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Racial Integration in One Cumberland Presbyterian Congregation: Intentionality and Reflection in Small Group

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RACIAL INTEGRATION
IN ONE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION:
INTENTIONALITY AND REFLECTION IN SMALL GROUP

CAROLYN SMITH GOINGS

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program
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This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled:

RACIAL INTEGRATION IN ONE CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN
CONGREGATION: INTENTIONALITY AND REFLECTION IN SMALL GROUP

prepared by

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my children, Kathryn, Jennifer, William, and John, and to the memory of my daughter, Michaela, and my son, David.

Abstract

Negative attitudes toward racial minorities and consequent maltreatment of non-Whites continue to be a crisis in America. The crisis of racism is still realized in phenomena such as residential segregation (Bonilla-Silva, 2014), health disparities (Chae, Nuru-Jeter, & Adler, 2012; Chae, Nuru-Jeter, Francis, & Lincoln, 2011), and in the not-so-uncommon unjust arrests and imprisonment of persons of color (Alexander, 2012). Improvement in race relations through the development of meaningful cross racial relationships in racially integrated settings is one avenue that may lead to reduction of racism (E. Anderson, 2010; Fischer, 2011; Massey & Denton, 1993). Christian congregations are common settings in America, and Christian teachings are primary sources of Western ethics and moral values. Historically, Christian practices have affected American attitudes such as with regard to elder care, have influenced legislation such as child labor laws, and have even swayed the contents of the United States constitution. Yet, racial segregation has been the norm in Christian congregations from the end of American slavery until today. Since there may be a relationship between the persistence of segregation in Christian congregations and the persistence of racism in America, racial integration in Christian congregations may impact racial attitudes and relationships. Using Participatory Action Research, this study explored ways to improve racial integration and race relations in Christian congregations. This study utilized volunteers in a 30-day exploration of racial integration in a congregation, a small church in one of the two Cumberland Presbyterian denominations. Data from observations, interviews, racially integrated events, reflection sessions, and participant journaling were collected and analyzed. Intentionality in racial integration in one congregation resulted in cumulative positive change, at times difficult and incremental. Findings revealed that adaptive, proactive leadership enabled cross racial dialogue leading to increases in transformative relations and learning. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, <http://aura.antioch.edu/>, and OhioLINK ETD Center, <http://etd.ohiolink.edu/etd>

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Chapter I: Introduction

Racial Discrimination: Renewed and Continuing

Many writers have discussed the numerous successes of the expansive 20th century American Civil Rights Movement, which led to the enactment of and increasing enforcement of anti-discrimination laws. As a result, over the second half of the 20th century, racial integration gradually evolved in American civic life, such as in public schools, employment, transportation, and housing. Despite tumultuous and often violent times, mandatory integration slowly took hold, and racial integration generally became the American way of life, just as segregation had been for the preceding several hundred years. However, as many events of the last few decades have made clear, less overt but entrenched institutionalized racism has led to stark reversals of many of those gains, evidenced by the return to segregated failing schools (Orfield, 2001; Orfield & Lee, 2007) and by discriminatory mortgage lending (Graves, 2003) as only two examples. In fact, racial discrimination against minorities and segregation seem to coincide with racial minority gains and integration as parallel expectations, particularly in three major areas of American life: economics, health care, and the justice system. As an example from one of these areas, it is noteworthy that, according to University of Minnesota Law School's Institute on Race and Poverty, people of color in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Region (in Minnesota)—even those with high incomes—continue to be denied mortgages at a far higher rate than lower income Whites, and when granted mortgages, they are charged higher interest rates and fees as well, as was concluded by the Justice Department in its finding against Bank of America's mortgaging subsidiary, Countrywide (Institute on Race and Poverty, 2009). Such discrimination is reportedly not uncommon across the country. Thus, while the language of legal racial integration and

equality is the expectation and while compliance with the law is frequently observed, it is often circumvented when possible. Although racial integration and racial equality has become the voiced public expectation, it is not the privately felt normalcy, even more than half a century after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling of 1954 or the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Christianity in America: Aiding Confusion, Adding Contradictions

The new millennium began amidst perplexing combinations of contradictions: major increases in racial integration carried over from the last century (notably within the military) but also widespread racial discrimination in mortgage lending policies and practices in the new century and public school re-segregation; the same low percentage (4.3%) of Black males in American colleges in the 21st century as were in colleges in 1976 (Harper, 2012) but also the election of the country's first Black president; a significant increase in employment of racial minority police officers in local police departments: up to 27% across the country from 15% in 1987 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013) but also widespread practices of racial profiling and of White police brutality. Are Americans getting contradictory signals about what actions are permissible, deemed understandable, excusable, and perhaps even *normal*, despite the fact that those actions contradict voiced values? What are the sources of this confusion?

It has been troubling and discouraging for many observers and activists to see that much of the American religious community—numerically made up mostly of White Protestant Christians—has been complicit in the maltreatment of racial minorities in the United States. For one thing, despite widespread increases in racial integration in civic life over the past century, racial integration is not the expectation in Christian congregations. In this most usual of settings (based on most Americans' claims that it is where they voluntarily place themselves weekly)—a setting in which a majority of Americans and their children are reminded of right attitudes and

normal good behavior—segregation of the races is acted out each week as the expected norm, though the opposite is routinely voiced. Within church walls, racial integration is not the expectation. In addition, for nearly the last 50 years the American religious community as an institution has been largely inactive outside the church walls in confronting racial discrimination, although lip service is given internally to racial equality and integration. This typical inaction, under the guise of innocuous passivity, can be heard in the discussion of DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, and Kim (2003). Though promoting racial integration in congregations as a theological imperative, the authors concede that multiracial congregations are “not possible [in areas where] only one race resides” (p. 138) and do not challenge congregations to develop a proactive awareness of their communities' practices or to be proactive advocates on behalf of potential residents who may not have been shown available properties by area realtors or who may have been unfairly denied affordable mortgages.

Martin Luther King Jr. (1967) said, in a sermon titled “The Three Evils of Society,” preached seven months before his death, that White America “has had a schizophrenic personality on the question of race . . . proudly profess[ing] the great principles of democracy [while] madly practicing the antithesis of democracy” (para. 9). He added that such “tragic duality” has been the cause of the movement toward racial justice taking “two steps backwards simultaneously with every step toward justice”(para. 8). In racially segregated American Christian congregations, perhaps the schizophrenia King identified is a terrible inner conflict between an unconscious desire to passively acquiesce to the comforts of privilege and the compelling though uncomfortable recognition by most Christians of a mandate from their God requiring them to promote justice (as told in Micah 6:8), despite resultant loss of privilege or other personal costs.

In the 21st century, segregated White or Black Christian churches do not turn away visitors of a different color. Nor would they deny membership to persons of races unlike their own. Nor would they require that such visitors or new members sit in separated seating. Anyone who happens through their doors is allowed in. Jesus, however, took more proactive steps. While traveling through Samaria, he intentionally engaged a Samaritan—a racial *other* at that time—in a conversation; it was, in fact, a woman. At that time, women constituted yet another class of *other*. His talk with her is the longest conversation found in Christian scripture that Jesus had with anyone. The full episode is recorded in the fourth chapter of John's gospel. As Bible scholar Craig Keener (2014) pointed out, Jesus crossed several cultural boundaries in that single encounter (p. 257). Jesus also intentionally engaged with tax collectors, another category of undesirables in his religious culture, as is clear in the recorded instances of such encounters in Matthew 9:10-11 and 11:19 when the Pharisees complained about Jesus, calling him a glutton, a drunk, and one friendly enough with tax collectors and sinners to even eat with them. Jesus did not wait for outsiders—the unwanted—to happen into the temple where he taught, despite the fact that his outreach to them carried significant social risks. He engaged proactively with people in all the cultures around him, and that is his obvious expectation of his contemporary followers: inclusive engagement, expanded perspectives. What caused the separateness we now maintain?

According to Simpson (1978), African enslavement in the Jamestown, Virginia settlement began in 1619 when the captain of a Dutch ship sold 20 kidnapped African people to settlers. Simpson wrote that five years later, in 1624, a Black child was baptized and “from that time on Negroes were baptized in most of the oldest churches in the South” (p. 213). Certainly Christian slave-owners experienced conflicting emotions (a bit of schizophrenia, for sure) while eradicating the physical and decision-making freedom of purchased persons but simultaneously

acknowledging the slave to be a human being loved by God and needing spiritual care.

Furthermore, baptism was recognition of the baptized person's rights under God. Therefore, opposition to slave baptisms rose quickly, presumably as implications of the conflicting realities sunk in. The baptism of America's first Black slave was the natural and normal thing to do for a child newly born into a Christian household, in keeping with the owner's religious upbringing. But it also highlighted the moral and ethical quandary of enslaving a child of God. Shouldn't baptism automatically free such a person?

