This is to certify that the

dissertation entitled

Understanding The Social Practices
That Sustain A Biracial Congregation

presented by

Daniel Edwin Joranko

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Doctor of Philosophy degree in Resource Development-
Urban Studies

Frank O. Fee
Major professor

Date April 26, 2002

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL PRACTICES THAT SUSTAIN A BIRCIAL CONGREGATION

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Resource Development-Urban Studies

2002

ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL PRACTICES
THAT SUSTAIN A BIRACIAL CONGREGATION

By

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There has been limited research on interracial collaboration in voluntary associations. Religious congregations represent a major form of voluntary association in American society. The purpose of this study is to develop a grounded theory of the social practices that sustain a biracial congregation.

The theory was generated through the analysis of in-depth interviews of congregational members. The congregation is United Methodist and located in a low-to-moderate-income urban community in the U.S. middle south. The membership, fairly evenly distributed between Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans, is socioeconomically diverse. Two pastors and twenty-five members of the congregation were interviewed. Substantial quotations from the interviews are included in the study.

Interview data were coded and analyzed using established grounded theory procedures. Ten thematic categories and over one hundred subcategories emerged from the analysis. The major categories are: 1) sense of community; 2) openness; 3) status; 4) outreach; 5) social stance; 6) power sharing; 7) intentionality; 8) symbolic repertoire; 9) style repertoire, and 10) commonality in diversity. An initial core category and an integrative core category were also conceptualized. These are racial equality and bimodal-cultural ethos. The categories were conceptualized in the analysis through four-frame dimensions, and categories were integrated into a theoretical model design to

provide insights into the social practices that can sustain a particular type of interracial congregation.

The major finding is that a bimodal-cultural-congregational-community ethos is one that aspires through social practices to foster: 1) an interpersonal community – open to diversity and inclusive on an equal basis of a significant percentage of both Afro-American and Euro-American members – that is symbolized through ritual; 2) a commitment to supporting racial equality in mission and service, including community outreach programs and social advocacy; 3) an intention towards the balancing of influence between the Afro-American and Euro-American cultural groupings, and toward the recognition of the equal worth of persons despite social status; and 4) an inclusion of the cultural modes of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans, practiced, respected and honored on an equal basis.

The emergent, grounded theory is then compared with the literature on race relations, the Afro-American church, and interracial congregations. Recommendations for practice and further research are included.

Dedicated to Tim Joranko, my brother and true friend

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the people who helped make it possible for me to finish this dissertation. I would like to thank the members of my site congregation who agreed to participate in this study, and who were such gracious hosts. I would particularly like to thank those who allowed themselves to be interviewed, the two pastors, and the congregation leader who initially invited me to conduct research regarding the congregation.

I would like to thank my parents – Frank and Joyce Joranko, my brother Tim, his wife Aida, and my nephew and niece, Frankie and Maria Helen for being such a wonderful family for me.

I would like to thank my major professor – Dr. Frank Fear – for providing invaluable guidance and patient support. I would also like to acknowledge the other members of my committee. Rex Lamore for his strong support over the years, especially during my time with the Center for Community and Economic Development. Dr. John Schweitzer for providing guidance in community research. Dr. Richard Thomas for encouraging me to pursue this topic, and for his knowledge of and dedication to interracial community.

I would also like to thank the dissertation discussion group led by Dr. Fear for their suggestions and support.

I would like to acknowledge Rev. Frank Lyman for editorial assistance, and Fran Fowler for formatting assistance and for fostering community in Urban Affairs.

I would also like to thank the Departments of Resource Development and Urban Studies for providing invaluable support and community. Also to the College of Agriculture and the Graduate School for providing a dissertation completion fellowship.

Finally I would like to thank the many friends and colleagues who provided support and fellowship during my time at Michigan State. Rather than singling any out, and possibly neglecting some, I would simply like to express my sincere appreciation to all these friends and colleagues. It is they, most of all, who have made my time at Michigan State so rewarding.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERCOMING DIVISION:

A STUDY OF A BIRACIAL CONGREGATION

The Need for this Study

Much scholarly work has been conducted over the years documenting the extent of exclusion and denigration of Afro-Americans (e.g., Myrdal, 1944; Clayton, 1996). This includes research on residential segregation that contributes to the economic impoverishment of the Afro-American population (e.g., Massey and Denton, 1993); studies of the symbolic discourse that portray Afro-Americans in a false and demeaning manner (e.g., Goldberg, 1996); and investigations of exclusionary practices in organizations and institutions (e.g., Jaynes and Williams, 1989). Considerably less sociological and historical research has focused on racial reconciliation and interracial collaboration (Thomas, 1996). John Stanfield (1993:7) comments:

> Studies of prejudice and racism are much more pervasive than studies of interracial harmony in race relations research. We ask more questions and record more observations to document patterns of intergroup dislike and discord than we do to document positive bonding and cooperation.

If exclusionary practices are to be overcome, then research on interracial collaboration represents an important area of inquiry. The study of diversity focuses on overcoming exclusionary practices. Diversity work has generally concentrated on

increasing minority group participation and fostering toleration in instrumental institutions and organizations (e.g., Cox, 1994). There are two apparent deficiencies in the diversity literature. First, most empirical studies of integrated settings have focused on processes of assimilation. Empirical studies of integrated settings that promote diversity in practice are rare (Foster and Brelsford, 1996). Second, there is a paucity of diversity literature related to voluntary organizations (Lakey, 1996). This is particularly the case in terms of race.

One form of organization - the Christian congregation - lends itself to research that addresses these deficits in the diversity literature. Congregations are voluntary organizations and small organic communities (Gustafson, 1961). They are a very significant form of association in the United States. Ammerman et al (1998:8) report that in the United States "more individuals belong to congregations than to any other voluntary organization." They go on to claim that:

> Congregations influence in varied ways both the individuals who belong to them and the communities in which they are present. They have rightly been described as generators of 'social capital.' They provide critical opportunities for gathering, communities of friendship and mutual support, spaces in which people can give voice to their discontents, and organizations through which they can mobilize for action. By the very presence of their buildings, their stained glass, they call people beyond themselves. Through educational programs, congregations not only transmit knowledge of the faith tradition and its meaning for contemporary life but also transmit values that promote community solidarity and

> continuity. Historically, congregations have socialized youth and newcomers, sustained people in need, and provided various rites of passage that mark significant life transitions: birth, adolescence, marriage and death. They have often supported community values and institutions, but at times they have also challenged those values and institutions in an effort to reform or transform them in light of the congregations' convictions. Thus congregations have significance not only for the individuals who belong to them but also for the society beyond their membership (p. 8).

Congregations are communities which, at least in principle, are generally devoted to interpersonal and societal reconciliation (Schreiter, 1996). Churches have played an important role in both fostering and combating segregation (Barndt, 1991). Though a considerable majority of congregations are composed largely or completely of one racial group, some congregations have interracial memberships (Chaves, 1999). Interracial congregations have the potential to be promising focal points for research on inclusive community organizations. They exhibit at least some level of commitment to allowing inclusivity. Moreover, as communities of interpretation, (Gustafson, 1961) they may contain members that are in a position to reflect insightfully on the journey to racial reconciliation.

The literature on the characteristics of interracial churches is also limited, particularly in relation to stable congregations. Early research focused on churches transitioning from a primarily Euro-American to a primarily Afro-American membership

(e.g., Ziegenhals, 1978). More recent studies have tended to focus on congregations with stable interracial memberships (e.g., Foster and Brelsford, 1996; Lakey, 1996).

During the late 1970s, various denominations facilitated studies of churches in transitional communities. For instance, Davis and White (1980) examined the dynamics of change in such congregations. The "Churches in Transition Project" of the United Church of Christ examined transitional churches in their community and institutional context (Ziegenhals, 1978). Both studies emphasized the likelihood of congregations moving, closing, or transitioning from an entirely Euro-American membership to an entirely Afro-American membership. They also emphasized that an intentional effort by Euro-Americans to overcome exclusivity was necessary to make this transition.

Considerably less focus has been given to studying stable interracial congregations. The available literature generally takes an organizational case study approach. Kurschinski (1982) emphasized the importance of member attitudes in stabilizing an urban interracial congregation. Gratton (1989) examined whether a Maryland Baptist church had the potential to become a stable interracial church. Jones (1994) investigated four racially diverse congregations and found that multi-racial ministry presents "unique complexities." Foster and Breslford (1996) studied three interracial congregations focusing on their informal educational practices. Lakey (1996) delineated the factors that contributed to a stable interracial suburban congregation. Ortiz (1998) has proposed models of multiethnic congregations. There has also been insightful work on interracial churches written by practitioners (see, for example, Perkins and Rice, 1993; Perkins 1995).

A recurring theme in this literature is the degree to which Euro-Americans overcome exclusivity. Studies of both transitional and stable interracial congregations have emphasized this issue. However, there is considerably less exploration on how inclusivity might be fostered through the practices of a congregation. Moreover, though the numbers of works on stable interracial congregations has grown somewhat in recent years a substantial body of formal theory has yet to be developed. The present study addresses this need.

Focus of the Study

This dissertation is a grounded theory of social practices that foster inclusivity in a stable biracial congregation. The research is guided by three research questions—a primary question and two secondary questions.

The primary question is:

- What social practices do congregational participants experience and understand as fostering inclusivity in a stable biracial organization?

The secondary questions are:

- How do congregational participants interpret inclusive practices in key dimensions of church life including, worship, education, governance, mission outreach, and fellowship?
- Are there notable similarities and differences between how Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans interpret inclusive practices in their congregations?

Exploring these research questions provided a basis for the development of analytic theory.

A single research setting was studied that exhibited characteristics of a stable biracial congregation.[1] It is important to note that there is no commonly accepted definition of a stable biracial congregation. Consequently, a working definition was established. In this research, a *stable biracial congregation is defined as one that does not show evident signs of transitioning to a membership where one or the other racial group is under 20%.* The 20% figure was chosen after examining research on interracial organizations and neighborhoods (Davis, 1980; Massey and Denton, 1993). Some organizations and neighborhoods have a high level of exclusivity and can not be considered substantially biracial. For those that are inclusive, the research suggests an important dynamic—when the threshold level of approximately 20% Afro-American is reached, many Euro-Americans become increasingly uncomfortable and flight becomes more likely. Davis and White (1980) suggest three characteristics of what they call "integrated" churches: First, they have been stable and racially mixed for more than a decade. Second, Afro-Americans make up a significant percentage of the congregation and the percentage of each race remains relatively stable. Third, new white members want to join. The research setting in this study has been racially mixed for about eight years. Moreover, it is a congregation in which the Afro-American and the Euro-American membership is roughly equal, and one in which the worship attendance of both groups has increased more than threefold during these eight years. A strong case can be made that it is stable in the sense of not showing evident signs of transitioning to a membership where one or the other racial group is under 20%.

[1] The single site approach enabled the researcher to gather interview data from multiple perspectives in a congregation. Studies that present interview data on interracial settings are rare. Examples include Thomas, et al. (1999) on a university setting and Simon and Roorda (2000) on transracial adoptions.

The congregation is United Methodist, located in a low to moderate-income urban community in the middle south. Sunday attendance during the research period was generally between 110-150 people (including visitors from other congregations). The membership is socio-economically diverse. A knowledgeable respondent estimated that about 20% of the Sunday adult attendance are middle-income, 50% working poor, and about 30% homeless or currently indigent. The congregation was undergoing a pastoral leadership transition at the onset of data collection.

A member--a leader in the denomination--initially recommended the congregation to this researcher for study. The congregation also has a national reputation in The United Methodist Church of exemplifying a stable biracial congregation. The researcher made a site visit to determine whether the congregation fit the criteria for the study. Access was initially gained through the leader who recommended the site. The researcher also met with the pastors and the Administrative Board to outline the proposed study and to obtain permission to conduct the research.

Research Methods

This is an exploratory study designed to advance scholarship and contribute to practice. It is exploratory because it is the first major study of the problem as specified in this dissertation. The purpose is to generate credible theory concerning the practices that participants' experience and understand as fostering inclusivity in a stable biracial congregation. The study will be conducted using an established methodological approach-- grounded theory (Creswell, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1990:24) define grounded theory as a "qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of

procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon." One does not start with a theory to verify. Instead, one generates a theory through a rigorous analysis of the data.

A common method for gathering data in the grounded theory approach is the semi-structured, open-ended interview (Creswell, 1998). Respondents are chosen because they are believed to have substantial experience with the social phenomenon under study. The two pastors and twenty-five members of the congregation were interviewed. They were selected because of their experience with interracial interaction in various aspects of congregational life. Thirteen Afro-American and twelve Euro-Americans were interviewed. Of these respondents, five were Afro-American males, eight were Afro-American females, six were Euro-American males and six were Euro-American females. The respondents ranged in age from people in their twenties to people in their eighties. The modal group was persons between thirty to fifty years of age. Respondents were interviewed using an open-ended, semi-structured interview instrument. Interviews generally lasted around one hour. The interviews were taped and transcribed.

Data from the interviews was coded and analyzed utilizing grounded theory procedures as described in Chapter 3. The analyzed data were compared with the relevant literature in the field of race relations, congregational studies, and organizational studies. The result: grounded theory associated with social practices that foster inclusivity in a stable biracial congregation.

Practical Applications of the Study

This study proposes theory relevant for practice using criteria developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory is generated that fits the substantive area through careful induction of theory from data. The emergent theory is applicable to various settings. Conclusions and findings are intended to be understandable and relevant for practitioners, including pastors, seminary educators, and others concerned with interracial organizations.

Organization of the Study

Interracial congregations are placed in a social and historical context in Chapter 2. The research design is described in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 introduces the analytic portion of the paper. Chapters 5-8 present findings and theoretical analysis in relation to four frame-dimensions. Chapter 9 presents a grounded theoretical framework based on the descriptive findings and earlier analysis. The final chapter (Chapter 10) includes summary, conclusions, comparison with the literature, and recommendations for practice and research.

CHAPTER 2

CHRISTIANITY AND RACE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review literature pertinent to conducting a grounded study of a biracial congregation. The literature will also serve as a basis of comparison with the study findings in the final chapter. The chapter is organized in four sections. Theoretical literature on race, ethnicity, and diversity is presented in the first section. An historical summary of interracial cooperation in U.S. voluntary associations is the topic of the second section. The third section covers literature related to religion and race. The topic of congregation and race is the focus of section four.

The Race and Ethnic Relations Literature

Race relations theory has never been a particularly coherent body of work. Various theoretical approaches have conflicted in their basic assumptions. Though this is true of all social fields to some extent, the topics of race and ethnicity have been particularly contested

An Overview of the Race Relations Literature

Much of the race relations literature has been plagued by prejudicial assumptions reflecting those dominant in American society. McKee (1993) reviews the sociological race relations literature over the past century and examines these assumptions. He identifies dominant trends that characterized much of the work of each generation. The

first generation shifted the emphasis from biological determinism to an emphasis on culture. With Robert Park in the 1920s, some of the emphasis shifted to seeing race and ethnicity in terms of social process. Four major types of process were identified by Park and Burgess (1924)-- competition, conflict, accommodation and assimilation. Many of Park's students also engaged in urban ethnic-community studies. Though McKee argues that Park was a nuanced and historically-oriented scholar, he also argues that many researchers at that time saw race in terms of a cultural essentialism. McKee sees the work of the 1930s as regression from the more sophisticated urban studies of the 1920s to a focus on the so-called primitive rural population of blacks. The 1940s saw the rise of Afro-American scholars, such as Franklin Frazier and Charles Johnson, who engaged both in community studies and broad theoretical work. The trend in the 1950s and the early 1960s was to focus on intergroup relations and social psychological studies of prejudice.

McKee severely criticizes the dominant scholarly perspective for failing to recognize the possibilities of Afro-American resistance and self-determination-- particularly for failing to predict the Civil Rights and Black Power movement. He also argues that most scholars failed to recognize the possibility of a distinctive black culture. He identifies three faulty assumptions that characterized an underlying consensual perspective. The first was a belief in the inevitability of the orderly assimilation of ethnic groups into a modernizing society. The second was a prejudice towards black American culture – seeing it as an inferior imitation of the dominant culture. This so-called inferiority was seen by some scholars as being the main hindrance of assimilation. The third faulty assumption was an overconfident claim of a less prejudiced middle class. These faulty

assumptions distorted the study of race relations and the eventual attempt to make it an applied study to promote racial harmony and eventual integration (McKee, 1993).

The generation of race relations scholars in the 1950s through the 1970s was still predominately Euro-American. Stanfield (1993) reviews this work and identifies four major theoretical orientations. The first is social psychological. It focused on prejudice and the concept of the "Authoritarian Personality" (c.f. Adorno et al., 1950). The second orientation considered Gunner Myrdal's thesis: seeing racism as a moral wrong in a society that was otherwise democratic. The third was the debate over Oscar Lewis' "culture of poverty" thesis (see Lewis, 1965; Rainwater and Young, 1967). The fourth was the race cycle model first conceptualized by Park (see Gordon, 1964).

A somewhat later approach developed by this generation of race-relations scholars combined social process theory with normative analysis. Pettigrew (1991) suggests several propositions from this perspective:

- Racial norms are a major determinant of race relations.
- Norms are changed more from top-down structural alterations than from bottom-up attitude changes; with face-to-face interaction serving a critical intermediate link.
- Race-class interactions have become predominately important in American race relations.
- Modern prejudice and discrimination are becoming increasingly more subtle, indirect, and difficult to combat.
- Minorities respond to oppression both reactively and proactively.

(p. 168-72)

The 1960s saw what Steinberg (1995) calls a "scholarship of confrontation" with prominent works being "Dark Ghetto" (Clark, 1965) "Black Power" (Carmichael and Hamilton (1966) and "Black Rage" (Grier and Cobbs, 1968).

Prior to the late 1960s, Afro-American scholars both produced influential work (c.f. Dubois 1903; Drake and Cayton 1945; Frazier, 1957) and were unable to shift the prevailing perspective of the field (McKee, 1993). Eventually more Afro-American scholars were able to enter the field and the fundamental perspective shifted to one that valued the contributions of distinctive Afro-American cultural formations.

The scholarship of the past twenty years reflects considerable diversity. There are socio-historical studies that focus on the formation of Afro-American communities and local institutions (c.f. Taylor, 1994; Thomas, 1992). There are socio-historical works that revise understandings of Afro-American migration and other trends (c.f. Mark, 1989). And there is a greater appreciation of the diverse cultural formations of the Afro-American Diaspora (c.f. Hine and McLead, 1999).

There is also a continuing emphasis on a social problems approach. Works explore how racial exclusion practices and policies structure urban areas and contribute to uneven patterns of development (c.f. Darden et al, 1987; Sugrue, 1996; Taylor and Hill, 2000). There is a focus on what is called an "underclass" of the extremely impoverished (c.f. Jencks and Peterson, 1991) and on high poverty concentration neighborhoods (c.f. Wilson, 1996; Jargowski, 1997). Others such as Massey and Denton (1993) demonstrate how residential segregation contribute to the formation of this "underclass." Some scholars also point to widening gaps between Afro-American socioeconomic classes and

see this trend as a new modality of class formation in American society (cf. Brooks, 1990).

One recent trend is that which focuses on interracial cooperation from both a historical and sociological perspective. Scholars such as Richard Thomas and John Stanfield represent this approach.[2] It differs from an assimilationist perspective in that it highlights the value of Afro-American culture, considers issues of power, and takes into account the revised perspectives of recent scholarship.

Theories of Assimilation and Pluralism

One longstanding theoretical framework in the ethnic and race relations literature contrasts assimilation and pluralism. It is a framework still utilized to a degree in major texts in the field. Richardson argues that assimilationist and pluralist positions have been two major competing visions in American history (Richardson, 1988). Considering these concepts is also particularly pertinent to a study of an integrated congregation.

Robert Park first proposed his theory of assimilation, which he called the "race relations cycle" in the 1920s. Park and Burgess (1924:734) state: "The race relations cycle which takes the form, to state it abstractly, of contacts, competition, accommodation and eventual assimilation is apparently progressive and irreversible." Ethnic groups[3] first have contract through migration. Eventually economic completion and other forms of conflict lead to various forms of social adaptation. Eventually, the migrating group is forced to accommodate itself to the situation. This may take relatively benign forms or it may be an oppressive subjugation. Finally, the cycle concluded with assimilation which is defined as, "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which

[2] An important early work in this area was Blumberg and Rove (1979).
[3] The term "race" was often used for populations now considered ethnic groups.

persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (Park and Burgess, 1924). This model has both been frequently utilized and criticized. Lyman (1968) argues that the theory is most applicable to European immigrants and is not necessarily applicable to groups considered racial minorities. Barth and Noel (1972) have criticized the model for its claim of inevitability and irreversibility.

Gordon (1964) utilizes the model but suggests that assimilation can be viewed from three perspectives. The first is labeled Anglo-conformity. Here ethnic groups conform to the norms and patterns of the core Anglo culture and institutions. Various theorists have posited a core Anglo culture; originally dominated by those of English descent, but eventually including other Protestants of European descent (Feagin, 1989). Integration has sometimes been criticized as simply being a form of Anglo-conformity.

A second theory of assimilation is the "melting pot" where various cultural traits of different ethnic groups blend into an entirely new culture (Gordon, 1964). This is close to what Park mean by assimilation.

A third theory of assimilation identified by Gordon is cultural pluralism where ethnic groups have equality in common society while maintaining strong ethnic subcultures. Horace Kallen (1956) presents a classic statement of this position. Theorists other than Gordon generally consider pluralism and assimilation to be separate concepts.

Gordon (1964) also distinguishes between various stages of assimilation. The two most pertinent here are cultural assimilation and structural assimilation. Cultural assimilation is a "change of cultural patterns to those of the host society." Structural

assimilation is the: "Large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of host society, an primary group level." (p. 71) "Structural assimilation" is probably poorly named as it generally refers less to social structure than to participation in voluntary associations.

Marger (2000) points out that pluralism in theory can take on both egalitarian and inegalitarian forms. He states:

> Two forms of ethnic pluralism are evident in modern multiethnic societies. In the first, groups maintain cultural and structural autonomy but remain relatively equal in political and economic power; moreover their separation is mainly voluntary. This form is *egalitarian pluralism.* In the second, groups maintain structural segregation and perhaps cultural distinctiveness as well but are unequal in political and economic power; further, group separation in these cases is ordinarily involuntary. This form is *inegaliarian pluralism.* (emphasis in original, p. 124)

A related type of cultural process is syncretism (Batiste, 1971). Camara (1997) states that the process of syncretism is:

> The intermixture or interfusion of diverse (dominant and minority) cultural elements...a relationship of which the end result is a new 'cultural physiogomy' (Valenter, 1976:11). Syncretism has a dialectical basis, insofar as the diverse cultural materials or traditions involved have a relation of tension, which makes for the preservation of the original traits, and concomitantly, a relation of attraction, which brings them together. There is a twofold aspect here, therefore, meaning that these elements

> coalesce into a new cultural product while their original identities remain identifiable, in a type of coexistence based on the dynamic equilibrium of the parts. This is what Bastide refers to as 'mosaic syncretism' citing the Brazilian religious context as an example. The syncretic situation also acts as a deterrent to the more radical impulses (that would normally be a feature of the integrationist model of culture) towards the unilateral annexation of minority cultural communities, and to the requirement that the later be totally subsumed under the dominant culture. Through syncretism assimilation proceeds on the basis of greater exchange and reciprocity between the dominant and minority cultural groups (p. 20).

Camara sees syncretism as similar to Park's original conception of assimilation. He believes that it characterizes Brazilian culture, while the more dualistic conception of race in the United States led to more distinct cultural formations (Camara, 1997)

Some theorists criticize the assimilation and pluralism framework for de-emphasing issues of power and conflict (Feagin, 1989). Newman (1973) calls assimilation a "majority ideology," and amalgamation (the melting pot) and cultural pluralism "minority utopias." He sees intergroup relations as characterized by varying degrees of conflict over interests, rewards, resources, and values. Oliver Cox (1948) sees racial stratification as primarily a function of economic exploitation. Others such as Patterson (1982) emphasize the subjugation and dishonoring that characterized the formation of race relations through enslavement and its aftermath.

When considering race and ethnicity it *is* important to consider social stratification. Terms often used to describe distinctions are socioeconomic status or

social strata. One approach to identifying the components of stratification in American society is to view it in terms of income, occupational, and educational dimensions. In turn, one's position in this strata would be strongly affected by one's race and/or ethnicity, and gender (see Krauss, 1976). Another approach (see Lenski, 1966) sees the distributive system as comprised of political, property, occupational and ethnic "classes," with each component having several major strata groups.

One perspective on the concepts of assimilation, pluralism, and syncretism would see them as ideal types (in the Weberian sense) of social processes rather than as precise descriptions of reality. They can also be seen not as total explanations of ethnic and race relations, but as concepts included in a social theory that recognizes persistent social stratification and conflict. One could also conceptualize assimilation and pluralism as tendencies that characterize various aspects of a society.

Race and Ethnicity

An alternative to a simple contrast between assimilation and pluralism is the social construtionist approach exemplified by Cornell and Hartmann (1998). They contrast two perspectives on ethnic identity. One emphasizes the "primordial" nature of ethnic identity. Isaacs (1975: p. 38) calls ethnic identity a "basic group identity, which consists of the ready-made set of endowments and identifications that every individual shares with others from the moment of birth by the chance of the family into which he is born at that given time in that given place." Cornell and Hartmann criticize this approach for being a form of essentialism because it does not take into account change and variation. They do, though, acknowledge the potential power of "primordial ties" that is conceptualized in the work of such scholars as Geertz (1963) and Shils (1957).

Another approach-- the circumstantalist perspective-- emphasizes political and utilitarian factors in the formation of ethnic identity. For instance, Cohen (1974: p. 57), in considering ethnic groups in Nigeria, writes: "Ethnicity is fundamentally a political phenomenon...It is a type of informal interest grouping." Steinberg (1981) argues that the strengthening of Euro-American ethnic identities in the 1960s and 1970s was based on utilitarian interests. While acknowledging certain strengths, Cornell and Hartman criticize this approach as reductionist and for its inability to explain the "felt experiences" of ethnicity. Moreover they recognize the centrality of historical process and context in the formation of ethnic and racial identity groups. They argue that ethnicity should be considered in terms of its "thickness," which is the degree to which it organizes daily life. They also believe that ethnic identity does not necessarily move in the direction of "thinning." It can also "thicken" depending on historical and social circumstances. (Cornell and Harman, 1998).

Cornell and Hartmann (1998: p. 35) contrast ethnicity and race. They state that ethnic group identity is "based on putative common descent, claims of shared history, and symbols of peoplehood." Moreover, "Identity may originate in either assignment by others or assertion by selves." In contrast, racial group identity "is based on perceived physical differences, " and that racial group identity "typically originates in assignment by others." They see Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans as both broad ethnic and racial groupings.

The implications of this discussion are that ethnicity and race are historically contingent and socially-defined categories, as well as being features of internalized identity. It is also important to note that social identity is complex. In considering

contrasts between societies Sen (2001) writes that "each of us has many features in our self-conception." These features include variations within a broad culture, gender, geographical residence, and occupational and/or family roles.

The final broad perspective to be considered here is the cultural studies approach, exemplified by scholars of Caribbean descent. They generally view race in terms of diaspora. They see valuation of black identity as both a form of resistance to domination and as potentially problematic when it becomes a form of cultural essentialism. Economic class also comes to the forefront of analysis. Finally, they often use a multicultural discourse, and emphasize the complex flows that characterize cultural interaction.

Gilroy (1993) explores the "double consciousness" of both American and European blacks. He calls a broad "black Atlantic" culture a "counterculture of modernity," which resists the subordination found in modernist social structures and rationalist discourse. He also critiques the "ethnic absolutisms in criticism produced both by blacks and whites." As an alternative, he emphasizes the complex mixtures that continue to form the diaspora culture of the black Atlantic.

Stuart Hall (1991) considers race in terms of what he calls a "new epoch of globalization" or the "global postmodern." This epoch is seen to be in tension with older more unitary and homogeneous conceptions of identity. He sees the dominant approach of this new epoch as attempting to incorporate, and to some extent neutralize, difference. He believes that this dominant approach can be resisted to some extent by those on the margins; often taking a localized form. He states: Ethnicity is the necessary place or space from which people speak. It is a very important movement in the birth and

development of all the local and marginal movements which have transformed the last twenty years, that movement of the rediscovery of their own ethnicities (p. 36). At the same time, when "movements of the margins" retreat into their own "exclusivist and defensive enclaves," they can "become as dangerous as national ones." This is a "refusal of modernity which takes the form of a return, a rediscovery of identity which constitutes a form of fundamentalism" (p.36).

Hall sees the general trend to be a fading of older forms of collective identities including "stable and unitary conceptions of race." He calls for the recognition of the complexity of identity which in terms of the Black identity "may have the effect of locating us socially in multiple positions of marginality and subordination, but which do may yet operate on us exactly the same way" (p. 57).

Orlando Patterson (1994) identifies what he calls "three Americas." He states:

> The argument that Americanization is resulting in the homogenization of the world ignores the increased vitality of local cultures and ethnicities in recent times and the complexity of global cultural diffusion, in particular the extent to which so-called peripheral regions are increasingly contributing to American popular culture and to the world music scene. Nor does it explain the emergence of a special kind of regional system, what I shall call the regional cosmos, as we shall see, is not a single cultural space, but is divided among three Americas: a traditional America, multicultural America, and ecumenical America. (p. 103)

"Multicultural America" is said to be made-up of four regions: a "West Atlantic Regional cosmos," the "Tex-Mex cosmos of the Southwest, and the "Pacific Rim cosmos

of the Northwest." The West Atlantic Regional cosmos is seen as incorporating the Eastern United States and the Caribbean region. The Tex-Mex cosmos incorporates "northern Mexican and Southwestern Euro-American cultures, peoples and economies." The Southern California cosmos is seen as a "volatile, unblended mosaic of Latin, Asian, and Afro-European cultures. The Pacific Rim cosmos "integrates the economies and bourgeois cultures of industrial Asia and traditional Euro-America." (p. 111). He describes "Traditional America" as:

> the Euro-African world that emerged from the Puritan North, the industrial smokestacks, the prairie farms, and the slave South. It is the America of the Midwestern main street, of the old and new South, and the ethnic working classes.... Socially, it is committed to enhanced opportunities and intergenerational mobility, but it is also historically racist, though changing in this regard, and profoundly separatist in its basic orientation. It embraces all races and classes, and today a great many African Americans are as committed to the separatist ideal as their Southern white counterparts (p. 113).

Finally, ecumenical America which is seen as "no utopia," but the "future of America for better or worse" is:

> Not merely cosmopolitan, for it goes beyond the simple embrace of many cultures maintaining their separate identities. It is, rather the universal culture that emerged and continues to develop in the great cities and university towns of the nation. This culture is a genuinely ecumenical one: it draws from everywhere, not just from the local cultures and the

> traditional ethnic and immigrant sectors and the traditional Euro-American culture at its doorstep. The image of the melting pot fails to describe the process by which it emerges, for it does not indiscriminately absorb all and everything into some common stew. There is a complex process of selections and universilization of particular cultural forms and styles generating its great cultural innovations for itself and for the world: in science, technology, literature, dance, painting, music, and cuisine (p. 115).

The Diversity Approach

A recent trend has been the attempt to institutionalize a multicultural approach in the workplace and universities. Lynch (2000) interviewed key consultants in workplace diversity. He found that the consultants believed that corporate managers as a whole were "ambivalent" about diversity. However, the consultants also "detected signs that there was a growing awareness of the business case for effectively managing workforce diversity" (p. 172). He also discusses a Columbia Business School Study of "minority" executives that explored actual practices within corporations. Lynch states that "The findings reinforced diversity management emphasizes on mentoring, communication and feedback in fostering upward mobility for women and minorities."[4]

Cox (1994) perhaps provides the most comprehensive theoretical approach to workplace diversity. He reviews the literature and provides a theoretical model for strengthening organizations through diversity. He argues that efforts to improve the "diversity climate" will enhance individual career outcomes and organizational effectiveness. His model includes these factors:

Individual-Level Factors:

- Identity Structures
- Prejudice
- Stereotyping
- Personality

Group/Intergroup Factors:

- Cultural Differences
- Ethnocentrism
- Intergroup Climate

Organizational-Level Factors:

- Culture and Acculturation Process
- Structural Integration
- Informal Integration
- Institutional Bias in Human Resource Systems

Features of organizational culture that are believed to enhance the diversity climate include "tolerance for ambiguity," a high valuation placed on cultural diversity, and a "low-prescription culture." (Harquail and Cox, 1994)

Cox's typologies of acculturation processes and organizations are particularly pertinent to the current study. Cox, Finley and Nickelson (1991) present four types of possible acculturation processes in organizations. The first, "*assimilation* is a one-way adaptation in which an organization's culture becomes the standard of behavior for all other cultures merging into the organization." "*Separation* refers to cultural merger situations in which the entering members are unwilling or unable to adapt to an

[4] quotation from Lynch (2000, p. 168) summarizing a 1998 Korn/Ferry Columbia Business School study

organization's culture and seek some autonomy from it." "*Deculturation* occurs when neither the culture of entering members nor that of the organization is influential or highly valued in framing the behavior of incoming members." The preferred form, *pluralism:*

> Refers to a two-way learning and adaptation process in which both the organization and entering members from various cultural backgrounds change to some degree to reflect the cultural norms and values of the other(s). Pluralism emphasizes interdependence and mutual appreciation among cultures and the importance of preservation of microculture group identity. Moreover, in terms of the centrality-of-content dimension of organizational culture, pluralism is an acculturation process in which the entering members assimilate a limited number of core behavior and values while preserving important differences along other dimensions (Cox, 1994, p. 166-67; emphasis added).

This typology was developed in attempting to describe two merging cultures, like that of two corporations merging or the incorporation of, say, Chinese Americans in a primarily Euro-American organization. Additional complexity is added when considering multiple forms of identity (Cox, 1994).

Finally, Cox (1994) contrasts the plural organization, which includes people of diverse ethnic identities and also has an "assimlationist approach to acculturation" to a preferred typed of organization, the "multicultural organization." This second type has the following characteristics:

1. A culture that fosters and values cultural difference
2. Pluralism as an acculturation process
3. Full structural integration
4. Full integration of the informal networks
5. An absence of institutionalized bias in human resource management systems and practices
6. A minimum of intergroup conflict due to the proactive management of diversity (p. 229).

Cox recognizes that "few, if any, organizations have achieved these characteristics." Moreover, some might question the label "multicultural" for those organizations that have a core culture shaped primarily by the dominant culture of a society.

The diversity literature sets forth ideals and principles and examines organizational dynamics. Even critics admit that this multicultural diversity approach has led to progress in workplaces and universities (for instance, Hu-DeHart, 2001). However, one critic of this approach believes that in reality what she calls "corporate or liberal multiculturalism" as practiced falls short:

> What is the problem with corporate or liberal multiculturalism, as practiced on our campuses? Simply put, it does not address the question of power and structural inequality. Differences are not differentiated; the sources and causes of these differences are never examined, discussed, interrogated or articulated, thus leaving the impression that they are just 'out there.' They materialize somehow, somewhere, without any attempt

> at contextualization – that is, without specification of historically and socially constructed categories of inequality and systems of hierarchy, of racism and institutional discrimination. In short, corporate and liberal multiculturalism consigns the Other to recognizable standards of difference but fails to question the power relations that define for the Other *how* and *why* they are different; liberal multiculturalism does not seriously question the status quo (Hu-DeHart, 2001, p. 92; emphasis in original).

Interracial Cooperation in Associations

Congregations are voluntary organizations or associations. Therefore, to put them in a social context, a brief review of interracial cooperation in voluntary associations will be presented here. The focus will be on the past 50 years. Most of the recorded history concerns the struggle for social equality.

The Civil Rights Movement

Morris (1984) makes a strong case that internal organization through the institution of the Afro-American church was the primary means propelling the movement. Euro-Americans did however did make some contributions and sacrifices in the efforts of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Moreover, Morris also points out that there were several interracial, though primarily Euro-American, organizations that assisted the movement in significant ways. These included the Highlander Folk School and the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Highlander was formed in the 1930s through the leadership of Myles Horton (EA) and others to provide educational experiences primarily for the labor movement. During the 1940s it began tackling racial issues in an intentional manner – bringing Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans together to analyze problems and formulate possible actions. Its philosophy was centered in the belief that answers would lie in a group analysis of share experiences. Leaders were then taught how to take these educational methods back to their communities. Many of the key Civil Rights leaders attended workshops including E.D. Nixon (AA), Fred Shuttlesworth (AA), C.T. Vivian (AA), Septima Clark (AA), Esau Jenkins (AA), and Rosa Parks (AA). King (AA) also associated himself with the school. Morris argues that Highlander helped the movement connect with a tradition of struggle and to formulate non-violent tactics. He believes that Highlander also served as a model of an integrated community (Morris, 1984).

A second influential organization was the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). It was established in 1915 and was a prominent pacifist organization for decades. A.J. Muste (EA) served as chief executive and as a mentor in FOR for many years. A number of important Civil Rights Movement figures A. Philip Randolph (AA), Bayard Rustin (AA), James Farmer (AA), Glenn Smiley (EA) and James Lawson (AA) were closely associated with FOR. Lawson and Smiley provided critical training in non-violent tactics to movement participants. Rustin served as a behind-the-scenes organizer and tactician. Randolph and Farmer were major leaders in their own right (Morris, 1984).

FOR also spawned the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). CORE was an intentional interracial pacifist direct action organization founded in 1942. In its early

years it conducted small direct action campaigns in northern and western cities in attempts to desegregate restaurants and department stores. Its affiliates were generally small; made up of people with a discipline commitment to non-violence. Interestingly, it attempted a Journey of Reconciliation in 1947, which was a forerunner to the 1961 Freedom Rides. It was then the central organization in the galvanizing Freedom Rides. The earlier CORE experience also provided inspiration to the student sit-in movement of the 1960s. CORE provided leadership in some of these efforts in cities like Durham and Tallahassee. Furthermore, CORE coordinated with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in southern campaigns. (Meir and Rudwick, 1975). Moreover, it stepped up its direct action campaigns for equal opportunity hiring, desegregated schools and open housing in the mid-1960s. As Meir and Rudwick (1975) state:

> CORE, more than any other organization, was responsible for the massive outpouring of direct action against housing, employment and educational discrimination in the North (p. 4).

CORE had victories in their job campaigns in cities including Baltimore, Philadelphia, Dayton, San Francisco, and Berkeley, New Orleans and Seattle. Open housing campaigns were held in cities such as New York, Chicago and Ann Arbor. School boycotts were conducted to protest inadequate segregated schools. This strategy tended to fail and the Cleveland campaign was seen as a disaster. In the late 1960s CORE attempted to build a mass base in Afro-American neighborhoods through community organizing and eventually became a Black Power organization (Meier and Rudwick, 1975).

