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MULTIRACIAL CHURCHES: AN UNUSUAL ARRANGEMENT

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MULTIRACIAL CHURCHES: AN UNUSUAL ARRANGEMENT

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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It is commonly said that 11:00 A.M. Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America. The contact theory explains how interracial contact can help to ameliorate racism - and this type of interaction can easily be fostered in a church environment. Durkheim's idea of the "collective effervescence" felt in ritual experiences would be beneficial for crossing racial lines and improving race relations in the U.S. in multiracial churches. A great deal of recent sociological work has focused on the phenomenon of church segregation on a nationwide scale. This paper compares characteristics found in nationwide religious congregation surveys and case studies to the 2007 Kent County Congregations Survey to identify particularities in the Kent County region and scrutinize the previously identified characteristics and developing theories on multiracial congregations. In Kent County, the common characteristics of multiracial churches are being in an urban location (as opposed to a suburban or rural location), and having a higher percentage of theologically liberal members (for congregations less than 20 years old). Implications and suggestions for further research follow.

KEY WORDS: Multiracial Churches, Contact Hypothesis, Organizational Identity, Race, Religion

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This thesis is dedicated to my wife who supported me throughout this project, and my dad, who helped ignite my curiosity on the topic of multiracial churches long ago.

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"The American Church of Christ is Jim Crowed from top to bottom. No other institution in America is built so thoroughly or more absolutely on the color line. Everybody knows this."
W.E.B. DuBois, "The Color Line and the Church," 1929 p. 169

"A further effort that the church can make in attempting to solve the race problem is to take the lead in social reform. It is not enough for the church to be active in the realm of ideas; it must move out into the arena of social action. First, the church must remove the yoke of segregation from its own body. Only by doing this can it be effective in its attack on outside evils. Unfortunately, most of the major denominations still practice segregation in local churches, hospitals, schools, and other church institutions. It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning, the same hour when many are standing to sing, "In Christ there is no East nor West." Equally appalling is the fact that the most segregated school of the week is the Sunday school. How often the church has had a high blood count of creeds and an anemia of deeds!"
Martin Luther King Jr., "Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story," 1958 p. 202

The words of DuBois and King shown above still ring true today, as recent data from the National Congregations Study shows that nine out of ten congregations have a majority race that composes 90 percent or more of the congregation (Emerson and Kim 2003). Similar figures have been found in other national congregation surveys as well (Dougherty and Huyser 2008).

Differences in worship styles, communication styles, and other cultural differences likely contribute to the persistent pattern of segregated worship. History, too, is a factor – as the church has served different functions for different racial groups historically. Additionally, the historical pattern of racial segregation in the churches has continued. In spite of authoritative religious texts speaking of a body of believers of all

nationalities, local congregations remain racially homogenous. Why is this? How can this norm be challenged?

The research problem is, in effect, that churches in America are racially segregated. This is problematic because the lack of potential interracial interaction is a lost opportunity to ameliorate racism. The contact hypothesis explains that intergroup contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members (Allport 1958). It details that when members are of equal status, with common goals, performing tasks that involve intergroup cooperation under the support of authorities, laws, or customs, this is the best form of contact for reducing prejudice (Allport 1958).

It is easy to apply this hypothesis in the context of religious organizations, especially if service projects (or even simply collective worship experiences) are involved. In fact, in 1999, Yancey applied the contact hypothesis and found that whites who attended multiracial churches exhibited less social distance from and tended to stereotype African Americans less than whites who attended racially homogeneous white churches (Yancey 1999). Durkheim's idea of "collective effervescence" (the energy formed by the gathering of individuals where they lose their individuality and unite with each other and with a god) experienced cross-culturally would indeed strengthen intergroup solidarity (Durkheim 1912).

In recent history, there has been a growing body of literature in this area, and several characteristics common to multiracial churches have been identified. The majority of these recent studies rely on either nationwide surveys or individual case studies. The characteristics identified are therefore characteristics of multiracial churches

in the United States. These characteristics include both external characteristics (e.g. those related to the congregation's location) and internal characteristics (including both sociodemographic characteristics and religious characteristics related to the congregation's theological beliefs). A theory of organizational identity for multiracial churches has been developed, stipulating that a multiracial congregational identity displays intentionality, utilizes experiential worship, and emphasizes relational connections among congregants (Dougherty and Huyser 2008). Additionally, an analysis of the development and typology of multiracial churches has been developed which classifies multiracial congregations based on primary impetus for change, source of diversification, and congregational type and produces seven types of multiracial congregations based on combinations of these factors (Emerson and Kim 2003). How might a regional survey differ or challenge some of these associations and developing theories, and how could it contribute to them?

Kent County is a county in Michigan that is unique in many ways. The purpose of this research is to use the 2007 Kent County Congregations Survey to explore whether the multiracial congregations in Kent County fit the characteristics identified in the national research. The question this research addresses is as follows: What are the characteristics of multiracial churches in Kent County? Additionally, we will ask what are characteristics associated with different racially homogeneous church congregations (e.g. African-American, White, Latino/a); doing this will leave us with factors that we can consider to predict the racial composition of a church and its likelihood of being multiracial, and see how far congregations are from the multiracial ideal type.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

1. Theory

In *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Emile Durkheim noted that "sacred" instances where entire religious bodies gathered together, united by their supernatural belief, helped increase solidarity by way of a "collective effervescence" (Durkheim 1912). Essentially, Durkheim's view of community ritual (as displayed in church services) explains a benefit of collective religious worship to establish solidarity. Churches provide an opportunity to establish solidarity across racial lines through the collective effervescence of interracial worship. Collective effervescence, for Durkheim, was exhibited in churches and congregational worship services were one example of where he believed collective effervescence occurred (Durkheim 1912). Religion was defined by Durkheim as, "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, i.e., things set apart and forbidden--beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them (Durkheim 1912:44)." This uniting aspect of church when applied to a racially segregated country like the U.S. could provide major benefits to society.

Another theory that supports the societal benefit of multiracial churches is Gordan Allport's contact hypothesis. The contact hypothesis explains that intergroup contact is one of the greatest ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members (Allport 1958). Allport specifies the four optimal conditions for prejudice-reducing contact as when members are of equal status, with common goals, performing

tasks that involve intergroup cooperation under the support of authorities, laws, or customs (Allport 1958). The contact hypothesis emerged when racism was thought to come from irrationally held beliefs and individual attitudes; the idea was that bringing people together would demonstrate to them that their attitudes were irrational and lead to attitudinal change (Emerson, Kimbro, and Yancey 2002). This assumed that attitudes and behaviors are causally related (Emerson, Kimbro, and Yancey 2002).

The contact hypothesis is not universally accepted. Some argue that the contact hypothesis ignores social norms and broader intergroup contexts, which mediate the effects of intergroup contact (Ata, Bastian, and Lusher 2009). However there is recent research that supports the claims of the contact hypothesis, and even shows that any type of contact (including intergroup contact without the optimal conditions present) reduces prejudice; the optimal conditions only serve to enhance the tendency for positive contact outcomes to emerge (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). A meta-analysis with 713 independent samples from 515 studies showed that any type of intergroup contact reduced prejudice, and the optimal conditions were not essential for prejudice reduction (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). In fact, 94 percent of their sample showed an inverse relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Additionally, one study showed that even simply imagining intergroup contact reduced prejudice (Turner and Crisp 2010). The success of the contact hypothesis leads some scholars to the support of governmental policies based on integration:

> "Irrespective of the influence of culture and racial/ethnic composition, contact can and does help to disconfirm stereotypes. Although the effects of contact are modest in an absolute sense, even relatively superficial contact helps to counteract some of the effects of other sources of stereotypes. As such, our results lend qualified support to the continuation of racial/ethnic policies that are designed to bring racial/ethnic groups into contact with one another. By promoting black-

white contact and exposing whites to new information, desegregation and affirmative action policies in schools and workplaces are likely to help disconfirm anti-black stereotypes (Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004:277)."

Unfortunately, for those white individuals involved in the interracial contact or interracial friendships, these relationships have almost no effect on policy orientations towards blacks; whites continue to oppose governmental attempts to promote racial equality in spite of having interracial friendships (Jackman and Crane 1986).

One study using data from the 1990 General Social Survey showed that after controlling for demographic variables, "The most powerful effects of attending integrated churches are that white respondents engage in less stereotyping and have lower levels of social distance (Yancey 1999:298)." Other research also suggests that whites who attend church with people of color are more likely to have progressive racial attitudes than other whites (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005). Members of integrated churches are significantly less likely to believe that whites should be able to keep blacks out of their neighborhood, and they are more likely to vote for an African American presidential candidate (Yancey 1999). Although the research cited here did not eliminate the possibility of some selection effect, they illustrate that the advantages of interracial contact are manifested in the congregational setting (Yancey 1999). This helps to legitimate the research done here. Although not testing the contact hypothesis, this research explores characteristics of multiracial churches and views interracial congregations as a tool for combating racism.

Moving forward from this point, the published literature on multiracial churches includes several theories developed about them. Emerson and Smith's 2000 book, *Divided by Faith*, a pioneering book in the study of multiracial congregations, pushes the

argument that, "In the face of social and religious pluralism, the organization of American religion powerfully drives religious groups toward internal similarity (Emerson and Smith 2000). The book argues that the costs of producing meaning, belonging, and security are higher in diverse congregations because of the complexity of demands, needs, and backgrounds the increased effort required to create social solidarity among various groups (Emerson and Smith 2000). They explain the *niche edge effect*, which means that voluntary organizations lose members who are atypical of the group faster than other members (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005; Emerson and Smith 2000). Another factor contributing to atypical members leaving congregations is the *niche overlap effect*, described by Christenson, Emerson, and Edwards as, "When the niches of organizations and groups partially overlap, they recruit some same-kind members. For the members being recruited simultaneously by multiple organizations – again, those on the edge and thus most dissimilar – the result is less stability of membership in any one particular group, because of the finite access to time and other resources (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005:153)." To combat these two effects, it is argued that membership of multiracial congregations should consist of people who are more integrated across race than the general population (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005). This fits with the observation that interracial churches often have a higher proportion of members from biracial or interracial families, who act as a stabilizing force in these congregations (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005)

Minority members, some scholars argue, bear disproportionate costs of membership in multiracial religious organizations (but that cost typically decreases as minority groups grow in number, and larger congregations help minimize the costs as

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well) (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005; Dougherty and Huyser 2008). Data from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey revealed that majority members in multiracial congregations had longer membership durations than non-majority members, and that gap increased with the size of the majority (Scheitle and Dougherty 2010). Rev. James Forbes, the first black pastor of New York's famous Riverside Church (a multiracial congregation), claimed that an integrated church is where everyone expects to enjoy 75 percent of what is going on and be made uncomfortable by the remaining 25 percent (Ammerman 2005; DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003). It is of paramount importance for those who have minority status in the broader community to not have to bear significant costs in membership in their religious organization, where they may be seeking refuge from such a burden (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005). Having friends within the church helps, but some research has shown that minority members were less likely to have their closest friends within the church (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005).

In some congregations, a particular ethnic identity is accentuated and rewarded (Marti 2008), and unfortunately, using research from a national survey as well as an individual case study, some research concludes that multiracial churches typically conform more to the European American church model and tend to be places where white Christians will be comfortable (Edwards 2008). Signs that may give minority group members feelings of structural inclusion include the vision statement of the organization, worship styles, leadership representation, and other such structural arrangements, many of which are recognized characteristics of multiracial churches to be discussed shortly

(Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005). In spite of those indicators of inclusion, multiracial churches still cater to white congregants (Edwards 2008).

In one multiracial Baptist church outside of Houston, whites displayed less tolerance for not being the core group and nonwhites appeared to have greater patience for cultural practices and social structures that did not favor them (perhaps because they were more adapted to this in their daily lives) (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005). It could be that whites use practice and language (two aspects of power) to create a space that is still dominated by white culture but appears open to other groups who will enter in subservient positions (Howell 2007). White individuals in multiracial congregations are more likely to believe in the intrinsic benefits of attendance in a diverse congregation, but they are also more likely to leave if they do not maintain their position atop the hierarchy of influence in the organization; this is in part due to the higher rates of non-local mobility among whites (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005).

Some have noted a few phenomena that go on in multiracial churches, particularly for minority group members as they make their decisions to join. The distinctive accomplishment of multiracial congregations has been described as the cultivation of an inclusive religious identity that overrides divisive aspects of ethnic identity (Marti 2008). Ethnicity is contingent, volitional, and negotiated, and multiracial congregations are capable of success in providing alternative shared religious identities that trump ethnic identities (Marti 2008).