This question was settled as early as 1664 when laws were passed providing that slaves did not become free upon acceptance of the Christian faith and their baptism. By 1706, six colonies had established laws that denied any benefit of freedom to converted slaves (Raboteau, 2004). In essence, legislation was passed that made it legal to enslave a child of God.

A number of slave-owners allowed Christian slaves to assemble separately from the White worship services, which led to concern that this gave slaves the opportunity to plan revolts. Consequently, this was discouraged by imposition of fines on slave-owners who allowed such assemblies. Thus, slaves typically worshipped with owners, though in segregated seating and as subordinate members of the congregation. Nevertheless, they heard the same messages about the way their masters' God loves the downtrodden. For slaves and many Whites alike, this caused, again and again, a primary questioning of the schizophrenia in the White Christian Church when it came to Black Christians: How can Christian beliefs be held by Whites simultaneous with their acceptance of the enslavement and disempowerment of Black Christians?

More and more Christian writers, researchers, and theologians raised a similar question in the 20th and 21st century, particularly in the last several decades: How can the Christian Church,

as an institution, refrain from radical action in response to the racial turmoil outside its doors and still be considered the body of Christ pledged and obligated to certain mandates, such as the promotion of equality and justice? Perkins and Rice (2000) warn that those who hope to fulfill the institutional goals of the organization known as the Christian Church labor “under the burden of a great historical contradiction: *that it is possible to be reconciled to God without being reconciled to your neighbor* [emphasis in original]. Whenever Christians make peace with that fallacy, it spells disaster for the world" (p. 10).

The Overwhelming Influence of Race

In 1992, Toni Morrison stated, “In this country American means White. Everyone else has to hyphenate” (as cited in Chavez, Monforti, & Michelson, 2014, p. 16). In the 21st century, race continues to be a driving force in the United States, affecting thinking, responses, and decisions. Despite the fact that the Christian congregation is the most segregated setting in the country, some have suggested it may be a potential source of racial healing, given Christian teaching about love and inclusion. Others wonder if segregation in Christian congregations has supported and facilitated racial ill will and segregation throughout the entire community at large. In a study published in 2011, using data from the Multi-Ethnic United States module on the 2000 General Social Survey, a researcher concluded that “White evangelical Protestants have a significantly stronger preference for same-race neighbors than do Catholics, Jews, adherents of 'other' faiths, and the unaffiliated” (Merino, 2011, p. 165). What is happening in Christian congregations may be making a bad race problem even worse.

At the turn of the new millennium, as racial segregation continues as a stronghold in the very soul of America—in Christian congregations—some Civil Rights Era achievements have waned and past political gains in equity and equality, if they have survived thus far, are now on

tenuous footing. Increased evidence of police brutality and racial discrimination in the justice system, as well as entrenched residential segregation and re-segregation of schools, have led to a terrible regression in race relations, despite the election of a Black president. In fact, President Barack Obama's historic position as a *First* has often made him a lightning rod for undeniable present-day racial hostility, though the language used may be circumspect. Furthermore, Stanford University professor Eric Knowles' research experiments revealed how racial prejudice is associated with negative attitudes toward Obama's policies, such as health care initiatives. When participants thought a Black person (President Obama) wrote a policy, they had distinctly different responses than when the same participants thought that a White person (President Clinton) wrote a policy, though the policies presented to participants were actually identical (Knowles, Lowery, & Schaumberg, 2010).

Resentment of many toward the Affordable Care Act (ACA), "Obamacare," is probably also an indicator of the current and persistent negative race-related classism. A recently published analysis of opposition to the ACA suggested that Americans equate health status with class status and that many see "the expansion of health care coverage to those at the lower edges of the socioeconomic hierarchy as a leveler of class" (Dolgin & Dieterich, 2011, p. 79). Such a perception, the authors surmised, "can seem threatening to people who believe that class status reflects moral worth and who fear being displaced in the class system by those below them" (p. 79). Dolgin and Dieterich also described more clearly hateful oppositional responses that had developed by the time of the ACA's passage:

As Barney Frank, an openly gay member of the House, and 70-year-old John Lewis, a one-time civil rights activist, walked into the capital, protestors screamed "faggot" and "nigger". . . Democratic Whip Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.) watched a protester spit on a Black member of the House [and said that] he heard things that day that he had not heard since 1960 when he was "marching to try to get off the back of the bus." (p. 88)

Despite a positive evolution in racial attitudes in some portions of the American populace—undoubtedly grown from the seeds of imposed integration and anti-discrimination laws—and, despite an historic Black president twice elected by a majority of White and Black voters, critically poor race relations in this Christian nation are still a massive problem apparent to many in this country and around the world.

Can Christian congregations play a role in enabling communities to respond to civic concerns through racism-free lenses? Can Christian congregations effect change by practicing more deliberate teaching and preaching within racially integrated congregations about the psychological, emotional, racial, and spiritual forces that conflict us and motivate us?

Looking again at the ACA, it is noteworthy that Sommers and Bindman's (2012) study of attitudes toward the ACA—which is generally perceived as benefitting the country's poor and minorities more than other groups—showed that a far higher percentage of medical students favored the Act (68%), as also did medical residents and younger doctors, compared to older physicians (44%). This indicated a probable response along generational lines, with the younger generation being the one more accustomed to racial integration in schools and other areas of civic life.

Another study by Gross et al. (2012) examined Americans' clarity and understanding about the contents of the ACA. Most interesting, the study revealed that, with regard to political affiliation, Democrats understood the most about the ACA, Independents less, and Republicans still less. Another national study of established otolaryngology physicians by Rocke, Thomas, Puscas, and Lee (2014) tested doctors' knowledge of the ACA and found their knowledge to be "fair" (p. 231). However, "fewer than 60%" (p. 229) correctly answered questions regarding the tax benefit for small businesses (such as their own practices) that provide health insurance to its

employees and, as the above-mentioned study revealed, the physicians in this group with Democratic party affiliation provided “significantly more correct responses” (Rocke et al., p. 229, 2014). Sadly, decisions about extremely vital issues are apparently made by many seemingly intelligent people unknowingly for wrong reasons.

Of course, wrong assumptions, misunderstood motivations, and racially segregated congregations are not limited to the White Church. Within the last few decades, the Black Church has also become reluctant to respond to God’s mandates related to race and justice. The supportive and sacrificial involvement of the Black Church during the Civil Rights Movement is legendary. However, as a Christian institution today, the Black Church is also complicit.

According to systematic theologian Professor James H. Evans, Jr. (2006), the Black Church, as an institution, needs to reclaim its historic faith as one critically connected to empowerment. Blacks as individuals have, in great numbers, led and sacrificially participated in the fight for justice in the United States, with numerous White supporters alongside them, during and after slavery and throughout the entirety of the Civil Rights Movement. As individuals and in secular organizations, Blacks continue to lead in the struggle for full equity of the descendants of American slavery. However, the contemporary Black Church as an institution, particularly the conservative evangelical Black Church, has become as conflicted as the White Church about whether and how to confront the complex and implicit justice issues of this century. More often the Black Church has taken a stance similar to the White Church when it comes to activism, considering it to be mostly outside the Church’s primary role of sharing Christ’s gospel. The Black theologian Dr. James Cone (1970), declared that the Black Church must be remade in keeping with its liberating heritage of the likes of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Martin Luther King Jr. The Church, Cone (1997a) reminded readers, “is the community that participates

in Jesus Christ's liberating work in history" (p. 138). But, more now often the Black Church does not, in fact, engage in justice issues. While some issues are dismissed by contemporary Black and White denominations as too secular for their calling, other issues—like women's equality issues or gay rights issues—are judged to be theologically unacceptable, at least according to official policies. Silence on those issues is generally maintained, often because they threaten to divide Black and White denominations alike. The New Civil Rights Movement is happening outside the Church and, to some degree, in spite of it.

In a speech given at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School to the Council members of The Gospel Coalition, Dr. Mika Edmondson (2016) spoke about the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM). Having been invited to help the Council "consider how God is working in our racially charged and polarized society," (para. 1) Edmonson told the gathering that an evangelical parallel to the BLM movement does not currently exist:

It grieves me deeply, to say there is no evangelical movement robustly, consistently, and practically affirming the value of disparaged Black people. So we must be careful how we criticize Black Lives Matter in the absence of an evangelical alternative. (para. 20)

While the BLM Movement, which rejects much of the approach and attitudes of the former Civil Rights Movement, does experience the support and help of some Black congregations, the traditional Black Church, with its solo heterosexual, cis-gender, male dominant leadership, does not lead the BLM movement (Black Lives Matter, n. d.). This shift has been coming for a long time, as Cone recognized decades ago.