Though the victories that can be directly attributable to CORE are perhaps modest, it played an important catalytic, symbolic and inspirational role. Though not without its internal interracial tension, CORE also demonstrated the possibility of discipline interracial unity in the cause of racial equality.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed in 1960 to provide organizing structure for the Afro-American student movement in the South. It coordinated with SCLC on a number of campaigns, but also took significant independent action. This included the urban sit-in campaigns and the major voter registration campaigns in rural Mississippi. It had considerable support from Northern students (both black and white) and these were drawn into the organization principally through the Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1963. Though a major example of interracial cooperation, this effort will not be considered in detail here because of its rural nature. SNCC's Mississippi campaigns had a dramatic impact on the consciousness of the nation. However, the tensions of trying to maintain substantial interracial activity in a short period of time under extremely adverse conditions during Freedom Summer contributed to the demise of interracial cooperation in SNCC (Lynd, 1997; Branch, 1998; Zinn, 1965; Morris, 1984).

Desegregation

Another major strand of interracial cooperation is the intentional efforts to desegregate schools and to promote open housing. With all the media footage over the years of whites opposing integration, it is often forgotten that substantial efforts were made by religious civic, labor, and neighborhood organizations to enable integration. Orfield (1996) points out that most Southern school districts quietly integrated. He states

that: "Persistent stable reform and increasing integration combined in the south until 1988 in spite of the Reagam administration's opposition and the virtual end of federal enforcement activity" (p. 58). Jacoway and Colburn (1982) point out that when biracial committees were formed in major Southern cities in the early mid-1960s "violence was minimized or avoided" (p. 6). Religious leaders and businessmen played prominent roles on these committees. They cite the cases of Birmingham, Atlanta, Dallas and Tampa. Where such efforts did not occur, such as in Memphis and New Orleans (both in 1960), violence occurred.

School segregation is actually most pronounced in the Northern industrial cities with separate suburban jurisdictions (Orfield, 1996). Crain (1968) looked at efforts in nine Northern and border cities. He states: "We were surprised at how frequently the interracial neighborhood group appeared as a proponent of school integration." They also found that Afro-American "Civil Rights" leaders often took an active role but "surprisingly" Afro-American "community leaders" seldom did. (p. 108-109). Metropolitan coalitions were also formed in the 1960s and 1970s in cities such as Buffalo, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Indiana, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and Syracuse (CRA, 1976).

The Open Housing Movement started in the late 1950s in a few communities as a corollary to the Civil Rights Movement. By 1970, over 2000 local organizations had formed. (Saltsman, 1978). The National Committee against Discrimination in Housing (NCDH) was founded to combat housing discrimination through research, education and consultation. As the movement formed in the late 1950s, it increasingly played a coordinating role and assisted in drafting local and national legislation. Its first national

conference was held in 1956. Four hundred people from 100 municipalities in 25 states attended the third national conference in 1963. President Kennedy addressed that conference. During the 1960s, the movement continued to grow and national Open Housing legislation was passed in 1968. Numerous local ordinances were also passed. During the 1970s the movement focused on enforcement of the legislation (Saltsman, 1978). The movement faded in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Community Organizing

Community organizing efforts have also fostered interracial collaboration. The urban community organizing movement was initiated through settlement houses. Local settlement houses often discouraged integration with some prominent exceptions, such as the Frederick Douglas Center in Chicago (Halpern, 1995). During the 1960s, the Students for a Democratic Society attempted to organize inner-city neighborhoods through a participatory democracy model (Fisher,1994). By the 1970s, interracial community organizations had become more prevalent. National interracial community coalitions including National Peoples Action and ACORN formed (Boyte, 1980). One major issue was bank redlining. In the mid-1970s, the interracial Westside Coalition in Chicago formed to combat redlining. This led to legislation (The Community Reinvestment Act) that requires banks to invest in their communities. Throughout the last twenty years, community coalitions in major cities have used this legislation to obtain reinvestment agreements totaling over 60 billion dollars (Squires, 1996). During the 1980s and 1990s, faith-based community organizations have formed on a neighborhood and citywide basis in a number of states (Fisher, 1994).

Religion

Mainstream religious denominations also played a role in the Civil Rights Movement, particularly through the coordination of the National Council of Churches (NCC). In the 1950s, its Southern Project engaged in modest activity on racial activities. Starting with the Albany GA campaign in 1962, Euro-American clergy and laity began participating in marches in visible number. In 1963, the NCC founded the Commission on Religion and Race, which supported direct action and Freedom Summer. The highpoint of grassroots participation came during the "March on Washington" and with letter writing for the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the mid-1960s. In 1967, the NCC formed the inter-religious Foundation for Community Organization. In 1968, James Lawson (AA) presented the Black Manifesto with its demand for reparations from white denominations. This led to both a crisis in confidence and an attempt to better recognize diversity in denominations. However, except for a brief period (1963-65), most of the efforts began at the top of a "moderately liberal white religious establishment" and did not develop a mass base (Findlay, 1993).

Religious beliefs have inspired other unity efforts. The Jewish contribution at the national and local level to organizations like the NAACP and to the Civil Rights Movement and other efforts is well recognized. The Baha'i commitment to interracial unity has been remarkable. In 1912, Abdu'l-Baha visited the United States and gave inspirational talks on unity to interracial audiences. In 1921, working from a plan recommended by 'Abdul'l-Baha, the first of many Baha'i amity conferences was held. Racial unity continues to be a central tenant of the Baha'i community (Thomas, 1996).

The Southern YMCA and YWCA movements inspired some to question segregation. Some in the YMCA movement joined with the Christian Socialist Butch Keaton (EA) in 1934 to form the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen to "preach and practice brotherhood." Among those associated with this organization were James Wendell Johnson (AA) (later of Fisk) and James Dombrowski (EA) (later of Highlander). Vanderbilt, a Methodist college, was a center of some dissent also (Egerton, 1994). The Federal Council of Churches was formed in 1908 as a national ecumenical social gospel effort. It made some attempts to "bridge the North-South and white-black chasms in the 1930s, but found little receptivity in the South" (p. 239). However, when Benjamin Mays (AA) became its Vice President in 1944, it took a more activist stance on the racial issue (Egerton, 1994). The social gospel movement also influenced the formative years of the NAACP and the Urban League (Luker, 1981).

There has also been a history of interracial urban church missions, particularly in the North. One influential example was the East Harlem Protestant Parish established by former Union Theological Seminary students. An interracial cooperative group ministry was formed to start and minister with storefront churches. The ministry also worked on social and political issues, and served as a training center for seminarians in inner city work. Leadership from this effort formed similar ministries in Cleveland and Chicago. (Benedict, 1982).

Urban Action Training centers were formed in cities during the 1960s and 1970s. These included the Urban Training Center for Christian Mission in Chicago, the Strategy Training in Renewal in Rochester, and the Ministry of Urban Concerns in Denver. These

trained clergy and lay people to deal with issues an poverty and race in urban settings and prompted denominations to keep a focus on these matters (Younger, 1987).

Intentional interracial inner city ministries have become more common in recent years. Examples of these include the Church of the Messiah and Joy of Jesus in Detroit (Mast, ed. 1994). The Christian Community Development Association is a national federation that promotes such intentional ministries and facilitates the relocating of people to inner city communities for racial reconciliation and community development (Perkins, 1995). Important services are also provided in urban areas by religious organizations. One example is Focus Hope in Detroit, a highly successful job training center and service ministry organized on an interracial community basis by the Roman Catholic Church (Mast ed., 1994).

Summary

There has been a discernable history of interracial cooperation in voluntary associations in urban areas. Though far from completely overcoming countervailing trends, it has had notable impacts. Several pertinent themes seem to tentatively emerge from this historical review. First, though the advances toward racial equality primarily came through the struggle of Afro-American-led institutions, the role of interracial organizations was significant. Second the predominant area of cooperative struggle was for racial equality. However there was also cooperative struggle to advance common interests; particularly in the area of community organizing. Third, religion and congregations seemed to play a major role in interracial cooperation in voluntary associations. Finally, it is clear that even under the most challenging social conditions attempts at interracial cooperation emerged.

Religion and Race

The history of Methodism is reviewed first in terms of race relations. The Afro-American church is then considered for the purpose of later comparison with the site-congregation.

United Methodism[5]

Methodism began as a movement of religious societies in Great Britain. It first considered itself within the established church of England, but often worked outside of its formal boundaries. It was characterized by, and in many respects focused on, the inclusion of the working class and impoverished, particularly in the rising industrial cities.

Missionaries were sent to the American colonies. They were particularly effective in the upper South. The preachers, increasingly indigenous to the colonies, were highly mobile, riding circuits on horseback or in carriage. They often preached in fields, barns and homes. Both the members and the preachers primarily included those of African, English and Irish descent.

The movement started with a strong anti-slavery stance. Its primary founder, John Wesley, was an adamant supporter of abolition. The circuit riders shared this stance. Preachers had some degree of success in convincing converts to emancipate. The confederation of local societies became a formal church at the Baltimore Conference in 1784. They called themselves the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Conference also passed a statement against slavery. The statement required any member to sign a legal

[5] This section is based on Joranko, 1996 and substantially quotes from this paper

document emancipating those they held in bondage immediately, or at least once the enslaved people reached an age where they could support themselves. This was to be kept track of by the local societies. Those who did not comply within a year (two in Virginia) would be excluded from the societies.

The leadership had some success in enforcing the requirement particularly in Maryland. However, it met with strong resistance in Virginia. One prominent preacher, Thomas Coke, went on a five-month preaching tour. He found that some made financial sacrifices to comply but he also met with hostility and was sometimes threatened with violence. The church soon rescinded the requirement, but maintained a formal stance against slavery. Methodists continued to organize local campaigns to protest slavery. However, as the movement increasingly became institutionalized with church property and settled pastors, the struggle became harder to maintain on a consistent basis. Many, though, continued to support abolition. In 1844, the Northern and Southern branches of the church split over the issue of slavery. They were not to rejoin until 1939.

Despite major obstacles in society, blacks were attracted in numbers to the Methodist societies. Historians have stressed different but complementary reasons. These included similarities between African and Methodist styles or worship and the anti-slavery message of the preachers (Raboteau, 1995). Others have mentioned that blacks could meet with whites with relative dignity (Richardson, 1976). Some emphasize that blacks may have felt that major changes were at hand in society because of the new social norms being preached at revivals (George, 1973). This was not an entirely inaccurate perception.

A contemporary, Richard Allen, mentions that blacks were attracted to the fact that Methodism was characterized by "plain doctrine" and had a "good discipline" (quoted in George, 1973). At first, black and white members were not distinguished on the rolls. By 1790, the total Methodist membership was recorded as 57,631 with 11,682 being black (about 20% or approximately the same percentage as in the population as a whole) (Norwood, 1974).

Blacks and whites attended emotional events together such as revivals and what were called "love feasts," which were communal meals combined with worship. Richey (1991) believes that such events had the power to break down status roles temporarily. Furthermore, for blacks and whites to use kinship terms like "brethren" could also challenge separation. Raboteau (1995) points to the egalitarianism present under the surface in this early evangelistic tradition. Blacks would often preach to whites, which was a role reversal. Blacks and whites experienced powerful conversion and communal experiences together. Moreover, the message that all needed pardon by God could be understood as meaning that all were equal before God.

However, there were also segregationist practices. There was formal discrimination. Blacks, for instance, could not attain the position of Elder. "Forced seating" segregation during services increased after Methodism became an official denomination with propertied congregations. Blacks were increasingly relegated to side pews and the balconies. Blacks also held separate preaching services, in part, to deal with issues of oppression.

Two independent Afro-American denominations formed in the first part of the Nineteenth Century due to the growing segregation and other problems in the Northern

church. The principle founder of one of these, Richard Allen, formed a separate Methodist church in Philadelphia in 1787. Led by Richard Allen and Daniel Coke, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) was founded in 1816. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination was founded in 1820.

The AME movement became an important center of activity. Allen's leadership best exemplifies this. In 1787, Allen was a co-founder of the Free African society, recognized as the first Afro-American mutual aid association. The "Society for the Improving the Condition of the Free Blacks" assisted newly arriving freed people of African descent, including 30 from Jamaica. The church sponsored many educational activities. In 1804, they formed the "Society of Free People of Color for Promoting the Instruction and Social Education of Children of African Descent." A convention was also held at the Bethel Church to organize the "Free Produce Society of Philadelphia," which was dedicated to exclusively purchasing agricultural goods grown by free blacks. In 1831, Allen was a key leader in organizing the "First Annual Convention of the People of Color," which served as a national advocacy organization (Alexander, 1985).

The Zion church was one of the most active anti-slavery organizations. Zion churches formed critical links in the Underground Railroad with members Harriet Tubman and Catherine Harris providing key leadership. Rev. Thomas Jones from Rochester conducted anti-slavery meetings and played an important role in abolishing segregated cars on the Northeast railroads. Bishop Jermain Lognen was a prominent abolitionist. Two of the most famous abolitionists had associations with the Zion denomination – Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglas (Richardson, 1976)

Afro-Americans continued to belong to the predominately white branches, eventually forming separate congregations. In the slave South, people of African descent continued to be converted but were severely constrained in their overt freedom of religious activity. After the Civil War, many of the Afro-American members of the Southern ME church split off to form what is now called the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The Northern and Southern branches of the Methodist Episcopal Church merged in 1939. As part of the compromise with the Southern branch, the Afro-American churches were organized into a separate organizational jurisdiction. This continued until the formation of the United Methodist denomination in the merger with the Evangelical United Brethren denomination in 1968. Afro-Americans formed an advocacy organization called "Black Methodists for Church Renewal" at that time to represent their interests. The United Methodist denomination continues to have primarily separate congregations of Afro-American and Euro-American memberships.

The Distinctiveness of the Afro-American Church

Scholars believe the church to be the central institution in Afro-American society. They also argue that is has distinctive characteristics (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). McClain (1984) calls black Methodism a "bicultural synthesis," and believes it to share distinctive characteristics with other black denominations. The most prominent studies of the Afro-American church as a whole are those of Frazier (1964), Nelson and Nelson (1975), Lincoln (1974, Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990), and Raboteau (1978; 1995).

Frazier (1964) calls the black church a "nation within a nation." It developed as a parallel institution with parallel organizational forms. Beyond a place for worship, he sees it as primarily serving the functions of social control, economic cooperation,

education, as well as an arena for internal political activity, and a "refuge in a hostile white world." He believed that urbanization contributed to secularization in Afro-American society, which he argued reduced the influence of the church. This was thought to be particularly true of the growing middle class. While recognizing its contribution, Frazier also argues that the black church held back progress in black society. He argued that this was due to what he believed to be the "authoritarianism" and "anti-intellectualism" of many preachers.

Nelson and Nelson (1974) argue that the black church was being transformed by the events of the 1960s. However, they support Frazier to a degree in his analysis (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). They identify four models of the black church. The *isolation model* "focuses on the predominance of the lower statuses within the black community" and factors which contribute to their isolation from civic society. They state: "Part of the isolation aspect of this model would be the description of black religion as a lower-class, otherworldly, and acting as an opiate for problems of a temporary nature, including those calling for civil rights militancy." The *assimilationist model,* which they saw represented in the work of Frazier, viewed the middle classes as attempting to shed an emphasis on racial identity in order to gain social status. The middle-classes were seen as attempting to reduce the distinctiveness of the black church and many were then seen moving into the Presbyterian, Congregational, and Episcopal denominations. The *compensatory model* is viewed as "in some degree a transitional state." They quote Drake and Cayton who concluded that the church served varied functions. At the same time, "it is probable, however, that the churches main attraction is the opportunity it gives for large masses of people to function in an organized group, to

compete for prestige, to be elected to office, to exercise power and control, to win applause and acclaim."[6] The final model, the *ethnic community-prophetic model,* "emphasizes the importance of the black church as a base for building a sense of ethnic identity and a community of interest among its members. This model often accentuates the potential of the black church or minister as a prophet to a corrupt white nation" (quotations from Nelson and Nelson, 1975, p. 8-11).

Lincoln (1974) also argues that the movements of the 1950s and 1960s transformed the consciousness of the black church. The study by Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) is the most comprehensive study of the institution of the Afro-American church. It focuses on seven denominations, including United Methodism, which include the majority of black churchgoers. The study provides both theoretical analysis and substantial empirical data. They argue that the black church has developed into what might be called "a distinctive ethos." In this ethos there is not an absolute separation between the sacred and the secular. Instead, it is characterized by "partial differentiation." There is also thought to be a greater communal orientation than the more privatized orientation of the white church. There is also an emphasis on freedom from oppression.

Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) explore the idea of the "double consciousness" of black Americans, which is thought to result in a dialectic that characterizes the black church as a whole. The primary features include a dialectic between:

- priestly and prophetic functions
- other-worldly versus this worldly
- universalism and particularlism

[6] quotation from Drake and Cayton, 1945, p. 424

- the communal and the privatistic
- charismatic and bureaucratic
- resistance and accommodation

(p. 11-13)

They describe other characteristic aspects of the black church. They believe that worship is a central function, particularly preaching and singing. They state:

> The sermon, or more accurately, the *preaching* is the focal point of worship in the Black church, and all other activities find their place in some subsidiary relationship. In most black churches, music is second only to preaching as the magnet of attraction and the primary vehicle of spiritual transport for the worshipping congregation. In some of the more traditional churches even the sermon (and often the prayers of the ministers or deacons) are still 'sung' in a kind of ritualistic cadence peculiar to the Black Church. The preacher who is particularly skilled at this kind of musical eloquence is usually highly regarded as adept in his profession, and his church is almost certain to be blessed with a large and faithful membership (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990, p. 346; emphasis in original).

Ministry to youth and children, represented by Sunday School programs and sometimes other outreach programs, is found to be important for most black congregations. The extent of these programs is largely dependent on resources and the size of the congregation. Other forms of social outreach in urban areas are common, but they are often limited in the numerous smaller churches to relationships to external

community and civic organizations. Outreach ministries can be particularly extensive in larger urban churches. The percentage of large urban churches in relation to the whole is distinctive to the black church; with almost 20% of the total in their representative research sample having over 600 members. Many of these large congregations represent a mixture of socioeconomic classes. Women clergy are still rare, with the largest percentage being in the Methodist denominations (Lincoln and Mamyia, 1990).

They describe the political stance of the black church over the years as being "ambiguous." However, they also believe that the extent of activity and the particular role of the church are often misunderstood because of the assumptions and perspectives brought by various scholarly disciplines. They suggest several propositions concerning this stance. These are paraphrased here:

- Due to the centrality of the black church in black culture politics can not be easily separated from religion.
- The black church has contributed to both survival and liberation traditions.
- The major function in politics is to be a mobilizing and communication network.
- Politics should be broadly defined to include community organizing and community building activities.
- Economic independence of institutions and persons is key to effectiveness; particularly in protest politics.
- "A deep religious faith can be the bedrock for sustaining a person in courageous political acts of liberation."

- The black church and its clergy are still a "significant force in leadership and sustenance" in electoral and protest politics. (p. 234-35)

They sum up the current condition of the black church:

> While black churches are still the central institutions in their communities, some cracks have begun to appear to the edges of the religious stronghold. Despite the universal claims of the Black church for the whole black community, there has always been a small sector of unchurched black people. Mostly they were younger black males or other maverick types determined to reside the powerful social control of black churches in the small rural towns and in urban areas....Recent studies have begun to show a significant growth among young, unchurched blacks, especially males in northern urban areas....In spite of this trend of a small but growing population unchurched blacks, it is a bit premature to conclude as Frazier, Mukenge, and Nelson have that black churches in the urban environments have lost their major communal functions in politics, economics, education and culture (p. 160-61).

Raboteau (1978; 1995) also provides a contrast to Frazier. He emphasizes the themes of "salvation history" and "Exodus" as providing hope for liberation throughout the history of the African-American church. He presents tensions between tendencies to both accommodate and resist subjugation. Through this tension the church has been a source of strength. He also points to the centrality of the chanted sermon and call and response in a communal form of worship. Finally, he emphasizes a church music, "that

constitutes one of the nation's most significant contributions to world culture" (1995, p. 194).

One further consideration is pertinent in examining Afro-American Christianity and culture. As we have seen, the leading scholars believe that it is a distinctive cultural formation in America. An interesting question has been the extent of survival of particularly African cultural forms in Afro-American religion. In a famous debate, Frazier argued that these forms were largely obliterated by slavery (Frazier, 1964). Michael Herskovists, on the other hand, pointed to significant evidence of survivals (Herskovists, 1958). Bastise (1971) argues that syncretism did occur and that there was mutual influence between black and white cultural modes in the early evangelistic periods. Raboteau (178) makes these points:

> There is a crucial aspect of Herskovit's argument which often gets ignored in the discussion of slave acculturation: the suggestion that at least some African religious concepts and behavior were not totally dissimilar to certain beliefs and practices characteristic of evangelical Protestantism. Perhaps the religious heritage of American Protestants and the African religious background were not completely antithetical. Culture contact was not in every case culture conflict with either Africa or Europe emerging victorious. The acculturative process was broader and more complex than simple retention or destruction of Africanism. Elements of African behavior and belief could have been modified by contact with European culture and could have merged with it in a new syncretistic form. Conversely, European traits could have been shaped and

reinterpreted by the slaves in the light of their African past. On the one hand, the similarity of some traits may make it difficult or even impossible to separate what is African from what is European in origin; on the other hand, this very commonality might have served to reinforce certain African elements while others withered under severe prohibition and attack. That some elements of African religion survived in the United States not as separate enclaves hidden under or blended with similar European forms is a thesis worth considering in more detail, especially since there are strong arguments for its validity in the areas of music, folklore, and language (1978, p. 59).

The Interracial Congregation Literature

This section considers the literature specifically focused on interracial congregations. The racial reconciliation movement in the Evangelical Church is first considered. Several theoretical studies are also examined. Particular case studies will be further described in the final chapter to serve as a basis for comparison.

Before moving to these sections, we will briefly examine extent of interracial congregations. A "National Congregations Study" was conducted in conjunction with a recent General Social Survey (Chaves, 1999). Approximately 50% of the congregations surveyed had no regular Afro-American attendees. Congregations with a regular Afro-American attendance of 1-10% represented 24% of the congregations surveyed. Fifteen percent of the congregations surveyed had a regular Afro-American attendance of 90-

100%. Only around 2% of the congregations surveyed had a regular Afro-American attendance between 26-74%.

The Evangelical Racial Reconciliation Movement

Emerson and Smith (2000) published a study on the recent racial reconciliation movement in the Evangelical church. One significant part of this campaign is represented by those associated with the Christian Community Development Society. Much of the early leadership of this movement was Afro-American. The perspective of the leaders of this organization is summarized by Emerson and Smith:

> According to this view, racial reconciliation is God's imperative. Conversely, racial division, hostility and inequality are the result of sin. Christian's work is to show God's power by reconciling divided people. For true racial reconciliation, then, believers of different races must 'admit, submit, and commit.'[7] That is, they must admit that there are racial problems. They then must submit by recognizing the problems are spiritual and only solvable by surrendering to the will of God. They also must submit to each other by building loving relationships across racial barriers. Finally, they must commit to relationships as in a marriage, and to overcoming division and injustice. As outlined by Perkins[8] reconciliation is linked with two other R's: relocation (moving to places of need) and redistribution (of talents, dreams, and materials.) The end result, according to this model is the reduction of racial division and inequality. In short, it is the ending of racialization. (p. 54)

[7] see Perkins and Rice, (1993)
[8] see Perkins, 1995

Yancy (1996) identified this movement and identified four steps the primary leaders of this movement saw as crucial:

- Primary relationships across race such as in friendship or in worship
- Resisting social structures of inequality such as unequal access to education or housing
- The imperative that whites repent of personal, historical and social sin.
- The imperative that blacks forgive those whites who sincerely ask for forgiveness.[9]

This movement was able to establish some interracial congregations through the efforts of committed relocating Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans. The memberships of these churches included a substantial proportion of impoverished residents of the local community. Local community development projects were also initiated. The movement also inspired youth adults to relocate in mission to impoverished urban areas on a temporary basis.

The Promise Keepers Movement also included racial reconciliation as a major theme in its campaigns. However, Emerson and Smith claim that as the racial reconciliation grew, (and included growing numbers of white Evangelicals), much of the earlier emphasis on racial injustice faded. Instead, the focus tended to move to primary relationships, often on a limited basis. Based on their interview data and their examination of the movement, they argue that this was a consequence of the predominant contemporary white evangelical worldview:

[9] paraphrased from the summary in Emerson and Smith, 2000

> On careful reflection, we can see that it is a necessity for evangelicals to interpret the problem at the individual level. To do otherwise would challenge the very basis of their world, both their faith and the American way of life. They accept and support individualism, relationalism, and anti-structuralism. Suggesting social causes of the race problem challenges the cultural elements with which they construct their lives. From the isolated, individualistic perspective of most white evangelicals and many other Americans, there really is no race problem other than bad interpersonal relationships (or people or programs trying to make it something more than this)....In short, they yearn for color-blind people (p.89).

Emerson and Smith also examine the issue of segregated congregations. They argue that segregated congregations contribute to social injustice by reducing the possibility of interracial social networks that might contribute to employment and other opportunity. They also argue that the voluntary congregational system contributes to segregation by encouraging people to primarily associate with people similar to themselves. They argue that people look for a sense of belonging in groups like congregations, and that groups are often bonded out of a sense of differentiation from other groups. (Emerson and Smith, 2000)

Interracial Congregations

The early literature on interracial congregations focused on the congregations in neighborhoods that were transitioning from Euro-American to Afro-American. For instance, Davis and White (1980) discusses dilemmas that clergy and members, both

black and white, face in transitioning congregations. He found that at that time transitions typically result in a gradual decrease in Euro-American membership and leadership and a gradual increase of Afro-American members and leadership until the congregation becomes all or virtually all black (White, 1980). Such transitions could be relatively harmonious or highly conflictual or somewhere in between. Factors were identified that contributed to this form of transition (Ziengentals, 1978).

More recent focus has been on congregations that are stable in their interracial membership. Ortiz (1996) briefly describes a number of cases and develops a typology of multiethnic congregations. The first type sees its primary mission as the evangelism of individuals. It can become multiethnic without ethnicity having a "very big influence on the structure of the church." The second type of congregation is "primarily concerned with correcting the injustices of society and the church by intentionally working towards reconciliation. It embraces other cultures and, in most cases, is a bicultural endeavor in a community where mostly African-Americans live under difficult circumstances." The third type is, "often the charismatic church that believes God is bringing the multitudes to the cities and that is excited about sharing the gospel through messages and signs. Culture is important, but the greater aspect of this ministry is seeing the way the Lord brings diversity together in both forms of ministry and quantity." The final type, "deals with churches in transition that are primarily concerned with church renewal and community inclusivism....The church is desperate but does not want to close its doors. A visionary comes to this ministry with an urban commitment and a willingness to live in the community as a display of the gospel. The church begins to grow with community people, and it also communicates a friendly environment" (quotations p. 46-57).

Two case studies of interracial congregations are particularly worth considering here. One framed the congregation primarily in terms of its culture (Lakey, 1996). The other took a learning community approach (Foster and Bresford, 1996). The conceptual approach of these two studies influenced the conceptual approach of the current study to a degree.

Lakey (1996) studied an Episcopal biracial congregation in the Washington DC area. She utilizes what she calls a "modified grounded theory" methodology. She identifies five stages of development:

> *Potential diversity* during which the congregation is practically all white but is open to attendance by People of Color.
>
> *Emerging Diversity* during which Black people begin to have a regular presence in worship services.
>
> *Expanding Diversity* during which Black members get more involved in the organizational life of the church
>
> *Deeping Diversity* during which intentionality leads to more diversity at all organizational levels and to beginning explorations about racial issues.
>
> *Transformatinal Diversity*, a projected future stage when the culture of tolerance is replaced with a culture of engagement and dynamic inclusiveness. (p. 271-72; emphasis in original)

Lakey examined each of these stages in terms of the following factors: area demographics, member attitudes and perspectives, leadership, and sense of community. She also found that the:

church's culture can therefore be said to be the central factor that has enabled the evolution of its racial diversity because it is the interactive system represented by the culture which determines who is attracted to the church, who joins and becomes involved, and who eventually leaves (p. 227).

Foster and Breslford (1996) studied three interracial congregations, two consisting of primarily Afro-American and Euro-American members. These two were located in the Atlanta area. They utilized a methodology that identified themes that symbolized the identity of the congregation. They explored how these congregations went about "embracing differences," "celebrating multiplicity," and "living into ambiguity" in a situation where people were confronted with "multiplicity" with few guideposts along the way. They also took a learning community approach:

> The challenge before these congregations, however, occurs in developing an educational process that seeks not communal homogeneity but communal heterogeneity. Although the schools of the nation have been struggling with this task since Brown vs. Topeka in 1954, few precedents exist in church educational practice to guide their efforts.... A closer examination of congregational practices illumines at least four resources to forming communities of diversity in and through the education of these congregations: 1) event-centered ecologies giving order and purposes to the common life of the congregation and its relation to the larger community; 2) the quest to read ancient texts from inside the situation of the diversity of their common lives; 3) the struggle to alter the dynamics

of power among alternative ways of living and being together; and 4) a corporate methodology for theological reflection. (p. 137)

Foster and Breslford (1996) also emphasize the need to deal with multiplicity:

> Bilinguality or multilinguality [in the sense of being fluent across cultures] is required of these Christians not just so they can participate in the conversation at the wall but so they can participate in their own communal conversion...The task persons in these communities face is *not* that of becoming bilingual or multilingual or multicultural in the sense of mastering the multiple languages and cultures in currency. Rather their task is to *appreciate* and *live in* rather than *master* or *resolve* the multiplicity of languages and cultures among them. Life in these communities calls persons toward the perception that experience can and should be interpreted and named in various ways, that truth can and should be viewed from various angles simultaneously. (p. 158)

The descriptive findings of these case studies will be considered further in the final chapter for comparison.

CHAPTER 3

GROUNDING THEORY THROUGH INDEPTH INTERVIEWS: THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter consists of five major sections. The first provides an overview of the grounded theory approach. The second discusses several major decisions the researcher made in designing his methodology. The third considers a framework for studying congregations. The fourth describes the process of selecting a site, gaining access, collecting data, and analyzing the data. The final section discusses issues of validity and reliability and outlines major research assumptions and delimitations.

The Grounded Theory Approach

The research methodology employed in this study is a qualitative grounded theory approach. The grounded theory approach was originally described by Barry Glaser and Anselm Strauss in a 1967 work entitled The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990:24) define this approach as "a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon." The focus is on generating theory by reflecting on data rather than working from existing theory in the literature or attempting to verify speculative theory.

The general methodology can be described as follows. One starts with a social phenomenon to explore. Observation sites and interview subjects are chosen because the researcher believes that the analysis of the data collected from them will enable one to develop a theory. Essentially this means that one starts by interviewing those who have

had substantial experience with the social phenomenon or by observing groups engaged in the social phenomenon. Additional respondents or groups can then be selected that are likely to help answer particular questions that are raised during the course of research. The data is conceptualized through comparative analysis. Data from various interviews are compared, categorized and coded. These codes are then employed in the development of analytic theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Creswell, 1998).

The grounded theory approach allows for considerable flexibility in the means of data collection and analysis. Moreover, although grounded theory is an established qualitative methodology, there is a degree of controversy concerning procedure. This is particularly the case concerning the appropriate procedures to utilize in analyzing the data. Therefore, the researcher is faced with some important methodological decisions. The choices made in the course of this study were based both on theory and practical foundations and on certain practical considerations.

Methodological Decisions

One decision faced in this study was whether to use a single site or multiple sites. Glaser and Strauss (1967) generally recommend comparing multiple cases, but they do allow that grounded theory can be generated through researching a single case or site. With a single case, the comparative analysis is achieved by comparing the data from respondents with varying perspectives on a phenomenon and by comparing data collected on a number of aspects of the phenomenon being studied. Dey (1999) provides theoretical justification for utilizing single cases in grounded theory. One can work with a "case of" study where the "case is selected and studied as an example of some wider

population or phenomenon." Theoretical generalizations can be made from this "case of" study:

- Substantive generalizations can be made through comparison with other (previously studied) cases.
- Analytic generalizations can be made through comparison with a theoretical model of a typical case.
- Innovative generalizations can be made through the reformulation of received ideas (Dey, 1999, p. 227).

The focus in this study is on innovative generalizations, although some substantive generalizations will be suggested through comparisons with other cases in the literature. The literature suggests that interracial congregations can by categorized by theoretical types (Ortiz, 1996). This may allow some analytic generalizations to be made.

Both an intensive approach (one site) and an extensive approach (multiple sites) presented certain advantages and disadvantages. Multiple sites obviously enable the researcher to compare different sites in developing a theory. There were practical limitations with this approach, though. Unless it was a very elaborate study the researcher would probably be limited to interviewing a pastor and perhaps a key leader. Moreover, the travel involved would have been prohibitive given the rarity of suitable interracial congregations. An intensive approach had several additional advantages. One was the advantage gained in getting multiple member perspectives' from a single congregation for comparison. The other was the rapport and in-depth understanding that can be gained through intensive work at a single site.

A second important decision was whether to utilize interviews or observation in data collection. The interview methodology was chosen for two reasons. The first is that, given the exploratory nature of the study, it was important to start by understanding the meaning that participants bring to practices. These meanings are not self-evident through observation. Interviewing is perhaps the most effective method for eliciting such meanings. As McCracken (1988, p. 9) states:

> The long interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory. For certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing. The method can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into lifeworld of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves.

The second reason was an ethical consideration. Interviews are generally believed to be less intrusive to group life than observation (McCracken, 1988). They also do not involve the researcher in the interpretation of observed behavior. The researcher wanted to be very careful to not affect the study participants in a negative way, and race relations can be a sensitive topic.

The researcher utilized interview procedures consistent with the grounded theory approach. A common interview method in the grounded theory approach is the semi-structured, open-ended interview (Creswell, 1998). Respondents are chosen because they are believed to have substantial experience with the social phenomenon being studied.

Twenty to thirty people are interviewed to achieve sufficient detail to generate theory (Creswell, 1998). To collect in-depth data, the interviews are at least one hour in length (Swanson, 1986; Creswell, 1998). The interviews should be structured in a manner that specifically explores the social phenomenon. However, they should also be open-ended and non-directive, enabling respondents to provide their own interpretations of their experiences and provide their own understandings (McCracken, 1988). These recommended procedures were followed in the study.

A third major methodological decision concerned usage of the literature. It is generally agreed that in the grounded theory approach that the literature does not drive the study. Therefore, an extensive literature review is not necessary at the onset. Moreover, because there is a focus on generating theory from the data, an exhaustive literature review is not necessary (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). There are differing strategies for utilizing the literature. Glaser and Strauss (1967) almost seem to advocate ignoring the literature until a theory is generated. They admit that existing concepts from the literature can sparingly be utilized in coding data. Strauss eventually advocated a more pragmatic approach; essentially advocating its use when it seems helpful to do so (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Dey (1999) argues that existing theory can be quite helpful in conceptualizing a grounded theory.

The approach to the literature employed in this study was one of neither ignoring it during the analysis nor having it drive the study. Three main phases of literature review were conducted. The first phase was intended to determine whether there was a need for such a study. This review is covered in Chapter 1. The second phase was conducted after an initial analysis of the data. Texts in race and ethnic relations theory,

and on religion and race, were reviewed to assist in further analysis. This phase of the review is summarized in Chapter 2. Finally, there was an additional review of two case studies of other interracial congregations for comparison in Chapter 10.

The final major decisions concerned analyzing and coding the data. With the grounded theory approach it is often recommended that the data be analyzed in the course of collection to shape further inquiry (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This turned out to be not feasible for several reasons. There were the practical difficulties involved in collecting, transcribing and reviewing data with respondents over the course of one year. There was also the need to collect sufficient numbers of responses to similar questions for comparative analysis. The third reason was perhaps the most important. Coding the data was not a mechanical process. Instead it involved considerable reconceptualization of certain aspects of race relations theory. This meant stepping back from the data and engaging in a sustained period of reading and reflection. More data specific to certain categories might have been gained through further refocused interviews, but this was not feasible in the time frames of the current study.

As was stated earlier, the most substantial controversy related to the grounded theory approach concerns coding procedures. The initial work by Glaser and Strauss (1967) did not specify particular coding procedures. Glaser (1978) later attempted to provide more specificity. He suggests that data can be categorized into a considerable array of types of theoretical codes. He also suggests that analysts start with "open coding" where data is coded into around ten main categories. Subcategories can also be identified where appropriate. The analyst then selects a major category as a core

thematic category. The interrelationships between the core category, the main categories, and various subcategories are then conceptualized in a grounded theory.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) take a considerably different approach. They suggest a line-by-line open coding of the data utilizing numerous categories out of which main categories emerge. They also add a phase called "axial coding," where the interrelationships between categories are examined in terms of causal conditions, context, strategies, and consequences. At some point in this analysis, a core category is selected ("selective coding") that guides further coding and theoretical conceptualization.

Both Glaser (1992) and Dey (1999) are critical of Strauss and Corbin's recommended procedures. Glaser believes that their approach to axial coding may be appropriate at times, but should not be seen as an exclusive method. Dey argues that their approach to open coding fractures the data in ways that run counter to a more holistic approach. Moreover, he agrees with Glaser that approach to axial coding unnecessarily limits the kinds of categories that can be generated.

Dey argues for the possibility of a more "holistic" approach where one attempts to "grasp basic themes or issues in the data by absorbing them as a whole rather than by analyzing them line by line. Broad categories and their interconnections are then distilled from a general overview of the data, before a more detailed analysis fills in a refines these through a process of subcategorization" (Dey, 1993, p. 104). As he argues elsewhere, "in one sense the whole is also simpler than each of its parts. It is easier to appreciate the performance as a whole, then to comprehend the interrelated sequence of complicated tasks required to produce it" (Dey, 1999, p. 100).

A holistic approach to analysis was taken in this study both for philosophical reasons and for the pragmatic reason that it seemed to work best. A core category was tentatively selected by reflecting on the data as a whole. As Glaser (and also Creswell, 1998) recommends about 10 main categories were employed in open coding. This analytic process will be further outlined later in this chapter.

Researching a Congregation

A research framework specific to studying a congregation as an organization also needed to be developed. Studying Congregations (Ammerman et al. ed. 1998) is a commonly used methodological sourcebook. Several sets of recommendations in this work were found to be useful in the organization of this study. One set related to studying the practical theology of a congregation (the beliefs and principles embedded in practice that guide its common life). Schreiter (1998) recommends examining the congregational narratives--its areas of practice and its texts. Pertinent areas of practice include its physical space, its patterns of worship and patterns of gathering (social events), special occasions, and outreach. Pertinent texts include mission or vision statements, educational curricula, and promotional materials. Another set of methodological recommendations concerns the culture of a congregation. Ammerman (1998) suggests examining the congregation's activities, artifacts and accounts. Pertinent activities include ritual with worship being "the most central event for most congregations"[10] religious education activities, ministry activities and kitchen work (behind the scenes support work). Gustafson (1962) was also used as a theoretical source for identifying dimension of congregational life to study.

[10] Ammerman, p. 87

Drawing on the researcher's knowledge of congregations and on theoretical sources, the researcher decided to focus on five key functions of congregational life: worship, education, governance, mission outreach, and fellowship. Interview questions were design to draw out data concerning these dimensions. In addition, the researcher's interviewing approach enabled respondents to relate the central narratives of recent congregational life and provide their accounts of events. Publicly available texts, including worship bulletins and church newsletters, were used as supplemental material.

