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A STUDY OF A MULTI-CONGREGATIONAL
ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVE

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DEVELOPING EYES TO SEE: A STUDY OF A MULTI-CONGREGATIONAL
ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVE

By

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING EYES TO SEE: A STUDY OF A MULTI-CONGREGATIONAL ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVE

By

Gail Gunst Heffner

This research contributes to the newly emerging literature on racialization and religion. It demonstrates how racial phenomena are structured in the historically-specific settings of three local congregations and examines how particular practices and institutional procedures produce racial inequality. The focus of this study has been to understand the lived-experiences of race for people of color and for whites in these congregations, particularly giving voice to those who been silenced in the past. It explores how differential access to power based on race leads to a differential distribution of resources within these congregations and how power given to certain groups eventually leads to privileges and resources flowing to some but not others. This differential access to power is revealed in: 1) who has influence within the congregations and whose preferences count in the primary functions of the congregation, including worship, programming, and outreach; 2) how leadership is determined and who has authority to make decisions; 3) who has access to information and how that affects the control of resources; 4) how accountability is handled within the structures of the congregations. These findings provide concrete examples of how institutional racism in the contemporary setting of the local congregation perpetuates a racialized society.

This study also explores how institutional racism is reinforced by internalized messages of racial superiority or racial oppression as revealed in the language respondents use and the rhetorical positions they assume when describing their

experience of race in their congregations. An important finding of this research is that whites within these congregations need to develop a growing consciousness of how their race affects their own daily lives as well as the life of the congregation. Open and honest dialogue about the connection between institutional racism and internalized racism is very important if there is to be any hope of dismantling it.

This research has been approached from the perspective of a scholar-practitioner. It is embedded within and contributes to a body of literature that recognizes that racism is not static based merely on some distant past but is constantly changing and such change is viewed as a normal component of the racialized system. Further the project has immediate relevance to a community and it is motivated by a call for action. Examining institutional racism in the congregation offers the possibility for action beyond the church as well. For the study participants, their experience within the congregation around race represents a microcosm of those encountered in society-at-large. The findings of this study can also inform scholars who seek to understand institutional racism in other organizations by providing a framework for analyzing both institutional aspects of racism as well as internalized aspects of racism. Thus, the research holds significance for faith-based institutions as well as for policymakers and scholars interested in bridging race and class barriers and establishing a more equitable world.

Dedicated to the memory of Dr. S. Burton Gunst, who guided, modeled, and shepherded me towards excellence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Chapter 1 -Introduction

Racial inequality is 'a reality enjoyed, but not acknowledged, a privilege lived in, but unknown.'
from The Social Construction of Whiteness (1993)

Continuing Racial Inequality and the Role of the Religious Community

Racial inequality has characterized the history of the United States since its earliest days. A number of scholars have argued that race has the power to provide opportunities for some and to deny opportunities for others because the United States is a society organized by race—that is, the U.S. is a racialized society (Bonilla-Silva 1996, 2001, 2003; Frankenberg 1993; Emerson and Smith 2000). A racialized society is a society where race matters profoundly for differences in life opportunities, life experiences, and social relationships and can be framed in structural terms. Bonilla-Silva (1996) maintains that "racialized social systems are societies that allocate differential economic, political, social and even psychological rewards to groups along racial lines; lines that are socially constructed" (Bonilla-Silva 1996: 474). Thus a racial hierarchy is implied with some people having advantages and privilege and others facing deprivation and disadvantage.

The scholarly analyses of racialization powerfully demonstrate how all aspects of American society are organized by race. Racialization has been documented in income and wealth distribution, education, health, music, television viewing patterns, even religious affiliation (Hilfiker 2002; Emerson and Smith 2000; Hurst 1998; Oliver and Shapiro 1995; Binder 1993; Winslow 1992). This framework of a racialized society is substantially different from notions of the race "problem" as being rooted in some inherent weakness in people of color themselves. Racial discrimination has been deemed

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illegal and racism in American culture is not as overt as it once was. However it has been argued that racism is not merely individual, overt prejudice but rather the collective misuse of power that results in diminished life chances for some racial groups (Barndt 1991). Because racialization is embedded within the everyday operation of institutions, this framework suggests that people need not intend their actions to contribute to racial division and inequality for their actions to do so (Emerson and Smith 2000).

Some scholars argue that religious institutions hold a unique potential to confront racial inequality because of their ethical and moral convictions (Conde-Frazier et al. 2004; De Young et. al. 2003). This dissertation explores the relationship between religious institutions and racial inequality. It examines how racialization can be perpetuated despite people's verbalized intentions to the contrary by examining one institution—the local congregation—assumed to have the potential to bridge race and class cleavages.

During the past decade, a great deal has been written about the role of the religious community in confronting racial inequality and meeting the social and economic needs of people (Smidt 2003; Warren 2001; Bane, Coffin, and Thiemann 2000; Cnaan 1999). Scholars argue that churches and faith-based organizations operating in urban areas have been more successful than others in organizing residents for action because religious institutions are among the few settings that still generate trust (Wood 1997). However, in order to be successful with disadvantaged communities, faith-based institutions need to recognize and be infused with a deep consciousness of how deeply race cuts through America (White 2000: 262).

A racialized society is maintained in subtle ways because people of color face racial stigma. Racial stigma is an awareness of the racial 'otherness' of people of color which is embedded in the social consciousness of the American nation due to slavery and its aftermath (Loury 2002). Racial stigma, even more so than racial discrimination, contributes to the enduring racial disadvantage that people of color experience. Loury (2002) argues that subtle processes are at work which perpetuate racial stigma and to properly study contemporary racial inequality scholars must identify these subtle processes in order to uncover the deeper, structural causes of the disadvantages that people of color face in the United States (Loury 2002:7).

The literature suggests that poverty often falls along racial lines and urban poverty in the U.S. is intimately tied to the issue of race (West 2001; Massey and Denton 1993). Historical, social and economic analyses of racial differences do reveal specific mechanisms, practices, and social relations which have produced racial inequality resulting in persistent poverty (Sugrue 1996; Darden, Hill, Thomas and Thomas 1987).

In a collection of essays about welfare reform a group of Harvard faculty explored the ways in which religious ideas and religious institutions have influenced society's capacity to feel and respond to a commitment to the poor.

> The promise of religious communities to play a crucial role in revitalizing the social fabric and re-knitting the social safety net comes from three potential roles: creating community; shaping moral dialogue; and participating with other institutions in social provision...Faith-based organizations are in a unique position in American society to create community, both through their religious commitment to the brotherhood and sisterhood of all humanity and through their very practical activities of bringing people together...Religious communities are in a unique position to help shape the moral dialogue about social caring and just provision for all persons...Religious communities also have an important role in participating with others to actually do the work of feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless and welcoming the stranger—and providing support and services to both welfare and working families (Bane, Coffin, and Thiemann 2000: 11-13).

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What is clear from this literature is that religious institutions play a significant, if little understood, role in poor communities (Foley, McCarthy, and Chaves 2001). Many recognize a unique potential role for the religious community to play in bridging the barriers of class and race in American society, yet little is known about how religious institutions actually serve as a bridge across race and class cleavages.

In fact, the literature suggests a contradiction—that the religious community has actually helped to perpetuate segregation between races (Emerson and Smith 2000). For example, Robert Wuthnow (1992) found that religiously active individuals participate in many groups and get involved in community issues. However, these groups and activities tend to be insular and homogeneous, leading to greater separation by race and class rather than leading to social integration. Wuthnow concluded that congregations tend to be places where people of the same race and social class come together to worship and therefore, their social activities also tend to be segregated.

This raises a question about how such barriers can be overcome. Some scholars argue that larger institutional or structural forces are at work which perpetuate the racial divide even when individual efforts at racial reconciliation are effective (DeYoung et. al 2003; Emerson and Smith 2000; Bonilla-Silva 1996). For example, multi-racial churches have been established through the building of personal cross-racial friendships and reconciliation efforts (Perkins and Rice 1993). But these reconciled relationships do not necessarily lead to broader systemic change. If it is possible to contribute to inequality and racial injustice without intending it and/or without being conscious of it, this raises important questions about how to change such a dire situation.

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When we examine institutional racism, the issue of power must be emphasized...As our nation oppresses its people of color, our personal bigotry and prejudice do not cause the primary damage. Rather, the damage is done by racism that has been institutionally empowered and is administered in seemingly impersonal ways (Barndt 1991: 77).

Because individualism holds such sway in the U.S. (Bellah et. al 1985), some suggest that one of the challenges we face is our limited ability to analyze the structural nature of our racialized society (Emerson and Smith 2000). Structures include the political, economic and cultural institutions that act as constraints or enablers which shape whose preferences count (Schmid 1987). Some scholars maintain the fundamental weakness of certain policies to alleviate racial inequality or poverty is the reliance on individual efforts to combat a social problem that is structural and institutional in nature (Meyer, 2000; Sugrue 1996; Massey and Denton 1993). Americans find it difficult to frame problems or solutions in structural terms. Thus, we cannot address the race issue in the United States without analyzing the institutions and structures that serve the interests of some at the expense of others.

Little empirical evidence exists which documents how bridging across race and class barriers can occur. Furthermore, there is little written on the role the religious community plays in this bridging. The framework suggested above maintains that building bridges cannot happen without an analysis of the institutions and systems which misuse power and marginalize people of color. The literature does not document how this analysis could occur, nor does it adequately articulate the need for such an analysis.

Furthermore, scholars who recognize the racialized nature of American society argue that for change to happen more work needs to be done to reveal the ways that dominant perspectives distort the realities of the 'Other' in an effort to maintain power

relations that continue to disadvantage those who are locked out of the mainstream (Ladson-Billings 2000). More research is needed to unmask how the dominant perspective ignores and even misrepresents the experience of nonwhite people in American society. Critical race theory (CRT) has emerged since the Civil Rights era as an important research paradigm to uncover and make visible how racism operates.

> CRT begins with the notion that racism is 'normal, not aberrant in American society' (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv), and because it is so enmeshed in the fabric of the U.S. social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this society... racism is a permanent fixture of American life. Therefore, the strategy of those who fight for racial social justice is to unmask and expose racism in all its various permutations. CRT departs from mainstream scholarship by sometimes employing storytelling to analyze the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render blacks and other minorities one down (Ladson-Billings 2000:264).

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the role of religious institutions in bridging the racial divide by seeking to uncover and make explicit how racism operates at a congregational level. Religious institutions have the potential to make an important contribution to shaping moral dialogue, creating community, and participating with other institutions in social provision to help alleviate poverty. In particular, this dissertation explores how race functions within the local congregation by examining three local congregations who have been part of an organized antiracism initiative. How do the participants in these congregations understand the notion of 'race' and what meaning does it have in their lives and in the life of their congregation? The focus in this research has been to understand the lived-experiences of race for people of color and for whites in these congregations, with a particular focus on giving voice to those who have been

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silenced in the past in keeping with critical theory. The work has been guided by two

primary research questions which evolved over time.

> *1) In what ways has race affected or influenced a person's involvement in the congregation? In what ways do the structures within the congregation contribute to institutional racism, thus reinforcing a racialized society?*

This first question seeks to identify and characterize racism, distinguishing between

individual racism and institutional racism within the congregations by analyzing the

structures that powerfully shape the congregation. As the research proceeded, it became

apparent that much of what was being explored appears to be hidden to white people.

People of color, on the other hand, could articulate their lived experience of race and

racism and thus, allowing them to give 'voice' to their perspectives was an important

component of the research. This led to a deeper exploration of how and why racism is

hidden to whites and in particular to an exploration of the connection between

internalized racism and institutional racism. Thus the second research question emerged.

> *2) How has racism been internalized by all people in a racialized society? How do notions of presumed racial superiority/inferiority support and reinforce institutional racism?*

The second question examines how messages about race and our racial position have

been internalized in deep, yet subtle ways. Becoming aware of and conscious of the tacit

assumptions we hold is a necessary first step in the dismantling of racism. Without facing

internalized racism, institutional racism cannot be confronted.

Significance

This thesis, written in the Department of Resource Development and Urban

Studies, has important implications for the scholar-practitioner. It is embedded within

and contributes to a body of literature that recognizes that racism is not static based merely on some distant past, but is constantly changing and such change is viewed as a normal component of the racialized system. Further, the project has immediate relevance to a community and it is motivated by a call for action. The dual scholar-practitioner focus of this work represents one of the unique strengths of the Department of Resource Development.

This research contributes to the literature on racial inequality in American society by examining one institution—the local congregation—assumed to have the potential to bridge race and class cleavages. It furthers our understanding about how faith-based institutions that usually perpetuate racialization can become a force to make structural change to undo it. It also documents the significant challenges of this work. By exploring the congregation in-depth, this study demonstrates how specific practices and structures within an institution either confront or reinforce institutional racism. Finally, this study also documents a growing recognition of the relationship between institutional racism and internalized racism, which is insidious and destructive because of the subtlety of its power. This is significant because of the widespread assumption that churches are one of the few institutions in American society that can potentially bridge race differences. This research demonstrates the difficulty of such bridging without serious structural analysis and also intentional work to identify how racism has been internalized subtly. These are necessary steps in dismantling racism and dismantling institutional racism is a crucial step in poverty reduction in American communities. Examining how institutional racism exists in the congregation is a microcosm of the larger society and has implications for broader social change. This research holds significance for faith-based institutions as well

as for policymakers and scholars interested in bridging race and class barriers and establishing a more equitable world.

Organization of the Study

To set the stage for this study, Chapter 2 examines the literature on the historical and theoretical perspectives on the changing notion of 'race' as well as explores the literature on religion and race. The focus of Chapter 3 is on the setting and context for this study as it is embedded in an ongoing antiracism initiative in a historically-specific context (as called for by Bonilla-Silva and others). Epistemological, methodological, and ethical considerations are reviewed in Chapter 4 as well as data collection and data analysis methods. The next two chapters are empirical chapters in which findings are shared: Chapter 5 is an exploration of how racism functions within the congregations with a particular focus on institutional racism as described in the lived-experience of people of color. Chapter 6 is an exploration of how internalized racism affects both people of color and whites within the congregations and serves as a foundation or pillar for institutional racism. Signposts of hope are explored in Chapter 7, including a discussion of initial steps the congregations are taking to confront both institutional racism and internalized racism. Chapter 7 also includes some recommendations for future research and action. The concluding chapter, Chapter 8, includes a summary of key findings as well as some discussion of the limitations of this research and need for further study.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

My basic aim in life: to speak the truth to power
with love
so that the quality of everyday life for ordinary people in enhanced and
white supremacy is stripped of its authority and legitimacy.
from *Race Matters* (2001)

The Changing Notion of 'Race'

The notion of 'race' has been a contested term within the American experience for decades and it has held different meanings in different time periods in history. At one time it was strongly believed that 'race' could be defined and explained in terms of biological differences revealed in obvious physical differences. Identifying distinct human groups through physical appearance dates back centuries but the emergence of a modern concept of race does not occur until the rise of Europe and the arrival of Europeans in the Americas (Omi and Winant, 1994:61). Spurred by the Enlightenment and the desire for scientific classification, scholars in the 18th and 19th centuries attempted to identify and rank variations of humankind in a racial hierarchy. Determining which characteristics constitute race or which markers are selected to construct a racial category are matters of human choice. Since these markers and categories are not predetermined by any biologic factors and evolve over time, racial categories are historical products and are often contested (Cornell and Hartmann 1998:24). Seeing race as essentially a biological concept is no longer the dominant framework by which social scientists approach the issue of race.

Race is now widely conceived of as a socially constructed category which means that notions of racial difference are human creations rather than essential or biological categories.

> Most of what we experience as "real" is a cultural creation. In other words, it's made up, even though we don't experience it that way...This process allows us to believe that something like "race" actually points to a set of clear and unambiguous categories into which people fall, ignoring the fact that the definition of various races changes all the time and is riddled with inconsistencies and overlapping boundaries. But when the stakes are privilege and power, dominant groups are quite willing to ignore such inconsistencies so long as the result is a continuation of their privilege (Johnson 2001: 21,23).

Further what matters in these understandings of race is that physical traits are taken to signify something of import within a particular context. Race is about embodied social signification (Loury 2002:21) and it is always a social and historical process which continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world (Omi and Winant, 1994:55).

To begin this review of the literature, we must first understand how racism, individual, institutional and systemic, has functioned to ascribe power and status to one group of people while simultaneously functioning to oppress and control another group of people. Different scholars use different terminology in describing various manifestations of racism. For example, some use structural, institutional, and systemic racism almost interchangeably as a contrast to individual racism. For this particular study the focus will be on structural and institutional racism.

Structures are part of institutions that shape the opportunities available to particular people in particular situations. They can be formal or informal; they may exist consciously or unconsciously as in habits of the mind (Schmid 2004:17). Institutions function to order relationships among people and define their rights, their privileges, and their responsibilities (Schmid 2004:6). Racism may exist at any level but structural and institutional racism are not exactly the same and it is helpful to keep these distinctions in mind as we review the scholarly literature.

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Structural and institutional racism in our day can be understood only in the light of the deliberate decisions of the past---decisions that provide the foundation for racism today. The nature of American racism has characteristics, which are similar to other nations, but it also has characteristics which are unique to the American setting. Racism continues to be a persistent and pervasive problem despite legislative efforts to make racial discrimination illegal. In looking at the U.S. historical record it is possible to identify that one system of racial exploitation has always replaced the former. Consider slavery followed by the Reconstruction period followed by Jim Crow laws followed by civil rights legislation. Despite gradual legal changes, racial oppression continues in the United States. European whites continually seek to control and dominate people of color. And this racism continues to affect nearly every area of national life (Loury 2002; Johnson 2001; West 2001). "Past efforts to change and improve this situation have been inadequate and incomplete. For the most part, racism has become more deeply imbedded, more carefully disguised, and more difficult to eradicate" (Barndt 1991: 20).

This chapter is organized under four broad headings: 1) Historical and theoretical frameworks/ perspectives 2) Race and religion 3) Religion and racialization theory 4) The need for the current study. It is important to see how current notions of race and racism have arisen historically as well as how the main theoretical frameworks have emerged and provide a context for the current study. The earliest scholars of race tended to ignore institutional racism which is a central aspect of racism. Being able to analyze the structural aspects of racism is an important foundation for understanding how racism functions in American society and as we will see the racialized social systems perspective has made valuable contributions to the literature. We will also examine scholarly gaps in

the literature, particularly in the study of race and religion and why the current study is needed.

Historical and Theoretical Perspectives

A number of historical and theoretical perspectives describe the social science enterprise that is used to explain race in the American context. These perspectives differ in their philosophical foundations and therefore differ in their analysis of the problem and proposed solutions. It is possible to trace the progression of race and racism theories over the last 50 years to gain a sense of how theory has impacted social, economic and political policy and practice.

Rational individualist perspective   The paradigm that undergirds neoclassical economic theory—rational individualism based on maximized self-interest—has had a significant influence on how racism is defined and perceived in American society (Becker 1957; Sowell 1981). This paradigm fails to acknowledge the impact of culture or institutionalization on racism, but it has played a role in defining racism. It tends to reduce discrimination to *individual* 'tastes' that guide choices made by consumers or other economic agents. The mainstream perspective regarding race is one where racism is seen as an ideology or set of beliefs that leads individual people to develop prejudice, defined as "negative attitudes towards an entire group of people" (Schaefer 1990: 53) which then is actualized in discriminatory practices against racial minorities. This ideological perspective of rational individualism has reinforced the most popularized and widely-held notion that racism is personal prejudice, beliefs and attitudes held by individuals that cause them to discriminate against others on the basis of physical appearance (Pettigrew 1958; Katz 1976; Sniderman 1985; Steele 1990; 1998; Murray

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1994; Lasch-Quinn 2001). This view suggests that racism develops when personal opinion and individual prejudice are codified and enforced as societal behavior. Racial prejudice is transformed into racism when one racial group becomes so powerful and dominant that it is able to control another group and to enforce the controlling group's biases (Barndt 1991:29). The dominant criticism of this perspective argues that seeing racism as primarily beliefs, attitude and behaviors of individual people fails to acknowledge the systemic nature of racism and prevents a deep understanding of how societies can be built and maintained on a racial hierarchy. "Rational individualists fail to identify the way organizational hierarchies constrain individual action and affect incentives" (Franklin 1991).

Institutionalist perspective   In contrast to those in the rational individualism tradition are scholars who claim that racism is more than personal prejudice or bigotry. They articulate that despite the apparent reduction in individual people's beliefs and attitudes about race in the United States, institutions are in place which reinforce a dominant racial group at the expense of subordinate racial group(s). Racism structures a society so that the prejudices of one racial group are taught, perpetuated, and enforced to the benefit of the dominant group and at the expense of less powerful groups. This institutionalist framework for understanding racism emerged as a result of the struggle of racial minorities in the U.S. in the 1960s and this perspective distinguishes between individual racism and institutional racism: overt racist acts by individuals versus racial outcomes that result from the normal operation of American institutions (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967; Barndt 1991).

Racism is both overt and covert. It takes two, closely related forms: individual

whites acting against individual blacks, and acts by the total white community against the black community. We call these individual racism and institutional racism. The first consists of overt acts by individuals, which cause death, injury or the violent destruction of property...The second type is less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts...[it] originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation that the first type (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967:4).

The most concise definition of racism among authors within this tradition is that racism equals personal prejudice *plus* power (Chesler 1976; Barndt 1991). Chesler, for example, suggests that racism involves institutional procedures that create and/or perpetuate sets of advantages or privileges for whites and exclusions or deprivations for nonwhites. This requires an ideology of explicit or implicit superiority of one racial group over another plus the institutional power to implement that ideology in social operations (Chesler 1976: 22).

Several theorists have argued that though this perspective has deepened our understanding of American racism, it does not pose an adequate theoretical challenge to the dominant individualist conceptualization of racism held in the social sciences because it seems to reduce racism to everything done by whites (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967) and it fails to recognize the multifaceted nature of the debate about racism (Miles 1993).

Marxist perspective Another analytical tradition which offers a conflicting view on racism is a Marxist perspective. Within a Marxist framework, class and class struggle are seen as the central organizing principle for society and as such race and racism is seen as secondary to class (Cox 1948; Bonacich 1980; Franklin 1991). "Race prejudice is a social attitude propagated among the public by an exploiting class for the purpose of stigmatizing some group as inferior so that the exploitation of either the group itself or its resources may both be justified" (Cox 1948: 393). This tradition fails to recognize the

role race plays in actual racial strife and assumes conflict is always based on the competing interests of the bourgeoisie and the working-class. "Racism leading to forms of discrimination in the radical or Marxian account is commonly focused on work site relations and is assumed beneficial to the capitalist class as a whole, a class that has the interests and power to reproduce the racial climate conducive to its profit-driven needs. The bottom line in this argument is that racism is determined by the dominant class in order to project its interests and privileges" (Franklin 1991: xviii). Scholars who critique this framework accuse it of class reductionism (Bonilla-Silva 2001) and claim that "racial dynamics must be understood as determinants of class relationships and indeed class identities, not as mere consequences of these relationships" (Omi and Winant 1994).

Non-Eurocentric culturalist perspective Two other theoretical perspectives which emerged in the wake of the Civil Rights era deserve mention: non-Eurocentric culturalism and internal colonialism. This first of these perspectives advocates the need for nonwhites to define themselves rather than be defined by whites. "Black people must redefine themselves, and only *they* can do that. Throughout this country, vast segments of the black communities are beginning to recognize the need to assert their own definitions, to reclaim their history, their culture; to create their own sense of community and togetherness" (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967:37). The culturalists critique other frameworks especially Marxism for failing to probe other spheres of American society where racism plays an integral role, especially the psychological and cultural spheres (Franklin 1991).

Internal colonialist perspective The internal colonialist perspective suggests that racism is caused by the colonial status of racial minorities in the United States. The distinctive

features of this colonization include forced, involuntary entry to a new land, the destroying of or at least constraining of the indigenous culture of the colonized groups, the lives of the subordinate group are controlled and managed by the dominant power who tend to manipulate and look down upon them (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967).

Proponents of this perspective argue that though the racial order and particular forms of racial oppression have changed throughout history, one constant factor is that whites receive unearned privilege and advantages at all levels in the society.

> To generate privilege, certain people have to be exploited and to be exploited they must be controlled—directly or indirectly. The mechanisms of control, ranging from force and violence to legal restrictions to cultural beliefs, ideologies, and modes of socio-economic integration, are therefore central to an understanding of oppression. Social oppression is a dynamic process by which one segment of society achieves power and privilege through the control and exploitation of other groups, which are literally oppressed, that is burdened and pushed down into the lower levels of the social order...White Americans enjoy special privilege in all areas of existence where racial minorities are systematically excluded or disadvantaged (Blauner 1972:22-23).

Blauner (1972) argues that although privilege permeates all institutions it is most strategically expressed in the labor market where whites receive special advantages. The strengths of this theoretical perspective are that it recognizes the differences experienced between white ethnic immigrants and racial minorities; it realizes that racism is more than psychological attitudes and beliefs held by individual people; and this tradition recognizes that racism is systemic, comprehensive and rational in that whites act to protect their interests (Bonilla-Silva 2001).

The previous sections summarize the dominant perspectives from the 1960s to the early 1990s. We now will turn our attention to more recent theoretical perspectives. One fascinating book on the history of research on race demonstrates how theory formation is often influenced by events unfolding in history (Stanfield 1993). Thomas Pettigrew, a

scholar of race relations theory, describes his shifting theoretical perspectives over the course of four decades of scholarly work. Originally a proponent of the primacy of individual attitudes in the perpetuation of racism (Pettigrew 1958, 1959), in his later writings he concludes that norms are changed more from top-down *structural* alterations than from bottom-up attitude changes—with face-to-face situations serving as a critical link (Pettigrew 1993).

Significant scholarly work on racial theory has emerged in the last ten years that departs from much of the earlier theoretical work and can fall under the broad rubric of critical race theory. Critical race theory begins with the notion that racism is 'normal' in American society and because it is so enmeshed in the fabric of the U.S. social order, it does not appear as unnatural to most people within this society (Delgado 1995). If it is true that racism is a permanent fixture in American life (Bell 1992), then "the strategy for those who fight for racial social justice is to unmask and expose racism in all its various permutations" (Ladson-Billings 2000:264).

Racial formation perspective   Several scholars whose work unmasks and exposes permutations of racism will be mentioned here in greater depth: racial formation theory by Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) and racialized social systems theory by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2001; 2003). In the opening pages of the 1994 edition of *Racial Formation in the United States*, Omi and Winant argue that a thorough review of the scholarly trends analyzing racial theory reveals a reductionism in the acknowledgement of the role of race in American society. Their perspective insists that race be understood as a fundamental dimension of social organization and cultural meaning in the U.S. and their alternative approach is based on the idea that concepts of race are always politically

contested. They describe race as a "matter of both social structure and cultural representation...[Where] racial projects connect what race *means*....[with] the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially *organized,* based upon that meaning" (Omi and Winant 1994:56). Their key point here is that a racial project is simultaneously an explanation of racial dynamics *and* an effort to reorganize/ redistribute resources along particular racial lines. It is these racial projects that display the ways in which structure and representation work together, that manifest the images and meanings around race on the structural and experiential planes. Put another way, the racial representation of a given people group does not function in isolation but is connected to specific social structures that are operationalized in our institutions day by day.

One of the strengths of their argument is the acknowledgement of the ubiquitous nature of racialization of U.S. society. They maintain that everyone learns the rules of racial classification and of our own particular racial identity without obvious teaching or conscious inculcation. All of us are "inserted in a comprehensively racialized social structure. Race becomes 'common sense'---a way of comprehending, explaining, and acting in the world. A vast web of racial projects mediates between the discursive or representational means in which race is identified and signified on the one hand, and the institutional and organizational forms in which it is routinized and standardized on the other" (Omi and Winant 1994:60).

Omi and Winant make careful distinctions between race and racism and argue that the two concepts should not be used interchangeably. They argue that race does not have a fixed meaning but is constructed and transformed sociohistorically through the link between the structural and cultural dimensions of race in the U.S. (Omi and Winant

1994:71) As such they seek to understand racial inequality in specific historical contexts and do not assume that all racism is the same. "This is because of the crucial importance we place in *situating* various 'racisms' within the dominant hegemonic discourse about race" (Omi and Winant 1994:73, emphasis added).

Another significant contribution made by Omi and Winant in the recent academic debates about the nature of racism is their rejection of an 'either-or' position regarding whether racism is primarily an ideological phenomenon or a structural phenomenon. "We believe it is crucial to disrupt the fixity of these positions by simultaneously arguing that ideological beliefs have structural consequences and that social structures give rise to beliefs. Racial ideology and social structure, therefore, mutually shape the nature of racism in a complex, dialectical and overdetermined manner" (Omi and Winant 1994:75).

The strengths of Omi and Winant's racial formation theory are many: first they understand that race is created and "lived" in American society by social, economic and political forces and that race is an organizing principle for social relationships and interactions in society. This is a departure from earlier theories about race. Their recognition that racism is shaped and reinforced by the continual interaction between ideological beliefs among individuals *and* the racialized structures that have been created has been an important contribution to the literature.

Racialized social systems perspective   Another theoretical framework for understanding these phenomenon that builds on the contributions of Omi and Winant is the racialized social systems perspective which suggests that societies "allocate differential economic, political, social and even psychological rewards to groups along racial lines; lines that are socially constructed (Bonilla-Silva 1996: 474). Using this framework racism is not

merely individual prejudice but the collective misuse of power that results in diminished

life opportunities for some racial groups.

> In all racialized social systems the placement of people in racial categories
> involves some form of hierarchy that produces definite social relations between
> the races. The race placed in the superior position tends to receive greater
> economic remuneration and access to better occupations and/or prospects in the
> labor market, occupies a primary position in the political system, is granted higher
> social estimation, and often has the license to draw physical (segregation) as well
> as social boundaries between itself and other races (Bonilla-Silva 1996:469).

Because of this reality, Bonilla-Silva maintains that racism should be studied from

the viewpoint of racialization—that is, how particular societies are racially organized

with racial hierarchies. This leads analysts to recognize that racism is not static based

merely on some distant past but is constantly changing and such change is viewed as a

normal component of the racialized system. Cultural, political, economic, social and even

psychological racial phenomenon, including overt and covert racial behavior, can be

traced to the racial organization of that society. Bonilla-Silva argues that rather than

conceiving of racism as a universal or uniformly orchestrated phenomenon, analysts

should study 'historically-specific racisms' (Bonilla-Silva 2001: 45-46).

One of the strengths of this framework is that it recognizes that racism can be

explained not by merely examining the wrongs perpetrated in the past but by examining

how racial phenomenon are structured in contemporary settings. Because the argument

focuses on the structural rather than the ideological nature of the problem, analysts who

affirm this perspective recognize the solution to the problem is not education of

individuals (as the mainstream would suggest) but rather the elimination or dismantling

of the systemic roots of racism. Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues that analysts are challenged

to test the usefulness of this theoretical framework by doing comparative research on

racialization in various societies/institutions and by examining specific mechanisms,

practices and social relations that produce and reproduce racial inequality at all levels –to

uncover and expose a society's racial structure. The crux of this argument is that

> The persistent inequality experienced by blacks and other racial minorities in the
> United States today is due to the *continued* albeit *changed* existence of a racial
> structure. In contrast to race relations in the Jim Crow period, racial practices that
> reproduce racial inequality in contemporary America are (1) increasingly covert
> (2) embedded in normal operations of institutions (3) void of direct racial
> terminology, and (4)invisible to most whites (Bonilla-Silva 1996: 476).

In the growing literature on racism and racialization most of the contemporary

theoretical frameworks acknowledge there is an interplay between different levels of

racism. If, in fact, racism is a root cause of observed race-associated differences in

socioeconomic status, health outcomes, educational levels, etc., scholars argue that it is

important to develop an understanding of the characteristics and manifestations of racism

(Jones 2001). Jones has developed a framework for understanding racism on three levels:

institutionalized, personally mediated, and internalized. In this framework,

institutionalized racism is defined as differential access to the goods, services, and

opportunities of society by race. Institutionalized racism is normative, sometimes

legalized, and often manifests an inherited disadvantage. It is structural, having been

codified in our institutions of custom, practice, and law so there need not be an

identifiable perpetrator...institutionalized racism manifests itself both in material

conditions and in access to power. *Personally mediated racism* is defined as prejudice

and discrimination (either intentional or unintentional) where prejudice means differential

assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intentions of others according to their race,

and discrimination means differential actions toward others according to their race.

Internalized racism is defined as acceptance by members of the stigmatized races of negative messages about their own abilities and intrinsic worth. This is manifested in their not believing in themselves or in others who look like them. (Jones 2000:1212-1213). More recent literature is emerging which argues that internalized racism can appear as either internalized oppression/ inferiority *or* as internalized superiority (Dias, Drew and Gardiner 2003). This literature suggests that in contemporary American society racial identity is shaped by complex dynamics that support and perpetuate the dominant racist paradigm in which people of color experience and live out racial oppression and whites experience and live out racial superiority. This internalization has significant consequences for how race is lived in America.

Race and Religion

Race scholars tend to avoid the role of religion in their study of race in American culture. But there is a need to understand the role of the religious community in addressing the racial divide. The mainstream notions of addressing race and racism through primarily individualistic efforts have been as influential within the religious community as within other American institutions. This focus on changing individual attitudes, beliefs and behaviors is reflected in the literature on race and religion (Vora and Vora 2002; Clawson and Clark 2003).

Since the 1970s there have been concerted efforts on the part of the religious community to bring about racial reconciliation (Salley and Behm 1970; Perkins 1976) and during the 1990s the evangelical Christian community in particular, began focusing on racial reconciliation as a central thrust of their vision (Perkins and Rice 1993;

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Washington and Kehrein 1993). Racial reconciliation is built on the foundation of

committed personal relationships that are characterized by intentionality, sacrifice,

vulnerability and interdependence. "The reconciliation model requires a decisive

paradigm shift—one evidenced by friendships of trust, common mission, and mutual

submission that go beyond Sunday morning" (Perkins 1995:110). The focus is on

transforming individual racism and this model only mentions in passing institutional

racism.

> Politics strives to transform people by altering the structure of society; religion
> strives to change society by transforming individuals. In this respect, the racial
> reconciliation movement of the 1990s differs importantly from the racial equality
> movements of the past. In those earlier movements, the main goal of religious
> activists, including Evangelical William Wilberforce, who led England's
> antislavery movement; the Quakers of American Abolitionism; or Dr. Martin
> Luther King, was to spur politicians to action. But in postmodern societies where
> the greatest challenges we face are increasingly less purely political in nature than
> behavioral and attitudinal, or even moral and spiritual, social change can be
> expected to come increasingly from grassroots community and religious activists
> like the Evangelical reconcilers, who strive to change the nature of society one
> community, and one soul, at a time (Glynn 1998:841).

Another strand in the literature on race and religion acknowledges there are

different manifestations of racism and distinguish between individual, institutional and

cultural racism. "White society is imprisoned in a system of racism that ghettoizes us

[white people] as well as people of color. Individual persons are incorporated into a

powerful system of white racism in four ways: through isolation, anesthetization, white

privilege, and conditioning education. In our own comfortable prison, both blatant and

subtle myths and lies about people of color and about ourselves are perpetuated and

believed (Barndt 1991:64).

Religion and Racialization Theory

In recent years a few race scholars have begun to write from within the racialized social systems framework seeking to understand the relationship between religion and the racialization of American society (Emerson and Smith 2000). They are calling for more study of how the religious community contributes to, rather than confronts, the racial organization of our society. They recognize the need to go beyond either a vague notion of institutional racism or a focus merely on individual racial reconciliation initiatives (Emerson 1998). Sociologists who study American religion, Michael Emerson and Christian Smith in their groundbreaking book, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America,* argue that many people mistakenly believe that racism is on the wane because of the gains brought about by the Civil Rights movement. Consistent with Bonilla-Silva (1996), they argue that racism has become more *covert* in the years since the Civil Rights movement but no less operative. As such, we must adapt our understanding and analysis of race to the new, post Civil Rights era.

Emerson and Smith (2000) further argue that our institutions and some of America's non-race-based values reproduce racialization without any need for people to be prejudiced. For example, according to Emerson and Smith's research, highly educated whites, compared to less well-educated whites, are much less likely to say they are uncomfortable with black neighbors, less likely to say that they would move if African Americans moved to their neighborhood, and more likely to say that they would consider moving to neighborhoods where African Americans live. But when they looked at where whites actually lived by educational level, college-educated whites are actually more segregated from black Americans than are whites with less education. They concluded

it's not that well-educated whites are more prejudiced in the traditional sense. Rather, it is because they are better able to follow core American ideals---a nice home in a quiet neighborhood with parks and good schools. Material comfort is an established core American ideal, whereas racial and cultural diversity is not.