Nearly 50 years ago Cone (1970) wrote that "black religion is authentic only when it is identified with the struggle for black freedom" (p. 62), suggesting that the mission of the Black Church must be not only the saving of souls but also the saving of bodies. He argued that this requires the Black Church to be as much a political institution as a spiritual one. While the

first-century Church would have agreed with Cone, most contemporary Black Churches have generally rejected it. Using words of Jesus in Matthew 10:39, Cone added that the Black Church must be an institution with a focus on what is required of followers of Christ rather than a focus on its own survival.

However, in this century of shrinking religious institutions and uncertain survival, the Black Church seems to have succumbed to the lure of safe passivity. Like Cone, Evans (2006) observed it as a tension between a “focus on the inner life of the church . . . as a near exclusive emphasis on praise and worship,” while the “whispers of the social gospel refuse to be silenced” (para. 2). Evans added that there are big-name black ministers who “push political passivity” (para. 3), but that there are also lesser-knowns who “cry out and work for justice” (para. 3). He asked these two vital questions of today’s Black Church:

How can the African American church recover and reclaim its prophetic mandate, mission, and message in the post-civil rights era? How can the African American church contribute to the realization of the kind of transformation and reconciliation that is called for? (para. 4)

In the preface to the 40th anniversary edition of Cone’s (1970) book, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, the author wrote,

The passion with which I wrote alienated most whites (and some blacks too). But I felt that I had no other alternative if I was to speak forcefully and truthfully about the reality of black suffering and of God’s empowerment of blacks to resist it . . . Theology is not only rational discourse about ultimate reality; it is also a prophetic word about the righteousness of God that must be spoken in clear, strong, and uncompromising language. (p. xvi)

An Ancient Solution: Acting on Faith

The Christian Church—Black and White—has become silent or, at best, has vacillated on the value of and has been indifferent to the need for racial integration in congregations, particularly in light of the difficulties involved in such an endeavor. The Christian Church has

begun to lack clarity, strength, and commitment to the pursuit of inclusivity and justice. The Christian Church has become fearful of losing members and funding. The Christian Church, as an institution, has lost its radical core and suffers from unbelief that it can bring about change in the current culture. But there is good news: the first-century church is both a witness and a model of racial and cultural (Acts 1:8) as well as gender (Acts 2:17) diversity in Christianity. It did not fail but grew, despite clear challenges and significant dangers involved in its diversity (Acts 6:1, Acts 10:28-11:20). Nevertheless, as described by Longenecker (1981) and Walton (2008), both the diverse nature and the vitality of the early church is undoubted. And as seen in Acts 2:42-47, they were determined to be united:

They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and they had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42)

Today's church, both Black and White, needs to see the first-century manner of being church not as an extinct ancient mandate but as the roots and foundation of the present-day institution and as a much needed contemporary remedy to the devastation of racial discord in the midst of which the Christian Church finds itself. Describing the work of the South African Council of Churches during the period of post-apartheid attempts at peacemaking, Bishop Desmond Tutu (1994) wrote,

We are committed to liberation. This is not the other side of the coin to apartheid. No, the obverse of liberation is damnation. Liberation is what the Gospel of Jesus Christ spells out in a situation of injustice, oppression and deprivation, such as most blacks experience in the land of their birth. Liberation is through and through biblical and evangelical. You would have to scrap a substantial section of the biblical and Christian tradition if you marginalized liberation. The divine act of salvation par excellence in

the Old Testament was the Exodus, an act of redemption, an act of liberation, which was the founding act for the establishment of Israel as a people. You can't understand the Old Testament at all if you discount that primordial act of deliverance which God effected, first through Moses and then through Joshua . . . Indeed the liberation is to be set free from sin, the most fundamental bondage, but . . . God's liberation would have to have real consequences in the political, social and economic spheres or it was no Gospel at all. It was liberation from bondage and liberation for the service of God and of his creation, liberation so that we might become fully human with a humanity to be measured by nothing less than the humanity of Christ himself. (pp. 37–38)

Modern research as well as church history has shown that diversity in congregations is inherently valuable despite the associated difficulties because racial attitudes do change for the better when people of differing races have the opportunity to be in close proximity and to develop meaningful relationships over a sustained period of time. In the opinion of Bible scholar Craig Keener (2014), the early Christian Church undeniably experienced serious growing pains as it dealt with the challenges of building unity in its diversity, but the limited number of people typically meeting then at one time commonly in house churches (creating what we would refer to today as Small Groups) must have helped them achieve that painful unity. Indeed, there is little doubt that mandatory shoulder-to-shoulder participation of groups of students in integrated classrooms and on integrated collegiate sports teams of the 20th century has forwarded race relations over time. The glaring absence of racial integration, from slavery into the 21st century, in an important place in American life (one exempted from the same mandatory processes), namely gatherings of religious groups, prompts the question: What advances in race relations and in the elimination of racial discrimination could have taken place in American culture at large if Christian congregations in the United States had undergone the same intentional though painful racial integration in the last century or even simply in the last few decades?

Investigating ways to increase racial integration in congregations is vital for the long-term success of Christian congregations as organizations with biblical goals. As a Christian

leader and researcher, I conducted this research to consider how racial integration might take place in an existing monoracial congregation and how it might be replicated and sustained.

Racial Integration, an Abnormality

Racial integration in Christian congregations, beyond the most minimal of levels, is extremely rare. This is strange considering the mandate on all Christian congregations. Though the mission statement found on the worship bulletins of most Christian churches would not present that goal with James Cone's clarity, none would disagree that their work of inviting people to commit to Christianity must be done by demonstrating an inclusive, welcoming reach to all aspects of contemporary society and all its peoples. Thus, in light of that historic Christian mission, the level of racial segregation in Christian congregations is noteworthy. Studying various aspects of this perplexing phenomenon can help leaders better understand the challenges of guiding change in this sector. Little research has been done on this topic, though writings have been increasing steadily within the last two decades. Very limited Action Research (AR) and no Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been done in this topic area.

Although significant numbers of studies have been conducted on what is known as the Black Church, little research has been done on Blacks in interracial churches. Dr. Michael Emerson (2008), perhaps the most prolific writer in this research area, referenced only six studies directly related to this particular topic in his brief paper outlining the need for more research on racially diverse churches. In calling for more studies, he suggested we need to learn more about people who are uniquely able to be a part of an interracial congregation, calling them "different from other Americans" (p. 3). This is similar to the belief of Scheitle and Dougherty (2010) who referred to comparable conclusions in works by Garces-Foley (2007a, 2007b), and Emerson and Woo (2006), in which such congregants were called boundary crossers and *Sixth Americans*,

meaning individuals who do not confine their social lives only to one of the major racial groups in America.

The assumption of the naturalness of the separation of the races puts people who integrate in a special category, according to these researchers, but as far back as 1968, Dr. James Parker described his research on the interaction of “Negroes and Whites” (p. 359) in a biracial church setting (his own), and noted that the “literature has little to tell us about the interaction of persons in desegregated institutions having voluntary membership” (p. 359). Were such groups, in Parker's time, thought to be an anomaly, just as authors of the more recent research studies above infer? Were they considered groups of people too strange to take seriously? Parker thought that such groups may give proof to the possibility of integration in congregations and other volunteer organizations. Yet, 35 years later, Christerson and Emerson (2003) noted only seven works dealing with the question of racial and ethnic diversity in religious organizations. They stated then that “volunteer organizations in the United States are overwhelmingly racially homogenous” (p. 163) and pointed out, as this review found, that much of the research is focused on “why volunteer organizations generally, and religious congregations specifically, are segregated” (p. 163); almost no attention has been directed toward just how it was possible in some instances for interracial congregations to happen. Garces-Foley (2007a) discussed the growing interest in overcoming “ethno-racial barriers in Christian institutions” (p. 210) but noted the lack of research specifically related to strategies used to “bring diverse groups together into a single church community” (p. 211). Can Christian congregations initiate and sustain voluntary racial integration? Can barriers to fuller integration be reduced? Smith and Yang (2009) indicated that since the end of the Civil Rights era, the possibility of biracial church integration (Blacks and Whites) had become a generally held assumption, but evidence to confirm such an

actuality was still greatly lacking.

My Participatory Action Research has been a relevant and timely exploration of that assumption, particularly in light of the current dialogue taking place regarding possible unification of two racially different but theologically identical Christian denominations from which participants for this research were drawn. It is clear that this kind of critical work needs to be done. Much of contemporary Christian America is located among communities of continually changing demographics, putting many congregations in ideal geographic positions to institute changes in race relations by engaging in intentional voluntary racial integration using leadership that can enable such vital changes. It is my belief that intentional racial integration at all levels of Christian institutions, and especially in congregations, is not only achievable but is necessary, albeit there are significant challenges and sacrifices involved. Emerson and Smith (2001) observed—more than 35 years after Cone (1970) developed Black Liberation Theology—"Few subjects are as persistent, as potentially emotionally explosive, or as troublesome as race in America" (p. 6). As Cone suggested, it still requires examination.

