved in an interview which covers certain aspects of this topic. No more than three hours on each outreach occasion would be required.

Participation in the interviews is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from the interview without consequence and any interview data will be removed from the research. Participants will be given a copy of the transcript of the interview to ensure that it is true and correct, and make alterations as appropriate. During the transcription process, the participants will be de-identified to ensure anonymity. While no individual identifying information will be published, anonymity cannot be guaranteed as the interviews will be conducted at a mutually agreed public location.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions. Any interview data will only be viewed by the researcher and the participant.

Since he intends to make an audio recording of the interview, he will seek your consent to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me by e-mail: steve.taylor@flinders.edu.au

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

Rev Dr. Steve Taylor

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 6740). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

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APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW

Flinders
U N I V E R S I T Y

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

(by interview)

Christian Social Engagement

I ....

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the interview for the research project on Christian Social Engagement.

1. I have read the information provided.

2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.

3. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.

4. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.

5. I understand that:

   • I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.

   • I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.

   • While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, identifying information will not be published, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed and individual information will remain confidential.

   • I may ask that the recording/observation be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

Participant's signature…………………………………Date………………....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name: Michael Smith

Researcher's signature…………………………………..Date…………………….

8. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of my participation and agree to its use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature…………………………………Date………………....

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE

✓	Questions	Potential Elaboration
	Background Information	
	How would you describe yourself? - *Age, work, education, family, etc* - *Do you have any hobbies/social interests?* - *How would you describe your group of friends?*	
	Can you describe your religious background for me? - *Can you describe other service activities have you done before? Why did you leave or change to (insert FBO)?* - *Have you taken on other roles within your church? Can you describe them for me?* - *How do you think your life as a Christian differs from your parents?* -	*Family, Church, Conversion Experience, Friends, Current religious involvement*
	Involvement	
	Can you describe how you came to be involved with *(insert FBO)*? - *How did you hear about it?* - *Have you always wanted to get involved in social outreach?* - *Can you explain what makes (insert FBO) different from other faith based charities?* - *How would you describe the people that your serve through (insert FBO)?* - *How would you describe the other people you work with in (insert FBO)?*	*Friends, Family, Church* *How long involved?* *How long others involved?* *Is it a calling? Giving back? Obligation?* *How does it make your faith grow?* *What keeps you going?*
	Do you see helping people as an important part of your faith? - *Why do you think so?* - *Is this uniquely Christian?* - *Do you think it is necessary?*	*Why?* *Is it an obligation? How do you know?*
	Can you describe some of the positive experiences you've had from being involved with *(insert FBO)?*	*How are they positive?* *How often do they occur?* *Is it rewarding? How?*
	Can you describe some of the most challenging aspects of being involved with *(insert FBO)?* - *Can you describe some of the challenges associated with the people you serve?* - *Can you describe any challenges with people that you've had to work alongside?* - *How did you work through them?*	*In what way is it challenging?* *How do you find strength?*
	Can you describe one of the more moving experiences that you've had while on *(insert FBO)?*	*How did it make you feel (internally, towards others,)*
	What keeps you coming back out here every week/weekend/month? - *Is there a particular Bible verse or saying you can think of that keeps your motivation up?* - *Can you describe the support you receive from people around you? (friends, family, other members)*	*What happens when it's tough?* *Do you see yourself growing?* *Bible verses?*
	Can you describe how important it is to you to be involved in *(insert FBO)?*	*How would you get others motivated?*

	- *How would you describe the connection between getting involved in (insert FBO) or something similar and your personal faith?* - *Would you be comfortable doing something similar with a secular organization? Why/Why not?* Do you think that working with *(insert FBO)* allows you to deliver justice? Can you explain this for me? - *Where does this sense of justice come from?* - *How do you know if justice has been achieved?*	*How important are friends?*
	Why is it that you have chosen to serve these people, rather than others? - *Why get involved in (insert FBO) rather than another group?* - *Is there a specific group that you have an interest in helping? Why?* - How different are you compared to the people you serve? - *When did you first notice some of these differences? How did you react when you experienced it first hand?* - *Can you describe a situation where the differences really showed in your work?* Can you describe the similarities between you and the people you serve? - *Can you describe a time when these similarities really showed?* Can you describe what kind of effect you'd like to have on the people's lives that you come across, both immediately and longer term?	*How?* *Best outcome?* *Exemplary life?*
	How do you think more people could get involved in doing something like this? - *What do you think would motivate non-religious people from getting involved?* - *Why don't you think non-religious people aren't involved / why there aren't secular groups like (insert FBO)?* Is there a particular message that you would like to get across through your work? Why? Do you think you are?	*What core practices as a Christian?* *Balance between church and outreach?* *Do they need to see what difference it makes?*
	Have you encountered any negativity while out here? Can you describe it for me? - *What helped you get through it?* - *What will you do if it happens again?*	*What was the situation?* *How was it negative?* *Could you turn it into a positive?* *How?*
	Are there times where you've felt like giving up? What made you change your mind? Has anyone been asked to leave? What happened?	*What happened?* *How are you different having gone through this?*
	Faith	
	Can you describe your regular church services? - *What sort of people attend?* - *Are there any recurring messages?* - *How important is church attendance to you?*	*Music / Sound system* *Building* *Vibrant? Reflective?* *Informative? Guidance?* *Same as parents?* *Other churches?*
	Can you describe how getting involved in social outreach enhances your faith?	*Do you get to witness?*

	- Can you explain if by being involved in (insert FBO) allows you to live more Biblically? Are there different ways of living biblically? Can you describe what you mean? - Have you been able to understand what it means to be Christian while out here? Can you give an example of this? - Can you explain if there is any connection between social action and atonement or salvation? For you or the people you serve? - Can you describe how your faith has changed by getting involved in outreach? Can you give an example of this? - Does outreach allow you to have new ways of knowing or experiencing God? Can you give an example of this? - Have you ever had a religious experience or insight while out doing social activism? Can you describe it for me?	Would you want to try to turn lives around?
	Does your involvement allow you to get closer to God? - Can you describe how you see God at work? - Are you able to know God better by being in XXXX? Are you able to experience the Holy Spirit or Jesus? - Do you see (insert FBO) as doing God's work? Can you explain this? How do you know? - Can you explain if outreach allows you to understand God's purpose for you? Can you describe such a moment? - Do you think that by getting involved you can become a better Christian? How? Can you explain this? Any examples of significant events? - Can you describe how your outlook on life, Christianity, etc has changed through being involved in (insert FBO)? - Can you describe how being involved in (insert FBO) has allowed you to see good or evil in the world?	Do you see good/evil?How? Do you see Jesus?How? New ways of knowing the Spirit/God/Jesus? Do you see or gain understandings of God through culture?