Studying Congregations also suggests frames for analyzing congregational life. Two were pertinent here. A *cultural frame* examines the symbols, norms and practices that shape its identity. The *process frame* looks at the social dynamics of a congregation over time and, in particular, "how leadership is exercised and shaped, how decisions are made, how communication occurs, and how conflicts are managed and problems are solved." (p. 16). Two additional frames were used in the current study. The *community frame* concerns the sense of belonging that members find in congregations.[11] The *service frame* concerns the outreach mission and social stance of a congregation.

The Research Process

Gaining Access

The researcher was invited to consider studying what became the site congregation during a meeting with a leader of the congregation at a national conference. The researcher knew that this contact had knowledge of interracial congregations and had asked for an informal meeting to discuss the possible research site. The contact described several possible research sites and then graciously offered that the researcher might

consider what became the site congregation. The researcher responded that he would strongly consider this possibility and would like to stay in contact. When it came closer to the time to actually securing a site, the researcher had another opportunity to meet with the contact leader at a second conference. It was agreed that the contact leader would discuss this with the pastor and that the researcher would then contact the pastor for a meeting. The pastor agreed to meet in August 1999. The researcher made a trip to the site congregation to see if it would be suitable and to meet with the pastor to outline the study. The pastor agreed to the study. It was agreed that the researcher would return the following year.

During this period, the congregation began the process of a pastoral transition. A new pastor was scheduled to be appointed in June 2000. E-mail and phone discussions were held with the outgoing and incoming pastors. The incoming pastor was agreeable to the study. Both felt it might be a good time for members to reflect on where the congregation had been and where it might be headed. It was agreed that the researcher would travel to the site to meet with the pastors and with the Administrative Council in May 2000. If all went well, the research would commence.

The researcher met with both pastors as well as the leader who extended the initial invitation. A presentation was made to the Administrative Council, which affirmed the study. The researcher also made a presentation to the whole congregation during a Sunday morning worship service. It was made clear during these presentations that data would be collected from interviews and that no observational data would be collected.

[11] See Emerson and Smith (2000) on sense of belonging and congregations.

Participants

The researcher compiled a pool of potential respondents by requesting names from both the incoming and outgoing pastors and from the contact leader. A pool of around 40 names was compiled. The researcher was interested in interviewing people who were believed to have a variety of different perspectives on the congregation. The researcher was able to interview people who had been members prior to the racial transition, people who had been part of the homeless population, people with middle class incomes, and people with incomes nearer to the poverty line. Respondents were also selected who were knowledgeable about a variety of aspects of congregational life. The majority of the selected respondents had held formal leadership positions in the congregation during the past several years. Several, though, were active members who engaged in important support roles. The researcher also attempted to interview approximately equal numbers of Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans as well as approximately equal numbers of males and females.

A total of 27 people were interviewed. This included the incoming pastor (an Afro-American male) and the outgoing pastor (an Euro-American female). Five Afro-American male members, eight Afro-American female members, six Euro-American male members and six Euro-American female members were interviewed. The pastors as well as the contact leader were both interviewed twice. Three pairs of people were interviewed as couples.

The researcher prepared an interview guide to explore the practices that sustained the congregation as an interracial community. A semi-structured approach was utilized with respondents being given the opportunity to provide open-ended responses to specific

questions. The questions were designed to elicit narratives of the congregation's recent history--accounts of their own experiences and their understandings on how the congregation was able to sustain its interracial character.

The first set of questions was designed to elicit *accounts of members' early experiences in the congrega*tion. These helped establish a narrative flow to the interviews. These questions were:

- What initially attracted you to this particular congregation?
- What in your early experiences helped you to decide to continue to attend?

The second set of questions shifted to a focus on *congregational process and change over time*. These questions were:

- Has the congregation changed since you began attending (If so, in what ways?)
- Have you seen major turning points in this congregation? (If so, what were they?)

The next ten questions focused on five *activity dimensions of congregational life*. These questions were:

- In what aspects of church life are you most active?
- Could you describe some of the activities [related to this aspect of church life]?
- How does the congregation insure that the needs of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans are met [in this aspect of church life]?
- Could you describe some of the fellowship activities of the congregation?
- Is the congregation active in the community? (If so, in what ways)
- Do you think that this involvement has helped the church become an interracial congregation (If so, how?)
- Do you think that there are differences in the worship services of your congregation and the worship services in congregations that are predominately of one race? (If so, what are these differences?)
- What does the congregation do to insure that the needs of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans are met in the worship services?
- How are decisions made in the congregation?
- How does the congregation insure that the voices of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans are heard?

The next two questions were designed to elicit *explicit identification and interpretation of the practices that sustained the congregation as an interracial community*. These questions were:

- What do you think this congregation has done that is most important in becoming an interracial congregation?
- What advice would you give other congregations that are interested in becoming interracial?

The final questions were designed to *elicit rewarding experiences that had not previously been mentioned and to allow for additional thoughts that were not covered in the interview*. These questions were:

- Would you be willing to share an experience that you have found particularly rewarding or fulfilling in your participation in this congregation?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add to this interview?

Most respondents were asked all eighteen questions. Questions were sometimes slightly rephrased depending on the flow of the interview. Occasionally, questions were dropped if they did not seem pertinent to the interview. Questions were sometimes added during the course of the interviews to explore areas that the respondent had brought up. Moreover, the researcher prepared additional questions prior to an interview based on the researcher's prior knowledge of the respondent's roles and experience in the congregation. This prior knowledge was either gained when developing the participant pool with the pastors and contact leader or through interviews with prior respondents.

The interviews with the pastors were considerably more open-ended. The first interview with the pastors generally focused more on eliciting accounts of their experiences and narratives of the congregation's recent history. The second interview focused more on the pastors' understandings of how particular practices affected the

interracial relationships in the congregation. The contact leader was also interviewed twice.

The researcher made six trips to the site city to conduct interviews and to review transcripts with respondents. Twenty respondents were interviewed between the beginning of June 2000 and the end of October 2000. Seven respondents were interviewed between the beginning of February 2001 and the middle of March 2001. Transcripts were reviewed with respondents beginning in February 2001 and concluding in April 2001 (this process is described below).

The researcher contacted potential participants by phone or in person to request that they be interviewed. In most cases, the researcher mentioned that the participant had been referred by one of the pastors or by the contact leader. All but a few of the potential participants were already familiar with the study through one of the researcher's presentations or through discussions with other members. When necessary the researcher described the purpose of the study. With all potential respondents he outlined that the interview would take about an hour-and-a-half, that the participant would choose the site of the interview, and that the participant would have the opportunity to review and revise the transcript before it could be quoted. He answered any questions the potential participant had. When the potential participant seemed comfortable with the possibility of being interviewed, the researcher asked for a meeting and arranged a time and place.

At the onset of the interview, the researcher reviewed the study and the consent form with the participant. It was emphasized that the participant's name would not be used in any of the researcher's reports. It was also emphasized that the participant would have

the opportunity to review and revise the transcript. Permission to tape was always requested and granted.

Interviews with the members lasted an average of around an hour. Interviews with the pastors averaged about an hour-and-a-half. The interviews generally seemed to flow well, though occasionally shifts in the subject matter of the prepared questions seemed somewhat abrupt. Most of the questions seemed relatively straightforward to the respondents. Three seemed less straightforward.[12] This did not pose a problem. In a qualitative interviewing approach, it is not necessary for respondents to have precisely the same understanding to particular questions. Respondents were encouraged to talk as long as they wished in responding to a question. When the respondent seemed to have finished what they desired to say, the researcher either asked a follow-up question or moved on to another subject area. In the initial interviews, the researcher concluded the interview for asking for feedback on the interview guide and on the process.

Tapes and transcripts were assigned numbers to identify them. The interviews were completely transcribed. The researcher then contacted the participants to arrange a meeting to review the transcripts. It was reemphasized that the participants could change, correct, or eliminate any of the responses with which they were uncomfortable. In most cases, the participants read the transcripts and made changes with a red pen. In several cases, the participant had the researcher carefully read the transcript to them. The meetings were also taped for accuracy. In several cases, participants made additional clarifying verbal responses that they agreed could be quoted in the study. On the whole

[12] These questions were: How does the congregation insure that the needs of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans are met [in this aspect of church life]? What does the congregation do to insure that the needs of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans are met in the worship services? How does the congregation insure that the voices of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans are heard?

the respondents did not make substantial revisions. Respondents occasionally corrected "grammatical errors" as speech often read ungrammatically. A few minor errors in fact were corrected. Several respondents also rephrased one or two responses that touched on areas of congregational life that seemed somewhat sensitive.

When this process was completed the researcher carefully confirmed the changes with the respondents. The participants then signed a second consent form agreeing to allow the revised transcripts to be quoted. The researcher then made the agreed upon changes to the final transcripts.

Analysis

The researcher initially attempted to code the transcripts through a linear open coding process by reading through the transcripts and coding small blocks of data. This process was useful as it enabled the researcher to become quite familiar with the data. However, the categories that resulted did not seem to be linked together in a conceptually coherent manner. So the researcher stepped back from the data and reviewed several texts on race relation's theory. Reflecting on both the data and these texts enabled the researcher to reconceptualize certain aspects of race relation's theory. A tentative core category was conceptualized. Ten additional related major categories were also conceptualized.

The researcher went back to open code the data to explore the fit of these categories. After coding the data, the researcher was satisfied that the proposed core and major categories adequately conceptualized the data. The researcher then examined some of the connections between these categories by exploring substantial and analytic interrelationships. Subcategories were also developed and connections with the main

categories were explored. This analysis enabled the researcher to develop a grounded theory. This process is described in detail in Chapter 5.

Validity and Reliability

Validity

The grounded theory approach was initially developed to generate theory not to verify it (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, more recently there has been debate of the status of the theory that is generated. On the one hand, Glaser (1978, p. 184) states:

> The credibility of the theory should be won by its integration, relevance and workability, not by illustrations; used as if they were proof. The assumption of the reader, he should be advised, is that all concepts are grounded and this massive grounding effort could not be shown in a written. *Also that as grounded they are not proven;* they are only suggested. The theory is an integrated theory of hypotheses; not of findings. Proofs are not the point (italics in original).

On the other hand, Strauss and Corbin (1990p. 112) talk of verification stating that:

> it is the purposeful grounding or verification process that makes this mode of theory building different from many other modes of theory building. This doesn't mean that you can't also quantitatively test those relationships later or even now, but that in building theory you gather sufficient data to repeatedly give evidence of our categories and the relationships between them.

Dey (1993) recommends that it is best to talk of validity (rather than verification) in qualitative research. He gives two primary criteria for determining validity. "A valid account is one which can be defended as sound because it is well-grounded conceptually and empirically. If it doesn't make sense, then it cannot be valid. If it fails to account for the data, then it cannot be valid" (p. 228). He goes on to stress the importance of objectivity:

> To produce a valid account, we need to be objective. This refers to a process, of which a valid interpretation is the product. Being objective does not mean omniscient – it doesn't mean we can know 'what really happened.' It means accepting the cannons which govern rational inquiry as a basis for realizing conclusions which are reasonable. It means taking account of evidence without forcing it to conform to one's wishes and prejudices, and accepting the possibility of error (p. 228).

This would suggest that validity is essentially a claim. The theorist makes the case that his or her theory is sound and attempts to convince others. Moreover, this case may be stronger or weaker depending on the extent of research or analysis. The theorist may propose a tentative theory based on an analysis of the data. Or he or she may make the claim that the theory is definitive. Or he or she may make a claim somewhere between these two assertions in terms of strength.

The grounded theory approach attempts to address the two criteria for validity suggested by Dey. First there is a focus on grounding the theory in the data. Dey (1999, p. 246) recommends two additional relevant ways of grounding the theory empirically:

- Consider the (in) consistency of the emergent theory with the evidence from other research done in the field
- Take account of different modes and levels of categorization.

The theory is then grounded conceptually through a rigorous approach to conceptualization. The most important criterion for grounding theory conceptually is that the connections between theoretical concepts and between the theoretical concepts and the data are coherent and consistent. Dey (1990, p. 244) suggests ways of grounding theory conceptually:

- Consider its consistency with other theories.
- Clarify the connections between concepts and the grounds for inference
- Identify errors, ambiguities, and exceptions in the analysis.
- Assess alternative explanations consist with the data.
- Provide an audit of the emergence of theoretical idea.

The researcher has attempted to take these criteria into account in the study. A full explication of these criteria in relation to the analysis in this study would be tedious to the reader. However, the report is written in such a manner that the reader can make an adequate assessment. The researcher makes the claim that the theory in this study is grounded empirically and conceptually. Given the time and resources available to this study, no claim is made that the theory is definitive. The theoretical framework, though, does provide a sound basis for guiding further research.

Reliability

Reliability can be demonstrated in qualitative approaches through established transcribing and coding procedures. This is accomplished here through the transcribing

and coding procedures described above. Reliability can also be demonstrated through transparency in coding. This can be accomplished by identifying one's coding and theory development decisions in the text (Marshall and Rosman, 1999; Miles and Huberman, 1994). This will be done here to the extent that it does not become overly cumbersome.

One can also discuss reliability in terms of the reliability of the respondents. Respondents were chosen because of their extensive experience with the social phenomenon being studied. But there is no guarantee that respondents will respond honestly. However, the researcher felt confident that the respondents were attempting to be honest in their responses for several reasons. The respondents seemed open to being interviewed. Many expressed interest in gaining further understanding of the phenomenon being studied, and expressed interest in the researcher's interpretations. There was also a certain comfort level gained from focusing on the unifying aspects of interracial interaction rather than on more conflictual aspects. There seemed to be a certain consistency in their accounts of events, though there was enough difference in perspective that respondents did not seem to be sharing an "organizational line." Respondents were sometimes critical of certain aspects of the organization without seeming to have an "ax to grind." Finally, respondents sometimes were self-critical in their responses. The overall tone of the interviews seemed to be an open one.

There is also the related question of interviewing across race. The researcher believes that this is not an inherent barrier to gathering reliable data. Rubin and Rubin (1995 p. 111) state that: "Some evidence suggests that interviewing across class, gender or ethnic barriers can actually be more effective than matching the background of interviewer and interviewee." Though the strength of this claim can certainly be

challenged, they cite research and their own experiences in making the claim that reliable data can be collected. Moreover, it is likely that the respondents in the current study had experience and some degree of comfort in communication across racial lines. It may be the case that an Afro-American researcher may have garnered somewhat different responses. It may also be the case that certain sensitive areas concerning interracial relationships were not covered by respondents; perhaps to protect relations in the congregation. Deeper explorations of certain issues may be necessary to produce a more definitive theory. The researcher believes, though, that the responses were more than adequate to develop a theory that illuminates the unifying dimensions of an interracial congregation.

The only way that a reviewer could completely check these claims to reliability would be to review the entire transcripts. The researcher, though, has attempted to include enough of the interview data in the report so the reader can experience the tone of the interviews.

Research Assumptions

Several research assumptions undergird this research:

1. *Because it is assumed that stable biracial congregations are far from the social norm, a degree of intentionality in practice is necessary to foster inclusivity.*

   It is possible that such intentional practices are either planned or develop serendipitously, and then are intentionally adopted.

2. *It is assumed that respondents can be identified--persons who can provide reliable interview data about their experiences and understandings.*

The comfort level concerning experiences should be higher in a study focusing on the unifying aspects of interracial interaction than in a study focusing on conflictual aspects of interracial interaction. The possibility of respondents articulating understandings may also be heightened by interest in, and prior reflection on, intentional practices. Therefore, it is probable that respondents will cooperate by sharing their experiences and understandings (see the discussion in the "reliability" section above).

3. *It is assumed that the concept of "race" is a socially defined category. The concept is one that is relatively stable, contingent, complex and contested.*

   The category has long been used in the United States to identify Afro-American and Euro-Americans. The concept is also contingent in that the social meaning of the category differs over time and place. It is a complex concept that is used to connote numerous dimensions of culture and social position. Finally, the social meaning of the concept is highly contested.[13] Given the grounded theory approach of this study, a developed theory regarding this social category does not need to be presented as an assumption. However, certain theoretical assumptions may need to be clarified in the analysis of the data and reporting of the findings. Self-identification of respondents will be utilized in relation to this category.

4. *It is an assumption of grounded theory that a full case description is not necessary.*

   The grounded theory approach differs from the case study approach (Creswell, 1998). Case study approaches are intended to provide a meticulous description. The grounded theory approach utilized in this study is intended to generate a theory concerning certain

[13] The properties of the term "race" outlined here are consistent with the material in the textbook by Marger (1991)

social practices. Description is only included in the grounded theory approach where is it is directly relevant to the explication of the theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

5. *Coding in the grounded theory approach is primarily a process through which the analyst conceptualizes data that is thought to exemplify a category.*

Dey (1999) criticizes the coding assumptions of Glaser and Strauss for seeming to assume that codes can simply be found in the data. Instead, categorization is a creative (though not arbitrary) process, "based on human experience, knowledge and imagination (p. 87). Dey reviews recent categorization theory in making the case that categories are not self-evident or based in precise definitions or indicators. He critiques the classical theory, "which assumes that category boundaries are crisp, membership is based on common features, and relations between categories are governed by logical operations." Instead, he identifies alternative theories. The most pertinent is the "prototypical model, which stresses the role of category exemplars and shifts focus from membership to degrees of fit" (1999, p. 80). In coding data, the analyst conceptualized data that is thought to exemplify a category. Conceptualization generally draws on existing concepts, but original categories may sometimes be created. Through this process, theoretical categories are generated and then assigned to blocks of data that are thought to fit these categories. Categories can help provide insight into social reality, but they do not exhaust the nuances of social reality. When not used with care, they can contribute to harm particularly when used to label people in sensitive areas, such as race relations. Therefore, the researcher needed to be particularly careful in coding data in this study.

Research Delimitations

In the process of designing this research, a number of decisions were made that affected research scope and approach. These are discussed in detail in the first section of this chapter. The delimitations that resulted are summarized below:

1. The study will be undertaken as an exploratory, and not as a confirmatory, study.
2. The research is conducted as an intensive study of a single setting rather than an extensive study of multiple sites.
3. The study data are restricted to interview data.
4. The literature review is undertaken during data analysis and in conjunction with the formulation of the findings and did not "drive" the study design.
5. The study focuses on the social practices of the congregation that foster interracial community rather than extensively exploring practices that result in conflict. Since it was not thought to be necessary to exhaustively delineate the nuances of conflict in the congregation, the researcher choose to not explore opportunities to interview former members who left because of particular conflicts.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTRODUCTION TO THE FINDINGS

Description of the Site-Congregation

The congregation is United Methodist. It is located in a city in the middle south. It was founded prior to the Civil War and was originally a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The Union Army evidently occupied the original building. The land where the current building resides was purchased with Civil War reparation money. The congregation became, in the former pastor's words, "one of the most powerful white wealthy congregations in the city." It had approximately 1,500 participants during its peak membership in the mid-1950s.

The congregation declined in its membership with the growth of the suburbs. The neighborhood also began to be integrated in the 1970s. The previous pastor estimates that the neighborhood is currently around 50% Afro-American, 40% Euro-American, and about 10% other ethnic groups. She also estimates that the neighborhood is about 25% low-income[14]

The previous pastor came to the congregation in 1993. It had declined to about 30 members— all Euro-American. (About 15 of these particular members remained in attendance at the conclusion of the site research eight years later.) She began inviting guests to worship including Afro-Americans.

[14] These estimates would vary depending on how the neighborhood boundaries are drawn.

Outreach programs also became central to the congregation's mission and development. During the next three years, the congregation began opening itself to the community. The congregation opened its building to various social service agencies. It hosted and was the primary organizer of a Habitat for Humanity project. Five new homes were built on what had been church land. An after-school program was started for children and youth in the community. A number of these children and youth began participating in regular church activities. The congregation also became a host for the city's rotating shelter program for the homeless. A church van was used to pick up people from the downtown homeless center for Sunday services. A fellowship meal began to be provided after every Sunday service for members and guests. The congregation also eventually became an active member of a city-wide faith-based community organization. The church receives financial and volunteer support from various local congregations and from the denomination. Two suburban congregations provide major support and are considered "sister churches."

In 1995, the congregation had grown to over 70 in attendance and the service was moved from the chapel to the sanctuary. The former pastor estimated that Afro-American attendance grew to 10% by the end of the first year of her tenure. It increased to around 15% at the end of her second year, and to around 30% by the end of her third year. During the period of site research in 2000-2001, the Sunday attendance was around 110-150 including visitors. The former pastor estimated that around 50% of the adult participants were Afro-Americans, 45% Euro-Americans and 5% from other ethnic groups. Another knowledgeable respondent estimated that about 20% of the Sunday adult attendance could be considered middle class, 50% working poor, and about 30%

homeless or nearly indigent. A significant number of neighborhood residents attended services, but the majority of the adults come from locations throughout the area. Most *do* live in the city.

During the year of site research, the congregation went through a smooth transition of pastoral leadership. The former pastor, an Euro-American woman, resigned to concentrate on other opportunities for Christian service. She remains a member of the congregation. Her former associate, an Afro-American male, was appointed by the regional United Methodist Conference to serve as head pastor. He originally began attending services in 1993 and had provided considerable lay leadership before becoming associate pastor several years later.

The core membership seems to have stabilized and attendance at worship was stable during the period of research. The congregation currently has a national reputation in the denomination as a successful interracial congregation.

A grounded theory of the social practices that foster inclusiveness is presented in the five analytic chapters that follow. An initial core analytic category emerged during data analysis. This core category – **racial equality** –represents the major challenge the congregation faces in becoming a stable biracial congregation.

The following abbreviations are used to substitute for member's names in the interview responses:

P	Pastor
FP	Former Pastor
AAF	Afro-American Female
AAM	Afro-American Male
EAF	Euro-American Female
EAM	Euro-American Male

These abbreviations are used to substitute for organization, place, or program names:

C	Site-Congregation
SC	Site-City
HSP	Homeless Shelter Program
FBCO	Faith-Based Community Organization
Y	Youth Program
PC1	Partner Church One
PC2	Partner Church Two
N	Name
X	Place Name

This core category is considered in relation to four frame-dimensions: 1) **community**; 2) **service**; 3) **process**; and 4) **culture.** Ten major thematic categories were also conceptualized during the data analysis: 1) **sense of community**; 2) **openness**; 3) **status**; 4) **outreach projects**; 5) **social stance**; 6) **power sharing**; 7) **intentionality**; 8) **symbolic repertoire**; 9) **style repertoire**; and 10) **commonality in diversity**. Each of these major thematic categories is considered in relation to one of the four frame-dimensions. Subcategories for the major thematic categories are also presented. Certain subcategories are labeled as "tensions." These subcategories are believed to be in tension with the central tendencies of the ethos of the site congregation for a variety of reasons. They may represent contradictions, stress points, issues of conflict, or even creative

tensions. The presentation of the four frame-dimensions and their corresponding categories makes up the next four chapters.

The categories are then integrated through a more holistic analysis in the summary section. An integrative core category – **bimodal-cultural ethos** – is introduced. This core category is thought to best conceptualize the data in relation to the question of what fostered the formation of the site congregation as a biracial community. The four frame-dimensions and the major thematic categories are integrated through this core category into an analytic theory. This theory is summarized in the fifth chapter of this set.

Notes to the Reader:
Grounded theory is presented in a methodical fashion. Therefore, there are occasional repetitions in the presentation of concepts either to integrate categories or for theoretical comprehensiveness. Abbreviations used in the text are presented in the chart on the previous page. Major categories are presented in **bold type** in the text. Word emphasis by respondents is presented in *italic* type. The terms "member" and "respondent" are used interchangeably when introducing interview data. During transcription each interview was assigned a number. This number is provided following each interview responds printed in the text, along with the respondent's cultural grouping (Afro-American or Euro-American) and gender. The responses by the pastors do not include this information, as they are identified as making a particular response in the text.

CHAPTER 5

EQUALITY IN COMMUNITY

This chapter considers the core category of **equality** in terms of the frame-dimension of **community.** Three major themes are considered: **sense of community, openness,** and **status.** Characteristics of members of the congregational community are also considered.

A. Sense of Community

1. Openness in Community

Members identify diversity in their congregation at many levels. Three come to the forefront. One respondent identifies them:

> It's really obvious that it's based on race. And when you go there [to the congregation] it's obvious it's based on class. It's less obvious that it's based on sexual identity. (EAM-4)

This study focuses primarily on the dimension of race and secondarily on class. Through their experience members have come to believe that a sense of community is possible even with considerable diversity. One member affirms this and then describes the diversity:

> What I've learned is that there are people...even though we are all committed to the community, we're all at very different places. And one of the things that's been surprising to me, I think is that you can start at *very* different places and still be community. And even though I knew that intellectually – the reality is my circle is very homogenous in terms of social and political outlook. And so to come into community with people who are at such different places in terms of their understanding of race,

class issues. Their participation in either the breaking down of those walls or the participation in racism and classism – to know that you can come together and work on those issues together, being in different places. It's been heartening to me.

She continues:

And the spectrum goes across race and class lines. So we've got some people who are very good, very open, sought out our congregation because they were tired of the mono-racial, strictly white sort-of middle class. They recognized that that's not what the world looked like. But had no practical experience in people of other races at all. Which is really *amazing* in this day and time. But just...you know it is *possible* to live in this world even in a community as diverse as SC and not ever have to really encounter folks in your circle. So we have people on that end. We have people who have... people of color who never really thought about their empowerment as people of color. Always just kind of took it as their portion that you're a person of color, you have to put up with a lot of crap. And you just kind of deal with it and you don't, you know, you don't try to make any inroads to getting to know white people and getting to build relationships with them, you know. So people who are not used to dealing with white people except as their bosses or authority figures, not as brothers and sister. And so people at that spectrum. And also within that a comm...those communities of color, people who have not recognized their internalized oppression. Things that they do to themselves, ideologies and actual practices that keep them oppressed. So that whole empowerment issue in terms of race. In terms of *class,* I think finding people who are just finding their voice and realizing that they have a story to tell and they have something positive to bring to the table. Something powerful. And then other people who are very aware of that. Very self assured. Well thought through...kind of understanding of who they are, who they've been, how far they've come, how far they've had to go. So you got that *total* spectrum. Now you don't have Klan-slave. At that spectrum. [chuckles] But just about anywhere else on that spectrum. [AAF-5]

This respondent suggests that the congregational community represents a spectrum of perspectives on race and class. Included in this spectrum, but not emphasized in her response, are those members (such as herself) who are quite aware of issues of Afro-American empowerment. There are also several members who have been involved in another local interracial congregation.

2. Ritualized Community

The primary symbol for members of this diverse community is the "Shalom circle." A circle is formed around the outer edges of the sanctuary at the end of every Sunday morning worship service. All are invited to hold hands and to sing a closing song called "Shalom." They are then invited to hug those around them. A similar ritual is performed during the worship service called "Passing the Peace," where people greet and hug each other. Many respondents testified to the power of these rituals. For instance:

> We put this in a circle and we all come and we make our circle that's evidence. When you make that circle at the end of the service and you look around. You look at what God has created. And that's what it is. So everybody's needs are getting met there. Because we're holding hands. And we're flowing those energies from one to the other. (AAF-24)

And:

> It's really...it's very moving to me. It really is. I have a hard time singing the Shalom song most of the time because I'm just kind of moving...I mean you're holding somebody's hand...and sometimes I can actually feel like a...not just some one's pulse but an energy running through them. And when you look around the room and, and it's just, it's really...it's almost like a little...here's a little snap shot of what the Kingdom's supposed to be. There it is, you know. Take a good look, you know. Take a good look, you know, and remember it. That's the kind of feeling I got. (EAM-6)

3. Mutual Caring

Respondents believe that a fundamental aspect of the congregational is the mutual care and concern that are shown for each other. This was a consistent them in the interviews. For example:

> That's one of the things I like, and that attracts me to C, is the fact that they got a good mixture of people, and you feel like you're loved and wanted there. You know, you're valued. But I've belonged to churches

where pastors didn't even know your name and you could have been there a whole year and they hadn't even looked at you twice. (AAF-15)

Another member states that in other congregations she has experienced that:

> You have this *front* that you put on: "I am the perfect Christian and I'm too blessed to be stressed." I don't know if you've ever heard that saying or not, but that's a big saying in a lot of black churches. Too blessed to be stressed. And I tell everybody, I say: "well don't tell me that." I say because God is blessing me through the stress. And I'm *stressed.* OK. So it's like this big victorious thing. Well, how do you share each other's burdens, you know, if you get no burdens, or if you're just handling 'em. So that's one thing that I felt is distinctive about this church – is that people are sharing each other's burdens. (AAF-17)

Or

> And I just genuinely love and care about these people. And it...I mean church is probably the reason that brought us together but, and God, of course, but my love...I'm think I have a few people on my mind...it's got nothing to do with church. It's just that they're great people and I love them. (EAF-19)

4. Organized Care

The congregation is organizing "covenant groups" for mutual care. Those groups are diverse in terms of race, class and gender. They were just being organized during the period of the research. They are intended to enable people to know each other better and to provide emotional support in times of illness or difficulty.

5. Fellowship

The congregation organizes other opportunities for people to fellowship. Meals are provided after each worship service and are well attended. Outings are also organized to a nature preserve several times a year. The organizer of these outings describes them:

> IN. *What are the characteristics of the people who go to this?*
> R. Thus far it has been the people who don't know about parks and are unfamiliar with them and they go out of curiosity. You know...or I think some of them are flattered to have been invited to go someplace...And they look upon that as a treat.

IN. *Do you get a mix of people racially on these hikes?*

R. Yep. Um-hum. Yeah, it's been about 50-50 I guess.

IN. *Uh-huh. Does it have an impact on people getting to know each other more?*
R. I think so, yeah. I think it definitely does. Draws them out. You know some of the people really have some serious problems in their life. And it offers them...they seem to, or at least in my opinion be able to step back from their problems...to get a different perspective on life. And maybe realize that, you know, life is not really all that bad after all. That there are some good aspects to life.

He went on:

One of the main benefits is that it gives people an opportunity to talk with other people in a situation where you're not hurried. Where you don't have a structure, where you don't have a timetable, where you don't have an ulterior motive. It just gives people a chance, while they're either riding to or from the park, or while they're hiking or while they're laying around at the park or whatever, to get other people and get to know them on a personal level. (EAM-10)

6. Children Fostering Community

Respondents believe that children have been an important part of fostering community at C. The pastor states that when the "children hurt the community hurts." Much of the early Afro-American presence in the congregation came through the children's and youth ministry. A number of children and youth have become integrated into the life of the congregation. As one member states about her daughter:

I can't get her to even visit another church. She...I'm going to another church, well she's not going, she's going to *her* church. This is *her* church. This is *her* church. And she *loves* this church. She won't even visit another church.

IN. *What do you think she likes about it?*

R. She just like the people... (AAF-3)

7. Friendship

Friendships have developed across race and class lines at C.

IN. *How do you characterize the relationships with the adults across racial lines at C?*

R. [pause] Well, I think that there's some pretty remarkable relationships that have been developed because it...there's permission given for relationships to be developed. And some of that modeled and with the leadership I think. Not the us and them or the doing to and receiving recipients but folks moving into friendship roles. [EAF-13]

Another respondent offered this:

IN. *What kinds of forms does that fellowship take?*

R. It takes...it takes many different levels. Some are, you know, on the level of truly spiritual best friends. Some are on the level of acquaintance. OK. So, you know, you have a broad spectrum. (AAM-26)

Members do socialize to some degree across race to some degree. One member describes his experience this way:

Recently my wife and I invited people over to my house after church. We got this game called Scattergories and just have people come over and just eat dinner with us. And black and white. Last week it was a black and white person. And we just like was ourselves. Went out to eat, came back, played and it was real good. It's...it's...I've seen the love. And we just want to continue to invite people and get to know people. (AAM-20)

The pastor reflects on how friendships are formed.

I think they form by being in proximity. They have formed in making the meetings and the covenant groups. Now EAF and AAF [young adults] have gotten close because I made them work. I put them together in a group. And so they had to talk. They knew each other —but then they had to communicate more and the conversations got deeper. Some of the other ones because maybe they sat around and practiced in choir together. Then they realized –Oh I haven't eaten – you haven't eaten – let's go eat. So they were working on something together. And when they were working on it together they found out that some other things they had in common. And that began to just strengthen the relationships. Or they worked in the kitchen together and both people were tired at the end: "well do you want

> to go to a movie?" And they went to a movie or something – and they just continued to extend, you know, from that standpoint.....So it's the proximity. And in the proximity and having the opportunity to just to be able to talk and to find out other things you have in common. And we just don't do enough of that for that to happen more. We still do far too much. We're far more intentionally connecting adults with kids than we are with connecting adults with adults. We've got to work on that. We – we connect people to where our priorities are in doing that – rather than trying to connect them.

8. Formal Setting as Comfort Zone

It can be a challenge for people to step out of the formal setting of the congregation and establish friendships in more informal settings. However, the inverse of this is that a more formal setting can provide a comfort zone for interracial relationships to form to some degree. The pastor reflects:

> When you socialize you also have to expose yourself to a certain degree and there's still some people who don't want to expose themselves completely. Because if you had, then you have to be careful. Basically you are out of...Getting relaxed and, you know, the ethnic jokes that you tell, that just normally come when you're in a relaxed situation. They might sneak out. If you're in a church and you know why you're there and you have those reminders then you don't have to tell those..... And particularly then if I expose you to another setting where I've got other friends, then the likelihood...so I might not...So you invite me over to watch the game, you know, if I were at church, you know, there it's very open and Dan hugs me and we don't have any problem. But when we're sitting there at the game, then you have a friend, you know, your friend looks at a game, and, you know, then all of a sudden he then lets out, "Boy you know, I don't pull for the Lakers, they just got too many niggers on the team." Well all of a sudden – see that sneaks out, because that takes place in that setting. And then I look at Dan, well now, you didn't challenge him. What have you been listening to at C? So we avoid in many case those kinds of things because we live it out on Sunday, but we haven't transformed all of our lives.

9. Safe Space

The congregation seems to serve as a safe space in society where members can experience interracial and interclass relationships that differ from the norm. It establishes

this space through ritualized moments in formal worship settings. It provides more informal fellowship activities that are still structured in a way that is set apart from everyday life. It also provides avenues where people can show concern for those in stress and crisis. Bonds form in this space at different levels of intimacy and trust. This respondent sees this safe space as essential to the formation of the congregational community.

> IN. *What do you think the congregation has done that is most important in being an interracial congregation?*
>
> R. .....The second thing which is more community oriented is, as I was saying earlier, it has offered a safe, what others think of as a safe space where they can encounter people that they would never encounter in their lives, typically, in their segregated established existences. (EAM-4)

10. Stability Through Commitment

The congregation has had a stability in is interracial character for several years. However, there was also a fair degree of changeover in membership in the years immediately prior to the research. Respondents believe that the core membership has stabilized. One member who has had considerable experience in the area of interracial congregations states:

> I think the mass exit periods are probably over at C. I think some of it had to do with worship and the content of worship, what went on and what didn't go on in worship. Part of it, before I came, I'm sure it had to do with simply that radical transition of membership and direction. (EAM-14)

Though there may still be some fragility to the congregation there also seems to be a high level of commitment among core members. One very active member reflected on this level of commitment in the context of the transition to a new pastor this way:

> We'll just have to see what the results are going to be. I think one thing that did happened early on was people did have to declare whether they

were going to hang in there with the congregation or not. And we had to say early on whether we could affirm P's being there and were we willing to stand by him. Because I don't think the Bishop was really thinking about this at all. But C was in danger of closing a few years ago, and there's no reason why if we don't keep our numbers up and keep our ministry solid – even through we now have something or a reputation – there's nothing to say that in a couple of years we can't be in the same shape. But even people who said that they were going to stand by FP – we had a couple of retired folks who had committed to standing by FP and when she left they would probably leave. Those people have said, you know, we've still got work to do at C. We want to stand by P. And so I think it made people think about it. Had to kind of declare was their commitment to FP or was it to the congregation? And if it's to the congregation and they're willing to stay and do the hard work with P. You know, not having FP's sort of charismatic, well-know leadership to do the cheerleading. But it made you think. You know it's going to require more work. P was her co-pastor or served as an associate. So more laity are going to have to step up to the plate to do ministry. And we had to think about whether we were willing to do that or not. And most of us said "yes." You know, I think everybody I know said, "yes." I don't know anyone who's planning to leave cause P is going to be the pastor. (AAF-5)

Despite having suffered a degree of turmoil, this core group seems to be committed. Part of this commitment may come from an awareness of the congregation's accomplishment in a difficult setting. One member who had been a member of another local congregation that had been interracial for over 20 years stated it in this fashion:

R. Well this is a...this is one [church] that in my history of living in SC that is probably the most unique. X [another interracial] United Methodist Church is probably, you might say, the mother church in some ways. Or at least it presents some similarities to C. But C is in a class by itself.

IN. *Why do you say that?*

R. I think, I was at X for probably five-six years maybe. I don't think it achieved what C has in the sort span of time that I've been at C. C has grown by leaps and bounds. It has gone through some stuff. [chuckles] I mean, you know, it's like...it amazes me that people are talking, are still talking about being there, and still doing...You know, it's like, well you know I want some peace in my life. Let me go over here. I mean that's what I say to myself. I want some peace. But I'm over there too, and it ain't necessarily any peace. People are still as confused. People still

asking some of the same questions. When spirituality is a part of your life, you're going to ask some of the same questions. [AAF-21]

B. Openness

Respondents believe that it is important to maintain a milieu that is open to people of diverse backgrounds who can both attend and participate on an equal basis.

1. Openness to Diversity

There are at least four levels of openness to racial diversity that are important to note. The first is the openness of Euro-American members to racial inclusiveness. In this circumstance, it was an important early step to becoming an interracial congregation. This is discussed in more detail in later sections. A second, and equally important, level is the openness of Afro-Americans to committing to an interracial congregation. For instance, one member shares her perspective:

> When I came to the church it was like, and then I just stood up and said, first of all that I, it was, I was amazed at the diversity. I mean a woman preacher, you know, and she was white. And then the lay minister and he was an African-American and he was male. And then, you know, you just look around and you see the old white ladies and, you know, old black men, you know, and all these children, some biracial, you know. Some probably had money, some poor didn't have. Homeless people, rich old ladies with big rings on. You know it was just like wow! You know – the world you're seeing, you know, every aspect of what's really out there in the world right here in this church. You know, and I thought, *man,* this is neat! You know it took some used to, used to....getting used to the singing (chuckles) You know like N [my husband] says, the order of service, you know, because we didn't do some things, you know at the Baptist church. (AAF-20)

Or another perspective:

> I would say for me...and this...I'm not trying to sound cruel – but it makes it more interesting. I mean being a black person in America – I do enjoy being around black people. But I also enjoy being around Asian

> people, and, you know, European-American people. Like just different people. If I were just around, I guess, black people all the time I think...I feel that would be limiting my world view. Whereas, being in this place it really helps broaden my worldview or my, you know...and in turn my children's worldview and it helps them to accept and learn to live with people of diverse background.
>
> And
>
> Another thing C has taught me – which is sometimes really hard because I did it in my personal life is to...allowing you to be more open to making yourself more accessible. To making yourself...to opening yourself more to others. That's extremely hard. Because when you leave yourself open sometimes you're going to get burned. (AAF-25)

A third level of openness is welcoming people to the congregation whose views on race might be seen as being "quite less than ideal." A fourth level is openness in terms of class; particularly the openness towards the extremely impoverished. This will be considered further below.