As a prelude to this study, I undertook a pilot study using Action Research methodology engaging White Cumberland Presbyterian volunteers in a brief exploration of integrating a single worship service event in a Black Cumberland Presbyterian congregation. This was done against the backdrop of that group's discussion of the issues surrounding the unification the denominations were considering. An important finding was noted. I had at first assumed that the only primary action (and learning) to take place during that Action Research project would be the group-designed action—that is, the actual visit to the congregation. Upon reflection, however, I realized that the revelations the group of White participants—who were previously well known to each other, or so they thought—were making about themselves—some of which

they apparently found quite surprising—were, indeed, important actions. McIntyre (2008) drew the same conclusion in discussing her work with women in Belfast and described their exchanges as having exposed truths that “contributed to their personal and collective growth” (p. 69).

While I cannot document such growth among the participants in the pilot study, due to its particular brevity, I eventually understood the conversations as action taking place within the scope of the research and that the changes in the perspectives of the participants (their personal and collective growth) were necessary prefaces to any changes the group might promote in their congregation or community. A deeper understanding of and appreciation for all aspects of necessary leadership during the pilot developed as I reflected on the guidance that enabled the group. Using insights about power from Chevalier and Buckles (2013), I guided one of our conversations through sensitive questions about potential losses or gains for any individual participant or for their congregation that may be a result of unification. Additionally, as our meetings progressed, I observed what I learned from Marshall, Coleman, and Reason (2011) about leadership as “relational practice,” in which action is “ways of being,” requiring a leader's caution regarding how to “behold and respond” to people (p. 7).

During the pilot, relevant materials in the joint archives of the Cumberland Presbyterian (CP) denominations and in the library of the denominations' seminary (the Memphis Theological Seminary) were reviewed. In addition, interviews with several leaders in both denominations were conducted, and observations and participation in various denominational meetings related to unification was accomplished. One findings from previous learnings suggested that many members of both denominations, particularly third generation post-slavery era members, either do not have enough information or do not have accurate information about the denominations' joint history. One important conclusion drawn was that more basic education and openness about

the history of the issues were required. Additionally, it became obvious that the sense that certain topics were taboo needed to be replaced with honest and open dialogue and with simple language rather than the cumbersome and unclear euphemisms typically used.

Exploring God’s Promise of Peace

Motivation for this research was based on faith that committed Christians are capable of making an important difference in the crisis of racism our civilization faces. Rationale for this study was founded on several premises. First, it was based on the assumption, as other research has shown, that intimate relationships may develop through repeated exposure of persons to each other in certain meaning-based settings like religious groups. Second, diversity—including racial diversity—undoubtedly is a highly desirable and even necessary group trait rooted at the core of the Christian identity as followers of Christ and of Christ’s principles for *interdependent* living. Christian scripture, taken as a whole, and numerous specific mandates of the Christian faith, make a compelling argument for not just racial equality but certainly for up-close racial unity. If Christian teachings obligate Jesus' followers to God’s desire for them to live in harmony and peace, overcoming human barriers (Ephesians 2:11-22; 2 Corinthians 13:11), then it can easily be argued that such a thing cannot be done effectively in separate, segregated worship communities. Third, and even stronger than the mandate to live together harmoniously, are the many instructions directed to Christians about love: “Everyone who loves has God . . . Those who do not love, do not know God; because God is love” (1 John 4:7-8). The point is repeated over and again: “Yes, this is the command we have from him: whoever loves God must love his brother too” (1 John 4:21). There can be no serious doubt that by the terms *brother* or *sister* or *neighbor*, Jesus means anyone created by God, especially those who share the beliefs about Jesus and one God, regardless of the ethnicity, gender, or class status of that fellow believer.

In fact, as any believer can recite, Jesus taught that even those who do not share the Christian's belief must be treated with love. This is illustrated in the story Jesus told in response to a question he was asked—"Who are my neighbors?"—by an expert of the Torah seeking to confound, outwit, or trap Jesus in an inaccurate (or politically incorrect?) answer. Just as theologian James Cone (1970, 1997b) described his own approach to developing and writing both *A Black Theology of Liberation* and *Black Theology and Black Power*, Jesus answers from a perspective foreign to his questioner, the perspective of sacrificial servant leadership. Rather than giving an answer that could be validated by the questioner's cultural assumptions and practices in relation to a shared ancient scripture or by the questioner's assumptions about his own spiritual and theological superiority, Jesus tells a story about the loving behavior a person from a sect despised by the questioner's cultural group. In the story, the person from the despised group (considered *inferior*) acts in a way (while helping someone in great need) that places him on higher moral and ethical ground than would have been expected of him by those who considered themselves *superior* and who despised his kind of people. For that matter, the level of generous compassion demonstrated by his actions was far superior than what would have been expected of his despisers. After telling the story, Jesus tells his questioner to learn from the despised and act in the same selfless way (Luke 10:25-37). It would be difficult to learn from such *others* at a racially-separated distance. Indeed, Christian teachings compels followers of Jesus to love those they despise and fellow followers, neither of which can be done from afar.

The basic characteristic of Christians, according to a major Christian dictum, is each Christian's love for every other Christian, despite differences in their circumstances (i.e., social status, age, race, or gender). That degree of positive regard of one Christian for another is, in fact, the single most striking identifying characteristic trait of the group (John 13: 34-35), and

Jesus frequently uses clear and uncompromising language to make that point, as in the passage from 1 John 4:20, which records this declaration by Jesus: “If anyone says, I love God, and hates a brother or sister, he is a liar, because the person who doesn’t love a brother or sister who can be seen can’t love God, who can’t be seen.”

Yet, regular gatherings of Christians with other Christians are routinely racially segregated, and those gatherings have continued to be an American norm. More Americans identify as Christian than as members of any other religious group. Thus, the Christian Church has set racial separation as an American norm. This is a demonstrably shocking disregard for the primary dictates of Christian scripture, and none of the rationalizations regarding the absence of racial integration in Christian congregations such as homogeneity and colorblindness, have been able to fully justify segregated congregations. Numerous voices are now calling for a change, and a movement toward multiracial congregations is gaining momentum, as is described in the next chapter.

The fourth and final premise of this study is that since all else has failed, possibly the last hope for healing the illness of racism will be proactive Christians courageous enough to heal themselves first and then practice change. Learnings from this study will aid persons responsible for leading congregations in facing and in addressing discrepancies between their current racial makeup—and, indeed, their negative racial attitudes—and the identity they desire to manifest, one in keeping with biblical principles.

Setting and Scope of the Study

The two CP denominations were ideal groups from which to draw participants for this research. These two bodies represented an illustrative microcosm of the nation's Black-White race crisis, considering of their own:

- separation by race; mythology developed around why, how, and even when that happened;
- shared history of degradation of slavery set in the continuing expansive institutionalized racism in America;
- more than a century of failed attempts to formally unify (combine) the denominations;
- mistrust, guilt, fatigue, anger, resentment, despair, which has impaired ability to dialogue; and
- unspoken fears, unexamined assumptions, the plague of superiority and inferiority caste roles.

However, these two bodies also represent a rallying potential hope for amelioration of the Black-White crisis due to their several unique assets:

- a shared, identical (and jointly written) theology, polity, and constitution;
- a continual though tenuous connection with each other from the time of American slavery until now; and
- potential for voluntary racial integration, unity across differences, and a commitment to love.

Although some knowledge of the history of these two denominations was useful and was referenced in this research, this study did not undertake an exhaustive history of the development of these two Christian bodies nor a complete detailed view of their shared history. This study was limited to questions that PAR may be able to answer about how racial integration and positive race relations at the congregational level may be achieved. In this dissertation, for the

sake of simplicity, the CP denomination (and the participants from it) which is predominantly Black will be identified as the Black CPs and, likewise, the other as the White CPs. For this study's duration, the two CP denominations remained apart. They remained identical in structure and theology but different and separate by race, as from their relationship's beginning.

From the time Black slaves owned by members of the CP denomination were first converted and baptized, these two groups of Christians were separate from each other because of race. Though slaves typically worshipped with Whites in CP congregations, they were segregated and their participation checked through separate seating and through strict limitations on their ecclesiastical freedoms and decision-making. Then, in the late 1860s, finally freed from slavery, Black people who had converted to Christianity during their enslavement as a result of attending CP worship services at the same time and in the same place as their CP owners (though in segregated seating), soon found themselves worshipping by themselves in complete physical and racial separation. Varying opinion and myth abound as to exactly how it happened, but everyone admits racism was at the heart of it, as the chronology presented as Table 1.1 at the end of this chapter reveals.