To reproduce racialization in the United States does not require overt racism or prejudice as they have been typically defined. It can happen just by following the 'American dream' in everyday actions and decisions, such as *where* we choose to live. This framework understands that people need not intend their actions to contribute to racial division and inequality for their actions to do so (Emerson and Smith 2000: 9). "Choice and freedom are two of the dominant American values that today maintain the racialized society. Contemporaries may view these values as the realization of American's destiny, but these values are at the same time now essential tools in dividing people along socially constructed racial lines" (Emerson and Smith 2000:11). In the Emerson and Smith analysis, black-white relations are center stage, not because there are not issues among other races and ethnicities, but because the gulf between American blacks and American whites is generally more vast and the history longer in comparison to others.

In their particular study of the role of religion and race, Emerson and Smith (2000: 76) studied American evangelicals and have argued that they often do not recognize a racialized society because they use particular cultural tools to interpret and make sense of their world—these cultural tools include individualism, 'relationalism' (attaching central importance to interpersonal relationships), and antistructuralism (an inability to perceive or unwillingness to accept social structural influences). Emerson

and Smith postulate that because white Americans in particular are often able to and do live their everyday lives in isolation from people of color, many white Americans claim that the 'race problem' either does not still exist or is overblown or exaggerated by vested interests. Whites' interpretation of the race problem is such that it is still viewed primarily as a problem among individuals and poor relationships. Their central argument is that white evangelicals (influenced by the dominant American societal trends) tend to construct reality so as to individualize and minimize the problem of race.

But the experience of people of color in their study was quite different. Black and white conservative Protestants were studied and asked how they explain racial inequality and their results were striking (Emerson and Smith 2000:94-98). White conservative Protestants blame blacks more for racial problems—or hold them more accountable—than other whites do and white conservative Protestants are significantly less likely to explain racial inequality in structural terms. (In fact, white conservative Protestants are more individualistic and less structural in their explanations of black-white inequality than other whites.) However, the opposite is true with black conservative Protestants. Black conservative Protestants, compared to other blacks, are *less* individualistic and *more* structural in their explanations of racial inequality. It appears that conservative religion intensifies the different values and experiences of each racial group, sharpening and increasing the divide between black and white Americans.

Highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the Emerson/Smith analysis, Douglas Sharp argues, "[T]he emphases on individualism and relationalism collude to deflect attention from the humanly constructed sociocultural context that makes human decision-making and actions possible and plausible" (Sharp 2004:244). Quoting

Emerson and Smith (2000:117) in their critique of the evangelical individualistic mindset, '[S]ociety is viewed as merely the aggregation of individuals, social change is achieved by personal change and renewal—most importantly by people becoming Christians,' Sharp continues, "To their credit, the authors discount this strategy as an effective means of social change. Indeed they argue that as a strategy, it is not only a failure but also a means to perpetuating racism. It is not just that personal transformation leaves racist sociocultural structures intact. Rather it is that personal transformation is thought to be disconnected from these structures, just like the individual as such is independent of social structures and institutions" (Sharp 2004:245).

The Need for Current Study

The relatively new scholarship on the role of religion and racialization calls for more investigation, particularly how the religious community contributes to, rather than confronts, the racial organization of our society. Few scholars have explored the racial structure of religious institutions and therefore have missed important aspects of how racial inequality is produced and reproduced in American society in subtle, yet complex ways. More research is needed to unmask how the dominant perspective ignores and even misrepresents the experience of nonwhite people in American society. For researchers interested in understanding the persistence of racial inequality new research strategies are needed to uncover how white superiority has been maintained despite the gains of the Civil Rights era.

Specifically this research furthers the discussion of the ways racialization is embodied in religious institutions particularly the local congregation. Drawing upon the theoretical framework of racialized social systems the research examines how race and

racism operate in a historically-specific context (as called for by Bonilla-Silva and others). The strength of the racialized social systems perspective is that it recognizes the need for a structural analysis without minimizing the impact of individual actors in combating racism.

This research explores how race power and privilege functions within the congregation and how structures within congregations build, support, and reinforce institutional racism. It explores specific methods, practices and social relations that produce and reproduce racial inequality within congregations. Relying on in-depth interviews and participant observation, this research seeks to uncover instances of institutional racism by exposing and bringing to light both what is overt and what is hidden. This study turns an analytical gaze on the present-day existence and manifestations of racism (as distinguishable within the institution) not merely as variables to measure but also as *lived experiences* within the research process (as called for by Chavez et. al. 2002:93). Similarities and differences in the perspectives of whites and people of color are examined carefully, particularly seeking to understand the experience of nonwhites in the congregational setting.

Acknowledging the breadth and depth of institutional racism has been challenging for the participants in this study because much of our understanding of how race/racialization functions within American society is unconscious. A particular focus of this study is to uncover hidden aspects of internalized racism and how internalized racism supports and reinforces institutionalized racism. Through in-depth individual and group interviews, we explore this connection between institutional racism and internalized

racism by examining the language respondents use and the rhetorical positions they assume when describing their experience of race in their congregations.

This research fills a gap in our understanding of how racism operates in American society by examining one institution which is known on the one hand, for its ethical commitment to confronting the race problem but has also been shown to perpetuate the problem albeit unknowingly. The research findings could increase our understanding of how faith-based institutions that usually perpetuate racialization can become a force to make structural or systemic change to undo it.

Chapter 3: Setting and Context of the Research

"There are not very many places in the country where you'll find more activity in trying to grapple with the issues of race and racism than in Grand Rapids and West Michigan" (GR Press March 2, 2003).
Joe R. Feagin, University of Florida professor and scholar of racism

Grand Rapids, Michigan: A unique setting for the study of race

Scholars have recognized and written extensively about the unique character and nuances of the racialized American society but the general public has been slow to understand how racialization has shaped and impacted their collective lives and the larger American society. In recent years a number of initiatives have been spawned to expose and uncover the pernicious effects of a racialized society in various sectors and segments of the U.S. In this context West Michigan has developed a national reputation for its efforts to confront and address racism in the business sector, in the education system, in health care provision, and in the religious community (Feagin 2003).

Grand Rapids and its metropolitan area are unique in the breadth and depth of work being done to tackle racism and it provides a rich setting for study. A brief outline of three of these initiatives follows since they form one context from which this research has emerged. In the early 1990s the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce staff and business leaders began to meet informally to discuss issues of cultural diversity and its economic impact. By 1993 the Cultural Diversity Council was formally established whose purpose was to promote an inclusive employee community. To help eliminate racism in the West Michigan community a coalition of businesses came together in 1997 to form the Employers Coalition for Healing Racism. Through pioneering programs and services, this coalition helps businesses incorporate, embrace, and benefit from racial diversity in the workplace. The Employers Coalition for Healing Racism also established

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the Institutes for Healing Racism, an award winning ten-week dialogue program focusing on combating and healing the wounds of racism. The Institutes for Healing Racism help participants explore the complexities of racism by examining U.S. history, personal attitudes about race, self awareness, privilege, and institutional power. This work spawned by the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce has made an impact on the business community in West Michigan yet many acknowledge that there is still much work to be done.

The Woodrick Institute for the Study of Racism and Diversity housed at Aquinas College works to help individuals and organizations increase their capacity to address racial diversity. It is well known for its 2-day Institutes for Healing Racism, targeting both executives and individuals from all parts of the community. In addition, the Woodrick Institute serves as a clearinghouse for diversity-related information, tips and resources and provides numerous activities and workshops to engage in healing racism and celebrating diversity.

The Racial Justice Institute (RJI) under the auspices of the Grand Rapids Center for Ecumenism (GRACE) provides a focus for mobilizing persons within the religious community to respond to issues of racial justice. A number of churches within the religious community in Grand Rapids are working to foster racial reconciliation to bridge the barriers caused by racial differences. In the fall of 1998, the Racial Justice Institute embarked on a mission that brought 150 area business, civic, educational and religious leaders together for a half-day leadership conference which focused on how racism can undermine the social, cultural and economic base of a community. Its purpose was to begin a dialogue that would pave the way for a proactive five-year effort to promote

cultural diversity and racial healing in the Grand Rapids area. The event's two-part

agenda was to create a vision for the future of racial justice in this community, and to

develop strategies that would provide a platform and action plan for achieving that vision.

As the process unfolded, two themes were established: (1) a Summit on Racism must be

an ongoing, action-oriented event; and (2) anti-racist work must be community owned

and driven. 'If Grand Rapids were a racism-free community, what would it look like?'

was the question at hand. In response to this question, six areas where racism was most

blatant were identified: Business, Community, Education, Government, Media and

Religion. Today each area has created Action Teams, which are working to implement

strategies to confront racism in these areas. When it began in 1999, the Summit on

Racism attracted over 400 people from all sectors of the community and since then, the

number of supporters and attendees has increased each year. The Summit continues to

attract a diverse group of people who come together annually to learn and share ideas, but

most importantly to create a plan of action to combat racism in Grand Rapids.

One particular faith-based organization, a denomination whose headquarters is

Although most of these diversity initiatives acknowledge the need to address

systemic racism, their primary focus is on confronting individual racism through

changing the attitudes and beliefs of individuals. Less has been done to organize and

confront the structural and institutional practices that have perpetuated racism.

One particular faith-based organization, a denomination whose headquarters is

located in West Michigan, has been intentionally working to analyze the *systemic and

structural* aspects of racism within its institution and it has been selected as the setting for

this research. The Christian Reformed Church has a large and visible presence in west

Michigan and its religious commitment to welcome and embrace people from all

backgrounds provides a rich opportunity to study the dynamics and impact of a racialized society in a religious setting.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)

The Christian Reformed Church (CRC), begun in the United States in 1857 by Dutch immigrants, places its historical roots in the Reformed tradition of American Christianity. The Reformed tradition is known for its strong view of the Bible, the importance of history and tradition in defining the life of the community, and the significant role of human experience in shaping the lens through which people view the world and their place in it (Plantinga 2002). The significant differences in life experiences and opportunities between the dominant white population and the people of color within the Christian Reformed Church are typical of the American experience and provide an appropriate setting for study.

In a new book on black theology, an African-American Reformed theologian argues that white Reformed Christians have a truncated understanding of human experience because they have failed to recognize the contributions made by African-Americans.

> An African American perspective on theology comes more as a reaction than as a theological initiative. It has been made necessary by conservative Christians' failure to grapple with issues of African-American history and consciousness. This is particularly evident in the areas of racism and discrimination. The sad yet irrefutable fact is that the theology of Western Christianity, dominated by white males, has had scant if any direct answers to the evils of racism and the detrimental effects of institutional discrimination. The major contributors to conservative theological thought over the centuries have, consciously or not, spoken predominantly to and for white people. In fact, the unfortunate reality is that the ideologies of racism and elitism that have marred the landscape of Western civilization have had a uniquely conservative Christian flavor. Those who advocated a caste system of slavery and racial superiority in places such as the United States, England, South Africa, and India have often done so with the

consent of a church defined by conservative theologians. And even though many white theologians have refuted these erroneous positions, very few have sought to positively set forth God and his providential hand in the life and struggle of African Americans (Carter 2003:6-7).

In the denomination's own internal history, the people who formed the CRC created a monocultural church which solidified a primarily Dutch ethnic identity, established institutions that nourished those who share that identity, and sustained those benefits over time for those within that shared inheritance. In the context of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, it is important to remember the differences between immigrant and conquered peoples. Most people of Dutch or German descent in the CRC feared absorption or cooptation by the dominant American society and sought to maintain a distinct ethnic identity (Bratt 2001). This is quite different from most African Americans and other people of color who have faced the opposite problem in the United States: exclusion from participation, full status and opportunity. This has been documented in the scholarly literature about racial oppression (Blauner 1972; Feagin and Feagin 1978; Feagin and Sikes 1994).

> Many ethnic groups in America have lived in ghettos. What makes the black ghettos an expression of colonized status are three special features. First, the ethnic ghettos arose more through voluntary choice: the choice to immigrate to America and the choice to live among fellow ethnics. Second, the immigrant ghettos of the inner city were one- or two-generation phenomena—way stations along the road of acculturation and assimilation. When ethnic communities persist, they tend to reflect voluntary decisions to live among one's fellows and maintain group institutions...the black ghettos on the other hand have been more permanent, though their boundaries expand and change and some individuals do escape them. But most relevant is the third point, that black communities are, to a great extent, controlled from the outside. For many Europeans...there was only a brief period, often less than a generation, during which their residential buildings, commercial stores, and other enterprises were owned by outsiders. Afro-Americans are distinct in the extent to which segregated communities have remained under outside control: economic, political, and administrative (Blauner

1972: 86).

While it is true that white Europeans who came to the U.S. in the last 125 years (since the Civil War) did not personally build or sustain slavery, they nevertheless benefited from the racist structures, practices, and attitudes that permeated American society since its inception.

> The ancestors of most people in the CRC were direct beneficiaries of race-based policies and practices and thereby inherit the legacy created by slavery along with its social effects. In placing themselves within the flow of North American history, CRC people of European descent ought to recognize an analogy with their theological understanding of original sin. They have inherited a situation and propensity not of their own making; they have, knowingly or unknowingly, accommodated themselves to, actively participated in, and sought to reap advantage from this inheritance; they have thus owned and perpetuated it and so share responsibility for it (Bratt 2001:2).

Thus white members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, many of whom arrived in the U.S. much later than did those of African descent have enjoyed unearned advantages socially, politically and economically. As the CRC began to broaden its outreach to other cultural groups, important issues developed over who is included and who isn't, whose preferences count and whose do not, and who leads and who follows.

The History of Race Relations in the Christian Reformed Church

From the time of its birth in western Michigan in the 1850s and for the first hundred years of its existence the membership of the Christian Reformed Church in North America remained almost exclusively ethnic Dutch. As early as the 1920s the denomination began 'missionary' efforts to Native Americans in Arizona and New Mexico and to urban neighborhoods in Chicago and Grand Rapids. However these

efforts kept the non-Dutch, particularly people of color, at arms length and did not grant them equal status within the denomination. During the 1950s there was increasing debate over the separate, lesser status of the neighborhood chapels and by 1959 the Synod adopted the Reformed Ecumenical Synod's twelve-point Declarations on Race, which initially seemed to have little bearing on the life of the denomination (CRCNA 1996: 4). By the mid-1960s as the U.S. faced racial strife in cities across the country, the CRC was forced to deal with race relations directly.

In 1971 the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR) was formed which provided full-time staff and was mandated to work toward the eradication of racism in the church and in society. "Since the late fifties, CRC synods (1959, 1968, 1969, 1977) have been regularly decrying racism in all its forms—both as personal prejudice and as abuse of systems in our society" (VanderMeulen 2000:1). In this work to confront racism the CRC has sought to diversify its membership and to form multiethnic congregations among Hispanic, Korean, Chinese and Southeast Asian immigrant groups.

Although the denomination has worked consistently on addressing racial inequality for decades, the process and progress has been slow—ethnic-minority persons working within the agencies of the denomination, although growing in number, still serve primarily in support roles; a disproportionate number of ethnic-minority pastors receive their training in nontraditional ways; ethnic-minority pastors are compensated at lower levels than are Anglo pastors; at all levels of denominational life persons of color struggle with a sense of belonging (CRCNA 1996:6-7). The 1996 Synod report on race suggested a wide range of responses including—"To witness publicly *against* racism, prejudice, and

related unemployment, poverty, and injustices and *in defense of* all people as image bearers of God" (CRCNA 1996:32, emphasis original).

The denominational staff and the denominational Board of Trustees were mandated to move forward in the work of eradicating racism affirming the direction of recent decades where the CRC has publicly decried racism in all its forms (VanderMeulen 2000). But by its own admission the denomination has not known how to truly cross the racial divide. By 1997 it "became clear that many of our agencies and institutions were stuck. We didn't know what to do next" (VanderMeulen 2000). It was in this context that a number of denominational representatives were invited to explore a new approach—anti-racism or the dismantling of racism on an institutional level. "This approach, pioneered by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, had been put powerfully into the context of Christianity by an organization called Crossroads. It was an exciting new approach that took history seriously and didn't gloss over power relationships. It offered a methodology that combined training, organizing, and teamwork in a powerful way" (VanderMeulen 2000:2).

The Anti-racism Initiative within the Christian Reformed Church

Since 1997, the denomination has been involved in intensive work to dismantle racism on the institutional level and has made a long-term commitment to this process. This has involved work at all levels within the denomination, its agencies and organizations, to consider carefully their racial history and to examine how power has been used and misused. It has involved education and community organizing to analyze systemic racism. To facilitate its growth in the understanding of anti-racism, the CRC

contracted with Crossroads Ministry, an independent nonprofit based in Chicago, to develop an intensive anti-racism training initiative for the whole denomination.

Crossroads was founded in the late 1980s as an effort to develop new directions in understanding and combating the root causes of institutional racism in the United States. The work of Crossroads is to train teams within institutions, primarily religious institutions, helping them to analyze racism and to develop and implement strategies to dismantle racism within their structures. Crossroads training begins by helping teams develop the ability to analyze institutional racism, particularly in specific contexts, and then to evaluate, assess, and develop strategies for change.

A significant part of the Crossroads anti-racism training is its argument that racism is more than personal prejudice and bigotry but rather racism is the systemic and institutionalized misuse of power. This theoretical framework situates Crossroads within the institutionalist perspective as described in the literature review in Chapter 2. The Crossroads anti-racism training examines how this misuse of power manifests itself and operates within institutional racism, in three essential ways.

> First it demeans and controls the people at whom it is aimed. Second, it provides power and privilege to the dominant racial group. By emphasizing the first form of racist power—the power to oppress—we often overlook this second and deeper feature of systemic racism: it is designed to serve the economic, cultural, and psychological interests of the dominant group. The third and perhaps most insidious power of systemic and institutionalized racism is its power it imprison us at a deep psychological level and spiritual level. It plants notions of superiority and prerogative in the hearts and minds of white people, and it leads people of color to engage in self-destructive attitudes and behaviors (Carpenter 2000: 21).

The denominational anti-racism work first began with the agencies and organizations of the denomination as a whole and then a congregational anti-racism initiative was undertaken in 2002 as a pilot program within the denomination to bring the

training to grassroots members. Each of the three congregational anti-racism teams have made significant investments of time and money in twelve days of training to begin analyzing institutional racism in their particular settings. The anti-racism training has helped participants examine U.S. history to identify both legal / intentional forms of institutional racism and non-legal/ hidden forms of institutional racism. Additionally considerable time has been spent considering how institutional racism can be perpetuated in subtle, unconscious ways and encourages participants to consider with a degree of painful honesty who 'we have been turned into.' The anti-racism training focuses on teaching as a tool for organizing rather than as merely a means of disbursing information. Over and over again the phrase is used during training—you can not teach racism away. Change needs to happen at the level of our unconscious assumptions as well as with our conscious, determined actions. The purpose here in describing the anti-racism training is not so much to evaluate its foundational assumptions and categories for analysis as it is to give a brief overview of what the participants in the anti-racism initiative were exposed to and encouraged to consider. After training was completed in 2003 the congregational teams have continued their intensive work to analyze how racism is perpetuated in their particular congregations and to strategize about the steps they need to take to begin to dismantle racism in their own settings. This anti-racism work is strikingly different from other diversity initiatives occurring in west Michigan because it does not primarily focus on educating people about racism or sensitizing them to racial dynamics, though this can be an additional benefit. Rather its focus is on helping people develop the ability to analyze how structures and institutions can perpetuate a racialized society and this ability to do structural analysis is a significant first step in confronting it.

The Research Setting: The Congregational Anti-racism Initiative within the CRC

This research studies the three congregations selected by the denomination to participate in the congregational anti-racism initiative. It explores the lived-experiences of race for people of color and for whites in these congregations, particularly giving voice to those whose voice has been silent in the past. This exploratory study has sought to understand the practices of congregations in analyzing the systemic nature of racism/ racialization and in organizing to dismantle racism at an institutional/ congregational level. A case study approach has been used since it is a "preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed...and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin 1984:1). The choice of approach has been purposeful as a means to develop a deep, rather than broad, description and interpretation of how a religious institution contributes to or confronts the racialization of American society.

The three congregations provide rich settings for study both because of their similarities (in terms of religious perspective) and because of their very significant demographic diversity and variation. One congregation is predominantly white, wealthy and situated in a suburban area of Grand Rapids; another congregation is predominantly African-American, poor and situated in a transitional urban neighborhood of Grand Rapids; the third congregation is racially mixed, economically diverse and situated in a well-established but marginalized urban neighborhood.

This study hopes to provide insight to both the study of institutional racism and the call to action to dismantle it in congregations, organizations, and society at large. It is

therefore conducted from the approach of a scholar-practitioner. In terms of scholarship, it is embedded within and contributes to a body of literature that recognizes that racism is not static, based merely on some distant past, but is constantly changing and such change is viewed as a normal component of the racialized system. In addition, as a case study it represents a microcosm of how institutional racism may function in society at large. The rationale for choosing a set of congregations as cases is that if people gain consciousness about institutional racism in a common space that they voluntarily inhabit, within institutions that they can actually affect, then they can slowly start to dismantle it. It is therefore a stepping stone to greater consciousness about institutional racism *outside* the church.

The study also has very immediate and practical goals in terms of the call to action to dismantle racism in these congregations. For the scholar-practitioner, these congregations provide an ideal research setting as the participants have articulated a desire to deepen their own understanding of how race affects the functioning of their institution. Because of this participants in the study were accessible and generous with their time. Most were open and willing, at times eager, to talk at length about their experiences. Their interest in the study led them to ask questions, to probe deeper and to hold the researcher accountable as the research unfolded which contributed to the collaborative nature of the research process. They share a common dedication and can take mutual responsibility for the work. Of all places, a church community should be a space with fewer racial problems that elsewhere and be the most open to understanding the challenges.

Chapter 4- Methods

There will be no single conventional paradigm to which all social scientists ascribe. We occupy a historical moment marked by multivocality, contested meanings, paradigmatic controversies, and new textual forms. This is an age of emancipation; we have been freed from the confines of a single regime of truth and from the habit of seeing the world in one color.

from *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2000:162)

Research Paradigm Underlying the Chosen Methodology

Substantial change has occurred in the landscape of social science inquiry within the last twenty years, particularly the last ten years.

> Indeed, it would be difficult to miss the distinct turn of the social sciences toward more interpretative, postmodern, and criticalist practices and theorizing. This nonpositivist orientation has created a context (surround) in which virtually no study can go unchallenged by proponents of contending paradigms. Further, it is obvious that the number of practitioners of new-paradigm inquiry is growing daily. There can be no question that the legitimacy of postmodern paradigms is well established and at least equal to the legitimacy of received and conventional paradigms (Lincoln and Guba 2000:164).

This emergence of so-called 'new-paradigm inquiry' has resulted in considerable intellectual and theoretical dialogue about differences, similarities, and contradictions among paradigms and a resultant blurring of boundaries between them (Richardson 1994). Lincoln and Guba (2000), for example, identify themselves as scholars who operate within the critical theory perspective but have been strongly influenced by those in the constructivist and participatory paradigms.

Paradigms are basic belief systems or worldviews that guide investigators in fundamental ways. All paradigms answer basic questions about the nature of reality (ontology), the nature and theory of knowledge (epistemology), how knowledge can be apprehended or accumulated (methodology) and what value this has within society (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Lincoln and Guba 2000; Bawden, 1997). Inquiry paradigms define

the boundaries of what falls within and outside the limits of investigation and questions

of methodology (both quantitative and qualitative) are secondary to questions of

paradigm.

Over the last half century these significant paradigm shifts have set the stage for

the development of new research methodologies. Emerging within the past 30 years but

gaining support and a deeper, more nuanced understanding in the last decade are

collaborative and participatory research paradigms. Heron and Reason (1997) argue for a

radical empiricism by asserting that a participatory worldview is fundamentally

experiential—through direct encounter, face-to-face meeting. Their argument forms the

foundation for cooperative inquiry where people collaborate to define both the questions

they wish to explore and the methodology for the exploration. Within this view, the

investigator and the investigated are interactively linked in ways that influence and shape

the inquiry. The role of the researcher has been re-defined from one of detached observer

to empathic collaborator. Close, interpersonal exchange enables researchers to gain

meaningful insights into how people understand and make sense of their own behavior.

Decisions about how to define the problem to be investigated, what methodologies to use

and how analysis is conducted become a joint responsibility between researchers and

participants. On-going reflection by co-researchers is critical to the development of

knowledge. Research must lead not only to the generation of new knowledge but also to

action for social change. Such research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns

of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint

collaboration (Brown and Tandon 1983).

The participatory research tradition emerged from work with oppressed people in the Third World and focused on linking investigation, education and action. Participatory research frequently emerges in situations where people want to make changes thoughtfully and with critical reflection. It emerges when people want to think about where they are now, how things came to be that way, and from these starting points, how in practice they might be changed (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000). Moving beyond merely recording observable facts, participatory research has had the explicit intention of collectively investigating reality in order to transform it (Hall, 1981, 1992; Brown and Tandon, 1983; Fals-Borda, 1991). Thus, participatory research combines three activities—investigation, education, and action. It is a method of social investigation of problems, involving participation of oppressed and ordinary people in problem posing and problem solving (Hall, 1981). The direct link between research and action is the most unique aspect of participatory research. Participatory research aims at three types of changes: 1) development of a critical consciousness of both researcher and participants; 2) improvement of the lives of those involved in the research process; 3) transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships (Maguire, 1987). "Alternative paradigm researchers stress collaborative or participative inquiry in which control over both the research process and product is more equally shared between researcher and participants. They maintain that research should be useful in improving the life conditions of oppressed people. Both the process and outcomes should put power and control in the hands of the oppressed. Research should give them a voice in articulating their perception of the problems and relevant solutions. In this way, research can become a tool for self-determined social transformation rather than for the maintenance of

inequitable social relations" (Maguire, 1987: 24). Participatory research can be seen as a significant shift from social science research that viewed people as the subjects of research (or research *on* the people) and it is also a shift from doing research *with* the people as in action research. The shift signified in participatory research is a shift to research being done *by* the people, as co-researchers. Participatory research focuses on methods and techniques of inquiry that take into account people's history, culture, interactional practices, and emotional lives (Stringer, 1999). Action researchers tend to not advocate for the groups or people with whom they work, while participatory researchers generally ally themselves with oppressed groups and do become advocates. As such, action researchers work *with* the system and participatory researchers often work *against* the system (Brown and Tandon, 1983: 288).

One of the weaknesses in the literature on participatory research is that the common use of the term 'participation' conceals divergent views about its aims and practice. Participation is loosely defined and is often assumed to be synonymous with 'good' and 'empowering' (Guijt and Shah, 1998). Rather, clarifying questions should be raised: Who is treated as a participant and who is excluded? On what grounds? In what ways do they participate? How is their participation taken into account and or not taken into account? How much do they participate? There have been times when only the most vocal community participants remained invested and involved in the work. This raises challenges about how to deal with the complexity of community differences, including age, ethnicity, gender, class, etc. It's not adequate to espouse the value of participatory research or participation, in general, without carefully delineating what it meant by the terms in the particular context in which it is being espoused.

One important task for a researcher is discerning what methodology is most appropriate in particular settings with the particular problems that are posed. This is not decided upon in isolation but must be done through negotiation and dialogue. Nevertheless, certain methods will lead to better outcomes than others depending on the setting. In every situation there is a tension between the ideal and what is possible given certain constraints. Participatory researchers face numerous challenges such as how to keep the participants involved and in the driver's seat, how to get information out to people in ways that are useable and how to pay attention to research priorities and power relationships/dynamics.

This research falls under the broad rubric of new-paradigm inquiry (Lincoln and Guba 2000). Though this research was collaborative, it was not truly participatory research because the research process was controlled by the primary researcher. The data collected was "not the telling of a life so much as it [was] an incomplete story angled toward my questions and each [person's] ever-changing sense of self and of how the world works" (Frankenberg 1993:49).

Initially the researcher approached the three congregational anti-racism teams to ask permission to study their process and to try to understand their attempts to dismantle racism within their congregations. Seeking their permission and their 'buy-in' required the researcher to carefully explain the purposes of the research and to outline how it could serve their interests. The proposed research was to be a doctoral dissertation but not merely that—much discussion ensued about how the anti-racism participants could use the research as a tool to better understand themselves, the unique contexts in which

these congregations are situated and how they could utilize this research to promote social change within their congregations.

The participants themselves recognized the value in this research being conducted but did not stake a claim in guiding it from beginning to end as would be true in participatory research. Many of the participants articulated the importance this research potentially has in their efforts to dismantle racism but they were not the instigators, nor the drivers to make sure the research process served their purposes throughout. The researcher met multiple times each month with members of the three anti-racism teams to listen, to share feedback, to dialogue and document what was being said through participant observation and to observe the racial dynamics of these groups. New-paradigm inquiry has sought to change the paradigm in which research is conceived and operationalized.

> Racism and privilege are major factors that challenge this paradigm shift.
> Understanding the roots of oppression and its relationship to trust and community
> building are part of the dance that is indispensable to doing this work. So is
> addressing the challenge of true equal partnerships in community based
> participatory research in a world of injustice. Having as collaborators working-
> class people of color who consider themselves equal partners and are considered
> as equal partners in the research process requires ongoing effort. The effort to
> understand racism and all its consequences is work done in the context of
> relationships. To empower a community, we must become a community,
> supporting and challenging each other as we implement culturally competent,
> power-and race-sensitive inquiry (Chavez et al. 2002:93).

As such, this research would most appropriately be recognized as collaborative research rather than participatory research as defined by some scholars, though these boundaries are easily blurred.

Because this research has sought to expose racism as it operates within the settings of the three congregations and to provide opportunities for research participants

to give voice to their lived experience of race and racialization, it is embedded in critical race theory.

> Much of the scholarship of CRT [critical race theory] focuses on the role of 'voice' in bringing additional power to the legal discourses of racial justice. Critical race theorists attempts to inject the cultural viewpoints of people of color, derived from a common history of oppression, into their efforts to reconstruct a society crumbling under the burden of racial hegemony (Ladson-Billings 2000: 265).

One key aspect of critical inquiry is its recognition that "both method—techniques for gathering empirical evidence—and methodology—the theory of knowledge and the interpretive framework that guide a particular research project [are] inescapably tied to issues of power...The central issue is how to bring scholarship and advocacy together in order to generate ways of knowing that interrupt power imbalances" (Lather 1994: 106). This has been a significant aspect of the scholar-practitioner approach of this research project.

Chosen methodology The theoretic framework this research falls within (critical race theory specifically the racialized social systems perspective) and the paradigm within which this research was undertaken (collaborative participatory) led the researcher to choose qualitative methodology for several reasons. The individual racial attitudes and beliefs of Americans have been studied by a myriad of survey researchers for decades. But less study has been done on the nuances and subtleties in particular contexts of racial dynamics and this lends itself to qualitative research. Qualitative research is useful when the purposes of the research are to understand the events, situations and life experiences of the participants in the study and the *meaning* they make of these things; or to understand the particular *context* within which the participants act and the influence that

this context has on their action; or to understand the *process* by which events and actions take place (Maxwell 1996: 17-19). The focus of this research is to understand how structural and institutional racism is operating at a congregational level as experienced by both people of color and white people within the three chosen congregations and this lends itself well to qualitative research methods. "Qualitative research is understanding people from their own frames of reference and experiencing reality as they experience it" (Taylor and Bogdan 1998: 7).

Survey research has been conducted for decades on American beliefs and attitudes regarding race but it poses significant limitations for understanding how race is lived in the United States. Likert-type scales, true/false questionnaires or other such scales can be useful in obtaining information about how well the research participants fit into the categories set up by a particular scale; they are of less use in exploring the intricacies and subtleties of lived experiences. If we recognize and accept the racialized nature of American society, what needs to be explored is not so much individuals' overt beliefs and attitudes regarding race but rather how the society is racially organized and structured, often in subtle ways.

> Traditional survey research is bounded by methodological individualism and, as such, is fundamentally concerned with individual's response variation to survey questions that presumably indicate individuals' attitudes…the most salient missing element in their conceptual scheme is the issue of power, that is, these researchers do not connect racial beliefs to a system of racial domination… traditional survey research systemically underestimates the extent of racially based beliefs among whites in the contemporary United States. This under-estimation results from two related problems. First, if the nature of post-civil rights racial dynamics and dilemmas has changed as many analysts claim, researchers using questions developed to measure racial attitudes in the Jim Crow era systematically overestimate the level of tolerance among whites. Second, because most surveys provide a limited analytical context—check marks on restricted questions and items often have an ambiguous meaning, and researchers assume the meaning of an "agree" or "disagree" an "approve" or "disapprove"—

the interpretation of their findings is not straightforward. Although surveys, particularly those that rely on questions that fit new social developments (for instance modern and symbolic racism), are excellent instruments for uncovering the broad parameters of racial debates, only through qualitative studies or multi-methods studies can analysts understand the way in which ideas about race are articulated and the discursive circumstances in which actors invoke those ideas (Bonilla-Silva 2001:60-61).

Qualitative research enables analysts to explore the subtleties and nuances of particular racial contexts and to examine the meaning participants make of the situations and life experiences they encounter.

Overview of Study Design

Many decisions were made in the design stage of this research, such as choices about sampling, data collection methods, and how to organize the vast amounts of information collected. The research was conducted in two phases. The first phase sought to understand how institutional racism (as distinct from individual racism) functions within the three congregations participating in the anti-racism initiative. The second phase sought to understand the ways in which racism has been internalized by all people in a racialized society and how this reinforces institutional racism. See the following table for an explanation of how data were collected, who is it was collected from, and total number of particular data collections, etc.

Table 1- Overview of Research Design

	Source of Information	Method Used/Type of Data Collection	Number of Data Collections
Phase I	Team Leaders	In-depth individual interviews	6
	Pastors	In-depth individual interviews	4
	Team Members	In-depth individual interviews	6
			Total *individual* interviews: 20
Phase I			
	Anti-racism Teams	In-depth group interviews	3
	Congregations At-large	In-depth group interviews	3
			Total *group* interviews: 6
Phase I and II	Trainings	Participant observation	9
	Team leader meetings (These meetings emerged in the last 6 months of the data collection)	Participant observation	6
	AR team meetings	Participant observation	12
	Denominational mtgs. re: AR	Participant observation	4
	Caucus meetings	Participant observation	10
	Joint 3-team events	Participant observation	2
	Individual mtgs. or phone calls	Participant observation	9
			Total *participant observation*: 52 sessions
Phase II			
	Caucus Leaders	In-depth *individual* interviews	4
	Team Leaders	In-depth *group* interview	1
			Total *Phase II interviews*: 5
Phase II	Written documents	Thematic Analysis	Total *documents analyzed*: 36

Data Collection

In this study several different methods were employed to elicit information about how racism (both individual and institutional) functions within a congregational setting---in-depth interviews with both individuals and groups, participant observation, and analysis of written documents. Proper procedures for protecting research participants were followed with the approval of the MSU Institutional Review Board, also known as the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS).

The decision to collect information from a diverse range of individuals and settings and using a variety of methods also known as triangulation (Denzin 1970) is based on the assumption that this technique helps to reduce the risk that research conclusions may reflect the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method and allows a researcher to gain a better assessment of the validity of research conclusions (Maxwell 1996). "Human beings are complex, and their lives are ever changing; the more methods we use to study them, the better our chances to gain some understanding of how they construct their lives and the stories they tell us about them' (Fontana and Frey 2000: 668).

Phase I The first phase of the research began with in-depth individual interviews being conducted with identified church leaders from all three congregations, including pastors and each anti-racism team leader from the participating churches. They served as key informants and provided valuable background information on the history of the each congregation and on congregational anti-racism initiative. In addition in-depth interviews were conducted with individual members of the anti-racism teams, paying special attention to include both people of color and whites from each congregation (See

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Appendix A—Individual Interview Guide: Church leaders). Next group interviews were

conducted with each anti-racism team (See Appendix B—Group Interview Guide: Each

Anti-Racism Team). The anti-racism teams provided unique perspectives on individual

and institutional racism within these congregations and the interaction among participants

proved to be especially important. For comparison, group interviews were then

conducted with congregational members at-large (members *not* involved in the anti-

racism initiative) from each of the participating churches using the same questions to

ascertain differences in perspective on congregational racism (See Appendix C—Group

Interview Guide: Congregational members at-large). In selecting participants for the

group interviews with members at-large within the congregation, the researcher

collaborated with the team leaders and used church directories to do a simple random

sampling. Selected members at-large were then invited in an initial letter to participate in

the group interview and these invitations were followed-up with personal phone calls to

guarantee an adequate number of participants representative of each congregation. These

in-depth interviews lasted from one hour to one and half hours and initially followed an

interview guide but the interviews also diverged into other directions as the participants

wanted to pursue other issues or concerns related to racism in their congregations.