2. Openness as Welcoming

Respondents believe that an atmosphere of welcoming, particularly in worship, encourages people of diverse backgrounds to feel comfortable in attending. One member states:

> Not only the interracial but the economic mix. The come-as-you-are type attitude that C generates. The...you're welcome here *period* attitude that C has. Not like other places where you're welcomed here *if* you meet this criteria or you're welcome here if you're not black or you're welcome here, you know, the different variations you have. I didn't...I didn't feel that at C. Didn't feel that. (EAM-8)

One member describes her first experience at worship:

> I came and visited the church and thought "Wow!" You know it was just kind of neat to see the different races and the diversity of the congregation. I thought that was just kind of cool and different. And they were real warm to me...real warm spirits. (AAF-20)

3. Openness as Tolerance

This openness is also expressed as tolerance.

IN. *Do you feel that there's any single most important thing that the congregation's done that's allowed it to be interracial?*

R. It's just opened its doors to everyone, and I think that's probably more than anything...And very open to people period. It doesn't have the judgmental appearances I think that some other congregations may have. So, you know, I just think it's...it's kind of you're walking in, you just, you know...you could feel a presence of *you're welcome* no matter what you're, where you've been or what you've done. (EAM-10)

Another member describes how the church is open to and tolerant toward people, such as the homeless, that other congregations are not.

> And they can come and participate at whatever level they want to. And I think that's positive too because some people are unchurched. Some people have had real bad experiences with churches. And so we allow folks to kind of come in at their own pace. And we provide what is needed in order for them to come. (AAF-5)

4. Openness in Worship Format

This openness is also expressed in the worship format. There is an order of worship printed in the Sunday bulletin. However, there is also a spontaneity of participation that is open to everyone.

IN. *This one is more...*

R. Flexible...if somebody got something to say or something you can voice it out or...and most churches don't. After they get to the preacher they ask you, you know, they say everybody have a voice and if you have something you want to say about what's on your heart today. Most churches...well if never been to a church that does that personally. (AAF-3)

Another member who has been a guest musician in a number of churches says:

IN. *How's it different from those other churches that you visited?*

Well it's a lot less organized. The service is way loose. You know, it's a come-as-you-are kind of church. (EAM-6)

A long-time member had this to say:

You never know what's gonna happen (mutual chuckles) That's been interesting (EAF-22)

There is improvisation during the service:

It doesn't always go as planned. OK. Depending on what may be happening at that time. OK. We're...we sort of improvise depending on what happens to be the need at the time. OK...

IN. Do you think that works?

R. Oh, it works very well. I think it works very well. (AAM-23)

And finally:

I became confused about the dictatorship of some churches. How they describe how God is. And the boundaries of God are boundaryless. OK. And there is no set way just to communicate with God.....

IN. *You said some churches have "dictatorships." How is C different that way?*

R. Well it's...you can tell right off the bat if you sit through one sermon here in the fact that it is clear that anybody has a voice in this church. You're given an opportunity during the service to stand up or sit down if you can' stand, you know. And offer what is one your heart. Your concerns. Your celebration. What you feel and see about the happenings in the world, your relationship with God, you know. (AAM-26)

5. Open Decision Making

The central church board meetings, the Administrative Council, are open to all to attend. Respondents emphasized that although there were formal offices, no one was excluded.

> We have Administrative Council meetings that they invite...open...that are open, you know, for anyone that is willing to help and be a part of that. (AAF-20)

> Nobody is barred from coming to meetings. OK, and that's one of the things I liked about being here. Because I got tired of the Deacons meeting. I mean, so you can bar people on all kinds of criteria that have nothing to do with race. You know, in most Baptist churches the women have nothing to do with the decision making because the Deacons make the decisions and the Deacons are men. OK so nobody's excluded. (AAF-17)

6. Openness to Participation

The congregation is also open to participation in worship.

> They got a little schedule they mostly go through and they allow people...most churches like pick...you have to have been, what you call it, been baptized into the church before they allow you to work in the church. While here we just if, you know, you can come in the door and want to do something that day you're welcome to do it. If you want to sing a song they'll let you sing. You don't have to be done joined the church. [This church is] is only one I know that I've been to where if you're not...if you're not a member they allow you to do things. So you can just step up and do things. (AAF-3)

Those who are economically indigent are encouraged to participate.

> A lot of them join and work around the church. Fixing up things. Telling how better they could...better things we can do for the church. Driving the vans. Helping them pick up people. A lot of them cultures some of the children. You know helping them in order. And just talking and being their friends. (AAF-3)

One member who had been economically indigent, and who now has a more stable situation, describes his outlook on this in a somewhat ironic fashion.

> I want to be in a church like PC1 that had everything. Brand new elevators and new vans and new everything. But oh man, they got the same deal...They don't seem – like I'd get lost in the cracks out there. And I wouldn't have to do nothing. That's the kind of mentality that I got. I could just kind of like praise the Lord, and ease on through there and you wouldn't never be put on the spot of making the decisions and trying to lead. When you trying to lead it's hard. You can't just say the way you really feel. (AAM-12)

7. Openness to the Socially Marginal

The congregation has opened itself up to the socially marginal; including those who are economically indigent. One member compares the congregation to other congregations.

> Because if you go...if you travel around to many other churches...now a lot of churches here – they do participate in the HSP. And...but...and they do invite some of...they do invite the people who are considered homeless to come and attend service and stuff like that. But the thing is they have a feeling that there's this wall, you know. Well you...we're called...it's like they're saying they're doing their Christian duty, but you know you need to be over *here,* you know. And as long as you stay over *here* the things are all right. You just can't mingle in completely. And although I think for the most part a lot of churches are changing that type of mentality. Because there are members in the different congregations who really feel that there shouldn't be that way. And they're starting to come forth and speak that this is wrong. Because we're all children of God. And that's what we try to emphasize here – is that when you come here, you know, whatever your life struggle is, whatever you're leading in life is going – when you step into the walls of this building called the C United Methodist Church we're here for the spiritual principle of developing a relationship with God. That's our first and primary goal. And then we'll work on them other things. And if you don't – if you're happy the way you are and you don't want to change that's fine. You're still a child of God. And you still need to come and have that spiritual need fulfilled. (AAM-26)

8. Openness Through Listening

A willingness to listen is also seen by some as an important characteristic of the milieu.

> R. Very few people in C last long enough who don't want to listen....
>
> IN. *Where do people listen?*
>
> R. People really see listening in the Wednesday Bible classes. You see some, you see some pretty good listening during the kind of executive

committees and so on. And you see really good listening when people are trying to work with kids. (EM-4)

9. Openness of Pastoral Leadership

The theological approach of the former pastor is seen as having fostered the congregation's openness.

> Someone like FP who aspires to the highest, you know 7th, the universalist approach of God. [15] The God of no face. The apaphatic approach of you can't say God is this and this and this because God *is* those things and *not* any of those things. And you...FP fortunately is someone who can communicate that in such a way, so that can pull primarily the lo...the dimension of love and grace is a primary message that comes out. So wherever you're at, whether you're a child or someone who's homeless and needs to have a physical presence of God, someone who will hold your hand as you go through the projects. (EAM-4)

She was evidently able to communicate this philosophy of inclusiveness in her actions. One member puts it this way:

> IN. *If you were to name one thing why this church became a, you know, diverse congregation what would you say it would be?*
>
> R. [pause] the pastor...had to be the pastor. Cause it wasn't diverse before she came. And she was kind of like a big old funny looking woman. And a...she...she would hug the tramps...And she'd hug the gays and lesbians. She'd...she's passing out that love. She was passing out that love to everybody. And she had a way of talking...and she...she went all that...out of her way to make everything inclusive. She did. She made...she wanted to include everybody. And when bad stuff happened, you know...it was kind of like a knocking her back a little bit...she *still*...They'd steal from he and she'd still include them. They'd steal the truck...they're still included. You know, it was mostly that woman. But then...you let a church will take on some of the traits of their leader...and I...we had a...a woman...a big old woman...that could speak real good that included everybody. And she would go down there looking for people. And you don't have...you could count the pastors on one hand that will go to a homeless shelter. He'll send somebody...that is go out and go under the bridge and go to the drug house. She done that. And I'd be scared for her. Get in between people that's getting

[15] Referring to the stages of faith development theory of Fowler (1981)

> ready to fight with knives drawn...you really got to be out of your mind. I've seen her do that. And over the years...hum...everybody knew her as that woman in that church. 'Cause she tried a lot...she tried a lot of things. And that's how the place ended up getting diverse. First thing it was...you had other women preachers, but you didn't have other women preachers beating the bushes. And got a reputation for that. And she was a pretty good speaker...and then she tried to include everybody...to where another church follow people with certain kind of lifestyles...it didn't bother her. And I think it would be better off for any person that it don't bother them...because, you know, you can really get in a bad space worrying about what somebody else is doing cause you need to be working on yourself. (AAM-12)

The current pastor also has a commitment to inclusiveness. He has also played an important role during his years as an associate and volunteer. He describes his commitment as follows:

> I was in my late 30s and most of my time had been spent at church and in a very segregated church. Though in my early teens the United Methodist church came into existence, which got rid of some of the segregation and practices. I began to realize that Heaven was not going to be or should not be the place where we finally got together. If we were to work to be Kingdom builders then we had to work to make sure that the world that we were in reflected what we thought ultimately that Heaven was going to be like. And if we somehow look at this meshing of all of these spirits into one, then there would be a lot of different kinds of people there. And so I thought that the church needed to be a place where diversity was important. I still believe that there are places within the church where they are drawn around ethnic lines because I think there's certain ministries and certain things that take place that revolve around that. But there also need to be churches that are much more inclusive of different aspects of people. And it is through that ultimately that you alleviate the needs for the others.

10. Letting Go of Blocks to Openness

Various respondents believed that certain attitudes and approaches could block openness to diversity. Respondents mentioned fear.

> IN. *Why don't you think there are more interracial churches in SC?*
>
> R. Fear factor. Fear. They're fearful. That's what it is. It's fear. And when you have fear you don't have faith. So where's your faith? So I

think it's fear. We have a lot of faith in C. That's why it's so diverse. And so very open.

IN. *Why do you think the fear isn't here?*

R. [pause] God didn't create it to be like that. That's the only thing I can come up with. Everybody that comes in here...they just kind of leave it at the door. And then once you start leaving it at the door eventually you look around and it's gone. Fear has left and faith has appeared. (AAF-24)

Another pair of respondents identified fear of losing status and being unconventional and a fear of challenges.

IN. *Why do you think more congregations haven't taken that path?*

RM. They're afraid to be out of the mainstream. Afraid to be looked down upon –just shunned. To be discarded by there – what? Higher ups – their Bishops or whatever dioceses or whatever it is [chuckles] And the community itself I think. You know they are afraid that their financial support will not continue because they are not doing what the mainstream would like for them to do.....

RF. Yeah. I agree. Just to segue...I would say it's...we are often afraid to do things that we *think* are hard. You soon discover once you do it – gosh that really wasn't all that hard. Like when you learn to ride a bike. When you learn to read. You learn to do something that you've always wanted to do.....Too many churches are caught up in – like he talked about earlier – status – keeping up with the Jones....The Jones are so busy trying to keep up with themselves and the Smiths that they don't have time to even sit down, open up – open themselves up to God to figure out what they need to do. That's why I think more churches don't do it. It's fear and status. Got to keep that status. (AAM, AAF –25)

One respondent identified being caught in a conventional routine as a hindrance.

They're set in their ways, and they might not have the ways and means to get people like C do. And it'll take a lotta work and time and I don't see people set in their way, ain't going to put that much time in, in trying to get something like C. (AAM –20)

11. Tensions: Resistance to Diversity

The congregation exhibited some strong resistance to being genuinely open during the first years of the former pastor's tenure. The former pastor states:

> Yeah, the first three years were really, really had years. Just intense conflict.

And:

> So from the beginning I don't think we ever had a Sunday where there wasn't somebody who was African American, and that was a hard change for some folks who were just hard-core racists. And did not want anyone who was African-American in their church. And, you know, it went through all the lines that racism always does – well OK they can show up, but we're not singing any songs that you might hear in an African-American congregation. OK, they can show up, but they can't come to a meeting.

12. Tensions: Emphasis on Margins

An emphasis on those who are marginalized by society can result in unease for those more in the mainstream of society. People who are too uncomfortable with this emphasis are unlikely to stay with such a congregation for long. However, more subtle or ambiguous stresses may occur:

> I think the worship service is definitely tilted toward the participation, toward highlighting of folks who are out on the margins. Since I've been there I have heard some complaints, and we went through a period at C last year where a significant number of people dropped out. Mostly white folks, mostly middle class white folks. The most frequent complaint was about the worship service, that it was *so* geared toward the problems of addiction and homelessness and abuse and so forth that some of those folks were saying, there's no real ministry for me here. Nobody seems to care about the struggle that I'm having rearing my children in a middle class situation, or the competing priorities of work and home and family. The kinds of things that folks struggle with in more middle class settings. And some of them exited at that time. I don't know whether there were a dozen or fifteen people who left. Some leadership certainly left. There were other issues, but I think the primary one from what I heard was that there's nothing much for me except to do a lot of grunt work (AAM-14)

13. Tensions: Degree of Structure

Some members are comfortable with a milieu that is less structured. Others would like to see more structure.

IN. *What do you think that lack of structure does?*

> R. For some it allows them I guess to be relaxed. I've had an issue with not enough structure here. And I've stated that. That we've got to put some more structure in the place. Because the thing about structure, it's not so much it's rules – it's respect to me....I have had some issues and I've addressed them with the pastor about having more structure here. I think that sometimes people hear you but they don't hear you. Because you're saying...I'm saying we need more structure and you have another person over here saying, "I'm here because there isn't all this structure." So then you have to sit up and say to yourself: "OK, look if people are coming because it isn't all that structured then now maybe I need to examine myself." And figure out why I have to have all this structure. Especially at the church. And maybe look at it and say this is how I grew up and that's what I was used to. But these people here where there isn't as *much* structure or very little structure are more real than these structured individuals over here. So you kind of have to learn how to say: OK, I'm going to come into the middle and see what this balance beam and see what's going to happen. So I mean...I could say that there...That's when his sermon this past Sunday on attitudes and things like that...The good thing about him is that you take issues to him and he's finding a way to work them into his sermon. And what he's doing is planting seeds. And saying, you know, we're going to have to be more mindful of the little things.
>
> Because there are people who leave because...we've lost some members in the past because there was no structure and things like that. Well you plant seeds. You have to make people more accountable and more aware and think about it. And there's a way to have structure. But at the same token when you have it – do *not* disregard other people. Or don't think that we're so structured that you don't fit in. (AAF-24)

The congregation seems to be moving towards a somewhat more structured approach to worship and decision making while attempting to retain spontaneity and openness. This may reflect, in part, the philosophy of the pastor and may also reflect the existence of a more stable core membership.

14. Tensions: Participant Exit

One of the challenges the congregation faces in being open to the socially marginal is that people in extreme poverty can be transitory. The pastor reflects on this challenge:

> That was the emergency room revolving door kind of thing – just coming in- coming out. You know, and it's a very, it's a very tricky thing. And it's one that, you know, I'm having to learn, you know, that there's a part of you that wants to put in...you've got that revolving door, and you just want to put your foot in there, or push the other way and stop the door. And keep the folks that you got in. The only problem is if you do that, it prohibits you from bringing other people in.
>
> So, I'm trying to figure out how do we get people in and not swing them back out once that door goes back around again. You know, and they come into community, they step in, and you know we have so many people - it takes you I think about a year, you just keep walking around that door. And trying to figure out where do you go: do you go back on the outside, or do you come on the inside? Is the inside really the place...We had some people that came on the inside, and they said: "Oh well, the inside's where you get financial resources." We give. And then if you say, well we don't have any money to give you....and as soon as that door opens up again they get back in, and then they go back out on the outside and they go looking for it somewhere else. There have been some people who have come in and who stayed on the inside. And who are working and building community....I just view people now that kind of walk around looking and saying, OK, you know, do I go in, are they really what they're saying they are? Or do I go back outside because I don't want to deal with, because it's no different on the inside. And I think people walk and deal because they're hurting.

15. Open Communications

Open communication seems to be an important challenge in dealing with tensions in a setting open to diversity. One respondent mentioned the importance of dialogue.

> IN. *Do you think those gaps are bridgeable or is that just a?*
>
> R. I think they are... I think to be bridgeable an ordinate amount of dialogue needs to go on. And a non-defensiveness and an openness on the part of the people who prepare and carry out the worship leadership. (EAM-14)

He also discussed an experience in another interracial church where a consultant facilitated a process culminating in a meeting where issues were openly discussed.

> Unless this kind of thing is organized, this kind of thing being a dialogical process, unless that's organized the squeaky wheels are all that you hear. I think one of the things that happened the night I referred to is the number of people acknowledging problems really affirmed the ministry and direction of the church. And I think, you know, I think that probably helped restore the morale of some of the supporters and so forth. So I do...I think that in your work in general...I think that diverse urban congregations have got to struggle with communication systems that are in some ways far more extensive than other types of congregations [EAM-14].

C. Status

Congregational members are aware of how status distinctions in society (particularly race and class distinctions) can adversely affect the congregational community. Racial equality is emphasized in the congregation and class distinctions are de-emphasized and ideally equalized.

1. Status Equality as an Active Ideal

Equality across status distinctions seems to be an aspirational ideal of the congregation. One long-time member put it this way:

> They're all as good as you in God's eyes. He loves you just like He loves all of us. We're just make different. But that was for His glory. And you shouldn't have got...there's nothing there that would make you think that you are better than they are or you're going to get, God's going to do more for you than he would for them. (EAF-18)

Another member had this to say:

> I guess I feel that...that sometimes our assumption that we all have to have education or economics or skin color or something in common before is disproven and gloriously and freely often times in a congregation like C. (EAM –14)

2. De-emphasis on Clothing as Status Signifier

One of the ways that the congregation signals their commitment to this ideal is through an intentional de-emphasis on clothing as a status signifier. This was emphasized by a number of respondents. One respondent stated that he was attracted to the congregation "because it wasn't a fashion show." (AAM-23) Another respondent said:

> Even in black churches you can walk into and you feel like, "Oh did I dress the right way?" And make you very self-conscious about what you really look like. Well, that's certainly not true at C. You can dress up or you can put on your jeans or you can look your best or you can do whatever, you know. And you don't feel like people are going to be looking at you going – see what she has on, you know. Or who you walked in the church with. And you've got this class-conscious thing that some churches....who is it that you're sitting with and who you're socializing with or, you know. So I don't think that you really have that at C. Or you're not, you may have it to some...it's that human stuff that just comes with people period no matter where you are. But I don't think I see it as much at C as I do at other places. (AAF-21)

Or:

> And you go down in the parking lot or stand around at a church, shake hands and compare what each other is wearing. I mean really...really that's how a lot of churches are. A lot of churches do the comparing during the service – as opposed to C. At C you walk in, you've automatically become a part of what's going on. You, it's...it's one of those...one of those situations or one of these feelings that you know...even though you don't know anybody before...you're welcome and you're loved, you're not judged...you're just as important here as anybody. I didn't feel that way when, when I was coming up and when I was in my adult life, when I was – went to this church in [place name]. (EAM –9)

3. Tensions: Awareness of Class Distinctions

The greatest class distinction noted by respondents is between those who have relatively stable economic situations and the chronically indigent.

IN. *How well do the middle class and the working poor interrelate at C?*

R. That group I think actually interrelates pretty well. Because the goals are similar. A lot of times for those of us, who are middle class, we recognize that we're only a couple of paychecks away or a divorce away from being strapped and working poor. A lot of these...I mean I really do believe the statistic. I'm not opposed to single parenting *per se* at all. But I do believe the statistic that single parent families often times have lower incomes and they're more likely to be struggling. And, you know, they're...we've got several couples in our congregation with children, who if one of those partners was not there, would be a working poor person, you know. It takes both incomes to keep them in a house, and keep the kids in day care and all of that. But I think...I think there's a certain camaraderie, I don't think the division is that *marked* between the working poor and the middle class. I think the lines become more marked when you start getting with the homeless and the chronically indigent and the homeless folk. (AAF-5)

There also seem to be class distinctions in the congregation in terms of qualifications for formal leadership. This issue is discussed in Chapter 6.

The congregation has intentionally become a community that can not evade an awareness of status distinctions simply by excluding those of different status. One member expresses her belief that his has enabled the congregation to continue functioning.

IN. *Do you think if you had started being interracial but primarily middle class – do you think you could have been a cross-class congregation?*

R. No. I really don't think so. Classism... classim in many cases in the African-American community is *so* pronounced. And becoming more so now. My mother goes to a church where if somebody came in, like somebody was...it's a black church, but if somebody came in, like somebody at C, people would leave, grab their purse, wouldn't know what to do. I don't think there's anyway that we could have...if we had just...I think we could have been, if we decided we were going to merge say...say the white church merged with a black middle class church, I don't think we would have made the kinds of strides. I think it was the desperation of getting down to nothing in terms of members in this kind of community and opening the doors to whoever came. And having to deal right away with issues of class. I think that's really what saved C. I think if we had merged with a...with a black middle class congregation 10 years ago the

doors would probably still be shutting. I really think so. Because we have a couple of...in this large community we have some black middle class Methodist churches that have dwindled down and are closing because they too have not opened their doors to the community. (AAF-5)

4. Bridging Status Distinctions

Despite apparent obstacles presented by racial and class distinctions, members do believe that genuine relationships are established. For instance:

> I've seen people reach out to people who are very different from them economically, socio-economically. And I've seen people cut through class lines and I think there's something powerful about that. (AAF-21)

5. Respect

Several respondents indicated that relationships across status distinctions are founded on respect.

> IN. *Why do you think the congregation has such a good mixture of people?*
>
> R. I think it's the love that they...I keep saying the word "love." Maybe it should be "respect." Love and respect that...that they have a good, they have a good hold on it. And they have a good pastor that brings out that type of respect from people. That people just love and respect each other and love to share and everything with each other. (AAF-15)

Respect also seems to be important in drawing in the homeless:

> IN. *You have a lot of interaction with the folk that are homeless.*
>
> R. Yes sir.
>
> IN. *Um-hum. What do you think that group finds attractive about C?*
> R. Well I would say that right off the top of the list is they feel respected. OK. By that I mean quite simply is – they know that they are accepted as who and what they are at this present time in their life. And we, as the fellowship of this church, believe in the power of prayer. And we pray for them that whatever it is that's holding them back that they can overcome it and more forward to a better, a better life. (AAM-26)

However, self-respect is not seen by some as being dependent on others in the congregation:

> IN. *How do you know respect is present at C between people?*
>
> R. You asked the wrong question. You know why? Because in a lot of situations I really don't care if it's known or not because I know what I am and I know what I do and I know that I do my own thing. And, you know...that I run a business. OK. I'm going to look you in the eye and we're going to respect each other as individuals. (AAM-23)

6. Recognizing Strengths and Gifts

Equality can be found through recognizing others' strengths and gifts.

> I think when you begin to sense an equality that you are blessing my life and I am blessing yours.....
>
> IN. *Can you give any examples of that at C?*
>
> R. Well, yeah. I think so. I mean speaking for myself in a few years I have, I've listened, I've heard enough that I've been *startled* sometimes at the musical talent and the gifts that people have as they express themselves, whether verbally or musically or whatever else. I have a great appreciation for that, and just a...I mean someone like AAF you know, her photographic talents and I think any time you become privy to someone's story and it's a blessing for you. And a, you know, that it would be the same if you met on the street in downtown SC or walked by each other on 8th Avenue that you'd be the same people that you were on Sunday morning. You know that something has happened and that it feels like mutual blessing (EAM –14)

7. Resolving Paternalism

Racial paternalism is one stigmatizing form of interaction that the congregation has faced in becoming an interracial community.

> R. Well because individuals at C have realized that every African-American or every person of minority that comes through the door is not saying that I need help. You have individuals there who are professionals in what they do and so they bring as much to the table as you bring. And so since we bring as much to the table as you bring, you know, we're not asking you for anything. We're trying to say what can we do *collectively* to make the situation better for everyone.

IN. So that's been a major change in the last 5....?

R. That's been, that's been the *most* major change. Yeah.

IN. And why do you think C realized that?

R. Probably due to some...of where the congregation is. OK. You know, we said that we're going to make this an all-inclusive congregation and you need to realize is that in this all-inclusive congregation that you have individuals who are not coming here every Sunday saying, "I need help. You have individuals that are coming here who are helping out. And it doesn't matter about their race, creed, color. (AAM-23)

This paternalism can be subtle:

You know it's subtle. OK. It's very subtle. OK, and it's not that...but you know,
Well is there something I can *do* for you?" "But no, there's nothing that you can do for me because I'm not asking you for anything. OK. (AAM-23)

Some Euro-American members have expressed a genuine awareness of this issue:

Some of them [Euro-Americans outside of the congregation] don't understand...In fact I had a couple of women today, I was at the fabric store buying fabric because I'm going to make altar clothes for C. And they were saying what are you...and it's obviously African-American cloth. "Well what are you doing with that?" And I said, "we're making altar clothes for C." "Well, like do you go out there to help?" Oh that just...it brings cold chills down my spine. I can't stand that because...I'm never going to C to help. I don't see C as a place to help. I have been nurtured and care for and been welcomed as a part of that community and just really – am so thrilled to be a part of that. And fit...and thrilled to be a part there. And have been taken in by these folks and not pushed aside. So...so that's some people's idea. (EAF-7)

The congregation had been intentional in finding Christian Education material that is not an expression of paternalism.

The curriculum we've got, we used to get our curriculum from PC1 and it was all white kids in the pictures and all that kind of stuff. And this was the first time I've taught, but also the first time I noticed that the curriculum had kids, you know kids...black kids on the cover. And it talked about issues. It wasn't like- we should help the needy or help the

> poor kids. It was like we should work together, you know, the language changed, the stories changed a little bit. I don't know that was specifically geared toward African-Americans, but geared maybe toward the inner city, or it wasn't geared toward the suburban kids. (EAF-19)

8. Tensions: Privilege

Racial and class privilege is an expectation that members of the congregation have found it necessary to challenge. Struggles in dealing with class privilege seem to be more in the forefront of the respondents' current concerns regarding the congregation, but racial privilege was also mentioned as a subtle expectation. The former pastor states:

> Change is so difficult for those of us who have been in positions of power and privilege, especially white middle to upper income folks. I mean I can be a nice person, and hang out with somebody different for a while. I even want them to share in the decision making. But the bottom line is every one knows I'm valuable to God and the church because I do all these things and these other people can't...And the...to come to a point where people have to say, nope that's not true. The person straight off the street...the person for who English is a second language, who has no attachment to the church is just as important to God as you are. And therefore, just as important to the church, or it can't be a special place distinct. So that's a really hard thing, it's a really hard thing. For all of us.

Another member states:

> But we've had a couple other people to leave because of that. I think also FP has said this and I believe this is true. Because those...those of us who are middle class and people who are white are used to being catered to. They're used to being pandered to. To be in a church where we elevate people who are struggling to an equal level...of equal importance. FP is as likely to take one of the homeless guys out to lunch as she is to take me out to lunch and talk to me. I think that's threatening to people. We don't even realize how much deference we get until we don't get it anymore. (AAF-5)

Expectations of privilege can also be mixed with paternalism. A respondent states:

> I will say in terms of class, there're people who've given lip service to wanting to be in a multi-class environment. But they don't realize how middle class people are catered to. And when there're not catered to they've left. They came thinking they could handle it, but there is such a

> difference between being the benevolent giver who is still catered to, but you're seen as, you know, just the benevolent, paternal, maternal figure. And to actually having your word voted down because a person who is homeless, who knows more about the need in this particular case has an equal say at the table about where, what do we do with the money. I mean it's totally different. Or, you know, if we make a decision about the kind of food that's served. And we're looking at the needs of the people who don't have needs as opposed to those of us who do. So we've had some serious conflicts where people have walked away. (AAF-5)

Participation in the congregation has, though, enabled some Euro-American members to become more aware of racial privilege and its effects on society.

> I remember P saying something like, you know, when I'm on this [local liberal arts college] campus, I'm a [name of school] student. And that's how people look at me. But he said if I walk outside of this campus...even though I have a great education and from a great family...if I walk blocks downtown I'm just another black man. And I could see it in his eyes. Like that's *really* how it still is for those...for you know, for black men. No matter...you know, no matter *how* smart or *how* gifted or how talented...and that's when it first...I first started thinking about it. (EAF-19)

9. Tension: Status of Need

When challenging privilege it is also a challenge to put genuine needs on an equal basis. Sorting through this can be ambiguous.

> That may be our biggest glitch at this point. Because we...we need to find more ways to minister to individuals who are not necessarily indigent. Who are having hard times but who on the surface may look as though everything is OK. They, you know, they may need more ministering to then we've been cognizant of. OK. (AAM-23)

Dealing with the ambiguity of need may also led to unresolved conflicts in terms of priorities.

> I'm not firsthand knowledge, but I think it might have, I think actually had something to do with maybe race and class issues. How our focus at C is *so* much people on the margins, homeless people, minorities, children, that the white middle class folks, some of them don't feel like they get the attention maybe they deserve. And it wasn't...and I don't want to say that is exactly why those 4 people left because there were other personal issued

involved, but I think that had something to do with it. And I know that there was another family that left for those reasons. They actually came to an Administrative Council meeting and said, "we're not, our needs are not being met here." And it's not necessarily...it's not a race thing, it's not a class thing, but a kind of combination of those things. That they were just middle-of-the road kind of folks and they weren't...they didn't feel like their needs were being met. So they went somewhere else. (EAF-19)

10. Tensions: Status and Resources

Parishioners recognize that organizations need resources, and that certain members have access to more material resources.

> I think that the congregation has to become more proactive in recruiting whites and African-Americans who are middle-class, and in formulating a base, a stable base for the church. So that it can continue to do its work with a people who are marginalized, without depending on it, everybody else to support the program. (AAF-17)

At the same time, the congregation has not allowed those with resources to have ultimate control.

11. Suffering as Equalizer

Respondents cite crises (and other forms of suffering) as equalizers. One respondent said:

> R. When I think about C and the folks of C is to just [pause] it's just how the average, well not average, but how the just individual people are.
>
> IN. *And that's something that you...you know really come to appreciate, huh?*
>
> R. Right. I mean, you know, and I guess it took the tornado and it took...because I mean I was so close of...I mean a block over of my house...where my house is at...there were houses that were gone. I mean they were literally flattened and it took *that* plus coming here to realize I could be one, like one of the people that's out on the street. That...that is homeless. So... (EAF-16)

The pastor puts it this way:

> If you [white middle class person] have this kind of problem, then it becomes a neutralizing kind of thing. So, you almost, we all find kind of common ground on the brokenness. We have to keep talking about the brokenness to remind us of our common ground. If we move away from that, then sometimes, then the old issues of race and things come forth. And it makes it more difficult to deal with. Because we *still,* we like being together, but there are still people, who still wrestle with the whole issue of equality.

Of course suffering is present in every community. People, though, may be more likely to recognize it as this kind of equalizer across race and class if they are in a community that is diverse in these terms.

D. Members

People who attend the congregation come from a variety of different backgrounds. However, the majority that attend regularly might be categorized in the following ways:

1. Long-term Elderly Members

There are about 15 elderly members who pre-date the transition into an interracial congregation. They are generally characterized by other members as being quite dedicated to the congregation during the years since this transition began. Respondents from this group seem to delight in the fact that the congregation is flourishing.

> IN. *What did you think when new people started coming into the church about 4 years ago?*
>
> R. Well, I thought it was great. And it was an answer to my prayer. I asked the Lord, I said please send us *lots* of people to help us. I guess this church helping those people that need help. And He just brought in the children like everything. Well, that's one thing I wanted, lots of children over there. You know, a child growing up in the church. And become more a part of it than an old person is. They just...they joins, some way or another, they feel like it's theirs anyway. And we began to get...grow and a...we had people visiting and then they began joining, you know (EAF-18)

One respondent has this to say about the older members:

> But I'm so happy for them [the children] and the older people in our congregation who have been as resilient as the kids. They have had to go through monumental changes, but they were ready and willing to do that for their church not to die. So some of the biggest supporters of the children's ministry are the older adults. We have one woman who gives us money every year. A generous amount of money just to buy the kids something for Christmas or show them a party, and she hugs every one of them every Sunday...
>
> IN. *Why do you think these women supporters were willing to change?*
>
> R. I think part of it was that they are, they are Christian churchwomen in the very best sense of that word. When I think of United Methodist women back in the day – even, you know, my mother and my grandmother's generation. They were learning about the plight of women in other countries before the other...the rest of our church knew anything about anything international. They were doing mission studies in Japan when a lot of people didn't know where Japan was. The United Methodist women knew about apartheid in South Africa a good ten years before the rest of the church started jumping on the bandwagon. And when I look at these women and when I look at these women and when I see them and hear their stories and know about them at C they just embody for me the best of what it means to be a church woman who may not have been to all of these places in the world, but knew about them, had studied about them. And I think they just were willing to embrace...I think they could relate to embracing hurting children. I also think they didn't want their church to die, and so they were willing to say: "Lord what do we have to do to make this congregation live and whatever it is, we'll do." And so when God threw them, you know, a curve, they said: "well, we said *anything.*" If that means being interracial, if it means interclass, if it means opening our doors and letting kids walk on the pews, then we're willing to do that. [chuckles] So...so I really think that's the reason. I just think they're just good Christian women. Good...the stereotype of the good, well-educated, well-read United Methodist woman. And I think they did just not want their church to die. And they were willing to try anything reasonable to keep it alive. (AAF-5)

The former pastor describes these members.

> I think 15 of those people are still very active. They're here every Sunday. They participate during the week somehow. Whether it's prayer or EAF yesterday brought five things for the clothing room. She's 91 years old. And she believes what she sees at C is the Jesus story. AAF who brought flowers on Sunday, who is probably the most conservative theologically.

You just talk to here. She gives God thanks every Sunday somehow out-loud for what's happening at C. But none of those folks would ever if you'd, you'd outlined where C is today and say if you would like to be a part of this church they would have said "no." But that's not how it happened. It happened a little tiny bit at a time. And it happened framed by the Jesus story rooted in the gospel so it made sense to them.

2. Committed to Mission

Some members seemed to be particularly committed to the mission outreach of the congregation. Some of them started out working with some of the programs and later started attending regularly. One, now a regular and involved member, relates her early experiences with the congregation.

IN. *What attracted you here originally?*

R. The children. I...in '93 coming into '94, when FP was the pastor here at the time, FP and I had become friends at [local AA church]. She was like a friend to me. And I would come over and talk to her about some things that were going on at a particular time. And she would...she would keep asking...she kept asking me to come in and help with this program they had on Tuesday nights called, "Kids Night Out."……So I kind of found myself getting involved with those children…..

IN. *Did you ever consider being part of an interracial congregation before you came here?*

R. No. No. [chuckles] Absolutely not. And I really felt that if FP wasn't here I knew I wouldn't have...would have never know about C...never know about C. And then when I would come at the beginning for a long time I'd miss things from [local AA church] like the music. So I kind of played both. I would work with the children here in Sunday School. And then go to [local AA church] for 11:00. (AAF-24)

3. Disillusioned with Conventional Congregations

There seems to be a fair percentage of members who had become disillusioned with more conventional congregations for a variety of reasons.

We've [he and his wife] never been to a [another] church more than once. We've been to a lot of churches. I mean *a lot* of churches. And we go one

time, and they're all the same, and they're just homogeneous and they're...they talk a good game, but they, but you can see that they're not practicing what they preach in being inclusive and loving and compassionate and those types of things. So, you know, we walk out...we go to church...and we walk out and we didn't have to say anything. But, you know, we both knew that's not the church for us, because you know they're all white, or they're all this or they're all that. There's no diversity. (EAM-10)

The pastor had this to say:

IN. *What were the characteristics of the new people that came in at the end of the second, the beginning of the third year?*

R. The new people [including Euro-Americans] who came in for the most part were people who had been disillusioned with the church. Who, somewhat like I had, had wanted the church to be more open, the churches where they are, to be more open. And the church had really closed the door on them. That, whether it was because of the issue of addiction or whether it dealt with their socioeconomic standards or, and what they were able to do and contribute to the church. For some reason the church had pushed them out. And there was a sense in them that they needed to be in church somewhere. And some of them journeyed...went looking. Many of the people who have come and who have stayed had gone through a series of church swapping, of going to one place and going to another. To try to be able to find a place where they felt comfortable. And a place where they could share their frustrations, their disappointment with the church. So they came out of a sense of real hurt, being disillusioned, and at the same time trying to find a church that was not as judgmental. So they came into this place and when they got here they found a church where we did not judge them because of their past experiences. And was a church that was much more open.

Another respondent sees an advantage in member's disillusionment with conventional churches.

I think my experience in the past has been that worship style...that the worship style is something that ticked people off more. And something about C...kind of let's worship style be how it is and...it's not as volatile as a point, I think. Now I could be wrong, I could not just be at the point where I hear those discussions, but in some of the other congregations the *biggest* battles between black and white people or that I heard were, you know, you're not respecting my traditions, you're not...you're not letting us sing the old songs that we used to love to hear. And so that was...that was the battles. It's like, turf issues on worship styles. And I think the

reason C's not that way is cause they're so many unchurched people or people who were fed up with the church that they hadn't been in a church for 20 years. So they're coming to it fresh, so they're not bringing quite so much baggage around, you know, and need to kneel 3 times or I need to [chuckles] sing this hymn every Sunday. So folks aren't as rigid in their traditions. [EAF-13]

Judging from the interviews, this respondent probably overestimated the lack of recent participation of members in other congregations. However, the point that members aren't as rigid in their preferences due to disillusionment with past experiences seems an important one.

4. Neighborhood Members

The congregation has attracted some members from the immediate neighborhood. Several have had children participate in the congregation's youth programs. The pastor said that the number of people attending, who also lived in the immediate neighborhood, had recently increased. One neighborhood resident shares her experiences.

IN. *And what was it like the first time you came?*

R [pause] it was friendly...kind a...not like most churches I went to. They have a, you know, most churches I go to expect you to dress a certain way and stuff like that.

IN. *So did you come back the next Sunday?*

R. Um-hum...I've been back ever since then.

IN. *OK. And a, why do you think you kept coming back? You said it was friendly and the dress and were there other things that the...*

R. ...it was a portion of the singing...and a place of feeling like somebody...the people cared about you and stuff. [pause] I was, I'd been looking for something for my children and they liked it. They had been coming here to the Y program during the week. And they felt that they had to be in church. I had to be there with them. (AAF-3)

5. The Indigent and Formerly Indigent

People also attend services or participate in activities who are (or have been) indigent and are often homeless. Some eventually become members, but most are transitory.

> Dealing with them and their needs is very important. They're part of the fellowship we've got. Folks like that are a regular part of who we are. Now I...do we have any real... *committed* members who are like that? Not really. Not really. We've got, you know, associates. (AAF-5)

6. Uncharacteristic Members

Some members have uncommon background characteristics for an interracial congregation. Some feel that they have been transformed by the experience.