For nearly a century and a half in the post-slavery years following their separation, racial issues continued to be primary factors in a series of failed attempts by the two denominations to become one. Race relations persisted as a stumbling block. The undeniable reality of the denominations' shared and troubled past has been a source of sadness for both groups who have tried to relate and cooperate in a number of ways. The lingering impact of their shared history on their relationship has been a source of some embarrassed confusion, worsened by present-day ignorance or denial by those in both groups about some of that history and by their differing racial experiences and attitudes as well. Adding to the difficulty is the reluctance or inability of

many in both groups to engage in candid and productive dialogue about it. Thus, race-based concerns, such as the often sharply held differences of opinion about how and whether to provide a reparative and compensatory balance of power in a new joint denomination, have continued to thwart a formalized alliance between these two Christian groups. But that may be changing now.

Several years ago, these two groups decided to make another attempt to become one denomination. Because of these current ongoing explorations and negotiations, research participants from these denominations have spent time during the last few years thinking about race and race relations. Such exploration going on within the denominations allowed the practice of PAR with members from these two groups to be a more productive methodology than it may have been ten years or so ago during a hiatus from such considerations between the denominations. Although the possible formal, legal unification of these two bodies was not the focus of this study, using PAR as a methodology to explore an aspect of the racial relationship between Blacks and Whites from these two groups was especially timely.

Using volunteers from these two CP denominations as a way to examine racial segregation and integration in congregations was an appropriate choice not only because of their shared history but also because of their shared polity and theology. Though some members in both denominations have doubts about whether—practically speaking—unification of the two groups is possible, both groups express the belief that such a joining is God’s ideal, as described above from the biblical standpoint of Christian scripture. In fact, Black and White CP members serving on the joint unification committee at the time of the last failed attempt at union, noted: “Sin is involved in our not being able to achieve union at this time, and we must confess that this is so” (Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1991, p. 157). Although each denomination continues to articulate God’s will on this issue identically, the denominations appear to be stumped in

figuring out what to do about managing the shortcomings of their human natures. As noted in minutes from 1991, “Theological commitment does not equate to organic union” (Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1991, p. 4). This study explored ways to close that gap between the self-professed shortcomings of human nature of the two CPs and the theological beliefs (if not commitment) held by both these groups.

The results of this study are particularly relevant to CP leaders charged with guiding racially segregated congregations set in an increasingly cross racial and cross cultural America into taking a critical look at the contradictions between what they profess and what they practice. This study can serve as a model of practical solutions to the conflict between human shortcomings of professed Christians and their spiritual beliefs and ethical creeds, such as is demonstrated by racial segregation in congregations, and the repeated failed attempts of these two denominations to become one. In addition, since American religious practices culturally function to normalize moral behavior in American life, desegregation of Christian congregations and the subsequent improvements in race relations may hold the key to healing the American schizophrenia described in the opening of this chapter. Thus, future duplications of this study may lead to a continued decrease in racial segregation in Christian Churches—the last major strongholds of racial segregation, leading to a deeply felt normalization of racial integration in American life, achieving lasting improvement in race relations.

Segregation in the congregations (as well as the separateness of the denominations) prevents effective evangelism, which is an important purpose of the organizations, but the mission of the groups cannot be fully accomplished under such circumstances because racial separateness in congregations incurs disillusionment in observers and negates the CP’s message of inclusivity, love, and acceptance of all persons. There may well be a relationship between

dwindling memberships in mainline denominations and the racial segregation of their congregations. This study provides congregations with new knowledge that can be used to enhance racial integration within their ranks, which will establish the authenticity of the Christian message, mission, and purpose and will increase the organizations' effectiveness.

As will be discussed in Chapter II, further studies are needed in this area, as a scarcity of research has been done on racial segregation in Christian congregations and the impact on the community at large of long-term segregation within Christendom.

Chapter III will describe the methodology used in this research, and selected data is presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V comprises the analysis, discussion, and recommendations for further study.

As a Southern American who is a descendant of Black slaves converted to Christianity by White CP slave-owners and as a biological descendant of both Black and White CPs and as an ordained Black CP minister, I had a personal appreciation for the importance of this study. Additionally, my pastoral experiences include the challenge of cross racial service and leadership. I am also a mother of biracial children.

Improvements in race relations and racial integration of congregations is of personal value to me. Personally and professionally, I am invested in both CP denominations, and I desire to contribute meaningfully to both and to their continuing relationship because that relationship impacts their message and mission. Indeed, it is a part of who they are, and they are a part of who I am.

The problematic relationship between slave descendants and slave-owner descendants in the United States has had a direct bearing on the racial makeup of Christian congregations in America. Therefore, this study excluded works not related to racial integration among American

Blacks and Whites. Although future studies are warranted on the impact of the integration of other racial and cultural groups in the American setting, limits were necessarily placed on the scope of this study. Therefore, it was restricted to those two groups related to American slavery.

This was a large enough task.

Table 1.1

Time Line of Relationship Between Black and White American Cumberland Presbyterians

1810	Cumberland Presbyterian (CP) Church begins in Tennessee amidst unrest over slavery.
1820	One of the CP founders (Ewing) frees his slaves and preaches against slavery.
1833	First CP paper, <i>The Revivalist</i> , issues support for gradual emancipation.
1848	CP General Assembly (GA) disapproves of any attempt to debate subject of slavery, as the agitation would “hinder the progress of the Gospel.”
1851	CP GA receives six memorials (motions) on subject of slavery, all are referred to committee (“Overtures Committee”) which determines its jurisdiction is limited to matters of “faith and morals.”
1857	Slavery and race relations continue to be intensely debated in all States. Though the CP denomination originated in the South and is mainly based in the South, it has some membership in northern areas.
1857	Since Blacks could live in Illinois as free during slavery, Missouri slave Dred Scott sues for his freedom on basis of 20 years prior residence in Illinois. The Supreme Court rejects his argument, declaring no Black, free or slave, is a full citizen and, therefore, cannot sue. Chief Justice Taney writes that Black Americans “have no rights which any White man is bound to respect,” historically known as <i>Dred Scott Decision</i> . CPs brought slaves to Missouri; records of one congregation founded in 1824 (Loeb Cumberland Presbyterian Church) notes a “Negro” slave as one of the “five charter members.”
1860	The CP denomination has approximately 20,000 baptized slave members.
1861	Civil War begins; CP denomination attempts to avoid a split in its body; one leader (Bird) said “Each [man] must allow others to follow their own convictions...”
1861	CP is only denomination with nearly equal membership in both seceding and in Union states.
1862	CP GA votes to advise ministers and members to “avoid partisanship and sectionalism in Church and State, and to evidence their loyalty to Caesar by their loyalty to Christ in following his example and teaching; and thus continue in brotherly love.”

- 1862 President Lincoln issues preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, tells rebelling seceding states to end fight against the Union or lose all their slaves.
- 1864 CP GA pledges loyalty to the Union while desperately attempting to maintain neutrality.
- 1865 Civil War ends. Though CP denomination avoided split, internal strife continues.
- 1866 GA argues at length about a resolution on “Rebellion and Slavery;” cannot agree “slave-holding” is sin. GA votes that controversy is a political matter outside denomination jurisdiction; adopts resolution calling for all CP publications to “exclude from their columns” any articles that might “engender unholy strifes and divisions among bretheren(sic).”
- 1866 CP GA appoints Special Committee to determine what to do with freed slave CP members, large majority of whom have no land, no property, no education, no resources.
- 1867 John Girardeau, a White Southern Presbyterian minister famous for his evangelistic work among Blacks during slavery, writes that problem White church men are facing "does not lie in the fact that our people are in any degree indisposed to worship together with the colored people. That they have always done . . . But in the past there was no tendency either to social equality or to an equal participation of the blacks with whites in the government and discipline of the church . . . The elevation of the colored people to civil equality with the whites tends to produce in them a desire for social and ecclesiastical equality. This the whites will not be willing to concede." (Girardeau, 1867, p. 7).
- 1867 Southern White CP presbyteries begin defining ecclesiastical status of Black ministers licensed by them, declaring licensure of Black ministers is intended to convey right only to preach to their own color and that their licensure does not entitle them to any seat in any judicatures of the White CP denomination.
- 1868 CP GA recommends "Negro" members attend services with Whites when they are not numerous enough to have congregations of their own, adding “However, the leadings of Providence may hereafter show more plainly whether they should be constituted in a separate ecclesiastical body.”
- 1869 CP GA Committee on State of Religion makes report that “sectional animosities . . . have been buried with the past . . . (and) bonds of Christian fellowship . . . re-established . . .” (referring to relationship between seceding, non-seceding White members).