Using Erving Goffman's impression management theory, Marti's research highlights the moment-to-moment variability in the "manifestation and salience of any aspect of one's identity", and also addresses how organizational structures are significant

for constituting the self (Marti 2009:55). Three of the most significant moments

identified in the study are when affinity with the congregation is established, identity

reorientation (through sermons, music, small groups, classes, workshops, pamphlets,

books, and informal relationships), and ethnic transcendence (Marti 2009). In multiracial

churches, "Havens" exist, where ethnic reinforcement occurs for minority congregation

members (such as gospel music for African Americans in predominantly white churches)

(Marti 2010). They reinforce aspects of the minority ethnicity, drawing members in and

contributing to identity reorientation (Marti 2010). Subsequent to identity reorientation,

ethnic transcendence occurs (Marti 2010). Because individuals derive a sense of identity

from belonging to a group (Read and Eagle 2011), ethnic transcendence involves giving

priority to religious identity over racial or ethnic identity, and Marti is quick to explain

that this is not a colorblind concept as it has been accused of (Garces-Foley 2007b),

stating, "Ethnic transcendence is not to be confused with a type of "color-blind" approach

to diversity that intentionally seeks to overlook ethnic differences. The emphasis is not on

ignoring distinctives but rather on accentuating an alternative identity rooted in the

ecclesial community (Marti 2008:14)." The differentiation here is a thin line; it seems

Marti argues that ethnic transcendence does not actively promote colorblind thinking, but

it certainly may be a byproduct.

Often times the people who attend multiracial churches are different from those

who attend racially homogeneous churches, having attended a more diverse school as

they grew up, having attended multiracial churches in the past, or even exclusively

desiring a multiracial worship experience (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005).

One study showed that African Americans in interracial churches lived more integrated

lives growing up than other blacks, were demographically different from other black churchgoers, and had more racially diverse social networks, but still maintained similar attitudes about issues of race and social issues as compared to African Americans who did not attend interracial churches (Emerson and Yancey 2008). This indicates a selection bias, as those with prior interracial experiences may be more apt to voluntarily choose to join interracial congregations.

Taking a step back from the individuals to the congregations, one study based on an in-depth look at 20 multiracial congregations across the country resulted in the formation of a typology of multiracial congregations and how they come about (Emerson and Kim 2003). In this study, two main variables were shown to underlie the creation of multiracial congregations: the primary impetus for change (mission, resource calculation, or external authority structure), and source of diversification (proximity, culture and purpose, or preexisting organizational package) (Emerson and Kim 2003). Ultimately, three ideal-type categories of multiracial congregations emerged: (1) assimilated multiracial congregations (reflecting the dominant racial culture and with the dominant race in leadership); (2) pluralist multiracial congregations (containing separate and distinct elements of all racial cultures with low interaction across races); and (3) integrated multiracial congregations (which maintain aspects of separate cultures and develops a new culture with high interaction across races) (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003; Emerson and Kim 2003). What category a congregation most closely aligns with plays a role in how beneficial the interracial contact in that congregation is, although as noted earlier, almost any contact is beneficial (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).

2. Characteristics of Multiracial Churches Identified in Prior Research

Prior research in the study of multiracial churches has identified several characteristics common to multiracial congregations. These characteristics, the majority of which come from national survey data or individual case studies, contribute to our understanding of multiracial congregations.

Some of the characteristics identified as common among multiracial congregations include external factors such as being located in the Northeast or West coast of the U.S. (and not the Midwest or South) and being in a densely populated, diverse urban neighborhood (Dougherty and Huyser 2008; Dougherty 2003). Internal factors also play a role, including being catholic as opposed to protestant; being in a denomination with a focus on race relations; having contemporary, expressive, charismatic worship; having a racial mix of leaders (with senior clergy a different race than the majority of the congregation); the presence of small groups; having younger average membership age; being a young church (founded recently); having higher average congregational education and income levels; doing race relations programming; and congregation members spending more time in fellowship together (Dougherty and Huyser 2008).

Several other characteristics have also been identified. Notably, there is a somewhat complicated relationship that appears between theological orientation (liberal or conservative) and multiracial congregations. African Americans frequently hold more traditional or conservative theological beliefs than mainline protestant white Christians; however when it comes to social justice or politics, they are often more progressive (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003). This phenomenon is just one

example of how religious affiliation and theological conservatism have different

meanings and implications for political orientations depending on race or ethnicity, as a

conservative theology for an African American does not typically go along with a

political conservatism (Hunt 2007).

> Yancey and Kim argue that,

> "Theologically progressive congregations may attempt to diversify by race and class as well as encourage the inclusion of women leadership. These congregations may do so because of a global progressive interpretation of their Christian faith. Racial integration becomes just another dimension in a theology of inclusiveness. It may be their theological progressiveness, rather than their racial integration, that is their defining characteristic (Yancey and Kim 2008:109)."

In their view, theological liberals could be more embracing of a multiracial mission.

Other research has shown that interracial organizations that use theological justifications

for their multicultural orientation are more stable than those that do not (Christerson,

Emerson, and Edwards 2005). In explaining racial inequality, it has been noted that

while 62 percent of white conservative protestants used individual-level explanations

(lack of motivation), only 40 percent of white theologically liberal protestants did

(Emerson and Smith 2000). The argument that follows this observation is that

conservative religion, "Intensifies the different values and experiences of each racial

group, sharpening and increasing the divide between black and white Americans

(Emerson and Smith 2000:97)."

However, there is contradictory evidence as well. "The concern with racial

reconciliation is by no means a monopoly of more liberal congregations. A number of

Conservative churches are also multi-ethnic and have designed innovative strategies that

build out of their own theological traditions (Ammerman 2005:129)." One multiracial

Midwestern Baptist church left the American Baptist convention because the church considered it too theologically liberal; this theologically conservative church was multiracial (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005). Another study found that theologically conservative protestant congregations were six percent racially mixed whereas mainline, more theologically liberal protestant denominations were only three percent racially mixed (Emerson and Woo 2006). It should be noted that the conservative protestant category includes Pentecostal and charismatic denominations, who have historically been more frequently multiracial and whose worship style is recognized as common among multiracial congregations.

Another important factor not yet mentioned is a strong organizational identity (often reflected through the mission or vision statement of the church or the racial composition of leadership), capable of ameliorating the in-group/out-group distinctions posed by race and ethnicity (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003; Dougherty and Huyser 2008). Prior research suggests that the organizational identity of multiracial churches involves intentionality (indicated by diverse leadership, among other things), experiential worship, and an emphasis on relational connections and an inclusive congregational identity (which small groups help to cultivate) (Dougherty and Huyser 2008). Active intention is required for multiracial congregations to be sustainable, and that intention can be illustrated through the church's vision (Ammerman 2005). The vision for the church, however, cannot simply be having a diverse congregation as an end goal; instead, diversity needs to be a required element of the larger vision for the congregation to buy into (Emerson and Woo 2006). Racially diverse leadership is also helpful as the staff can satisfy the multiple constituent groups within the organization

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better and lessen the level of conflict (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005).

Leadership of multiracial congregations is less likely than that of uniracial congregations

to be African American (four percent of multiracial congregations are headed by black

leaders whereas 20 percent of racially homogeneous congregations are), and is more

likely to be someone of mixed racial heritage (12 percent of multiracial congregations

versus one percent of racially homogeneous) (Emerson and Woo 2006). Based on the

National Congregations Study (Chaves 2004), 68 percent of head pastors of multiracial

congregations in the U.S. are white (as are about two thirds of adult attendees) (Edwards

2008).

Small groups are an important characteristic of multiracial churches. Small

groups typically involve groups of 12 or fewer people who gather together for fellowship

or Bible study. In creating an inclusive identity for the congregation and cultivating a

united membership, small groups have been shown to be very beneficial (Dougherty and

Huyser 2008). The bonds formed within a cell group or small group help foster a sense

of belonging in the greater congregation for members of multiracial churches, as the cell

group is looked at as a microcosm of the larger community (Garces-Foley 2007a). These

bonds formed in small groups and the sense of belonging that is fostered are crucial for

keeping members, as churchgoers who do not form these types of bonds rarely stay in the

church (and if they do stay, they rarely become active members) (Garces-Foley 2007a).

Consequently, churches with regular small groups have been shown to be more racially

diverse than churches without them (Dougherty 2003). The benefits of small groups

continue irrespective of congregation size; however the necessity of small groups is

exaggerated in larger congregations; that is, the bonds and the feeling of belonging

developed in small groups is more important in larger congregations where that sense of belonging is less likely to be developed outside of the small group (Dougherty 2003).

When considering multiracial churches, there is a great variation in the styles of worship that congregations embrace and recent research suggests there is no single "right" way to do worship in multiracial churches (Marti 2011). There are however, wrong ways. A study of a temporary trial merger of two churches in South Carolina where one congregation was predominantly black and the other predominantly white showed that as the worship style of the merged church shifted toward a more exclusively white style of worship, black attendance dropped; ultimately, at the end of the trial period, most of the white congregants were in favor of merging the two congregations and the majority of the black congregants opposed it (to the surprise of the white churchgoers) (Priest and Priest 2007). One issue many multiracial churches have is not adopting the worship styles and practices of African American churches, and this fact undoubtedly contributes to black/white multiracial churches being some of the most difficult to sustain (Edwards 2008). In fact, African Americans in multiracial churches are often viewed in a homogeneous way by other church members as ecstatic and naturally musical; it is reasonable to believe that this stigma may be a source of frustration (Marti 2011). Many African Americans in multiracial congregations feel they have contradictory expectations, where as worship performers they are expected to be more expressive, yet in the pews they are asked to refrain and "suppress a little bit (Marti 2011:70)."

As the attempted church-merger incident illustrated, congregational worship has the power to either include or exclude cultural groups (Dougherty and Huyser 2008).

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Because of this power, "The worship styles of multiracial churches tend to include the cultural elements of more than one racial group. The worship style of most integrated multiracial congregations tends to be a mixture of several different racial worship styles (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003:176). Multiracial churches utilize what Marti refers to as "Racialized ritual inclusion", the process by which church leaders change worship services and incorporate members of differing racial and ethnic groups, or "the engine that drives diversification through worship (Marti 2011:199)."

Multiracial congregations have a number of effects and ways they impact individuals involved and communities that support the contact theory. Wilcrest, a predominantly white Baptist church in Houston that became multiracial, had many congregants note that the diversity at the church changed them in a positive way, sometimes reducing stereotyping and prejudices (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005). In other research, the results of interviews showed that integration in the church helped people grow more secure and proud of their unique cultural identities, as well as causing an increase in the diversity of the majority of people's friendship circles after joining multiracial congregations (Emerson and Woo 2006). Additionally, although the costs of attendance in multiracial churches are typically born disproportionately by minority group members, many attendees report a unique exhilaration in worshipping with a diverse group, describing it as a, "Taste of heaven," and a lot of these people claim they would never be a part of a racially homogeneous church since joining a multiracial congregation (suggesting the transformative power of religion acting against social norms) (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005:179). Multiracial churches clearly have potential to be a powerful force in race relations in the larger society; however the

church needs to address structural inequality and group-based interests to maximize its impact (Garces-Foley 2007a).

Currently, the structure of U.S. religion is highly racially segregated, and segregated congregations often have unique characteristics that distinguish them from one another. Location is one way, as white congregations are less often in diverse neighborhoods than multiracial or black congregations; on the other hand, Asian and Hispanic uniracial congregations are found in more diverse neighborhoods than multiracial congregations nationwide (Emerson and Woo 2006). Black congregations are often located in neighborhoods that have higher levels of poverty, political alienation, and social isolation, and black churches differ from white churches in that they likely face more pressure to respond politically to social concerns that impact their congregants, communities, and society (Brown 2006). Evidence of this may lie in the fact that black congregations are more likely than Asian, Hispanic, or white congregations to provide health programs that serve their communities (Brown and Adamczyk 2009).

The history here is important. For black and Native American individuals, in light of the historic pervasiveness of racism against them (and other nonwhite people), congregations became important cites for the affirmation of their humanity (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003), so congregations in these communities are markedly different than white American congregations. Worship styles also differ. Black congregations are more likely to show verbal affirmation and spontaneous physical worship, two charismatic elements that have been also linked with multiracial congregations (Edwards 2009). Finally, Catholic congregations, which are more frequently multiracial, have fewer differences when they are racially homogeneous, aside

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from a lower percentage of attendees without a high school diploma for white Catholic congregations compared to African American Catholic Congregations (Edwards 2009)

3. History

As the majority of congregations in the survey for this project are Christian congregations, my focus will be on the history of race and the Christian church in the U.S. Additionally, since the black and white divide has historically been the most polarizing in the country (Dougherty and Huyser 2008; Quillian and Campbell 2003) and black and white church history is so intertwined, we will explore the history of black-white relations in the Christian church in a greater level of detail that other racial and religious groups.