In this research extensive participant observation was conducted over the course

of eighteen months at many different types of gatherings—training sessions for all three

teams together, team leaders meetings, individual congregational team meetings, joint

events, follow-up conversations (either by phone or in-person), denominational meetings

where conversations about anti-racism were the central topic, caucusing meetings (which

emerged about six months into the process) where the three congregational teams came

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together monthly for specific conversations about how they have internalized either racial superiority or racial oppression and how this affects the anti-racism work they are pursuing within their congregations. These caucusing meetings provided very rich data as the dynamics between the people of color and whites were a fascinating mix of theoretical analysis and honest, gut-wrenching emotional expression that were woven together as the participants wrestled with how to truly dismantle a system in their churches that is hurting them all.

Phase II The second phase of the research explored in more depth how racism is internalized in all people in a racialized society. In addition to extensive participant observation, in-depth individual interviews were conducted with the emerging leaders of the persons of color caucus and the white caucus to explore notions of racial superiority or racial oppression and their impact on the functioning of the congregations (See Appendix D—Individual Interview Guide: Caucus Leaders). Anti-racism team leaders were interviewed as a group during the second phase of the research to ascertain their perspective on the progress made (or lack thereof) in the anti-racism initiative to date (See Appendix E—Group Interview Guide: Anti-Racism Team Leaders).

Analysis of the content of many written documents including historical documents about the denomination and the anti-racism initiative as well as documents prepared by the anti-racism teams as part of their training and follow-up meetings were analyzed as well to gain insights in an emerging understanding of how congregations are organized by racial dynamics.

Sampling Careful decisions needed to be made about how to develop a sampling plan for this study. Church leaders as well as leaders within the congregational anti-racism

initiative were selected for inclusion in this study because their knowledge and perspective was deemed important. However it was also important to hear the perspectives of the typical congregational member as a point of comparison between those actively involved in the anti-racism work and those not involved in it.

For the majority of data collection described in Table 1, no sampling plan was needed as interviews were held with the 'population' of individuals or groups that served as sources of information for this study. More specifically, in–depth interviews were held with each of the team leaders and pastors of the three congregations as well as with each of the three anti-racism teams and caucus leaders. In addition, the author engaged in participation observation over the course of eighteen months at every anti-racism event held by the congregational teams. These events included trainings, team leader meetings, Anti-Racism team meetings, joint 3-team meetings, and caucus meetings. All together, these direct observations led to data collection from 52 separate anti-racism events in these congregations.

Sampling, however, was employed with two categories of interviews: 1) individual interviews with team members and 2) group interviews with the congregations at-large. Realizing that boundaries needed to be set on whom to talk with, what to pay attention to and focus on, and what to observe led the researcher to think carefully about how to make these decisions. For these groups particular attention and care was given to include as much diversity as possible when deciding who to interview. As such, for the team member interviews, I wanted to guarantee that at least one person of color and one white person were interviewed from each of the three anti-racism teams. In some cases, a person was selected to be interviewed because he or she represented the only person of

that racial background on a particular anti-racism team. For the group interviews with the congregational members at-large, a random sample was drawn using the church membership directories as a sampling frame. Data were collected in this case study thoroughly from all three churches.

How information was collected In this research in-depth individual and group interviews provided a rich source of information about people's experience of race and racism in their congregational settings. Each individual and group interview was audio-taped and transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after the interview was completed. "Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings…each interview context is one of interaction and relation; the result is as much a product of this social dynamic as it is a product of accurate accounts and replies" (Fontana and Frey 2000: 645, 647). In qualitative research the design for interviewing must be flexible, iterative and continuous rather than prepared in advance and set in stone (Rubin and Rubin 1995). The researcher needed to respond to emerging ideas and issues. Individual and group interviews served different purposes: individual interviews often allowed for more in-depth expression of ideas and experiences on the part of respondent as well as created space for more probing and exploration on the part of the researcher. Group interviews relied on the interaction among respondents to elicit important information and the inquiry could flow back and forth between structured questions and the participants' responses and interaction with each other. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to share their experience and understanding of the world without being constrained by terms, questions or frameworks suggested by an interviewer Unstructured interviews with open-ended questions provide

a fuller account of the story with rich detail and the depth needed to understand the complexity of the phenomenon studied (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

Participant observation was one of the most important parts of data collection in this research. Many writers have argued that participant observation produces especially great rigor when combined with other methods (Adler and Adler 1994; Schensul, Schensul, and Le Compte 1999) but caution is necessary because the findings are always filtered through the researcher's interpretive lens. Participant observation "progressively narrows and directs a researcher's attention deeper into the elements of the setting that have emerged as theoretically and/or empirically essential" (Adler and Adler 1994:381). Noting and recording observations in as much detail and as closely as possible to how they are rendered is important. "The challenge for the researcher lies in the transformation of observations into field notes, which then constitute a scientific record of the experience for future reference. The more complete and accurate the field notes, the easier it is for researcher to catalogue, code, and use them as data. Writing good field notes involves detailed and concrete observation and recording on a regular basis" (Schensul, Schensul, and Le Compte 1999:114). Observational data gathering continues until researchers achieve 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser and Strauss 1967); that is, when new data fit into the categories already devised or when new findings replicate earlier ones.

The scholarly literature on qualitative research describes a number of ways of ways a researcher could decide to document findings through different types of writing. One of the biggest challenges faced in this qualitative study was organizing the massive amount of data that was collected.

The method we developed [involved] jottings, a diary, a daily log and three kinds of formal notes...jottings will provide you with the trigger you need to recall a lot of details that you don't have time to write down while you're observing events or listening to an informant...a diary chronicles how you feel and how you perceive your relations with others around you...a log is a running account of how you plan to spend your time, how you actually spend your time and how much money you spent...field notes are... notes on method and technique, descriptive notes, and notes that discuss issues or provide an analysis of social situations (Bernard 1995:181-186).

How the information was organized: Field notes/journal file/ memos to self A 'system' of organization for the vast amount of information collected was needed. In addition to the transcribed individual and group interviews, jottings were kept of all meetings, training sessions, phone calls and other events related to the anti-racism initiative and these were typed by the researcher as field notes as soon as possible after the data had been collected. A separate journal file was kept to record personal reactions, reflections, issues, concerns, reading notes during the entire research process. These were often turned into typed 'memos to self' which contributed to the analysis by capturing analytic thinking about the data and by facilitating and stimulating analytic insights. For example, after reading literature on transformative research and thinking about this study I wrote in a Memo to Self dated 11-14-03:

> *"Individuals engaged in transformative political action should ask themselves, as often as possible, what are the possibilities and foreclosures of openness and secrecy in given contexts. Transformative research in this sense, then, furthers agendas which...are situational, presented in given contexts and framed by local conditions...So while the ultimate goal of exposing hidden power arrangements must never be forgotten, it may be stalled until a more opportune time arises...Thus, transformative politics must come back to a situation and ask of it again, 'What's possible'?" (Baez 2002:53).*

> *[[This challenges me to think carefully about findings as they are embedded /situated in the particulars of time and place. Not to think strictly in terms of change, per se but rather of movement. So do I describe where the groups were at the beginning and how they have seen movement over time? Do I frame what my respondents have shared within the context of 'what's possible?' Or will this lead to a kind of selling-out?? I'm not sure. But these are things to be aware of*

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and think about as I analyze what I have heard and as I think carefully about patterns, etc. The point Baez is stressing is that research that does not seek to expose and challenge oppression cannot be called transformative. It may be valuable in other ways, perhaps, but it is not transformative research.]]

"Secrets in the context of oppression foreclose the possibility of an agency that will resist it... Qualitative researchers must be leery of continuing to conduct research which...reinscribes notions of power. Such researchers should further transformative political goals on behalf of historically marginalized groups and individuals. This requires openness and risk-taking—frightening and dangerous, of course, but necessary for critical agency and movement" (Baez 2002: 55).

[[The issue for me is not so much how to keep secrets but how to appropriately share information that seeks to expose and challenge oppression and to do so within some level of accountability to the people I have interviewed. This whole thing seems like a huge risk and evokes feelings of fear in me—will I appropriately hear (or have I heard) what is being said? Will I be able to hear the words-behind-the-words (my own phrase or where did I get that phrase?) Will I have the courage to say what needs to be said risking the wrath of people on all sides of these conversations? I've been reading and thinking about this for 5 hours straight now. It's time to take a break and do something else]]

Also effort was made to find alternate understandings or meanings of particular events or ideas. "The recursive process of questioning constantly; getting answers; asking more refined questions; getting more complete answers; and looking for instances that clarify, modify, or negate the original formulations permits [researchers] to reorder their sense of what is happening. Especially important is the search for negative evidence, or instances, events, behavior, or other facts that appear to disconfirm what...has already been found" (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 11). Reading field notes for regularly occurring phrases, and with an eye to surprising or counterintuitive material that may need to be clarified is critically important (Miles and Huberman 1994).

Sustained engagement/ saturation   One of the benchmarks often associated with good qualitative research is that the researcher is engaged in the data collection process over a

long enough period to ensure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. "How long one needs to observe or how many people need to be interviewed are always difficult questions to answer ahead of time. The best rule of thumb is that the data and emerging findings must feel saturated; that is, you begin to see or hear the same things over and over again, and no new information surfaces as you collect more data" (Merriam 2002: 26). In this study the saturation point began to become clear about 15 months into the data collection process when the same things were being said repeatedly from different respondents. It was at this point that themes began to come into focus.

Data Analysis Methods: Audit trail

As is described in much of the literature, qualitative analysis begins after the first interview and continues throughout (Rubin and Rubin 1995; Crotty 1998). Analyzing qualitative data involves strategy as well as technique. It involves listening to informants, reviewing taped interviews, reading transcripts, writing down impressions, reviewing initial impressions and writing up new ones. The analysis process provides a feedback loop that informs and shapes future data collection. To analyze is to grasp a basic understanding of what is said, gain a deeper understanding as time goes on, ask new questions as they arise and develop theories from all the data and stories before the researcher. "The ultimate power of field research lies in the researcher's emerging map of what is happening and why. So any method that will force more differentiation and integration of the map, while remaining flexible, is a good idea" (Miles and Huberman 1994:65). Every qualitative study requires decisions about how the analysis will be done and these decisions influence and are influenced by the rest of the research design. An

audit trail is one way to ensure that the research has been handled with integrity and consistency. An audit trail in a qualitative study describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made through the inquiry (Merriam 2002). A qualitative researcher needs to be transparent and reveals the research steps taken along the way and in this way is accountable for the research decisions made.

In this section we discuss the steps taken in the analyzing the data including how the data was processed/cleaned, how a coding structure was developed and checked, how themes emerged and were developed into displays for review. (See also the discussion of descriptive validity in the section entitled Validity of the Findings later in this chapter.)

Data processing/cleaning the data   Each individual and group interview was transcribed verbatim from the audio-tape as soon as possible after the interview was completed. The primary researcher then listened to each tape to proofread it for correctness/ accuracy and to add aliases for all named participants in this study. Then each transcript was read thoroughly at least twice. The first reading was to get an overview and to make marginal notes/ comments about what seemed to be most salient and illuminating about the contact. The second reading was to type a summary identifying main issues or themes in this contact, identifying new information learned and new issues raised, and identifying potential follow-up questions to be asked. This summary also provided an opportunity for the researcher to write impressions and analytic insights as they emerged.

Code development and code-checking   Once these preliminary tasks were completed, analysis began immediately and continued throughout the study, enabling the researcher

to progressively focus the interviews. Each completed transcript was coded using NVIVO software based on a coding structure which was created as patterns began to emerge in the data about how respondents have experienced race and how their racial identity was formed through their life experiences. The ways participants in this study describe their experience of race in their congregations is consistent with concepts and themes described in much of the theoretical literature about race and racialization, particularly Frankenberg (1993) and Bonilla-Silva (2003).

The coding structure (see Appendix F—Coding Table) was developed to ensure systematic analysis of the data. Specifically, the coding table included a name for each code, a definition and a rule for when to use each code, as well as an example of how it was used from the data. The development of the coding structure was iterative. Continued reviews of the transcripts with the code definitions often resulted in combining two codes or creating new codes. Throughout the initial stages of coding, the coding structure was revised numerous times (no less than twelve times), trying each time to make the codes more specific and exact so that each usage of the code was as consistent as possible.

After completing the coding for the first six transcripts, code-checking was done by giving several transcripts along with the coding structure to three colleagues to check their coding decisions against the primary researcher's. This strengthened the analysis by tightening the definitions of important concepts because in each instance these independent code-checkers asked good questions and pushed for clarification about the usage of each code. Also, they raised issues that had remained unnoticed or unseen before. For example, one colleague noticed that on a particular transcript there was a

repeated pattern where the respondent talked about: 1) understanding the analysis of racism (cognitive or intellectual) 2) embracing the analysis (more affective) and 3) making plans to do something about it *(know, feel, and then do)*. This repeated schema used by one participant for describing how she was approaching racism within her church had gone unnoticed before—and it led to more thinking more about how a white person's motivation for involvement in this anti-racism work is more cognitive/ external while the motivation articulated by most people of color is more affective /internal, such as 'we want a better life for our kids.' Much of the literature on qualitative research affirms that "the process of inscription involves learning to notice what is important to other people and what one has not been trained to see, and then to write it down" (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 14). After getting feedback from these intercoder colleagues, the coding structure was revised again before completing the coding for the last group of transcripts.

Thematic analysis and displays As data were collected and coded, differences began to emerge between responses from white participants and participants of color. This was evident in the individual and group interviews but it was also supported by the data collected at the many events in which participant observation occurred. In addition, as data collection for this study proceeded, the emerging set of experiences was found to be consistent with a body of literature, described in Chapter 2, as the racialization/racialized social systems literature. Thus, as the different views between whites and people of color became more pronounced through the data collection, it became clear that the analysis should contrast the views and experiences of white people and people of color with institutional racism in their congregations.

To accomplish this, all coded passages on institutional racism were pulled and collated for white respondents and put into a memo or list. This process was repeated for non-white respondents. Memos such as these provide the researcher the opportunity to characterize the experience described by each group, looking for internal similarities and differences. Analyzing the data to look for differences across break characteristics proved to be one of the most fascinating aspects of the analysis. Four themes emerged as differences between the responses of whites and of people of color—*differing definitions of racism; race consciousness vs. invisibility of race; awareness of race privilege; and overt vs. hidden racism.* These themes called for further analysis to examine how they were understood and in what context.

The data were then further disaggregated to separate instances of hidden and overt institutional racism. To accomplish this, a display in the form of a large, four-cell matrix was developed. The 2x2 matrix consisted of the coded passages (eg. the coded evidence from the raw data) that described the congregants' experience with institutional racism. The 2x2 format separated the evidence according to two break characteristics: 1) race of the respondent (e.g. white or persons of color) and 2) the nature of the racism: hidden or overt. Overt racism included passages that indicated forms of institutional racism that were named, acknowledged or obvious to the respondent while hidden racism included experiences that were not recognized as racist by the respondent or appeared to be unconscious or seemingly unknown.

Thus, the display was designed to contrast the experiences of whites and people of color with both hidden and overt instances of institutional racism. This analysis provided the basis for the empirical findings in Chapter 5. The cells of these displays when filled-

out contain the detail, complexity and richness of the data around the chosen concepts and break characteristics. In each cell, the coded passages containing the respondents' views on institutional racism are collected. Displays such as these provide the researcher the opportunity to readily see connections or disconnections among the data in each cell and to characterize the experience described by each cell. As this analysis is done, a summary of the findings for each cell is written so that the findings may be compared and contrasted across the cells. Summaries make comparisons across cells more tractable, but at the same time ensure that the findings are rooted to the primary data shown in the display.

As the analysis of this display unfolded, particularly on the elements involving hidden and overt racism, it became apparent that there were subtle yet deep internalized understandings about race and racial dynamics among the participants. As such, another four-cell display was developed to examine the data on internalized racism. This 2x2 matrix is similar to the one described above as it contrasted the experiences of whites and people of color across the hidden/overt break characteristic. However, it instead analyzed the language used by respondents and the rhetorical positions they assumed when answering questions about race and discrimination and what they reveal about internalized racial superiority and/or internalized racial inferiority. This analysis provided the basis for the empirical findings reported in Chapter 6.

Validity of the Findings

Validity is an important methodological consideration in any study and is related to the credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation or interpretation claimed in

research findings (Maxwell 1996: 87). How a researcher prepares for and plans to address threats to validity is as important in the design of a qualitative study as in a quantitative study but the criteria are different. The central question embedded in validity is: "How do we know when we have specific inquiries that are faithful enough to some human construction that we may feel safe in acting on them, or more important, that members of the community in which the research is conducted may act on them?" (Lincoln and Guba 2000:180).

A vast body of literature on validity in qualitative research has emerged in the last fifteen years. Scholars are not in agreement about what constitutes appropriate criteria for judging the validity of a particular piece of research. The dominant positivist paradigm (as well as post-positivist paradigm) tends to argue for particular procedures that guarantee validity while proponents of new-paradigm inquiry tend to argue for a *process of understanding* of a given phenomenon.

> Defining types of validity in terms of procedures, an approach generally labeled instrumentalist or positivist, is not the only approach available. The most prevalent alternative is a realist conception of validity that sees validity of an account as inherent, not in the procedures used to produce and validate it, but in its relationships to those things that it is intended to be an account *of* (Maxwell 2002: 39).

Descriptive validity Maxwell (2002) argues for three distinguishable types of validity in qualitative research. The first type, descriptive validity, is concerned with the factual accuracy of an account; that researchers are not making up or distorting the things they saw and heard (Wolcott 1990; Maxwell 2002). This descriptive validity is achieved by intersubjective agreement as seen in justifying a particular claim, for example, through re-examination of a particular audio or videotape of data. In this study descriptive

validity is enhanced by the use of audio-recorded interviews and verbatim transcripts as well as the proofing such transcripts against the audiotape.

Interpretive validity In addition to descriptive validity, qualitative researchers are concerned with what the phenomenon under study *means* to the people engaged in and with them. Interpretive validity involves hearing and understanding aspects of an account from the participants' own language and as such can give 'voice' to those who have been silenced in the past. "While accounts of physical and behavioral phenomena can be constructed from a variety of perspectives, accounts of meaning must be based initially on the conceptual framework of the people whose meaning is in question" (Maxwell 2000: 49). Furthermore, African-American feminist scholar, Patricia Collins argues for concrete experience as a criterion of meaning, the use of dialogue in the assessment of knowledge claims, an ethic of caring and an ethic of personal accountability (Collins 1990).

The first part of interpretive validity involves hearing the experience of participants in their own language. As such, this study has focused on giving voice to people of color and to whites and their lived experiences with race and racialization in their congregational settings. The second element of interpretive validity, however, involves understanding these experiences. To improve our understanding of these experiences and to thus improve the interpretive validity of these findings, various forms of member checking were employed. At multiple points in the research process, the researcher took data back to the participants to ask for clarification and feedback. For example, many respondents of color in this study stated that they think whites are lying when they say they do not see the racial oppression people of color experience.

Numerous times these kinds of statements were probed for clarification and further explanation about the respondents' understanding of such comments. Sometimes this probing happened during the interview, sometimes this probing happened in follow-up phone calls, and sometimes this probing happened at later meetings. Trying to genuinely understand what the respondents of color actually *mean* when such statements are made required member checking in numerous follow-up conversations, in various settings involving participant observation and at times bold, honest questioning.

Member checking also included checking the interpretive validity of early findings and working hypotheses. For example, at the conclusion of the data collection a special session was held with the team leaders to share some of the preliminary findings, to ask them if these findings 'ring true' and to listen to their suggestions for fine-tuning.

Theoretical Validity Finally, the question of whether a particular account is an appropriate characterization of a phenomenon moves beyond whether it is an appropriate rendering of the 'facts' of a given situation as well as beyond whether it has been properly interpreted. A third aspect of validity, known as theoretical validity, stresses the relationship of a particular account to the theory of some phenomenon. Theoretical understanding refers to an account's function as an *explanation*, transcending merely a description or an interpretation of the phenomena.

> Theoretical validity, in contrast, is concerned with problems that do not disappear with agreement on the 'facts' of the situation; the issue is the legitimacy of the application of a given concept or theory to established facts, or indeed whether any agreement can be reached about what the facts are. The distinction between descriptive or interpretive and theoretical validity is not an absolute, because (contrary to the assumptions of positivism) objective "sense data" that are independent of the researcher's perspective, purpose, and theoretical framework do not exist (Maxwell 2002:52).

In this current study the primary researcher has sought to understand *how* racism is embodied in the institutional functioning of the congregations. To the extent that the findings are consistent with existing theory on race and racism, they are expected to be more valid. As data analysis for this study unfolded, the congregants' experience with racism emerged and was found to be consistent with a body of literature, described in Chapter 2, as the racialization/racialized social systems literature. Although a diverse set of literature was read in preparation for this study, this particular literature became the basis for the emergent conceptual framework for the study. Theoretical validity of the findings was therefore assessed vis a vis the outcomes that would be expected under this body of literature.

Peer Review   Peer review was used to strengthen the theoretical validity of the study's findings. As such, two additional scholars of race/racism reviewed the data, the displays and the summaries along the way, to provide feedback to help confirm the findings or to provide new interpretations of the data. Particular attention was given to finding scholars familiar with the literature, but also who were 1) from different disciplinary backgrounds and could bring fresh insights as well as 2) from different racial backgrounds who were instrumental in helping this white researcher 'see' some things that had been overlooked. Here's an example of an email exchange as a result of one of these peer review meetings with an African American faculty colleague at Calvin dated 3-31-04:

> *Dear D---*
> *Tell me again the phrase you used last week when we had lunch---'inherent abversive (sp?) work' related to suffering. I've been trying to think more about that part of our conversation about suffering and how critical lived-experience is in the formation of empathy.*
>
> *I've also been thinking about the intersection of empathy and self-interest. I think there's something about self-interest that has to be connected to empathy, too.*

For example, if a white person does not recognize how racism intersects with their self-interest (if they don't see or can't articulate how racism damages them, too), then their empathy may degenerate into pity rather than engage them in action for change. These are just some rambling thoughts. I want to explore this more. How do white people recognize and articulate how racism hurts them too? This seems to be a critical piece and not much is written about it that I've come across at least. What do you think?

(You know, sometimes, I get afraid to share my rambling thoughts for fear of coming across as so darn naive and clueless....we white people are so much more damaged than we know and the fact that we are so clueless is just a teeny, tiny tip of the iceberg. So thanks for being patient with me.) Talk with you soon.

****
Here's her response:

Oh please do not be afraid, you are in no way clueless and I have loved our discourse over these issues, ramble away, the rambling times have been some of the richest in coming to new ideas or angles for analysis, question raising, and insight. I like the self-interest stuff, in some ways it reflects back to the decontextualization issue, how connection/disconnect speaks to the level of personal intake/ownership of difficult concepts. On the comment I said, it was the "inherent obversive work of suffering," the other side of the coin. Boy, I am excited to hear where all this conceptualizing and exploration leads you, what important work you are doing.

Ethical considerations   Recent literature on the role of ethics in research indicates profound paradigm shifts are occurring among some scholars. Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest that they have rethought their earlier position which was that ethics/values play a part in the inquiry process in the selection of research problem, choice of theoretical framework, choice of data-gathering and data-analysis methods and presentation of findings. They now argue that

> ...[S]ubsequent rethinking of our own rationale have led us to conclude that the issue is much larger than we first conceived. If we had it to do over again, we would makes values, or more correctly, axiology (the branch of philosophy dealing with ethics, aesthetics, and religion) a part of the basic foundational philosophical dimensions of paradigm proposal. Doing so would, in our opinion, begin to help us see the embeddedness of ethics within, not external to, paradigms and would contribute to the consideration of and dialogue about the role of

> spirituality in human inquiry...The expansion of basic issues to include axiology, then, is one way to achieving greater confluence among the various interpretivist inquiry models (Lincoln and Guba 2000:169).

This expands ethical considerations in social research and it involves moving beyond professional ethics per se (i.e. informed consent, confidentiality, institutional review boards) to include a more broadly conceived moral discourse about knowledge generation, involving, for example, interpretive sufficiency (Christians 2000). Scholars writing about interpretive sufficiency describe it as an important mission of social science research—in which multiple interpretations are recognized because lives are grounded in cultural complexity (Denzin 1989). This suggests that social researchers have an ethical responsibility to study in such a way that findings possess enough depth, detail, emotionality, nuance, coherence and representational adequacy that will permit a critical consciousness to be formed by the reader (Christians 2000:145). This enlarged understanding of the role of ethics in research leads to new areas of reflection for the researcher.

Other scholars such as Guba and Lincoln (1989) called for five 'authenticity criteria' they believed to be the hallmarks of authentic, trustworthy, rigorous, or "valid" qualitative inquiry---fairness (all perspectives and voices should be apparent in the text), ontological and educative authenticity (which determine a raised level of awareness), catalytic and tactical authenticity (the ability of a particular inquiry to prompt action on the part of research participants and the involvement of the researcher to train participants for social or political action). In a later work, Lincoln (1995) argues that the *way* we know is tied both to *what* we know and to *our relationships with our research participants*. As such, seven new standards were developed to inform validity:

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positionality, or standpoint, judgments; specific research sites as arbiters of quality; voice; critical subjectivity; reciprocity (the extent to which the research relationship becomes reciprocal rather than hierarchical); sacredness (how can science contribute to human flourishing); sharing the perquisites of privilege that accrue to our positions as academics with university positions (Lincoln and Guba 2000:182). These are criteria by which this current study can be judged for its trustworthiness and authenticity.

Reflexivity   One of the important ethical issues that researchers need to consider involves reflexivity, the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher. In addition to the usual skills needed to conduct robust research (such as intellectual skills, data management and organization skills), participatory inquiry requires another set of skills for the researcher—the ability to be reflective and reflexive, the ability to listen well and to communicate carefully and with thought-fullness, the ability to facilitate or at least co-facilitate in interpersonal and group settings.

> It is a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself. Reflexivity forces us to come to terms not only with our choice of research problem and with those with whom we engage in the research process but with our selves and with the multiple identities that represent the fluid self in the research setting (Lincoln and Guba 2000:183).

We constantly ask ourselves the question: How do I understand myself in the process of this research? A good researcher must understand herself/himself well enough to admit the internal conflicts that are experienced about how power is shared, about how and when to make decisions involving advocacy and taking a stand, as well as how to express

emotions of hurt, anger or fear, when appropriate. Learning to discern when to speak and when to remain silent is an important skill that a good participatory researcher has to develop over time. There is a great deal of 'internal' work that a researcher must face if she/he hopes to do meaningful work. There are significant lessons in humility, care and equity to be learned and practiced.

In rigorous qualitative research, the researcher documents this growing understanding of self in relationship to the research through personal writings and reflections and draws connections between what the data reveals and how the researcher understands and experiences the data (Richardson 2000). For example, in a Memo to Self written early in the data collection process dated 7-8-03, I wrote:

> *Something that is striking to me as I read through the transcripts to write summaries (I've now read four of them) is that each one contains contradictions, conflicts, inconsistencies, and confusions. An interviewed person may say something in the beginning of the interview and contradict it later. I'm struck that this anti-racism work is conceptually hard work for all of us as well as emotionally hard work for all of us. The analysis we learned in the anti-racism training, though very helpful, is challenging to fully understand conceptually and it's easy for people to get confused particularly about the differences between Power 1, Power 2 and Power 3.*

This early entry reveals an initial engagement with the issues being talked about in the research and acknowledges that the work is difficult conceptually and emotionally but doesn't reveal how this difficulty is affecting the researcher. In many subsequent Memos to Self the personal "wrestling" with these issues on a cognitive level and an affective level becomes much more obvious.

Ethical dilemmas presented themselves in this study such as when to speak and when to remain silent, when to probe and when to just listen, when to change directions and when to follow the participants' change of direction in the conversation. One

challenge was knowing when to interject an idea or an opinion in an authentic way trying to be conscious not to manipulate. Doing too much talking or presenting of opinions can get in the way of participatory research (Chataway 1997). Chataway's description of holding back and silencing herself to avoid dominating the research relationship is a necessary caution. "The important issue is that outside researchers must learn to value what community participants have to say, listen to everyone in a meaningful way, and not speak as the 'expert.' Once again, a dance is involved; balancing silence and speaking creates the space for community members to express themselves" (Chavez et al. 2002:88).

Ethical dilemmas also emerged in the collection of data and in the dissemination of the findings. Asking questions, probing, and following the lead of participants requires the researcher to be aware of the uneven power dynamics which exist in the research relationship. "In qualitative research, ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings. Overlaying both the collection of data and the dissemination of findings is the researcher-participant relationship...When the research is highly collaborative, participatory, and/or political, ethical issues become prominent" (Merriam 2002: 29).

One of the particular challenges faced in this research was navigating the tensions between protecting the confidentiality of participants and exposing oppression and unjust social structures. In an article challenging conventional notions of confidentiality, Baez (2002) argues that when confronting issues of injustice, the researcher has a responsibility to expose and resist oppressive power structures. This can pose a dilemma for the researcher that seeks to protect her respondents by not revealing their identity (i.e.

altering data by changing a respondent's name) but feels morally obligated to not remain silent.

> [A]ltering data about discrimination resolves (perhaps) only the problem of confidentiality, while presenting other concerns which are equally –if not more – problematic for transformative research. For one, altering such data sheds doubt or undermines the extent of the problem the researcher aims to address, such as oppression ...More important, altering the data undermines critical agency because it can accomplish the same thing as confidentiality, keeping oppressive power arrangements hidden...the failure to disclose important information may have perpetuated the kinds of experiences racial minorities 'keep having again and again' (Baez 2002:40-41).

In response to this provocative article I wrote a Memo to Self dated 11-14-03:

> *This is my biggest worry... how do I disclose information that is important for the dismantling of racism but at the same time protect the identity of my respondents. Sometimes my respondents have said things like, "Tell anybody what I'm saying, this situation is so bad that I want the world to know about it" and other times my respondents will say things like "You're not going to tell anyone what I just said, right? This information is not going anywhere, right?" Oh, my! Something that just popped into my memory---it was a POC that said 'Tell anybody' and it was a white male who said, 'You're not going to tell anyone, right?' I wonder what this might mean for the relationship of power/control and how silence might be a tool to maintain power. I guess one possibility that I may have to do when I am ready to disclose my findings is to check with particular respondents and make sure they are comfortable with my sharing particular or specific ideas. But again remember that I don't want to share incident-specific ideas but rather share findings that are conceptually-bound somehow.*

Positionality Another key ethical issue in this research involves positionality, the open acknowledgment of differences of gender, race, ethnicity or class and their relationships to power in the research process. There are at least two sets of power relationships that shaped this research. First there is a power imbalance between researcher and the participants in the research in the sense that the researcher sets the initial agenda, asks the questions, edits the transcripts, analyzes the findings and eventually publishes it (hopefully!) This power dynamic was openly acknowledged and attempts were made to mitigate the imbalance by encouraging participants to add questions for conversation, to

re-frame a question that was asked, to suggest and move in new directions. A fascinating

study conducted by Frankenberg (1993) of white women and how they understand and

experience their whiteness was valuable for this current study because it helped name and

identify the racial dynamics that exist in research on racism.

> The second set of power relations, more specific to this project, are the power relations of racism itself, and specifically the effect of the color-and power-evasive discourse on race that ... [has been] the dominant public language of race...Central to this task was my development of a 'dialogical' approach to the interviews. Rather than maintaining the traditionally distant, apparently objective, and so-called blank-faced research persona, I positioned myself as explicitly involved in the questions, at times sharing with interviewees either information about my own life or elements of my own analysis of racism as it developed through the research process. This approach served two different functions, for in addition to seeking to facilitate discussion about race and racism in a social context where privilege and particular discourses on race construct zones of silence, repression, and taboo, it served to democratize the research process, reducing the extent to which I was positioned as an invisible presence (Frankenberg 1993:30).

Her techniques for attempting to openly address power imbalances were instructive when

my study was just getting underway and throughout data collection and analysis I

returned to this literature to think through how to handle particular situations.

As an invited speaker in a class at Michigan State in April 2004 I prepared the

following presentation:

> *There have been certain challenges as I have negotiated my role as researcher and as participant in the anti-racism initiative. I conducted these interviews as a middle-class white woman with many whose culture and class and education were different from my own but who shared a similar religious background. This religious similarity created some level of trust but there were surprises and unexpected twists in the conversations that occurred. Sometimes I was viewed as an insider; sometimes I was viewed as an outsider. In fact, sometimes I viewed myself as an insider and sometimes I viewed myself as an outsider. One of the areas I want to explore more is the times I felt surprise when I viewed myself as an insider but someone responded to me as though it was obvious that I'm an outsider...particularly regarding race. The color differences (or similarities) sometimes seemed obvious to others but not to me; other times they seemed*

obvious to me but not to those I was interviewing. For example, people of color often spoke of whites as the collective "they" / "them" (as though I was not one of "them") yet there were times when I felt surprise when someone referred to me as "you" (since I felt internally as though I was self-identifying with the person of color, who was speaking). I want to examine this more.

The power positions of researcher and researched are not fixed dichotomies but shift and move during the course of the study. As the researcher I hold power in terms of framing the initial questions asked which start the conversation. But since they are open-ended questions, the conversations can go in many different directions under the influence of the respondent.

Those interviewed subtly negotiated the power dynamics by determining where and when the interview was held, what information to share, what questions to ask me. They decided how they choose to answer a particular question or not, they decided what to disclose and what to withhold.

For example, there were a few instances when a person said something about needing to do this interview to "help our sister here out and teach her about race" (as though to imply that I can't know much about race myself since I am a white woman who attends a predominantly white church).

These notes reveal something about how participants viewed me as the researcher and how I viewed myself in relationship to the participants. The notion of positionality was a completely new idea to me when I began this study and it has been challenging at times to have the eyes to recognize how much this influences what is said and what is not said in the course of the interactions.

The issue of privilege created a fair amount of internal conflict at various times within the research process. In a Memo to Self dated 2-18-03, very early in the process of trying to initiate the research and negotiate the research relationship with participants I wrote:

At the invitation of [the Director of Race Relations], I met with the six team leaders at a Dim Sum restaurant right before Christmas. In retrospect I realize this was a mistake. [The Director] was trying to accommodate my need to start a conversation with the team leaders before Christmas so he invited me to an already scheduled meeting but we should have approached this whole thing differently. Probably I should have prepared a short one page summary of what I

was proposing to do and given it to the team leaders before hand. Part of my confusion about how to handle things at that time was related to my own ambivalence about my white power and privilege as an educated white woman. I was unsure how to approach the subject of participatory action research with them because I felt uncomfortable with my own privilege. Plus I didn't know the team leaders very well yet (with the exception of _____). The meeting was awkward because the waiters kept interrupting to serve the food continually and to let people keep ordering. This broke my train of thought repeatedly and I found myself unable to think clearly and speak articulately about what I wanted to do. [The Race Relations Director] mis-read the situation by prematurely announcing, "Well, I don't hear any resistance" without giving people a chance to ask questions, etc. [-------] reacted quite negatively because he felt that the original purpose of their meeting had been co-opted by my presenting the idea of the research proposal.

The fact that this Memo to Self is written two months after the event in which it describes what happened, highlights the difficulty I had recognizing how privilege and power affects dynamics at many levels of human interaction. "For professionally trained researchers who are white or otherwise advantaged, privilege is one of the most important and difficult arenas in community based participatory research to address, as it in part defines who we understand ourselves to be. The outcomes and mechanisms of institutionalized racism are easier to uncover because they are not personal. To look internally at privilege conferred due to education, race, sexual orientation, gender, or organizational affiliation means a long-term commitment to engage in deep inner work researchers may not be prepared to do" (Chavez et. al. 2002:91).

Summary

How will we know if the research is valid? The challenge of this research is to understand how the participants in the anti-racism initiative describe the racial dynamics in their lives and in their congregations and then to understand what this *means* to them.

What is important to interpretive social scientists is how people understand their worlds and how they create and share meanings about their lives. Social research is not about categorizing and classifying, but figuring out what events mean, how people adapt, and how they view what has happened to them and around them. Interpretive social researchers emphasize the complexity of human life. Time and context are important and social life is seen as constantly changing (Rubin and Rubin 1995:34).

The key is to discover the meaning in their words—how are people experiencing racism in their lives, in their congregations, in the church as an institution—and how does this lead us to view the world in new ways, to envision a new reality and to work to make it happen.