> R. When my daughter first came here...well I had already told her, you know, it was blacks and whites and gays and lesbians here...When she first came here and she saw me hug a black, she said, "Mother!" I turned around and looked at her and said, "what?" And she said I never thought you would do this, and I went, I said the only thing I can say is, it was God that changed me. Because I was very, very prejudiced. And I think that was due to my upbringing. [EAF-16]

7. A Challenging and Fulfilling Place

The congregation has been a challenging place for many members. Not only are there the dynamics of an interracial community, there are also the dynamics of working with very impoverished people. However, a group of people has become committed to the congregation. Respondents have certainly expressed finding fulfillment there. The former pastor has these reflections:

> We talk a lot about learning the language of grace. And that it's a foreign language for all of us....And so we all make mistakes, and it's hard work, and the only way we get fluent in it is practice...it's really intentional...practice. So, yeah, I think it's difficult. And you have to want to be about difficult things...if we want an easy place to be don't

> choose a multi-racial congregation. Especially one that's dealing with sexual identity and economic issues on top of everything else. If you want an easy place to be, you need to go someplace else. But you'll miss the good stuff, would be my argument.

E. Summary

The site congregation has been able to form a congregational community with a diversity that crosses racial and class lines. Members bring a spectrum of previous experiences and outlooks on race to the congregation. Diversity is symbolized in ritualized community in worship. Members also express appreciation for the mutual care in the congregation that bonds members. Some of this care is formalized through covenant circles. Much seems to be more informal. There are also regular opportunities for fellowship such as meals after virtually every Sunday worship and outings at a local nature preserve. Children are seen as playing an important role in fostering community. Friendships have evidently been formed across racial and class lines. The more formalized setting of a congregation may serve as a buffer against more abrasive or demeaning interaction across social difference may occur in everyday life. With its commitment to interracial and interclass fellowship, the congregation serves as a safe space to interact across difference. The congregation also seems to have developed a certain stability in its interracial character through the commitment of its core members.

An open milieu has facilitated this interracial and interclass community. Worship services are semi-structured and are open to participation by attendees, including spontaneous "testimony" or commentary after sermons. Meetings are open to all who wish to attend and leaders stress that participation is encouraged. Openness in listening and open communication networks are thought to be crucial in this type of diverse

setting. Members also stress that pastoral leadership has modeled and encouraged this openness. "Letting go" of hindrances like tendencies to control, fear of difference, and insistence on conventional routine is suggested by participants as being important in fostering inclusivity. Certain tensions and contradictions to this open milieu have also arisen. There has been resistance to openness, particularly in the first several years of Afro-American attendance. The emphasis in worship and outreach on the social margainalized had led to conflict and member exit. It has also resulted in a certain transitoriness in attendance because of the instability in the lives of the indigent. Some members would also be more comfortable with, or would see more effectiveness in, a greater degree of structure.

There is an awareness among members of the congregation of how status distinctions in society, particularly race and class distinctions, can affect congregational community in an adverse way. Racial equality is emphasized in the congregation and class distinctions are de-emphasized and ideally equalized. Clothing is intentionally de-emphasized as a status signifier. Status distinctions, though, evidently do affect relationships in the congregation; particularly in relation to the indigent. However, friendships have been formed which bridge status distinctions. Respect for the other is seen as a way of indicating personal equality. Affirming the strengths and gifts of others is also seen as fostering recognition of personal equality. Suffering and crisis also are seen as bringing a sense of personal equality. Despite this de-emphasis on societal status, the congregation still has racial and class distinctions. These can take the forms of racial and class paternalism and privilege. Members of both races are aware of these tendencies

and attempt to counter them. Tensions also have arisen concerning the relative importance of needs and the challenge of reaching out to those in great need.

There is evidently a pool of people in the area who, given the opportunity, are willing to participate in this form of interracial and interclass organization. This includes long-term members (who predate the transition) who are glad to see their congregation flourish. Others were attracted to the outreach to those on the margins of society. Some members were disillusioned with more conventional congregations-- either because of certain practices or their sense that such congregations exclude on the basis of race or class. Some neighborhood residents were attracted through community outreach programs. A few of the indigent and formerly indigent have formally joined, which the majority come to worship, for hospitality or for other reasons. There are also members who have characteristics one might not expect to see in an interracial congregation because of their previous background. Some members fit several of these categories, while others might not fit any.

CHAPTER SIX

EQUALITY THROUGH SERVICE

This chapter considers the core category of **equality** in terms of the frame dimension of **service.**[16] Two major themes are considered—**outreach projects,** and **social stance.**

Outreach service projects were crucial in the congregation becoming an interracial community. The most important of these have been a Habitat for Humanity project, hospitality for the indigent, and an after-school youth program.

A. Outreach Projects

1. Opening the Building to the Community

The first thing the congregation did was open the building to the community for social service programs. The former pastor describes this process:

> We had these Biblical images and the first thing we thought was, well the buildings belong to God so we can't just have a few things here. We have to do more than that. So we started opening up the building to different people coming and going. And we had stuff like a public health clinic meet here and offer immunization, 12 Step programs, community groups. So now there's different people who are coming in and out...it used to be that the building was so seldom used that people would come up and ask if the church was closed or if it was for sale. But now we had visible stuff happening, and different kinds of people coming. And so that helped a whole lot. And still people were pretty protective cause on Sunday that was different – during the week...they didn't have to come during the week.

[16] Service is used in the wide sense of public service or public mission

Opening the building gave the congregation a higher visibility in the community. It has also attracted new members over the years, the first coming from programs held in the building but not sponsored by the congregation.

2. New Identity Through Service

Opening the building in itself it did not transform the outlook of the congregation. The former pastor believes that a turning point in transforming the identity of the congregation was a Habitat for Humanity project. The congregation risked letting go of a resource despite tight funding, worked in partnership with other organizations, and opened up its worship service during the process. She elaborates:

> We looked at the fact that we had this huge chunk of land right next to the church. And they had dreamed of building affordable housing and using that land for affordable housing. But they wanted...they needed to get...they thought they needed to get a huge amount of money for the land. They would sell it. And all that fell through. But at least they had already done some thinking about that. And so we hooked up with Habitat for Humanity. And we worked with 500 volunteers and 30 organizations. And, you know, it was a long time leading up to. But once it came, in 10 days 5 houses were built. And it was incredible. It was a miracle. You know, and all the organization that it took to bring us to that point, they had to...we voted on it. We voted on it 11 times. And every vote was "yes" according to our Biblical guidelines this was the right thing to do. We were doing nothing with that land. We had no use for that land. It was OK, we didn't need a huge amount of money. It was OK to hand over this resource because this was what God would want us to do...Habitat had never done in SC more than one house at a time so this was going to be a key move for Habitat. It would, you know, create a new movement in the city. We had to create a...a community organization in order to talk to people about it, and make sure neighbors were feeling good. We had to work through our own theology about it because we had to talk to neighbors about it. And there were lots of neighbors who were kind of upset, so we had to work through what we were doing and why we were doing it and how we were doing it. It was an incredible gift to be part of that. And that was the most significant movement after the Bible Study because people were so afraid that the church was dying that they just clung to every little resource. They were so afraid of spending the dollar on anything because it seemed like we never had enough. You know, we could barely pay the bills. Or could we afford the electricity if we let

somebody in the building, that will cost us more for electricity and we won't have enough money to pay for it. And all of a sudden we were letting go of something that could have brought a significant amount of money. That we could have sold off for a bigger chunk of money. And it would have seemed like it would have saved us, you know, with the money. But what saved us was giving it away. And working with these folks, and being a part of what was clearly a miracle. I mean we had huge banners on the trucks that said, "A Miracle at C." And we believed it was so. Because people had to know that God was doing something in the neighborhood. I mean it was not this little motley crew of folks who had somehow created the five homes. And it was a miracle because it gave us a new identity. We were no longer the dying church. We were the church that had created this possibility for five homes. Even though we had all these 500 volunteers and 30 organizations, and we had only a little tiny part of that. I mean even people in our congregation who were 80 went out there and hammered. It was awesome. It was *wonderful.* People served lemonade, you know, they invited people into the church. And they suddenly saw what God could do if we just were willing to be used by God, you know, and it really challenged them.

The former pastor emphasizes the transformation of the congregation's identity:

> There was a long planning process, long discussion process, all the stuff we had to go through to get to that point. And then all of the celebrations and all of the fundraising efforts and all the partnerships with so many different kinds of people in the community. And so it created a whole new way of being in the world. We were partners with all different kinds of congregations. We saw ourselves different. All of the stuff kept spilling over.

The project also opened up the worship service and connected it to the community. In the words of the former pastor:

> Suddenly folks we were working with were showing up for worship. And we were inviting people in to worship. And worship began to change because we would have like the Director of Habitat come talk to us and share with us both the before and middle and after so it became the norm that worship was connected with what we were doing in the world and not disconnected from it. And it happened a little bit at a time so I think it was easier for people to deal with. And it happened because they had chosen to do this then. And so, you know, we had to work on it, and by now we're looking markedly different as a congregation and kids started showing up. Just started showing up at church. I mean just 10 straight days of having all these people coming and going and all of the things that went before to raise money all the things afterwards to celebrate. We just

had high visibility in the neighborhood. And so kids started showing up...just showing up without any adult. Never been to church before.

3. Outreach to Children on the Margins

The children's outreach programs and the participation of children in worship have also been fundamental in the congregation opening itself up. A group of primarily Afro-American children and youth attend worship, Sunday School, and other church activities. Many of these children, with some others (about 40 in total), attend an afterschool youth [Y] program sponsored by the church. One respondent describes this program:

> It's a free program for kids in the neighborhood, kindergarten through high school. And we have a teen program and an afterschool program for kindergarten to 6th graders. And then a teen program which operates during he school year. And we have a summer camp for kids, an eight week summer camp. And we have tutoring and conflict resolution and just socialization training. So we try to teach those skills and help young people develop skills and get along better with one another and do a lot better in school and so they're able to succeed in life. (EAF-13)

The program also has a focus on African-American heritage.

> IN. *What do you think the congregation has done that is most important in being an interracial congregation?*
>
> R.....I guess our most, the thing we've done that is most important is to have a positive impact.... it's also the biggest thing we've done.... The thing we've done the best up till now is to...is had a positive impact on kids who were at the margin. And they probably never would have had some, a lot of these experiences, you know, going camping, going canoeing, going etc. That...that is a big positive thing. (EAM-4)

The children's ministry is also seen as bringing an uplifting energy to the congregation.

> IN. *A number have identified the children's ministry as being vital in re-vitalizing C. Do you think that's the case?*

R. Yeah I do. I think it's a...it just brings about an energy you can't find otherwise. You know that is hard to recreate because people can get excited about things. There's so many downsides to some of the other issues that we deal with, you know, addiction and homelessness and that they can be really heavy, but the kids are such a delight that [chuckles] you know. And kids...and folks want kids to have a place to be happy and safe and so I think it really motivates them to try to create that place. So I think people...so I think people *stick* around because they both enjoy the children and want to see more of the same. So I do think it's energized it. (EAF-13)

The former pastor also believes that the children have challenged both a certain paternalism that may have been present in the congregation and challenged the adult members to extend the purpose of the church. She states that when children started showing up.

That was the next major shift for us as a congregation. And I think people in the beginning were very paternalistic and thought, "Oh those poor children. We will take care of them and we will fix them." But, in turn, the children changed us. They really taught us to be the church. So we were transformed by these young people who were hanging out. And that was also an incredible experience. And over and over again it was kids in the worship service who startled us into doing things in a different way.

She provides some narrative on how this happened.

Well, they're all different great stories. Some of the classic ones. N was 7 at the time when we started this thing with prayer cards where we, you know, we draw pictures or we write words down and N who's still there in the congregation was 7 at the time this happened. And she'd been standing next to the 16-year-old who was gunned down in a housing project in a drug deal. And she'd been standing right next to him the day before and on her prayer card she drew this body with blood coming out of it and holes in it and a girl standing next to the body crying. And she said I want you to pray for my friend who died and for me who almost died and for all the kids who aren't dead yet. And it changed the prayer life of the church. And people had been sorta of, you know, prayers are perfunctory, it's what you do when you go to church. But this kid brought her hardest hurt and her deepest hope and she *expected* the church to pray, and she expected something to happen because of that prayer. And it was just...it was a stunning moment in the life of the church. The kids changed our prayer life because I had not been able to get people to be able to respond. I would say, "for what are we thankful," and people would just sit there,

just absolutely silent. People would tell me that's just between me and God and we don't need to talk about that on Sunday morning. You know, just pray, get it over with. We just want something that's short, sweet...we don't want to share all that stuff out loud. That's nobody's business.

But kids, particularly kids who had no training in being silent in church immediately responded and they could go on and on and on and on: "but for what are we thankful" – "trees and flowers and rain and sun and lollipops and sugar and spaghetti and sometimes my brother." I mean they could just go on and on and you'd have to say, "that's great, save some for next Sunday, thank you very much." And so they stirred up, you know, other stuff in the church. They responded to things so completely differently. We would walk into the buildings and all the adults would say, "oh woe is me, there's these terrible things and we have to fix it, and we don't have enough money and it's such a big problem." And we had kids who had no place to be except little tiny cramped places. They could put a picture on the wall. It would be there two weeks later. It belonged to them. They had rooms where they felt where they belong. And they loved it. They would give anything...they would be at the church anytime the church was open no matter what it was open for. They always showed up. And they were so excited to be at the church. And they loved these buildings.....and so the adults began to be confronted, you know, with stuff we were, we were thinking about that had no, should have had a claim on us. All the things we can't do, all the things that won't work. Instead of all the things that would.

4. Hospitality to Adults on the Extreme Margins

The congregation has provided considerable outreach to indigent adults – both Afro-American and Euro-American. The majority of these have been men from a downtown center for the homeless. The congregation picks them up in vans for the Sunday morning service. A light breakfast is provided before the service and most partake in the fellowship meal after the service. The congregation also participates in the city's rotating shelter program [HSP]. Free clothing and other services are also provided. This outreach is also seen as an important component in the congregation becoming racially inclusive. One long time member states:

> Well, I guess really is when they started picking up the homeless and bringing them in. That's been a big change. And then when they started feeding the lunch on Sunday we got a lot of folks that way. And I guess that was a real turning point. And then probably the HSP, some of those people continued coming. (EAM-22)

Outreach to the indigent is primarily seen as providing hospitality in terms of a comfortable place to be:

> If I'm a street person and I find a haven of rest. And I think that's what they found there. And then most of 'em's smokers. And we...that I don't...I guess our church is, since we've sighted these changes taking place, we haven't tried to push that out. They don't smoke in the church [chuckles]. But they a...they're smokers. And so they, they talk to each other and they show up. And I don't think it's altogether because they get a meal at the end of the service. (EAM-22)

The pastor had this to say on hospitality:

> So it's many people that are in and out. And all we can do for them I think is form community. And it's not on things that become measurable as far as success is concerned. As to what we want, is a kind of clinic, you know. The clinic doesn't solve the cancer. It just gives you the kind of place to come in and give you some comfort for awhile.

Members reach out in conversation to this group during fellowship meals and other opportunities.

> I also had the opportunity to drive the van this past year for HSP and I was driving the men back and forth from the shelter here in the mornings. And for some reason that, you know, there was not oftentimes a lot of interaction, but it was just, it just felt good to be able to do that. To, you know, have conversations with people who are really struggling and to have a better understanding of that. Of what some of the struggles were or what some of the struggles are when you're homeless and have chemical dependency. I think those two things have been, you know, experiences that are heartfelt for me. (AAF-21)

5. Tensions: Resources

Outreach programs for the indigent have put a strain on the congregation's resources. Support from partner congregations has been essential for this and other areas. The pastor interpreted the matter:

> I'm trying to put in a way that we can systematically continue to survive while we do those things, and how is it that we can pay for the lights so that we are able to have a place that you can come to...While at the same time knowing that there is a place that you can come and you don't have to pay for the lights, you know. And I think that you have to deal with a middle class population within the church for that to be able to be sustainable.

6. Tensions: Extreme Need as Strain on Community

The indigent population brings extreme needs. How best to deal with these needs without overwhelming the community seemed to be a factor in the second major conflict in the congregation:

> Part of it is, is that, and probably the greatest criticism of C is that because we spent so much time being an active outreach congregation until recently...until the most recent set of defection...People were saying well we can't take this anymore – we're out of here. You guys have just lost the boat with some of this stuff. And it wasn't the fact that they lost the boat on being intentional or being inclusive. It was the fact that you were working with too, you were working with too few...some communities that have enormous, limitless needs. And as a congregation you got to figure out what that balance is. And you need to come back and fortify yourself. That need is there. That need will always be there. But your needs are as important as that. And that has not occurred until just, until recently. Actually people realized, you know, we're getting out of balance there. So that was an internal cause, and really the membership has prayed, played, has remained rather stable for the past year. [EAM-4]

7. Service as Attraction

Outreach service programs for adults have helped retain and attract members. One long-term member says this in the context of talking about the homeless:

You're doing something. And so I feel like that's kept *me* interested and several of us are still there. And I say still there – I think we, whoever's been to our church, they can't get away. They won't get away from it ever. It'll always be a part of their...in their hearts. But anyway those little changes that I guess because we were able to accept 'em. We could have said, well the heck with this. We're not going to get to this, we're going south. And that we were able to keep the doors open and the people have that interest in. (EAM-22)

The congregation's community outreach programs have been a reason why some new members decide to return after their first visit.

IN. *Why'd you keep coming back?*

R. Well, because it seemed to be a church that was doing a little bit more and above. OK. They seemed to be doing the things that they were talking about, rather than just talking about them.

IN. *What do you mean by that?*

R. Well, they talked about going and doing community outreach type services, naturally you had the a...We built a couple of houses next door and that sort of thing. They were...they were actually going out and talking to individuals and not just talking about it. (AAM-23)

Another member sees service as being very attractive:

C brings something to the table. They got a lot of programs that attract you to it. My church in X don't have nothing that attracts you to it, except everybody is similar about going to church on Sundays. Everybody knows about Bible Study on Wednesday. That's as far as it goes. Any given night here at C, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday something is going on here. If it's something positive with NA or something with Bible Study or something for the kids, you can get that here. But the church I grew up in, don't have that. They don't have nothing but church on Sundays and Bible Study on Wednesday. And that ain't attracting and bringing it to, they ain't bring for the community. And where C is bridging a lot of stuff to the community. You know, I'm not knocking my church in N, the church I used to go to, but they just...not...

RW. Set in their ways.
RM. They're set in their ways, and they might not have the ways and means to get people like C do. (AAF-20)

Service is an important component of the congregation's identity. There have been discussions about finding ways of adding more professional services. This member's opinion reflects that belief.

> We love and we reach out and we have an open door, but we think that God is calling us to do a little bit more in terms of transitional housing, spiritual counseling, support, you know. One-on-one support. (AF-5)

B. Stance

An important feature of Afro-American Christianity has been the stance that congregations have taken on racial and social justice issues. For instance, Afro-American congregations and their pastors took a leading role in the Civil Rights movement. Many (though certainly not all) Afro-American clergy see social advocacy as an important part of their role as pastor. Congregations have also served as bases for social action. This is true for some Euro-American pastors and congregations. However, the case can be made that social advocacy plays a less prominent role in Euro-American Christianity as a whole.

The site congregation has taken part in sustaining this social justice tradition. The current and former pastors have been active in social advocacy and the congregation has participated in issue campaigns.

1. Pastor as Advocate

The former pastor has a substantial reputation in the region for her social advocacy.

> FP does have a reputation. She's well know as an advocate for the poor – as a civil and human rights advocate. (AAF-5)

The current pastor is also known for his involvement in local issues, particularly education. He sees social involvement as an important function of the congregation.

IN. *Where do you see the church in three to five years?*

R. I hope in three years that we are still a very inclusive congregation. Really connected with the community on some broad social issues. Continue to be at the forefront of the church and lift up some social concerns for this community.

2. Preaching on Race and Class

The sermons often touch on issues of race and class.

> [There's] some mention of it [race, class or sexual orientation] in every sermon and how this interpretation of the Bible, which has been held this way for these many centuries has affected each one of these groups of people. (EM-4)

3. Issue Campaigns

The congregation is involved in a citywide faith-based community organization (FBCO), which organizes campaigns on a number of local issues.

IN. *How important is it, do you think that FBCO has been to C?*

R. I think it's been a very important, and again I'm a little jaundiced in my view probably, but I think it's been very important. There has been N before EAM and EAF exercising an aggressive intervening leadership in the worship and so forth. Getting people involved and doing that – they're having to look at *city* issues and not just congregational issues. And not even just neighborhood issues. It is...it is very tempting in a congregation that has that much challenge and diversity in it to become very introverted as very introverted as possible. And I think that while introversion would never happen altogether with FP or P, I do think that FBCO has helped turn some energy into centrifical instead of centrifugal energy. And that's...I mean EAM and EAF are giving leadership to the neighborhood action team. The turnouts from C are always good from mass rallies. Not too many Sundays go by without some information from EAM and EAF. And so, so I think it's, I think it's been a good balance. A good complementary factor at C. (EM-14)

FBCO works to unite congregations of different denominations and racial and ethnic groups. One member active in the organization states:

> I think it helps it cross different lines because there are people from all ethnic groups, I guess is the right word, that have common goals. That

have dreams, that have ideals or ideas – what they think their community should be like. And for a long time they couldn't get together, and I think it took something like FBCO to bring them together. To let everybody see that not only can we be interracial, but we can be denominational sake of – desegregated or whatever. (EAM-8)

The congregation has worked with FBCO on a number of issue campaigns.

> We have worked on housing issues. We had a housing hearing a couple of months ago. Trying to figure out what agencies are out there that can help people who are either homeless or just on the borderline, you know, getting a home or whatever. We have worked on transportation. We've...the bus systems – we've improved that some. It still has a long ways to go. Education...that and we've just finally started a new neighborhood livability project (EAF-16)

They are also working together on desegregation issues.

> R. But I don't think we're going to solve this problem [of segregated congregations] until we solve the problem of neighborhoods and diversity of neighborhoods.
>
> IN. *Is FBCO addressing that issue?*
>
> R. Trying very hard to do that. Yeah. Our housing research team and our hearing a few months ago – it was a chunk of that in the name of diversity. We've talked some with the new director of the Metro Planning Organization here, N, who's very committed to that. (EAM-14)

4. Community Outreach and Issues

The congregation also addresses issues through its community outreach programs.

One respondent states:

> I've never been in a church that has tackled issues head on like C does...Just goes right to the core of them, you know, needle exchange, I mean "hello," right there on Wednesday night. The needles were right there on the table, next to the pizza, you know what I mean, it's right there in your face. So not only is it diverse, but I mean it's trying to make an impact and shake people up. So I mean just *totally* night and day from any church I've ever been in. (EAF-19)

5. Priorities

The congregation seems to place a priority on being involved in citywide issues through FBCO and neighborhood issues related directly to its community outreach. However, other than the earlier Habitat project, the congregation has not been involved significantly in neighborhood association or community development projects. One member discusses this in relation to a denominational training program in neighborhood development.

> The neighborhood itself didn't turn out to look like a very high priority. That there were very few people – EAF and EAF who participated in the training. We had a couple of meetings after the training was over. But clearly the things that Shalom Zone training was calling for were not a high priority for C at that time, with its commitment to the children's programs and so on and so forth. Given the size and resources of the congregation it was obviously doing a lot. Leadership like EAM and EAF and P and FP and others – leadership has brought FBCO to a higher priority it seems to me as a city-focused priority than the immediate neighborhood. (EAM-14)

Moreover, though the congregation is involved in social issues, the researcher would not describe the congregation primarily in social activist terms. Most respondents tended to use the discourse of "community" rather than "social issues" during the interviews.

6. Tensions: Evasion of Race-Based Issues

Notwithstanding the congregation's social involvement, some respondents said that issues pertaining directly to race were evaded at times. One respondent believed that they were evaded through a discourse that focused on generic social problems or on "diversity."

> I think class-wide, you know, socio-economically, especially when it comes to social justice, we are doing a really good job with that. But when it comes to race I think, we skirt that, we try to shoot around it.

And later:

> And I would love to see us become – African Americans – become more economically self-sufficient. And not that that should be a divider but, you know, just have more opportunity for African-Americans to be part of the whole. To become a part of the economic system. You know, and not always on the periphery or not always on the fringes. And not always on the welfare end of it. So how can we do that at C? We could talk about that. We need to talk about that. And we don't need to skirt around it by saying, "well, you know, we have a lot of different ethnic groups of people." But the majority is *black*. The majority is African-American. And don't use that as an excuse. We have to answer to all these different groups of people. Yes we *do* have to be sensitive to everybody. I don't care, you know, you have to be sensitive to everybody no matter what – even in a situation of all black people. We all have to be sensitive to each other cause we're all just different. We all have unique ways of being and doing. But I think we have to look at it from a broader perspective, you know. And how politically African-American families are being impacted, what's happening. How jail cells are filled with African-American men and that's increasing. How a lot of our youth are just falling by the wayside. And I think again we have to ask ourselves some very, very tough questions *if* we are to be real. (AAF-21)

7. Tensions: Congregational Self-Sufficiency

African-American congregations (particularly in the Baptist tradition) have had a certain form of self-sufficiency, namely, enough independence from Euro-American dominated institutions to take a strong social stance. The site congregation has gotten important support from the denomination and from partner congregations. This has been greatly appreciated by both pastors and the congregation's leaders. The partnerships with suburban congregations have also been seen as an important social link. Moreover, given the particular history of this congregation, it is unlikely that it could have flourished without support. While recognizing the importance of these links, there are also ambivalent feelings about not being a self-sufficient congregation.

> One of the things that I bring with me from being in African-American churches, which I'm finding a hard time getting used to, alright, is being in

a church that is always on a receiving end. You know, I was in black churches, we paid for our own literature. OK, if we want to feed you, either you paid for your dinner or if it was a fellowship dinner then the church paid for it, you know. But C, I understand is re-building itself. OK, I understand why it's like that, and I think that is one of the positive things about the United Methodist and the connection, you know, the system of being connected and being able to tap into the resource, you know from other places. I think that's a positive thing. But I have to admit that it kinds of rubs me the wrong way sometimes, you know. (AAF-17)

The pastor reflects:

If we're going to continue to be an "emergency room" we're going to have to find funding for that to be around. I am not as good at that as I probably will be. Because I am more for us developing some kind of self-determination...X [another church with strong outreach programs] now gets huge amounts of grants, but for many years X paid for what it did. And they, the people goings inside their pockets and paid for it. And they had to invest it with some kind of wealth.

He explains his approach:

One of the things that I have tried to do since I've come in is to have us focus more on what it is that we can do, and how it is that...before we had so much outside influence. And we heavily relied upon our sister congregations for financial support and for resources as a place to come and do ministry and be able to go back. What I'm trying to get us to say, we need to have the responsibility initially. And it ought to be something that we want to do and we're willing to invest with our financial resources and also with our time and effort. So let's us see what it is, and rather than just saying there's a good program that needs to happen, and let us find somebody to do it here, let's try to find out what it is we can do. And there are some people who want to come in and do those kinds of things. I think probably a real good example was the Harvest Festival. I mean in the years past, you know, we went to PC1 and said, "you'all come to do something for our children." We went someplace else and said, "you'all need to come over and give us entertainment," and it was maybe 6 or 7 people who actually worked. We probably had maybe 6 or 7 people who actually worked. We probably had this year within the C community close to 35-40 people who had worked at some point in time during the weekend and on helping us do that. I think they all enjoyed it. Now we still are not at the point where we can financially do all the things that we want to. We are still gonna have to have partnerships from that standpoint. But I think people enjoyed just coming in and doing something and say that they had contributed to that part of it. And there

were different faces. I mean we had 5 parents from the Y program who came and helped out. And so it was just...it was a good time. That had never happened before.

C. Summary

Service projects have been important to the congregation in opening the church to racial inclusivity and in supporting racial equality. Opening the building to the community and the congregation's outreach projects have attracted new members who were served by these programs. Both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans committed themselves to service projects and later joined the church. Outreach to Afro-American children has been instrumental in transforming the congregation's outlook. Hospitality to the indigent has opened up the church to a new social group. It has also led both to an increased tolerance in dealing with difference, and to tensions due to dealing with extensive needs. Outreach projects have enabled members to develop a shared purpose and have stimulated the development of a congregational identity—as a church open to and serving the community.

A social stance for racial equality has been an important part of the Afro-American Christian tradition. The site congregation attempts to continue in this tradition. Both the current and former pastors are well known in the region for their advocacy for racial justice. Sermons often reflect on how particular Biblical texts relate to the dynamics of race and class. The congregation also participates in issue campaigns through a citywide faith-based community organization that is also interracial.

Though involved in neighborhood issues through outreach services, the congregation does not currently place a priority on what is generally categorized as community development. Though supportive of racial equality in terms of being

involved in social issues, the congregation sometimes evades the connection of race and social issues through a discourse on generic diversity and generic social issues. Finally, while recognizing the importance of outside support, some leaders also express some ambivalence about not being self-sufficient as a congregation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EQUALITY THROUGH PROCESS

This chapter considers the core category of **equality** in terms of the frame-dimension of **process.** Two major themes are considered—**power sharing** and **intentionality.** Characteristics of members of the congregational community are also considered.

A. Power Sharing

1. Power Sharing in the Congregation

An important dimension in considering equality between races in a congregation is power. Over a period of eight years, the congregation made the transition—from power held exclusively by Euro-American to (at least for some respondents) power shared fairly equally between Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans. Power in a congregation can be looked at in terms of authority where influence is strongly vested in position (such as pastor). It can also be looked at in term of leadership where members hold designated voluntary positions (such as committee chairperson), enabling them facilitate decisions within the organization. Finally, it can be looked at in terms of more informal modes of influencing the goals, resource development, and the organizational ethos.

It is difficult to determine the precise balance of influence between categorical groups in an organization. It is somewhat easier to notice if there is a major imbalance of

influence between Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans. At least some respondents believed that influence was beginning to be balanced. One responds:

> IN. *Do you think that the voices of both African-Americans and whites are heard in the decision-making at C?*
>
> R. Oh definitely. Definitely. I could tell you that 5 years ago that...it wasn't necessarily that, you know, you had all one side making the decisions. It's just that you may not have had individuals that were involved from both sides in the decision-making process...But at this point I can definitely say that we're trying to get on an even plane. OK. We're getting on an even plane. (AAM-23)

Or

> Power sharing (pause) Well, I think it's kind of evened out here. (AAF-24)

On the other hand, some respondents noted that more Euro-American members tended to be in attendance at committee meetings

2. Formal Authority and Leadership

Several respondents felt that the majority of the major chairperson positions were held by Euro-Americans. But respondents also noted that some of the most influential roles were held by Afro-Americans.

> He is very conscious of the fact that he is now the pastor – and he's African-American and she is the music minister and also the pastoral assistant and she is African-American. And some of us who are considered quasi-staff like myself are African-American. And so the appearance to an outsider and even to insiders, is that there...we've gone from being a more diverse church to an African-American church. And that becomes more pronounced when it's not white. White people a lot of times can be comfortable with white leadership and still consider themselves diverse —if there's one or two people of color. But it's not the same when the leadership team is largely African-American. I think our pastor is very sensitive to that. (AAF-5)

One important instance of authority being shared was between the former pastor and the current pastor when he was an associate. Power sharing was modeled, though, even before he had a formal position. The former pastor states:

> Well, I think in Administrative Council meetings folks would have seen long before P had any power or position or money – that we functioned as partners. That we didn't, you know...I didn't automatically assume that my voice was going to be the loudest. In fact, P often had to work and say, "OK now we're going to hear from the Pastor, " because I tended to be more...I see myself as a partner.
>
> Also:
>
> I don't know how you'd do it without a really strong partner. And one who's willing to be open. I mean it's hard work to really challenge each other, to keep saying, "I don't know why you did that. That made no sense to me, that was really offensive to me...you're doing that because of your own limited background, and I think that's..." And a partner that you can completely trust. I completely trust P. I disagree with him, I get mad at him, but I completely trust him. And that...it's an enormous amount of work because there's so much conflict that comes. And if you couldn't trust the partner thing that would just be a mess.

Other respondents saw co-leadership as crucial:

> I think one of the mistakes most commonly made is to defer the issue of diversified leadership. As soon as a congregation begins to change it's neighborhood or whatever it *must* find that Hispanic pastor, because in marginalized communities the preacher is very central. There must be- as when Jackie Robinson's thing was going on - that there has to be a black Casey Stengel as well as a black Jackie Robinson. You *can not* assume that because minority children are brought in on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons that anything important's gonna happen in the congregation. You must, if you embrace it, you must have leadership. Staff leadership, co-pastors, somebody you hire to come and do the preaching and help with the leadership to become prominent and visible. (EAM-14)

Another respondent states:

> I think the visual – visibility of having a black male and white female, or black person and white person paired – was that people visually saw that the church was open. I think if they had just gotten a white person it would have been hard to scrape through that. And if they'd gotten an

> African-American that would have been dismissed as "oh, it's now becoming a black church." (AAF-5)

And:

> I talked to P some time ago about hiring white leadership. The way he and P worked together...I think white folks are gonna have to have an identity person. It's silly to say that, but I think it's true. I think he needs an assistant or somebody on the preaching staff that has as much continuity as he does. (EAM-14)

3. Informal Influence

There are other ways of having influence in a congregation than formal position. It is evident from the interviews that respondents consider several Afro-Americans, who did not currently have the role of major chairperson, as being among the most influential and respected leaders in the congregation. They have been active in organizing and facilitating a number of congregational functions and are sought for advice by leadership. For instance one chairperson of a major committee states:

> Well I don't keep tabs on who makes what decisions, but, you know, AAF is and AAF are integral parts of this organization. And AAF has been a driving force in a lot of different areas. I mean the newsletter, the children's program, the music program and other areas too. AAF's work schedule has not allowed her as much free time to devote to the church as AAF. You know, I try to have lunch with AAF or AAF, and I have lunch maybe about once every two weeks. And AAF and I have had lunch several times...I hope that I rely on them before anything, before I do anything at all. (EAM-10)

These leaders seem to believe that their time and skills were currently best used outside of the role of a major committee chairperson. Moreover, other members, from more working class backgrounds, also seem to exert influence outside of committees:

> I just make sure that everything runs smoothly, when you're doing mainly crowd control. I'm the one that yells at the kids not to run. I'm the one that makes people circle up [at lunch]. I'm the leader of the Baby Boomer Bible Study Class. And I'm the one that will make the harder decisions on

my own and take the flack for it. And they know it. And I'm the one that'll spend my money out of my pocket if it's for the Lord. (AAM-12)

Another states:

I used to be on the board. But I'm not much of a board person. I'm more of an independent mustang type person. I'm not more for the rules and regulations, the dialogue, and all of this and, and doing this and doing that. I'm not for all of that. I'm not personally myself...I'm one of those people who just like to be left alone to figure it out for myself and do what I want to do and sit down when I get tired.

IN. Do you think that you have influence on the congregation even though you're not a board member?

R. I think my opinion is valued on there and used. If I express my opinion on something, I think it's valued.

IN. *Who would you express it to if you wanted to express it?*

R. I would go straight to the top, to P, if I had an opinion on something I didn't like or felt that it needed to be changed or whatever. I would go straight to P on it. I have no problem with saying, OK we need to talk. This is this. What can we do about this? So I have no problem at all if something I felt like I didn't like – I could go to him and talk to him about it. (AAF-15)

4. Tensions: Leadership Expectations and Class

The congregation faces this challenge: organizational forms and processes associated with formal decision making tend to be geared towards the skills, experiences, and time availability of people from middle-class backgrounds. The congregation has more Euro-Americans from middle class backgrounds than from Afro-American backgrounds. This is the primary reason noted for the imbalance in the number of major committee chairpersons between Euro-Americans and Afro-Americans. The pastor notes:

And part of that is in recognizing that we have not brought in a lot of black middle class. And leadership...and key and effective leadership has to have somebody who can help facilitate the process.

Another respondent states:

> Part of the problem, again, like I mentioned before, is that, those African-Americans who working, you know, they are working several jobs. The economic dynamic really comes into play, and that's something that is new for me to see, because in the church that I grew up in, well there were people from different economic background, but it was, and is heavily middle-class. Why you have your job, and then, and then you're *off.* OK, you got regular working hours. And...you always have the people who are too busy working to participate. But in C's case, much of the time, these people happen to be black. And so they're not represented in some of the decision making that goes on. But like I said, I don't think that it's a matter of excluding. That once again there has to be more proactive behavior that occurs. (AAF-17)

One respondent stressed the importance of being proactive and suggested practices that might be utilized:

> If we want folks to be in choir and they don't have a car then we've got to pick people up for choir rehearsal. It's inconvenient, especially for a town that depends on its own cars. I mean it's a hassle. But you got to do that if you want to have a meeting. If you want people here at Bible Study we got to serve a meal. We got to serve food, you know, because they get off and again some people may some people may miss their evening meal at the shelter or whatever if they come to Bible Study, come to meeting. To look at everything in the light of race, class privilege is tiring sometimes. But it's so ingrained in us that we know that we have to do that. Look at how we spend our money, how we decide how we spend our money. And it's a balancing act we do because some people a...in terms of class, for example, have *not* had the responsibility of dealing with money and power issues. And so they may be ill equipped or the may feel ill at ease, you know, there's just a lot to think....So there's a lot of cross-training that has to be done. And making sure that people get an opportunity to talk. I'm not one who calls on people who are silent. I assume that they just want to be silent. But one of the things that some of the better leaders in the congregation know to do is just to go around the room and let everybody speak. Sort of say...we're going to go around and everybody's going to say something. And we don't cram...don't jam them if they don't want to, but making sure that...you know, we present an opportunity. We say this is your time to speak....

Also:

> Now one thing we *are* doing is we now have a chairperson and a co-chairperson. And that co-chairperson is in training. Instead of having a vice-chair, it's actually a co-chair. That person is in training. And so we've got some people who have come along to become chairpersons because of that training. And they kind of cross the spectrum. That's kind of neat. (AAF-5)

5. Tensions: Race Privilege and Power

The societal ethos of race privilege can have a detrimental impact on power sharing in a congregation. If members are not aware of this tendency, they may reflect this ethos in their interaction. One member reflected on this:

> When I'm in a meeting, for example, and I mean not just at C – I'm talking about just in general – I've heard it said by others who are African-Americans too...And you've got white Americans sitting at the table. African-Americans are either going to be invisible in some ways, not heard in some ways, and then sometimes we won't even voice what it is we're thinking and feeling. We're already intimidated just by the fact that you have the dominant group of the dominant race that's supposedly in our community sitting at the table. Who speaks the language, who understand the language. Who's able to recite the language in such a way that you feel like, "Oh my God!" you know, I'm not sure how I should respond to that. But I've been in situations where you want to participate, but you're a little bit fearful about participating because you're not sure what the response will be. And if you say something that's inappropriate or that's not right, it's not only hurtful to you, but it's hurtful to your whole race. Because somehow you're attached to your whole race. And, you know, that dominance that just hovers out there. So maybe if I was to conduct some kind of, you know, workshop or something that would address some of those issues. One of the things that I'll probably say, is that, you first have to recognize those distinctions. We have to recognize, we have to own up to the fact that the dominant class of people has been speaking for a number of years vocally and have been heard for a number of years in every facet of our world...I try not to think of myself as being less than. You know, I try to think of myself as being, I'm just another human being. But you are sometimes made to feel that way regardless, you know. That's when you have to deal with those distinctions that are there. I think an awareness is the first thing.