When Africans were brought to the U.S. as slaves, many whites at the time believed they had no souls; after some time their thoughts changed and the desire to Christianize slaves gained popularity (Emerson and Smith 2000). Concerns about African Americans becoming Christians, getting baptized, and believing in their Christian right to be free were evaded by evangelists who developed methods to preserve the existing social order primarily using biblical interpretations that justified and rationalized slavery in an attempt to pacify slaves (Emerson and Smith 2000). Around the time of the revolutionary war, many protestant evangelicals questioned slavery, but their questioning subsided with the fading of revolutionary rhetoric and an increase in the belief that the real solution was simply converting slaves to Christianity (Emerson and Smith 2000). Prior to 1865, the Bible was used to justify slavery by some evangelicals, and they interpreted the Bible to explain their Christian responsibility to protect and provide for

the "inferior race" (Emerson and Smith 2000). On the other hand, African American congregations formed and met as what sociologist E. Franklin Frazier called the "invisible institution"; away from slaveholders in secret locations, these were the precursor to black protestant denominations (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003:49). The tradition of the invisible institutions and how they legitimated suffering (as opposed to challenging the status quo) continued on until the 1950's and the civil rights movement (Emerson and Smith 2000). In the mid-to-late 1700's, the effort to Christianize blacks saw its largest successes as evangelists like John Wesley and George Whitefield (founder of revivalist evangelism) preached during the "Great Awakening" about how blacks and whites were equally sinful and all needed a personal relationship with God; this was seen by many blacks as a racially radical message at the time it was preached (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003; Emerson and Smith 2000; Emerson and Woo 2006).

Interestingly, there have long been racially mixed churches in the U.S. However, "Historically, racially mixed churches have often been marked by profound racial discrimination, as black men and women either were forced by their white masters to attend church with them during slavery, or were separated from whites in balconies or back rows (Emerson and Woo 2006:10)." In fact, when the first Africans came to the U.S. as indentured servants around 1619, they were baptized into protestant white congregations (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003), so worshipping together was common. For many of these black men and women, the conclusion of the civil war and the end of slavery also represented freedom from worshipping with whites in these undesirable circumstances (Emerson and Woo 2006).

With this freedom to worship separately and spawning from the invisible institutions came the inception of predominantly African American protestant Christian congregations. In 1787, Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and others were kneeling to pray at their predominantly white Methodist Episcopal Church where they worshipped when they were forcibly removed from their kneeling positions and reprimanded for kneeling in a whites-only section of the church (Emerson and Yancey 2008). Subsequently, they left the predominantly white Methodist church and Allen formed the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church while Jones helped start the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion) Churches around 1816 and 1820, respectively (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003). With Baptist denominations following and the formation in 1914 of the more charismatic Church of God in Christ (COGIC) denomination, African Americans soon had a number of black, racially homogeneous options for worship (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003). These black churches became centers for black culture and society in ways that did not necessarily reflect the functions white churches served for their communities. Black congregations provided an arena for political activity (a place to form consensus, debate public issues, determine elected representatives) helped to bring up community leaders, were musically innovative, developed a unique theology (notably, Dr. James Cone's black liberation theology), and these churches provided a place for a set of honorable titles (first lady, bishop, evangelist, church mother, etc.) that could not be otherwise obtained by African Americans in the white-dominated U.S (Emerson and Woo 2006; Emerson and Yancey 2008). The difference in the functions of black churches versus white churches is evidenced by the well-documented and pivotal role the black church played in the civil rights movement

and the political and presidential elections in that time period. Surprisingly, in spite of the pivotal role the racially homogeneous black church played in the movement, the civil rights movement involved an element that pushed for church desegregation; "church visits," were essentially sit-ins that were organized in the 1960s in an effort to integrate churches (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003:70).

Segregation in churches had some positive societal functions, particularly for African Americans; however it also helped to perpetuate segregation elsewhere and a resulting lower advocacy for desegregation (Emerson and Smith 2000). Both the black and white churches, "Institutionalized the segregated nature of the United States within their religious organizations very early in the nation's history (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003:106)." White Christians and white evangelicals in particular began to look at the example of Booker T. Washington, believing hard work and discipline were keys to success and thus emphasizing personal piety over structural and societal reforms; this is a conviction that displayed itself as whites who participated in the civil rights movement were rarely evangelicals, and Emerson and Smith found this belief still prevalent among white evangelicals as recently as the year 2000 (Emerson and Smith 2000). It appears likely that opposition to structural reforms kept many white evangelicals out of the civil rights movement.

The high religiosity of African Americans is a particularity that has led some to subscribe to what is known as the "semi-involuntary thesis (Hunt and Hunt 1999:780; Hunt and Hunt 2001:606)," to help explain the persistence of black/white congregational segregation. The semi-involuntary thesis speculates that black church attendance is semi-involuntary due in part to the structural absence of secular outlets for achievement

comparable to what can be achieved within the black church, as well as the cultural

presence of community and moral pressures to support the black church as an institution

providing moral and spiritual nourishment to the community (Hunt and Hunt 1999).

Furthermore,

> "This thesis holds that segregation, especially in the rural South, has historically
> (1) constrained the religious practices of African Americans to segregated
> churches, (2) isolated them from broader public institutions, (3) increased their
> reliance on religious institutions and spiritual beliefs, and (4) made their church
> participation patterns particularly reflective of broader community pressures
> (Hunt and Hunt 2001:606)."

Contrary to the trend of church segregation after the civil war, there were

interracial churches. In the 1880s, a movement began in the Midwest called the Evening

Light Saints or the Church of God Movement, which had a nondenominational spirit and

a message of holiness and unity (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003). The

group is currently known as the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), and has become

more racially homogeneous after the first generation of leaders died off in the early 1900s

(DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003).

In 1906, African American minister William Seymour, who left the Church of

God (Anderson, Indiana), started the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission; this mission

began as a multiracial revival and became a multiracial ministry lasting about three years

(DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003; Garces-Foley 2007a). The revival

(and the ministry) were marked by glossolalia (speaking in tongues) and helped to spawn

the modern Pentecostal movement (Garces-Foley 2007a). The now predominantly black

COGIC denomination began with a ministerial racial composition of about half-white,

half-black (since it was the first Pentecostal/holiness denomination to legally credential

ministers); however in 1914 many white ministers left to join the predominantly white

Assemblies of God denomination, and Pentecostal congregations formed primarily along strict racial lines (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003; Garces-Foley 2007a). Although racially specific Pentecostal denominations formed, the Pentecostal tradition's inclusive heritage, going back to the Azusa Street Revival, "provides a basis for theological and liturgical similarities across racial-ethnic groups (Dougherty 2003:69)."

Around the same time, the early 1900s, it was known that approximately 40,000 white preachers were actively involved in white supremacist organizations, with some protestant ministers serving as Grand Dragons of the Ku Klux Klan in Colorado, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, and Texas (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003). However, white evangelicals did also have an interracial movement, which occurred in the 1920s and 30s; although it did not attack congregational segregation, the movement was an effort to improve race relations nationally (Emerson and Smith 2000). In the 1940s, there was more experimentation and more attempts to integrate U.S. congregations (Emerson 2008). One such congregation was started in 1944 in San Francisco by Dr. Howard Thurman and Dr. Alfred Fisk; the church was called "Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples" (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003:64). Funded by the Presbyterian church, this congregation was intentionally nondenominational in feel (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003). Dr. Thurman would later go on to become the Dean of Marsh Chapel at Boston University where he would meet and influence a young Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

After the civil rights movement, there was an upswing of evangelical leaders

emphasizing a racial reconciliation theology based on Ephesians 2:14-15 which reads as

follows in the New Living Translation (Emerson and Smith 2000):

> "For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one
> people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility
> that separated us. He did this by ending the system of law with its
> commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by
> creating in himself one new people from the two groups."

This reconciliation theology that was embraced by some white evangelicals was focused

on individual reconciliation and ignored systemic and structural components of the

racialized U.S. society, and for many may have reinforced colorblind ideas. The number

of congregations since the 1960s that have embraced the struggle to be multiracial is

small, and multiracial congregations remain the exceptions to the rule (Emerson and Woo

2006).

In the racial reconciliation movement, the 1994 "Memphis Miracle" is seen as a

major turning point (Garces-Foley 2007a:42). The national convention of leaders for the

white Pentecostal Association of North America (PANA) in Memphis was an event

where these white leaders asked black Pentecostal denominations for forgiveness and

disbanded to form a new multiracial Pentecostal body in the spirit of the Azusa Street

revival (Garces-Foley 2007a). This was not an isolated incident, as other denominations

in the 1990s (e.g. Worldwide Church of God, Southern Baptist Convention, etc.) made

public statements of repentance and committed to pursue racial reconciliation in their

denominations and individual congregations as well (Garces-Foley 2007a).

The Promise Keepers organization, prominent in the 1990s as an association of

predominantly white evangelical males, embraced the racial reconciliation agenda and

their large Promise Keeper conventions often included apologies and pledges to spread

the message of racial reconciliation (Garces-Foley 2007a). Unfortunately, and to the

chagrin of many evangelicals of color, these gestures in the 1990s yielded few concrete

changes, and churches as institutions continue to reproduce racial and ethnic divisions to

this day through congregational segregation (Emerson and Smith 2000; Garces-Foley

2007a). The Promise Keepers' agenda was lacking in attempts to combat racism through

political, educational, or corporate actions, and the movement's leaders actually believed

that these types of efforts were futile (Alumkal 2004), paralleling the belief of many

white evangelicals (Emerson and Smith 2000).

4. Race in the U.S.

One essential fact to understand about race in the U.S. is what it truly means to

say that the U.S. is a racialized society, a society with what can be called racialized social

systems (Bonilla-Silva 1997). In sociology, race is understood to be socially constructed.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva explains, "Actors in racial positions do not occupy those positions

because they are X or Y race, but because X or Y has been socially defined as race . . .

Because races are socially constructed, both the meaning and the position assigned to

races in the racial structure are always contested (Bonilla-Silva 1997:472)."

Racism in the U.S. has changed since the 1960s and shifted away from more overt

forms of racism to more subtle, covert and nuanced racism that avoids direct racial

terminology and is invisible to most whites (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Bonilla-Silva 2003;

Emerson and Smith 2000; Yancey 1999). It is thus, inaccurate to say that racism has

declined, but we must understand that it has changed and measurement of racism and

discrimination is a different task:

> "The combination of socially acceptable speech and old questions that no longer
> tackle our contemporary racial dilemmas has produced an artificial increase in
> racially tolerant responses among whites. Nonetheless, the same whites who state
> in surveys that they have no problem with blacks and do not care if blacks move
> in their neighborhoods and that it is great to have children from all racial
> backgrounds interacting in schools have very limited and superficial relationships
> with blacks, live in white neighborhoods and move when blacks move in, and
> they have objected for over 40 years to almost all of the government plans to
> facilitate school integration (Bonilla-Silva 2001:196-97)"

Racial inequality is reproduced through the normal operation of society and is not as

dependent on racist or nonracist individuals (Bonilla-Silva 2001). As it stands in the

U.S., the status quo, normal operation of society involves racially segregated churches.

White evangelicals often embrace colorblind ideologies which, by neglecting the

significance of race, also ignore the structural and systemic causes of racial inequality

(Bonilla-Silva 2003; Emerson and Smith 2000).

In helping to maintain the racialized society, European-Americans also tend to

display an insensitivity toward historical and structural discrimination faced by blacks in

America, resulting in their conclusions of individualistic justifications for inequality

(Yancey 1999). Individualistic justifications negate a need for structural (or government

policy) solutions and instead suggest that African Americans in particular make bad

choices that lead to unequal outcomes (Hinojosa and Park 2004). This opposition to

government initiatives, which have historically been most effective at reducing racial

inequality, helps to maintain the status quo and stymies progress in the United States

(Edwards 2008). Opposing government initiatives to reduce racial inequality may help

defend group position for whites, which is one of the main factors in which the race

problem is rooted; others include intergroup conflict over resources and ways of life, inequality, and the institutionalization of race-based practices (of which the majority of American congregations are guilty) (Emerson and Smith 2000).

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva identifies four frames of what he calls, "colorblind racism"; one of these frames, the most important one, can be applied to the concept of the multiracial church (Bonilla-Silva 2003). Specifically, support for abstract principles like inequality coupled with the contradictory opposition to government policies to reduce residential segregation, economic inequality, educational inequality, etc. can be referred to as, "abstract liberalism (Bonilla-Silva 2003)." The other frames are naturalization, cultural racism, and the minimization of racism.

The abstract liberalist frame is visible in the context of the multiracial church as seen by churches that embrace diversity and inclusion as abstract principles, yet do nothing to change the status quo operations of the institution that help to maintain its racially homogeneous character. In effect, Bonilla-Silva may argue that these churches are practicing colorblind racism. In fact, prior researchers have suggested colorblindness as a white evangelical norm that is in some instances embraced by other racial groups as well along with other white evangelical norms (Garces-Foley 2007b). Along the lines of the colorblind ideology, at times multiracial religious organizations (or those pursuing multiracial membership) support seemingly contradictory ideas, welcoming individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds while at the same time attempting to erase racial and ethnic differences (Jenkins 2003).

White evangelicals are not alone in having colorblindness as a norm. Some suggest that it is a norm the general white American population. Whiteness consists of

three main dimensions that help to sustain white hegemony (Edwards 2008). First, white structural advantage gives whites a dominant location in the racial hierarchy and helps to facilitate white normativity and the normalization of white ethnicity (i.e. whites as the, "Default," race) (Edwards 2008). Second, white normativity helps to reinforce the normalization of white cultural practices, ideologies, and their dominant position in the racial hierarchy as, "The way things are" (Edwards 2008). Lastly, white transparency is the element of whiteness that truly connects it to colorblindness as whites, as the normative race, possess a unique lack of racial consciousness (Edwards 2008). One should be cautioned, however, that understanding colorblindness should not set up a dichotomy between colorblind or color-conscious approaches, or even individualistic versus social justice approaches to racial reconciliation as these binary juxtapositions are, "inadequate for understanding the breadth of the racial reconciliation movement today (Garces-Foley 2007b:54)." Setting up false dichotomies artificially eliminates solutions and suppresses critical thinking.