To gain a valid understanding of this meaning, this research applies criteria for descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity. Rich, detailed observation notes, verbatim transcripts, and detailed displays are used to ensure descriptive validity. A focus on lived experience and various forms of member checking enhance interpretive validity. Peer review with multiple researchers who have knowledge of the literature on race as well as the context of the research site puts the theoretical validity to test. And finally, the research participants name and describe their experience with racism. These experiences have been a motivating factor for their action and deeper self-reflection through the anti-racism initiative. As such, the empirical findings fulfill the criteria for catalytic validity as well. Catalytic validity refers to the degree to which research moves those it studies to understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it (Kincheloe and McLaren 2000: 297).

Chapter 5 – What You See Depends On Where You Stand: Institutional Racism in the Church

Modern racism must be understood as lived experience.
from *Living with Racism* (1994)

Racialization and Religion

Sociologists who study American religion, Michael Emerson and Christian Smith in their groundbreaking book, Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America, argue that many people mistakenly believe that racism is on the wane because of the gains brought about by the Civil Rights movement. They argue that racism has become more covert in the years since the Civil Rights movement but no less operative. Emerson and Smith argue that American evangelicals often do not recognize a racialized society because they use particular cultural tools to interpret and make sense of their world—these cultural tools, as we described in Chapter 2, include individualism, 'relationalism' (attaching central importance to interpersonal relationships), and antistructuralism (an inability to perceive or unwillingness to accept social structural influences (Emerson and Smith 2000: 76). They further postulate that because white Americans in particular are often able to and do live their everyday lives in isolation from people of color, many white Americans claim that the 'race problem' either does not still exist or is overblown or exaggerated by vested interests. Their central argument is that white evangelicals (influenced by the dominant American societal trends) tend to construct reality so as to individualize and minimize the problem of race. In contrast, Emerson and Smith found that black evangelicals tend to be less individualistic and more structural in their explanations of racial inequality.

The purpose of this research is to further the discussion of the ways racialization is embodied in religious institutions, in particular local congregations and to understand the lived-experiences of race for people of color and for whites in these congregations. The literature on racialization and religion has demonstrated that our institutions can reproduce racial inequality without any need for people to be prejudiced. To reproduce racialization in the United States does not require overt racism or prejudice as they have been typically defined. The racialized social systems framework understands that people need not intend their action to contribute to racial division and inequality for their actions to do so.

As such, significant variation exists in people's understanding of race and racism. For some racism is perceived as individual beliefs and overt actions which oppress people of color. For others, racism is perceived as more systemic and built into structures of our institutions. These varying perceptions need to be more deeply explored if racism is to be confronted in contemporary society. Scholars have documented that individuals' ideas and beliefs about race have changed in recent decades and this, therefore, has led to less overt racism operating in the social dynamics of American life today than there was fifty years ago (Blauner 1972; Feagin and Feagin 1978; Omi and Winant 1994; Loury 2002). However there is much evidence to suggest subtle racism is still operative in many of the systems of our society and in our institutions (Jones 2000; Bonilla-Silva 1996, 2001).

The strength of the racialized social systems perspective is that it recognizes the need for a structural analysis without minimizing the impact of individual actors in combating racism. It recognizes that racism can be best explained by examining how

racial phenomena are structured in contemporary settings and how this leads to the racialization or the racial organization of a particular society. Because this argument focuses on the *structural* and *systemic* rather than primarily on people's beliefs and ideas about race, it asserts that, "Actors in superordinate positions (dominant race) develop a set of social practices and an ideology to maintain the advantages they receive based on their racial classification, that is, they develop a *structure* to reproduce their systemic advantages. Therefore, the foundation of racism is not the ideas that individuals may have about others, but the social edifice erected over racial inequality" (Bonilla-Silva 2001:22). This suggests that the conscious ideas and beliefs that individuals hold about race and racism are not the cornerstone upholding a racialized society; rather it is the structures and systems which have been created that perpetuate racial inequality.

> [In a racialized society]...Institutionalized racism is normative, sometimes legalized, and often manifests itself as inherited disadvantage. It is structural, having been codified in our institutions of custom, practice, and law, so there need not be an identifiable perpetrator. Indeed, institutionalized racism is often evident as inaction in the face of need. Institutionalized racism manifests itself both in material conditions and in access to power (Jones 2000:1212).

This includes both the formal structures of an institution (such as constitutions, by-laws or committees) as well as the informal structures of an institution (such as the customs and practices) some of which are conscious and some of which are unconscious or internalized.

In this chapter we turn the spotlight on one particular institution—the local congregation—to explore the relationship between religion and the racialization of American society. Little empirical work has explored institutional racism and religion or illustrated how structures within congregations have built, supported and reinforced institutional racism. This chapter will explore these structures—the specific methods,

practices and social relations that produce and reproduce racial inequality within congregations. Relying on in-depth interviews and participant observation, the data are used to expose both what is overt and what is hidden as we seek to uncover how race affects involvement in these congregations.

This chapter begins with an exploration of the variation in people's perceptions about what constitutes racism. Then we turn to the main analysis, an empirical exploration of institutional racism in the three study congregations. Using a thematic analysis of qualitative data, we demonstrate how race shapes the experience of people of color and whites in very different ways in these congregations. The analysis is based on theory presented by Bonilla-Silva (2001; 2003) and Jones (2000) in which institutional racism is embodied in 1) differential access to power based on race and 2) differential distribution of resources. This analysis of institutional racism presents the emergent categories of differential access to power, uncovering four different ways in which power is illustrated in the data: through influence, leadership, information, and accountability.

Variation in Perception and Understanding of Racism

Much has already been written about the differing lenses through which people of color and whites view and understand racism in their lived experience (Omi and Winant 1994; Loury 2002; Bonilla-Silva 2003). These differences have emerged because of the differing positions vis a vis systems of privilege or oppression that have been manifested in how race is lived and experienced. The variation in peoples' perceptions and understanding of what constitutes racism is significant as it presents a challenge in trying to understand how institutional racism operates.

We first explore the assumptions that people hold about racism and the language they use in describing it and how it functions in their lives. The data illustrate that some are more cognizant than others of the impact race has on their lives and in the functioning of the congregation. Some exhibit confusion and demonstrate a superficial understanding of race and racism. When asked they assume racism is primarily overt acts of discrimination that hurt or oppress people of color. For some, institutional racism is not widely understood and they are unable to connect racism to systems of oppression. Others are able to grasp that racism is more than personal acts of prejudice and discrimination and can see the connection to structural issues. Many of them are deeply reflective about their lives and their experiences within their congregations.

It is important to highlight what may seem self-evident to some readers—that a person's perspective or standpoint on these issues is fundamentally shaped by their racial position in our society. Numerous examples of these dynamics are evident throughout this research. As such, in the analysis that follows excerpts are given from the transcripts of the research participants and the race and gender of the respondents are identified. These differences play an important part in the analysis. The following key indicates race and gender of respondent: POC-M = Person of color, male; POC-F =Person of color, female; W-M= White, male; W-F = White, female.

We begin by examining comments about the racial composition of the congregations and what this reveals about people's assumptions about race and racism. In this study each of the three churches has expressed desires to be multiracial and multicultural in terms of their congregational make-up. However respondents from all the churches reveal differing levels of understanding about what a diverse composition

actually *means*. Some people and this was true for whites and for people of color, suggest that because they have different racial and ethnic groups among their numbers, this is evidence enough that racism is not occurring in their congregation, i.e. the visibility of people of color within our congregation proves that racism does not exist in our organization. In other words, the presence of whites *and* people of color within the congregations equates with a lack of racism.

> W-F: I think it's almost hard to be racist or discriminatory in this church, because you've got whites, you've got blacks, you've got intermarriage, you've got Hispanic, and you walk in and you see this and you're like – if you're discriminatory there's a problem already when you walk in that door.

> W-M: You're at the wrong church.

> W-M: Yes. We need each other so much that you can't afford to discriminate against anybody. We've got to have each other. I mean, we need everybody here; we couldn't discriminate if we wanted to.

Another respondent describes his congregation as not struggling with racism because their racial make-up is mixed, suggesting that having a visibly diverse membership 'proves' that racism does not exist in their midst.

> POC-M: [W]hen I examine or analyze this thing, uh, racism at [this church], it cannot exist because we're fifty-fifty, and everybody got – ain't no white power, ain't nobody struggling anymore to get what we want or to have a voice, or to be respected. We're not struggling like everybody else is struggling, uh, with this racism. You know, when you come in the front here, you see someone like you in every different part – black and white and Hispanic… So, uh, we're not struggling. Our passion is to be used by God to confront racism in the CRC as a whole; that's what drives us.

For others, visible diversity does not necessarily mean that racism is absent and in fact, it can lull people into thinking that racism does not exist unless you scratch beneath the surface. Having diverse numbers can be merely cosmetic and does not reveal what occurs in the actual functioning and operation of the institution.

> POC-F: …you know, I'm giving pure…my reaction, not what anybody else says or thinks or feels about, this is just where I'm coming from. [This church] has had a face of success for a long time, but they know, I believe, as well as many others who are a part of a people of color perspective, that they're very far away from the actual realization of antiracism. There's a real good front going on, and from the outside, from – you know, if you were to lift up off the whole CRC scope of

things and look down and try and find a church that's making some marks with regard to bringing the races together, [this church] probably stands miles away from all the rest of the churches. However, we're a long, long, long ways away from where we need to be. And so I think this is a make-or-break event for [us], because they've gone into all the other arenas with regard to how to make this work, and so this is kind of like the make-or-break event as far as I see it, because this is going to really get to the heart of the issues, and this is going to start addressing that paternalistic attitude that I think is at the heart of what people in the CRC have to come to grips with.

The critical difference in these various understandings of visible diversity is related not merely to how multicultural the congregation looks on the outside nor how long the particular congregation has been working to address racial reconciliation (one congregation claims it has been working on this issue for 40-50 years) but to respondents' continuing ability to deepen their analysis of how race impacts and affects the congregation's functioning.

I: This current antiracism initiative that the three churches are a part of, do you see that as being different than what's been occurring in this church for years?

POC-F: Yes.

I: And how so?

POC-F: Because what's been occurring in past years has been more surface, and it's dealt with *looking* multicultural and there hasn't, like I said, been a real process in place to make it happen. We've just kind of tried this or tried that, 'or maybe this will work,' or, 'we need a certain number of people on staff,' or, 'we need a certain number of people of color as elders or deacons,' but there's been no real process, and this movement is about process, strategies, goal-setting, and it's looking at long-term effects of what we do now and actually how building on now will affect this church ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years from now.

These responses reveal significant variation among people about their understanding of race and racism. Some have a superficial understanding and assume having mixed-race congregations is enough to prove that racial inequality does not exist in their midst. By contrast, others express that to begin to understand racism we must go deeper and analyze structural elements of how a particular institution functions. Simplistic notions about racial composition and visible diversity can mask the reality of institutional racism and make it difficult for people to recognize what lies beneath the surface. This finding suggests that in order to understand how institutional racism functions we will have to

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delve deeply into people's lived experience to examine how the structures within the congregation give or restrict power and privilege. For some, this is not easy to identify.

Analysis of Institutional Racism in Congregations

To begin our analysis of institutional racism we will explore how differential access to power based on race emerges from the data and how it leads to a differential distribution of resources within the congregation. Giving power to certain groups eventually leads to privileges and resources flowing to some but not others. The findings described below reflect what respondents have described as their experience of race and racism in their congregations. The experiences of the congregants lead to the identification of four emergent aspects of differential access to power: 1) *influence* within the congregations and whose preferences count in the primary functions of the congregation, including programming, worship, and outreach; 2) *leadership* and who has authority to make decisions; 3) access to *information* and how that affects who controls resources; and 4) *accountability* and how this is handled within the structures of the congregations.

Institutional racism as seen in who has influence and whose preferences count

In this section we will examine whose preferences count and who has influence over the primary functions within the congregations by looking at both the formal structures in the congregation (such as decision-making structures and committees) as well as the informal structures (such as common practices).

Inclusion and exclusion of people of color within congregation   People of color describe in detail that although whites invite them and often welcome them to participate

in the church, their contributions are not recognized and often are not validated. They describe the strange experience of being highly visible as a person of color yet treated as though they are invisible. People of color acknowledge that they are not systematically excluded as might have been the case in years gone by. However they articulately describe the experience of token inclusion but not substantive inclusion.

> I: Let's think about ... and describe ways in which people of color are included within [this church]. Sort of how you view their inclusion ...?
>
> POC-F: Well, I still see a lot of tokenism.
>
> I: Okay.
>
> POC-F: I still – and this is just my perception, I'm on [this congregation's antiracism] team...So all I can go by is what people say to me, and the relationships and the things that I know about what's going on, but from where I sit, I still feel a lot of tokenism.
>
> I: Mm-hmm. So what that means is people of color are invited to do things, but it's mostly because they need somebody to make it more colorful, but not necessarily to let their voice and their real contribution be given.
>
> POC-F: Right. Because even when I was asked to be an elder there, it was more out of, 'we need somebody black,' as opposed to, 'you know what, you're a major player. You've been around a long time, you have a major contribution.' They would learn all that after the fact.

The descriptions of feeling tokenized within the congregation have multiple effects on people of color and on whites. Not feeling invited to participate because of the genuine contribution they can make makes people of color reluctant to become involved in substantive ways. At times, those people of color who are included can feel over-extended and at times burned-out. Competition between minorities for favored status among whites can also be very destructive.

> POC-F (1): I've heard some people saying – I think it was said tonight –um – that ultimately white folks are in control, so why am I doing this, why am I going to be on council, or... They ultimately have the control.
>
> I: Okay.
>
> POC-F (2): Personally, it does limit your involvement. It has mine. Um, not coming from this traditional background, that always seems to come up into play as to what they've done and where they gone to school and where they went to church, and all that, so it can be intimidating sometimes.

I: Mm-hmm.

POC-M (1): Like, uh, serving on the council, like when I was in there was probably twenty-five percent black part of it, and you know it felt...I mean, 'why should I even go? It doesn't matter. My vote doesn't count.' It didn't count. And I think that's what happens if you're only twenty-five percent, thirty percent.

POC-M (2): I think it's kind of like any other system in that it encourages you to take the mainstream, you know, that if you are a minority on a governing body of the church, you're expected to pay homage to the majority by going along with that majority, and so you compromise – as a former council member – you compromise positionally because you feel the weight of, 'don't come out – don't get out of line; follow the protocol that's been laid before you.' So for me, it's unfortunate, but it's a perpetual kind of, 'this is the status quo in the church just like it is anywhere else. You know, we expect you to dance our dance, play our music, do it the way we do it,' you know. But then quickly to reference the fact that you were there, you know, giving approval of whatever this project is.

I: So a person of color is needed there for visibility's sake, but in terms of really having a voice and really being listened to, that doesn't always happen is what you're saying ? People give lip service: 'we want to be diverse, or multiethnic, but we're not really caring about the voice and the opinion.' Is that what you're saying?

POC-M (2): Yeah. As a person of color on a governing body or council you can give an opinion and be articulate about giving an opinion, but that opinion won't necessarily weigh in until your white counterpart goes along with it. Okay. When it goes – when that happens, then we're moving forward, okay. If that doesn't happen, then 'you need to come up to our standard.' That's kind of the feeling. Come on .That's a real feeling. I can feel it even talking about it, that there's a feeling of, 'come on, play ball over here on this playground. Don't go over there.'

I: 'With these rules.'

POC-M (2): Yeah. 'This is the way we do it. Come on, we're helping you.'

POC-F (2): But at the same time...this may not be a good word, but I'm going to use this word; you can be pimped here a lot.

POC-F (1): *Mm-hmm*, I know it [Emphasis in original].

POC-F (2): Okay, when they – when you do speak your mind: 'well, we want that person again.' Whether they may listen to him but, 'that's a voice – okay, well we have that voice, and that person's pretty strong, and they're not going to...' But you really wonder, are they really listening to what you're saying, and so you become – you can, if you let yourself – this little statue for them, and that's where you'll get asked and asked and asked over most likely. There's more people, you know. No, you may not want my opinion. So that gets hard, so you – if you don't put Christ in it, it'll make you real bitter– put a bitter taste in your mouth.

POC-F (1): I was thinking too, on the same line, it creates division, because it can give certain people the pedestal look, and you are... I remember when I was first hired here, an African-American said to me, 'you know, you're the flavor right now, but don't you mess up, because it's over,' and so that puts pressure on you because you know you're the one that they've chosen to...you are it, and you are there, and if you do anything to ruin that then you ruin it for the whole nation of people of color. But it also produces – it could produce this, 'you know, I am pretty special.' And they think they're pretty special, which creates these divisions.

I: Competition.

POC-F(1): And there is a competition going on, for resources.

The subtlety of including people of color so the numbers look diverse but not deeply

valuing the contribution offered, serves to perpetuate the status quo in the racial structure

of the congregation. This finding has been documented in the literature and fits with

comments made by a number of respondents in this research.

> [T]he civil rights rebellion, in conjunction with other social, economic, and
> demographic changes that transpired in the 1960s, dramatically altered the nature
> of racial structure in the United States. I have argued that a new racism has
> replaced the old structure and that today 'white supremacy' is reproduced in a
> mostly institutional and apparently nonracial manner that relies on *token
> inclusion*—rather than on the systematic exclusion—of racial minorities from
> certain jobs and places and does not depend on overt expressions of racial
> hostility (Bonilla-Silva 2001:67).

In general, respondents of color describe that they have less influence in the congregation

and this is also reflected in comments about whites being given instant respect and trust

without having to do anything in particular to earn it.

> I: [Can] you if you can think of any examples of hidden racism within the congregation…
> we've been talking a lot about how racism is a hidden – it's covert, it's subtle, it's hard to see, for
> all of us, whites and blacks.
>
> POC-M: In the decision-making structure…you…it's interesting, I'm just learning the dynamics
> of organized church… In the decision-making body you look and you listen and some decisions
> that would be made could very well be blamed toward racism. A white person is going to have
> more influence on the Consistory than a black person, and to me that's hidden racism. If I'm just
> as educated and know just – know my facts as well as this white person and you're more willing to
> listen to him than you are to me, to me that's hidden racism… If I'm white and I'm in this position
> and I'm pursuing something I'm more influential, and that shouldn't be the case, you know, that
> shouldn't be the case.
>
> I: Mm-hmm. It sounds like you're almost saying that being white they get more trust and respect
> automatically and it shouldn't be the case.
>
> POC-M: It shouldn't be the case, but that's the case.

Thus one of the first findings is that whites have more influence and their plans and ideas

often take precedence in the functioning of the congregation. People of color describe

that either 1) they are marginalized and their voice is not heard; their opinion is not

honored or 2) because of small numbers of people of color willing to become active, the ones who do are over-used and over-worked and they can begin to compete among themselves for favored status. Next we will examine the ways this differential influence is manifested in the primary functions of the church—worship, music, and programming.

Worship and music The first example of differential influence because of race can be seen in one of the primary functions of a congregation---worship. Worship, liturgy, and music play a central role in the life of any congregation and decisions about how to structure these aspects of congregational life are generally made by committee. Within the congregations studied there is differing understanding of the impact race has on worship and music. In an interview with a white respondent who has just said race operates 'unconsciously' within the congregation, he makes the following comment about music.

> W-M: You know, and here's one of those things that we as a church will have to think about: the decisions that we have made in terms of worship; how much of that creates an obstacle to people of color? And is, for instance, music, you know, style of music, the kind of music; is that a racial thing or is it a cultural thing, and then, you know, how do you separate those two things? And so if you say Bach or the Psalter Hymnal is not necessarily racist how then do we make so that it is inviting to---people who are not familiar with those sources of music? I mean that's a really big question. I mean does it mean that we now and again put in, you know, a black spiritual or does it mean that...I don't know what it means. I mean, and that's part of – I mean it's that kind that of question that needs to be constantly sort of churning so that when we do make decisions, even if it's not made perfectly, it will influence the decisions that we make.

Just including songs from nonwhite traditions is not enough to ensure that people of color feel welcomed or included in the congregation. A respondent of color from the same congregation describes one way she has felt excluded is the lack of recognition for the contribution her people's music has made historically.

> POC-F: You know what, um, I was there the other Sunday and they were doing a Negro spiritual. So what they do is they call it 'American traditional song.' It's a doggone Negro spiritual, you know, we're proud of that. Anybody can sing it, but don't change – like I said, don't change the words of the song, don't change the, you know – because under the next song it will be written by Isaac Watts or Frances whatever, and then they go today..., and you know. But then, you know, you got 'American traditional song.' Maybe so, but for a long time it was separated. I'm not

> ashamed that it's a Negro spiritual. That's what they used to call them, so maybe they've changed that, but I wasn't informed of that, you know. [chuckles]

Although these examples do not reveal an intentional exclusion of people of color, the subtleties of how programming decisions are made do, at times, reveal differential access to and influence on the services and opportunities within the congregation based on race. The music and worship preferences of people of color can be overlooked and not validated in the same way that white preferences are.

Church program planning   Differential influence within the congregation is reflected in the planning and decisions about church programming. This has been expressed by people who feel frustrated when church meetings are scheduled during the workday and they cannot attend because of work commitments or childcare obligations. As we will see this occurs because significant differences exist in the life experiences and opportunities available to whites versus people of color. Race-associated differences in life experiences, opportunities and social relationships have been well documented in much of the scholarly literature on racism (Bonilla-Silva 1996; Emerson and Smith, 2000; West 2001).

People of color describe the challenging life situations they face in terms of socio-economic differences and how this is easily overlooked by whites who tend to control the planning of church programming. These socioeconomic differences not usually considered when church meetings are planned or even sometimes when programming decisions are made. Here a respondent of color describes how these differences can have a subtle yet powerful affect.

> POC-M: Sometimes we're not very sensitive to the life of a non-white, middle class person and how more maybe drama there is. There's just stuff going on and the needs that present themselves almost daily are different, so I'm not sure how we exclude people other than process.

> I: What are some of the needs that are different that play out in this drama you're describing?

POC-M: Well, there are some things that – for example, in the summer our non-middle class, non-white folks don't go to the cottage, don't go on vacation. They're looking for quality places for their kids, so we tend to shut down in the summer most of our churches... Programming stops right before school ends and doesn't start back up until now, September. Well that's because our white, middle-class folks who run the church generally take off; vacationing, trips of – all kinds of trips, whether it's missions or whatever, but they're gone, and so the assumption is everybody else should be gone too. Well, our population's in the neighborhood, okay, struggling through summer.

I: They can't go anywhere.

POC-M: Well, usually they don't have the means to go. The extra income isn't there to go, so there's a difference in the way we look at life. There's issues in terms of car repair. A good example would be – I was sharing with someone that my car broke down and I had to figure out how to get it home, and for him it was a significant moment, because he looked at me and said, 'You know, when my car breaks down I call a tow truck and I get a rental.' Well, that's a different world, and I don't even consider myself to be all that far out of middle class, okay, but I – you know, I just think about, 'How am I going to get it home?' So there's a lot of those issues. There's issues – you know, it's interesting to hear someone who is what I would consider solidly middle class talk about someone being laid off and how hard it is, and I've been part of conversations among non-whites who look at those folks and go, 'You just don't understand. I mean, you don't know what roughing it is,' because if the same thing happens to someone who is less middle class, and generally those are the non-white folks who are less middle class, they are in danger of losing a house, they are in danger in of losing a car, you know, they're in danger of having their lifestyle severely disrupted, not just the loss of an income. So there are differences, everyday economic differences; there are family differences. We tend to be a little more enmeshed with our extended family. It's not unusual to have an extended family member living with us, or on the verge of coming or whatever. That's more of a planned thing and a convenience thing for our white counterparts, not to say that they're not feeling it, because I think now because of the economy everybody's doing more of it, but nevertheless for us it's tradition, for our white counterparts it tends to be more of a convenience thing. Although now again, with parents living longer and kids staying at home longer, I think everybody's starting to realize, 'Ooh.' But I think there's differences even in terms of planning. Some of us don't have the luxury of planning, because we're not sure how we're going to make it through today, or this week, or this month, so for us to plan for next year almost seems ludicrous to us. We just don't have that. It's more of a survival-reaction kind of deal.

I: Live in the present.

POC-M: Yeah, because we can make plans, but we don't really know how our situation's going to be next month. You know, next month my car may not be functioning or I may have an extended family member who's taking up a considerable amount of my time or my job may be not so stable, or whatever, but there seems to be more variables in the non-white community that impact our daily life than in the white community. It's kind of weird, because sometimes I think it's just economics, you know, that if we could just raise the bar on both side then we could both complain about – just about the, you know, the stuff of life. So sometimes I think it's an economic thing, but the other – you know, the other inequity is that I still have to worry about being out late. I worry about – you know, if I have a little – like I have a taillight that has a crack in it and the light is showing, I'm thinking, 'Oh jeez, just a matter of time before I get stopped and have to go through the routine.' So there are differences that are part – almost differences that we've become accustomed to – 'This is just the way life _is_' – that impact us daily, that make us think about race right away, because I just dealt with it at the bank, or I just dealt with it when I got stopped, or I just dealt with that because I went to a store and they were looking at me funny, or I just dealt with that because I was calling the doctor and they figured out that my name's [Hispanic surname] so they wanted to make sure that I could get up for an eight o'clock appointment, or I dealt with that with a neighbor because we were playing basketball, and it was late, it was ten o'clock, and you

know, *she* had to go to work. The assumption is 'You obviously don't.' You know, so there's – there are the race things that you deal with day in and day out. You know, there's the economic stuff and then there's race stuff that just makes our life different.

Program planning decisions that are controlled by whites can exclude people of color in very subtle ways. This response reveals the challenge people of color and whites face when working together in congregational settings to plan and organize programs. Because of vastly different life experiences that have disadvantaged people of color and because of their position in the racialized social system in the United States, it is easy for them to be overlooked or excluded because their priorities are different than the dominant group. This is another example of how whites are more influential as their preferences take precedence.

Informal, yet common practices In addition to the more formal structures of the congregation that tend to give preference to whites, there are informal ways—customs and practices that are more subtle and almost invisible that perpetuate the racialized social system and can reveal differential influence. One example of this is the subtle way people of color are singled out to speak on behalf of other minorities. People of color also describe the experience of being asked to be a representative for an unnamed nonwhite collective and to speak on behalf of it. "What do 'you people' think about that?" Whites are never asked to speak on behalf of *all* whites; rather a white person is given the privilege of speaking for him/ herself. We will look at two examples here. The first is a cross-racial exchange in which a black man is asked to explain black behavior. The second example (from a different interview) reveals how having to 'represent' the minority and give an opinion for the collective is both draining for the person of color and it is misguided, assuming that one person can give *the* opinion for all minorities.

I: [B--], one of the things you said to me before we actually started was that you've been a member of this church a long time and when you came it was a predominantly white church, that it's changed. Talk a little bit more about that.

W-M: Well, I'm trying to count for it. Well, we had people here that didn't want to be interracial, so they left. They were old-time members. Some of them live around here, but, you know, they disappear on you. So that's just one thing. Uh, all the rentals, or one thing or another, changed things. *Why would they have moved here – blacks, Danny?* [asking a black man to speak for all blacks]

POC-M: (spoken softly)--the rent.

W-M: Cost, or school, or what?

POC-F: Might have been just the neighborhood.

W-M: Hm?

POC-F: It might have been just the neighborhood.

The white man is trying to understand why blacks have moved into the neighborhood near the church and he turns to a black man and asks him to speak on behalf of others. In the setting where this occurred, it appeared to be an innocent question asked in a very natural way. But consider the subtle racism in the exchange. The white man would not generally be asked a similar question about why whites act in a particular way.

In the next example, a person of color describes being asked to represent a nonwhite minority and what he considers a ludicrous expectation that he even could speak on behalf of all nonwhites.

POC-M: Um, we're always representing, you know, always representing the minority. If we're anywhere close to a majority pool we have – we will be called on to represent, and that gets old.

I: Instead of being able to speak for just yourself you have to speak for others?

POC-M: Yeah, when's the last time someone asked you, 'Hey, what do you think white people think about this?'

I: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

POC-M: You know, it's given; I mean it's like everybody knows what white people think about that I guess, but we want to know what non-whites think, and there's a lot of non-white folks that don't think like me, or that I don't think like them.

These examples serves as subtle reminders that a person of color is viewed as different and never quite belongs in the congregation in the same way that a white person does. This is not a formal structural aspect of institutional racism but it is a common practice, albeit informal, that serves to maintain whites in positions of superiority while reinforcing a subtle inferiority on people of color.

Race-based privilege is revealed in who has more influence within the functioning of these congregations and in whose preferences count. Whites' ways of organizing and planning for worship and music often take precedence over nonwhites; white priorities in terms of programming and process often take precedence over nonwhites; whiteness is the assumed norm. As we will see, the assumption of white superiority is manifested also in how leadership is handled within the congregations, how information is shared about organizational processes, and in how accountability is structured.

Institutional racism as seen through leadership structures

Leadership is an important aspect within any organization. How decisions are made and how leaders are selected, developed and utilized reveals something about what is valued by those within the organization. Many participants in this research have described that the power structures in all three congregations are still predominantly white despite the racial make-up of the congregations being racially mixed.

White leadership easily perpetuated This is revealed in the process for leadership selection. White leadership perpetuates more white leadership in very subtle ways. The data show that whites often do not consider or think much about race when making decisions and this can lead to maintaining the status quo. Whites are often not aware of

the impact of their own race nor do they think about the impact on nonwhites during decision-making. This relates to the assumption of whiteness as the norm.

> W-F: Well, one of the, one of the things, well, I guess one of the things that I see pretty clearly is we don't think about the... race when we are making decisions. And so, uhh, it really does seem to me that we have perpetuated a white leadership, by just doing things that way, and--- and successive leadership comes from white person to white person and we just haven't thought that that's even a process we've chosen. And one that is pretty well set--- firmly--- and so to, to change that with consideration for people of color is, I think, going to be a very *different* way of making decisions.

White leadership is perpetuated almost unconsciously just by doing things the way they have always been done; decisions are considered and made without thought of race and its implications.

Obstacles to nonwhite leadership   Even when a congregation wants to confront this perpetuation of white leadership through revisions in their recruiting and nominating processes, particular challenges have to be faced and obstacles overcome. First, the data collected through participant observation and through interviews reveal that it is not a common experience for whites to submit themselves to persons of color in positions of leadership. This can create dissonance, uncertainty, and hesitation. Second, as we have seen, people of color are often reluctant to assume leadership roles because they assume or fear it will be a waste of their time.

> W-M: ---one of the legacies of racism is that people of color tend not to step up to the plate or have inferiorities sewn into them, the challenge of having them lead and lead white people is quite huge really.
>
> I: Mm-hmm.
>
> W-M: For you and I, I think a big challenge for white people is, 'okay, is there a dentist, a doctor, a lawyer, a pastor, a counselor, who I will submit myself to in a significant way,' or you might even say intimate way, like doctor or dentist, 'that I would intentionally choose?' That's not our experience. Our experience is *to serve a person of color*, to tutor them or something like that, but to put ourselves under their authority as in preacher or elder or – like in this church... or in other things. That's where we tend to go, 'oh, now wait a minute. Maybe they're not competent,' or whatever. [chuckles]
>
> I: Mm-hmm.

> W-M: 'They don't speak my language. I'm not comfortable with that kind of stuff.' So that's a big challenge.

Because of the legacy of white control, sometimes people of color are reluctant to step forward and take on leadership roles because they feel their contribution won't be valued or their voice won't be heard.

> POC-M: I think a lot of that has to do with the structure. There are some of us that prefer not to be part of the status quo structure, so you know, if you're going to invite me to be part of a leadership deal but basically all I do is go to meetings, um, and I don't have much of a voice there, then why should I be part of that?

Even when a congregation works intentionally to have multiracial leadership, they face challenges in recruiting and maintaining people of color as leaders.

> POC-F...getting people of color to participate in some things is like pulling teeth. We have to, in some of our job postings, we state openly that we would prefer or we will only hire a person of color. Sometimes when we do diaconal and elder nominations we say we have so many spots open, but whatever number of these spots are slotted for people of color, because we are intentional about getting a racial balance in our leadership and on our staff. See, and there again, I think because we look multicultural, but there's nothing happening underneath on the foundational levels of this church, is why we look multicultural on Sunday morning, but when it comes to ministries, leadership, staff, for whatever reason people of color aren't there; they won't step up to the plate.

This difficulty of finding nonwhites willing to assume leadership within the congregation can be caused either by whites' unwillingness to relinquish control and submit themselves to the authority of people of color. Or it can be caused by the reluctance of people of color who are unwilling to step forward and serve as leaders because they fear their contributions won't be valued and they will waste their time.

Institutional racism as seen through access to information and control of resources

Another important component of institutional racism is analyzing who has access to information and who has the ability to use resources to achieve desired purposes. In

the context of the congregations studied there are indications of differential access to information based on race and therefore differential control of resources as well.

Knowing 'the system' Knowing the system or process to get something accomplished and/or to take action in an institutional setting is an issue of power. The data show that predominantly white churches function differently than churches that are predominantly black or nonwhite. Knowing the 'system' is critically important in a white church if a person wants to make something happen.

> W-M: Well, here's a way to understand it. In the black church, still today, and particularly in Grand Rapids, the way you get things done and the locus of authority is in the pastor. It's relational, in fact even the way black people speak about going to church, they talk about 'going to so and so's church.' And so how do you get things done in the black church? The pastor is sort of chief of the tribe, and he might do that sensitively or more autocratically, but – so I'm not making a judgment about that person so much as just, that's the way things happen there. And it's still true. If you want to get anything done in the black church you have to go to the pastor, or his assistant ... And in the white church you have to know the system; you have to know the process and you have to know what the personnel policy manual says, and dot, dot, dot, dot. So   black people are excluded just because our system is set up white...I don't know if I'd call it Christian Reformed, but it's certainly white. So it's not so much who you know, it's, 'Do you know the process?' And so black people will get cut out of stuff all the time or their proposal won't get to the table or whatever, because they didn't do it right. Sometimes we catch it and say, 'forget the process,' or... explain the process, or... whatever.

Who knows the process or system and who does not is an issue of power. Beyond just knowing the process or system to get something accomplished within the congregation is observing who knows how to access resources (and then who actually does access them) and who controls the resources within the congregation.

Organizational processes In all three congregations respondents described that budgeting, allocation, expenditures, and management of resources reflect preferences being given to whites. Some respondents of color describe that these organizational processes within the congregation excludes them.

> POC-M: Well, you know, the whole budgeting process is one big hidden racism, because the process, the numbers – it's not so much the numbers as it is kind of the way it's presented, you know. You could easily get lost and either you go, 'yeah,' or you don't know. So there hasn't been an attempt to be inclusive in the budgeting process, you know, to take the time to explain. You know, 'Here's this line-item. This is how much we allocated to it, this is why we did it, these are

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the people who had input into it,' you know, or even backing it up before that; saying, 'We're starting the budget process. These are the folks that have responsibility over this part of the budget. Any questions, any ideas, you know, feed them to this person who will take them to that group. They'll deal with it, that way you'll see what they recommend after they make a recommendation they can see it in the line-item. But some of the process explanation, the 'why we do' and the 'how we do' aren't evident. I mean, you get a budget sheet and you go, 'uh, oh, okay.' You're not part of the process. 'Well, why isn't there money for...?' 'Well, you – we voted on the budget, and we approved the budget. You didn't speak up.' So I think some of that – we've had times too where we've felt like the executive committee of the church was making decisions. Well, you know, they have the right to do it, but there's no minority representation on that committee.

This response reveals that the how's and why's of particular processes are not obvious to all members. Conscious deliberation to guarantee that all members understand how these processes work in the congregational settings is often absent. Being unfamiliar with organizational processes that involve financial resources can lead people of color to feel excluded within the organization. This can be seen through preference being given to whites in the acquisition and control of resources and in how priorities are decided.

Control of programs and resources within congregations In this study people of color articulately claim that whites need to maintain control of programs and of resources and one obvious way is their needing to manage the money. Assumptions are made that whites know how to manage money and at times they are given responsibility without having to earn it. Furthermore, respondents of color describe that the priorities of nonwhite people are not as respected as are the priorities of whites.

> POC-M: Well, you know, for me, the power and structure – it's not necessarily power and structure, it's the money. It's who controls the money, because whoever controls the money controls what happens, and so probably the worst that we've suffered is when we have someone who is not white in a position of authority and that person is reporting out – we have a tendency right now in the environment we have, we have a tendency to say – and I don't know that we actually say it, but this is the reality – it is good for someone who is not white to get a person who is white to oversee, so that they can make the money, so they can account for money, so they can – because that way it will be received. If the person of color is handling money or basically overseeing a budget, generally they can't.

> I: That's the assumption.

> POC-M: It's kind of the assumption, so what it does is it really does limit people from getting involved, because the inadequacy, the lack of equity, is seen very clearly. You know, if you're in there long enough you see that so and so can spend money whenever he feels like it and turn the

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receipts in. So and so needs to make sure he gets it approved so that, you know – and so those kinds of issues tend to have a severe impact on involvement and how the thing is set up. The other thing is that the allocation of money brings priority with it, and so if priority is a non-white priority, if there's no money it won't happen, or it will happen under duress. And so I think we tend to…our structure at this point is not as giving to the non-white person. It's much easier to get this done, get something done, <u>through</u> a white person.