- 1869 CP GA votes to organize “Negro” members into separate judicatories (Campbell, 1982, p. 37; Thompson, 1895, p. 193).
- 1869 173 "Negro" CP commissioners meet in Murfreesboro, TN to discuss their fate. CP GA promises “free entertainment” if they attend (Murray, 1966, p. 153).
- 1869 White CP commissioner asks GA to devise plan by which "Negro" ministers might receive instruction in theology and church government. Since it had been illegal to teach slaves to read or write, majority of Blacks are illiterate then.
- 1870 White CP GA minutes note that a "Negro" CP commissioner who attends the White CP GA is denied seat in the White assembly.
- 1871 CP GA authorizes formation of "Negro" segment of denomination, the “First Synod of the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church” of Fayetteville, TN.
- 1873 Other "Negro" ministers of the White CP who are not within bounds of the new “Negro” synod ask for verification of their status in CP denomination. Are they still part of the CP? (These ministers had already been placed in separate “Negro” presbyteries which were part of White synods. Synods are CP structures composed of presbyteries in a geographical area.)
- 1873 CP GA votes “No” on the question raised by "Negro" ministers who are not of the "Colored" synod formed in 1871. GA decides then that no "Negro" has any further part of the White CP denomination.
- 1874 "Negro" CPs organize first separate GA with 46 "Negro" ministers and 3,000 members; White CP financial support is significantly less than was promised.
- 1875 Civil Rights Act passes, guarantees Blacks equal treatment in public transportation and accommodations, and service on juries, is the last major civil rights advance during Reconstruction to correct inequities of slavery.
- 1877 Compromise of 1877 ends Reconstruction as well as much northern interest in aiding freed slaves; White race domination and discrimination is legalized via Jim Crow laws. After that, no public schooling is provided for Blacks, in addition to many other consequences. Racist doctrine of Social Darwinism, denigrating stereotypes of Blacks, so-called scientific theories of racial inferiority, superiority is taught by White scholars, ministers, and politicians.
- 1882 A series of articles on race appear in the *Cumberland Presbyterian Review* (a White CP publication). A writer declares Emancipation a big failure, says ninety percent of southern Black voters are illiterate, that Negro leaders should be less concerned with civil rights than the physical condition of their people. Another writer says that southern Whites should assist "Negroes" in forming their own churches (Murray, 1966, p. 153).

- 1882 "Colored" CP denomination requests financial assistance from the White CPs; limited support is received.
- 1883 CP synod of Central Illinois submits request that the GA take steps toward Black and White CP union, starting by having both Black and White CP GA meetings at the same time and in same place. The White CP GA declines the request.
- 1883 The Supreme Court decides that the Civil Rights Act is unconstitutional, solidifying White racist domination as law.
- 1885 A school for "Colored" Cumberlands is established in Bowling Green, Kentucky with little financial support from the White CP denomination. Its existence is tenuous and short.
- 1887 White CP GA minutes note that another appeal from "Colored" Cumberlands for help with the school is received. The White CP GA donates \$2,700 added to what Black CPs can raise.
- 1889 Black CP author-historian, Rev. Nancy Fuqua (2002), includes in her book the entire "First Annual Report of the Bowling Green Colored School" from H. A. Gibson who pleads for more assistance from the White CP GA. Gibson writes that the school enrolled fifty-six students, has three teachers, and that the building is not big enough for that number of students. He notes that he has undertaken repairs for which payments have not been made (p.64).
- 1890 School for "Colored" Cumberlands is considered in such poor condition that the property (belonging to the White denomination), is sold. Other property is sought for new location of the school.
- 1895 Attempts to set up another school for "Colored" CPs in Springfield, Missouri fails due to shortage of funds.
- 1896 Illinois Synod of White CP asks GA to approve entrance of Black students to the CP seminary until "such time as that church shall be able to provide said instructions in their own institutions" (Campbell, 1982, p. 47), but the request is denied.
- 1897 Educational Society of White CP GA suggests individual voluntary donations be made to the "Colored Church" if it takes "active steps toward better educational work" but that "great care" be taken that such donations do not reduce the "expected income" for their own work, noting "These people are in our very midst, they bear our ecclesiastical name, believe and preach our doctrines with enthusiasm and are calling loudly for help. As they are part of our own household of faith, we cannot ignore them and hope to stand guiltless before our common Father" (Campbell, 1982, p.47)

- 1898 GA of White CP recommends Black ministerial students get training at Fisk University, a school established for Blacks, instead of the CP seminary.
- 1903 Two White groups consider reuniting: northern Presbyterians [PC(USA)] and southern CPs. Murray writes that main barrier to reunion is CP attitude toward race. "If union was to be accomplished, some method had to be devised to separate Negro and White communicants in the South" (Murray, 1966, p. 196).
- 1904 White CP member of Committee on Union of the CP-PC(USA) reports in *The Cumberland Presbyterian*, "The Southern people need have no fears of the negro in this union. The members of the Presbyterian committee, who were from all parts of the North, recognized as fully as did our own committee the absolute necessity of a separation of the races in the South" (Murray, 1966, p. 196).
- 1904 White and Black Presbyterians (mostly northerners) vigorously oppose union of CP and PC(USA). Prominent northern Black Presbyterian pastor, Francis Grimké, writes, "Until evangelism clearly recognizes the evil of race prejudice, and includes it among the sins to be repented of in bringing men into the church of God, it is a mocker, a mere sham, utterly unworthy of the Christian church" (as cited in Murray, 1966, p. 185).
- 1905 Despite protests of many, vote for acceptance of CPC-PC(USA) union plans go on, contingent upon the White CP requirement of separate racial judicatories.
- 1906 From 1906 to 1911, the White CP denomination suffers devastating losses resulting from the 1906 union with PC(USA).
- 1906 An article appears in White CP publication, *The Cumberland Presbyterian*, asking for financial help for Bowling Green Academy, the school for Blacks. While praising the school, the author of the article also apparently attempts to allay White fears of Blacks seeking equality through too much education beyond industrial or vocational, noting that "they are trying to teach the Negro his place and to train him to fill it wisely and honorably" (Fuqua, 2002, p. 68).
- 1911 Colored CP GA receives greetings from the White CP GA in Indiana. Contact between Black and White CPs begins to slowly resume.
- 1926 White CPs begin mission work among non-Whites outside United States. This frustrates some White CPs, creates White CP conflict. Rev. Hudgins, editor *The Cumberland Presbyterian* writes, "We are in full sympathy with our one thousand Cumberland Presbyterians in China . . . but why should we . . . fail to show our sympathy for . . . 15,000 Cumberland Presbyterians in our homeland because their skin is not of the same hue as our own? We believe the Cumberland Presbyterian Church should give as many dollars every year to help our brethren in Black as it gives to help our brethren in yellow, and we would see the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Colored, growing and progressing" (as cited in Campbell, 1965, p. 46).

- 1933 Black CP pastor Rev. William Fowlkes sends appeal letter to Stated Clerk of White CP GA, saying without "fundamental cooperation is had from your church it will only be a matter of time that we can hope to exist" (Campbell, 1982, p. 53).
- 1936 Rev. Fowlkes from Colored CP attends White CP GA, appeals for help.
- 1937 White CP GA passes resolution to engage more with work of Black CP denomination. Black CP GA appoints committee to visit White CP GA to develop closer relationship. Cooperative work, fraternal visits are very difficult in the South due racist practices prohibiting groups of Blacks and Whites from meeting together and prohibiting Blacks from eating or sleeping in restaurants or hotels.
- 1938 Pulpit exchanges, are one-sided: White ministers can preach in Black churches; reverse cannot easily happen. Racism thwarts efforts for decades. Campbell (1982) tells of Black minister visiting 1938 White CP GA in Russellville, AR as a guest but eats in the kitchen while the White GA attendees eat in dining hall, except for one White CP elder friend who eats with him in the kitchen (p. 57).
- 1950 When GAs meet, both groups—Black and White CPs—renew commitment to exchange fraternal delegates despite continuing race-based challenges or limitations placed on Black CPs. Practice of sending fraternal delegates to each other's GAs has continued into the 21st century, providing "opportunity for interchange of ideas and sharing fellowship" (Fuqua, 2002, p. 44).
- 1950 Youth fellowship groups of White CP contribute to scholarship fund for Black ministerial students.
- 1953 Texas Synod asks that "Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Ministerial candidates and other fulltime Christian workers" be given admission to the Cumberland Presbyterian Theological Seminary. GA votes in the affirmative. However, since an undergraduate degree is prerequisite for admission, by 1956, only one Black student has enrolled.
- 1954 Supreme Court rules racial segregation in public education is inherently unequal and thus illegal under 14th and 15th Amendments, repudiating the 1896 Separate but Equal doctrine that had governed American race relations.
- 1954 White CP GA votes to allow Blacks to attend an In-Service Training School for Rural Ministers. The first Black attends in 1956.
- 1957 White CP GA receives a request from one of its presbyteries that Black ministerial students be allowed to enroll at Bethel College. Request is denied. Study of future Black enrollment possibilities is initiated.