One major factor in the race problem that contributes to the lack of multiracial churches is residential segregation. People often attend church congregations near to their homes, so with the high degree of residential segregation in the U.S., congregations often reflect neighborhood racial and ethnic compositions as well. Immigrants that move to the U.S. often move into ethnic enclaves to preserve their culture, however much of the residential segregation between blacks and whites began after World War II with suburbanization and white flight (Emerson and Smith 2000). The result was that most industrialized cities had inner-city ghettos and, as a positive, black evangelicals were able to speak out in a more organized, unified voice (Emerson and Smith 2000). Residential

segregation may have become more prevalent after World War II, but blacks and whites remain segregated. In fact, at all levels of socioeconomic status blacks remain residentially segregated from non-Hispanic whites, where for Hispanics and Asians as socioeconomic status rises, their residential segregation with whites decreases (Denton and Massey 1988; Iceland and Wilkes 2006). Additionally, even at lower levels of socioeconomic status, Hispanics are less segregated and spatially isolated than black Americans; meanwhile Asians are following assimilation patterns similar to those of Hispanics and earlier European immigrant groups that assimilated into white American culture (Denton and Massey 1988). Whites, when looking for houses to buy, have a lower probability of buying a house in an area with more than a token black population (fifteen percent or more African American), but Asian and Hispanic populations have no independent influence on whites' likelihood of buying a home in a given neighborhood (Emerson, Chai, and Yancey 2001). In this sense, the black and white divide is again shown to be the most polarizing in U.S. race relations. It is worth noting, however, that levels of residential segregation do vary by region given varying histories and cultures by regions (Dougherty 2003). It is also noteworthy that residential segregation has some relationship to congregational segregation, as levels of residential segregation are lower in the western U.S. and there have been a large number of case studies that focused on multiracial churches in the West. More discouragingly however is evidence of white conservative protestants' high levels of residential segregation and their "closed community" of segregated social networks, undoubtedly contributing to the difficulties in creating and sustaining multiracial congregations (Blanchard 2007).

As demographers estimate the absence of a single majority race in the United States by the year 2050, this changing racial landscape will dramatically effect the country, particularly with Americans of European ancestry becoming numerical minorities for the first time and potentially developing a higher race-consciousness (Marti 2005). Additionally, some estimates show that two thirds of new immigrants are Christians, so scholars suspect that the European style Christianity which is now prevalent will be changing with the influx of new non-European Christians in the U.S (Garces-Foley 2007a). Perhaps multiracial churches could be a part of the solution to America's, "Race problem," in the coming century.

5. Religion

"Viewed sociologically, religion is a set of beliefs and practices focused on the sacred or supernatural, through which life experiences of groups and individuals are given meaning and direction (Emerson and Smith 2000:17)." Based on this definition, religion is conservative, providing legitimation for the world as it is, but history has shown that religion can also be a powerful source of change (Emerson and Smith 2000).

In religions, boundaries and solidarity are important (Durkheim 1912), and, "The more satisfactorily a religious group provides meaning and belonging, the stronger that religious group is (Emerson and Smith 2000:142)." Boundaries and solidarity, it would seem, may be easiest to form within racially homogeneous congregations. There is a school of thought in the church growth literature that endorses this, "homophily principle," which explains that social relations tend to form between people of similar socioedemographic characteristics (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005; Edwards

2008; Emerson and Smith 2000; Garces-Foley 2007a). This is similar to the

homogeneous unit principle, which was taught in the context of preparing for foreign

missions and posits that homogenous congregations represent the most effective method

for evangelization as cultural barriers will not need to be crossed by potential converts

(Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005; Garces-Foley 2007a). The homophily

principle has been challenged in academia, however, as some research has shown that

racial-ethnic diversity did not significantly correlate with either educational diversity or

income diversity (Dougherty 2003), so choosing one racial group does not necessarily

create homogeneous congregations as far as education and income. However, from a

church growth standpoint, the homophily principle has its merit. "The more successful a

faith tradition is in terms of its overall number of adherents, the more segregated are its

local assemblies (Emerson and Woo 2006:46)."

Homogeneous growth is not universally endorsed, however, as many theologians

believe that multiracial congregations and a multiracial religious body are biblically

mandated. Writings in the Old Testament prophets and Psalms testify to the "divine

intent that people from other nations are to share in the blessings of God's people and to

join with them in honoring the God of Israel (Kee 1995:179)." The Pauline epistles

(including Ephesians 2:14-15, a favorite of the reconciliation theology movement as

noted earlier) repeatedly speak about the interdependency and value of diversity within

the, "Body of Christ (Kee 1995)." Finally, Jesus, in his parables in the book of Luke,

frequently points to the inclusion of so-called, "marginal" people in the faith community,

tying that in to the purpose of God (Kee 1995). Jesus did not just speak this message in

parables, but he lived it also:

"From the outset of Jesus' career and in keeping with the message implicit and explicit in the Law and the Prophets, the divine intention was for men and women of all ethnic origins to be invited to participate in the life of the new covenant community. The strategies and the message, as well as the problems involved in this vast undertaking, are signaled in Luke and Acts, in which the author traces the divine purpose accomplished through Jesus and Paul for establishing the ethnically and culturally inclusive people of God (Kee 1995:207)."

Passages in the book of Acts referred to in the above quote show how the first century church moved to a vibrant multiethnic congregation in Antioch from a congregation that was ethnocentric in Jerusalem (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003).

In the late 1960's, black evangelicals began to speak about their proposed solutions to the racial problems in the U.S., arguing that the common lordship of Christ was the only way to reconcile the races and referencing such passages as Ephesians 2:11-12 and Galatians 3:28 (Alumkal 2004). These earlier African American reconciliation advocates did not separate individual efforts from attacks on structures perpetuating inequality (Alumkal 2004). Some scholars, however, have been critical of Galatians 3:28 and how that passage has been embraced by supporters of reconciliation theology, arguing that since the passage says, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus," this encourages a colorblind attitude (Garces-Foley 2007b).

Some conservative Protestants, for example, who may embrace this ideology, focus primarily on individual explanations for racial inequality instead of structural causes, and often oppose governmental interventions aimed at reducing racial inequality (Blanchard 2007). In fact, opposition of government intervention in this case appears to be a form of a transformation of, "neoconservative faith in the American systems of constitutional democracy and free enterprise to solve racial disparities . . . replaced with

faith in Christ to bring racial reconciliation" while maintaining the condemnation of "big government" solutions (Alumkal 2004:203). Kathleen Garces-Foley provides additional insight:

> "When framed theologically, the color-blind ideology can be a powerful tool for both ignoring or effacing difference and silencing conversations about the sources of social inequality that lie beyond individual prejudice. Ironically, White evangelicals will cite Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, hope that Americans would no longer be judged by the color of their skin in order to support their individualistic, color-blind approach to racial reconciliation and to foreclose dialogue on race issues (Garces-Foley 2007a:45)."

Others critical of the reconciliation theology approach include church growth advocates, who believe that reconciliation theology detracts from the Great Commission of saving souls (Garces-Foley 2007a). However, the message of reconciliation theology is to spread the gospel across cultural boundaries and in that sense would reach even more people and result in more saved souls (Garces-Foley 2007a). Proponents of this theological view believe that multiracial churches are human attempts at creating what God envisioned for the church in the New Heaven and the New Earth as described in the book of Revelation (Garces-Foley 2007a). Still reconciliation theology is a source of controversy and disagreement. In their research, Emerson and Smith found that the majority of Christians they interviewed believed that Christians should be addressing the problem of the racialized society and that they as Christians may even possess the solutions (Emerson and Smith 2000). Could it be that multiracial churches are part of that solution?

Emerson and Smith's 2000 book *Divided by Faith* revealed a great deal about the attitudes of white evangelicals when it comes to issues of race. They found that evangelicals' concerns with discipleship and evangelism, individual-focused efforts,

contribute to their disinterest in structures, institutions, and culture in promoting racial reconciliation (Emerson and Smith 2000). These white evangelicals often believe in the miracle motif, which is a theologically rooted idea that explains that more individuals becoming Christians will miraculously solve personal and social problems (Emerson and Smith 2000). This motif fits in with the "engaged orthodoxy" which many white evangelicals believe in; in this view, traditional (individual) faith can and should be used to solve social problems like race relations (Emerson and Smith 2000). Some research has suggested that the racial attitudes of Asian Christians have come to align with white evangelicals as well, leading them to look for similar solutions to issues of race (Garces-Foley 2007a). Emerson and Smith argue that these individualist solutions and beliefs of white evangelicals, and the rejection of structural causes of inequality, are a result of their cultural toolkit; these sociologists offer a pessimistic view on multiracial churches as engines of social change (Emerson and Smith 2000; Hinojosa and Park 2004). Contrary to the views of white evangelicals, African American members of white traditional Christian churches are more likely to affirm structural causes of racial inequality (Hinojosa and Park 2004). This suggests that African American members of white traditional Christian churches are not accepting the individualist beliefs of the white evangelicals that they worship with, or that those beliefs are not translating to their perceptions about inequality (which are likely grounded in more real-life experience). Some argue that the cultural toolkit approach taken by Emerson and Smith is too narrow to address the combined effects of religion, political orientation, and racial experience, but they too offer a pessimistic view in illustrating that from their research, religion does little to draw black and white individuals together in their thinking about racial inequality

(Hinojosa and Park 2004). Emerson and Smith note, "In short, religion in the United States can serve as a moral force in freeing people, but not in bringing them together as equals across racial lines (Emerson and Smith 2000:18)." Additionally, they explain, "In the face of social and religious pluralism, the organization of American religion powerfully drives religious groups toward internal similarity (Emerson and Smith 2000:136)." Other scholars have agreed that simply uniting as multiracial congregations will not eradicate racial hierarchies and stereotypes (Priest 2007). As true as this is, it does not negate the benefits of interracial contact and the potential for multiracial congregations to be socially transformative.

A critique of Emerson and Smith's pioneering work that emerged posited that there was actually a close connection between "evangelical adherence to individualistic explanations for economic equality and the group-based anti-black attitudes that emerge in Emerson and Smith's interviews (Tranby and Hartmann 2008:345)." Group-based anti-black attitudes, these scholars argue, are ignored in *Divided by Faith* (Tranby and Hartmann 2008). The consequence of this, Tranby and Hartmann argue, is as follows:

> "Thus, the problems of race are not just the unfortunate result of a theoretical, individualistic discourse and ideals, as Emerson and Smith would have it; instead, the problems of race are also nurtured and sustained by deep-seated racialized—if not simply racist—images and ideas (Tranby and Hartmann 2008:346)."

Some of the views expressed by white evangelicals in *Divided by Faith* translate over to political positions of white Americans and where they typically differ from African Americans. For example, white evangelicals are more conservative and are less likely to favor affirmative action than white nonevangelicals or secular individuals (Brown 2009). In fact, based on information from the General Social Survey from 1977 to 2004, "The basic pattern for non-Hispanic whites is decreasing endorsement of *any*

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offered explanation for the black/white socioeconomic status gap (emphasis in original) (Hunt 2007:399)," this includes both individual and structural explanations. This is a stark contrast to both African Americans and Hispanics who are more likely to see both individual and structural factors in explaining inequality (Hunt 2007). Although research has shown that racial identity for whites is peripheral to their sense of self (Edwards 2008), white conservative protestants have been found more likely than other whites to believe their race is important to their identity (Tranby and Hartmann 2008), so their political position is not due to a lack of race-consciousness. Contrary to white evangelicals, for African Americans, being involved in church committees and church-based political communication contributes to increasing black involvement in electoral and nonelectoral activities (Brown and Brown 2003).

Socioeconomic status influences political behavior as well; people with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to be activists, probably because members of higher social status churches have more opportunities for civic skill development and know more about the opportunities to be activists (Brown and Brown 2003). In their numerous volunteer opportunities, prior research shows that white evangelical protestants more frequently engage in volunteering activities that benefit their own members and communities, aimed at helping to maintain the social fabric of the church rather than focusing on external endeavors (Wilson and Janoski 1995).

The above findings may seem to run contradictory to the widely held view that African American churches are more politically active, and it does. Black congregations are, on average, no more likely than white congregations to be involved in lobbying and protest politics, but this likely has to do with resource constraints; Black congregations

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are, in fact, more politically active in voter registration efforts, which require few monetary resources (Brown 2006). What stimulates black political involvement is not simply church attendance alone, but the political messages and civic skills gained by participating in church projects provide stimulus for African American political behavior (Brown and Brown 2003).