I: It almost sounds like there's not a trust. You haven't said that, but that's what's subtly implied here is that 'We don't trust a non-white as much as we trust a white,' in a subtle way.

POC-M: Right.

Among whites there is little recognition that white control is the assumed norm.

Yet racism that appears hidden to whites (i.e. 'this is just the way we do things here') can feel like overt discrimination to people of color. It is striking that people of color express that their requests may or may not be given priority and that in order to get something done in the congregation it is easier to do it *through* a white person.

In another conversation about how race affects a person's involvement in the congregation, a respondent of color articulates her experience of observing whites usually wanting to have things done their way without a sense of mutuality.

POC-F: They become controllers. The control factor is just real prevalent. I rarely ever detect the attitude, 'you know, I'm at that point where I realize you have a lot to give me. I have a lot to learn from you. Are you teaching any classes here? Is there any way that I can be a part of something that would give me more of you?' The total opposite of that is true. 'We're going to have this class, we're going to have that class, we're going to have this support group, we're going to do that, and I'm going to teach it, and you're going to learn, and then we'll all be good happy Christians.'

I: Mm-hmm.

POC-F: And sometimes it's frustrate – you know, I'll do something public and people will approach me and say how blessed they are and how much they really benefited from it, but it's sometimes almost in shock.

I: That you could make such a contribution?

POC-F: Yeah. And those are the types of things…that's the kind of stuff I hear.

The experience that people of color describe is that many whites assume they are to be in control—whites are to be the givers and people of color are to be the receivers. Whites are to be the leaders and decision-makers while people of color are to be the followers.

People of color describe that whites often operate from a 'savior mentality' in their relationships with nonwhites. 'How can we help fix *your* problem?' or 'Can we help you people?' Another way to understand how whites maintain control in these congregations is to examine how they handle outreach or ministry to the poor. Unconscious assumptions about who is to serve and who is to *be* served perpetuate stereotypes and prevent people from examining the issue of unearned white privilege. People of color describe the experience of being treated with paternalism and how whites seem to have a general 'fix-it' mentality when they first begin interacting with people of color.   Whites often assume what people of color need without asking them. In an interview with a woman of color, she describes working on a mission statement for an outreach job within the church and the assumptions made by a white person about the black people in the neighborhood being 'broken.'

> POC-F: One person that looked at [the] mission statement added this line; they said that, um, 'we want to help broken people and bring them to wholeness.' And one of the things that I'm learning in this analysis training, but also in other trainings is that the brokenness occurs for white people *and* people of color. It occurs for everybody, so we aren't just about helping those broken people down there that we want to help out of the gutter, so the mission statement [now] says something like, 'we're working in such a way that the Holy Spirit brings to wholeness [church] members and members of the neighborhood, so that when we work together with each other, there is a mending if you will, a healing of *us*, all of us; the folks in the church and the folks outside the church.

Being able to acknowledge brokenness as a common human experience without tying it to race begins to confront the paternalism that often is woven into the outreach work the congregations undertake.

Some whites do recognize that they have been in the role of the helper and how this can reinforce inequities and can maintain uncomfortable power imbalances. But feeling the discomfort of such a situation and knowing how to change it are two different things.

> W-F: Well, I would say we are, I think we have a lot of ministries where we have been the helper, the fixer. And, um, it seems like every time we get involved in outreach ministries, it's to people who are, have less money. That's a lot of what we provide is money, food, tutoring, and that, right away, puts us in with a person of color who doesn't have money and education, and so then we have, we have the power. *We hold the control.* So, ahh, and I think it's been an uncomfortable position. I don't think [our church] has enjoyed that position, and I don't think we've done real well in it. Like I don't think, I think relationally with the people we've been working with, it's never, I wouldn't say it's never been good. So there's a, I think there's a, a desire to do something else, without maybe knowing what that might be. But I think that some of that discontent has, umm, encouraged people to do this analysis to maybe be able to look at things in a new way, a different way. And you realize when you are doing helping ministries that you never, you never make any progress. Nothing ever changes.
>
> I: So you seem to perpetuate…
>
> W-F: Yeah, you see the system. People just still don't have jobs. People still need food ten years from now. The same people. You think, well, what have we done to help them? Kept them alive in their misery. So there's a, there's a certain element of, of, um, disappointment, that, that we don't know how to, how to work with this and make anything better. So…

The antiracism analysis has helped participants begin to examine the elements of institutional racism and begin to recognize how race privilege leads to white control of plans, decisions, funding, and programs. Gradually participants have realized that one of the missing pieces in all this that could potentially confront these inequities is the lack of accountability to people of color. In another interview a respondent describes not only how church programs are run by and controlled by white people with white priorities dominating, but also how this often occurs with no accountability to a community of color.

> POC-F: Most of these programs are run by white people. Most of these programs have no accountability to a community of color at this point. Um, yeah, and most of these programs report back to the predominantly white structures of [our church], be it deacons, elders, or council.
>
> I: So does that mean that the whites in the congregation control the resources primarily too?

POC-F: Yes...They *have* the resources and they *control* the resources, mm-hmm.

These responses have highlighted how resources are managed and controlled *within* congregations in ways that favor whites.

Control of programs and resources between congregations Among some of the churches in the antiracism initiative there has also been ongoing conversation about forming a partnership between them for shared ministry. Next we will examine how two of the congregations have managed and allocated resources *between* them for joint ministry and outreach. Extensive dialogue has occurred between these congregations and has led to decisions about the need to go beyond doing pulpit exchange or joint antiracism work to include their common desire to do outreach into their respective communities and how to assist one another in those ventures. However there has been confusion about what the partnership between these two congregations should look like. There is evidence of a lack of understanding about what partnership might actually mean particularly whenever the conversation turns to economic considerations and the sharing of resources.

One of the churches studied has been the recipient of a large grant to establish an internship program for recent seminary graduates to gain ministry experience. They have recognized that one of the other churches could provide valuable inner-city ministry experience for their interns. However the inner city church has not been involved as an equal partner in all the discussions about how to utilize the internship program for the mutual benefit of all and they have not received any financial resources for the work they have done. The well-resourced church has not provided financial resources to the inner city church for the service they are providing to the internship program. The assumption

is this poor church will be glad to receive additional personnel without any cost to their budget.

Excerpts from interviews with members from each congregation describing their understanding of partnership reveal a lack of understanding about how control of resources can have a damaging effect on partnership.

W-M: But now take the [interns]. I mean we want them to be involved in the ministry at [----
Church]. Now one of the reasons for that is we want to have a partnership with an inner-city, people of color community.

I: Mm-hmm.

W-M: So when that goes through the funnel – through the final, 'okay, let's do it,' that piece will be decided in light of that ideal that we get heavily invested in an inner-city church. Uh, so it's not that you add a new piece into the structure, or you know, a little side group, but that the regular channels have that as part of the, I don't know, part of the reasons why we do what we do.

I: Mm-hmm.

W-M: Uh, so I mean for me to, now next week I'm doing lunch with [a leader from the inner city church] and that too is an attempt to be...uh, how would I put that? Well, at least to be in each other's lives. I want to hear from him how he would like our [interns] to work there. I would like to have him hear how we would like, you know, [their] church to be involved with us, so...

I: [Have they] been at the meetings when you're talking with the [interns] and planning their work?

W-M: No.

I: So they're not there. So, it's like you will offer them an [intern] or several...

W-M: Well no, it's not quite--- There, it's [inner city church leader] and myself and we have been in conversation, because we have in the past – you know, we have tutors that joined their tutors and we tutor kids from the[ir] neighborhood... And so they said, 'Can we work together and make use of your [interns]?' And I told [him] at one point that we had this windfall (speaking of the grant) and so we had these people and that they needed ministry and that one of the things that we thought [their church] could be extremely helpful in was to provide inner-city experience that they don't get in the seminary. So now, uh, so what my – our committee, the [internship] committee has asked is that I go and talk to [him] and say, 'Now ... what we're going to have is we have three arenas in which these [interns] will work... and we want them to have experience in pastoral care, and worship, and outreach, and in congregational life ...so we have these parallel arenas so that they can get the kinds of experiences that they need and they can be used and be really – not just, you know, where they're not so much a burden as a real asset... So now what [their church] has to do is to tell us...

This exchange reveals a sincere attempt on the part of whites to dialogue and be involved in the lives of people of color but there is little recognition of how whites are still in

control of the resources (financial and human), of how whites are the ones making the primary decisions and the assumption is that this arrangement will 'serve' the people of color by giving them something that they cannot provide for themselves.

A respondent of color from the other church describes the experience of working toward a partnership in very different ways. He expresses frustration that whites control the resources and they are not equitably shared. He expresses concern that the partnership needs to involve more than the exchange of money but also include the joining together of members from both congregations to work together on projects.

> POC-M: But don't call me your sister...don't see me all the time... and you can't slide me into your budget. And you got all them rich folks out there. Come on, man. All them educators, all those great people. I ain't – my people ain't hardly – you know, they pay their tithes, but when they tithe it only adds up to about thirty thousand a year. Man, how come I always got to beg?

> I: Yeah, it's hard to have to beg all the time.

> POC-M: No, no, no. This – no, but this is – I accept the ministry that God calls to me, because God has been making our budget work, but if you love me and you know that your budget...and you know that you can squeeze a little bit more out of your people, for ten thousand American dollars – and that ain't anything but peanuts; you spend that much up in stamps in a year. You can't give a love offering man, and say, 'Let me stick them in the budget; let me confirm that to the church that they are part of us.'

> I: Mm-hmm. What happens when you say this to people at [_____ Church]; the power structure at [_____ Church]? Do they hear it when you say this, or have you not ever said it?

> POC-M: No, I've said it...

> I: You have said it?

> POC-M: I have said it.

> I: And what's their response?

> POC-M: ... Uh, 'no, we can't do it.'

> I: Why not? What do they – what's the reason given?

> POC-M: They didn't give me a good reason. Because it, you know, the budget. And I know; I made sure – now the first year I can understand, because the budget had already been passed. The second year, you see what I'm saying, uh, uh, I caught it before the budget. Couldn't do it. And then come back here where the deacons said they'd just take an offering for you. Hmmmmm.

> I: Now again, it still feels like crumbs off the table, it's just that instead of it being part of the system...

POC-M: [A different white church] is our mother – or used to be our mother church before we became a [separate] church – give us ten thousand. They're committed to us.

I: Do they still do it?

POC-M: They still do it; they're doing it. Now how long it's going to last I don't know, but my point is they've been committed and they ain't got no rich folks up there. I bet the average person only gets about forty, forty thousand tops, the majority of them. But they believe that God called...has ordained this relationship. And I don't even go up there as much. ... But I'm sitting at the same table with you.

I: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. So that's another example of hidden racism perhaps.

POC-M: You better believe it. You better – it's power, white privilege....
Okay. I just used that as a great example, because when we first come together about buying a house and helping out and stuff like this here, that's caring. Or mobilizing a team of some of your peoples to really work here; serving the community, and stuff like this. That never happened.

I: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. So do you have a sense that programs and structures within the congregation....within the partnerships between the churches...are controlled by white people rather than controlled by people of color?

POC-M: Well, we don't have a table anymore...see the reason I can say that is they control the table. Here's why I say that. That's all [----] wants to do and he's made it plain to me, and I'm saying, 'Wait a minute man, this partnership is going to be bigger than this, than antiracism.' That's the only thing that's going to hold us together? Man, I'm not – look here, we're down here dealing with our own racism in our own church. Go find somebody else for your pet project; you see what I'm saying. It's got to be bigger than that. It's got to be bigger than on Sunday nights; changing pulpits. No, no, I want something tangible. Let's buy a house together, let's do something together other than fight injustice just from, from...you know. So I got people down here that I got to minister to too, and so I need help ministering, you know. Do you see what I'm saying?

I: I think so, yeah.

POC-M: And here's the deal,...My people suffer... So I'm up against something tremendously more challenging than they are— to even be in the war of antiracism, when I got social issues, I got a majority of people around here, man, they haven't even got a place to stay yet... alcoholic and stuff like that, you know what I'm saying. That concerns me; ministering to the peoples, you know what I'm saying, but I also understand that I have an obligation within the CRC.

This dialogue reveals a number of things. Because of racialized social structures, this nonwhite congregation is dependent on outside sources of funding (primarily the charity of external, predominantly white congregations) to be able to survive financially. However the nonwhite congregation desires more than just money from the white congregation but there is a lack of clarity about what their mutual interests are and a lack of understanding about how to work jointly on projects of mutual concern. They dream

about working together in outreach and ministry in their neighborhood; they desire a tangible project that they could work on jointly rather than being seen as a 'pet project' of the white church. They want the partnership between them to include financial resources but to go beyond merely an exchange of money.

When we explore institutional racism we find that there is differential access to information based on race, in terms of knowing the system for taking action, in knowing how particular organizational processes work in the functioning of the institution, and in controlling the programs and resources within and between congregations.

Institutional racism as seen through differential accountability processes

We have recognized institutional racism in the formal and informal influence that whites wield in many aspects of the institution, through leadership structures that privilege whites over people of color, and through differential access to information and control of resources. Now we will examine how institutional racism is seen in the ways accountability is handled within the congregations. In-depth interviews with church leaders reveal that different expectations and different standards exist for people of color and for white people within these congregations. We can see three examples of this in these congregations. First, different standards can lead to some people being set up to succeed and some being set up to fail. People of color describe that the sharing of economic resources within the congregations is not equitable which prevents them at times from accomplishing what they set out to accomplish. Second, people of color describe that more is expected of them in giving an account of their work on the congregation's behalf and they have to justify themselves more in committee meetings

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and in other congregational settings. People of color describe that they are scrutinized more than are whites. Third, when mistakes do happen, the mistakes made by people of color are disproportionately remembered and held against them.

Being set up to succeed or fail In the first example, a person of color describes the experience of being set up to fail through inadequate financial resources which also affects the time, organization, and accomplishment of planned activities.

> POC-M: I was just thinking about the fact that there's a sense that...the non-white person, I have a sense that we're generally set up to fail, and the reason I say that is that our programs generally are funded less and since the funding is not quite there, we're scrambling more, we have more loose ends.

> I: Mm-hmm, have to beg more.

> POC-M: Have to beg more and just have to be surviving more, so if I have a well-funded program here and I'm barely making it here...an example would be, I have forty kids to take to camp, but I really didn't have – you know, the money wasn't allocated for that, so now I've got to scramble and try and write a proposal or grant or something for camp. If I end up in a deficit after it's all said and done, I don't manage things right. But we kind of knew, because we've done this for years, that this group of kids is going to go to camp and that we should put money in the budget for camp, but we don't do it. But yet over here in this program that's white run, we fund it. So the lack of equity tends to be mismanagement. 'These folks manage money great. Look it. They even have a few dollars left over.' Well, some of it is just – and I want to say it's ignorance, but it's...I don't know what it is. It seems like it's ignorance. And that's not always the case, okay. These are examples of times when you feel like, 'man, we could have just avoided that whole deal by simply allocating more funds to that, because we've done this every year.' So some of it is that-- yeah, the lack of funding, because really money is power and privilege.

Lack of adequate funding for priorities or programs organized and implemented by people of color leaves them at a disadvantage and sometimes they are held personally responsible for what is more likely a structural issue.

POC have to give more justification and are under more scrutiny People of color describe that more is expected of them and they experience a different level of accountability than do whites within the congregations. They are expected to give more of an account of their actions, their proposals, and even their suggestions than are whites. Some respondents feel they have to give more justification, argue and explain in detail more, and put everything on paper in order to get what they want.

POC-M: So that is the same thing we're dealing with here; checks and balances, because we're having more things to address there presently rather than long term, so I had to struggle with getting food pantries open, getting clothes banks here, getting outreach here, and stuff like that. All they wanted to do was to preach the word and evangelize, but there's more to life. We wanted the ministry – my vision was to minister to the holistic of a person. So that was a struggle in the beginning. And then understanding his thought, his white thought. Uh, let me put it another way. The way they were trained in these schools; like A-B-C-D-E, you know what I'm saying. Everything had to be on paper, stuff of this nature.

I: In an ordered way, is that what you mean? The way the whites think it's got to be boom, boom, boom. [hands indicating one, two, three]

POC-M: Well, right, uh, keep it to the level. But life is not to the level. You see what I'm saying? Uh, when I came in here, I said now look... I said, 'now, tell me where this white cow is at, and I won't touch your white cow. What's sacred here to you, because I know everybody's got something sacred, so show me the white cow and I won't touch it.' Because I knew their mindset, and so I always had to confront and fight with them. When I left out of the council meeting, I left there exhausted, but the white guy could get what he wanted without any long out discussion, but I've got to tell how, when, where, and all this stuff. And he didn't have to put anything on paper, but I had to put something on paper.

I: So you're saying that as a black man you had to justify things to a greater extent than white people did.

POC-M: That's right...

Some feel that they are under the scrutinizing gaze of whites who expect them to give a detailed account of their decisions and actions. People of color have to spend more time justifying themselves than do whites.

I: What's it been like for you as a person of color to be in this church, which as you said is ninety percent white? What's the experience been like?

POC-M: It's been, um, it's been interesting, because, um – it's been, it's been hard in some ways because there are people who I feel like are like right on top of me, constantly looking at what I'm doing in the youth ministry. Uh, some parents who I know weren't like that with other ones.

I: Other youth leaders?

POC-M: Other youth leaders. And so it makes me wonder, is it just because it's my first year, is it because all of a sudden there's a new guy who's [a person of color] who's going to be dealing with my children so I need to watch exactly what he does and what he says? That could be far off, but it could also not be far off, so it just makes me wonder how things would be if I wasn't..., if I was white, if my name was John Vander something, Minister to Youth. Would there be such a, a...would I have some of these parents who are white looking over my shoulder to see exactly what I'm doing step-by-step? So, um, in that sense it's been hard. It's also been hard because, um, as far as being in staff meetings or stuff like that, um, I don't feel like I have the...enough of a voice to make a difference. But that could be because I'm still new. I am the newest one, I'm young. It may have nothing to do with race, it just may have to do with me being – feeling like I'm still the new guy, and I'm just young. I mean, everybody else is a lot older than me, so I'm the 'young gun' and I'm the new guy, so...I haven't been here that long. I mean, I'm only going on my second year. Maybe in three or four years it will be different, so, you know, we'll see.

This respondent expresses strong feelings of frustration at feeling scrutinized more than white youth leaders have been but then almost discounts his concern by stating this may have nothing to do with race. Such a statement is a common racial storyline often given by those who struggle to acknowledge the power race has in shaping institutions as well as life experiences. It is fascinating that any given respondent may make a strong statement about race one minute and then contradict it in the next. As we will see in the next chapter, many white people and some people of color seek alternate explanations for particular racial situations claiming, 'This has nothing to do with race.'

What is noteworthy is that people of color describe a dual reality they experience which is a sharp contrast. On the one hand, they feel as though they are invisible within the congregation (don't have much of a voice) and on the other hand, they feel like they are under almost a scrutinizing beam of a microscope having to justify their actions and having to explain everything in more detail than do whites.

Mistakes remembered disproportionately   Occasionally mistakes are made when making financial decisions or organizing a program or allocating resources. Assumptions about who is responsible and how to handle these mistakes reveal differential accountability. Respondents of color describe that their mistakes are disproportionately remembered and they are treated differently when financial mistakes happen. Here the respondent asserts that there is, in effect, a double standard.

> POC-M: Now, I must admit though that at [our church] some of those trusting relationships ended up in chaos. We've had some mismanagement of stuff that people have been trusted with and they've mismanaged, so that hasn't helped any. You know, that doesn't help then to have people give trust, because...
>
> I: Has that mismanagement happened with both white and non-white, or is it usually one or the other and then that skews the way people think of it in the future?

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POC-M: I think we've had mismanagement – in fact, yes, mismanagement has happened both ways, however, the ones that we accent or the ones that we hold to light are the mismanagements that have occurred with non-whites. I think the mismanagements that occur with whites are kind of part of the system. You know, we decide to buy new computers even though we just bought new computers two years ago. That's mismanagement of funds, but it's systematic mismanagement of funds, so the individual that proposed it...

I: So it's not personal.

POC-M: No, it's part of the system.

I: They're not held personally liable.

R: No, because...

I: For bad decisions I mean.

R: Yeah, but if a person decides to...I don't know, secure a bus that we end up not using; 'Ooh, see? They can't manage money.' So there's not equity in the way people perceive or judge the outcomes.

This respondent is admitting that whites and nonwhites have made mistakes in the past which have had financial repercussions for the congregation but he feels that mistakes made by nonwhites are highlighted and remembered as personal, individual mistakes whereas mistakes made by whites are 'part of the system' and whites are not held personally liable in the same way a nonwhite person is. There is inequity in the way these mistakes are perceived and remembered. This is another example of differential accountability processes.

Summary

This chapter demonstrates and makes more concrete some of the theoretical assertions about institutional racism by examining how racial phenomena are structured in the contemporary settings of three congregations. Specifically the data illustrate how particular mechanisms and practices, some of which are overt and some of which are hidden produce racial inequality within these congregations. This is seen in the articulate descriptions the respondents give of their lived-experience of race and racism in these

congregations. The data also show how people of color have experienced differential access to power based on race and how they perceive this to lead to a differential distribution of resources within the congregation. The findings suggest that power given to certain groups eventually leads to privileges and resources flowing to some but not others.

In this chapter, we have considered differential access to power by examining who has influence within the congregations and whose preferences count in the primary functions of the congregation, including programming, worship, and outreach. By paying attention to voices that have usually been silent, it is possible to develop eyes to see how institutional racism is operative in these congregational settings. We have examined how leadership is determined and who has authority to make decisions. We have examined who has access to information and how that affects the control of resources. And finally we have explored how accountability is handled within the structures of the congregations.

By drawing upon the perspective of those who have been silenced in the past, we are able to see how race-based privilege is revealed in who has more influence within the functioning of these congregations. People of color describe how white ways of organizing and planning for worship and music often take precedence over nonwhites *and* white priorities in terms of programming and process often take precedence over nonwhites. Whiteness is an assumed norm and this is seen in comments made by both whites and people of color. This finding has theoretical validity in that it has been identified in the literature on racialized societies (Frankenberg 1993; Bonilla-Silva 2003) and it has been confirmed through multiple data collections via participant observation

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and in-depth interviews. This has been also verified through member checking in follow-up conversations with team leaders and interviewed team members.

People of color describe that they are marginalized and their voice is not heard. They experience token inclusion or if they are willing to become active, the ones who do are often over-used and over-worked. The difficulty of finding nonwhites willing to assume leadership within the congregation can be caused either by whites' unwillingness to relinquish control and submit themselves to the authority of people of color. Or it can be caused by the reluctance of people of color who are unwilling to step forward and serve as leaders because they fear their contributions won't be valued and they will waste their time. These findings were validated through member checking with team leaders and in several follow-up conversations with participants.

In the context of the congregations studied there are also indications of differential access to information based on race and therefore differential control of resources as well. In all three congregations respondents described that the budgeting, allocation, expenditure, and management of resources reflect preferences being given to whites. This can be caused in subtle ways by whites knowing more about the organizational processes needed to get something accomplished and because nonwhites have not had these systems explained to them and this leaves them at a significant disadvantage. The findings in this study suggest that race privilege leads to white control of plans, decisions, funding, and programs and there is a lack of accountability to people of color.

Not only is there a lack of accountability *to* people of color by whites but we have seen that there are different expectations and different standards of accountability *for*

people of color within these congregations. Nonwhites describe that more is expected of them in giving an account of their work on the congregation's behalf. This finding was validated by member checking in all three congregations. People of color have to justify themselves more in meetings and in other congregational settings and they are more scrutinized than are whites. When mistakes do happen, the mistakes made by people of color are disproportionately remembered and held against them whereas mistakes by whites are treated as part of the system and rarely are whites held personally liable. These findings reveal how the structures of the congregations operate to favor whites over nonwhites despite mixed race congregational composition and how this perpetuates institutional racism.

A fascinating aspect of this study has been the gradual shift that occurred in the inquiry during the process of the research. In the beginning it was assumed that examining institutional racism would be fairly straightforward. However after several months of data collection and in-depth conversation it became clear that a striking finding was emerging—much of what was being explored appears to be hidden to white people. Most whites cannot see how race privilege is played out in their lives *and* in their congregations except in the most dramatic and obvious ways. It is invisible to them. For most people of color in this study, they express disbelief that it is not obvious to the whites who hold power and privilege in the functioning of the institution. This finding was validated through peer review and is consistent with the literature on racialization. As a result of this finding, we determined that the roots of institutional racism required deeper exploration—in particular, an exploration into how and why racism is hidden and how racism is internalized.

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In the next chapter we examine internalized racism—how messages of racial superiority or inferiority are absorbed and how this operates to support and reinforce institutional racism to maintain the status quo. We will examine the subtle, often unconscious assumptions people make about race and how these internalized messages—the unconscious rules for making rules—uphold institutional racism. We will consider the language and rhetorical positions whites and people of color assume as they describe their experience of race in the congregational setting and what this reveals about internalized racism as the foundation which keeps institutional racism intact.

Chapter 6- Lost Opportunities:
The Impact of Internalized Racism

To be white in America is to not have to think about it.
from *For Whites Only* (1988)

Understanding Internalized Racism

It was the innocence and sincerity of the question that captured my attention.

"Are you all saying that you don't know that you are white?" The young black woman

leaned forward in her chair, looked around the room with a puzzled look on her face and

waited for a response. The people she looked at began squirming in their seats, coughing,

looking around at each other with an uncertainty about how to answer the question. First

a middle-aged white man responded, 'Ah, well. We know we are white.' as if to say, 'Of

course, we are not blind. We <u>can</u> see each other.' The next person to respond himmed

and hawed and couldn't quite get a sentence out. The third person who attempted a

response turned the question back on the young black woman, 'Why do you ask? Do you

know that you are black?' The young black woman got wide-eyed and animated, 'Oh,

yes! I know I'm black. I feel it everyday at school. I feel like I stand out and I go to a

mostly black high school.' This conversation happened at one of the antiracism team

meetings between several churches and the topic of discussion for the evening was white

privilege. All but one in the room that evening were white, of European descent. The

one person of color in the room for this discussion was the youngest person present, the

only black person present and a female in a room of mostly middle-aged white men. The

fact that she spoke up and asked the question in the first place was striking because of the

courage required to even ask it in that setting. And the fact that those sitting there were

almost struck 'dumb' by the question was equally striking. This illustrates how for

some whites race functions almost unconsciously and it raises questions not just about white privilege but even more fundamental is the question of how people have come to understand what race means in this society—in these congregations. How do whites understand what whiteness means and what impact does this have on the functioning of their institutions? These questions are important because they reveal what people believe unconsciously and have internalized regarding race and racism.

In Chapter 5 we explored how institutional racism operates within the congregation by examining the *structures* of the congregation as revealed in some of the specific methods, practices and social relations that produce and reproduce racial inequality. We sought to expose how the dominant perspective ignores and even misrepresents the experience of nonwhite people in American society. Acknowledging the breath and depth of institutional racism within these congregations, as defined by people's lived experience, has been a difficult and demanding process for the participants in the antiracism initiative. Part of what makes this recognition difficult is that for most Americans much of our understanding of race/ racialization and how it functions within American society is unconscious and has been internalized in subtle ways (Jones 2000). A person's understanding of their position in society in terms of race, gender, and socio-economic status is developed gradually over time and happens by absorbing the many subtle cues a person receives as they live their lives day in and day out. Many cultural messages are given about a person's identity including their racial position in society (and in the church) and these are often accepted without our even acknowledging it.

In this chapter we will explore how racism has been internalized in both whites and people of color by examining the language respondents use and the rhetorical

positions they assume when describing their experience of race/racialization in their congregations. The language used and the rhetorical positions a person assumes are important because they reveal something about what the person believes, consciously and unconsciously, about race and racism. Internalized racism (either of superiority or of inferiority) is the result of multiple intersecting factors including cultural messages about race received through the family, the school, the media and other institutions (Barndt 1991). Becoming aware of and conscious of the tacit assumptions we hold is a necessary first step in the dismantling of racism. Without facing internalized racism, institutional racism cannot be confronted. However the findings of this study reveal not only the difficulty of gaining this consciousness but the persistent cultural forces that are subtly at work to maintain the status quo.

Scholars have documented that racism needs to be understood as different levels or as different manifestations. As described in Chapter 2, there is a growing literature on racism and racialization which acknowledges the interplay between these different levels of racism—institutional, individual (or personally-mediated), and internalized. Institutional racism is created, supported, and perpetuated by internalized racism, which has been acquired in subtle, insidious, and unconscious ways (Jones 2000; Barndt 1991).

The literature on internalized racism describes it as one result of continued racial segregation where whites and people of color live in relative isolation from one another. "The isolation of people of color can lead to internalized racism, whereby people internalize their lack of opportunities as self-blame" (Chavez 2002:84). In other words racism is not just an enemy outside which oppresses but it can also be an enemy within which gives us a false understanding of who we are. This happens when people of color

believe and accept many of the negative stereotypes prevalent in cultural messages about their racial identity (Bonilla-Silva 2003).

> Internalized racism is defined as acceptance by members of the stigmatized races of negative message about their own abilities and intrinsic worth. It is characterized by their not believing in others who look like them, and not believing in themselves. It involves accepting limitations to one's own full humanity, including one's spectrum of dreams, one's right to self-determination, and one's range of allowable self-expression. It manifests as an embracing of 'whiteness' (...stratification by skin tone within communities of color, and 'the white man's ice is colder' syndrome); self-devaluation (racial slurs as nicknames, rejection of ancestral culture...); and resignation, helplessness, and hopelessness (dropping out of school, failing to vote, and engaging in risky health practices) (Jones 2000:1213).

The literature on internalized racism does distinguish between that which has been internalized by people of color as racist oppression and that which has been internalized by whites as racist superiority. Whites hear repeated cultural messages about their presumed superiority (McIntosh 1998; Krieger 1999). This has deep and profound influences on how whites view themselves and on their assumptions about the abilities of people of color. It also has deep and profound influences on how people of color view themselves and on their assumptions about whites.

Internalized racist superiority can be defined as a complex socialization process that teaches white people to believe and accept superior societal definitions of self and to live out superior societal roles. When combined with the internalized racist oppression experienced by people of color, internalized racism supports and reinforces a kind of dance that helps maintain the race construct (Dias, Drew and Gardiner 2003). The antiracism training in which the congregations participated argues that internalized racism is an issue for all people, not just people of color.

> Racial identity in the United States is not shaped in a neutral environment. The identities of people of color form in response to racial oppression and the

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identities of whites form in response to racial superiority. These two identity dynamics manifest in a complex range of attitudes and behaviors that support and perpetuate the racist paradigm in this country. In order to work together to dismantle...racism, people of color and whites must understand how these identity dynamics operate in specific institutional settings, and devise strategies to overcome the barriers and oppression that are created by them (Dias, Drew and Gardiner 2003:1).

Two excerpts from the interviews demonstrate how these subtle, internalized messages about superiority and inferiority are evident in the congregations. The first is a black man speaking about his church and how it is viewed by those outside his congregation as not being good enough to be in the denomination. Notice that he seems to accept certain unconscious messages about the *presumed inferiority* of people of color when he says 'they ain't too smart' but then contradicts himself by saying, 'we're smart just like you are but we've got a stigma' on us because of race.

> POC-M: When you think of the CRC, and me being – I mean, don't take offense or nothing, but me being a black man in the CRC, you do feel the difference; different pressures and kind of like, 'you ain't good enough to be CRC.' I mean, this – I do feel this. Or like, you know, you know... okay, I know what [_____ Church] is, and those people down there, you know, they ain't too smart,' or whatever. Not 'too smart,' I don't want to say that, but, 'they have hard times,' and everybody here hasn't had hard times. I mean, we have – I mean, some of our black people, I mean, we're smart, we're smart just like you are. (Someone else agrees and says, That's right.") But we've got this stigma on this church, like, 'oh yeah, you know, that church down there is not safe,' and you know, I feel that in the CRC, because when I go visit other churches – (whispering) 'oh yeah, he's from [_____ Church], oh yeah,' you know.

This reveals something of the internal struggle the respondent experiences because certain messages about inferiority have been absorbed yet he's trying to counter those messages even in his own mind.

In the second example a person of color describes his experience of having to prove himself when working as a deacon in the church and a white male responds at first by trying to claim this may have nothing to do with race. But notice the subtle comment in which he assumes the person of color may not have the 'background' to handle the job. This is an example of unconscious *presumed superiority.*

I: [---], it looked like you were trying to say something.

POC-M: [laughs] I'm a deacon right now, and I remember when I was chair it did seem like you had to really make sure that you crossed your t's and dot your i's when it came to having reports and stuff, or if you did, if you did drop the ball, it's like, 'whooooa! You're doing such and such...!' You know, it was a *big*...it was a big, big thing. Now was it because of race? I don't know, but it does seem that way. You have to really...

POC-F: Deal with your p's and q's ??

POC-M: You've got to really – you've got to really be on it, because, man...

POC-F: [Unclear name] says you have to be on your p's and q's.

POC-M: Yeah, yeah, because man, you drop the ball and it's...and you hear about it forever. [laughs] You hear about it.

W-F: I know there were rumors that...

I: So it's not just like when it first happens; you hear about it weeks and months later?

POC-M: Oh yeah. You just hear about, 'well you know, such and such...' Yeah.

W-M: Well, would that be true if it was a white guy that they were trying to shape up? Or whoever's doing it; I don't know, I guess. Would they do it the same way if he didn't have the background, or do you think it's a little different?

POC-M: Background?

W-M: Yeah, I mean, you know, math or accounting, or whatever that goes into deaconship, or writing reports.

POC-M: I don't know. I don't have background in accounting or whatever. [laughs]

W-M: No, but are we getting away from this? I mean...

POC-M: Oh yeah; you're saying, if it was a white gentleman that had a good background do you think he would have the same...the same treatment? [unclear because he's interrupted by a white man]

W-M: Well, without a background, the guy that doesn't have the education, doesn't know anything about being a deacon or bookkeeping, and happens to be white. Wouldn't whoever be getting after him because of the same thing, or do you think they might pick more on you because they assume you don't have it?

POC-F: Anyway...

W-M: And it's so hard to distinguish between race and personality, too.

Notice also that the person of color attempts to ask a clarifying question wondering if the

same treatment would happen to a 'white gentleman' and before he can finish asking the

question, he is interrupted by a white male who reveals his own assumption that a person

of color may not have the 'background' to work effectively as a deacon in the church. But rather than staying focused on the issue being considered (the effect of race on how a person is treated when serving as a deacon), the white man then goes on trying to find an alternate explanation by claiming it's hard to distinguish between race and personality. As we will see later this is a common rhetorical move whites use when trying to discount the impact of a racialized society.

The assumption of white superiority has been subtly acquired in people of all colors and ethnic backgrounds in the United States through socialization and the internalization of unconscious yet redundant messages that reinforce a racial hierarchy (McIntosh 1998; Krieger 1999). This internalized racism is persistent and pervasive partly because it is unconscious and there is evidence that reveals this internalization often 'trumps' or dominates beliefs, behaviors or perspectives that seem to contradict it. We absorb cultural messages that contradict what we say we believe and this happens in subtle and unconscious ways.

Differing Standpoints: Examining Racial Rhetoric and How It Reflects Internalized Racism

In this section we will explore the empirical findings on internalized racism by examining how the language used and the rhetorical positions assumed reflect internalized racial superiority or internalized racial oppression. The words people chose to use in describing a particular situation or setting can reveal a great deal about how they understand or interpret their life experience, what they have internalized about what is true. Despite the fact that the participants in this study were intensively learning and thinking about institutional racism throughout the course of this research, their responses

to the interview questions about race fluctuated between directness and confidence to contradictions, inconsistencies, and confusion. This is part of the normal flow of conversation and is not uncommon when people are asked to share their ideas, opinions and experiences. Race scholars have documented that when race and/or racism is being discussed people often use "an interpretive repertoire consisting of ...common frames,...racetalk, and storylines" (Bonilla-Silva 2001:66). In other words, there are common phrases, shorthand expressions and even simplistic explanations given in response to questions about race.

Paying attention to the language and the particular rhetorical responses people give when discussing race is critically important because insights can be gained about what their understanding of reality is. When were respondents articulate and when were they ambivalent? When did respondents speak with clarity and forthrightness and when did they respond with hesitancy and reluctance? When do they say one thing and then contradict it moments later? And how do these rhetorical positions reveal what people have internalized about the meaning of race in American life and in particular, the institutional church? An interesting challenge during analysis was trying to understand and interpret the meaning behind the language used among people with varying racial positions in the congregations. As we will see, awareness of how race power and privilege operates within the congregations is strikingly different among whites and people of color and reveals many contradictions.