- 1957 White CP GA approves a request to study the feasibility of eventual merger of Black and White CPs.
- 1958 White CP GA committee reports merger not feasible now but may be in future.
- 1959 White CP GA receives request from one of its synods that Black ministerial students be considered eligible for enrollment in Bethel College, as no progress has been made on study ordered about that. Request denied. Trustees of the college told to prepare and propose a plan to next GA to implement admission.
- 1960 White CP GA votes not to attempt racial integration of Bethel College, based on report from the Trustees.
- 1961 White CP GA does not approve Black student admission to Bethel College before it adjourns. However, one Black student is admitted to the Bethel College fall of 1961, several months after the GA ends.
- 1963 The historic March on Washington takes place.
- 1963 White CP GA appoints committee to study relationship between Black and White CPs and to develop plans for eventual union.
- 1964 White CP GA votes to racially integrate Bethel College and CP seminary.
- 1967 Vote on union fails; not enough affirmative Black CP votes. Committee on union dissolves.
- 1968 Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy are assassinated. Some Black and White CPs are involved in the Civil Rights Movement.
- 1968 White CP GA Committee on Christian Social Relations recommends that the GA "make it clear...that participation in the Memphis crisis or in similar social movements in the future is a right guaranteed every individual...it should be understood that any individual exercising his rights is not representing the [CP] denomination..." (Campbell, 1982, p. 91).
- 1968 Black and White CP GAs establish Committees on Cooperative Activities and Unification as a future possibility. A new Joint Committee is also established.
- 1970 The Joint Committee on Cooperative Work and Unification (JCCWU) reports to both GAs, and presents some reasons why latest union attempt failed. Six reasons given: three reasons are attributed to the Black denomination and three to inadequate planning. Neither race nor racism is officially mentioned.
- 1972 The Black and White CP denominations together develop the "Federated Board of Christian Education," as a joint experiment in cooperative programming.

According to Fuqua (2002), regular meetings of the Federated Board of Christian Education (FBCE) led to "increase in person-to-person understanding, decrease in hostilities, and lessening of fears and estrangement" (p. 45).

- 1974 The purposes and work of the JCCWU and the FBCE seem to parallel and overlap, at times in confusing ways.
- 1974 The FBCE reports members discover denominations "are more alike" than not.
- 1977 The FBCE, has met regularly since its beginning, has planned three programs in 1974 and 1975, and four special events in 1976. Board reports in 1977 that it became "more than a structure through which the two denominations work" but also became an arena in which "interpersonal relationships" were developed. FBCE acknowledges that "only a relatively small group of people" from the two denominations had the opportunity to experience "a new venture in taking seriously the unity we are given in Christ" (Campbell, 1982, p. 156).
- 1977 The FBCE continues meeting, begins to alternate meeting locations between Black CP's newly constructed headquarters (completed in 1976) and the White CP headquarters in Memphis, where FBCE had previously met each time.
- 1977 The JCCWU sponsors a "Celebration of Unity" which is well-attended; an approximately equal number of people from each denomination attend.
- 1979 The JCCWU sponsors another "Celebration of Unity" which is poorly attended.
- 1981 The FBCE reports having both joint and separate meetings. With "pure federation" being unachievable, the Board settles for "selective federation." Each denomination's board is free to pursue its "own program goals." Soon, FBCE reports their work together has lost momentum.
- 1981 Both Black and White CP GAs agree to put three Black CPs on Board of Trustees of the Historical Foundation of the White CP denomination, making the Foundation officially a cooperative work between the groups.
- 1984 Confession of Faith is jointly revised and adopted by Black and White CPs.
- 1985 Plan of Union is approved by Black and White CP GAs for study; a 1992 union is projected.
- 1991 Joint committee reports union failure: "Sin won't let us unite."
- 2011 After 20 years, Black and White CPs denominations vote to try union again.
- 2012 Black and White CP GAs form Joint Unification Task Force to plan Union

Chapter II: Literature Review

Racial Integration of Congregations: A New Conversation

Little interest in racial integration in congregations existed prior to the Civil Rights Era, and the body of literature on racial integration in religious entities, particularly in Christian congregations, has been quite limited. That began to change over the last 20 to 30 years or so, with a nearly two-fold increase taking place in the last eight to ten years alone, no doubt because of the slow but steadily increasing number of at least minimally integrated congregations over the last several decades. Most cited research on racially integrated Christian congregations was done within the last fifteen years or so (Marti, 2009, p. 53), with the list of researchers referenced regularly being limited to eight or so. It can be observed that writings by African Americans are not frequently mentioned, though quotations from historic writers like Du Bois and Martin Luther King, Jr. are sometimes utilized sparingly. The writings of Black authors such as James Cone (1970, 2011), Gayraud Wilmore (1998), or Cain Hope Felder (1989) appear to be ignored in this particular area. To be fair, it can be argued that those writers were not particularly concerned with racial integration of congregations, per se, which is the topic at hand in this study. In fact, some of the above-mentioned authors suggested that racial integration is neither desirable nor possible. Nevertheless, what they have contributed to the national discussion about race relations and the history of the development of Christianity among Blacks, sheds significant light on the difficulties of racial integration in Christian congregations. Such works should not be overlooked by anyone whose goal is to promote racial integration, as their writings will be of invaluable assistance in paving effective roads to racial integration. For example, in none of the works I first read at the beginning of this study by those researchers noted most often, was it mentioned that religions which slaves brought with them when captured may have bearing on

their eventual adoption (or adapting) of Christianity and that, in turn, may have bearing on how their descendants practice Christianity. However, in the introduction to the third edition of his book, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, Wilmore (1998) noted that any examination of the Black Church in America must be undertaken with an awareness that “God’s revelation was alive and well in Africa before the coming of the White man” (pp. xii–xiii). Thus an understanding about the conversion of Blacks to Christianity must include an understanding of “the religion of the first Blacks to set foot in the New World” (p. xiii). Furthermore, he pointed to later scholars who have researched slave narratives that revealed some things about slave religion and how it began to weave into the fabric of the Christian religion around them.

Although, within the limits of this study, an examination of African religions and of the influence on American slaves was not possible, this is mentioned to highlight Wilmore's point that recognizing the prior spiritual experiences of slaves and the ways in which they may have interpreted and internalized concepts of Christianity, requires application of a broader perspective on the gospel itself, just as Native American Christians will connect to their history as Christians, Americans, and as aboriginals in a culturally relevant way that must be unique and that will be different in some aspects from Black or White Christianity. Particularly pertinent to studies related to Black-White integration in Christian congregations is Wilmore’s (1998) analysis of the response of clergy—Black and White—to the development of the Black Power Movement and its impact first on relationships between leaders in the Black and White religious communities who had been working together on civil rights for Blacks and second on the development of a Black theology.

All of James Cone’s works can assist the discussion on racial integration, precisely because he raised doubts about the possibility of *true* integration. Though his full estimation of

the state of race relations when he wrote is not assumed to be accurate, he no doubt voiced what others may have also believed, and this is important to know. He made prophetic warnings which are being borne out now by recent events. In his book, *God of the Oppressed*, written 40 years ago, Cone (1997a) cautioned in the section titled “Reconciliation: Black and White,” that prerequisite to successful or sustainable racial integration of congregations is an understanding in the new congregation of the need to continuously work to do justice (pp. 215–225).

However, most of the often-referenced literature on racial integration of congregations has been focused on why integration cannot be done or why it does not work. For example, Yancey and Emerson (2003b) suggested that the answer to why racial integration in congregations does not work is obvious: racism. They note in a study on intracongregational conflict that “racial tension is a major source of conflict in the United States . . . conflict can partially explain why religious organizations are overwhelmingly monoracial” (p. 113). Yet, the number of racially integrated congregations has continued to grow, albeit quite slowly. Some studies note the influence of church-growth programs that utilize homogeneity as a tactic, suggesting that racially integrated churches go against a naturally desirable tendency of like entities to bond (Scheitle & Dougherty, 2010, p. 409).

In other studies, researchers highlight dominant attitudes of White privilege and how that impacts not only worship attendance choices of Whites but also the subjugation of worship needs of non-Whites to the needs of Whites in interracial settings; they point to subsequent departure of racial minorities, and declare integration impossible to sustain (Edwards, 2004). In fact, recently published research has continued the pattern of ringing bells of alarm declaring negative consequences of integrating congregations. In “Congregational Diversity and Attendance in a Mainline Protestant Denomination,” Dougherty, Martinez, and Marti (2015), reveal a decline in

attendance over a 10-year period in a multiracial congregation. Certainly frightening for those who have watched membership numbers steadily shrinking in monoracial mainline Protestant congregations is the notion that promoting integration will make it even worse. Though the authors stated that they "did not intend to discourage" diversity (Dougherty, Martinez, and Marti, 2015, p. 680), their conclusion was that it is difficult and often does not work, particularly in denominational settings more so than in nondenominational settings. However, there was no discussion in their article about whether any tactics or planned strategies of intentionality were used by that congregation's leadership as racial integration began to take place. The authors do not seem to consider any other reason for the shrinkage.