In spite of some of the more negative views expressed above, a large body of research on the impact of multiracial churches is more optimistic. There is a growing belief that, ""The church has the potential to become a countercultural community in which 'normal' relations of social and cultural power can be inverted, subverted, and deconstructed through practical and symbolic means (Howell 2007:305)." In spite of the negative findings about white evangelicals and their potential for group-based anti-black attitudes, prior research also shows that an increase in agreement with orthodox Christian beliefs is associated with a decrease in implicit prejudice, and learning more about Christian beliefs that engender tolerance and acceptance of others (e.g. love your neighbor, the golden rule, etc.) may serve to reduce implicit prejudice even further (Rowatt and Franklin 2004; Tranby and Hartmann 2008). Tied in with the heightened religiosity found among African Americans (e.g. higher levels of regular church attendance), this could suggest that African Americans have a lower level of implicit prejudice than whites overall (religious and secular), however further research would be required to verify this (Hunt and Hunt 2001).

Unfortunately, almost half of congregations do not have a single member of a second racial group (i.e. they are completely racially homogeneous), 90 percent of American congregations are composed of at least 90 percent one racial group, and nearly

80 percent of congregations are composed of at least 95 percent one racial group (Dougherty and Huyser 2008; Emerson and Kim 2003). As of 2006, the public schools were six times more racially diverse than religious congregations and neighborhoods were three to ten times more diverse (Emerson and Woo 2006). According to the definition we will use in this research, a multiracial church will be defined as one where the majority race is less than 80 percent of the congregation. Using this definition, about 7.4 percent of American congregations are multiracial and about 15.5 percent of church attendees go to multiracial churches (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003; Emerson and Kim 2003). For African Americans, 18 percent of those who attend religious services go to interracial congregations and about 9.5 percent of all blacks (who regularly attend worship services and who do not) are in interracial congregations (Emerson and Yancey 2008). Additionally, protestant Christians are 78 percent white as compared to Catholics and non-Christians who are about two-thirds white; this lack of internal diversity within protestant Christianity decreases the potential for multiracial congregations (Emerson and Woo 2006).

6. Kent County

Along with the national history covered briefly above, the history of congregations in Kent County can provide additional insight into the situation in Kent county as of 2007 (when the data used here was gathered). The largest city in Kent County is Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the metropolitan area is home to the majority of the churches in that county. The bulk of this section will focus on the history and present state of that city.

From 1870 until 1915, five African American churches organized in Grand

Rapids, competing for members and seeing one another as rival institutions (Jelks 2006).

"Local congregations informed the class identity and aspirations and reached into the

private and public lives of the African American community like no other institution on a

daily basis (Jelks 2006:33)." Like for the rest of the nation, the black church in Grand

Rapids played a different role in the black community than the white church did in its

community. The AME church in Grand Rapids in the 19th century was looked at as the

most influential black church in Grand Rapids, reflecting the national trend of the AME

church as the church of the African American leadership class (Jelks 2006). Around that

time, in the mid to late 1800s, there were many whites in Grand Rapids who were

abolitionists; these abolitionists and the white Christian community interacted with black

churches, sometimes providing financial and other support for local AME, AME Zion,

and black Baptist congregations (Jelks 2006).

Racial reform remained in the public discourse among black and white Christian

leaders and with a large influx of Dutch immigrants to Grand Rapids between 1847 and

1915, some African Methodists found commonalities in their shared protestant values; in

fact, Spring Street AME Church rented the local Dutch schoolhouse to hold services until

their building was built (Jelks 2006). By 1915, protestant Christianity was a major factor

in mediation of blacks and whites, and the protestant ethos that all people were equal

before God helped soften racism and foster both paternalism and politeness in the Grand

Rapids community (Jelks 2006). The black church was also prominent within the black

community and provided social services; for example, in 1923 First Community AME

church hosted local pediatricians who volunteered their time to care for African

American infants (Jelks 2006). Still, in spite of relatively amicable relations between blacks and whites, separatist attitudes were commonplace in both communities (Jelks 2006). As southern Blacks migrated north during the 1920's and desired their own churches unique to their experiences, Rev. C.O. Murphy of St. Luke AME Zion church explained his belief that, "Negroes should in the main, attend Negro churches (Jelks 2006:83)."

The character of the Dutch, who arrived in the Grand Rapids in 1847, can be felt throughout the city and especially in the white community (Dougherty and Mulder 2009). They settled mostly in southeast Grand Rapids, the same quadrant of the city where many African Americans had migrated to; however there were clear boundaries to the neighborhoods and much like today, the city was largely segregated (Dougherty and Mulder 2009). The Dutch brought with them their own Christian religious traditions and the majority of the Dutch immigrants joined either Christian Reformed Church (CRC) or Reformed Church in America (RCA) congregations; both of these were similar evangelical denominations with the CRC being a conservative offshoot from the RCA and originating in Grand Rapids (Dougherty and Mulder 2009). The CRC grew in Grand Rapids to the point that there were 39 congregations in the 45 square mile city, almost one per square mile (Dougherty and Mulder 2009). During World War II, the influx of African Americans into Grand Rapids resulted in white flight in Southeast Grand Rapids, conflicts, and race riots in 1967 (Dougherty and Mulder 2009). The trend of white flight continued, and soon the Southeast quadrant of Grand Rapids, home to the CRC headquarters, the largest CRC college and only denominational seminary, saw a massive exodus of Dutch American immigrants to the surrounding suburbs, as the city of Grand

Rapids witnessed a growing population of black and Hispanic residents (Dougherty and Mulder 2009).

Now, Grand Rapids, Michigan is a diverse and segregated, unusually religious city of about 200,000 residents and a metropolitan area of just over 500,000 (Dougherty and Mulder 2009; Hernández, Carlson, Medeiros-Ward, Stek, and Verspoor 2008). Residential segregation is evidenced in metropolitan Grand Rapids by an index of dissimilarity of .719 according to the 2000 census, ranking 41st among 318 U.S. metropolitan areas. This index, reading over .600, is considered high (Denton and Massey 1988). As for religion, the Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey showed that 59 percent of residents had attended a place of worship "in the last week," as compared to just 35 percent nationwide who responded to a similar question on the 1998 GSS, indicating Kent County's high religiosity (Hernández et al. 2008). In addition, the somewhat conservative estimate from the 2000 Religious Congregations and Membership Study (RCMS) gave Kent County a rate of .77 congregations per 1,000, which ranked ninth in the nation among counties with populations exceeding 500,000 (Hernández et al. 2008).

Congregations in Kent County vary by race in some key areas; one area is neighborhood income levels, where the median majority-white congregation's nearest public school has 30 percent subsidized lunch eligibility, but in black congregations the median is 88 percent and for Hispanic congregations the figure is 95 percent (Hernández et al. 2008). This is important information, particularly when considered in conjunction with the fact that 43 percent of regularly participating adults and 55 percent of religious leaders live in the same neighborhood as their congregations (Hernández et al. 2008).

There is an obvious wealth and resource disparity between congregations by race in Grand Rapids. Finally, overall averages for the estimated percentage of congregation members who are theologically conservative, moderate, or liberal came out to 59 percent conservative, 28 percent moderate, and 13 percent liberal, with Pentecostal congregations having 70 percent theologically conservative, Catholic congregations having high percentages of theologically moderate members, and "other traditions" having a greater proportion of theological liberals (Hernández et al. 2008).

Chapter Three

Methods

The overall goals of this analysis are to determine what (if any) significant characteristics of multiracial churches in Kent County exist, and how Kent County church characteristics compare to characteristics identified in prior research using national survey and individual case study data. (Note that the variables selected for the analysis are based on prior research in this area and identified characteristics, specifically for the binary logistic regression model predicting whether or not a church is likely to be multiracial). Additionally, this analysis should serve to provide common characteristics of racially homogeneous churches in Kent County specified by race (i.e. Black churches, white churches, etc.). With this information together, a clearer picture of how race and churches interact in Kent County, Michigan will be painted. Specifically interesting is how Kent County, a disproportionately churched region of the country according to the 2000 Religious Congregations and Membership Study, will fare when compared to nationwide data. Kent County is not only an area with a high concentration of churches, but also a region of fairly high residential segregation. It is indeed a peculiar region and one that merits analysis.

1. Sample

The data in this research is from the 2007 Kent County Congregations Survey (KCCS). This survey was funded by the Douglas and Maria DeVos Foundation and received input from the Calvin College Center for Social Research, Grand Valley State University Community Research Institute and the Douglas and Maria DeVos Foundation

at RDV Corporation. The KCCS had four objectives: (1) to document the social and educational services that Kent County congregations provide; (2) to collect demographic and contextual information about religious leaders, congregations, and their civic and community engagement; (3) to facilitate comparison of Kent County to the nation; and (4) to estimate the "replacement value" of the top three social or educational services provided by each congregation. The second and third objectives are the most relevant for this research.

The sampling process began in 2006, with an attempt to generate a master list of congregations in Kent County. Researchers and volunteers canvassed roads throughout the county, with an initial focus on lower-income areas. Many undocumented congregations were uncovered during this process. A database was formed through consolidating lists from several sources (including the Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism's directory, denominational lists, the Yellow Pages, and religious marketing mailing lists), resulting in a total population of over 900 congregations. By pursuing interviews for this survey, hundreds of outdated records were deleted from the database and 47 additional congregations were discovered, bringing the total master list to 720 congregations. In total, 81 percent of congregations contacted by the research team participated in the study, for a total sample of 583 congregations. Of these 583 respondents, 395 were interviewed in a face-to-face setting and 188 were interviewed by telephone.

By using listwise deletion on congregations missing information in key categories (number of people who are associated with the congregation, number of adults who regularly participate, and the years that the leader has been involved in the congregation),

a total of nine observations were deleted. Additionally, 99 responses were deleted as a result of improper math by respondents. Specifically, variables that measure the percent of the congregation that has a certain characteristic (i.e. percent that is black, percent with a four-year degree, percent that is high-income, etc.) were calculated by dividing respondents answers for the number of people they estimate to fit in that category by their response for the total adult participants in the congregation. For some respondents, the numbers worked out to create percentages that were over 100. Those responses were considered inaccurate and removed from the sample. Finally, the five Asian congregations were removed from the analysis. For statistical purposes, these five congregations were not enough to generate meaningful and generalizable results, and would also hinder the effectiveness of the logistic regression models used in this research. The total sample used in this research, as a result, came out to 470.

The sample of congregations used in this research had racial majorities of approximately 76 percent white, 16 percent black, and eight percent Hispanic, with 12 percent of the congregations being multiracial (having a majority race that comprised less than 80 percent of the congregation). We use the 80 percent threshold because, as prior research has indicated, this is the point of critical mass where if an individual meets 20 people randomly in the congregation, they have a 99 percent chance of meeting someone of another race (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003). The congregations had an average age of 56 years old (as of 2007, when the survey was done), with ranges in age from one to 307. They averaged 262 adult participants per congregation, 10 percent high-income (with "high-income" defined as household incomes greater than $ 100,000) and about 35 percent holding a four-year degree. Most of the congregations

were urban, with 56 percent from urban areas, 36 percent suburban, and 8 percent rural.

Of the congregations, 15 percent offered some type of ethnic programming while the

remaining 85 percent did not. Clergy in the sample averaged about 51 years of age with

around 11 years of involvement with their respective congregations.

2. Measures

First, a multinomial logistic regression was computed to predict the dependent

variable of congregation race. In the congregation race variable, respondents had the

opportunity to choose White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, or other (where non-responses were

also coded). In initial attempts to run a multinomial logistic regression, errors occurred

because two respondents answered that their congregation race was "other" or did not

respond to the congregation race question. These respondents supplied enough

information to determine that the congregations had an African American majority, so

they were recoded to reflect this and so that the multinomial logistic regression calculated

properly. Also in the initial attempts with the multinomial logistic regression, problems

were encountered due to the presence of four Hispanic and six Black suburban churches.

Due to these small cells, the multinomial logistic regression could not properly converge,

so the variables for locale were removed from this model, with an understanding that the

overwhelming majority of suburban and rural churches were White congregations.

Secondly, a binary logistic regression model was used to predict whether or not a

congregation would be classified as multiracial. In order to generate a multiracial

dummy variable, several variables that estimated the percent of a congregation that fit

into different racial categories were considered. The variables were the respondents'

estimates of the percentage of the congregation that were African American, White, Hispanic, and Asian. These different variables were considered in conjunction with one another and used to generate a variable that represented the percent of the congregation that was composed of the majority race. Essentially, if any incident of this "percent majority" variable had a value of 80 percent or more, the multiracial dummy variable was designed to have a value of zero; multiracial churches were then given a value of one.

Subtracting the year that the congregation was founded (supplied by the survey) from 2007, the year in which the survey was administered, left us with the congregation age variable.

For the neighborhood variables, the primary distinction is between urban and non-urban congregations, so dummy variables were constructed to represent these variables based on the original variable in which the respondent answered if the church was in an urban, suburban, or rural neighborhood.

A question in the survey regarding the number of racial or ethnic programs the congregation held per year was reduced to a dummy variable, considering whether or not the church held any racial or ethnic programming.