Presumed racial superiority as internalized by whites The empirical results suggest that internalized racial superiority of whites is revealed in a lack of awareness about race and about the power it holds in their lives. Some whites assume that because they have lived

in a predominantly white world, they have had no opportunity to be a racist so they assume no responsibility for the effects of the racialized society.

> W-M: I grew up in a predominantly white community and I went to Christian schools my whole life. Most of – well all the schools really, the majority was white people, at the elementary, high school, and college level, you know, the majority of the students were white. Um…you know, I remember as a child – maybe there wasn't so many black people, but there were other people of color such as people from India and Pakistan and stuff like that, and I remember some of my friends making jokes about people of color and I probably unknowingly participated in some of those as well, some just certain jokes. Then I guess, um…when I'm not surrounded by a lot of people of color I just kind of didn't really know too much about their culture and didn't really have too much of an opportunity to be a racist if I'm not even around people of color, but I've always, you know – when you're a little kid you're immature, right, and so I probably put in those jokes, but as I grew older, say high school level and then eventually college, just out of a Biblical message to love everybody and to work…you know, I've been able to have friends outside of my own race, because as I got older I was exposed to more people, I was surrounded by more people, so I had the opportunity to be friends with more of those people. And my parents were never racist, and, you know, they always raised me to love everybody equally, and uh, now I'm actually learning about racism and how it hurts and what it's all about. You know, I never really thought of it before, so…

Here the respondent reveals a dominant perspective among whites---that racism is primarily about overt individual attitudes and actions that hurt people of color. Little understanding is offered of how structural racism operates to oppress people of color. It is noteworthy that this respondent answered as he did—viewing racism primarily as individual attitudes and actions. By the time this interview occurred the respondent had been through twelve full days of antiracism training over many months which focused on a structural analysis of racism and yet his response reveals how much he has internalized a view of racism as individualistic in nature. The structural analysis of racism offered by the training has been overshadowed by a perhaps unconscious yet dominant message that defines *racism as individual actions and attitudes*.

Additionally this is by no means the only white respondent who spoke about how his parents were not racist and how he was raised not to be a racist. Particularly among people who had been through the antiracism training comments were often made to defend themselves as not being like other whites. The training describes such a posture

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as a "looking-good strategy" that whites call upon to distance themselves from the dominant white culture and not view themselves as part of the oppressor.

Another common occurrence among whites is that *race is not something that is given much thought* or when it does come up it is peripheral and appears to be an afterthought. To demonstrate how whites see race as a peripheral reality, specifically in their congregations, we will turn to several group interviews in which the respondents are addressing the question, "How does a person's race affect their involvement in this church?" In the first example, the people of color in a multiracial congregation have been describing their experience and then a white person interjects a comment and the following conversation ensues

> W-F: Can you ask that first question again and I'll answer, because none of the whites have answered that question, so I want you to get the other side…That first question you asked about race and how it…
>
> I: How does a person's race affect their involvement in this church?
>
> W-F: As a white woman, I don't ever think of race as being an issue with my involvement at [this church]. I don't ever think I'm chosen because I'm white, I don't ever think of it even once, like, oh, somebody wants a white person on this committee, or… I just don't think of race in that perspective. I just don't. You know, there's your stark contrast.
>
> POC-M: Where she doesn't ever think of race, I think of it all the time.
>
> W-F: Right, that's why I wanted to say it.

There is a striking contrast—that whites can be involved in the congregation without having to give much thought to how their race affects this involvement. Whites have internalized a sense that either their race does not matter OR that they do not even have a racial identity. We will discuss the invisibility of whiteness later in this chapter. But for now the point to note is that it takes a fair amount of work on the part of whites to even recognize that being white gives them certain advantages.

Usually for most whites to recognize race (since it such a peripheral part of their consciousness) it comes up in relationship to some designated 'Other.' In another group interview with respondents who are part of a predominantly white church the discussion begins with comments about visitors saying they feel intimidated when first attending this church and then the conversation shifts to a consideration of whether this is related to racism.

> I: Have others of you heard from people or experienced this sense of being intimidated in this congregation? You've heard other people say it?
>
> W-F: Yes.
>
> W-M: All the time.
>
> W-F: I'd say it's a recurrent theme. [laughter]
>
> I: How's that – and how does that intersect with racism? Is there a way that it intersects?
>
> POC-F: Well it could intersect with race if you think in educational levels. Um, for us to bring in people from [the projects] would be very difficult because education levels for the most part is much lower than ninety-five percent of the people here, and how are they going to find that five percent of us that don't maybe have that. And then even then it's a step above them, two steps above them. How do you – you know, we can maybe bring them in the door, but how are we going to get them to the point to say, 'I'm okay.'
>
> W-M: And it's a standard of excellence, it's our standard, it's a white standard of excellence, so that you can go to a black church and think, 'Boy, their music is really excellent,' but it's excellent in a different way than it's excellent at [this church], and so I would guess that a person of color who comes here from a different understanding of what is excellent feels like they don't fit in, because their standard is different, the style is different. But we impose our style of excellence on everyone. 'You've got to do it our way.'
>
> W-M: Um, I was just thinking that for a church that conceives of itself as being liberal and on the right side of the issue with regard to race and so on, there's not a whole lot of overt attention to making sure that the subject even comes up. I mean recently we've had this, this committee, but for a lot --a lot of years some of us, um, there have been some people who really wanted to have ministry to people of color, wanted to be a presence in the inner-city, but not a whole lot ever came of that, and I think maybe what [D---] was saying is a barrier on that. There's a very definite commitment to a certain style and a standard of excellence and it's a very intellectual church, but I think when you ask the question, 'How does race figure in here?' By and large it hasn't, it seems to me.

There are a number of assumptions operating here. First is an acknowledgment that race issues have not been a driving force in their institution; race has been a peripheral issue for most of them. Even further they perceive race as being synonymous with color.

Whiteness is often not perceived as being a race (albeit a socially-constructed category). In the above example note the assumption that race means people of color; there is little recognition of whiteness as a racial position that has power in society. Whiteness is the assumed norm and 'Others' who are nonwhite are welcome to join but they must adjust themselves to fit in. The white norm is never challenged. These assumptions about what constitutes race have been tacitly accepted and internalized by the vast majority of people participating in this research.

Scholars have described how race privilege functions in American society to offer preferential treatment and unfair advantage to one segment of the population at the expense of other segments of the population (Blauner 1972; Emerson and Smith 2000; Bonilla-Silva 2003). "The experience of the dominant group often serves as the point of reference, the "norm," and is compared with that of people who are disadvantaged along a continuum of oppression and powerlessness" (Chavez et. al. 2002: 90). What is striking is that whiteness as a norm eventually becomes invisible to those who have the racial advantage.

> Whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination…Among the effects on white people both of race privilege and of the dominance of whiteness are their seeming normativity, their structured invisibility (Frankenberg 1993:6).

This masks an inability among many whites to name race as having any power in our society or to even recognize the effects of racial differences. There are two important and inter-related ideas here. Whites have a difficult time seeing and recognizing their power and privilege. And because of the subtlety of white privilege, whiteness as a race is invisible to those who are white. Whites often fail to recognize the exclusion of people

of color or they miss the subtle aspects of racism until they are told by someone who is

nonwhite. In this study often white respondents *assume race means nonwhite.*

> I: How would you say a person's race affects their involvement in this church?
>
> W-F: I don't think I can answer that yet. I think that I'm beginning to understand that it impacts their involvement significantly in ways that I'm still discovering and learning. But I guess I would say it impacts--- race impacts--- 100%.
>
> I: Can you think of an example? Or examples of how that is true?
>
> W-F: ...Umm, I have heard people tell me, people of color, tell me that they are *hidden* in the congregation and they feel like they are not sought after for a voice. That, it's assumed that, that people of color will just come along with any decision that is made and usually made by people who are white. So I would say that that is a discrimination. And ahh, I actually ahh I--I mean I think what I'm finding out is that there is a whole lot of, of discrimination but it's subtle. It's not necessarily a verbal, obvious kind of discrimination. But I think that what I'm picturing happening is that it's more of a discounting, ignoring, avoiding, not thinking.

The first few sentences in this response reveal a contradiction. This respondent first

claims ignorance about how race affects involvement in the church and then in the next

sentence says it impacts 100%. But notice that the assumption being made is that race is

synonymous with persons of color. This respondent appears to have no recognition that

whiteness is also a race that has implications for *her* involvement in this institution. She

refers to 'their' involvement and to 'they' feel with no recognition that her race affects

her involvement in the church as well. This reveals a great deal about what she has

internalized unconsciously about race. "As many race scholars note, not having to know

the details or extent of racialization is an advantage afforded to most white Americans"

(Emerson and Smith 2000: 88).

The findings of this study provide evidence of what the literature describes as

structured invisibility—whites cannot explain what being white means nor see their own

race power and privilege (Frankenberg 1993). And this structured invisibility reveals

some of what has been internalized by whites which reflects a subtle but very real sense

of superiority.

Another way this can be seen is in white responses that discount or deny the significance of race or discredit the experience of people of color when they describe their experience in the church. In other words, white respondents used *argumentative strategies to deny the significance of race and/or racial discrimination.* Most of the whites who were part of this study would admit verbally that discrimination still happens and that racism still exists in our society but when we examine the way they respond to questions about how racism functions within their congregations, very often they assume a position of *denial.* Comments such as 'I don't think what we're talking about has anything to do with race' or 'Blacks are too sensitive about race' were not uncommon. There are numerous examples of whites seeking alternate explanations to race or trying to explain away the role race plays in particular situations.

> W-M: I mean I think what we [whites] need is help in identifying our blind spots and the only way that can be done is by listening to each other and to listen to people of color. Um…and on the other hand, you know, I want to be…I want us to have the freedom to say, 'but I don't think that's a –you know, that's not a race issue.'

Notice in this example the respondent's acknowledgement of needing help to identify blind spots but very quickly claiming that whites need to have the freedom to say, 'But that's not a race issue.' So there is almost a double message being given here. Whites might say that discrimination and racism still exist but *they* want to be able to decide when a particular issue is related to race and when it isn't.

In the following example several people of color are describing how they pick up subtle cues from white people that reveal disdain and then they emphatically reinforce each other's comments about how a person of color can feel and sense when a white person is putting on a front of being kind but not really caring for them. Notice the white peoples' responses late in this dialogue.

POC-M(1): You know, we as black people – we as a black people, we've just seen it and like heard so much about those 'isms, and just like, it's been like, [static noise] like, like, it's been like, it's just been pumped into us, you know, like, you know, 'look out for this.' It's in us. We just know. You know, and I'm not saying that we're like dogs, or whatever, but I'm just – I say that, you know, we just tell. You can just...

POC-F (1): You can tell, though.

POC-M (1): And sometimes I feel so bad, because sometimes we as black people, we can pick it up, whereas you, you won't sense anything. (speaking very animatedly) You think, 'Awww, no!' It's like, 'Man, it's there.' And it's like, 'Aw, you're just being too sensitive.' And it's like, 'Man, it's – you can...'

POC-F (1): I had a person tell me...

POC-M (2): It's there! You can see it. I mean, for us, you can...

POC-F (1): You can feel it! You can see it!

POC-M (1): You can feel it. You can sense it.

POC-F (1): All of it.

POC-M (1): It's just, when you've been around it so long...

POC-F (1): You can look at somebody's eyes and they can say, 'oh, okay, I got to do this, but I don't to want to do this.'

POC-M (1): But you don't want, and you just know that this person don't like you. You just know it! But...

POC-F (1): But I have...

W-M (1): I would ask, why did he lie to you? [[this question seems to come out of the blue]]

I: –Sorry... what did you say?

W-M (1): Why did he lie to you? You know what I mean? You've got to ask yourself that.

POC-M (1): Oh, I know why.

POC-F (1): They don't mean – really, they don't. They tolerate you. They don't like you; they tolerate you, because they feel they have to. They don't like you. It's a toleration.

POC-M(1): Yeah, but you know, it's a difference between some people like me –When you've been around it so long, you just know. It's like, it's white people. You know when a black person don't like you. You know, I don't want to just – I don't want to be up here just talking like it's all about me.

W-M (2): Well, I also know when a white person doesn't like me too. I mean, that really doesn't have much to do with race, I don't think.

In this exchange people of color are describing their experience in the church of feeling

tolerated but not genuinely liked or appreciated.   The first response a white person gives

is to question the veracity of what the people of color have just shared by saying you have to ask yourself why a white person would lie to you; in other words, people of color have to ask themselves why a white person would say one thing but really mean another. Later another white person responds by saying that he also knows when a white person doesn't like him and that this really doesn't have much to do with race. The point here is not to decide whose experience is more valid. The point is recognizing how quickly whites *seek to find alternate explanations to race* in particular settings and how uncomfortable they appear to be accepting what people of color share about their experiences. Perhaps this is because it is difficult for whites to admit they have been the beneficiaries of a system that provides advantages for them while simultaneously providing exclusion and disadvantage for people of color. The literature on white privilege describes that facing internalized feelings of guilt and shame (despite the fact that this may not be the result of individual racism but is the result of systemic racism) is difficult and painful for many whites to do (Helfand and Lippin 2002). Trying to find other ways to explain away these difficult feelings is a common response.

Sometimes white respondents answer from a position of supposed *unawareness* and claim 'I don't know' or 'I'm not sure.' Whether these responses reflect true naïve unawareness or instead are more a reflection of wanting to ignore the racial reality in the congregation, either way not naming the power race has in shaping American culture serves to keep the status quo in place.

> I: Given all the different kinds of experiences you've had and how you're thinking about it and studying about it, what do you think being white means to you? How would you describe what it means to you now?
>
> W-M: Um, I don't know what being white means. It means this particular color I was given is one of the many colors in the rainbow and God decided that I would be white and what that means to me is, this is who I was chosen to be. I have no choice in my color, but I want to learn more about

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everybody else's culture as well, you know, not just my own. It means I'm just another person and that doesn't mean I'm better or worse than anyone else.

This response reveals a shallow understanding of what race power and privilege—or whiteness—means in the context of the congregation. What is not entirely certain is whether this response is one of genuine unawareness ('I don't know what being white means') or if this is more a rhetorical maneuver for self-protection. This respondent seems to have internalized the message that white is superior though he is trying to claim that it isn't. He appears to be uncomfortable naming whiteness as a position of advantage and this will prevent him from being able to use his racial position to confront the racialized social system and work to dismantle it. Being able to *recognize* race privilege and to *name* it are necessary first steps in being able to confront racism.

Another respondent was asked about the structures of the congregation and whether they give power and privilege or limit power and privilege to members of the congregation. The respondent hesitated to answer or be specific and claimed she didn't want to speak for the team.

> I: Well, I have a couple of questions about institutional racism I'd like to sort of explore. How do the structures of this congregation, decision making structures, leadership development, community outreach, any program, **give** power and privilege or **limit** power and privilege to people of color from the congregation? How does it give power and privilege and how does it limit power and privilege to particular people?

> W-F: I'm still working on this. Can I answer this later? (laughs) Haa Haa But I mean, I think that's what, what we are going to start being real specific about as a team. Uhh, I have some ideas, but I really don't, ya know, I don't wanna speak for the team.

This response could be interpreted in several ways. It could be interpreted as intentional avoidance of an important issue related to racism in congregations. It could be an example of the invisibility to whites of their race privilege and their inability to honestly assess the difference race plays in the functioning of the congregation. Either way these findings suggest that the current situation within this congregation will remain unchanged

if people are unable to recognize and/or name specific examples of institutional racism.

This inability to name racism for what it is can also be seen in the language (or lack thereof) respondents use when asked about their experience in the congregations. A common occurrence exhibited among white respondents in this research has been identified by others scholars as *rhetorical incoherence.*

> "Rhetorical incoherence (e.g. grammatical mistakes, lengthy pauses, or repetition) is part of all natural speech. Nevertheless, the level of incoherence increases noticeably when people discuss sensitive subjects. Because the new racial climate in America forbids the open expression of racially based feelings, views, and positions, when whites discuss issues that make them uncomfortable, they become almost incomprehensible" (Bonilla-Silva 2003:68).

This occurs when a person seems unable to answer the question asked, stumbles in conversation, becomes inarticulate and almost unintelligible. The following example occurred in a group interview with a racially mixed church in response to a question about overt racism.

> I: Have any of you ever heard of examples of overt prejudice that anyone has experienced, that you know of, within this church, this congregation?

> W-F: I have one, just recently actually, and I don't know if it was overreaction. I mean, I know the person that was being accused, and I'm not sure if it was an overreaction. I mean, I know that the person is – has done things in the past, but... I mean, I don't know if this person is – you know, because if two people are talking and they look at you, you automatically assume that they're talking about you, that's just human nature, so I don't know if it was something like that and it was an assumption that they were being discriminated against, but I haven't seen anything with my own eyes, so...

In this instance, the respondent started to answer the question asked but got lost trying to explain and defend her explanation perhaps because the topic raised feelings of anxiety and discomfort. The listener is left in a state of confusion wondering what the respondent was trying to say. The respondent seems to have internalized that the topic of racism is a hot topic and one in which you must be careful what you say. Though she never says these direct words her lack of coherent conversation reflects a certain level of discomfort

in talking about this topic. The dominant cultural message in American society regarding race is that racist ideas or opinions are shameful and therefore, whites reveal discomfort in discussing race for fear of being accused of sounding racist.

Less dramatic than rhetorical incoherence is the *verbal hesitancy* (um, aaah, well....) that white respondents also exhibit when discussing race or the power race has to shape institutions. These stumbling responses often demonstrate an insecurity to give an opinion or sometimes to even share obvious information.

I: How important do you feel this antiracism initiative is to the life of the congregation?

W-F: Very important. I think that we are umm developing in a --in a-- a new way and ahh and in an *important* new way.

I: Developing *it?*

W-F: developing *in...*

I: *in* ---OK

W-F: Developing *in* a new and important way.

I: Could you describe that a little more?

W-F: ahh, I think what I, what I have come to, to believe is that as a Christian, there has been a wrong interpretation here in my own life as to what a way to view the world as far as racism or antiracism. So I... I think that our congregation suffers from that also. And so I think that --that what I understand about our analysis is that as a Christian, we are looking at racism, we are incorporating racism into our Christianity and that is wrong. And so there's been an awareness that, er there's been like a spotlight beamed into that, and there's probably other areas of our Christian walk that are just as wrong, but attention has been brought to that. So I feel, now that I understand that, then we must ...change it.

This response reveals the respondent's hesitancy to recognize or at least name how race has power to shape the congregation. It is more what she doesn't say here rather than what she does say. Acknowledgement is made that racism has been incorporated into Christianity but its impact has been discounted when it's compared to other areas that are 'just as wrong.' Further, at times white respondents seem to want to avoid certain topics of discussion. In response to a question about hidden racism, this respondent refuses to

talk about it claiming there are some things that she suspects are hidden but she doesn't want to say them.

> I: Have you been able to identify instances of hidden racism within the church?
>
> W-F: (long pause to answer) I umm, suspect some things. I, I, I don't even want to umm, I don't even want to say them right now, but I, I suspect there's plenty that's hidden.

This is another example of not naming the impact of racism and therefore, maintaining the status quo. Hidden racism will continue in this setting because it remains unnamed and unidentified and thus, it is really unacknowledged.

Examining the rhetorical responses and the positions assumed by whites in this study reveals what has been internalized unconsciously and is reflected as presumed superiority. When whites fail to recognize, fail to acknowledge or fail to name the role race plays within the functioning of the congregation, this serves to support and reinforce institutional racism in subtle ways. Because this failure to recognize and name is the result of internalized messages of presumed white superiority, it raises questions about how to bring to consciousness that which has been tacitly assumed and unchallenged in the past. We will explore that in the next chapter. But first we will examine how people of color have internalized racial inferiority and oppression and how that leads to the perpetuation of institutional racism in these congregations.

Presumed racial inferiority and oppression as internalized by POC   People of color, in sharp contrast to whites, have little difficulty in seeing and acknowledging how race privilege exists within the congregations and leaves them in positions of structured disadvantage. People of color in this study face racial inequities day in and day out and rarely do they describe their experiences with ambivalence or hesitancy or rhetorical

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incoherence. Usually they speak directly and with forthrightness. And it is not

uncommon for people of color in this study to express *anger and deep frustration* when

describing how our racialized social systems affect them even in their congregations. In

the following example, two men of color are discussing how their whole lives are totally

affected by racism which creates a deep internal struggle that is felt acutely especially

after antiracism meetings. The people of color openly express how difficult it is to live

with such a strong sense of oppression especially when the whites listen to the struggle

but then return home to their own luxury and nothing changes.

> POC-M : And not – we need to go farther than that, because your congregation looks just like your community: poor, helpless, and hungry, and made up of black and white, and our children go to the same school and stuff of this nature. It's painful when we look at these other all...predominant powerful churches. We are reminded where we come from, that we are in the fight, or when we go to these secluded places where, uh, uh... You know, for example, like...it's painful for us because we have no avenue to send our children forward. We dream dreams for our children to go forward and be educated and be part of God's king ---represent God's kingdom too, and so it's painful for us to go there and present our stories, you know what I'm saying, and yet there's nothing done. It seems redundant just going through something when we've got to go back to this fishbowl and deal with needs and try to encourage people's lives with the little resources that we have, you know, and so you see where – and [E---] made a great statement, which is true; you may come down here, but when you're going back to your nice area, you see what I'm saying, we talk about racism coming back to the same – you see what I'm saying, and so we are totally affected. For me...even with those antiracism teams I'm truly – in fact, I'll you the truth, I'm pissed off when I leave those meetings too, excuse me, if I can use that phrase.

> [Another POC-M]: You're not by yourself. You're not by yourself. We went through the last caucus and [E---] did a wonderful job of helping us to...uh, basically analyze the analysis, and at the end of the meeting I was angry, you know, I was angry. And ...we were supposed to relate personal issues to the analysis, and after having related several issues to the analysis, when we came back to the table – the people of color came back to the table with the white people, I still had that gut...that hurt, you know, in my gut, because – and I said, you know, I sit back and I think about that, and just like [P----] was saying, we come right back into the midst of racism or the society or, you know, the picket line where 'this is where we want to live and you can't live outside of this,' and white people go back to their luxury, so it's like, okay, if the shoe's on the other – if you reverse the roles, then they would understand some of our pain. We keep telling the story, keep telling the story, and you know, you hear a story for a period of time, you start to embrace it a small amount, but the magnitude of it... You know, how do you get the magnitude of this oppression to people who are not oppressed? How do you help them to experience the oppression if they're not being oppressed? So you tell the story, you tell the story, and you give a small glimpse of it, but [they] don't understand the magnitude of it.

This example raises a very important and powerful question—how to get the magnitude

of this oppression to people who are not oppressed? It is not enough for people of color

to merely describe the oppression they live under because those who have never experienced it cannot really understand, despite good intentions and/or empathy being awakened. Because of the racialized structure of American society, whites can choose to be involved in antiracism work and they can walk away from the work. They can choose when and when not to be involved. People of color do not have the same choices. This example gives us some glimpse of how people of color experience race as a central reality of their lives as the effects of being people of color in American society never leave them.

In the last section we saw how whites tend to not think about race when it comes to their involvement in the church. This contrasts sharply with what we hear from people of color in these congregations who describe how race affects every part of their involvement in their congregation and is a significant part of their daily experience including in the church. People of color are told by whites that they *bring up race too much*. Recall the findings in Chapter 5—in one of the group interviews with a racially-mixed group, the people of color speak articulately and at length about feeling on one hand, limited and marginalized within the congregation and on the other hand, feeling 'over-used' and 'over-asked' to do certain tasks. They then go on to describe how their concerns about race are treated with suspicion and doubt by whites. In the following excerpt we get a glimpse of what it feels like to nonwhites when their concerns about race are discounted as though they are being overly-sensitive.

> POC-F: I have been told, and I don't know if other people of color around this table have been told, that I bring up race too much. That it's not all about race, and I don't think it is, but that I bring it up too much and that I take too many things back to race, and that – one person even told me that, 'I feel like I have to watch what I say around you, because, you know, you'll just – you'll make it racial.' I would say that's prejudice. That's insulting to _me_, because you're telling me you don't want to hear what I'm telling you, how it affects me as a person of color. You don't want to hear that, so that's a direct insult... [Many respond, 'Mhmm. Mhmm.']

POC-M: You know, it's a tightrope between... You know, you could go off every five minutes. You know, from the 'those people' comments, you know, when they're referring to the kids in the community, you know, to the 'you people' comments, um, and, you know, it's not like somebody's swearing at you, but...

POC-F: 'You people, you people.'

POC-M: There are days, that, you know, I might be one of those over-sensitized people and you just want to go, 'Uh-uh. We are not going there,' you know, and you want to jump out of your skin and forget you know love, that you love Jesus, you know.

Being stigmatized through comments like 'you people' and constantly being reminded that 'you bring up race too much' serves to make people of color feel unwelcome and at times insulted. In this excerpt we see that comments such as this cause people of color to feel excluded and set apart and continually being reminded that 'you are not like us' (even in subtle ways) can create feelings of inferiority. Notice in the last sentence of this example that the respondent is subtly accepting the label that nonwhites are overly-sensitive, rather than remaining firm in his conviction that his complaints are valid.

We saw in the last section that whites tend to view racism in individualistic terms as individual attitudes and beliefs that lead to particular individual discriminatory actions. In contrast people of color tend to *view racism in systemic terms*. The oppression and hurt experienced is much more than individual people's acts of prejudice or discrimination against people of color. People of color articulate clearly their experience of not having the same opportunities or advantages that whites receive.

POC-F: I think it speaks to the fact that, once again, that we see this stuff as systemic, and we underst – and I think it's kind of this, um...I don't know, innate knowing, because you... Well, I can just speak personally for myself. I work with people who have good hearts and who want to fight this thing, but at the same time they benefit from it. And so at the same time that I love them sometimes I get pissed off because the system gives them a whole lot more than it gives me. And I was just talking to somebody last week about this whole thing of entitlement. You know, how do you even deal with that and then, um, even in the short conversation I happened to have last week, to learn that this sense of entitlement was given to me by white folks. I didn't have this strong sense of that until I started coming to [this church]. Even before I started coming to [this church], when certain things started happening in my life and then people stepped in and helped me in different places, all those people that helped me were white folks. And what it did was kind of affirm that stuff that 'they got everything, I have nothing, so yeah, they should give me some of their stuff, because I don't have anything anyway.' So then you have to also fight that entitlement thing and then being mad at the system, because the system gives all the baubles and stuff to the

white folks and then you've got these white folks that you love who you know love you who hate the sin, and so there's just a whole lot of conflict that's going on as well. You know, so, um, yeah, I love the person, but I hate the sin.

An interesting contradiction seemed to emerge among the people of color in this study. Strong language was often used in their comments about how 'white-people' (hyphen and quotes, intentional) oppress and hurt them—deliberately, purposely, intentionally and consciously. But within almost every interview comments were also made about the development and growth of trusting relationships between some people of color and some whites. It was difficult at first to interpret the 'white-people' comments in relationship to the comments made about love and trust developing cross-racially. As this was probed in later interviews and in member checks with participants in the study, it gradually became apparent that the way to interpret it is to understand that for some people of color 'white-people' are viewed as a powerful collective entity which causes pain and suffering through systemic mechanisms which oppress them. Individual white people (as distinct from 'white-people') can become allies and friends in the struggle for racial equality but this does not negate the impact of 'white-people' (as a system of oppression). This distinction helps to explain how people of color can hold seemingly contradictory views of whites. Here is an excerpt from an interview where a woman of color is making a *distinction between white people and 'white-people'* and the tension she sometimes feels in being with them.

I: Talk to me more about how people of color are included in this church. And also, how are they excluded, you know in some of the stuff you've...

POC-F: Well...

I: In terms of – so it's not just how it looks on Sunday morning, but how is it...?

POC-F: Right. Well, I think there's a real intentionality to include people of color, but I know – I can say for my personal self, sometimes to be around white people is work, because I can't be me. I can't – you know, I might say something and they'll go, 'Oh, what does that mean?' or, 'Why do

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you say that?' or, 'Why do you do that?' [nasally tones] or you can just see – you just made this comment and they are clueless, because their growing up, their environment, their culture, all this stuff is different than mine. But when I get with my-- my folks, you know, we can just, hoooo…

I: Talk in short hand.

POC-F: Exactly, exactly, and be us, and I think that's true with any culture. So to be – you know, to go out on Friday nights, or come over to a house for dinner, or whatever it might be, it's work, it's work. Now there are certain white people that in the ten years I've been here I've gotten to be very close with and so I can just call and say, 'Let's go to a movie,' and I don't – you know, whatever, it's just okay. But it is work. White people want to include us, and to some degree we want to be included, but I think that some degree comes in that…you know, 'I know here, I've been with white folks all day at work, when I had to go to the bank, when I had to the grocery store – just give me a break right now.' And that's…

I: Let me rest.

POC-F: Exactly. And I remember one of the trainers said that one of the things she realized about herself in going through this training is that she didn't look at white people as people. They were just – they were white people, but they weren't just people.

I: Sort of as a group? She looked at them as a collect – you know, they're the 'white-people'?

POC-F: It's kind of almost like another species. 'They're white-people; they aren't people. They aren't people; they're white-people.' And so it's almost like you objectify, like there's a purpose for white people. You know, when I go to work I'm with white-people, when I go to get some money I'm going to a white-person, when I go to do this, and I know most of the structures that I deal with are owned by white-people,' so it's like white-people are a function or an object, but not people. And so she said, 'I really had' – and when she said that I thought, 'I can so relate to that.' It's almost like, um, in some sense – the best way – they can sometimes be a means to an end, but they're not a person that I have community with, and that's what I have to work to make happen.

But I think that's the way society has set it up is that there's this wall, this invisible wall that exists between white people and people of color and people of color know that we are stepping into white-people's world. But I do think [our church] people are working to open the doors for people of color, it's just figuring out how to do it the right way. And then I was thinking about, we have this team of willing workers and basically what they do is make sure our kitchen is kept clean, and I think there's five women on this team…five, and one man I think, and four of the women are African-American and one woman is white and the man is white, and my problem with that is, here we go, fulfilling that stereotype. Now, we're fulfilling it because they chose to be on that committee. Nobody had to ask them really, they just chose to be this committee, but – and so I want to say to them, 'Hello! We don't need you in the kitchen all the time; we need you in leadership positions, we need you coordinating some stuff, we need your voice on some things. Don't just go to the kitchen. Go to the leadership positions as well.' So, you know…

The challenge in analyzing this dialogue is in trying to understand what the respondent

actually means when she uses the phrase, white people. She seems to have internalized

two different views of whites and she is just beginning to understand these differences

and how they might affect her in congregational interactions. She desires to see white

people as people she could eventually 'have community with' rather just treat white-people as a means to an end for something she needs or wants. Furthermore, in the example she gives of the kitchen team the respondent is acknowledging that people of color tend to view themselves as servers first rather than to view themselves as potential leaders. The hope is that as people of color begin to see themselves on par with whites, they will begin to offer their gifts in leadership positions in the church and not only serve in the kitchen. One potential way this may happen is when the structures of the church are changed in ways so that they work on behalf of nonwhites, too, rather than only serving the interests of the dominant white groups.

As long as people of color continue to experience the system working against them, they will experience a certain degree of internal conflict. In addition to and perhaps because of having internalized two different views of whites (either the enemy as in 'white-people' or allies as in white people), people of color fluctuate between being angry and being conciliatory. For example, a respondent may speak from a position of deep anger frustration and then a few minutes later within the same interview give a response that seems to contradict the earlier anger and become almost *conciliatory to whites*.

> POC-M: You know, I want to be honest with you, because I don't want you to leave with the idea that I don't trust white peoples, and especially that white man. I don't want to leave with that and I don't want that in my heart, you know what I'm saying. That's why I'd rather just stay on down here with [my church] and love the people in this community, uh, you know. But I'm with my brothers here; as long as they want to keep this thing going [the antiracism initiative] I'm leaving them the ball, I'm in it one hundred percent, but if it were left up to me, shoot...

Sometimes a person of color may speak from a position of *resignation* to the way things are. Part of this sense of resignation on the part of people of color is revealed in their hesitation to come to the table for continued dialogue and work to confront racism.

POC-M: …because we've tried so many things over the years, our non-white folks are tired, because every time that we try something they have to put their stuff on the table, and so it takes a lot of energy.

I: And vulnerability.

POC-M: And vulnerability, and some of it, you know, you put it out there and you get stepped on, and so we have a number of folks that at this time are saying, 'Yeah, been there, done that, and don't ask me to get involved because I don't want to go there. That's too painful for me to deal with, so I'll just…,' you know. So this is something that, yeah, at this point in time there are some that are I think intellectually wanting to go forth, okay; emotionally may not know what really they're saying. Or maybe emotionally distant, because of what's involved.

People of color describe growing tired of the 'battle' and losing energy to keep fighting the 'system.' It is hard work; it requires vulnerability and a willingness to reveal yourself and often people of color feel like this has already been tried and failed so a sense of hopelessness and resignation has been internalized.

Further, people of color express that when they do come to the table for dialogue the whites don't really listen to people of color. They know what they want to do and are going to do what they want to do anyway.

POC-M: But here it's a slick, silent talk. He could sit at the table and listen to me, and still won't say nothing, and go on and do what he wants to do. None of my ideas are respected.

I: So you feel like you're overlooked and…

POC-M: Even at [——— Church] right now. You got a guy there in a leadership role right there; supposed to be connected with [our church], but when he comes to the table, he comes to the table – you can look at his face and tell that he don't listen to those ideas, he's going to do what he wants to do anyway.

I: Mm-hmm. So it makes you feel like you're invisible or being treated like you're invisible. 'We don't have to listen to your idea; we're just going to do what we want to do anyway.'

POC-M: They're going to do what they want to do anyway; exactly, exactly. Their folks are going to do what they want to do anyway. That's why I really focus my focus on what God called me at [this church] rather than trying to…I ain't got time to wrestle.

I: Yeah, yeah. So…

POC-M: But the white man up north…something else.

I: Talk more about that. What's that mean?

POC-M: That means that he is slick and cunning. [chuckles] …if I can use those words.

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I: Mhmm...

POC-M: Because he understands that it's his table and he's going to call the shots at his own table, and even though he sits and nods his head like this here, again I say he's going to do what he wants to do. That's what I'm saying about he's slick and he's cunning, and he always comes with a preexisting motive. He's got a game plan ---and he's smarter anyway--of how he wants to do things.

This interview reflects almost a sense of resignation for the respondent of color. He can give his opinion or his suggestions but he feels like the whites at the table will not necessarily listen to him and that they will do what they want to do anyway. A number of respondents of color made comments about whites going to do what they want no matter what. Notice the small comment at the end where the respondent is saying the white man has got a game plan and then he inserts---'and he's smarter anyway'---of how he want to do things. This is a subtle comment, easily missed, where the respondent of color reveals an internalized message that the white man is smarter.

It is important to note that whites are not the only people who have a hard time recognizing the effects of the racialized society. The American culture is so focused on individualism that it is difficult at times for the average American citizen of any race to understand societal *structures* and how they operate. Scholars of race and religion claim that many white religious Americans are unable to perceive or are unwilling to accept social structural influences (Emerson and Smith 2000). However the findings of this congregational research suggest that some nonwhites have also been influenced by this individualistic perspective dominant in the larger society and they also have not been able to recognize systemic issues until it is pointed out to them. For some people of color, the antiracism training has enabled them to explain in an articulate way a reality they have experienced but previously had been unable to name. The training has given words to and a common language for a racial reality that previously they have not been able to put into

words. The following two examples are from men of color who describe how the antiracism training has *validated their life experience* by giving them words to explain what they know to be true from experience. The first respondent is answering a question about his own racial awareness.

> I: I'd like to talk a little bit more about –about how you've experienced race in the larger American society. I'd like you to tell me a little of…when did you become conscious of being a black male?

> POC-M: To be honest I…maybe I would say within the last ten years, in my thirties. I was thirty-something when I became conscious of it. I wasn't aware – well…I became more conscious of it during my first two-and-a-half day training, which is a long time for me. I was just talking to the pastor about this. I grew up in a diverse neighborhood. Most of my neighbors were white, okay, and I had one childhood experience where I realized…a white cop choked me one time when I was in the mall, and my friends were doing things, but I wasn't doing anything. And because I wasn't doing anything I didn't feel that I needed to be put out of the mall. So I had a few words to say, just to back myself up. And he choked me. And I didn't think of prejudice at that time. I didn't think white-black; I started disliking cops period because of that incident.

> I: This was a white cop I assume?