And:

> Unfortunately within the dominant culture – that's been dominant in terms of ruling and in terms of being in control – I think there is a prejudice of but *I know, but I know.* Do you understand what I'm saying?
>
> IN. *Yeah.*
>
> R. And you need that awareness. And all African Americans feel that way. We don't always say it because, you know, to say it almost says that your are somehow putting yourself in an inferior position. But that's not what you're saying, you're saying, let's be aware of that.

And:

> Some of us African Americans need to...we're removed too. You know, we can become desensitized and we become so much a part of the dominant culture that we have...some we'll...I don't know...maybe we're not as in tuned as we should be. (AAF-21)

6. Tensions: Relinquishing Control

Euro-Americans in the congregation have faced the challenge of relinquishing control of the organization.

A couple of years after the transition began the congregation had a crisis, which is described as being over this issue. The former pastor describes it this way:

> R. That January (1996) was when we shifted power. We didn't move anybody out of power, but we named additional people to committees and in leadership positions and for the first time the leadership actually reflected the diversity in the congregation. And that was a huge fight...because it was one thing to allow those people to come to church. It was a whole 'nother issue to have some sense of, well the people who have been here forever aren't the most powerful and they no longer have veto control, which is what they'd had until then. And so we did that in the fall, and then in January it took effect. And then in March was when people got so angry they walked out of the church, some people. And they gave the church an ultimatum and they were the major funders. And they said, you know, either you stop doing this stuff or we'll take our money. And it really was the older people in the congregation who said, if you have to leave, you have to leave, but this is where God was led us. And it had to do with race and class issues. And mostly it had to do with a

genuine shift in power sharing. And I thought we would, I thought we might have to close our doors, that we would not make it. But we did. And it was wonderful cause it was during Lent. And by Easter we pretty much knew we were going to make it. You know, stuff just kept happening and folks just coming. And many kept showing up.

And:

We had already decided to move into the sanctuary. Because we were too big for the chapel. We had about 70 folks at least on Sundays. And we were crowded in the chapel and that's wonderful. And we decided to move to the sanctuary even though the sanctuary's huge. It swallowed us. And so here we are with...you know...wonderfully, theologically too. And 70 people swallowed up in a sanctuary, but too big for the chapel. We lost a big church of money. And we had no clue if we'll make it. And I think that Easter we baptized 30 people on that Sunday. It was just incredible. Then every month we made it financially. It was always enough. We'd come really close to not having it. It would show up. So that was the...that was another really important turning point for the church. Because again the church had to trust that God had called us to this point. This is what it meant to be the church. And that God would see us through. And the original folks were the ones who made that decision. So after that the partnership was just real clear, people made that decision that powersharing was going to happen.

During this turmoil it was important for the pastor to have a commitment from the Bishop to not be moved from the congregation.

That was a crucial agreement. I said to the Bishop in the beginning, OK, I'm gonna go – I don't want to go – but I'm gonna go. But you have to promise me that if every single person walks out the door you will not move me. I'm here for 3 years come hell or high water, no matter what. They have to know they are stuck with me. Because if they think we just have to ride this through for a year, and then we'll be over, I'm not going in. 'Cause I had done that in X County. And I went in for 2 years and we were just beginning to turn the corner and incredible stuff was happening and they moved me. And its not what it does to me in that situation, it's what it does to the people who risk the transformation. 'Cause they're left in that same congregation. And that life is *very* difficult. I mean I'm going to go down later this week and visit a woman who's 74 in X County who took this incredible risk in welcoming a woman pastor and helping a congregation that's changing. She still gets grief.

The former pastor reflects on the issue of people relinquishing control during her tenure:

> There's a difference between working together, but I still feel in control and I still feel like I have power –and a willingness to be open to my own racism and how that shows up, and to let go of, of my position of privilege which I'm really, really used to – and like am willing to let go of little pieces at time if I continue to control it.

7. Tensions: Resolving Conflict

Respondents seemed to believe that there as a fair amount of consensus in the decision making process in the congregation. One member states:

> And a lot of the time we're all pretty much in agreement on most things; all just kind of in agreement. You know, talk about what is - what we need to do. Everybody's fine with it. (EAM-6)

The former pastor reflects on changes over time:

> Well, it's interesting because the first three years were incredibly awful...conflict. The next 2 years were like being in some fantasy world. They were easy, they were wonderful. And then the last two years have been hard again because - I think this must be, probably church growth people know this – but the handful of folks who created, were partners in bringing about the birth of this new congregation then struggled as it became larger. As soon as it got over a hundred or about 120 you no longer had such a small group in leadership and the conversation happened over a wider area and not everybody could know everything right at the time it was happening.

The congregation seems to have gone through two major conflicts since the second began. One is described as having been focused on the issue of power sharing and the other on the congregation's focus on, and approach towards, the socially marginalized. Both resulted in members exiting the organization.

The research project did not explore conflict in depth so there is no attempt here to resolve the issues or determine people's particular motivations. No doubt motivations

varied from person to person and it is likely that people left for varying reasons. Some of these reasons might some have had little to do with the particular issues being debated. What is important to note here is that remaining members expressed the belief that it was important to uphold the principle that no one group controlled the congregation. It also led to new commitments by them.

The former pastor states that the "turmoil was really scary and hard and it was heartbreaking. You hate to see people leave." And:

> You know, and then having to sift through with those who stayed, well what does this mean. Well it means conflict is inevitable. Well how do we deal with it? We're here to stay. In fact it did some really good things. Because...and so that happened intensely for about a year. And what happened was we convened a community meeting and we said look, the church is really struggling...these folks have walked off. What do you want from the church? What do you think it means to be the church? And so we did that...again and about 50 people stepped forward who had never been in leadership before and said, "we'll do whatever it takes because we believe this matters and God has called us for this." So now we have people who you never could have convinced to be leaders. Or I don't think we could have.

B. Intentionality

1. Inclusivity as Goal

Inclusivity was a goal of the former pastor from the onset of her tenure:

> IN. *Did you set out intentionally to foster a genuinely interracial congregation? Was that an intention of yours from the beginning?*
>
> R. It was.
>
> IN. *A-huh. What were your first thoughts in going about doing that?*
>
> R. Well, it would be a reflection of the neighborhood. It wouldn't be foreign to the community – it would reflect the community because the community's so diverse. And that we would have to be intentional about it and it would require visible leadership by folks from other racial backgrounds.

Fairly early in her tenure entered into a dialogue about the mission of the church. This centered in Bible Study and resulted in the creation of a covenant. The former pastor describes this:

> We created a covenant that we used and we used it at every meeting, every time we gathered. Not in worship, but at every kind of meeting.. [First] we are all on the journey of discipleship in Jesus' Name. Meaning that's enough common ground for us. We don't need any more common ground than that. And the second is we are all learners and all teachers. So we will learn to listen to and respect each other. And that was a way of saying nobody has figured this out. And everybody's voice is valued. And nobody gets to be in charge of saying what's right and what's not right. We're all learning this together. And the third one is we are a community of grace and forgiveness learning to be glad for our difference and diversity. Conflict will come, but we promise to stay for the conversation and not slam shut the doors of our hearts or minds and to remain for the conversation.

The current pastor was recruited by the former pastor to provide leadership in the congregation. He also holds inclusivity to be an important goal. He describes his early days in the congregation:

> I first came to C seven years ago. 1993. FP had been appointed as pastor at C. Her appointment before then was the assistant pastor, associate pastor at [local AA] church which is my home church....So when FP came over I just came over initially just to kind of see how she was coming and just to say, you know, I'm here to be supportive of you. If there's anything that I can possibly do just let me know. And from our conversations FP began to talk about creating a different kind of community here. C had a wonderful facility; a lot of space. But only a very few members were there in a middle of a community that was very diverse...and realizing that in order to be able to attract people to come in...oftentimes to be able to see people who look like them or who are able to communicate. So as she began to talk about here desire to be able to create that type of community, and having the church to be more of a community type church, I told her I was willing to invest some time in coming by and doing some things. Gradually as I came she asked me to do more and more things in this place. And being committed to thinking that that's what church is supposed to be like. And that it would not happen probably in my home church. I just started investing more and more time here at C. And for, I guess for the first couple of years or so I would, you know, maybe offer some leadership within the worship setting

– of offering a prayer or words of response or just spending time really connecting with people. We have a HSP which brought people in who spent a night...trying to connect with the.. the...doing a lot of time of just communicating – of being able to help to some degree to be a translator between the people who were here and the people who were on the street and trying to have clarity about what people were saying. So that's what kind of brought me here. And kind of the reason that I was attracted to being a part. But then the other thing that I found that as I became more and more involved is that then I became involved in the lives of the people who were here and coming in. And became attached to them. And then ultimately just coming back because they had become a new part of family for me and a new sense of people whom...I think when they had disappointments and let downs I also was disappointed. In sharing not only in times of sorrow but in times of joy. So that's what kind of kept me here.

The former pastor also invited Afro-Americans she knew as guests:

The first person to preach actually was probably N who is a friend of mine who's African American who is an ordained pastor and does pastoral counseling. And does a lot of work around the issue of healing. And is very gentle. And so I asked her to come and she did some partnering with me both in prayers and in preaching. And she has special gifts for dealing with folks who are undergoing any kind of trauma, dealing with older folks. I mean people resisted, a lot of people resisted the interracial thing. And there were other folks who came in for different reason. Folks to do special offerings. I have friends who are writers, poets, so on a special Sunday that might come in and have done some kind of drama, something to offer up a poem or special music. I has a friend...I have a friend who's Puerto Rican who did some special music one Sunday. But just a kind of...every Sunday have something that says we want to be larger than we are in the voices that we hear. And the people that we see. There's a larger world out there that we need to reflect. And, you know, because I had served as associate pastor at [an African American congregation] then people came from [that congregation] from the beginning. So after I showed up I don't think there was ever a Sunday where there was all white anymore.

Though there was resistance, some of the long time members were quite welcoming. As the former pastor states:

On the other hand, some folks were really open and welcoming and they knew if something dramatic didn't happen in the church it would die.

During the second year of the transition most of the Afro-Americans who attended were from the homeless population. The congregation then began attracting some Euro-Americans who were intentional about an interracial community. The current pastor describes this period, starting with the early homeless population who:

> Really did not invest in this place...And then after there was this group of whites that came in that really wanted to redefine. And they became intentional in connecting with the African-Americans who were here.

More Afro-Americans who were committed to building an interracial congregation also joined after the second year of the transition. One member describes her motivation:

> I think the thing I find attractive about C is that people are sincerely trying to under...they're trying to work towards a spiritual community in spite of some very clear uphill battles. Not just from the cultural or racial standpoint, but also from the economic standpoint. I like challenges and it's definitely a challenge. It's a challenge with my way of thinking and also it's a challenge just to be able to work sometimes and relate to those who have differences. But I sometimes find some great relationships with those who are different from me. (AAF-21)

2. Intentionality in Programmming

The congregation is intentional about reflecting a cultural balance in programming:

> I do think we have things in place in terms of the worship service which allows for diversity in the worship service. Like for example music. AAF's background is, of course, in music, so she knows a lot of different kinds of music and so she is very deliberate in putting that in the church service. And also with the Sunday School teachers – AFF is deliberate in trying to make it a diverse setting. The only...I know there's only one group of where both Sunday School teacher's she does teaching in teams – where both are of the same race. (EAF-19)

Much of the balance in worship seems to be worked out informally. One respondent states:

IN. *So it's not like: "Well we're going to do a black gospel song here and we're going to do...*

R. Right. It's just whatever song. It's really kind of just driven by whatever the song is. A lot of times they'll pick stuff out that has to do with the rest of the service. Sometimes not. It's just [chuckles] you know, let's do this song. We really like that song. So we'll do it and it ends up whatever style it ends up being. (EAM-6)

Another respondent mentioned that there was concern by some that musical selections were too slanted towards an Afro-American gospel style and the pastor exerted leadership in balancing this with other styles. So it seems from the responses that the leadership is deliberate in achieving a mix over time. However, it also seems that much of this is worked out informally and the cultural lineage of particular music, for instance, is not always the focus during selection.

The congregation has combined planning and improvisation in its efforts to foster inclusivity through its programming. The former pastor states:

I think a lot of the things we do are deliberate and some of them we just stumbled on – we never thought about, but looking back we could say, oh, that was a good thing to do, or that it wasn't. But the new membership classes, the visible partnership [between her and the associate pastor] the diversity in leadership, the worship experience reflecting the deliberate intentional inclusiveness. I think in doing the retreats, time away together to really get to know each other in sharing stories is important. We've been doing three of those a year. P's now organizing small groups and that's something we've talked about and moved toward for two years. I think those are going to be really helpful...intentional togetherness, even to meal times together, acknowledging that when we come together it's important to eat and feast and celebrate...the Bible Study that's really open discussion. I think all of that stuff contributes to the life of the congregation and our ability to really be a community and learn from each other and listen to each other and to say that all the voices are welcome and important and all those different stories are welcome and important. (EAM-6)

3. Race and Deliberation

We have considered ways in which considering racial inclusiveness comes to the foreground of deliberation. However, at other times, race seems to recede in the awareness of some. There is a sense in which decisions can simply be seen as reflecting the commonality, which comes from being part of a congregation. One respondent puts it this way:

> IN. *Do you think that the voices of both African-Americans and European-Americans are heard?*
>
> R. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Oh I think so. I mean...This is...the voices are the voices of the church. And it's irrelevant whether they're black, white, brown, pink, whatever. (AAM-25)

There is also a sense in which decisions can simply be seen as those that come with being the type of organization that a congregation is. A respondent puts it this way:

> IN. *Where do you see the...how do you know when interracial cooperation is happening in the church?*
>
> R. How do I know when it's happening? Well, I guess as far...like the decision-making process when we're in a meeting...everybody's opinion is valued. There's not even...there's not even any kind of feeling that there's a racial thing about the decision. The decisions we have to make don't really have anything to do *with* race. They have to do with the church. And there's probably, usually a pretty even mix of black and white and young and old and rich and poor and whatever in that decision-making body. (EAM-6)

4. Intentionality Through Education

The congregation has had retreats and workshops focusing on race, though it seems that they had become somewhat less prevalent than they had been several years previously. However, new educational programming was initiated called a "living lab." The intent is to bring members together in guided dialogue on issues of race and class. The plan is to then train members to host other congregations for workshops and

participatory learning experiences on the subject of inclusivity. A member has this to say about the dialogue sessions:

> I've learned really what it means, you know – especially with AAF doing the living lab – I've learned what it means to be deliberate about diversity. Not just in the workplace and in the church community, but in your community at large. (AAF-25)

One focus of the dialogue sessions is becoming aware of racial privilege:

> I think I've noticed that some of the people in the lab are really...*really* glom onto the issue of privilege. They understand it. Which is really heartening for me because may times when I'm doing training [at other sites] I get violent reactions from white...when I say violent, you know, very militant reactions about the whole notion of privilege. I think they do recognize it. And I think one reason they recognize it is because for good or ill if you line up the white folks and the people of color, a larger percentage of the white folks are better off, middle class or better. Then there are the people of color in the same boat. So I think they...it's just in their face, you know. I think it's just totally in their face. We've got a couple of people who come from [suburb] who are very clear, you know, they're very clear about it. They've experienced it. And I think that, unfortunately you can't experience everything, you know. Something's you just have to believe and know. But I think for the people who recognize it, its because they've experienced it in a very real way. And again I just think that people at C, people who make the commitment to be here are already predisposed to believe that there is some changes in society that need to be made. And so they are...they're more willing to *believe* and part...believe in the need and participate in the change. (AAF-5)

The former pastor discusses this educational process:

> IN. *How did people learn to model that [power sharing]? Are there ways that that can be fostered?*
>
> R. Well I think we talk about it a lot. So that it's not just something you see, its something that gets analyzed and discusses. You know, P and I have always, have always been really open in the congregation about our differences, but not use that to divide anything or play off each other, but to complement or to joke with each other. And then are more likely to say out loud when we screw up I think than some other folks. And...and then we talk about it a lot. I mean we've had deliberate workshops on racism on partnering and mutuality and then special discussions...I mean we just try to figure it out and say, you know, nobody really understands all this

stuff, but the key is that you're open to paying attention and being aware and learning and unlearning in a really genuine partnership. And you have to keep doing it. It's never over. You're never done. You never get to a place where you say now we figured it out and we just get to move on. It's a permanent part of the journey. So I think, you know, we keep saying that in different ways. And then we...I think we also try to affirm good stuff when we see it, when it happens and say this is, this is what it means. As well as saying this is what it does *not* mean. It does *not* mean this. So I think we've tried to be intentional.

5. Tensions: Non-Intentionality

It seems clear from the interviews that there is a certain degree of intentionality in dealing with race in the discourse and deliberations in the congregation. However, matters of race do not always penetrate discourse or deliberations. One respondent states:

> IN. *Is race intentionally talked a lot about at C? Other than, you know, racial justice or, you know, those kinds of things lifted up in the congregation?*
>
> R. I don't think a whole lot. I wouldn't say it's a...yeah, cause I...the times I think about it is within the context of, you know, times the societal things are racially charged or racially, you know. Something going on that...that's when we...when we actually address it...but I don't think...I know they've had...they had several retreats where they talked about different conflicts and things that that was early on, but I think we've, there's been some kind of put on the back burner and not deal with it...not, you know, deal with it as directly as we want...as I heard they once did. (EAF-13)

Members also don't seem to believe they have become an interracial congregation through a clear strategic plan. One respondent has this to say:

> I think it was our last retreat...we were going around the room and saying, what do you think we're doing well at and what do you think we're *not* doing well at? And one of the people there said I think we're so diverse. And people always applaud us for being so diverse and yea for C! And I said, you know, pardon me, excuse me but...how are we...why are we so diverse? I said are we diverse cause we're intentional about it? Or did this just happen by accident? And if it happened by accident...then we should all be a little concerned, because it could *unhappen* by accident. And nobody had a really...a really good answer for me about *how* we are

> intentional about it. Everyone said we should be intentional about being inclusive and diverse, but nobody knew *how* we are, and maybe it's just God's will. (EAF-19)

Another member felt they lacked a clear "roadmap":

> There's this mountain to climb. And the cost of what it takes to get up this mountain sometimes makes me take a deep breath and sigh and say, "how did we get there?" Because we don't have any, we don't have any keys; we don't have any examples of how to get there. It's almost like a mother raising a child, you know, it doesn't come with a manual. You've got a lot of information these days, but a lot of stuff that occurs, it happens along the way. And you having to orchestrate and manipulate and make happen as you go along. You don't *know*. I *don't know* the answer to this - you know why my child responded in a certain way. I don't know, I got to figure that one out. So you don't come with that information packaged. You know, run to the page and say, oh it's on page 45d and you know how I respond to this. So I think C is kind of the same way. We don't have a manual for this. Just sort of carving the way, and God bless us in our carving the way so that maybe somebody else can have a manual. (AAF-21)

In using the metaphor of "raising a child," the respondent may also be pointing to the insight that in interpersonal community one can not simply use techniques.

6. Tensions: Race Discourse as Strain on Community

There is also a sense that including all members in a pervasive race discourse would put a strain on this fragile community. One member shared these observations:

> IN. *How often and how directly – and maybe it – it differs over the life of the congregation – but how often and how directly can people deal with issues of race and class? Can they deal with it directly all the time or do they have to alternate or what are your thoughts on that?*
>
> R. That's a...this is a really interesting question. There are some people who...I guess I think it depends on how it's dealt with. Again I think the family dynamic and the trust dynamic is so important. I think that some people are never going to be able to deal with it in the congregation, it's too painful...it's too...you know...and we've got some people who I know would never come and be a part of the conversation. They're here and they think that's enough. And for them it may be enough. But I do think...I think you can deal with it all the time if you build the trust. I think a lot of times what happens in conversations about race and class are

> that people feel...they feel like they're in a community where there's not trust – so they either feel like they're being attacked or they're angry about being victimized or their voice has just been taken away from them because...either of their feeling of being victimized or just that...you know, they throw up their hands and say there's no need to talk about it. And I think that comes from not feeling safe. If you have a friend who's different from you – and not racially, but it could be different in any way, but if you're really friends you can talk about that difference all the time (AAF-5)

One respondent who stressed the need to talk more straightforwardly about race felt that it was difficult to talk about in a community in which one is a part:

> And you know, it's hard. It's hard to talk about race. It's hard to be honest. You know it's very difficult. You're struggling with your own feelings, your own emotions, and you're trying to grow yourself individually, as an individual. And then you get in a group of people and the distinctions are there. You know, they're always similarities, you know. I'm not saying that there can't be some unity. The reason why I'm at C is because I hope there will be one of these days something that will resemble unity somewhere in the land. (AAF-21)

7. Tensions: Self-Protection

Some respondents conveyed their sense that a direct confrontation with issues of race and privilege could be uncomfortable for some members. For Afro-Americans there may be a self-protective reticence in the face of the dominant culture. One respondent reflects on this:

> IN. *Does race get talked about directly much in the congregation?*
>
> R. Not as much as I think it should. Unfortunately I think that's one of the problems I foresee...that I feel is, you know, a problem. And if others agree or disagree...but I think we're *scared* of it almost. I mean it gets talked about as for as mentioning...we talk a lot about social justice and race gets thrown into class and sexism. And in my experience race is definitely...you know, race, class and all the isms are, you know, definitely related. But the race issue is one that we are the most uncomfortable with dealing with. And it's very difficult for us to be honest with each other as a black and white person. I think that the way that the world has been set up for African-Americans – and for other ethnic groups too – but we learn to live bi-culturally – which means that

> we learn to live and be a certain way in the presence of the dominant society. And who we are as a people, we're afraid to be that way. And that's just something that becomes a part of your psychological development. You don't even realize it...it's just there. Because its...it's inbred. It's in the nature of the kind of world that we live in to protect ourselves. It's like a child or anybody instinctively, you protect yourself against the things that hurt you. And so as a result, of course, you know you get one face of a person, you know. That is the face that you want the world to see, but who I really am...I'm afraid to let you see because that person or that...that part of me you will hurt ultimately. So I see that at C. I don't see as much discussion. (AAF-21)

One form self-protection might take for Euro-Americans is a certain defensiveness about their backgrounds. One respondent reflected on avoiding this defensive mode in the context of communicating in a diverse setting:

> I'll come out and hand something out, like at one of the Executive Committees and I'll see grimaces from everyone. So OK forget it. You know, all right, it was, it was an attempt. So let's revise it...And you just can't be, you can't, I can not be defensive about my limitations and my biases and my prejudices because of my upbringing, my background and how I live and where I'm at. Umm, if I can not hold the same with other people. And as long as that occurs then we come up with something that's better. So...that's gonzo [great]. (EAM-4)

8. Unselfconsciousness About Race

Some respondents seemed to communicate a sense that relationships between persons might not seem genuine if racial identity was always the focus. Yet, on the other hand, one had to be intentional in opening up. One respondent had this reflection:

> In becoming a racially diverse church it's tough, and the most difficult thing is how do you make it occur without looking like you're trying too hard. And I don't know the answer to that. But I think if you, like we did, we didn't become an intentionally diverse church until, you know, we opened the doors and said anybody can come in here and started, started from that. And then everything that you do has to reinforce that. Because if you don't walk the walk people will, people will not believe you. And once you get past, you know, once you get started I don't know how, you just kind of have to be conscious about it. (EAM-4)

Another respondent reflects:

> To me intentional means like if you go out to your workplace or your grocery store or wherever you want to live out your testament of your faith. Be intentional. Go up to...a...you know talk to your black colleague, your white colleague or whoever, you know, and be intentional by actually not really thinking about it. (EAM-8)

These two statements are ambiguous in their meaning and difficult to interpret[17] One interpretation: when a focus on racial identity becomes too blatant, there can be a strain on relationship if the issue seems "forced." Perhaps in interpersonal interracial relationships an approach is needed which is both aware of racial dynamics and unselfconscious in demeanor.

9. Tensions: Clarity and Ambiguity

Dealing with a diverse environment can be enlightening and problematic at the same time. It brings the clarity of focusing on a larger and more complex world, an antidote to myopia. At the same time, things become more ambiguous. With differences, certain simple absolutes are challenged. The former pastor reflects on this:

> I just think it's an incredible gift that shows us more about the abundance and richness of life. For me it's the difference between suddenly realizing that the way you've been looking at the world is like flat. It doesn't have any of the fullness in it. Or it's really narrow. You've been looking through this one little tiny window and all the sudden somebody's torn down the whole wall and you see this incredible view. That it brings strength because no matter what it is if you're only looking through this one little narrow window you can't do anything as well as if you could see the larger picture. So the positive that people sometimes find, in the insulation and isolation from each other and think that differences are good because they divide us, is some kind of feeling of self-certainty. You know, "I mean I really understand the way the world works." Cause there's lot of ambiguity once you look at that. The absolutes fall away. You have to practice the both/and instead of the either/or. And that's really hard for people to do I think. [pause] But I think it moves us closer

[17] Perhaps the researcher is also reading too much into them. However, it is also an interpretation based less on direct statements in the interviews than a sense of what respondents as a whole seem to be conveying about interpersonal relationships.

to being the church. We border on idolatry if we don't have it. We're just stuck in one way of seeing the world and thinking somehow that's God's way of seeing – this one wisdom, one perspective, one social location. It's not enough for seeing the world. It's totally inadequate. So I think it's *inevitably* a strength.

10. Awareness of the Pervasiveness of Racial Privilege in Society

Key leaders in the congregation have emphasized the pervasiveness of racial privilege in society and have attempted to help people become aware of how privilege affects the congregation. The former pastor articulates this perspective:

> Because I think racism and classism are deeply woven into everything we do in this country. In everything. In our education system, our judicial systems, and the political decisions, in our language, our theology, our hymns. I mean in everything. And so we have to be intentional and we have to be willing to confront ourselves and to say, I know why I'm reacting to this. And it's not really because of XYZ. It's because something in me wants to be more important than someone who's black or poor or brown or, you know, something else. I think I deserve it, I've earned it. And so, I just think that's really hard for people. And people want it to be easy. They want to go through an initial, OK, I understand that I'm white and I participate in racism and so I'm going to do a good job. Look at me, I'm in a multi-racial congregation. How much better can I be? Look at me. I'm on a committee and I'm a leader in the congregation and I include people who are African American or Hispanic or folks living on the streets. But they don't see the ways in which we don't include...the way in which we silence other voices...or minimize the impact of our diversity on the partnership. And I just think that's real...that's hard for me to do. It's hard for all of us to do - just it's so deep in there. It's not a conscious decision that says I have to pay more attention to Dan than somebody else. I think it's hard work. I think racism is powerful. Stuff that's intrinsically evil. Cause it's not, it's not...I can't confine it to a few folks who are bad people. It's deeply rooted in how we are in the world. The conflict is permanent. The hope is that we see conflict as a good thing, which is hopefully what the Civil Rights movement and other movements teach us. Well, yeah, conflict is good because it surfaces the junk. The we can deal with it. And being....some kind of intentionally honest and open community, learning to love each other, practicing grace.

11. Commitment to Exploration

Members see the congregation as having an ethos that emphasizes a more empathetic way of being together. One member had these reflections:

> I think sometimes at C that's a bit of a struggle to...you know...not really knowing how. What's the right word to say? What's the right way to be? You still have all those social barriers that happen no matter what your racial background happens to be, you know, they're just barriers to communications sometimes. And through it all we've wobbled and stumbled along the way to find out how to answer the cry and the call of the needy. And we are a congregation that doesn't always know what the answers are. We don't ...we don't have a large pool of people to draw from. But those small pools of people keeps saying, well what can I do? How can I do it? No matter what obstacles, no matter how difficult it may be. (AAF-21)

C. Summary

The congregation has been intentional in fostering a milieu that is open to racial inclusiveness and has attempted to maintain a balance of influence between the Afro-American and Euro-American membership. Formal leadership is shared. The current pastor and music director are Afro-American along with several of the most respected and influential lay leaders. The majority of the committee chairpersons remain Euro-American despite a desire to alter this pattern. This leadership configuration may result in a certain balance of influence. However, it is also viewed as less than ideal, a consequence of the congregation's particular history. Members also find ways to exert informal influence. Considering more informal modes of influence is important in recognizing how certain members may be empowered; particularly those from working class backgrounds who may be more comfortable in exerting informal models of leadership.

One reason cited for the smaller number of Afro-American chairpersons is there is a limited pool of Afro-American members with middle class backgrounds. The committee format the congregation inherited tends to be geared to skills and experiences more typical of the middle class. Training, both formal and informal, is one way the congregation hopes prepare less experienced leaders.

Race privilege contradicts attempts to establish a balance of influence between Afro-American and Euro-American members. Relinquishing control is crucial and both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans need to relinquish attempts at control. It is particularly crucial that Euro-Americans do so, given race privilege in today's society. Attempts to maintain control by Euro-American leadership has led to conflict and the departure of several established leaders. All conflict in the congregation is not necessarily related to control issues and some members exit for personal reasons. However, control is an overarching and prevailing concern. The congregation has been willing to risk the loss of some established members to maintain this principle.

The congregation has been intentional about inclusivity. This started with the former pastor who invited Afro-Americans to worship. Programs and events are designed in ways that reflect and foster diversity. The congregation has also been intentional in power sharing. Furthermore, there have been educational events and retreats focusing on race. An attempt to institutionalize this emphasis was the recent establishment of the "living lab," which is designed to raise awareness of the dynamics of race relations amongst both members and participants from other congregations.

Despite this intentionality, the congregation has not followed a strategic plan for racial inclusiveness. Short-term planning seems to alternate with improvisation.

Challenges and opportunities are addressed when they present themselves. Potential outcomes are not entirely clear. Moreover, considerations of race do not enter into all deliberations. An emphasis on a race-related discourse seems to be seen as a possible strain on community as some members may be alienated. Members may also shy away from race-related discourse at times out of self-protection. Afro-Americans may be wary, at times, of raising uncomfortable issues and some may be reticent in the face of racial privilege, while Euro-Americans may be defense about the issue of racial privilege and wary of having their motivations questions. Both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans may at times simply not know how best to talk about race. It is also possible that interpersonal community relies to a degree on people focusing on interacting with others as individual persons rather than simply focusing on racial identity.

Nonetheless, there seems to be an awareness of the social dynamics of racial privilege among both Afro-American and Euro-American members.[18] There was also a feeling among some members that race needs to be dealt with more intentionally in terms of group dynamics and social awareness. On the whole, though, the congregation seems to be a milieu where a certain degree of ambiguity is tolerated and where there is a fair amount of openness to exploration and experimentation.

[18] Respondents seemed to differ in their degree of awareness.

CHAPTER EIGHT

EQUALITY OF CULTURAL MODES

The core category of **equality** is considered in this section in terms of the frame dimension of **culture.** Three major themes are considered: **symbolic repertoire, style,** and a **common and diverse ethos.** Characteristics of members of the congregational community are also considered.

A. Symbolic Repertoire

1. Traditions Honored in Worship

Both Afro-American and Euro-American traditions are honored in the worship service. One member describes it this way:

> Well, I think they bring a lot of things from both the black tradition and the white tradition. It's just a real standard Protestant kind of – part of the service. And then the more, I don't know how to describe that – the more flamboyant aspects of the black tradition. It's just...it's a mixture, you know. I just think it's a really kind of *even* mixture at C. It's...doesn't really seem...if it seemed one way or the other it's probably more black than it is white. But...it's not as black as some black churches I've been into. So I think that it's just a combination of the two traditions. (EAM-6)

2. Traditions Honored in Music

This combination of both the Afro-American and the Euro-American traditions seems to be particularly evident in the music. The music is described this way:

> We've done some anthems and we've done, we've done gospel music. We do a capella; we like folk style music. We've done some things just instrumental. And we've done blues, classical music performed on instruments...So I would not categorize it culturally. I think that's, if it has a culturally, then it's C culture. OK, but we've used – like I said –

we've used blues and gospel, which you could categorize as being African-American, even though I've heard some incredible blues singers who are white. But, of course, blues did come from the African-American experience. We've done spirituals, which is also African-American. We've done anthems, written by white composers. I have written music for the choir and so has EAF [past musical director], and hers I would categorize as maybe New Age...You know we've done classical music. One of the things I'm planning to do for a...Christmas season is "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," which I have played on the piano here, but I want the choir to do it. And we've done, we've used...I mean how do you categorize violin music? You know, violin is a European instrument. But I play hymns on it. Just traditional hymns that are sung in any church...which is a...what culture is that? It's a church culture. OK. American church culture. "Blessed Assurance" is sung everywhere. "Amazing Grace" is sung everywhere. So I would not categorize it except to say it's C culture. And it's eclectic. (AAF-17)

The regular liturgical music is also borrowed from both traditions and from a common Methodist tradition.

IN. *What about the worship experience itself. Does it...is any cultural influences you think predominate or...?*

R. Hmn...Well in terms of some of the choral responses...No I do not think any one does predominate. I...there's been a conscious effort to keep that from happening. There are 2 responses that we do... "Thank you Lord," which is from the black church, and the "What a Fellowship," which is church culture again, but we do it in black style. OK, but then there's "I See the Light of God in You," which we start our service with, which I never heard in any black church, and most of the people I noticed for the first time have to learn it. And now we end with "Shalom" which is in the United Methodist hymnal. I'll have to look and see if it has a particular culture on it or something. And then we do...the Doxology, which is church culture. Black church, white church, we've done, which is done everywhere. [pause] So no...as far as the music is concerned I don't think that the lit...the liturgical music that we do I pre- has one culture predominating. I think that if there's a culture that predominates it is in the Methodist culture. (AAF-17)

3. Traditions Honored through Food

Food can also be a sensitive cultural symbol. This is negotiated in the congregation. This negotiation is described by the former pastor [tone of voice – light]:

> Well, it could be everything from how much people like potluck dinners, you know, and the different foods that are brought and what people think when they're planning a lunch on Sunday. You know, the banter that goes on about what a good meal always requires or not. So when we do, for example, like a Christmas Eve or a Christmas dinner and everybody brings their favorite, what they think is required for a Christmas or Thanksgiving or something. You know, there's usually great arguments or whether pigs feet definitely do not belong or do belong on the Christmas dinner list.

4. Traditions Honored through Narrative

The former pastor emphasizes the concept of "stories," which seems to reflect both people's individual narratives and the narratives they bring from their background. She states:

> Because it [respect] basically is just honoring the other person's stories, seeing them...so I think you see that in a million different ways at C.

Also:

> I think the valuing of stories when we do retreats. We find different ways for people to share their stories and people have very different background in a lot of ways, but there tends to be a sense of thanksgiving for these differences, not a sense of threat, you know, that, "oh no, that's not like my story, so it won't work here." I think the congregation works on finding common ground as a way of being in which the different stories and cultures are honored and we don't exclude or write off somebody's way of being.

5. Traditions Honored through Holidays

Holidays from various traditions are celebrated in the congregation. This includes those that come out of the Afro-American tradition, such as Kwanzaa and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Others come from shared traditions, such as Thanksgiving (perhaps originally from a Euro-American tradition) and Christmas.

6. Tensions: Iconic Symbols

The pastor believes that it is a challenge for a diverse congregation to have visual, especially cultural iconic symbols that unite rather than divide. He states:

We stay away from the [visual] symbols. We're not a very symbolic church. And so I don't...the only symbol, the only thing that we really carry away from, I think most people carry, is our last standing in the circle. And that's the image that people carry away. I wish somehow we had some other symbols.

IN. *Do you think symbols and images are more difficult in a diverse setting?*

R. It is. It is. Because we see them...we see them in so many different ways....So I'm trying to bridge those gaps and find something [symbolic] that we can all kind of hold onto together. Because it really doesn't help us to form as a community if it only belongs to a small group in the community. If it's something that *I* can identify with in the community and yet it turns off everybody else then it doesn't become a very helpful symbol. So it is a challenge for us to find those things that are – that we collectively can join in and say: "that's a part of who we are." Other than just the whole big part – which I think we do connect with and say that C is this wonderful diverse place – so it becomes a symbol in itself. But I want us to have some other more – some other things that we can try to hold onto...that distinguish us and give us a sense of spiritual pride.

The pastor feels that his attempts to incorporate liturgical symbols, such as the altar as unifiers, have not been particularly successful. Perhaps this is because many in the congregation are not particularly grounded in liturgical traditions. Or it may be due to a resistance to liturgical symbols, either out of members coming from church backgrounds that did not emphasize them or from other experiences that predispose people to resist a close identification with them. However this might be interpreted, it is interesting to note that the "inclusive worshipping community" is congregational members most-identified-with visual symbol.

7. Honoring Additional Traditions

The congregation also engages in honoring of other traditions to a lesser degree. Christian music from other cultures is sometimes included. Other religious traditions are

also recognized. For instance, the holy days of other religious traditions, such as Yom Kippur and Ramadan, have also been lifted up during worship.

8. Common Regional Repertoire as Unifier

Members also share a certain repertoire from living in the U.S. middle south. This is reflected in a partially shared repertoire between Afro-American and Euro-American congregations.

> ...because we're *Southern,* we share a Southern heritage, - that a lot of things that my seem to a person who's not from the South as Afro-centric are really Southern-centered. And so some of the old songs like, "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms," that's really a Southern phenomenon. And you'd...and you're just as likely to hear that in a...in a white Southern church as you are in a black Southern church. Their rhythm may be a little different. But some of the things cross lines. And I'm amazed. I didn't know until I started working with the United Methodist hymnal committee how many songs that I thought were just from the African-American experience were from the Southern experience and were common to people. (AAF-5)

9. Common Christian Repertoire as Uniter

A common Christian symbolic repertoire unites the congregation. Although the congregation is not rigid in terms of doctrine, considerations of faith do seem important to members and affect the congregations' approach to community. It is interesting to see how members were able to draw on this repertoire in deciding to open up the congregation. Early in her tenure, the former pastor led an extensive Bible Study with long-term members. This was a way of reflecting on the mission of the congregation. She describes this process:

> But then by September and October we started this Bible Study. So people met as a whole, plus small groups looking at different texts and they were to come up with a song that made sense from the scripture, they had to draw a poster. Then to say, well so what, if we use this image of the church, what difference would it make at C? What would it change about being the church? And it was a wonderful lead into the

transformation that was going to happen because instead of any one person or committee or anybody else, any written resource coming in and saying this is what you have to do to be the church. You went back to the Bible, which they all said they really like. And none of the images in the Bible, you know, are just people who show up on Sunday morning, sing a few songs, and go back as if nothing happened. And Biblical images are all radical. It didn't matter which images you chose. And what we had said was we were going to choose three images that were going to become the guideline for the church. Then when we're making decisions about who makes coffee on Sunday morning or how much money to spend on something or who can use the building, who can't use the building, we wouldn't have to argue so much on individual's opinions. We just look to the Bible, on what we think the Bible was saying. And that was a wonderful time, it was really positive, even people who later left, had some good experiences in that Bible Study because people, people wanted to be faithful. And they wanted to know what the Bible said. And they chose three images of the church.