The perceived theologically liberal or conservative nature was also represented in the survey by the question that asked respondents what percentage of the congregation they believed were theologically liberal. This variable was included in the models as well.

The number of years the senior clergy member had been involved with the congregation as of 2007 was a direct response to a question from the survey as well as the number of regular adult participants, the percentage of congregation members classified

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as "high-income" (over $ 100,000 per year), and the percentage of congregation members in possession of a four-year degree.

There are several important things to note regarding some of the measures used in the models predicting congregation race. The "number of adult participants" variable is an estimated amount by the respondent. In 384 cases, respondents were senior clergy members, but in the remaining cases respondents were not. Some might suspect that senior clergy members may have a desire to inflate attendance numbers, but whether or not that is the case, these are human estimates and may be flawed. Additionally, variables measuring the percent of the congregation who are theologically liberal, high-income, or have a four-year degree are also based on respondent estimates and may have similar errors. The question asking about congregation locale could also be problematic, as what is "urban" to some might be looked at as "suburban" to others. Limitations and imperfections in the data and measures should be considered, and results of these analyses should be viewed with these limitations in mind.

3. Analysis

Listwise deletion was used to handle missing data. One major reason for this was that listwise deletion on key categories only resulted in a loss of nine observations. Only five Asian congregations were found in the Kent County Congregations Survey – these congregations were removed to facilitate use of the regression models selected in order to generate meaningful data. After deleting additional troubling observations as mentioned above, the resulting sample size of 470 is still quite large (and a high percentage of churches in the county based on the master list of 720 churches). Additionally, the

observations that were deleted did not appear to cause any material bias or demographic change in the sample and did not appear to have any other common characteristics that would result in a frame error in my analysis. Listwise deletion is robust in this sense; it yields unbiased estimates of coefficients even when data are not missing at random, and logistic regression with listwise deletion only causes problems when the probability of any missing data depends on both the independent and dependent variables (and is not always problematic in those instances) (Allison 2001; Allison 2010; Little 1992). Reviewing descriptive statistics revealed no major concerns; however, performing t-tests revealed a statistically significant change in the congregation race variable. Upon closer inspection, the deletion procedures performed resulted in approximately 15 percent and 16 percent decreases in the number of white and black congregations, respectively, but an approximately 37 percent decrease in the number of Latino congregations. Although the sample itself, in spite of a high response rate, is not necessarily representative of the entire county, additional consideration should be made that Latino congregations are underrepresented in the sample used for this project.

The regression models used were multinomial logistic regression (Model 1) and binary logistic regression (Model 2). In Model 2, the dependent variable is the dummy variable for whether or not a church meets the outlined criteria for being considered multiracial (that is, whether or not the majority race makes up less than 80 percent of the congregation). Binary logistic regression is used because we are estimating the probability of a certain outcome, rather than predicting a value of the dependent variable based on values of the independent variables (as in ordinary least squares regression). For example, the value of the dependent variable "multiracial" could not be greater than

one, so in ordinary least squares regression, values generated greater than one would be meaningless. In binary logistic regression, probabilities of the outcome either being one or zero are generated based on the dependent variables.

For Model 1, predicting congregational race, multinomial logistic regression was used because the dependent variable, congregation race, was a nominal variable. Multinomial logistic regression was the appropriate model for this case based on the variables involved. Multinomial logistic regression essentially runs a series of binary logistic regressions to measure the probability of, in this case, a congregation being White, Black or Hispanic.

Additionally, one more model was run in which the probability of a congregation offering ethnic programming was used as the dependent variable. In this binary logistic regression model, the percent of the congregation that was black, white, or latino, and the multiracial dummy variable were used as independent variables. The idea behind this model was to explore whether the racial makeup of the church was associated with an increase in the likelihood of that church offering ethnic programming and thus raising awareness and providing a venue for education and dialogue about racial issues. No statistically significant relationships were found in this model.

For regression diagnostics, F-tests, Bayesian information criterion, and the likelihood ratio chi squared tests were all used and considered together to compare and evaluate model fit.

Chapter Four

Results

Descriptive statistics for the sample used are as follows in Table 4.1:

Table 4.1. Descriptive sample characteristics (Kent County Congregations Survey, N=470)

	Proportion	Mean	SD	Range
Multiracial	0.12	-	-	-
Congregation race				
White	0.76	-	-	-
Black	0.16	-	-	-
Hispanic	0.08	-	-	-
Congregation age	-	55.86	47.63	1 - 307
Number of adult participants	-	261.67	594.71	1 - 7,500
Percent high income	-	9.93	13.55	0 - 80
Percent with a four-year degree	-	35.19	25.78	0 - 99
Percent theologically liberal		14.14	21.58	0 - 100
Locale				
Urban	0.56	-	-	-
Suburban or rural	0.44	-	-	-
Offered ethnic programming	0.15	-	-	-
Clergy age	-	50.63	10.31	21 - 83
Clergy years of involvement	-	10.70	10.35	0.17 - 70

Model 1 predicted congregation race based on age of congregation, whether ethnic programming was offered, the percent of the congregation considered theologically liberal, the years of the senior clergy member's involvement with the congregation, the number of regular adult participants, the percent of the congregation who have high incomes (over $ 100,000 per year), and the percent of the congregation who hold a four-year degree.

Model 1 revealed that for the churches in the Kent County Congregations Study 2007, on average, each additional year of a church congregation's age is, is associated with a 2 percent decrease in the odds of the church being Black as opposed to being White (p<0.001), and a 2 percent decrease in the odds of the church being Hispanic as

opposed to being White (p<0.05), holding covariates constant. Additionally, every one

percent increase in the percent of the congregation who are theologically liberal is

associated with a 3 percent increase in the odds of the church being Black as opposed to

being White, on average, holding covariates constant (p<0.001). Also, for every one

additional year of clergy involvement in the congregation, the odds of that congregation

being Black as opposed to White increase by a factor of 1.05, on average, all else

constant (p<0.001). Also noteworthy is that on average, every one percent increase of

congregation members with high incomes is associated with a decrease of 29 percent in

the odds of the church being Hispanic, as opposed to White, all else constant (p<0.01).

Additionally, every increase of one percent of congregation members with a four-year

degree is associated, on average, with a decrease of 5 percent in the odds of the church

being Black as opposed to being White (p<0.001), and a decrease of 6 percent of the

church being Hispanic as opposed to being White (p<0.001), holding covariates constant.

See Table 4.2 below for details:

Table 4.2. Summary of multinomial logistic regression results - relative risk ratios for variables predicting congregation race compared with Whites (N=464).

	Model 1	
	Black	Hispanic
Congregation age	0.98 (0.00)***	0.98 (0.01)*
Number of adult participants	1.00 (0.00)	1.00 (0.00)
Percent high income	0.98 (0.02)	0.71 (0.09)**
Percent with a four-year degree	0.95 (0.01)***	0.94 (0.02)***
Percent theologically liberal	1.03 (0.01)***	1.01 (0.01)
Offered ethnic programming	1.47 (0.57)	1.38 (0.73)
Clergy years of involvement	1.05 (0.01)***	0.99 (0.02)
LRX^2		224.71
Adjusted count R^2		0.21

Note: Relative risk ratios presented, standard errors in parentheses

* = p<0.05; **=p<0.01; ***=p<0.001

In addition to relative risk ratios, which talk about the relative odds, predicted probabilities are useful to help interpret the overall likelihoods. Table 4.3 shows the relationship between congregation education (as measured by the percent of congregation members with a four-year degree) and expected race of congregation using predicted probabilities developed from Model 1 above.

Table 4.3. Predicted probability of race of congregation based on percent of congregation with a four-year degree (the mean +/- one standard deviation)

	Percent with a four-year degree		
	Low	Medium	High
Black	0.24 (0.15 - 0.34)	0.08 (0.04 - 0.11)	0.02 (0.00 - 0.04)
Hispanic	0.01 (-0.01 - 0.04)	0.00 (0.00 - 0.01)	0.00 (0.00 - 0.00)
White	0.74 (0.65 - 0.84)	0.92 (0.88 - 0.95)	0.98 (0.96 - 1.00)

Note: Predicted probabilities are presented, confidence intervals in parentheses

Note that the predicted probability of a church congregation being predominantly African American (or Hispanic based on confidence intervals) is greatest if a lower percent of the congregation has a four-year degree, while the opposite trend is true for Caucasian churches in Kent County based on the results of Model 1.

A discrete change plot, as shown below, can also be a useful tool in interpreting the data:

Figure 4.1
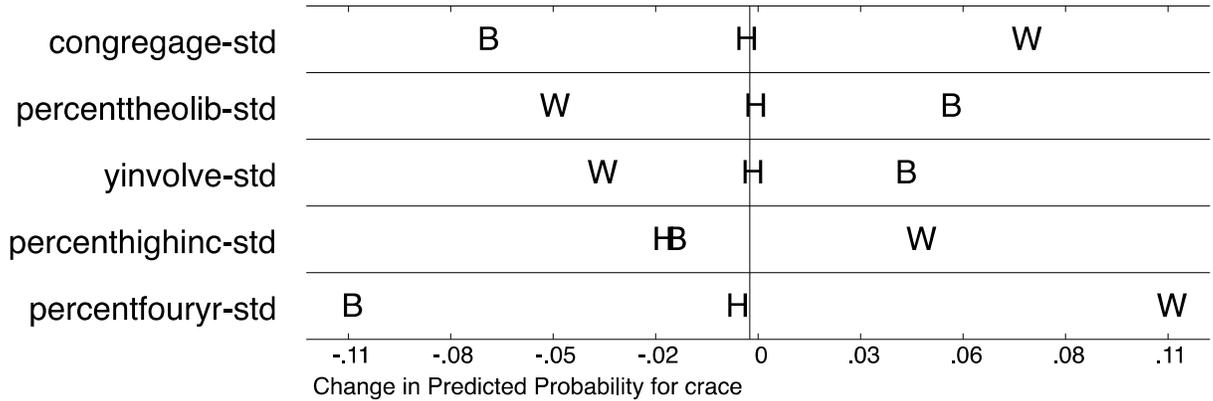
As illustrated in the discrete change plot, the variable "percentfouryr", which measures the percent of congregation members in possession of a four-year degree, has the greatest impact on congregation race. The next most impactful is the age of the congregation, which also has a relatively large impact on the predicted probability of the church being Black or White. Finally, in decreasing magnitude, the percent of the congregation that is theologically liberal, the years the senior clergy member has been involved with the congregation, and the percent of the congregation members who have incomes over $ 100,000 per year all have impacts on the predicted probability of the congregation being a certain race. Blacks and Whites remain on the outer edges with approximately opposite predicted probabilities in all variables except for the percent high income, where a lower percent of high-income congregation members increases the predicted probability of the congregation being Hispanic to a greater degree than it does for that congregation to be predominantly African American. All the changes shown above are based on one standard deviation increase or decreases from the mean in the variables listed.

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In addition to the multinomial logistic regression model in this analysis, a binary logistic regression was used in an effort to identify characteristics in Kent County that are associated with churches being multiracial. The model used will be referred to as Model 2. Model 2 included variables for the age of the congregation, a dummy variable indicating neighborhood context as either urban or suburban/rural, a dummy variable indicating whether the church offered ethnic programming or not, the percent of the congregation who are theologically liberal, the number of years the senior clergy member has been involved with the congregation, the number of regular adult participants, the percent of the congregation that was high income (with income over $ 100,000 per year), and the percent of the congregation in possession of a four-year degree.

This model indicated that on average, being urban as opposed to being suburban or rural is associated with an increase by a factor of 2.26 in the likelihood of the congregation being multiracial as opposed to being racially homogeneous, holding covariates constant ($p<0.05$). Additionally, every increase of one percent in the percent of the congregation that is theologically liberal, on average, is associated with a one percent increase in the likelihood of that congregation being multiracial as opposed to being racially homogeneous, holding all else constant ($p<0.05$). See Table 4.4 below for a summary:

Table 4.4. Summary of logistic regression for variables
predicting whether or not a church will be multiracial (N=464).

	Model 2	
	OR	SE
Congregation age	1.00	0.00
Number of adult participants	1.00	0.00
Percent high income	0.97	0.02
Percent with a four-year degree	0.99	0.01
Percent theologically liberal	1.01*	0.01
Locale		
Urban[1]	2.26*	0.79
Offered ethnic programming	1.22	0.45
Clergy years of involvement	0.99	0.02
LRX^2	30.73	
$Adjusted\ count\ R^2$	0.00	

* = p<0.05; **=p<0.01; ***=p<0.001

Note : Unstandardized coefficients are presented

[1] Omitted category is "suburban or rural"

Odds ratios are presented in Table 4.4, and much like relative risk ratios, odds

ratios should be considered in conjunction with predicted probabilities to fully understand

the associations shown. Table 4.5 showcases the predicted probabilities of multiracial

churches based on location and percent of the congregation that is theologically liberal.