> POC-M: This was a white cop, yeah. Not because they were white or black, but because I had received an injustice from one of them, so I began to have a dislike for all of them. It wasn't a white or black issue at that time for me, you know, and I was, I think it was in '93, '94, '95, I was fighting against something. I had gotten my bachelor's degree at Baker College. I had [gone] to school for the job that I was in. I had received an associate's degree in SPC, which is statistical process control, which qualified me to do a little bit more than what I was doing as an inspector. They were willing to take my knowledge for the betterment of the company, but they were not willing to promote me into a supervisory position, which – I had already had supervisory experience, and they chose to promote a white woman that I had trained that did not have a high school diploma. And I was still naïve towards racism. [laughs] You know? Uh, I was just naïve. I was wondering, 'What was I fighting?' Because I was fighting for the position and I was told I would receive the position, but I was still naïve as to what I was fighting against, you know. So after going through my first two-and-a-half-day training the scales fell from my eyes and I realized that I was dealing with racism, you know? But it's hard to fight something as an individual, ignorant – at that time I was ignorant, because I didn't grow up – I grew up in the sixties. You know, I was a kid during the sixties so I grew up listening and seeing, but not experiencing it. I didn't experience it. I went to a multi-cultural – not multi-cultural, but it was fifty-fifty, blacks and whites, and we did not have an attitude. There was no prejudice that I perceived at that time.

> I: And you didn't feel like you were segregated?

> POC-M: Hmm-mm. No. No.

> I: Blacks and whites mingled comfortably?

> POC-M: Yeah, it was very comfortable, so I didn't experience it during my youth or as I came up, I didn't experience it. Because I didn't experience it I didn't identify with it until later on. Hindsight they say is twenty-twenty. After I went through that training I realized what I was dealing with.

I: Yeah. So what about the training made the scales fall from your eyes? What specifically can you remember about that?

POC-M: Mm, the system, because I was dealing with a system. I was dealing with a system of privilege.

I: Mm-hmm. That you never really thought about as such.

POC-M: Never thought about it, because I thought in myself that if I was as good as the next person that I would be promoted right along...as quickly if not faster than the next person. If I put forth the effort and I was qualified to do the job, then I would be promoted based on my merits, not based on my color. And it just didn't happen like that for me. And I realized then that there was a system in place that continued to oppress you regardless of how educated you became. You still – you may do a little bit better, but as far as shooting for the moon and falling into the stars, that just wasn't going to happen, and I burnt a lot of energy fighting a system...fighting a losing battle. And I asked several times to my supervisor, 'What am I dealing with here?' I had not a clue.

What this demonstrates is that it is possible for people of color to fail to recognize the *systemic* nature of racism if they have had certain advantages such as advanced education, increased socio-economic status or even a racially integrated residential location. Analysts must use caution when explaining race privilege and avoid simplistic explanations that assume all nonwhites have a greater awareness of the racialized system than do whites. Other cultural influences may have bearing on these perceptions. This respondent is a college-educated black male who has lived in multiracial environments for at most of his life. These influences have given him 'eyes to see' certain aspects of and to be blinded by certain aspects of the racialized society.

When a person experiences repeated oppression and it is done in subtle ways, it is easy to internalize blame and assume it is your own fault. Another respondent of color describes how the antiracism initiative has confirmed some of his life experience and has helped him recognize that he is 'not hallucinating' or imagining these experiences. In this case it is not so much that the training helped bring to light aspects of systemic racism with which he was unfamiliar. Rather hearing the stories of others as expressed through

the antiracism training and follow-up meetings has served to remind him that others have experienced similar oppression and he is not alone in the struggle.

> POC-M: But [some people] don't have that mindset, you don't have that willingness or wanting to learn to be right, to dismantle racism, to see how racism works as a systemic beast, and how it's not only hurting me, it is hurting you. If it wasn't for the goodness and grace of God, and here I am fifty-three years old, and this program, the [antiracism training] program, actually got me to the point where I can sit down and talk about this without having to go out here and break something or somebody. You talk about pain and anger, and raising six children...

> I: How did [the training] do that? What about it helped you be able to talk about it?

> POC-M: Um, one of the biggest things was it allowed all the things that I had seen and learned over the years, I saw it all coming together in one place so that I wasn't hallucinating, because the white man will tell you that white is white and black is black, and every time you say, 'no, black is black and white is white,' [smack] he hits you over the head.... But he don't talk about all the years he [smack] beat you over the head, [smack] beat you over the head, and taught you something, and that's the way the society is. 'We say we love you, but we won't give you any money. We say we want you to succeed, but we won't open any doors for you.'

The reflections on black experiences and the incidents recounted in the interviews weave together to show the web of intentional and unconscious discrimination which leads to internalized racism. Nonwhite Americans soon come to realize that no amount of hard work or achieved status can completely protect them from racial oppression which exists across numerous institutional arenas of this society. People of color may, as a young people, have little awareness of the systemic nature of race privilege but soon have experiences that make this obvious to them.

The impact of 'color-blind' racism on all people Scholars have documented that one of the dominant cultural messages to emerge within the past four decades and grew out of the post Civil Rights era is the ideology of color-blind racism that supports a 'new' racism that is more covert, subtle, systemic (Bonilla-Silva 2001; 2003). This ideology explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial factors, such as market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, or cultural preferences such as groups

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of people prefer to live with similar people. Color-blind racism as an ideology affects all Americans and it has had tremendous cultural impact by obscuring the *structural* elements of the racialized society. This color-blind perspective is evident in comments well-meaning people make about how color doesn't or shouldn't matter without a clear understanding of how race does, in fact, affect the structure of American society. The widespread comments people make about the need to build a 'color-blind' society are, in fact, subtle ways to maintain a racial hierarchy in which whites are dominant.

Respondents in this research reveal just how powerful the internalized message of color-blind racism is among all people regardless of their racial position. At times conversational partners would claim race was not significant in their life experience and would try to prove this by saying all people are the same. In the following exchange between a woman of color and a white woman both claim race had nothing to do with how they grew up. They try to normalize this crucial aspect of their lives by not recognizing it as an issue or discounting the impact of living racially segregated lives. They seem to be operating from within a common storyline about race—that all people are the same—but when their comments are analyzed it is clear that all people are not the same.

> POC-F: ... they didn't started a-bussing white kids and black kids until after I graduated, which was in '68, seventies, and then – that's why I said we didn't know nothing about black and white. Everybody was the same.
>
> W-F: That's the way I grew up. Everybody was the same...
>
> POC-F: Equal, everything.
>
> W-F: And it – yeah, but it was understood that if you were black or not Christian Reformed you didn't live in G—— Township. That was just understood back then. And it wasn't until I got in high school that I actually saw a black person in my school, and it was just one family, two kids, and then it wasn't until my late twenties that I lived in Grand Rapids and there was a black family behind me and one of the girls came up and hugged me, and I was like, 'What do I do?' You know? 'What do I do?' because I'd never been raised around them. I never – I could have told you back then, 'I'm not racist, I'm not racist,' but when a twelve year old girl hugged me I

didn't know what to do, and... I mean, after a while I learned just to hug them back, but it did take awhile.

Notice the contradiction in claiming everyone was the same yet 'it was understood that if a person was black or not Christian Reformed' there were places you could not live. The respondent seems to interpret this as normal or at least does not recognize her racial isolation from minorities as a problem. She tries to say that color didn't matter when she was growing up but her life experience contradicts this. Color did matter and it affected where people could live and go to school; it affected how different racial groups interacted with one another, and it still affects her today in the language she uses to describe her experience. Notice she is talking with a woman of color from her own congregation but in this conversation she uses the word 'them' in describing blacks. This implies that she sees people of color as 'Other.' This suggests that despite her comments that race/color does not matter, she has internalized a cultural message that says it does make a difference.

A dominant story line among whites in the rhetoric about our racialized society is that race/color should make no difference in terms of life opportunities and experiences. It is noteworthy that even some people of color have absorbed this message. At the conclusion of a long interview with a person of color who articulated clearly many facets of institutional racism in the congregation, he is asked about the future and whether he has hope for change.

> I: What's your sense of the future of this initiative? I mean, do you feel a sense that change is possible? Do you feel hopeful or do you feel like it's pretty fragile?
>
> POC-M: ...The environment in our church in particular is one that, you know, the young folks that are coming up, they don't see color. I see color in the people around us. So there's some stuff going on. I'm hopeful.

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This response is striking given that he so eloquently spoke about the struggle he and other people of color have experienced in their congregation yet his answer about the future was a simplistic response that young people do not see color as if to imply given enough time, color will not matter. This contradicts earlier comments he made about the need for structural change which can happen only if we acknowledge how race places limits on some people. This response reveals that societal messages about a color-blind society can and do impact our collective subconscious. People can hold apparently contradictory views simultaneously. On one hand there is recognition that we need to change structural aspects of our racialized society; on the other hand assumptions are made that if only people didn't recognize race, then our problems would be solved. This color-blind ideology that subtly ignores the structural elements of racism was evident in many of the responses despite the fact that the rhetoric used and the perspectives most respondents articulated would *seem* on the surface to counter to a color-blind ideology. In order for structural change to occur, people first need to recognize the power race has in shaping our institutions. To avoid this recognition by attempting to be color-blind will short-circuit attempts to make needed structural change. For example although the people interviewed openly discussed how their Christian faith perspective influences their views on race and racism, at times these views seemed to be 'trumped' by an unconscious absorption of the dominant American cultural messages seeking a color-blind society. Unless these contradictions are brought out into the open and honestly acknowledged, examined and confronted the hope of dismantling racism remains an unattainable dream.

Summary

In this chapter we have explored how racism has been internalized in both whites and people of color by examining the language respondents use and the rhetorical positions they assume when describing their experience of race/racialization in their congregations. This has revealed some of what the people believe, consciously and unconsciously, about race and racism. Becoming aware of and conscious of the tacit assumptions we hold is a necessary first step in the dismantling of racism. The participants in this study speak articulately and give examples from their lived experience of a racial hierarchy in American culture, even within their congregations. However as we have seen, the findings of this study reveal not only the difficulty of bringing to consciousness that which has been internalized but also the persistent cultural forces that are subtly at work to maintain the status quo.

How do we know what was studied is racism—because the research participants themselves named it as such in describing their lived experience in their congregations. This has been validated by the participants as being an authentic understanding of their experience and it has been validated through the scholarly literature on race and racialization. The empirical findings are consistent with theory (i.e. have theoretical validity) and have catalytic validity as well.

> Catalytic validity points to the degree to which research moves those it studies to understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it...Research that possesses catalytic validity will not only display the reality-altering impact of the inquiry process, it will direct this impact so that those under study will gain self-understanding and self-direction (Kincheloe and McLaren 2000: 297).

The key is that the research participants name their experience as racism and this has been a motivating factor for their action and deeper self-reflection. Their 'truth' will

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continue to evolve as it is dynamic but this research accepts their understanding of this experience as racism because they have identified it as such.

Three broad conclusions have emerged from the empirical data in chapters 5 and 6 which reveal how people of color and whites approach the issues of race and racism from strikingly different standpoints. The literature suggests that these strikingly different standpoints are the result of internalized messages about racial superiority and racial inferiority/ oppression which form the foundation of the racialized American society.

1) *Centrality/ peripherality of race*   First, the findings of this research confirm what has been identified by other scholars that people of color articulate the centrality of race both historically and in their own everyday experience and whites view race as a peripheral reality and do not perceive themselves as racist (Chavez, et. al. 2002; Blauner 1994). In this study people of color describe in detail how race is central in their lives and it shapes their perceptions of what is possible and the roles they play in the life of the congregation. By contrast, whites view race as peripheral and race is not something that is given much thought when they consider their involvement in the congregation. The findings are consistent with contemporary theory on race and therefore suggest theoretical validity. These findings also have interpretive validity in that they were verified through peer review and member checking.

2) *Systemic/ individualistic nature of racism*   Second, the findings reveal that whites tend to frame the problem of racism in individualistic terms as overt attitudes or actions that white individuals do to oppress people of color whereas people of color frame the problem as systemic oppression and this was validated through member checking with

both whites and people of color. People of color describe how the systems or processes within the church tend to exclude them even when individual white people attempt to be inclusive. Because of the effort and initiative to include nonwhites within these congregations, whites have a difficult time seeing how the structures of the congregation can exclude and oppress people of color. This leads whites to use argumentative strategies to deny or discount the significance of race and/or discrimination in the congregation and they often seek to find alternate explanations to race.

3) *Awareness of race power and privilege* Third, people of color and whites have a vastly different awareness of race power and privilege in the functioning of their congregations because of their strikingly different standpoints on race (#1 above) and racism (#2 above). People of color describe the subtle ways race functions to disadvantage them and are shocked that whites cannot see the privileges they are afforded in American society and in these congregations because they are white. By contrast, whites often do not recognize whiteness as a race and assume race is synonymous with persons of color. Because of this whites often have little recognition of the role their own race plays in the privileges they receive within the congregation. This interpretation has been confirmed through member checking and peer review and is also consistent with contemporary theory on race and racialization.

One of the most interesting findings of this research is the stark contrast among whites and people of color in recognizing race privilege. Whites often appear to speak from a position of *ignorance* and seeming unawareness and people of color believe that this is disingenuous and dishonest. Because nonwhites have no trouble producing specific examples of the racialization of the congregations, they often express disbelief

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that whites cannot see the privilege they have. Strong language is often used about how whites intentionally, deliberately and purposefully work to maintain white power and privilege, which oppresses people of color.

> I: It's interesting how subtle this is. I mean I think if you were – usually if you were to name it to a white man they don't necessarily see it, just like we don't often...
>
> POC-M: Just let me give you a prime point. I'm going to give you the evidence right today. This is why I'm having a hard time even coming to the anti-racism meeting, because *they're lying, they're lying, they're lying.* [emphasis in original] They've been through this thing called ... they saw this history around the thing, they saw the evidence. I don't know if you would know this or not, but the [denomination] is up in a rattle right now, because they fired the whole, laid off the whole Hispanic team. Blacks and things are leaving and never can be retained. They're talking about, uh, empowering blacks and stuff like this here, and they're firing these people up at the [denomination headquarters]. And they call it up under the name, 'an economic crunch,' money, but they're getting rid of – if this is supposed to have been something important to you, to break down walls and to retain and uplift blacks, why are you firing them all up there right now?

In this example, a person of color expresses that whites knowingly and consciously oppress nonwhites and when they don't admit this, they are lying. Yet when whites are asked about their oppressing people of color, they express bewilderment, surprise, or confusion. This particular example was one in which the researcher did member checking by making follow-up phone calls to probe for greater understanding of the respondent's meaning.

These sharply differing perspectives among the white participants and the participants of color presented a dilemma in analysis for the primary researcher because of her ascribed racial position and privilege. During peer review a colleague of color challenged the primary researcher to discern whether whites are speaking from an authentic ignorance in which they truly cannot see because they are blinded by their racial position in society or whether they are speaking from an intentional/self-preserving 'ignore-ance,' in which whites intentionally adopt a posture of ignoring what is blatantly obvious to people of color. (Isom 2004, personal communication). Many whites appear

to not understand the power or significance of race in the operation of the congregations. Letting go of "ignore-ance" on the part of the dominant race would require the courage to see and to name the power race has to shape institutions. Insofar as we try to ignore race and our racialized society by attempting to be color-blind, we hurt all people. To confront racism and begin the process of dismantling it, all of us—whites and nonwhites—need to develop a greater cognizance of race and the power it has to shape our daily experiences and sense of self.

This study suggests that people of all races in these congregations have internalized racist perspectives because of our racialized social systems. No one can claim neutrality, though it is very tempting to hide behind a color-blind rhetoric. Our society has taught us to repress racist ideas rather than to abolish them. Becoming race cognizant is a first step in the dismantling process. People of color need to be able to name how race has impacted them and bring to consciousness the ways they have internalized oppression so they can confront it. Whites also need to be able to name what whiteness means—'examining and naming the terrain of whiteness' (Frankenberg 1993:7). This forms a foundation for working toward and generating antiracist institutions.

The role internalized racism plays in supporting and reinforcing institutional racism needs to acknowledged and openly confronted. Part of the strategy to begin dismantling institutional racism in these congregations has been to do intentional work to *recognize* internalized racism and then to tackle the effects of internalized racism directly. In Chapter 7 we will examine the initial steps being taken by the antiracism teams to confront internalized racism and begin the process of dismantling it.

Chapter 7-Signposts of Hope

*We need people who not only speak truth to racism but who can envision a future church
where racism is no longer a defining characteristic of our faith.*
from *United By Faith* (2003)

Challenges

Beginning to understand how institutional racism operates in the specific settings

of these three congregations has been a challenging enterprise for both the people of color

and the white people in these congregations. But even more challenging has been the

growing recognition of the impact of internalized racism to reinforce and support the

structural aspects of racism in the congregations. It has required deep and honest

conversation about people's lived-experience regarding race and this work has not always

been pleasant or easy.

Part of the difficulty as we have seen in Chapters 5 and 6 is that whites and people

of color tend to interpret the dynamics of our racialized society very differently. The

empirical findings illustrate that they experience different realities day in and day out.

The findings are also consistent with those reported in the literature. Whites tend to

believe, act and communicate as though there are few or no race-based motivations or

implications in the functioning of our society while most people of color tend to believe

the opposite—that race-based motives and structures affect all aspects of life (Bratt

2001). Most whites and people of color tend to fundamentally doubt the validity of the

other group's reported life experiences. Whites often seek alternate explanations to what

people of color describe as race-based. People of color often claim they believe whites

are not honest when they deny race-based motivations and implications. This leads to a

genuine distrust of one another. Ethnic and racial groups tend not to trust each other at a

basic level and both sides tend to withhold and withdraw from each other. Unless these differences are recognized and acknowledged, the work of dismantling racism will not go forward.

Over the course of the last two years, participants in this study have gradually grown in their understanding of what it means to become antiracists. The scholarly literature on racism argues that this requires movement from a state of anesthesia and numbness to a state of consciousness and action (Barndt1991). "Being an antiracist begins with understanding the institutional nature of racial matters and accepting that all actors in a racialized society are affected *materially* (receive benefits or disadvantages) and *ideologically* by the racial structure [emphasis in original]. This stand implies taking responsibility for your unwilling participation in these practices and beginning a new life committed to the goal of achieving real racial equality"(Bonilla-Silva 2003:15).

In this final empirical chapter we will discuss the initial efforts of the antiracism teams to confront the anesthesia of internalized racism as well as their efforts to make structural changes within the institution of their congregations. These are beginning steps and this work requires perseverance and tenacity. This chapter describes the process for institutional change being undertaken and offers signposts of hope. Then, in the spirit of a scholar-practitioner approach to research, the chapter offers recommendations both for practice and for future research.

The overarching goal has been to make more explicit the impact race has on the functioning of the congregations and this has been worked on in two primary ways--- through caucusing to confront internalized racism and through strategy meetings to confront institutional racism. Strategizing to make institutional change will be limited if

effort is not made to confront internalized racism first. Strategy sessions involving institutional analysis and planning for institutional change are very intentionally separated from the conversations about internalized racism. In other words, each congregational team has monthly meetings for analyzing and building strategies to dismantle institutional racism. And separate from these strategy meetings, the three teams gather jointly for the sole purpose to explore, dialogue, and probe deeply how internalized racism has operated in all our lives and turned us into racists without our consciousness and often without our willingness.

Confronting Internalized Racism through Caucusing

One significant aspect of the antiracism training is its focus on how whites have internalized racist superiority and how people of color have internalized racist oppression which leads to inferiority. The antiracism training has focused on helping participants begin to see how this internalization has affected the formation and maintenance of our racialized society. During the course of the first eight months of this antiracism initiative it gradually became clear that to confront institutional racism, serious work needs to be done to recognize and acknowledge internalized racism.

Caucusing was introduced as a tool to enable participants to recognize, admit and confront their internalized racism. Caucusing encourages participants to consider with a degree of painful honesty who 'we have been turned into.' How do whites distance themselves from acknowledging how race privilege has worked to their advantage? How do fear, shame, and/or feelings of guilt lead to excuses and denial? How do people of color get stuck in blaming whites and continuing to focus on the past? How do

nonwhites disassociate themselves from their identity as nonwhites and unconsciously seek to be like whites?

At first caucusing was used during training events to help participants in separate racial groupings begin to understand what racism has done to them---both people of color and whites. Eventually the three teams decided that caucusing is such an important piece of this work that they wanted to build it into their on-going work. Various suggestions were tried as the participants struggled to figure out how to use caucusing to really explore internalized racism. It may be helpful here to describe for the reader the process and structure currently being used for caucusing. Various attempts at caucusing were tried and it has taken these antiracism teams months to develop a process that works with any degree of success.

The structure and process for caucusing   The three antiracism teams agreed to hold a separate meeting once a month specifically focused on addressing internalization issues. All participants from the three teams are invited one Friday evening a month (that in itself is amazing that people will make a *Friday night* commitment to such an event!) to gather for dinner and then to split into racially separate groups and meet in different parts of the building for several hours of more in-depth and honest dialogue. In these racially-separated groupings people talk more openly about how they are starting to recognize internalized racial superiority or racial inferiority. After the designated time, the white caucus and the people of color caucus re-convene for a short reporting out of what was just discussed. Very clear ground rules are set about confidentiality, about not offering judgment or critique during the reporting out and about not strategizing about how to

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'fix' something. The purpose of caucusing is to deepen understanding about internalized racism and to develop 'eyes to see it.'

Once people have begun to see what has been invisible to them in the past, there is a huge temptation is rush in and try to make immediate change. Most of the time this has not been advisable. Rather the caucus groups need to have patience and stay focused on developing the ability to recognize the subtle aspects of racism that all of us have internalized. So for example, white people in their caucusing might explore how their whiteness leads them to value quantity over quality in certain settings or the strong tendency to seek perfectionism which can lead to handling mistakes in confusing ways (failing to distinguish between *making* a mistake and *being* a mistake) or how the written word is worshipped (those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued even in organizations or settings where relational skills or the ability to relate to other people is key to the mission). People of color in their caucusing might explore how they have internalized negative definitions of who they are such as valuing light-skinned people more than darker-skinned people or how they compete with one another for attention and affirmation from white people in particular settings or how they de-value the opinions of other people of color. There are many, many different ways to explore how all of us have internalized racism and this work is difficult and requires people to take huge risks with each other in talking about things are very deep, almost unconscious and very painful when honestly confronted.

Progress in fits and starts These caucus groups have had to repeatedly be reminded that the purpose of these monthly caucuses is strictly to focus on recognizing internalized racism. Even though there may be a temptation to make suggestions for change or

action, this is not the primary purpose of the caucus. These caucusing sessions have been happening monthly for the past nineteen months and sometimes participants express that these sessions are very helpful and other times participants express that they are a waste of time. There has been confusion during caucusing especially in the early months when everyone kept slipping into discussing what whites need to do to change rather than facing how we all have internalized either racial superiority or racial inferiority. The groups have needed to be reminded over and over again that the purpose of this work is to confront what we have internalized and to postpone strategizing about change until we are in team meetings. It has taken months for the caucusing groups to clarify this and even now there are moments when this distinction is forgotten and the caucusing ends in confusion.

In the early caucusing meetings conflict emerged because some people thought these meetings should occur in mixed race groups to foster an understanding of each other's experience. But the trainers were adamant that the groups be separated by race for these dialogues about internalization because how internalized racism develops is quite different for people of color and for whites. For example whites try to distance themselves from racism and this can be seen with whites' tendency to defer to people of color when discussing racism in mixed race groups. Whites sometimes act like only people of color know anything about racism. This can prevent whites from looking deep within and beginning to do the internal work needed to develop the ability to 'see' racism in themselves. A person of color once shared at a meeting that it is a 'red flag' when a white person says, 'I need to hear the stories of people of color.' While there is a time where stories need to be shared so that empathy can be fostered, this can also be a

diversion tactic preventing a white person from doing self-examination. Each person is

encouraged in caucusing to wrestle to understand the self, rather than to focus on hearing

the stories of people from different racial backgrounds. Here is a section of dialogue

between people of color describing how the caucusing has affected each of them and why

keeping the races separated for this work has been beneficial.

> POC-M: Having to talk again about the analysis of racism creates a hurt within me and it takes
> awhile to recover and deal with it. To embrace the analysis creates a sense of hopelessness…the
> process of the caucus needs to end with encouragement and not stay stuck on the big picture.
>
> POC-F: I walk away with a different picture. When we are caucusing, I finally come to
> understand how much internalized racial oppression has been a part of my life. Embracing this
> understanding was life-changing for me. It helps me see how I've internalized inferiority.
> Realizing how society and racism has shaped me—naming it— helps me to release it. I need to
> be in the presence of other people of color to be able to talk about this."

Though it took months of caucusing, agreement was eventually reached that we need to

be with our own people to wrestle to see how we have internalized either superiority or

inferiority. This is an important first step in confronting it.

Deep challenges   Slow progress has been made as the groups have developed trust and

have grown in their own understanding of how to do the internal work that needs to be

done. However, there are deep challenges that must be and are being faced. For

example, people of color have described two of their biggest challenges—infighting

among themselves and preparing people of color to assume leadership.   Here a person of

color describes how infighting within the group diverts the attention from the real work

that must be done to confront racism and it is only through caucusing that people of color

can develop the 'eyes to see' the role internalized racial oppression plays in this dynamic.

> POC-F: One of the best answers that I got in the training highlighted four areas that people of
> color struggle in, in the internalized racial oppression scene, and the fighting, the infighting
> amongst people of color, was one of the things that is a product of racism that I never understood
> before. And it became so clear to me that if people of color can war against each other in any
> effort to bring the races together, the attention, the energy, will be on the war against each other
> and not on the battle against racism. And that just became so clear, and so that helped me to stop

personalizing a whole lot of the situations that I'd find myself in.... people of color have such a problem coming together to unite on issues that *could* make a difference. And not until being exposed to this antiracism model... looking at the issues of internalized racial oppression and internalized racial superiority, have I had a handle for how to define the war that goes on amongst people of color, and then what to do about it. So when I look across the board, to ask myself how I feel about this, [caucusing] the only thing that I have any hope for, because until people of color can put down whatever issues they have amongst themselves and say, 'the fight is racism, not white people, and we have to unite against racism and stop fighting each other,' will there be a critical mass that will make an impact. And I've watched it on a personal note, I've watched it across the board; I'm starting to listen to people who have been in public places for a long time saying the same thing year in and year out....but definitely defining the infighting as being the major obstacle as to why people of color can't come together to deal with an issue. It's, 'who's going to be on top; what's going to be the issue we're going to fight; how come you can't...?' You know, power struggles within the ranks, issue struggles within the ranks, that divides to the point of losing sight of what we're really doing,

Both whites and nonwhites have needed to be reminded to stay focused on their own internal work and not keep trying to change the other. Caucusing is a place where this has been reinforced and supported. Here a woman of color articulately explains her understanding of the importance of caucusing.

POC-F: We people of color keep stepping in and trying to help whites. That's their job....We have to trust whites to do their own work. Sometimes I'm frustrated, too, with the lack of change. But my role... I'm called to impact people of color. My job is to create an environment where people of color are allies with each other and to get us ready to take on power when change does happen. We need people of color who are ready, willing, and able to pick up the mantle. I'm trusting that whites are doing their own work. *My* responsibility is to the people of color caucus."

Another signpost of hope in the dismantling of racism will be when people of color are ready (and willing) to assume power and take on leadership responsibilities. On-going conversation continues about how to facilitate this. Here a white respondent describes his hopes for the future outcome of this antiracism work.

I: What's your hope for where this antiracism team ---within the church--- will help take the church? Do you have dreams and hopes about what will happen, and how might things be different in two years, five years, ten years?

W-M: Mm-hmm. Well, the two areas that I think are key – the way our worship feels and leadership – that will take us steps forward, and so we'll be even more a truly multiethnic, multicultural church in terms of power sharing and decision making, and I think one of the things I hope it means is that people of color will step to the plate more and that white people will have an analysis of racism that's way more helpful. I want it so clearly tied to the authority of the gospel and the call of Jesus Christ and so much sewn into our educational process that when persons... leave at age eighteen they have a call on their life about being antiracist and it's grounded in the

gospel, and they're formed and shaped that way the rest of their life. So that's really my hope and goal for that. So how children, and teens in particular, get involved in this is real important.

Whites face different challenges than do nonwhites. One of the most difficult is developing an awareness of what whiteness means in American society. It is not a neutral term like many white Americans assume. Being white brings with it unearned privilege and certain expectations. This respondent describes how the caucusing helps to clarify and bring to consciousness what in the past has been a structured invisibility.

> W-F:--Maybe as we all gain insights, and what I mean by 'we', the white people gain insights, we can help one another see how we do it [operating from a sense of privilege, entitlement, power, assuming a sort of reality] in our place of work, how we're still doing it in our place of worship. Um, I think we need one another to point it out. I just – it's just so...what we do. So...
>
> I: Is it invisible to us?
>
> W-F: Yes, I think it is invisible. It's just-- it's habitual, it's, you know, involuntary, it's how we breathe, it's what we do, it's, um...it's certainly what we know, and it gets reinforced all the time, you know. We go to a restaurant and expect to be served and if we're not served, if we're not welcomed, you know, that's a big deal. You go into a store, you don't expect to be tailed by a security cop; you might be insulted if you are—So, uh, I think it would *not* be a good thing if we stopped caucusing. I think there's an accountability to one another that should be fostered over time and I think the caucus is a vehicle to provide that.

Caucusing has served as a vehicle to help whites develop a sense of what their whiteness means within this society and within their congregations. It has helped bring to consciousness what has been internalized and assumed regarding race and it has helped develop a sense of accountability. In honest dialogue whites are beginning to ask new types of questions about how their congregations operate, how leaders are chosen, how programs are developed and whose preferences count in decision-making and resource allocation. Caucusing has contributed to racial reconciliation but more importantly it has helped whites to become allies with people of color in the struggle to make institutional change.

> POC-M: But when I first came here... it was a different environment. I think it was a more hostile environment than it is now. You know, now there *are* allies. There are people, I'm as raw as raw gets with them, you know, and they don't go, 'okay, I'm not talking to

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this...anymore.' You know, they welcome it, and there's healthy exchange, and I've seen growth, on both of our parts.

Participants in this study are not naïve about the breadth and depth of the change that is needed. They are taking initial steps to *address internalized racism through caucusing* and initial steps to *address institutional racism through careful analyzing and strategizing* at ongoing at team meetings and joint meetings of all three teams.

Confronting Institutional Racism through Institutional Analysis and Strategizing

The need for structural change in the congregations has become more obvious as participants have deepened their understanding of how institutional racism functions and as this has been more openly acknowledged. Ongoing dialogue and work is occurring to determine the best ways to make this happen—through individual congregational antiracism team meetings, leader meetings for the leaders of all three teams, and occasional joint antiracism team meetings.

Team meetings In addition to gathering for antiracism training days conscientious work has also been done among the three teams to build a sense of solidarity and a deeper honesty about how race impacts the life of the congregations. This work, though still in the early stages of implementation, has helped shift the conversation within these churches so that a greater understanding is starting to develop about the racialized dynamics which exist even within these congregations. Through monthly meetings for strategizing, organizing and motivating each other, members of each of these antiracism teams are working to make careful, systematic change. These team meetings are helping members to identify and analyze how the particular structures of their congregations (including leadership, decision-making, language, culture, budgeting and accountability)

are racialized and give preferences to some members of their congregations and exclude others. These team meetings involve discussion and analysis but also planning about how to make needed structural change at many levels within the congregations. For example it has been recognized that change is needed in the personnel and in some of the programs/services provided by the congregations. These are the most visible areas where change can be seen but the teams are recognizing that this can remain merely cosmetic, not reaching to the level of structural change that is required. So conversation has also included how to make change beyond just the constituency of the congregations but also in the organizational structure of the congregations which will hopefully lead to change in the broader mission and identity of the congregations. These strategy sessions are at times frustrating for the participants because of the tension of wanting instant change while knowing this is a long-term, slow process. Participants are recognizing and beginning to work on changing the processes for *nominating leaders* as well as the process for *developing* antiracist leaders among people of color and whites within each congregation. Consideration has been given to requiring antiracism training for all prospective leaders and intense conversation has ensued about whether to require it or merely encourage it for those interested in leadership positions in the church. Participants are beginning to consider decision-making structures, including *financial decision-making and accountability* particularly to people of color who have been excluded in the past. At these monthly meetings, *issues of power and misuse of power* within the institutional setting are becoming topics of conversation and consideration. Discourse is happening about how to create a long-term sustainable *identity* as antiracist congregations, not determined merely by the racial composition of the congregation but

more by how the congregation addresses whose preferences count in decision-making, planning, and leadership. Here a participant of color describes her hope for how the antiracism initiative will affect her congregation.

> I: How important do you think this current antiracism initiative is to the life of the congregation?
>
> POC-F: I think that if [our congregation] is going to…appreciate our rich racial, cultural diversity, if we're going to live that out, and if we are going to keep the people of color that we have and attract more people of color, I think that this next step in our journey, implementing this model of antiracism, is going to help to take us there if we do it right. I think what will happen is, we'll change not just the way we look, but we'll change the underpinnings that determine how we function, determine policies, determine procedures, that within – hopefully we'll be accountable to a body of people of color, so that whenever we make decisions, whatever we do, there's an accountability to a body of people of color … and that we aren't just doing stuff *to* people of color and *for* people of color, but it's done *with* people of color, and I'd like to think that this analysis, this model, is going to help us do that.

This respondent uses the word 'if' numerous times in this passage recognizing there will be many challenges the congregation must face if it hopes to succeed in making important institutional changes.

The role of the team leaders   The role of the team leaders in this initiative should not be underestimated. Each congregational antiracism team has had at least two team leaders who have agreed to provide leadership for this ongoing work. They have endured heated conflict, misunderstanding, and at times anger but most have persevered and have provided an important link between the churches. They serve as a conduit of information from their individual teams to the larger group of three congregational teams and from the larger group back to the individual teams. The team leaders serve in a significant way by keeping the issue of antiracism before the congregation and pressing to keep the agenda moving forward.

One of the striking things which emerged at a team leaders meeting about two years into the process was that this group of team leaders has become an accountability

group to each other and it encourages them all to keep going. It would be much more difficult if any one of these churches was working on this individualistically. This is an important finding of this study because it reveals evidence of solidarity and collective strength and the developing of accountability between whites and people of color. Participants are recognizing that they have claims on one another and that they need each another to be able to identify, analyze and then plan for institutional change.

Ongoing antiracism training for additional congregational members Another small signpost of hope is the expansion of antiracism training within these congregations. The original members of these congregational antiracism teams (approximately 48 people) have now begun assisting the denomination in organizing ongoing antiracism training. These two and half day trainings have occurred three times each year for the past two years and about 40 new people have attended each one. This has kept the issue of institutional racism on people's minds and among the members of the three congregations studied it has led to a continuing conversation about the role race plays in the life of the congregation. A slow but steadily growing number of people are beginning to consider how racism has shaped their congregation and they are beginning to analyze and discuss how to make necessary changes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, some initial recommendations can be offered for others interested in confronting institutional racism, particularly in congregational settings. There are implications for practice but there are also important implications for future research. Each will be highlighted.

Recommendations for practice Open acknowledgment and recognition of the racialized nature of our institutions, including the church, is a necessary beginning. This involves an honest assessment of the congregation and the role race has played in its institutional history, its culture and its current functioning.

> ...we must emphasize the crucial role the church can play in helping us to break through our anesthesia. This is probably the church's most important task in dealing with racism. The process we have called 'de-anesthetization' is helping people to become aware of their brokenness as a result of racism. It is taking away the insulation factor that stands between us and feelings of pain, separation, and imprisonment; it is offering a new wholeness to those who seek [an] alternative way of life (Barndt 1991:143).

Careful attention should be paid to how the rhetoric of color-blind racism may be impacting the perspectives *and* perceptions of congregational leaders and members. This can mask what may need to be openly confronted for change to occur. Ongoing dialogue is needed so that people collectively can develop a common analysis of the nature of the problem and of possible responses.

Long Term Commitment To begin antiracism work requires a willingness to engage in difficult analytical work *and* challenging internal work to examine what has been internalized in us regarding race. This work is not for the faint-hearted. It requires a willingness to take personal risk, to be exposed, to experience vulnerability and at times defeat. Nevertheless what is needed are people of influence who will say, 'We're in this for the long haul, we're committed to it.' The participants in this study recognized early on that to engage in this work they must make a long-term commitment and they must maintain a certain sense of perseverance in the face of many odds that will seek to derail the process. For people of color there is risk as honest conversation can stir memories or re-open wounds of painful lived experiences. For whites there is also risk as privilege

becomes more conscious and must be faced "as it in part defines who we understand ourselves to be...To look internally at privilege conferred due to education, race, sexual orientation, gender, or institutional affiliation means a long-term commitment to engage in deep inner work [that some] may not be prepared to do" (Chavez et. al 2002:91). So the first recommendation from this study is to count the cost of undertaking such an initiative and be prepared for a long-term commitment. It is not something to be entered into lightly without careful consideration of what will be needed in terms of commitment and time.