10. Sacred Place and Community

The church is seen by members as a sacred space, which includes a sense of sacred place. The pastor even emphasized how the children "loved the buildings." Long time members were also able to draw on their sense of this place. For example: :

> Yeah, it still feels like home. Whatever changes they have...it still feels like home. I can feel the...
>
> IN. *Why do you think that is?*
>
> R. Well, I don't say that's the only place God is. I couldn't say that. But if you're in a church, and when you look up and see these things, the cross for instance, it's a huge cross. There in the choir loft. A huge cross there. You look up there and almost see Christ on that cross. And this a Loews Theater, years and years ago, gave 'em a pipe organ. Oh it has a beautiful sound.....And that young man that sings, that black man, he's got a great voice....He played...sang the Lord's prayer. He did a great job with that. And we've got many talented people in that church as far as the music is concerned.

The pastor stresses the importance of including this sense of place and community in the transformation of the congregation:

> In order for the transformation to take place people have to still be here to show that transformation took place. Other than that, then really what you deal with, is you deal with is the transition that is almost like a takeover. So that it continues to be important for us to have some of the people who were originally there to tell the story of how we got to this point, as opposed to just bringing in all new black folks and all new white folks. And just created...you can just transplant them from somewhere else into this place. But *true* transformation means that this place and the spirits and the energies have taken growth.

The former pastor reflects on drawing on this:

> See it was a source of life for the community, but we're a different community. So how does it become a source of life for the community? What used to happen? Well, kids ran all over the place and kids just showed up here all the time. They thought they belonged here. You know, we could do that again. The kids would just look different. So I think it...a lot of the memories...the memory of music. C has a famous choir that toured all over the place. So they were willing to invest some energy and time in always having some kind of music. And they appreciated good music. And they were glad for that because they didn't have a lot left. They had some famous singers that came out of C. N was one of them and he died after I'd been there a couple years. But EAM is another one. He's 81, he still sings at C.

11. Comfort Level and Negotiation Over Repertoire

There seems to be a fairly high level of comfort in drawing on both Afro-American and Euro-American symbolic repertoires. One member experienced with interracial congregations states:

> I don't think there's a lot of conflict over the style. I think there are always gonna be things to talk about in the worship...I think the music is a good example. I think AAF and EAF before, I think, they do keep a lot of variety in the music. I think music is very important. And I think that the sermons are strong and clear, they're not overly wordy. (EAM-14)

Another member had this to say on this issue:

> But I also think people are very tolerant because they feel like, for so long when C was closed down we had our show. And if this is what it takes to bring people in. I think there's a mix. I think there's some people who are not saying, you know, where they're uncomfortable. I think there's some

people who are saying this is great and, you know, we like it, it's new and I think there are other people who are still finding their voice. (AAF-5)

Part of this tolerance may come from being willing to accommodate the group, from being willing to suspend racial privilege, and from a genuine appreciation of new and diverse experiences.

IN. *Do you think in a congregation like C people subordinate their normal comfort, cultural level to accommodate or to...?*

R. You mean like at worship and stuff?

IN. *Yeah, overcome racial privilege.*

R. I think so. I think in some instances people are definitely saying, you know, well this may not be totally comfortable for me, but, you know, I got to let it ride, you know – or they're – I'm not in the majority here. I think there's some of that. I really do think that a lot of it is that people are looking for something different than what they've had. And so for them this is different. (AAF-5)

Part of the openness to diversity in the congregation may come from the fact that a number of members do not have a strong background in a particular church culture.

At C I think you have a lot of people who are not church people. That grew up within a particular type of tradition. Like me. And some other folks that I know there. So it's kind of like, we'll try just about anything there as far as the worship service goes. (EAM-6)

The pastor also evidently challenged the new Afro-American music director to be particularly sensitive about including music from an Euro-American heritage. One member talks about the importance of Afro-Americans being open in a shared setting:

We try to heap the bias on white folks – but we can be very, very insular ourselves. And I know myself, that for a long time, if the church music wasn't from my own experience, whether that was from the Methodist hymnal or the black gospel that I grew up with – then it wasn't legitimate church music. And one of the things that being Methodist at a certain level – working in the church at a different level – I get to go to more diverse things. So one of the things I've learned at C – it's not about me

and that the expression of praise of God is a...can be and should be a very diverse experience. (AAF-5)

B. Style Repertoire

Closely related, and in many ways intertwined with cultural symbolic repertoires, are what may be termed cultural interactional styles. Included here are both interpersonal communication styles and cultural presentation styles. Certain styles are generally primarily associated with the Afro-American or Euro-American cultures in that region of the country. Of course, styles also differ widely within both groups. Perhaps styles within a cultural grouping can be thought of in terms of a repertoire of styles; with each person within the group having a certain range of styles[19]

The congregation provides a space where members can interact through a style associated with their own cultural background. At the same time there is some degree of participating in or crossing over into another style; particularly in worship.

1. Meshing Styles: Worship

The worship allows members to participate in what one member calls "a mesh of styles. (EEF-13) The pastor describes it this way:

> I think we are truly a hybrid between cultures. I mean there are some aspects of it that I see in the black church. Our music tends to be more ethnic. Because at this point...I mean our people who are singing...yet we open up the opportunities and we try to bring other things in. I mean, you wouldn't have many black churches having Brahms or Bach being played before the sermon as it was on this past Sunday. Just but for us it's just finding the people to be able to...to have some variety. I think the looseness of the service tends to come out of a Euro-tradition. You know, just the casual approach to it, the dress and those kinds of things are not typical of the black church experience. So and there's, you know, blacks are at...want it one particular way. Whites want it another particular way. And in some sense I don't think it...it's like anybody's experience. I think both whites and blacks are probably uncomfortable with the amount of

[19] See Kochman and Rich (1981) and Rich (1974) for a discussion of style and the Afro-American and Euro-American cultures.

time we take on the prayer...Those who come with worship, you know, want it...We spend some time – so I don't know where that really goes. I think one of my *strengths* is being able to read the moment, in dealing with the moment. So I think we effectively switch in going between things that are culturally on the one side...a more rigidness that I think the black church has. So sometimes I'm able to be more rigid. I think the Euro church wants a pattern and wants to know that the pattern fits and that there are certain parts of our...you know, generally kind of follow a consistent order of worship so that...It's subject to change at any time, but at least there are things that we do every Sunday. So there is that consistency that people look for from a cultural standpoint.

2. Meshing Styles: Pastors

This mesh requires pastors when leading worship, and to a lesser degree in their personal interaction, to use multiple styles. This is generally more challenging for Euro-American pastors. In this setting, the former pastor spent time as an associate in an area Afro-American congregation. That helped her prepare for the experience.

One member describes the presentation styles of the two pastors in worship:

> Even our white pastor ...they always joke, like if you close your eyes you were sure a black woman was up there because she was *so powerful.* And I mean I guess I don't really know that might be a stereotype that African-Americans preach more powerfully than European-Americans. I don't know that the content is so much different as the delivery maybe. And you know our pastor was very powerful, he is a powerful speaker. I've never seen a...I've never seen a white man preach like that. I don't know that I've heard different. The content is different, but I don't think that's because he's African-American. I think that's because he's at C, and we preach differently. We believe in different...we believe in inclusiveness and in justice and in all that kind of stuff. And that's what we preach about. You could go to another church where it's predominately African-American and the presentation would maybe be the same as P's, but the *content* would be completely different. So...I would say in presentation maybe it's more African-American, or maybe it's more...yeah I guess...but content-wide I don't know there's a difference. (EAF-19)

Another respondent had these observations on their interpersonal styles:

> FP is probably the most street-wise, *down* white woman that I've ever met. I mean she's...I consider her a total sister to me. But you can't out – no matter how down you are – you're not going to be as down as a black

person who's down. You know what I'm saying? In terms of dealing with African-Americans. (AAF-5)

The differences in identity also have impacts on how they can relate in their interaction with people. The same respondent adds:

> P is very candid and he can afford to be. FP's not likely to say it, but P has said, you know, some of you black folks sitting around here acting like it's just white folks that act like this and we know about you too. It's like Ooooh, but he's very good at challenging us and he'll say we need one more person on this committee or we haven't heard from this person or this person who hasn't spoken up.

On the other hand she says about the former pastor:

> She was disarming because she was white and she could talk tough to men and they would take it because she was a woman. So she...that wommaness was an advantage. (AAF-5)

Both pastors borrow from the cultural performance styles associated with the other heritage. One member observes:

> One of the parts we're not doing anymore- which I always identified with the black church – which was to sing a verse of the hymn or sing three verses of the hymn and then stop and do a prayer and then stop and do the last verse. And that's something FP did and then P has not, doesn't do anymore. And that would be something that I appreciated and like that, you know, for whatever reason don't...but that was something to me was from an African-American style (EAF-13).

3. Comfort in Presenting Own Style

The congregation attempts to provide a space where members feel their cultural style is respected and where they feel comfortable expressing their cultural traditions. One compares the congregation with the surrounding city:

> This feels like home. I don't feel like...like if I show up here with a wrap on my head I don't feel like anybody – white, black, blue, green – who comes here is going to look at me like I'm weird or something...I mean I got that this morning. I went to the grocery store in North SC – which is...North SC is predominately black, Hispanic, Kurdish, then white is a...you know...And there were mostly black in the store. And they were

> all looking at me like I was an idiot or something with this wrap on my head. But I accepted it and I know it to be ignorance. They don't even recognize, you know, that this is how women on the Ivory Coast or, you know, West Africa – that they wrap their...the things they do. And it's a daily thing, you know. And they're seen at the market like this in West Africa. That's not to say I'm trying to say I'm West African. But obviously I am of...some of my blood is African decent. So that's neither here nor there. But my point in saying that is, you know, even other black people sometimes look at me like I'm weird or strange or something – so *here* I feel totally accepted. (AAF-25)

4. Participation in Another Style

Members have the opportunity to participate in another culture's styles and symbolic repertoires. This is particularly the case with the music in the worship service. There are other opportunities, even to the point of being challenged in the larger society. For instance (in an example given earlier in the paper):

> In fact, I had a couple of women today, I was at the fabric store buying fabric because I'm going to make altar clothes for C. And they were saying what are you?...And it's obviously African-American cloth. Well what are you doing with that?

Worship leaders also exhibit performance styles often associated with the other cultural modality:

> But what we did have in our past – our immediate past musician – was a musician, though white, had some diverse training and gospel experience. So she was – she could run the gamut from classical to "Everflowing Streams" to a little bit more soulful. I mean she wasn't gutbucket gospel – but she could do – she could be soulful – and she was working on that. (AAF-5)

The current music director is a classically trained violinist. She is Afro-American who sometimes plays selections during worship services in an originally European style.

5. Tensions: Thinning and Thickening of Styles

In this meshing of styles certain aspects are perhaps thinned in a cultural sense. Respondents remarked on a more staid style in comparison with certain Afro-American congregations:

> There was a lot of shouting. A lot of praising out loud. A lot of out loud...however, I don't...I can't recall any hugs or, you know – we felt the Spirit, but in a different kind of way than the Spirit here at C, which I think is the same Spirit. It's just, you know, it's moved one way in that type of congregation and it's moved the way it's moved over here. It's a lot quieter, you know. It's taught me that to worship God or to feel the Spirit – it doesn't have to be a loud thing.
>
> IN. *Did that take some getting used to?*
>
> R. It did. It did. And I shared about it. You know, when we have like meetings, congregational meetings and Bible Study, I'll share that. You know this is just different for me. They just said, well, you know, if you feel like you want to clap your hands, you know, or stomp your feet. And you can do that there. And I *do,* you know, sometimes. But I don't have...you know it's just not as...if I went to my old church, everybody does it. So you know it's...it's like at C...you know.. I have to be OK with...OK if I'm the only person clapping my hands, so what. I'm the only person clapping my hands, you know, so but it's OK. (AAF-20)

It's likely that some of this perception (that the congregation moderates Afro-American church culture) comes from comparisons with certain Afro-American Baptist churches in the region. One respondent makes this comparison:

> R. I used to go to the Baptist church. And they used to preach and they used to shout. And a...they ain't no comparison. This is kind of like lukewarm church. And it's getting to where it needs to be. Because...if you can get the people to looking for the Lord, you done your job. If He...if He...He'd make Himself found. He'll make them...they'll meet together. That's all the church is supposed to be. Believers need to gather together. And they kind of like strengthen one another. When they gather...you can be a believer by yourself....it ain't quite as well. You don't get as much out of it. You...once you see somebody else...you know on fire for the Lord. It...it kind of like boosts you up a little bit.
>
> IN. *But you stuck with it...even though it's kind of lukewarm, huh?*

> R. Yeah, it's lukewarm. But...I ain't never seen. Never seen nobody shouting. And I ain't seen nobody fainting since I've been...this is a Methodist church. They're almost as bad as Catholics. And they're kind of like laid back, it's just the way they do it. (AAM-12)

The congregation does not have the "shouting" or much of the call-and-response associated with many Afro-American congregations. In this sense, there is a "thinning" of culture. Of course, it should be noted that these styles are by no means universal in the Afro-American church. Euro-Americans also experience a thinning of their culture in a certain sense. For instance, Euro-American respondents tended to associate the worship style a bit more with the Afro-American tradition.

Members could also experience a certain "thickening" of culture in certain aspects of congregational style in comparison with past experiences. For instance:

> Even for *me* it's different. I mean I grew up in a very kind of staid Methodist church. And although there was a lot of Afro-centric music, a lot of it was very Euro-centric. I've not been a part of a black Methodist church that has been this Afro-centric in terms of its music. And so even for me it's exciting and it's different. (AAF-5)

6. Tensions: Communication Styles

An awareness was expressed by some respondents on how different communication styles affected understanding and decision making. As we have seen, there is an emphasis in the congregation on being open to listening to other perspectives. This may allow members to overcome cultural differences in communication. However, some members believe the congregation could do more in addressing this issue. The pastor believes that communication increases during instances of others' personal crisis because of the empathy that emanates from concern. He believes this empathy can then recede during more normal circumstances:

I see instances of equality around pain. With the sort of person that's struggling with addiction. When the person is struggling with loss. If a person, if family members are, if they have a family member that has cancer or something like that. It's those kinds of disappointments that cross lines and people are able to relate to it.
On a fundamentally...people...equality comes, and you see equality most in this place when there is a realization that there is a dependency upon God. So then it doesn't matter whether you view your God as being black, white, male or female or all or none of the above. But when you realize that you need God in order to be able to make it through. Then you then have to hope that somehow God will use the community, then you don't care who is in the community. God uses it to bring you some sense of comfort. But you just did know. So then it becomes equality. But once lives get back to a point of comfort then the lines of equality break down again. Because those who have helped – they don't know any other way to communicate. And to deal with the next level then takes a huge amount of investment of time to be able to cross the ethnic lines of communication...of understanding things. And once the comfort is there – it then becomes easier to get back into your own ethnicity. And then to hold on to that. And then it breaks down again. Because then it becomes, "But you don't understand." There you are trying to change me. There you are unwilling to accept me as I truly am." But when the kids hurt, then the community really hurts. Then whoever it is that stands up and says, you know, my life is unmanageable. I just can't take it anymore. Then there's equality. But it's generally seen through God, and not really seen through ourselves.

One Euro-American reflects an awareness of communication difficulties across race and class:

It's always a problem how I communicate in the meetings, and how I was going to try to communicate, for example, and try to appeal for money. I wrote down what I thought was a really good, really fairly unbiased appeal to give us money, and I handed it to P and FP and they both went, no...I don't...give us a try at this. And then we'll, we'll see. And so they did a better job. (EAM-4)

An Afro-American member emphasizes awareness:

I think awareness is the first thing. And a statement about that awareness in saying I think communication styles may be different, but to welcome the communication styles. Welcome your input, no matter how you say it. No matter what word you choose to use. Take your time. Say what you have to say. And if a person needs help in understanding I think we need to bring in whatever it is, and whoever it is to help with our understanding.

> I think education is very important in making people aware of what's out there is important and what we can draw on to help each other to understand each other. I think we have to unveil that and make ourselves open to those opportunities...Let's make sure that we take the time to talk to each other in a manner, in away, that we do understand each other. Or at least we work on...we work on *trying* to understand each other. That would be one way to work with different learning styles and means of decision making. But I also think that C is gonna have to work on that too. It's gonna have to really explore and its gonna have to really do some investigation of ways to help each other understand. (AAF-21)

C. Commonality and Diversity

Respondents engaged in a discourse, expressing their belief in equality and recognizing both commonalties and differences among members. Some respondents seemed more comfortable using a discourse that emphasized a common humanity, while others seemed more comfortable emphasizing the positive aspects of racial identity. An important finding was how respondents weaved together the language of commonality *with* the language of difference. The following is not intended as a full discourse analysis; instead, it is intended to be suggestive.[20]

1. Commonality in Difference: Humanity

Some respondents emphasized that members shared a common humanity. The overall impression of the researcher was that respondents expressed themselves in a manner which emphasized their concern for each other as persons while, at the same time, recognizing racial identity. For example:

> The circle at the end, where we all circled up. That was a very moving and a significant event. And it has the effect of I guess not only equalizing everybody, putting everybody on a level playing field. And...but...it points out, you know, that in relating to other people that we are equal...and it's a more personal kind of thing.
>
> IN. *How do you see the congregation active in the community?*

[20] The following theme may seem a diversion to the reader at this time, but it is important in developing the integrative theses, which follow.

R...I guess the first way is through our example. I think hopefully we can, we can demonstrate to the community at large, or whoever is willing to look that, you know, we can get along and we can function and we....we not just have a superficial respect or awareness of each other and our diversities, but we have a deep seated and very genuine regard for different folks.

And finally:

So you know a lot of the churches that are...a lot of the people that are...that are not diverse or whatever, they don't come in contact with different people. So they don't have an opportunity to talk with them and find out that basically we are all the same inside. We're all...we all have the same needs, the same desires...you know we're motivated pretty much the same way – that we have so much more in common than we do...than we're different. (EEM-10)

Or as this respondent states:

I'm not saying that when you come here I'm going to sit up and say I'm not going to sit by you because you're not a person of color. And that you are a...European-American or you're just...I don't do that. And I don't think....we embrace everyone irregardless of the color of your skin. So we don't play a race card here. Because if we played a race card we would be perpetrating who we are and what we stand for. So we don't do that. So it's not...So if my need is being met I think yours is too on a spiritual level. Because when the pastor comes before us is not about you're this or you're that because of the color of your skin. It's about what's in the center. What's under that cover? You as a person. (AAF-24)

And as this respondent put it:

IN. *If you were to give advice to another congregation that wanted to become interracial, what would you tell them?*

R. To become interracial...as the whole purpose to become interracial? OK...what would I tell 'em. I don't know, you you get 'em in there. White folks and black folks together. I think I'd say to see the people. Look beyond the color. And see the people. Yeah, we are different. We are very different. I mean, you know, you cut us we bleed. All these types of...we are very similar. We *are* very similar. But are histories...our traditions are different. See you just have to be...you have to be patient. I don't know...I just see...just see the people. See us for who we are. Try to be who we are. Work through it just as like, If I'm

> sitting across the table from a man at a meeting. I mean he brings different things and I bring different things just because our genders are different. (EAF-7)

2. Commonality in Difference: "Children of God"

A number of respondents also expressed their belief that all persons were "children of God." One respondent recognized commonality, difference, and equality in this phrase:

> Each person is unique, each person is a child of God, and you shouldn't judge a person on the color of their skin or how much money that you have in the billfold. (EAF-16)

3. Commonality in Difference: Shared Christian Community

Respondents also saw a commonality in being a Christian community. One long time member stated:

> The you know how we act. [chuckles] We're a very loving type of people that recognize that they're in the Body of Christ like we are. And everybody's a brother or sister. And we really try to *live* that thing, you know and *treat* 'em as such which I think's the way the Lord wanted. (EAF-18)

Or:

> And to me spirituality in some ways over rides all the other stuff. To me it's the great equalizer, in my opinion. You know, just because you are from a certain background doesn't mean that you're gonna be – think, feel, be – the same way. But spiritually I have found that with many people...at least you have that as a common base. One of the things at C that I'm hoping that really makes the community solid is that even though we're not dealing with the race [issue] right now, I'm hoping that we will find some ways to deal with that. Cause it's gonna be in our face regardless. With the spiritual formation, that if we can begin at that point then we have *something* to fall back on. You know, we have something to fall back on. We have something to keep us still holding on and still talking to each other, without this total divide. You know: "I'm mad at you, I'm not ever going to speak to you again." But because we're spiritually on the same path and on the same journey I have to talk to you.

> I have to try to find a way to work through our differences. So I'm hoping that that will be the proven equalizer. (AAF-21)

Though respondents expressed a sense of unity through their common Christianity, the congregation does not find unity in a rigid doctrine or practice. This respondent reflect on diversity and faith:

> Because a lot of people, you know, we all go in the same direction – trying to anyway – to get to Heaven. But God works differently with each one. (AAM-26)

Another respondent emphasizes that the congregation is not united by identifying social scapegoats. She discusses this problem in terms of Christianity as a whole:

> But one of the things that I think is sad about many of us as Christians is that we're looking for an enemy, we're looking for an enemy, we're always looking for somebody to condemn to validate our own faith and Christianity. And we just don't emphasize grace enough. (AAF-5)

She has a vision for the congregation that emphasizes a common congregational ethos that includes diversity:

> What I would like to see – and what I think our pastor is moving for – move from having black songs or white songs or Hispanic songs – that we learn that become C songs from a variety of background. (AAF-5)

4. Commonality in Diversity: Community of Care

The congregation also finds unity in being a community of care and concern. One member puts it this way:

> IN. *What about your friends, do they know about C?*
>
> R. They know about C. They question as why we continue to go here, why, I mean they can't understand about black and white together...
>
> IN. *What do you say to them to say that this is a good place for you, how do you explain that to them?*
>
> R. Well, when I first, when we do talk about religion, I say, you know C is a loving, connecting family where...each person cares about the other

person and then I, I'm sorry about what...no matter what color you are, no matter is you're rich or poor, straight or not, and this time they're really looking at me really funny like what type of church is this? (EAF-16)

Or

C has a variety of people. I think it depends on who that person is. I think *very* many street people come to get a meal. To be in an environment where people will shake your hand – look in your eyes and generally not just throw you away. For that length of time that you're there. You can be one...we're all together. So I don't know if they feel the same that I do. But I'm sure that's a message that they delight in also. And it's a message that we all delight in. (EAF-7)

5. Commonality in Diversity: Common Interests

Members also find commonality in personal interests:

Well, one day you find out you're sitting on the pew with someone who isn't exactly like you. And you start a conversation...and conversation starts...you keep going on and on and on and then you find out you have something in common with that individual. (AAM-23)

6. Commonality in Diversity: Through Crisis

Respondents also found a commonality and equality through crisis. One can also recognize the individual in crisis. Working together in tornado relief was seen as a unifier for the congregation. One respondent reflects:

R. When I think about C and the folks of C I just the [pause] it's just how the average, well not average, but how the just individual people are.

IN. *And that's something that you...you know, really came to appreciate, huh?*

R. Right. I mean, you know, and I guess it took the tornado and it took...because I mean I was so close of...I mean a block over of my house...where my house, where my house is at, there were houses that are gone. I mean they were literally flattened and it took *that* plus coming here to realize I could be one, like one of the people that's out on the street...that...that is homeless. (EAF-16)

Another member reflects on personal problems, mutual concern, and equality:

> IN. *Are the people who are in tune – how do you think that happen?*
>
> R. Well it happens the same way it happened to my wife and I when we came here. I mean they see that, you know, an actual demonstration – that when you stand around the circle that people are pretty much equal, you know. If you don't have problems now in your life just stick around, you will. We're all gonna have problems. Somebody's gonna have problems, everybody's gonna have problems in your life sometimes, sooner or later. Hopefully yours won't be bad and you'll get over them pretty quick, but just because somebody's got problems doesn't mean that they're...they're inferior or they're different much (EAM-10)

7. Commonality in Diversity: Common Mission

As was discussed in Chapter Seven the congregation has found a common purpose in its service to the community through various outreach projects.

8. Commonality in Diversity: Children as Unifiers

An important part of the congregation's mission has been its outreach to children and youth in the community. This respondent believes they unite in a way that goes beyond simply a common concern for them:

> IN. *Do you think people mix easily across a...?*
> R. Now that I...some people do. Because it's just their nature, you know. And some people find it's hard for them because of their upbringing. OK, they may deep inside have the desire that...that nature of wanting to expand across different boundaries...but they're inhibited, you know, so-to-speak because of their upbringing. OK. And so it takes them a while longer to make those steps. One of the greatest easement of that is dealing with the children. And the reason why is because when you look at the children and the young ones especially – you just – they tend to be formed in a way that is designed in the Word of God. They don't get involved in, you know, black, white or Chinese or whatever, you know. They don't get involved in that. You know, they just go on they they're just exuberant and their love explodes out. And, you know, and...we learn from them how to be more, you know, compassionate and accepting of each other. You know, we teach, you know – in fact if you look at it

> correctly I believe is that we teach them, if we're not careful, we teach them how to be *wrong* kind of children of God. Where they would teach us how to be the right kind of children of God. And so if...and so if we can watch and learn from them many things – it helps us to be more God's children-like. (AAM-26)

9. Diversity in Commonality: Diversity Between Cultural Groups

Respondents believe there are differences between the two major cultural groupings in the congregation.[21] The congregation includes members from "other" backgrounds.

10. Diversity in Commonality: Diversity Within Cultural Groupings

Throughout the interviews, respondents recognized diversity within cultural groupings. For instance:

> And right about that time the growth spurt brought more middle class black and Hispanic folk who became more vocal, kind of blasting do-gooders out of their comfort zone. You know, I'm black so I know everything about being black. Well I'm black, but I'm very different from a black person who's lived on the street all their lives. And so there is not that homogeneity that you think there is. And so there started to be tension. It was hop...hopefully creative tension, but there was tension. (AAF-5)

Or:

> You know, just because you are from a certain background doesn't mean that you're gonna be – think, feel be – the same way. (AAF-21)

11. Diversity in Commonality: Unique Individuals

Throughout the interviews respondents recognized that individuals were also diverse. This respondents sums this up:

> I'm finding that people are just different, you know. And their reasons for coming are different. (AAF-21)

[21] This subsection states the obvious. It is only included for the sake of theoretical comprehensiveness.

12. Tensions: A Wider Diversity?

Some respondents expressed a desire to see the congregation express a wider diversity, while still maintaining an interracial balance. One respondent stated:

> Like this is a great place. And its diversity is one of its greatest assets because you get all different kinds of views, and you seek God is so many different ways. And I would *hate* for that to go away. I would hate, I wouldn't even...I mean the balance, I would like to see maybe *more,* like you say we have European Americans and African Americans. We have a few Hispanic Americans. We don't have hardly any Asian Americans. So even some *more* diversity as far as that goes. But I would hate to *lose* the balance that we have. (EAF-19)

Another respondent stated:

> And we have a music director now who's pretty, whose *training* is very diverse. She's got sacred music background, but it's very Afrocentric in a lot of ways. And while that's comfortable for me, I think I would like to see us do a little bit more diverse things. Which is one reason I taught that Burmese song yesterday. My job has...just has me highly sensitized. Sometimes too much. I'm called Miss PC Queen. But there's just so much beauty in the differences. But I think that... I think that our folks are open, and so I think it's going to up to the leaders again. I think as people start to assert their culture and not just depending on other people. I think *we're* going to have to push for that. We have Hispanic people in our congregation. And for Easter I want to teach a Spanish song to the children. I think they can learn it. They're really good about languages. And again, you known on these different days I think we can do different, different things. (AAF-5)

The former pastor states:

> There's lots of different cultural pieces that come into C that make it even *more* diverse than the multi-racial part.
>
> IN. *How would you characterize the church culturally?*
>
> R. Oh, I don't know. I don't know that I know a good definition of culture so I guess it would have to be multi-cultural because if culture is all the myths, values, beliefs, traditions that come from out of our own kind of pockets in the world then I'd say we're multi-cultural. And lots of different stories get woven into a larger story....I think it, I think C values most often the different, the cultural differences that people have.

13. A Common Congregational Ethos

One characteristic uniting members seems to be a yearning for a community that is not superficial when confronting difference. One member puts it this way:

> IN. *Why do you think other people who are at C are there?*
>
> R. I'm finding that people are just different, you know. And their reasons for coming are different. One of the commonalties is that we all have the same kind of yearning, you know, we want something that's a little bit more real.
>
> IN. *So you see that across a lot of people that...*
>
> R. I think as a majority, yes. I think there's some people there that are at some very, very *different* places than me. And there's some people who come from similar backgrounds as me. And probably have very different lives than me. Similar but different, you know. But the commonality is that everybody has this quest, you know. (AAF-21)

This yearning seems to contribute to a congregational ethos where accepting difference in community is fostered. One respondent discusses the ethos he perceives in the congregation this way:

> I mean I am such a great believer in God's grace. And I think that's a major part of it. I think God sees us trying and God is backing us up and trying to help us stay together. I think there's a certain ethos of tolerance and wanting to get to know. There's a...there's a certain window that opens when you come into C and you peer through and you see something different. Something new. Something that's not like anything you've had before. And you're not really sure of what it is but you want to be a be a part of it. And so I think that's one thing that keeps us together....But for me it's knowing that this is what I've been seeking all my life. The best of what a community can be. And knowing that this...it's not perfect. But it's closer than anything I've been involved in. I think other people have the same feeling. We...we know that we're on to something. And we may not get it right most of the time. But we...there's a feeling that we're onto something. And if we stay together we'll achieve or we'll *see* that something. (AAF-5)

Another member remarks on the importance of delighting in difference:

R. What's the key? [to becoming an interracial congregation?] (pause) I don't know what the key is. (pause) I think there has to be a desire for it. Because I think people will tolerate it, you know, or they will allow it, or they will....but you gotta kind of delight in it, or they will...but you gotta kind of delight in it or wish it to be, and that's not the same thing I was talking about, you know...

And:

You [referring to herself] sound like you wanted everybody to assimilate, that's not what I'm saying. You know, obviously it's like to...to come to the table with gifts and strengths, everybody bringing those together makes for a stronger whole than one group, than standing against another group – so that' why I think it's become stronger that way. (EEA-13)

She continues by identifying a common perspective:

IN. *Well, do you think it kind of permeates the congregation a little bit or hit and miss or?...*

R. Well, I think it pretty much does. I think it, you know, I think we...I was talking to AAF. We were setting up a meeting for next Monday night. She's like, we need some white people on this committee. I said there are already white people on this. [chuckles] And it was like, yeah, it is, where you get so you forget. It's not that, it's not color blind, I don't believe in all that, but it's like you – there's an enmeshing of what we're talking about with so many people with different perspectives and all of a sudden we start sounding like we all have a common perspective. So you don't need a white person on there to add the perspective, you need a middle class or, or needing some other form of diversity to form the diversity – because the diversity or...a lot of us are feeling a lot of the same way. (EEF-13)

14. Communitas

As we have seen, this commonality in diversity is expressed in the ritual of worship. *Communitas* is a profound sense of community gained through the leveling of status in a group. It is often temporary and can be felt in ritual. It can also be a temporary sense of the unification of "global" forms of difference. (Turner, 1969) The Shalom circle ritual described here can be categorized as a form of *communitas*. One member reflects on this ritual:

> And we went to church that first Sunday and I was just blown away. I mean the initial *feeling* when you walk in there. And probably the first thing that you do notice is how diverse it is. And how inclusive it is and what a great spirit that creates. And so from that first Sunday on I was just hooked. I mean when you get in that circle at the end and sing Shalom and you look around I was hooked from that moment on.
>
> And later:
>
> When we get our circle and when you look around, it's just like, this is what, this is who is in the world. This is what the world...this is what the world looks like.
>
> And finally:
>
> Everybody's holding hands. And you look around the circle. It's hard for me still to not get choked up. Not because it's diverse. But because this is my family, and I love these people. (EAF-19

D. Summary

The congregation has attempted to foster an ethos where both Afro-American and Euro-American symbolic repertoires are equally honored. They are particularly honored in the music of worship. Food, particularly at special events, is negotiated to ensure proper recognition. Opportunities are given for members to share their narratives that come out of differing backgrounds. Holidays are recognized from shared traditions and those associated originally with Afro-American or Euro-American traditions. Iconic (visual) symbols seem to present a particular challenge since many seem to represent a unity through difference rather than a unity in difference. The congregation also recognizes diversity by incorporating some aspects of symbolic repertoires from additional cultural traditions.

The congregation gives opportunity to participate in the symbolic repertoire from member's own cultural backgrounds. It also gives the opportunity to participate in the

symbolic repertoire from another cultural background. There is also a certain commonality in repertoire through a shared regional culture. A common Christian repertoire also serves as a unifier and as a rationale for inclusivity. The congregation, over time, seems to have developed an ethos where there is a high degree of comfort in sharing repertoires, and negotiation over these is not as charged as it might be in other settings.

Interaction in the congregation is represented by a variety of style repertoires, particularly from the Afro-American and Euro-American cultural groupings. The congregation has experienced pastoral styles both more associated with Afro-American cultural and with Euro-American culture. Both of the recent pastors both represent their own background and cross over into another style. The worship service includes styles associated with both cultures and, at times, blends them.

The congregations seems to have an ethos where members can both feel comfortable in the style they bring to the congregation and to some degree participate in another. There is probably a thinking of style and symbolic repertoire of both cultures to accommodate comfort levels from both cultural background. However, certain aspects of expression can be experienced as a "thickening" by some. Finally, members have an awareness of differing communication styles in interactions, such as decision-making. However, some respondents believe that this is not taken into account enough in accommodating differing styles or in adjusting group interaction.

The ethos of the congregation seems to favor the recognition of equality and recognizes commonality and difference in its discourse. A shared humanity was emphasized by members, recognizing the differences of individuals and their cultural

identities. Members believed that everyone had equal worth because all were "unique children of God." Commonalties were also recognized through mutual concern, a commitment to interracial community, and common interests. Commonality was also fostered through the mission service projects of the congregation. Members also believed that children served as unifiers. Finally, members recognized a certain commonality and equality when confronting crisis.

Yet members also recognized differences within this commonality—between and within cultural groupings. They also stressed that members were all unique individuals. Members differed in whether they stressed a discourse that focused on race or one that primarily used the language of diversity. Many also alternated these discourses. Members were united in ritual, which symbolized commonality and difference, as well as equality and affection.

CHAPTER NINE

A GROUNDED THEORY OF A BIRACIAL CONGREGATIONAL ETHOS: AN INTEGRATIVE SUMMARY

This final section presents a grounded theory of the social practices that foster a biracial congregation. The theory integrates the components of the earlier analysis within a more holistic analysis of the data as a whole. It postulates an ethos, which the congregation as an interpersonal community within a voluntary organization, leans towards and has to some degree fostered. The terminology given to name this ethos is a *bimodal-cultural congregational-community ethos*. Though this phrase is a somewhat unwieldy, all the components are important. The ethos is one in which there is an aspiration towards racial equality through interpersonal community. Social practices and a social consciousness that are inclined towards racial equality form this ethos. Social practices and social consciousness that stand in tension with the central tendencies are also present.

The remaining parts of this chapter present an analysis of this ethos in relation to the four frame-dimensions considered above. Grounded hypotheses are given for each of the frame-dimensions. These hypotheses are then integrated into a summary grounded theory.

INTEGRATION OF THE FRAME-DIMENTIONS

A. Congregational-Community Ethos

The ethos fostered in this type of congregation is one in which there is:

1. An **openness** to people of diverse cultures, particularly in relation to the Afro-American and Euro-American cultural groupings
2. A **sense of community** is fostered is fostered through mutual care and fellowship with other persons
3. A commitment **to equality across societal status distinctions**, particularly in relation to race, and
4. The establishment of the congregation as a **safe and sacred space** where diversity, (particularly in relation to the Afro-American and Euro-American cultural groupings) can be expressed and explored

Discussion:

a. *Respondents express an openness to diversity in general.* This is important to the ethos of the congregation. However, this researcher places special emphasis on the inclusion of the Afro-American and Euro-American cultural groupings. This may, in part, reflect the initial focus of the research. More importantly, though, it reflects both the membership composition of the congregation and the consequent emphases in the transformation of the congregational community. The bimodal-cultural ethos posited here can perhaps be seen as a form of multiculturalism; though one which places an emphasis on two cultural modalities.

b. *Face-to-face and empathetic interpersonal community is central to this ethos.* This differs from the more instrumental interaction of many social networks found in society. Mutual care and concern is identified as a key characteristic of the congregation by respondents. Friendships have been formed across social barriers. Care in crisis is emphasized. Fellowship activities, such as regular meals after service and outings to a nature preserve, are organized. Members seem to regard each other as individual persons rather than simply focusing on racial identity. This care, concern and fellowship seems to be crucial to bonding the community.

c. *The term "social strata" rather than "social status" is used here.* This use of terms is intended to indicate the emphasize the strata position that members bring to the congregation rather than the statuses that might be internal to the congregation in various roles. A primary societal status is race. The researcher believes that the site congregation has genuinely focused on aspiring to racial equality. Equality across class is also an aspiration, but it has perhaps presented more contradictions because of the substantial presence of indigent people with unstable life circumstances. It may be the case that thinking in terms of extreme poverty (rather than thinking simply in terms of class) may be a good way of categorizing many of the issues faced by the congregation. Perhaps the primary way in which the congregation de-emphasizes social strata is through the inclusion of people from different social strata. Voluntary organizations, particularly smaller ones, often exclude on the basis of strata position in society (and often informally so). Other practices, such as dressing down in worship and honoring the cultural modalities of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans, contribute to the de-emphasis of social strata.

d. *The term "sacred space" is emphasized here.* The congregation seems to serve as a sacred space in two senses: as a place where religious values are focused on, symbolically expressed, and internalized in memory; and as a place intentionally set somewhat apart from everyday life in society. A congregation as sacred space may allow participants to distance themselves to a degree from the prevailing practices of everyday society. The formality and particular values of this space may enable people to practice a different mode of interracial interaction than is present in everyday society. Tensions may also be lessened in such a space. However, the sacredness of the space may also tend to charge interaction, both positively and negatively at times. The sacred space of a diverse, yet united, community is particularly symbolized in the closing worship ritual of the site congregation's Shalom circle. This seems to be a form of *communitas*. It also seems likely from the research that equality in the congregation was most often experienced during Sunday morning activities; particularly in worship.