For this table, "No theological liberals" represents an ideal-type congregation that is zero

percent theologically liberal, "Mean amount of theological liberals" is an ideal type

where the variable measuring the percent of the congregation that is theologically liberal

was held at its mean of approximately 14 percent, and "Many theological liberals" is an

ideal type where the variable measuring the percent of the congregation that is

theologically liberal was held at one standard deviation above the mean, for a value of

approximately 36 percent. Note that, "No theological liberals" used a value of zero

percent because subtracting one standard deviation from the mean of the variable

measuring the percent of the congregation that is theologically liberal would result in a

negative value. This indicates a right-skewed distribution of theological liberals,

meaning there is a higher number of congregations with a lower percent theologically

liberal and this is not a normal distribution about the mean. A log transformation was

attempted, however it did not yield statistically significant results, so the original percent

theologically liberal variable was used.

Table 4.5. Predicted probability of racial composition of
congregation based on neighborhood and amount of
theological liberals (the mean +/- one standard deviation)

| | No theological liberals | |
	Urban	Suburban or rural
Multiracial	0.12 (0.07 - 0.16)	0.05 (0.02 - 0.09)
Racially homogeneous	0.88 (0.84 - 0.93)	0.95 (0.91 - 0.98)
	Mean amount of theological	
	Urban	Suburban or rural
Multiracial	0.13 (0.09 - 0.18)	0.06 (0.03 - 0.10)
Racially homogeneous	0.87 (0.82 - 0.91)	0.94 (0.90 - 0.97)
	Many theological liberals	
	Urban	Suburban or rural
Multiracial	0.17 (0.11 - 0.23)	0.08 (0.04 - 0.13)
Racially homogeneous	0.83 (0.77 - 0.89)	0.92 (0.87 - 0.96)

Note: Predicted probabilities are presented, confidence intervals in parentheses

As Table 4.5 illustrates, the highest predicted probability of a multiracial

congregation is an urban church with many theological liberals, while the lowest

probability is in suburban or rural churches of the mean or no theological liberals. It is

interesting to note that suburban or rural congregations are less likely to be multiracial

based on the amount of theological liberals in the congregation, whereas in urban areas,

the amount of theological liberals appears to have a larger impact on the predicted

probability of the congregation being multiracial. Figure 4.2 below further illustrates this

point.

Figure 4.2
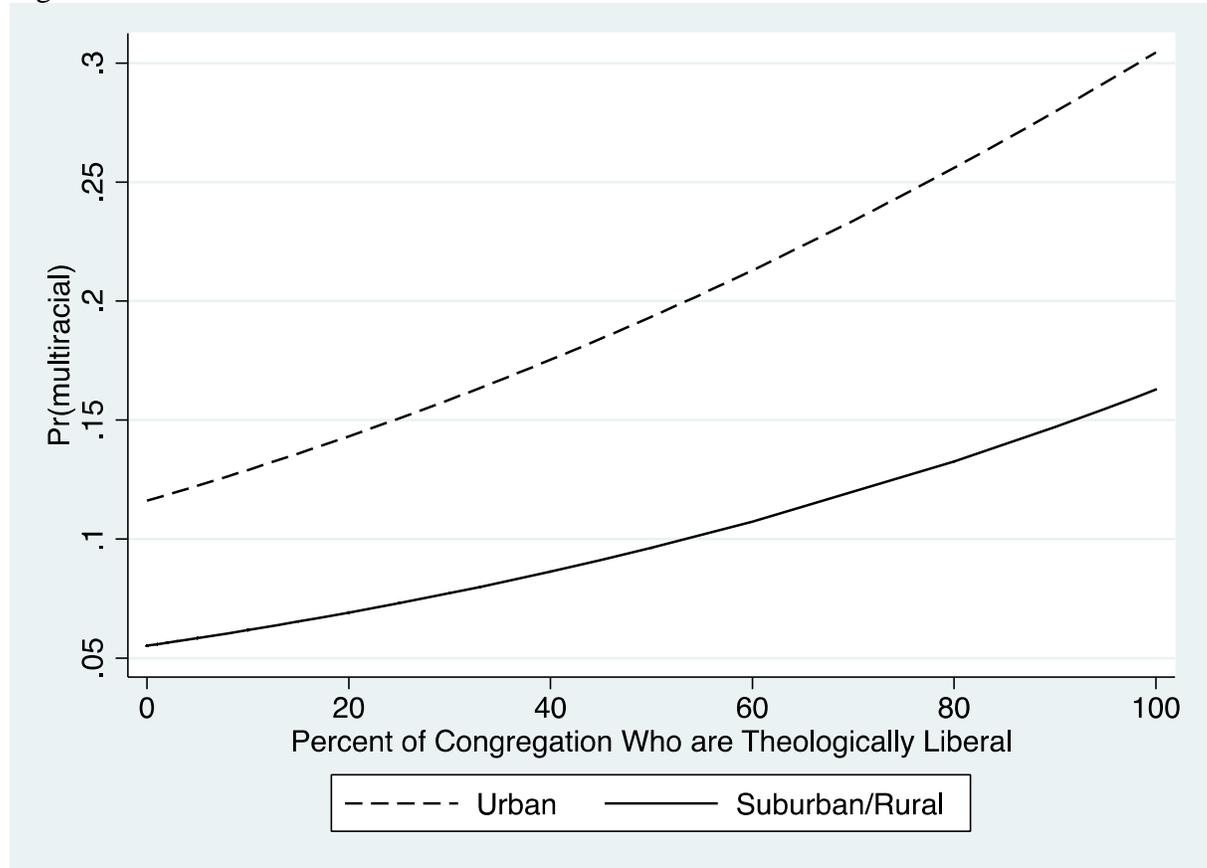
As shown in Figure 4.2 above, in general, urban congregations have a higher

percent theologically liberal and are more likely to be multiracial than suburban and rural

congregations. Additionally, the widening of the gap between the lines shows that the

higher percent of the congregation who are theologically liberal causes a greater increase

in the probability of a congregation being multiracial in urban congregations as compared

to suburban or rural congregations.

In the binary logistic model we refer to as Model 2, possible interactions were

tested for interactions between percent of theologically liberal congregants and year

founded, between percent of high-income congregation members and percent in possession of a four-year degree, and between percent of theologically liberal congregants and urban location. There was no evidence of an interaction between either the percent of high-income congregation members and those with a four-year degree or between the percent of theologically liberal congregants and urban location.

However, there is evidence of a significant interaction between congregation age and the percent of congregation members who are theologically liberal in predicting the likelihood of a church being multiracial (OR=1.00, p<0.05). Specifically, for congregations founded prior to 1987, each additional increase of one percent of the congregation that is theologically liberal is associated with a predicted decrease of 1.3 percent in the likelihood of that congregation being multiracial, holding covariates constant. For congregations founded in 1987 or later, each additional increase of one percent of the congregation that is theologically liberal is associated with a predicted increase of 2.7 percent in the likelihood of that congregation being multiracial, all else constant. For a visual representation of this interaction, see Figure 4.3 below:

Figure 4.3
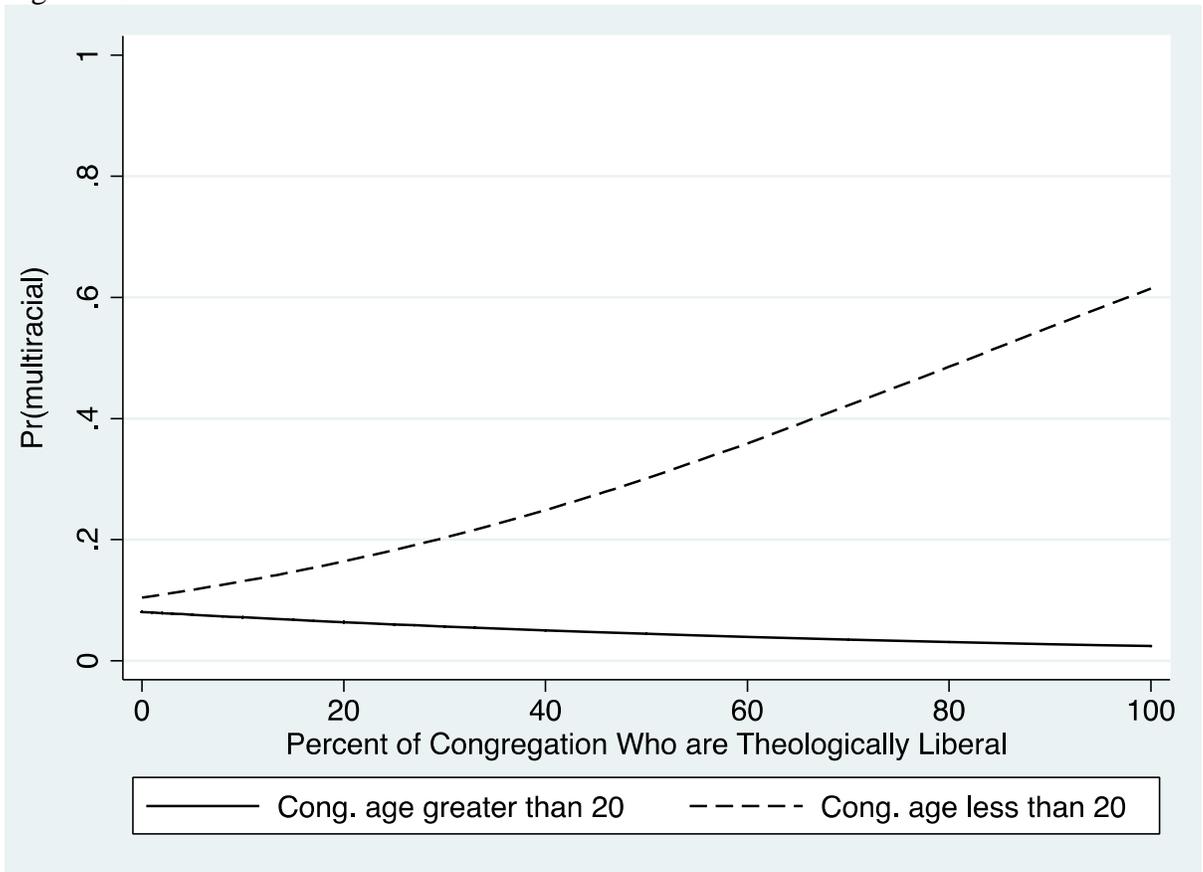
Chapter Five

Discussion

There were several key findings from the above analysis. Compared with White churches, African American and Hispanic churches are associated younger congregation ages. In addition, and unsurprisingly, African American and Hispanic congregations are also associated with urban locations in comparison to White churches. One more commonality between Black and Hispanic churches compared to White churches in Kent County based on the above analysis is that both are associated with a lower percent of congregants possessing a four-year degree. Black church congregations are associated with more theologically liberal members and longer tenured clergy, who have spent more years involved with their congregations than White clergy. Additionally, Hispanic churches, based on this research, are associated with a decreased amount of higher-income congregation members when compared with white churches. In exploring characteristics of multiracial churches, a suburban or rural church location is associated with a decrease in the likelihood of a congregation being multiracial, and having a higher percentage of theologically liberal participants is associated with an increase in the likelihood of a congregation being multiracial; this is particularly true for churches founded in the last 20 years, as the effect is greater in younger congregations.

It is noteworthy that the percentage of high-income congregants is a good predictor of whether the church is Hispanic, but was not significant for Black churches. This may be indicative of the fact that Black churches are more socioeconomically diverse, or perhaps in Kent County, there are fewer high income Hispanics than high income Blacks, proportionately.

As noted above, interracial contact in churches can serve as a mechanism to ameliorate racism; however in Kent County, the low rate of interracial churches means a low likelihood of that occurring. Since the significance and magnitude of the effect of urban neighborhood settings on the probability of a congregation being multiracial was so large, the high residential segregation in Kent County is likely a factor. The largest urban area in the county is in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where most of the multiracial, black, and Latino congregations are located and where most of the nonwhite residents of the county reside. This result was unsurprising and consistent with prior research, and the phenomenon of "white flight" resulting in nonwhite urban areas and predominantly white suburbs is common throughout the United States.

In Kent County, religiously based collective effervescence occurs in congregations that are racially homogeneous most frequently, and rarely in multiracial congregations. The findings here are indicative of this, but also show that in urban areas and in newer, more theologically liberal churches, collective effervescence is more likely to cross racial lines. Durkheim's definition of religion noted earlier, which involves unity, manifests itself frequently in racially homogeneous congregations in Kent County, as it does in the U.S. as a whole generally as well.

Likewise, the beneficial impact of interracial contact as explained in the contact hypothesis is also rare on the religious scene in Kent County. Although the sample in this study had a slightly higher proportion of multiracial churches than data from prior studies using national data, the proportion of multiracial churches was still quite low. As an area that is already facing high residential segregation, the lack of interracial contact by proximity is not remedied by weekly worship experiences; congregations remain

largely racially homogeneous. In light of criticisms of the contact hypothesis' disregard

for social norms and broader intergroup contexts, which mediate the effects of intergroup

contact (Ata, Bastian, and Lusher 2009), the benefits of racial contact in a highly

segregated environment could be called into question. Since some individual prejudice is

linked to ignorance, the ideal contact to reduce the ignorance is positive contact which

promotes learning and appreciation for differences. In a church setting, this would

perhaps be encouraged (although Marti's idea of ethnic transcendence seems not to

suggest celebration of differences, but celebration of religious unity). Conversely, in the

broader social context of Kent County, a highly segregated area, some interracial contact

could be detrimental. Although a meta-analysis of intergroup contact theory found that in

94 percent of cases Allport's optimal conditions were not necessary (Pettigrew and Tropp

2006), one could question what happened in the other six percent of cases. The high

segregation and likely intergroup ignorance in Kent County could potentially cause the

early stages of formation of multiracial churches to be painful rather than transformative

(depending on how they develop), unless the only attendees were those who chose

multiracial churches because they preferred them to racially homogeneous congregations.