Intentionality   Much of the scholarly literature on multiracial or multicultural churches describes the need for intentionality in establishing diverse congregations. In a new study on multiracial congregations, De Young, Emerson, Yancey and Chai Kim (2003) argue,

> Churches that desire to become multiracial must prioritize becoming multiracial and retaining their racial diversity. Such churches will have to be explicit about their desire for a multiracial congregation...Intentionality is important because the social tendencies in the United States lean toward racial separation instead of integration... Another important aspect of intentionality is the creation of structures in the church that allow people of different races to meet together and get to know one another across racial groups...[there are] far too many multiracial churches that lacked real conversation between racial groups on the difficult and important topics of racism and racial alienation. If multiracial congregations are part of the answer to racism in the United States, then such churches must intentionally create the honest dialogue that is so often missing within other integrated social institutions, like schools and workplaces (De Young, et. al. 2003:178).

The word 'intentionality' was almost a buzz word among many of the participants in this study but there were varying degrees of understanding about its role. Some respondents had vague ideas about the need to intentionally include people of color among their ranks while other respondents seemed to imply that although intentionality to include people of

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color is important, it is not adequate to establish a truly multiracial, multicultural

congregation. Good intentions do not automatically lead to good outcomes because it is

so easy to default to white power and privilege in the functioning of the institution. Here

a respondent describes the particular challenge of wanting to be intentional but how even

this falls short of the goal.

> W-F: I don't think there's any one ministry that is exclusively run by whites and attended by whites. I may be wrong about that, but I can't think of any off the top of my head. But I'm sure on an individual basis... I think from a financial standpoint maybe. The people that deal with money right now I believe are all white. I don't think that's been the way – it's not always the way it's been, but I think that's where it is right now, and I think that's a big area that is easily made a white area. It's really hard I think for me to answer that question, because I don't see it all from their perspective. Um...I'd love to hear what they had to say, because those are exactly the areas that we need to go after as a team.

> I: What about the programs of the church or the structures of the church? ...are there programs and structures in leadership or outreach or whatever that *give* power and privilege to some and *limit* power and privilege to others? Do you see that playing out within [your church], where power and privilege is given to some more automatically and are limiting to other people?

> W-F: Well it's because of the majority. I think the majority always will default almost to giving power and privilege to their own, and that's where that issue of intentionality comes in, but we're not, we're not a hundred percent intentional. We have – every once in a while it feels like we did a good job trying to be inclusive. Most of the time I'm looking at it with a critical eye, but most of the time we fail even in that area. Let me give you a situation. Right now as a chair of the worship committee, um...we – I've been on the worship committee for about almost three years, and when I first joined the committee there were two people of color on. One was our director of music, who was black, and his mother actually, but she was involved in a lot of music, and then he left, therefore she left, and we decided we needed to get a person of color on the committee again. We asked someone who agreed and she made it to a meeting and ended up – went through a process of building a house or, you know, got busy, at least that's the word we got, and we haven't had a person of color on our committee since.

Intentionality, though a necessary and crucial first step, is not sufficient to lead to an

antiracist congregational identity because it is simply too easy for whites to default to

doing things the 'way it has always been done' and this gives priority and privilege to

white modes of operation and institutionalization because that is what is known tacitly.

Intentional inclusion of nonwhites in a particular church, on a particular

committee or even in a leadership position within the congregation does not necessarily

guarantee that it will lead to a multiracial, antiracist institution. Unless there is ongoing

analysis of how power is manifested and validated within the congregation, the status quo will be perpetuated consciously and/or unconsciously.

People of color also spoke about the challenge and the difficulty of expecting too much from white people's intentionality to include nonwhites or placing too much hope in intentionality as a basis for inclusion.

> POC-F: Right. Well, I think there's a real intentionality to include people of color, but I know – I can say for my personal self, sometimes to be around white people is work, because I can't be me. I can't – you know, I might say something and they'll go, 'Oh, what does that mean?' or, 'Why do you say that?' or, 'Why do you do that?' [nasally tones] or you can just see – you just made this comment and they are clueless, because their growing up, their environment, their culture, all this stuff is different than mine. But when I get with my-- my folks, you know, we can just, hoooo...
>
> I: Talk in short hand.
>
> POC-F: Exactly, exactly, and be us, and I think that's true with any culture. So to be – you know, to go out on Friday nights, or come over to a house for dinner, or whatever it might be, it's work, it's work. Now there are certain white people that in the ten years I've been here I've gotten to be very close with and so I can just call and say, 'Let's go to a movie,' and I don't – you know, whatever, it's just okay. But it is work. White people want to include us, and to some degree we want to be included, but I think that some degree comes in that...you know, 'I know here, I've been with white folks all day at work, when I had to go to the bank, when I had to the grocery store – just give me a break right now.'

This response reveals the difficulty of people of color and whites working together and understanding each other. People of color can become tired and discouraged when they are questioned and constantly have to explain their context and situation. Intentionally including the 'other' does not automatically produce a multicultural or multiracial institution. So the second recommendation is that intentionality is critical but must be tempered with realism about what it can accomplish. Without intentionality inclusion may not happen but good intentions are not enough to lead to the desired result of an antiracist congregation.

In-depth analysis of racism to change identity of institution Confronting institutional racism requires an in-depth analysis of the institutional structures in place that give preference to one racial group over other racial groups. Examining and

analyzing how certain practices, rituals and systems perpetuate and sustain racism is an important component of being able to make institutional change.

It is critical that a common understanding of the issues and a common language for discussing them be developed. This involves openly analyzing worldview assumptions of what a particular group believes to be true. Ethical and moral considerations are intricately linked to these assumptions. For example in these congregations their conversations were informed and shaped by a biblical vision for restored relationships and for just institutions. This foundation then led to an examination of how the congregation specifically does or does not fulfill its vision. So the third recommendation is a challenge to explore within the institutional setting how power is used or misused, how racial phenomena are structured in particular settings, and how specific practices and mechanisms (both overt and unconscious) can produce and reproduce racial inequality.

Structured relationships for accountability The fourth recommendation emerging from this study is that to create an antiracist, multicultural congregation concerted effort must be invested in creating a process for mutual accountability between whites and people of color. For years people of color have had to give an account to white people for their actions and decisions. Establishing structures for accountability wherein whites must be accountable to people of color is a radical change from the status quo. Usually whites make decisions and action plans without specific regard for or consideration of how these may impact people of color communities. Therefore, instead of functioning as though race does not matter (i.e. trying to be color-blind), race power and privilege is openly recognized for what it is and what it has done. This growing race-

cognizance can then be put to the service of dismantling institutional racism by people working to create specific structures which provide accountability between whites and nonwhites.

Recommendations for Research   Scholars have argued that congregations have the potential to affect grassroots change in racial attitudes and that multiracial congregations are one answer to the problem of race in America (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Kim 2003). If this is true, further study is needed to explore how multiracial congregations could impact not just personal attitudes but also the structural aspects of our racialized society. Can multiracial congregations play a role in confronting our racialized society by building within their institutions structures that promote justice, equity and accountability? Because the church is a microcosm of the larger society, there are implications that could be useful beyond this particular setting. If people gain consciousness about institutional racism here in a common space they inhabit, within institutions where they can actually affect change, then there is potential to dismantle it. It is therefore a stepping stone to greater consciousness about institutional racism *outside* the church. There are connections between how institutional racism operates within the church and within the larger society. In addition, this study is not just a blue print for church or other faith based organizations, but any organization that desires to do anti-racism work.

How does racial isolation and segregation (i.e. whites living in all-white neighborhoods, sending their children to all-white schools, joining all-white churches) affect the formation of ideas and perspectives about race? Researchers need to turn an

analytical gaze on *white* segregation and isolation from minorities and begin

documenting how this isolation affects whites' views, emotions, and cognitions about

themselves and about minorities (Bonilla-Silva 2003: 184). How does white isolation

contribute to the maintaining of a racialized society?

Another theme which emerged in the data is that people of color describe in

detail the economic differences and challenges they face in their daily lives—whether

that is having to default on a mortgage, losing a job/ facing continuing unemployment, or

having no means of reliable transportation when an old car breaks down. Though it is

beyond the scope of this study the findings suggest that more research is needed to

explore the relationship between institutional racism and poverty. Martin Luther King

argued in his Nobel Laureate lecture that our survival is dependent upon our ability to

solve the problems of racial injustice, poverty and war (King 1964). Much remains to be

learned about the connections between these important issues.

Limitations of Current Study and Need for Further Study

In any study there are certain constraints imposed because of time and limited

resources. In dissertations it is customary for a single researcher to plan, execute and

eventually analyze and write about the chosen topic of study (of course with the direction

and support of a guidance committee). In this particular study of racism in

congregations, the primary researcher benefited greatly from the collaboration with the

participants in the antiracism initiative because they probed, raised questions and at times

even demanded a certain level of accountability about the progress of the research. This

strength cannot be underestimated.

However one of the limitations of this research is that it was conducted primarily by a lone *white* researcher. The racial position of the researcher affected what was able to be seen, understood, and interpreted. During the course of the research it became apparent that the *racial* position of the researcher (in addition to worldview and perspectival positions) provided certain windows of seeing and certain blind spots. At times, this led the primary researcher to miss particular dynamics, or to misinterpret, or to be confused about what the data revealed. Having peer reviewers from different racial backgrounds helped to augment these limitations.

As other scholars have called for, more study needs to be conducted of how race and racism are operative in historically-specific contexts. A single white researcher studying issues of race and racialization is bound to miss important aspects of these important issues. In the future having a team of researchers comprised of people from different racial positions and different disciplinary backgrounds could strengthen research being conducted about the multi-faceted aspects of our racialized society.

In this chapter we have explored the initial efforts of the antiracism teams to confront the anesthesia of internalized racism as well as their efforts to make structural changes within the institution of their congregations. We have examined specific methods utilized by the antiracism teams to dismantle racism and though these are still in the very early stages of a long term initiative, there are some small signposts of hope. The implications of this research for practice and for future research have also been discussed. The people in this study who have been a part of the congregational antiracism initiative have deepened their level of analysis about what constitutes racism and they have deepened their commitment to one another to confront it. They articulate

clearly a growing recognition that they have claims on one another and that their joint

work to eradicate racism is in the interest of *all* people.

Chapter 8- Conclusion

*Our universal solidarity is rooted in the principle that "we have inescapable claims on one another which
cannot be renounced except at the cost of our humanity"*
from Peukert (1981)

Emerging Understanding

To grasp the complexity of the issues in this study took time and required patience

and perseverance for all the participants. Understanding emerged gradually and in many

ways, there is still a long way to go. Several years ago the *New York Times* ran a series

of extensive articles about race in America and the editor's introduction offered a

compelling portrayal of the challenge of discussing race in contemporary America.

> Their stories unfold over time in all their complexity, the patterns emerging only
> gradually to the beholding of a patient onlooker who has won their confidence
> and therefore the opportunity to serve as a sympathetic witness. And if this is true
> in general, it is exponentially truer when the subject under discussion is race, in
> particular on the white side, where, we were to discover, much seems repressed
> and open conversation about race is considered unnecessary and risky, if not
> taboo in decent company (Lelyveld 2001: xi).

Racism has been viewed historically by the general public as a problem that people of

color face and have to struggle with but not an issue that generally involves much

struggle for white people. This often leads whites to approach antiracism work as an

'add-on' or something they undertake in their spare time. "Antiracism work [i]s an act of

compassion for the 'other,' an optional, extra project but not one intimately and

organically linked to our own lives. Racism can, in short, be conceived as something

external to us rather than as a system that shapes our daily experiences and sense of self"

(Frankenberg 1993:6). The findings of this research suggest that for many whites racism

is something very difficult to identify within themselves and/or within the institutions of

society; discussion of race and racism is, at times, something to be avoided; and many

whites do not see the damage racism has done within their own lives. This research has sought to unmask the ways in which the experience of people in color has been ignored, sometimes misrepresented or distorted in the congregations and how this subtly maintains power relations that continue to disadvantage those who are locked out of the mainstream. The findings also suggest that antiracism work must not be seen as an extra project that is optional or voluntary but rather, as Frankenberg (1993) and others have said, it is linked to our very lives.

As we have seen, the racialized social systems framework understands that people need not intend their actions to contribute to racial division and inequality for their actions to do so. The literature on racialization and religion suggests that our institutions can reproduce racial inequality without people showing overt prejudice or discrimination. This can happen just by having ordinary people follow the 'American dream' in everyday actions and decisions, such as the neighborhoods we live in or the schools to which we choose to send our children. This research has demonstrated how it can also occur in religious institutions—particularly the local congregation. These research findings help to increase our understanding of how faith-based organizations that usually perpetuate racialization can become a force to make structural change to undo it. We have examined specific methods and structures operating within congregations that have perpetuated institutional racism and we have observed social practices within the congregations that support and maintain a racialized society. The task of uncovering and making racism visible in its various forms is an ongoing process of discovery.

Summary of Key Findings

This research contributes to the newly emerging literature on racialization and religion by demonstrating how racial phenomena are structured in the historically-specific settings of these three congregations. By examining the experiences of people of color in these congregations we have seen how particular practices and institutional structures produce racial inequality within these congregations. We have explored how differential access to power based on race leads to a differential distribution of resources within the congregation and how power given to certain groups eventually leads to privileges and resources flowing to some but not others. We have observed this differential access to power as revealed in: 1) who has influence within the congregations and whose preferences count in the primary functions of the congregation, including worship, programming, and outreach; 2) how leadership is determined and who has authority to make decisions; 3) who has access to information and how that affects the control of resources; 4) how accountability is handled within the structures of the congregations. These findings provide concrete examples of how institutional racism in the contemporary setting of the local congregation perpetuates a racialized society.

Acknowledging the breath and depth of institutional racism within these congregations has been a difficult and demanding process for the participants in the antiracism initiative. As we have seen, part of what makes this recognition difficult is that for most Americans much of our understanding of race/ racialization and how it functions within American society is unconscious and has been internalized in subtle ways (Bonilla-Silva 1996, 2001; Emerson and Smith 2000). In order to understand

institutional racism it is important to grasp the role that these internalized messages about race play in the lives of all people.

In this research we have explored how racism has been internalized in both whites and people of color by examining the language respondents use and the rhetorical positions they assume when describing their experience of race/racialization in their congregations. This has revealed some of what the people believe, consciously and unconsciously, about race and racism. Becoming aware of and conscious of the tacit assumptions we hold is a necessary first step in the dismantling of racism. However as we have seen, the findings of this study reveal not only the difficulty of bringing to consciousness that which has been internalized but also the persistent cultural forces that are subtly at work to maintain the status quo.

One of the most interesting findings emerging in this research is the stark contrast among whites and people of color in recognizing the racialized nature of their congregations. The participants in this study speak articulately and give examples from their lived experience of a racial hierarchy in American culture, even within their congregations. These strikingly different standpoints are the result of internalized messages about racial superiority and racial inferiority /oppression which form the foundation of the racialized American society.

The findings illustrate how race is *central* to the lives of people of color and how it shapes their perceptions of what is possible about the roles they play in the life of the congregation. In contrast, whites view race as *peripheral* and race is not something that is given much thought when they consider their involvement in the congregation. The findings reveal that whites tend to frame the problem of racism in *individualistic* terms as

overt attitudes or actions that white individuals do to oppress people of color whereas people of color frame the problem as *systemic* oppression. People of color describe how the structures or processes within the church tend to exclude them even when individual white people attempt to be inclusive. People of color and whites have a vastly *different awareness of race power and privilege* in the functioning of their congregations because of their strikingly different standpoints. People of color describe the subtle ways race functions to disadvantage them and are shocked that whites cannot see the privileges they are afforded in American society *and* in these congregations because they are white. By contrast, whites often do not recognize whiteness as a race and assume race is synonymous with persons of color. Because of this whites often have little recognition of the role their own race plays in the privileges they receive within the congregation. Whites often appear to speak from a position of ignorance and seeming unawareness and people of color believe that this is disingenuous and dishonest. Because nonwhites have no trouble producing specific examples of the racialization of the congregations, they often express disbelief that whites cannot see the privilege they have. Strong language is often used about how whites intentionally, deliberately and purposefully work to maintain white power and privilege, which oppresses people of color. For most whites, race privilege is invisible and they have limited understanding of how it functions to bestow benefits on whites and disadvantages on people of color. In contrast people of color easily identify the existence of race privilege and disbelieve that whites can not recognize it.

This research confirms what others have documented about the very different life experiences, opportunities, and expectations between whites and people of color

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(Emerson and Smith 2000; Bonilla-Silva 2001) and how this leads to very different perspectives about the salience of race. Whites often say or imply that people of color are focusing on race too much, are overly sensitive about race and need to 'move on.' It is not uncommon for whites to wish that people of color would 'let go' of the race problem and stop living in the past. This research is consistent with what was identified in the Pulitzer-Prize winning *New York Times* series on race published in 2001.

> It's impossible to read these stories...without encountering a parade of whites who want to believe that the time has finally come to lay this ages-old matter of race in America to rest; that is, for blacks to get over their morbid preoccupation with *it* and give *it*—and the rest of us—a rest...That blacks are oversensitive, that race is something that needs to be purged from their consciousness, that the problem of race is now mainly in their heads, is a leitmotif of white conversation ...the first response of whites, who, knowing themselves to be well meaning and guiltless by definition, find no connection between the persistence of race as a fundamental category in American life and their own individual lives. In simplest terms, race and issues of race make no obvious demand on them...Whites can walk away from race: it's over when they go home. With blacks, it's seldom so easy (Lelyveld 2001: xiv-xv).

The findings of this research suggest that in order to confront the problem of race in American society white people, in particular, need to become more aware of how race does make a demand on them. Whites need to be encouraged to take stock of their racial position and to become conscious of how their whiteness provides them with certain advantages. None of us has a choice about which racial group we are born into but we do have a choice about how we use the position we have and we do have a choice about what we do with the privilege we have been given. All people stand to gain if more attention is paid to making race more visible and to naming the power it has to shape the life opportunities and possibilities for all of us.

Thus an important finding of this research is that whites within these congregations need to develop a growing consciousness of how their race affects their

own daily lives as well as the life of the congregation. This is a necessary first step for confronting the damaging effects of racism. Because the church is a microcosm of the larger society, there are implications that could be useful beyond the particular setting of the congregation. The findings can lead to greater consciousness about institutional racism *outside* the church as well since there are connections between how racism operates within the church and within the larger society. This study is not just a blue print for church or other faith based organizations, but any organization that desires to do anti-racism work. Open and honest dialogue about how internalized racism reinforces institutional racism is very important if there is to be any hope of dismantling it.

The findings of this study can inform analysts who seek to understand institutional racism in other organizations by providing a framework for analyzing both institutional aspects of racism as well as internalized aspects of racism. This research holds significance for faith-based institutions as well as for policymakers and scholars interested in bridging race and class barriers and establishing a more equitable world.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Individual Interview Guide: Church Leaders

1) Introductory Questions (about the church in general)
>   How did you become involved in this church?   How long have you been a
>   member?
>   What is your understanding of the Anti-Racism initiative within this
>   congregation? PROBES: Who is involved in this initiative? How
>   important do you feel it is to the life of this congregation?
>   From your perspective, what is driving it?
>   Who makes most of the decisions that affect this congregation?

2) Questions about their own understanding and experience of race in America
>   In what ways was your own racial identity formed?
>   When did you become conscious of your race?
>   How has the church been similar to or different from other institutions in America
>   in terms of race?
>   From your perspective, how does race operate/function within your own
>   congregation?

3) Questions about individual racism within the church
>   How does a person's race affect their involvement in this church?
>   How have you seen personal prejudice influence the way particular people are
>   treated within this church?   PROBE: How have you personally seen
>   and/or experienced overt personal prejudice and discrimination within this
>   congregation because of your race?
>   In what ways are people of color included in this church?
>   In what ways are people of color excluded in this church?

4) Questions about institutional racism within the church
>   Have you been able to identify instances of hidden racism within the church?
>   How do the structures of your congregation (i.e. decision-making structures,
>   programs, leadership development, community outreach) give power and
>   privilege or limit power and privilege to people within the congregation?
>   In what ways are the programs aimed toward people of color in your congregation
>   and community controlled by white structures and white people?
>   In what ways do white people control the distribution of resources that reach
>   people of color in your congregation and community?

Appendix B

Group Interview Guide: Each Anti-Racism Team

Introductory Question
>Why are you personally involved in the Anti-Racism initiative?

1) Questions about their own understanding and experience of race in America
>In what ways was your own racial identity formed?
>When did you become conscious of your race?
>How has the church been similar to or different from other institutions in America in terms of race?
>From your perspective, how does race operate/function within your own congregation?

2) Questions about individual racism within the church
>How does a person's race affect their involvement in this church?
>How have you seen personal prejudice influence the way particular people are treated within this church?
>How have you personally seen and/or experienced overt personal prejudice and discrimination within this congregation because of your race?
>In what ways are people of color included in this church?
>In what ways are people of color excluded in this church?

3) Questions about institutional racism within the church
>What are some examples of hidden racism within the church? Do you see instances of subtle racism within the church?
>How do the structures of your congregation (i.e. decision-making structures, programs, leadership development, community outreach) give power and privilege or limit power and privilege to people within the congregation?
>In what ways are the programs aimed toward people of color in your congregation and community controlled by white structures and white people?
>In what ways do white people control the distribution of resources that reach people of color in your congregation and community?

4) Questions about hopes/expectations for the Anti-Racism teams
>What are your hopes for this work being done by the Anti-Racism teams?
>How are you handling differences of opinion? How are you handling conflict?
>How and when will your work as an Anti-Racism team be shared with the full congregation? What reaction do you expect?
>What needs to happen next?

Appendix C

Group Interview Guide: Each Congregation-at-large
(members not involved in ART)

1) Introductory Questions

What is your understanding of the Anti-Racism initiative within this
congregation?

Who is involved in this initiative?

From your perspective, what is driving it?

How important do you feel it is to the life of this congregation?

2) Questions about their own understanding and experience of race in America

In what ways was your own racial identity formed?

When did you become conscious of your race?

How has the church been similar to or different from other institutions in America
in terms of race?

From your perspective, how does race operate/function within your own
congregation?

3) Questions about individual racism within the church

How does a person's race affect their involvement in this church?

How have you seen personal prejudice influence the way particular people are
treated within this church?

How have you personally seen and/or experienced overt personal prejudice and
discrimination within this congregation because of your race?

In what ways are people of color included in this church?

In what ways are people of color excluded in this church?

4) Questions about institutional racism within the church

What are some examples of hidden racism within the church? Do you see
instances of subtle racism within the church?

How do the structures of your congregation (i.e. decision-making structures,
programs, leadership development, community outreach) give power and
privilege or limit power and privilege to people within the congregation?

In what ways are the programs aimed toward people of color in your congregation
and community controlled by white structures and white people?

In what ways do white people control the distribution of resrouces that reach
people of color in your congregation and community?

5) Questions about hopes/expectations for the Anti-Racism team

What are your hopes for this work being done by the Anti-Racism team?

What concerns/ conflicts do you have?

What do you expect will happen as a result of their work?

In what ways do you think your congregation may change as a result of this
work?

Appendix D

Individual Interview Guide: Caucus Leaders

1) Introductory Questions
   Can you describe what a caucus is and how it fits into the work of the
       congregational anti-racism initiative?
   What is the function or purpose of the caucusing?
   From your perspective, how important is caucusing for the anti-racism initiative?
   In what ways has the caucusing been significant to the process of the anti-racism
       initiative?

2) Questions about sense of solidarity
   What issues have surfaced within your caucus that you are now trying to address?
   In what ways does the caucus build a sense of shared identity among the
       participants in the anti-racism initiative? In what ways has it failed to build
       a sense of shared identity?
   In what ways has your caucus changed your understanding of race?
   In what ways are people taking mutual responsibility for each other's well-being?
   In what ways have the caucuses enabled people to build stronger relationships
       with people of their same race?   Cross-racially?

3) Questions about sense of agency
   Are there ways that your own consciousness of race has deepened or changed?
   What challenges / obstacles has your caucus faced? How are you trying to
       address these challenges/ obstacles?
   In what ways does caucusing develop a sense of empowerment to make change
       happen?
   Has the caucusing led to changes within the power structure of the congregation?

4) Concluding Questions
   Are there changes you'd like to see implemented in the caucusing?
   What do you anticipate for the future as far as the caucusing is concerned?
   What impact do you expect will happen as a result of the caucusing?

New Questions
What's been your personal experience in the caucus?
How have you felt during the caucus? Were there things that made you uncomfortable?
Why is this so hard?

Appendix E

Group Interview Guide: Anti-Racism Team Leaders

1) Introductory Questions
    From your perspective, how is the Anti-racism initiative progressing?
    What good things are happening? What successes have you seen?
    What concerns are emerging?

2) Questions about sense of solidarity
    In what ways are people building a sense of shared identity with one another?
    In what ways are people taking mutual responsibility for each other's well-being?
    In what ways are people building cross-racial friendships?
    Are there any ways racial groups are becoming less isolated, less segregated?

3) Questions about sense of agency
    In what ways has the Anti-Racism initiative changed your understanding of
        race? PROBE: Are there ways that your own consciousness of race has
        deepened or changed?
    How are members of the Anti-racism team coming to terms with power
        differences within the church?
    How are they developing a sense of empowerment or building a sense of agency
        to make change happen?
    What changes have been instituted in the power structures of the church?
    What challenges/ obstacles have you faced? How are you trying to address these
        challenges/ obstacles?

4) Concluding questions
    What do you anticipate the response will be from the congregation when you
        share the work your Anti-Racism team has been undertaking?
    How will you deal with resistance and defensiveness?
    What are the next steps?

New Questions
In what ways are people become more conscious of internalized racism?
What's been your personal experience in the caucus?
How have you felt during the caucus? Were there things that made you uncomfortable?
Why is this so hard?

Table 2—APPENDIX F

CODING TABLE

CODE	What does it mean?	When do you use it?	Example of when used.
FREE NODES (NVivo)			
Absence of POC in whites' experience	Whites not aware of POC or awareness of POC absent	When whites referring to an 'all-white' town or school	'My racial identity was formed within a very white context.'
Agency	Capacity of people to order their own world/ power to define themselves(w/o outsider control	When people refer to feeling empowered to make change happen or NOT	'I can be an agent of change at any given moment'
Caucusing	Purposeful meetings with races separated to understand how superiority/inferiority has been internalized	When people refer to what is discovered through caucusing	'Caucusing creates a unified front, it gives you that unified front'
Hope or optimism	Belief that positive change is possible	When people give examples of or expressions of hope/ change	'The real hope in my opinion is that we get back to our roots. This black-white thing is not that old, you know...Racism as we know it, may be 300-400 years old. It's powerful but it's not that old, and it's a matter of wanting to get back to the Biblical roots' ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ 'When we come into a caucus it provides hope because I'm not by myself'
Conflict	Examples of conflict or disagreement	When people refer to conflicts or disagreements	'...we question the denomination...we question their stick-to-it-tiveness...there's no self-regulating"
Connections	A resource that helps/supports people when they face difficulties	When someone describes how other people gave tangible and/or emotional support when they were in need	'At [Cambridge] we have a whole group of folks that...get together all the time. We're a care group unto ourselves'

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Disappointment/anger	Dashed hopes or dreams	When someone refers to their expectations not being met	"I realized then that there was system in place that continued to oppress you regardless of how educated you became. You still—you may do a little bit better, but as far as shooting for the moon and falling into the stars, that just wasn't going to happen, and I burnt a lot of energy fighting a system..fighting a losing battle. And I asked several times my supervisor, 'What am I dealing with here?' I had not a clue."
Economic Issues	Examples of economic/class issues	When referring to economic differences between POC and whites	'every time one of my people go to one of those meetings they have to get out of 6 or 7 hours of their jobs..my people suffer'
Exclusion of POC	Examples of how POC are excluded/not treated equally	When referring to how POC are not included/devalued	'In a way they're excluded because of the power structure even though we have a black minister, the power structure is still predominantly white'
Gender Issues	Power struggles and limitations caused by gender	When referring to different/unequal treatment because of gender	"No, not women elders and I don't even think women deacons are allowed yet. I'm not sure about that, but I'm saying that's gender-wise, but racially, no, you can be any position in this church. It's not like, 'Well, I can't go into that because I'm a black person.' You can go in anything you want."

Good intentions	Something intended for good but doesn't necessarily lead to positive outcomes	When referring to intentions not matching results	'I think of our attempts to be part of racially mixed congreg. and how intentions don't necessarily mean it happens.'
Hidden racism	Examples of racism unknown or unacknowledged by whites	When referring to people's comments about less obvious or covert signs of racism	'There's a whole lot of discrimination but it's subtle…it's more of a discounting, ignoring, avoiding, not thinking.' ██████████████ 'A white person is going to have more influence on the Consistory than a black person, and to me that's hidden racism.'
Inclusion of POC	Examples of how POC are included/ treated equally	When referring to POC being included	'POC are included in congreg…we have POC who are elders, who are very respected choir and worship leaders'
Individualism	Autonomy of individuals as part of the American dream	When referring to people watching out for their own interests and not part of a collective struggle	'No one is willing to unify to address racism because the assumption is that racism is not seen, so now instead of being in this struggle together we're in the struggle as individuals'
Intentional	Purposeful action to include POC in congregation and/or leadership within	When people refer to purposeful action or decision-making to include POC	'I think the church was intentional about hiring POC…for the last 40 years there's been a certain intentionality to do racial reconciliation'
Multicultural	Reveals evidence of more than one culture contributing	When referring to settings where different racial/ethnic groups are contributing	'[Cambridge] has a long history of trying to become multicultural and antiracist …we use the term 'diversity''

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Overt prejudice/ discrimination	Examples of obvious discrimination/ personal prejudice	When referring to specific situations where POC are being discriminated	'No black person is going to lead my kid...I'm not going to have a black person teaching my kid'
Partnership	Mutual reciprocity/respect between 2 or more entities	When referring to reciprocal working relationships	'I don't think any one of our churches want to be the only one doing this so in a sense there's safety in numbers'
POC feel invisible	Examples of POC feeling invisible	When referring to POC feeling overlooked, ignored or discounted	'POC tell me they are hidden in the congregation and they feel like they are not sought after for a voice.'
Race consciousness	Examples of people's consciousness of the effects of race	When referring to how race affects a person's involvement in a congregation	'[race] impacts their involvement significantly in ways I'm still discovering and learning...race impacts---100%' ▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪' 'I really don't think whether they're white or black it really affects their involvement in the church'
Racial Identity/Formation	Experiences which have contributed to the formation of one's racial identity	When referring to how a person's racial identity was formed	'We were bussed in and we were the white people bussed into this district and we were not very welcome.'
Solidarity	Deeply shared identity; commitment to others	When referring to people connecting with/ being committed to each other	'How do we build trust to cross the race differences?.. by establishing a friendship...it takes time.'

Structural Racism	Examples of systemic or institutional racism	When referring to unequal treatment that is built into the way things are done institutionally or systemically	'After I went thru that training I realized what I was dealing with...I was dealing with a system—a system of privilege...I thought that if I put forth the effort and I was qualified to do the job, then I would be promoted based on my merits, not based on my color. And I realized then that there was a system in place that continued to oppress you regardless of how educated you became'
Two Worlds	Examples of POC and whites living in separate worlds	When referring to people not understanding the life experiences of different racial groups	'I realized how difficult it was to get to know a POC & that they did not really want to get to know me...my world was so separate... just 2 worlds and it never dawned on me to try to mesh those worlds.'
Visible AND Invisible	Examples of POC being simultaneously visible (for certain reasons) and invisible (for other reasons) "under a microscope and invisible at the same time' (Sharp contrast is key)	When referring to examples of POC being invited to participate because color is needed but there voice and perspective is not valued.	'There are some of us that prefer not to be part of the status quo structure, so if you're going to invite me to be part of a leadership deal but basically all I do is go to meetings and I don't have much of a voice there, then why should I be part of that?'
Whiteness	White privilege and power functions in society almost without whites recognition	When referring to what whiteness means(most whites are unconscious of white privilege/ power)	'I don't know what being white means...it means I'm just another person and that doesn't mean I'm better or worse than anyone else.'

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TREE NODES (NVivo)			
Analysis/Training	General comments about the AR training or the impact of the analysis	When people referring to the training or the analysis in general terms	'Part of the analysis is to understand who makes the decisions.'
Power 1 (Oppression of POC)	Examples of racism's power to hurt, control, or disempower POC	When specific examples are given of how POC have been oppressed	'It's assumed that POC will just come along with any decision that is made and usually made by people who are white.' ■■■■■■■■■■■■■ 'They were willing to take my knowledge for the betterment of the company, but they were not willing to promote me into a supervisory position...they chose to promote a white woman that I had trained that did not have a high school diploma'
Power 2 (White Privilege and Control)	Examples of white privilege and power (conscious/unconscious) which maintains the status quo	When referring to white privilege which supports and maintains systemic racism	'we don't think about race when we are making decision and so... we perpetuate a white leadership.'
Power 3 (Internalization)	Examples of how whites have internalized racial superiority and POC have internalized racial inferiority	When referring to how a person's race has affected their sense of their place in the world	"White people's ego is stroked all the time whereas it's just the opposite for a POC. So you have internal dynamics. 'Yes, I can' the white person says. "I'm never going to make it' the black person says within himself."

Cultural Racism	Collective socialization to impose a way of life on oppressed groups which can discount/discredit POC cultures	When referring to behaviors that have been accepted (status quo) as people try to find acceptance	'...quietness of white people vs. loud, more vibrant personalities of the POC'
Action/Change	Examples of action to bring change or not	When referring to getting the congregations ready to change OR keeping things status quo	"this last training really helped me...[understand] our job is to help get them ready...to change'
White response to training	Examples of white response to training/analysis	When referring to comments made in support of or in resistance to the training (including caucusing or POC gatherings)	'We've got a few people who just seem not to get it& who are going to resist applying the analysis in terms of our church'
Definition of Racism	Ideas which contribute to people's definition of racism	When people give their own understanding of what racism is	'Racism at [Vance], it cannot exist because we're fifty-fifty...'
Decision-Making	Who/what has the power to influence or make decisions in congregation	When referring to how decisions are made	'look at our council...I think about an even amount of people of color and white people...all decisions are equally listened to and when we're making our decision I don't think there's really any racism holding our decisions down'
Pastor/Staff	Comments describing the role of pastor or other church staff	When referring to role of pastor/staff in making decisions	'we have a black minister and [he] does have a very powerful influence on what's done and what's not done but the power structure was predominantly white'
Key committees (including church councils here)	Examples of committees who have power to impact/ influence the congreg.	When referring to committees who have decision-making power	'worship committee ought to at least inform the elders the kind of conversation that we're having...'

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Consciousness-Raising	Comments on role consciousness-raising plays in decision-making	When referring to comments about educating people about racism ***REMEMBER: you can't eliminate racism by education	'(POC) have faced a lot of racism in their lives and, you know, at the very least they're learning about it and how it's internalized into this nation and stuff, and so at least for, you know, educational purposes, and how can you now fight it, and how can you do things differently, that's really important to this congregation'
Driving Forces	What is driving or motivating this initiative to become AR	When referring to more general comments about what is driving this initiative	'The American dream of equality. Equality and status in the CRC and the United States, that's what drives the initiative. It's the great American dream that everybody wants.'
Biblical Perspective	Belief in particular Biblical mandate(s) act as a driving force	When people refer to the Bible to explain their own perspective	'…the main motivation for the people involved in the team. They believe that a Biblical call, challenges what's driving it' ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ 'There's no Biblical mandate to address racism so it's easy to put it aside.'
Key people	Particular people hold power to motivate and drive this initiative	When referring to comments about particular people who drive the Anti-racism initiative	'We have a couple people who keep prodding and pushing us'
Denomination	Denomination has been driving the anti-racism initiative	When referring to comments about the role of the denomination in the AR initiative (positive or negative)	'I think we're really rather independent of the denomination a this point.'

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External	The motivation for involvement in the AR initiative is external (to self) or lacks a personal connection	When people give reasons that are not personal (moral imperative or Biblical call)	'what is driving this initiative? The Bible.' '...try to understand what the analysis was _they_ wanted us to embrace and _they_ wanted us to bring to our congregation.'
Internal	The motivation for involvement is internal and encompasses a personal connection	When people give personal/internally-driven reasons for involvement	'I think what's driving it here is our own sense of wanting to improve in the area of racial reconciliation.'

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