B. Service and the Congregational Ethos

The service frame-dimension is integrated into the congregational ethos in the following manner:

1. Service **outreach projects** are emphasized and oriented toward the socially marginalized, particularly impoverished Afro-Americans
2. A **social stance** is taken which emphasizes social justice, particularly in terms of racial equality

3. Socially marginalized people are integrated into various dimensions of the congregation
4. The **social stance** is integrated into various dimensions of the congregation

Discussion:

a. *Though it is not necessary for an interracial congregation to have outreach projects for it to be oriented towards the socially marginalized, they have been important to the identity and development of the site congregation.* Moreover, a strong case can be made that a congregation that neglects the extreme marginalization of many Afro-Americans is neglecting an important aspect of how race impacts society. Community outreach projects, such as Habitat for Humanity, a strong children and youth program for the socially marginalized, and hospitality for the extremely impoverished, are a central part of the site congregation's mission.

b. *The same can be said in terms of social stance – that a neglect of questions of racial equality in society neglects a central aspect of how the category of race functions.* The struggle for racial equality has been an important (though not universal) aspect of the Afro-American Christian tradition. The site congregation has attempted to incorporate this stance. It is exhibited through the advocacy of the pastors, substantial participation in a major citywide community organization, and through linkages with issues related to the congregation's outreach projects.

c. *It is evident from the descriptions above that the site congregation has achieved varying degrees of success in integrating the socially marginalized.* This is likely due, in part, to the life circumstances of many of their indigent guests. They are most integrated in worship and in organized fellowship activities like meals. The site

congregation seems to have been more successful in integrating socially marginalized children. It can also be noted here that other biracial congregations may be located in areas with few extremely marginalized residents.

d. *This social stance is emphasized in the site congregation through communication events such as sermons and Bible Study.* It is also modeled in practices, which point to the elimination of racial privilege and paternalism; such as the partnership between the Euro-American pastor and the Afro-American associate pastor.

C. Process and the Congregational Ethos

The process frame-dimension is integrated into the congregational ethos in the following manner:

1. An **intentionality towards insuring an equality between members in the congregation**, particularly in regard to the Afro-American and Euro-American cultural groupings
2. An **intentionality towards balancing the influence of the Afro-American and Euro-American cultural groupings** and a **power sharing** across societal status
3. An **intentionality in recognizing the equality of cultural modes** particularly in regards to the Afro-American and Euro-American cultures
4. An **intentionality toward interracial organization** that recognizes and attempts to counter how racial privilege objectively structures society.

Discussion:

a. *This intentionality is exhibited in the site congregation in ways that entail both planning and improvisation.* The particular open milieu of the site congregation

seems to contribute to a preference for spontaneity vis-à-vis strategic planning. However, leadership has planned ongoing practices and events to foster inclusivity and equality.

This intention towards equality can be analyzed across the various forms of interaction in the congregation. As a particular kind of community organization – a congregation – the organization exhibits forms of interaction particular to interpersonal community, small- scale instrumental organization, and communal ritual. This intention towards equality of cultural groupings is perhaps most realized in the site congregation in communal ritual. However, even here there have been tensions (most recently over concerns related to an emphasis on the issues associated with extreme poverty). Equality seems realized in realm of interpersonal community through concern expressed in crisis, mutual care, and fellowship activities. Friendships have evidently been established that extend beyond the walls of the congregation. Yet, this type of informal interaction presents particular kinds of challenges in relation to distinctions of race, class and poverty. The more instrumental relations of process in an organization present further challenges. Instrumental skill and experience sets related to class come more to the forefront. Interclass small-scale voluntary organizations are not the norm, so the site-congregation does not have common models to draw upon. Nonetheless, members in the congregation struggle with these various challenges and attempt to find and develop various means to deal with them.

b. *Determining a balance of influence between Afro-American and Euro-American cultural groupings in a congregation is a difficult question.* It is perhaps more

feasible to notice a major imbalance. No claim, of course, is made here that the site congregation has achieved this balance. The configuration of the leadership in the site congregation adds a certain complexity to this question. During most of the research period, the pastor and the pastoral assistant/music director were Afro-Americans. Several of the most influential leaders of the congregation were also Afro-Americans. However, the majority of the formal chairpersons were Euro-American. Informal leadership was also exhibited in the site congregation. Several working class respondents expressed a preference for this mode of influence. The instrumentality of maintaining an organization over time presents challenges to equality in an interclass setting. The formalities of organizational structure in U.S. society tend to favor the particular skills, experiences and resources of those who come from a middle class or higher background. The site congregation has struggled with this issue. It presents a particular challenge because during the period of research the congregation had more middleclass Euro-American than Afro-American members. Certain practices, such as installing co-chairpersons in training, were instituted to attempt to facilitate the gaining of skills by members less experienced in leadership. Other practices, such as the close partnership of the former pastor and the associate pastor, were fundamental in modeling power sharing.

c. *The leadership of the site congregation is particularly conscious of including the symbolic repertoires of both the Afro-American and the Euro-American members in worship*. This seems largely to be accomplished through an informal negotiation over time, as many selections are simply made to suit the moment.

d. *The discourse in the interviews as a whole suggests a fair degree of awareness among respondents that racial privilege is not simply a personal expectation; instead it structures society.* There is also a lack of focus on the personal prejudices of members. This approach would put an emphasis on race as an objective stratifier rather than simply seeing racism as a subjective shortcoming. It would also allow members to distance themselves from an overwhelming focus on personal motivation and to concentrate more on the organizational dynamics of racial privilege. Combined with a genuine concern with other members as individuals, this approach can allow members to carefully guide others rather than simply attack personal motivation.

At the same time, behavior that exhibits racial privilege is seen as having been learned over time and is thought to be something that can be also unlearned. This learning approach stands somewhat in tension with the approach just outlined because it points to an internalization of this social stratification in personal expectations. Moreover, exceptions of privilege can certainly be seen as a form of motivation. But these expectations are seen as learned in society and are fairly pervasive in "white" society. They are not simply a function of "faulty individuals".

This dual interpretation seems to be generally consistent with the congregational dynamics portrayed in the interviews.[22] Leadership exercised through sermons, dialogue in retreats, workshops on race, and through more informal means has attempted to educate the membership on the dynamics of racial privilege and paternalism. We have also seen how the former pastor emphasizes how this privilege

[22] One could also make the case that it is consistent with the theology of "grace" emphasized by the former pastor in her interviews.

is a both a reflection of society and how it can be potentially pervasive in a congregation. Furthermore, there seems to be a relative unwillingness to focus on personal prejudicial motivation in the discourse of the interviews. This may reflect a concern for others as persons, and a desire not to focus on negative aspects. It may also reflect an awareness that to focus on negative aspects would put a strain on the community. It may too be a reflection of awareness that those who attend have already shown some commitment to interracial community. There must be either a degree of trust concerning motivation or at least a willingness to give some degree of the benefit of the doubt.[23] Trust has no doubt also been built through genuine relationship. The data also suggest that members value the mutual concern shown in the congregation and seek to maintain an interpersonal community in the face of certain strains.

Moreover, certain more subtle expectations of race privilege--particularly when combined with class distinctions-- may be viewed less as forms of prejudice than as simply an internalization of common social strata distinctions. Because Euro-American members seem aware of the problem of race privilege and paternalism to varying degrees, overcoming race privilege may be seen as a challenge that is faced together.

Though this study does not focus on conflict, those considerations have implications for understanding conflict over principle in a congregation. If members focus on personal motivations, conflicts can be personalized and principles neglected. On the other hand, there is the opposite danger if members focus on objective social

[23] An alternative consideration is that respondents were simply being polite about their fellow members during the interviews. The researcher, though, was generally impressed by the candor of the respondents.

strata and neglect concern for the other as a person. Then the tendency may be to simply defeat the other at the cost of community.[24]

In summary, the contention made here is that the ability of members to objectify race privilege as a function or societal structure may help foster the formation of an interracial congregational community.

D. Culture and Congregational Ethos

The cultural frame-dimension is integrated into the congregational ethos in the following manner:

1. An integration of a diversity of **symbolic repertoires** and **style repertoires** into the ritual and other practices of the congregation, with a particular emphasis on Afro-American and Euro-American cultural modes
2. An opportunity of members to both **participate in cultural repertoires primarily associated with their own backgrounds and an opportunity to participate in repertoires associated with other backgrounds**
3. An **ethos discouraging the practice of certain aspects of culture** that:
    - Places an absolute preference on one's own culture
    - Expresses racial and class privilege or vestiges of forced subservience
    - Expresses an exclusion of other people from community
4. An ethos that recognizes that culture expresses both commonality and difference

    This commonality includes a common humanity, common commitments and purposes, and cultural repertoires common to U.S. society and the region

[24] These reflections are not intended as commentary on any particular conflict in the site congregation.

Diversity includes a diversity of values, diversity between the cultural groupings of Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans, diversity within ethnic groups, some diversity through the presence of other ethnic "minority" groups, and the uniqueness of individuals.

Discussion:

a. *The site-congregation weaves the symbolic repertoires and style repertoires of members throughout its events, particularly in worship.*[25] It has helped in this respect that the congregation recently had a pastor and an associate pastor from both cultural groupings. The current pastor is committed to continuing this approach. In this mesh of cultural modalities, there is probably a certain thinning of them to accommodate comfort levels. However, in some aspects members may also experience a thickening of their own cultural heritage.[26]

This approach is termed a bimodal-cultural approach since there is an emphasis on two modalities: the Afro-American and the Euro-American. It could be argued that the term "bicultural" could be used instead of "bimodal." This, in part, may simply reflect the researcher's preference. However, it is based on certain considerations. The term "culture" is very elusive to precise definition. The question also arises whether an entire culture enters into the practices and beliefs of a voluntary organization like a congregation. Moreover, the argument can certainly be made that certain aspects of culture are discouraged in the congregation (e.g. the racial privilege that is present in Euro-American culture). Finally, the question can certainly be raised whether Afro-Americans and Euro-

[25] The term "weaving" is suggested by Foster and Brelsford (1996)
[26] For instance possibly in music

Americans is best to characterize Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans as genuinely belonging to separate cultures. The term "bimodal" was chosen to simply emphasize the inclusion of particular cultural modalities.

b. *It is important to note that, of course, members already share a large repertoire of symbol and style as they live in the same society.* However, certain aspects of the member repertoires are primarily associated with Afro-American or Euro-American culture in the region. Members are encouraged to express themselves through the repertoires in which they are most comfortable. However, they are also encouraged to stretch and participate in the repertoire of another cultural group. There are also instances where participants' interactional styles are influenced by another culture repertoire and seem to, at least, partially reflect a style primarily associated with the other major cultural grouping in the congregation. Afro-Americans are probably more likely to be fluent in more aspects of both style repertoires. The congregation gives the opportunity for Euro-Americans to become so to some extent. This mesh of repertoires is probably aided through a certain shared Southern Christian repertoire of symbol and style.

c. *The site-congregation discourages aspects of culture that express exclusion and privilege.* An obvious example is the de-emphasis on "appropriate" clothing during worship. The pastor also discusses how visual symbols are often avoided in worship because they are seen as exclusive to a group. Many of the other practices discussed in this chapter also are intended to discourage those aspects of Euro-American culture that promote exclusion and privilege.

d. *A discourse is weaved through the interviews that recognizes both commonality and diversity.* This discourse recognizes that people are both similar and different in various ways. However, it might also be possible to identify alternate modes of discourse weaved together in the interviews. One mode of discourse focuses on the problems of racial privilege, paternalism, and social inequality. This is a discourse that seems to be exhibited in the interview responses included in the sections on status, outreach projects, social stance, and power sharing. A second mode of discourse is that of culture and diversity. This discourse emphasizes the appreciation of different cultural modes. It seems to be primarily exhibited in the interview responses in the sections outlining the major categories of openness, symbolic repertoire and style. The third discourse emphasizes a common humanity. This discourse seems to be exhibited in the interview responses included in all the outlined categories, and is often intertwined with the other two modes. It seems to be used to signal a belief in equality. Though there are varying emphases by respondents; most if not all the respondents seem to employ these three modes to some extent. Recognizing differences of discourse, though, at least point to the complexities of race, class and culture, and speak to the challenge of addressing complexities in a voluntary organization, such as a congregation.

E. Summary

A bimodal-cultural congregational-community ethos is one that aspires through social practices to foster:

1. An interpersonal community – **open to diversity and inclusive on an equal basis** of a significant percentage of both Afro-American and Euro-American members – that is symbolized through ritual
2. A **commitment to supporting racial equality in mission and service** including community outreach programs and social advocacy
3. An **intention towards the balancing of influence** between the Afro-American and Euro-American cultural groupings, and toward the recognition of the equal worth of persons despite social status
4. **An inclusion of the cultural modes of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans,** practiced, respected and honored on an equal basis

This ethos is further specified in the summary sections above, and the social practices particular to the site-congregation have been identified throughout this chapter.

Discussion:

Fundamental to the transformation of the site congregation into a biracial community was the fostering of a particular ethos. The ethos is termed "bimodal" because the site-congregation attempts to include cultural modalities of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans on an equal basis. The term "modality" can also be used in characterizing aspects of process and influence. The site-congregation also aspires towards balancing the influence of the two largest cultural grouping of members.

This ethos is formed both through social practices and through a degree of shared principles and consciousness. The characteristics of certain central tendencies can be identified. These tendencies are not absolute in practice; they should be thought of in relative terms.

- There is an **intention towards** racial equality in community, through social service, through process and between cultural modes.
- There is **openness to** the inclusion of diversity and difference; particularly in terms of Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans.
- There is a **concern for** others as individual persons.
- There is a degree of **planning in** the formation of this ethos. There is also a fair degree of spontaneity and improvisation in a milieu that is open to people expressing their cultural repertoires.
- There is a **letting go** of hindrances to inclusion and equality including fears of difference, societal status distinctions, and certain conventional customs and routines. Particularly important is the letting go of attempts to control by the Euro-American cultural grouping.
- There is an **awareness of** how status distinctions structure society and how they can potentially structure interpersonal community and organization in a congregation.
- There is also a **commitment to challenge** invidious status distinctions.
- There is an **appreciation of** and **respect for** the symbolic and style repertoires of different cultural groupings; particularly in terms of Afro-American and Euro-Americans.

- Finally, there is a **drawing upon** the rich heritages of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans. In a congregation, the symbolic repertoires of religion and the historical memories of sacred space also can be drawn upon. So transformation is not seen simply as change. It also draws upon the past.

This ethos is not without tensions. These tensions include various contradictions and stress points in relation to the central tendencies. They may, at times, simply represent difference and diversity. Tensions can strain a community. They can also be a creative force.[27]

The emphasis here on the formation of an ethos as opposed to a strategic methodology. Perhaps the formation of a particular ethos can be thought of as an approach, but it should not be seen as a set of particular techniques. A bimodal-cultural congregational-community ethos can also be thought as characterizing one type of interracial congregation. This type can be compared to others. This will be considered further in the final chapter.

[27] This paper does not delve into theology. However, it may be important to note one related element. There seems to be an emphasis on "grace" in the theology of the congregation. Put into practice this emphasis it is possible that it might contribute to a willingness to forgive shortcomings of members in dealing with race. It may also point to the possibilities or renewal and transformation.

CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY, COMPARISONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter begins with a summary of the study and the grounded theory that was developed in by analyzing the data. This is followed by a discussion of the relationship between the emergent theory and the literature presented in Chapter 2. The last section of the chapter offers recommendations for practice and for further research.

Summary and Purpose

Racial divisions have characterized life in America and religion plays an important role in American life. The central organizational form of Christianity in the U.S is the congregation. Racial divisions are expressed in the common form of segregated congregations. This study considers an alternative – a biracial congregation. The purpose of this study was to present a grounded theory of one type of interracial congregation.

The research questions initially formulated to guide this exploratory research were:

Primary question

- What social practices do congregational members experience and understand as fostering inclusivity in a stable biracial organization?

The secondary questions:

- How do congregational participants interpret inclusive practices in key dimensions of church life including, worship, education, governance, mission outreach and fellowship?
- Are there notable similarities and differences between how Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans interpret inclusive practices in their congregation?

Methodology

The methodology was grounded theory in design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews of 25 respondents-- 13 Afro-Americans and 12 Euro-Americans. The respondents, all thought to be knowledgeable about particular aspects of the congregation, were interviewed using an open-ended, semi-structured interview instrument. Interviews generally lasted around one hour. The interviews were taped and transcribed.

Data from the interviews was coded and analyzed using established grounded theory procedures. Ten major thematic categories and over one hundred subcategories emerged. The major categories were:

sense of community

openness

status

outreach

social stance

power sharing

intentionality

symbolic repertoire

style repertoire and,

commonality in diversity.

An initial core category and an integrative core category were also conceptualized. These were:

racial equality, and

bimodal-cultural ethos.

The categories were contextualized in the analysis through four frame dimensions:

community

service

process, and

culture.

All of the dimensions and categories were integrated into a theoretical framework intended to provide insight into the social practices that sustain a particular type of biracial congregation.

A Grounded Theory Framework for a Bimodal-Cultural Congregational Ethos

The primary features of the grounded theory are summarized here in the form of a congregational ethos.

- An interpersonal community – open to diversity and inclusive on an equal basis of a significant percentage of both Afro-American and Euro-American members – that is symbolized through ritual

- A commitment to supporting racial equality in mission and service including community outreach programs and social advocacy
- An intention towards balancing influence between the Afro-American and Euro-American cultural groupings and recognizing the equal worth of persons despite social status
- An inclusion of the cultural modes of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans, which are practiced, respected and honored on an equal basis.

More specifically:

Congregational-Community Ethos

The ethos fostered in this type of congregation is one in which there is:

- An **openness** to people of diverse cultures
- A **sense of community** through mutual care and fellowship
- A commitment to equality across societal **status** distinctions, particularly in relation to race, and
- The establishment of the congregation as a **safe and sacred space** where diversity can be expressed and explored

Service and the Congregational Ethos

The service frame-dimension is integrated into the congregational ethos in the following manner:

- Service **outreach projects** are emphasized and are oriented toward the socially marginalized; particularly impoverished Afro-Americans

- A **social stance** is taken which emphasizes social justice, particularly in terms of racial equality.
- **Socially marginalized people** are integrated into various dimensions of the congregation.
- The **social stance** is integrated into various dimensions of the congregation.

Process and the Congregational Ethos

The process frame-dimension is integrated into the congregational ethos through multiple forms of **intentionality** which aspire towards:

- **Equality** between congregational members
- The **influence** of the Afro-American and Euro-American cultural groupings and a **power sharing** across societal status
- Recognizing the **equality of cultural modes,** and
- A **commitment to interracial organization** that recognizes and attempts to counter how racial privilege objectively structures society

Culture and Congregational Ethos

The cultural frame-dimension is integrated into the congregational ethos in the following manner:

- An integration of a diversity of **symbolic repertoires** and **style repertoires** into the ritual and other practices of the congregation.
- An opportunity of members to **participate in multiple cultural repertoires**
- An ethos that **discourages practices** that place an absolute preference on one's own culture, express racial and class privilege or vestiges of forced subservience, and exclude people from community.

- A recognition that **culture expresses both commonality and difference**. Commonalities include a common humanity, common commitments and purposes, and cultural repertoires common to U.S. society and to the Southern region. Diversity includes a diversity of values, diversity between cultural groupings, diversity within ethnic groups, diversity through the presence of other ethnic "minority" groups, and the uniqueness of individuals.

The Importance of the Ethos and Further Characteristics

- *Fundamental to the transformation of the site congregation into a biracial community was the fostering of a particular ethos.* The ethos is termed **"bimodal"** because the site-congregation attempts to include cultural modalities of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans on an equal basis. The term "modality" can also be used in characterizing aspects of process and influence. The site-congregation also aspires towards balancing the influence of the two largest cultural grouping of members.
- *This ethos is formed both through social practices and through a degree of shared principles and consciousness.* The characteristics of certain central tendencies can be identified. These tendencies are not absolute in practice; they should be thought of in relative terms. There is an **intention towards** racial equality in community, through social service, through process and between cultural modes. There is an **openness to** the inclusion of diversity and difference. There is a **concern for** others as individual persons. There is a degree of **planning in** the formation of this ethos. There is also a fair degree of spontaneity and improvisation in a milieu that is open to people expressing their cultural repertoires. There is a **letting go** of hindrances to inclusion and equality including fears of difference, societal status distinctions, and certain

conventional customs and routines. Particularly important is the letting go of attempts to control by the Euro-American cultural grouping. There is an **awareness of** how status distinctions structure society and how they can potentially structure interpersonal community and organization in a congregation. There is also a **commitment to challenge** invidious status distinctions. There is an **appreciation of** and **respect for** the symbolic and style repertoires of different cultural groupings. Finally, there is a **drawing upon** the rich heritages of both Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans. In congregations the symbolic repertoires of religion and the historical memories of sacred space also can be drawn upon. So transformation is not seen simply as change. It also draws upon the past.

- *This ethos is not without tensions.* These tensions include various contradictions and stress points in relation to the central tendencies. They may at times also simply represent difference and diversity. Tensions can strain a community. They can also be creative.

Discussion of the Study Questions

The initial study questions were intended to guide the exploration of the research.

1. *The primary study question focused on social practices that sustain a stable biracial congregation.* During the analysis, it was found that particular social practices were embedded in and fostered a type of ethos. In many respects, framing a congregation in terms of ethos is similar to framing a congregation in terms of culture. The term **"ethos"** was chosen because it seemed to better convey a sense of principles and

aspirations in an interpersonal community. The researcher is wary of the overuse of the term "culture." The term "bimodal" was chosen (rather than a term emphasizing a greater diversity of cultural modes) because what most distinguished the congregation from most others was the "thick" presence of both Afro-American and Euro-American modalities. As the researcher has indicated, a complexity of diverse cultural and identity modalities are included within this ethos. The ethos can be thought of one having a common core with two primary cultural modalities that is interspersed throughout with the expression of diverse modalities.

2. *The first secondary question concerned how these practices influenced the organizational functions of worship, education, governance, mission outreach, and fellowship.* Rather than organizing the theory specifically around these functions, the researcher chose to use a four-frame dimension of community, service, process, and culture. Analysis of the original five functions was included in the analysis of the four-frame dimensions. However, these five functions point to a slightly different way of framing the analysis. The congregation has a *community* dimension represented, in part, by fellowship. It has an *instrumental* dimension represented, in part, by governance. It has a *mission* dimension represented, in part, by outreach. It has an *educational* dimension. Finally, it has a *ritual* dimension represented, in part, by worship. Equality and bimodality are perhaps most realized in ritual. The more instrumental relations of organization present particular challenges in terms of significant class and income differences (particularly when including those who are economically indigent). The congregation seems to have a genuine internal sense of community. The somewhat more formal setting of a congregation presents a safe

space to experience interpersonal equality in ways that are probably more challenging in the informal settings of everyday life. The congregation strives towards supporting social equality in its mission outreach. However, providing hospitality to those of particularly low social strata provides major challenges to a sense of equality. In many respects, the congregation represents a "sacred space" set apart to a degree from everyday life, where members can experience equality and practice their distinctive cultural modes in ways not generally found in the more stratified society of which they are a part. A secular analogue in terms of voluntary organization is the "free space" concept.[28]

3. *The third research question related to notable differences in interpretations between the Afro-American and Euro-American members.* The researcher did not find it fruitful to analyze the data in a way that would answer this question. Members in many ways seemed to share a common ethos. However, relations to racial privilege and paternalism are probably an important difference.

Comparisons with the Literature

Interracial Congregations

Ortiz (1996) presents four types of interracial congregations. It is evident that not all biracial congregations fit the bimodal cultural model presented here. Congregations can be organized around religious purposes that do not emphasize the importance of the equality of cultural modes or social equality in the larger society. In many respects, the ethos of the site congregation best fits the third type presented by Ortiz where the congregation:

[28] See Boyte, 1980

> is primarily concerned with correcting the injustices of society and the church by intentionally working towards reconciliation. It embraces other cultures and in most cases, is a bicultural endeavor in a community where mostly African-Americans live under difficult circumstances (p. 51).

However, it also fits to a degree the fourth type which:

> Deals with churches in transition that are primarily concerned with church renewal and community inclusiveness...The church is desperate but does not want to close its doors. A visionary comes to this ministry with an urban commitment and a willingness to live in the community as a display of the gospel. The church begins to grow with community people, and it also communicates a friendly environment (p. 57).

The third type seems one formed by a core of people committed specifically to racial reconciliation. The fourth type seems to be a congregational community that is open to the urban environment in which they are set.

Like the third type, the site-congregation has a focus on issues related to race, but it is by no means the sole purpose of the congregation. (It should also be noted that the phrase "racial reconciliation" did not appear in any of the interview transcripts – which suggests a difference in terminology and perhaps of focus). Like the fourth type, it was a dying congregation revitalized, in part, through the efforts of a "visionary" pastor committed to urban mission. It is also characterized by inclusiveness and friendliness. By combining features of these two types, the site-congregation struggles with tensions between two emphases – interpersonal community and race. However, this combination has its advantages. A consistent focus on racial identity can be stressful and be de-

personalizing as a sole focus. A stress on interpersonal community counters these tendencies. However, a consistent focus on interpersonal community can deemphasize important issues associated with social stratification and privilege. It can also neglect an important aspect of identity.

The two case studies discussed in Chapter Two are also pertinent for comparative purposes. Lakey (1996) studied a suburban Episcopal congregation in the Washington, DC area, primarily middle class with 285 adult members. At the time of the study, 60% of the membership were white, 37% were black, 2% Hispanic and 1% of Asian descent. Forty three percent of the black members were relatively recent immigrants of African descent. Lakey utilizes what he calls a "modified grounded theory methodology" and identifies four phases of congregational development and examines five factors in relation to these phases. He also places an emphasis on the church's culture as the central factor. He calls this culture a "culture of tolerance," which he believes needs to progress to a "culture of inclusiveness." Lakey describes the effects of this culture of tolerance:

> Just as the common denominator of middle-class status up to a point serves an important diversity enhancing function, so do the attitudes of openness and tolerance....On the other hand, openness to 'them' joining 'us' and tolerance in respect to difference may assume assimilation of he minority group rather than a transition to multiculturalism....In order to move beyond the stage where the church is 'owned' by one group which graciously invites another group to participate, intentionality will be needed (p. 343).

She further describes this culture:

> Ambivalence and tension between conflicting feelings and perspectives are themes that run through the development of racial diversity in this church.... While some Black members see no need for change in a congregational practice, there are others who are tempted to leave because they find insufficient affirmation of their ethnic heritage and identity. While some who see the need for new approaches do nothing about it, others become advocates for change. Among the White members, a few take an active interest in issues related to race, but this is not a major issue on the agenda of most of them. While most White members see racial diversity as a valuable part of the congregation's identity, they exhibit limited awareness of majority/minority dynamics in the church, in society at large, or in their own perspectives or interactions. They are pleased with how far the congregation has come in terms of racial diversity, but they are ambivalent about the value of more intentional action to deepen their understanding (p. 344).

The current study complements Lakey's stage and factor analysis of a biracial congregation. However, the ethos of the urban site-congregation found in the current study seems to differ in important ways with the "culture of tolerance" found in the more "staid" middle class setting of the Episcopal biracial congregation in Lakey's study. Lakey has identified a considerable avoidance of racial issues. There are tendencies towards this in the site-congregation but they do not seem to be pervasive.

Differences in the two congregations resulted in differences in the conceptualization of types of ethos or culture in the two studies. Perhaps this suburban "culture of tolerance" represents an additional type of biracial congregation. However, Lakey hopes the congregation will move in what he believes will be a more transformative direction.

Foster and Breslford (1996)[29] studied three interracial congregations, two with substantial numbers of Afro-Americans and Euro-Americans. Cedar Grove United Methodist Church is located in Atlanta. It has 300 members, including a substantial number of Euro-Americans, many long-term Afro-American members, as well as Sri Lankan and Jamacian immigrants and their families. Oakhurst Presbyterian is located in the suburbs of Atlanta. It opened itself to a transitioning neighborhood in the 1970s and has an Afro-American pastor. It struggled as Euro-Americans attempted to "maintain their privileged status." A new pastor was appointed eight years prior to the study. "Following an intense power struggle initiated by the new pastor, a new vision of the congregation's mission emerged from an increasingly diverse constituency" (p. 20). At the time of the study, the membership was almost equally Afro-American and Euro-American, with some of Native American and Asian descent.

The authors utilized a methodology that uncovered themes symbolizing the identity of the congregation. Five symbolic themes or signs were identified for the Cedar Grove congregation by Foster and Brelsford:

1. *"We are Family."* This theme recognizes the "deep rooting" of family relations in the fellowship of the congregation.

[29] In the researcher's view – a superb study - perhaps the highest quality published study done to date on integrated congregations

2. *"We Just Do It!"* A gym, for instance, was built with limited resources. The pastor emphasizes "freedom in Christ in her ministry.
3. *"Jesus and the Children"* The authors state in this congregation, "children and youth are not only visibly present, but the voices are taken seriously." The congregation has outreach to children and youth in an after-school and summer camp programs.
4. *"Community Church"* The pastor and some members are active in local civic organizations, and the gym serves as a community center.
5. *"We're Special But They Don't Understand Us.* The authors explain this theme in this fashion: "There is ambiguity among Cedar Grove members about their public role and responsibility they have assumed. The style of the church (its way of worshipping, fellowship, governing and education) reflects traditions rooted in both European and African cultures. Those who look from the outside find it difficult to find appropriate categories to comprehend what they see. And yet, it is not clear what kind of church it is becoming. Will it become a *black* church like others in the area?" (Foster and Brelsford, 1996, p. 49-61).

Four symbolic themes or signs were identified in Oakhurst Presbyterian Church by these two authors:

1. *"Racism is on the Rise"* The church puts much emphasis on the theme of racial injustice. It houses a Headstart program and an adult-literacy program. Members work in social ministries such as community centers, halfway houses, and homeless ministries. Members write letters to national legislatures, local newspapers and neighboring churches on social issues. The associate pastor actively in social advocacy.

2. *"The Good News of Jesus Christ"* This theme identifies the contrast between the experiences of the members in their congregational community and their experiences in society, particularly in terms of racism and injustice.
3. *"We are all Children of God"* The authors posit two aspects to this identity that members claim. First on one is completely in charge or acting as a socializing parent. Instead, members make collective decisions as a "family."
4. *"Weaving the Rainbow Tapestry*:" The congregation's mission statement states that "diverse people weave the fabric that is our tapestry." The authors state that this "weaving can be seen throughout the congregation. Banners suggesting diverse cultures often adorn the sanctuary...the Christmas pageant weaves together Christmas, Kwanzaa, and Poseda celebrations, as well as ancient texts and contemporary life. African and European heritages are woven together in fellowship dinners." (Foster and Brelsford, p. 81-85)

The congregations also have what the authors call "rituals of intensification." They state:

> The ritual of greeting at Oakhurst erupts as people move throughout the sanctuary in a burst of hugging and handshaking among persons of all ages that may last ten minutes or more....The time for conversation and at Cedar Grove before and after worship is perhaps more leisurely and intimate. Especially on Sundays when guests are present Cedar Grove folk line up outside the door to greet them as if they were visiting dignitaries. (p. 138)

A number of similar themes were found in the current study and those presented here by Foster and Brelsford. In many respects the congregations seem remarkably similar. Of the two in the Foster and Brelsford study, only Oakhurst has significant socioeconomic class differences. Oakhurst is perhaps more activist in style than the site-congregation. Moreover, it suggests that the congregational ethos presented in the current study may be a "type" grounded in data rather than being an isolated case.

Yet, there are important differences in the theoretical perspectives of the two studies. These differences have implications for congregational practice. Foster and Breslford emphasize the "diversity" and "multiplicity" of cultural forms and identities, while the current study puts more emphasis on race, class and poverty. (This may be due, in part, to differences in the congregations being studied.) Both studies *do* consider each emphasis to some degree. However, there may be critical distinctions between emphasizing "diversity" and race. Emphasizing diversity recognizes the complexity of social identity. Race, however, recognizes social strata and the real divisions feel in society. A diversity or "multiplicity" approach may be more palatable for many congregation members. The argument can also be made that such an emphasize will lead to the eventual abolition of race as an oppressive category.

However, the argument can also be made that this approach downplays real issues. Race is more direct. It *is* more painful to deal with. It is not something that can be ignored. Foster and Brelsford do not ignore it by any means but there is the risk that an emphasis on multiplicity could lead to that. Also, an emphasis on complexity may require considerable mental gymnastics by members. This may be a good thing, but one can become lost in complexity too.

It *does* seem, though, that members of congregations can shift their focus between the distinctive person, a particular social identity, diversities in identities, and commonalties. Such shifts in focus may point to complexity. But if the congregational discourse becomes too complex, it is possible that people will become uncertain, perhaps losing the confidence to make the needed shifts in focus.

Moreover, an explicit awareness of how race stratifies may be necessary to challenge it in an organization. The abolition of race as an oppressive category may require directly confronting it. This is a crucial debate on approach. Finally, it is quite possible that America has been dealing with diversity for a long time – with ethnic identities being thinned and thickened in various contexts. Though failures in this history are well know, these shortcomings pale a bit in relationship to the problems associated with race.

Race and Ethnic Relations Literature

The current study touches on many of themes in the recent race relations literature, such as urbanism, poverty, class and culture. It also touches on the longstanding theme of assimilation versus. pluralism. A bimodal-cultural ethos is probably neither assimilationist nor pluralist in the classic sense of the terms. Instead, it is a form of integration with two primary modalities present. Of course, the terms pluralism and assimilation can be used in different ways. Assimilation was originally used to refer to a new type of cultural creation through blending. Today, it is primarily used as conformance. Cultural pluralism can mean either the formation of separate ethnic voluntary communities and organizations or the acceptance of considerably distinct

practices and beliefs in an institution.[30] A bimodal-cultural ethos may be termed pluralistic in the second sense of the term, but this use may carry misleading connotations.

It will be interesting to see if, in the future, integrated congregations lead to a form of assimilation in the sense that Park and Burgess (1924) suggested – blending into new forms of culture. This could also be termed syncretism even though that term often implies a dominant culture. Moreover, the researcher is hesitant to apply that term to the case of a single voluntary organization because it is not clear how much genuine syncretism can occur in such a small social space. Moreover, given the racial separations that characterize U.S. society, it seems probably that the two cultural modes still seem fairly distinct in such an organization.

A bimodal-cultural ethos is similar in many ways to the description of pluralism given by Cox (1994). However, the researcher is also wary of applying the workplace diversity literature directly to a congregation given the substantial differences in organizational forms. Certain comparisons could be useful, though.

A few further points can be made in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The normative approach of Pettigrew (1993) may be a fruitful line of inquiry when considering an organizational ethos in terms of race. How norms fit into an influence and ethos is worth further exploration.

Regional differences are also probably important in considering interracial congregations. This congregation sits in a region that shares similarities with Patterson's

[30] Most of the race and ethnic relations literature refer to it in the first sense, but Cox in his typology of organizations, refers to it in the later sense

"traditional America."[31] The issue of race is direct and segregation is still the norm. One does not have to totally accept Patterson's (1994) analysis to recognize that regional histories will have an important impact on how race and ethnicity are experienced.

Finally, a bimodal ethos points to some interesting parallels to the theme of "double consciousness." Double consciousness was first suggested by DuBois (1903), who explored the tensions between a common identity and a very distinct identity in the Afro-American consciousness. It is interesting to consider that the ethos of the site-congregation may allow Afro-Americans to experience this consciousness in a setting not characterized by exclusion or discrimination. The setting also forces Euro-Americans to confront and deal with this double consciousness. They too, though, may finally realize that their own history presents them with a double consciousness – masked in a very privileged way. They are presented with the opportunity in such an ethos to explore this without a guarantee of privilege.

Religion and Race

We have seen how Emerson and Smith (2000) presented the Evangelical racial reconciliation movement. In many ways, the primary leadership of this movement grappled with some challenging issues. However, as the movement grew to include more Euro-American evangelicals the emphasis shifted from challenging injustice to simply forming interpersonal relationships, often on a limited basis. The site-congregation avoids this tendency with their emphasis on social justice, internal power issues, and a different social analysis.[32]

[31] The influence of "ecumenical America" is also, no doubt present in the site city

[32] This is not to say that all members share a similar social analysis; it is simply to say that discussion of social structure enters into the congregational discourse through the leadership

One concern with integrated congregations is that they will weaken the central institution in Afro-American society – the independent church. In many ways the site-congregation seems to compare with distinctive tendencies in the Afro-American church – its active stance for social equality, its outreach to the socially marginal, and its confrontation with the real issues face by inner city Afro-American males. It also includes many aspects of Afro-American worship. It features considerable amounts of Afro-American music presented in an Afro-American style. (The site congregation does this despite not having a large choir – and so is limited in the forms it can present). The congregation does not have the chanted sermon and the call-and-response seen by Raboteau (1995) as exemplifying the Afro-American communal worship service. It is interesting, though, that the congregation substitutes an emotional communal experience, or form of *communitas*, in its Shalom circle. Here the emphasis is directly on the community rather than the preacher's interaction with the community. Whether this is thought to be an adequate substitution is an interesting value judgement.

Can the Afro-American church exist in an integrated congregation? Does it require separate self-determination? Can in exist in mutuality with Euro-Americans in an integrated setting? Is it a sacred space or just a space free from some of the racial stratification present in society? It may share similarities with the Afro-American church.[33] It is unlikely that Afro-American culture is simply going to be assimilated. As Raboteau (1995) suggests, this tradition is rooted in a sense of purpose – freedom from oppression – symbolized in the Exodus tradition.

[33] Though the Afro-American church could be seen to be free of much race stratification, the interview some interview respondents have pointed to a feeling of class distinctions in some congregations

Finally, the congregation suggests comparison with the early history of Methodism – a history that offered the promise of social justice, mutual influence, and common communal experiences. This early history was marred by discrimination. The congregation may represent a point in a long journey of recovery.

Recommendations for Practice

1. *The research suggests that there is a pool of people who would be attracted to interracial voluntary organizations given the opportunity.* Two groups stand out: those who have a high commitment to the outreach mission of the church, and those who have been disillusioned by other congregations for various reasons. One model is to attempt to combine those familiar with church tradition (particularly that of the Afro-American church) but who are flexible in their preferences with those who are not particularly committed to particular worship styles. This approach would allow the congregation to experiment with different repertoires until it achieves acceptable balance.
2. *Interracial congregations can be new church starts or represent transitional situations.* The later almost evidently brings initial conflict, but can also present the advantage of drawing on rich resources and the congregation's heritage. It is perhaps best to launch a new church start with an interracial group of committed people.
3. *An interracial congregation goes beyond being simply a project in racial reconciliation.* Only focusing on this aspect of the congregation neglects other functions of the church, which serve as sources of strength in this challenging arena.

4. *Building a strong sense of community* seems to be particularly important in sustaining an interracial setting.
5. *Two characteristics seem particularly important* for pastors of interracial congregations: *fluency across the cultures* and *resiliency.*
6. *Shared leadership and power sharing* by the primary cultural groupings seems to be particularly important in sustaining an interracial setting.
7. It is important for leaders of interracial congregations to *maintain networks with each other for mutual support and sharing of ideas.*

Recommendations for Further Research

1. *The primary approach to studying interracial congregations has been the standard case study model.* The current study utilized an interview approach to explore member understandings. These two approaches can be complemented with participatory ethnographic research to further explore the modalities of cultural interaction.
2. *A survey instrument* could be developed that operationalizes knowledge of interracial congregations and used to explore how many people in an area might be willing to seriously commit to an interracial congregation.
3. It seems probable that *an education frame-dimension should be added to the model presented here.* Further research could explore the educational dynamics of interracial organizations such as congregations.
4. There is a *lack of research* on other types of interracial and multiethnic congregations.

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