Historically, relations between the Dutch population in Kent County and the African

American population were mediated and softened by their common Protestant beliefs

(Jelks 2006), but although this may have softened some of the worst forms of racism,

separatist attitudes continued, as reflected in the continued pattern of residential and

congregational segregation. Much like resistance to mandated school integration during

the civil rights movement, asking racially homogeneous religious congregations and

members to compromise, change, and accommodate one another could be a request that

many will not appreciate and may stir up resentment between groups. Perhaps, in the case of Kent County, the high residential segregation increases the likelihood that attendees of multiracial churches are people who are less prejudiced and are more likely to desire to attend multiracial churches, as opposed to people who see their prejudice attitudes transformed through multiracial contact at church. Further research is necessary to make this determination: whether multiracial church members in areas of high residential segregation see their high levels of prejudice reduced as a result of their attendance or if their prejudice levels are already low.

In order to truly evaluate the prejudice-reducing capacity of multiracial congregations, a longitudinal study of the prejduices of members of multiracial congregations would be neceesary. The data used in this study is not longitudinal, so assessing the prejudice reduction of multiracial churches in Kent County could not be done; however this is an area that perhaps warrants future research consideration. If this research is pursued, it will be important to structure the instruments that measure prejudice in a way that will assess current, more covert prejudices that old surveys measuring racism and prejudice fail to detect (Bonilla-Silva 2001).

The possibility that individuals who attend multiracial churches already have lower levels of prejudice brings up a valid point about causality. In the associations explored in the models in this study, the probability of a church congregation being black, white, Latino, or multiracial are explored using a number of characteristics. One example of a characteristic used is the percent of the congregation estimated to be theologically liberal. The findings indicate that the higher percentage of theologically liberal congregation members is associated with an increased likelihood of a church

congregation being predominantly black. That is interesting, but why is that? Could it be that black congregations are actually more likely to be theologically liberal. In this example, the idea that black congregations in Kent County are more likely to be theologically liberal runs contrary to national trends where black Christians are typically more theologically conservative; however the point about causality should be mentioned. In the models presented here, congregation race and racial composition is predicted using theological orientation, but the direction of causation could be the opposite of what the models seem to suggest. The models reveal significant associations and claims to causality can not be formulated based on the information in this study. Statistically significant associations mentioned are characteristics associated with racial composition of churches in Kent County, not things that cause multiracial churches, black churches, white churches, or Latino churches.

If we assume that newer churches in urban locations demonstrate a display of intentionality about being multiracial, we can use a developed typology of multiracial churches to see what type of multiracial churches are prevalent in Kent County. The significance of an urban location suggests that the population may be drawn by *proximity*, and the young congregation age (which interacts with theological orientation in my model) implies that this would not be a church that decides to become multiracial for survival (Emerson and Kim 2003). Based on this information, multiracial churches in Kent County are likely either *neighborhood charter* congregations or *mandated* congregations (Emerson and Kim 2003). They are likely *neighborhood charter* as opposed to *neighborhood embracing* because *neighborhood charter* churches begin with the intention of being multiracial, while *neighborhood embracing* churches have a history

in an area and change in response to changes in the local neighborhood population (Emerson and Kim 2003). *Mandated* multiracial congregations are those that originate from an authority structure outside of the individual congregation (for example, the denomination) (Emerson and Kim 2003). If the denomination decides to create multiracial congregations, they will likely place them in urban areas; we know that the CRC denomination has two such *mandated* congregations in Grand Rapids (although we can not verify that both meet the multiracial requirement used in this study) (Dougherty and Mulder 2009). In a sense, these were neighborhood charter churches as well, as they were intentionally positioned in more diverse, urban neighborhoods (Dougherty and Mulder 2009; Emerson and Kim 2003). This study, however, is limited in that we can not distinguish the type of racially diverse congregations in Kent County (whether they are assimilated, pluralist, or integrated) (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003), but the contact theory illustrates that which ever type of congregation it is, it should have some prejudice-reducing benefit (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).

In one study, characteristics of multiracial churches were compiled in an effort to develop a theory on the organizational identity of multiracial churches (Dougherty and Huyser 2008). The researchers noted intentionality, experiential worship, and inclusive identity as elements of the organizational identity of multiracial churches (Dougherty and Huyser 2008). In Kent County, it is difficult based on the results presented here to evaluate the organizational identity of multiracial churches. The results here indicate that, being newer, theologically liberal, and in an urban location are all factors. Because the location and newness of a congregation was associated with an increase in the probability that it would be multiracial, this may indicate intentionality in that newer

churches intentionally planted in urban locations to create multiracial congregations. For the elements of organizational identity, having a senior clergy member whose race differed from the majority of the congregation was noted to be a positive indicator of intentionality about diversity (Dougherty 2003). For this research, the choice was made not to include the senior clergy member variable in the models as it would decrease the sample size substantially; however this may be an area worth exploring to better understand how the elements of organizational identity are manifested in Kent County. Worship was also not included in the models in this paper, as there were no direct questions related to worship style in the survey. However, perhaps using denomination as a proxy could, in some cases, lead to results indicative of the impact of worship. This technique does have its potential drawbacks, as within denominations there can be a large deal of variation, and a substantial population of nondenominational churches decreases the utility of denomination as a proxy for worship. Finally, inclusive identity was noted as indicated through fellowship, particularly through the presence of (and participation in) small groups (or cell groups). Initially, a cell group variable was included in the model; however its effect was not statistically significant and it was removed from the model for parsimony. Incidentally, age of the congregation and theological orientation are not incorporated in the organizational identity model presented in prior research; perhaps this is evidence that the model should be revisited and revised.

Two findings related to the percent of the congregation that are theologically liberal are worth noting. First, that African American congregations are associated with a higher percent of theological liberals runs contrary to prior research which indicated that although African American Christians may be liberal when it comes to social justice

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issues, they are conservative theologically (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003). One concern when dealing with the survey data was that no consensus had been reached about the meaning of what "theologically liberal" was to the respondents; however the majority of the respondents were senior clergy members, but assuming familiarity with this terminology is still dangerous and represents a potential limitation of this finding. Additionally, other research suggested that more theologically liberal denominations were less often racially mixed than more theologically conservative ones (although the more theologically conservative ones also more often had charismatic worship, which was a characteristic of multiracial churches in prior studies) (Emerson and Woo 2006). Based on the results from this study that contradict these patterns, and prior research that does not give a clear indication of the relationship between theological orientation and racial composition of the congregation, it appears more research in this area is needed.

For Kent County, the typology and the theory of organizational identity above appear to have a shortcoming, as neither includes consideration of theological orientation (conservative, moderate, or liberal). Although there has been conflicting research on the impact of theological orientation on the likelihood of a church being multiracial, this research shows a small, statistically significant effect. Is the theology of oneness, emphasized as important for multiracial congregations, a theologically liberal position (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Chai Kim 2003; Dougherty and Huyser 2008)? Are the prominent denominations in West Michigan and Kent County considered theologically liberal or conservative? One factor to consider here is the prominent Dutch denominations (CRC and RCA) in Kent County, which fall into the categories of

conservative protestant and mainline protestant, respectively (Ammerman 2005). With the CRC being identified as conservative protestant, and its prevalence in the area (Dougherty and Mulder 2009), this could provide some explanation of the unique results presented here. If the CRC and RCA are more theologically conservative denominations and are predominantly racially homogeneous Dutch American congregations, then perhaps relative to these dominant denominations in the region, black congregations are more theologically liberal. More research would be necessary to confirm this, including research on the homogeneity of the historically Dutch denominations.

What about the impact of worship style interfering with theological orientation, as many theologically conservative churches engage in charismatic worship? Do these have conflicting impacts? Also, if charismatic worship in more theologically conservative congregations is contributing to results, this needs to be addressed. Perhaps if it were, other results would be consistent with what we are reporting for Kent County. As for the elements of organizational identity, are they more prevalent in newer churches? Are these newer churches typically more theologically liberal as well?

While my findings do agree with prior research in finding urban areas more conducive to multiracial churches, it is interesting to note what was not significant. Specifically, education, income, size of the congregation, and presence of ethnic programming were not significant predictors of the probability of a congregation being multiracial in Kent County. On these variables in Kent County, racially homogeneous churches were comparable.

Also, the theologically liberal variable was a significant predictor of the probability of a congregation being black as opposed to white in Model 1. Additionally,

congregation location was not used in Model 1 because there were so few black or Hispanic non-urban churches (six black and four Hispanic). Typically, rural areas are less diverse than urban areas. In addition to this, rural areas are much less densely populated. As a result, if a rural church attempts to attract a more diverse congregation, it is likely that transportation will need to be provided. Additionally, it may be that urban dwellers may have never heard of the rural church. One other factor to note was that attenders of multiracial churches are noted to be different than those of racially homogeneous churches in that they often have had more other racially diverse life experiences and may seek out diversity (Christerson, Emerson, and Edwards 2005). Consequently, rural dwellers who may have lacked the opportunity to have diverse experiences could understandably lack the desire for multiracial congregations, having nothing to base that desire on.

Overall, black churches were more frequently theologically liberal and more often in urban areas while a higher concentration of white churches were in non-urban areas (Brown 2006; Emerson and Woo 2006). Charismatic worship is also a more common feature of black churches than other congregations (Edwards 2009) (although the research here does not verify this for Kent county). Still, these factors illustrate that black congregations most closely align with multiracial churches. On the surface, this seems to contradict some prior research; however these characteristics say nothing about worship style, organizational leadership, or culture of the church which in multiracial churches more often aligns with the standard of white homogeneous churches (Edwards 2008); this could still be the case in Kent County as well.

One interesting finding related to multiracial churches was the interaction between age of congregation and theological liberalism. The findings indicated that having a higher percentage of theological liberals had a positive association with a higher likelihood of being multiracial for newer churches (less than 20 years old). Why is this? In prior research, being a young church was an identified characteristic of multiracial churches, but in this research having a young congregation alone was not significant. The impact together of youth and theological liberalism could be due to many reasons. First, perhaps older congregations in Kent County are more frequently from more theologically conservative denominations, whereas maybe newer congregations are from younger, more theologically liberal denominations (or nondenominational). Perhaps there is a move within denominations in Kent County like the CRC, RCA, or AME churches to mandate multiracial churches and those churches attract theologically liberal congregants. Perhaps congregations in the CRC who are not responding well to losing members as their neighborhood demography transforms from Dutch American to black and Latino are seeing members frustrated with their theologically conservative (and racially homogeneous) shrinking congregations move elsewhere. Could youth be a factor here? Perhaps children of families who have been CRC, RCA, AME, etc. are finding themselves frustrated with the denominations and frustrated with the homogeneity and looking intentionally for newer, less "established" congregations to join. Are younger churches in Kent County more likely to embrace multiculturalism *along with* a theologically liberal orientation, or are theological liberals likely to be attracted to newer churches as opposed to established churches in theologically conservative denominations

that dominate the area? A number of factors could be involved here and these factors pose a number of opportunities for further research.

The research done here has its limitations, but poses a number of new questions and areas for future research about multiracial churches. As it stands, much has been learned about multiracial congregations in the past 20 years, but there is still much more research to do. As the demographics change in the U.S., understanding characteristics of multiracial churches and making multiracial congregations sustainable for those congregations that may have tried and failed could help smooth the transition to a more multiracial country.

Recognizing that the contact theory predicts a reduction in individual prejudice in certain social contexts, it appears on the surface that interracial contact in multiracial churches is not a structural solution to race relations problems in the U.S. today. However, by identifying characteristics of multiracial churches and distributing them to church leaders (like through George Yancey's, One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches), scholars studying religious segregation can empower religious leaders to challenge the structures within their institutions that reproduce religious segregation and help others to recognize and challenge those structures elsewhere in society as well (Yancey 2003). The multiracial church is the structural change and could foster the kind of interracial contact that has the potential to reduce prejudice. Too many congregations passively express the desire to become multiracial but lack the tools and perhaps the will to do what it takes to be multiracial. If these congregations claiming a passion for diversity are expressing colorblind, abstract liberalist views (Bonilla-Silva 2001) and really have no desire to change, they may be a

lost cause. On the other hand, if there are congregations that believe in a religious mandate for diversity in churches but are having trouble achieving that goal, as sociologists we should help them to identify the structural barriers and to make the structural changes necessary. The history of congregations in the United States illustrates the revolutionary force which congregations can possess – it is time to rekindle that force and use it for racial reconciliation.

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