Far fewer studies examine why interracial congregations are now desired by a growing number of people or the factors that have enabled those limited number of interracial congregations to function and thrive, but there is great importance in studying how racial integration in congregations can be done and which approaches may help it work. The potential benefit from this study, particularly using AR (action research) methodology, is significant. This approach was based on the assumption of the capacity of Christians to believe that the mandates of God are possible to achieve in this lifetime, that living the radical life as fully devoted Christians can be a reality. The portion of Christian scripture most pertinent to that premise is Jesus' well-known instructions on prayer: "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10, English Standard Version Anglicised). Inclusion of the words "on earth" clarified Jesus' presumption that it really can and will be done in this life, not just in eternal life. Jesus declared that safe, easy, passive acceptance of the status quo of racial segregation in congregations is not his followers' best in this life.

Admittedly, the scarcity of research in the field is likely reflective of the perplexity of the Black and White racial divide in which America is entrenched, much as a result of American slavery. Few ideas have been put forth on how to turn the tide on such a strong historic current as racial segregation in American congregations. Even in studies on the rare successfully integrated congregation (where a minimum of 20% of minority members has been reached), not enough is said about how such successes could be duplicated. In fact, reasons for successes seemed to be guessed at and attributed to accident or luck (such as propinquity) or to the singular leadership of a particular charismatic pastor or to the ability of the non-White racial minority members (since it is they who are integrating into America's racial majority churches) to transcend their racial identity; this, according to the guesswork of one researcher (Marti, 2010).

Other research reviewed pointed to the difficulties for non-White racial minorities in congregations if the number of minorities in attendance does not create enough numerical weight to force worship services and other congregational practices to reflect some of the needs of the racial minorities (Edwards, 2004). Some researchers have also found this to be one of the reasons racial minority attendance and membership is not sustained. Studies note uncertainty and confusion about what non-White racial minority attendees in majority White congregations need in order for their attendance and membership to be sustainable (Emerson & Yancey, 2008; Marti, 2009, 2010). However, no attention has been paid to why Whites generally do not integrate into non-White majority churches or to the circumstances under which they would or sometimes do.

While there are significant gaps in knowledge in this area of research, the limited research on congregations that have become racially integrated and where that integration has been sustained has shown that, over time, racial understanding is enhanced, comfort levels increase, and racial attitudes change (Garces-Foley, 2007b) and that the skill level and

commitment of leaders to racial diversity makes a difference (Parker, 1968; Pittman, 1945; Rusaw, 1996). Making a bolder inquiry into how current lack of integrated congregations relate to race, race attitudes, and racism was deemed necessary.

Although several researchers have commented on the strange normalcy of racial segregation in congregations (Emerson & Kim, 2003; Porter & Emerson, 2012; Scheitle & Dougherty, 2010; Yancey & Emerson, 2003a), it has been attributed to the theory of homogeneity as the glue that holds congregations together and, in fact, as a glue that has been considered a necessity and used intentionally in planning the development of new congregations (Scheitle & Dougherty, 2010).

This is a strange curiosity in the face of the irrefutable history of diversity and inclusion in the development of the first-century Church. The unreserved outreach to all *others* by Jesus during his lifetime supports this contention. Indeed, the early church looked back to the unconditional love of Jesus as a model and guide as it continued to grow. Despite the conclusion of some researchers that homogeneity is necessary for congregational growth and sustainability (Scheitle & Dougherty, 2010), it can be observed that the traditionally homogeneous mainline racially segregated congregations are the ones that are shrinking, while the rare congregations with high levels of racial inclusivity are the ones that are growing. An example is Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, a megachurch with approximately one-third each of African American, White American, and Hispanic American members. Lakewood will be an important congregation to watch over the next five to ten years because, as researcher Curtiss Paul DeYoung noted more recently, Whites attending Lakewood are now the minority (Boesak & DeYoung, 2012; DeYoung, 2012). It is not unreasonable to wonder how that shift in attendance demographics will impact the church's growth and sustainability. For now, it is the most racially

diverse and the largest single-campus Christian congregation in America. Michael Emerson (2008), probably the most prolific writer in this specific research area, along with other researchers, has suggested that it takes special people to be able to succeed at racially integrating churches. In his call for more studies on this, Emerson suggested we need to learn more about “people who are uniquely able” to be a part of an interracial congregation, calling them “different from other Americans” (p. 1). This is similar to the belief of Scheitle and Dougherty (2010), who referred to comparable conclusions in works by Garces-Foley (2007a, 2007b) and Emerson and Woo (2006), in which such congregants were called “boundary crossers” (p. 420). The assumption of the naturalness of the separation of the races puts people who integrate into a special category, according to these researchers. Scheitle and Dougherty (2010) concluded from their quantitative data analysis that the duration of church membership of those who are the racial minority in a congregation is shorter than those members in the racial majority.

Even if the theories of homogeneity and the naturalness of racial separation were true, as may appear to be the case, judging from the racial makeup of Christian congregations in America, and even if it takes special people to cross the line of such normalcy, are not all Christians, by definition, those special people? That Christians have the power to participate in loving relationships across cultural barriers is illustrated in the history of the developing early Christian Church: It soon grew into a multicultural phenomenon.

In observing the state of diversity—specifically, the lack of it—in volunteer organizations in general, aside from religious groups, researchers Christerson and Emerson (2003) noted only seven works dealing with the question of racial and ethnic diversity in volunteer organizations. They stated: “[V]olunteer organizations in the United States are overwhelmingly racially homogenous” (p. 163) and pointed out that, as a review of the literature makes clear, much of the

research is focused on “why volunteer organizations generally, and religious congregations specifically, are segregated” (p. 163). They suggest that almost no attention has been directed toward just how it is possible in some instances for interracial congregation to happen. Garces-Foley’s (2007b) literature review on the emergence of the multicultural church, considered the growing interest in overcoming “ethno-racial barriers in Christian institutions” (p. 11), but noted the lack of research specifically related to strategies used to “bring diverse groups together into a single church community” (p. 11). She also mentioned the troubling confusion of terminology in the literature, which is a related problem, as discussed below. Smith and Yang’s (2009) quantitative data analysis on Black and White integration trends between 1978 and 1994, indicated that since the end of the Civil Rights Era, the possibility of biracial church integration of Blacks and Whites had become a generally-held assumption; but evidence to confirm such an actuality was lacking, as Black-White integration levels remained stagnant during that period, according to their research.

Complicating the literature and due to the scarcity of research on racial integration in congregations is the fact that studies having anything to do with race and religion are lumped together in search results whether closely related or not. For example, a study investigating whether racially integrated churches are more or less likely to be politically liberal (Yancey & Kim, 2008) shows up in search results with a study examining ecumenism between Black and White Churches (Barnes, 2010) and a study comparing and analyzing racial attitudes of two monoracial Christian churches (Barnes, 1997), as well as a study on how racial identity impacts one’s understanding of oneself as a Christian (Buell, 2001) and a comparison of levels of conflict in monoracial and multiracial churches (Yancey & Emerson, 2003b), and so forth. In addition to the limited number but wide ranging foci of these unrelated studies, they often share a confusing

variety of overlapping but non-exchangeable terminology used often as if it were interchangeable, a problem which may be due to coy and vague euphemistic language in many studies. Use of the terms ethnic or ethnicity, only in reference to non-Whites but never in reference to Whites is one example. Referring to different cultures or cultural differences, when discussing people of different races but who are, in fact, in the same culture, is misleading and adds to the problem. Although such a tendency to rely on innuendo in the use of terms is common—for example, referring to Black youth as inner-city or “at risk” youth rather than as Black or non-White—researchers in this field need to set a higher standard of perspicuity, as this tendency adds a lack of clarity to an already confusing and sensitive topic, one apparently difficult for many to discuss, even scholarly researchers. The need to simplify language by eliminating euphemisms and clarifying terms is critical. While these may seem at first glance to be superficial concerns, they become major issues depending on the researchers’ audiences. In fact, researcher Rusaw (1996) found that leaders of congregations and other voluntary organizations wanting to promote diversity and integration in their groups realized that achieving such change required a keen awareness of the use and meaning of terms and symbols as those leaders communicated with their followers and potential followers.

Historical Context of Researcher and Participants

I was born into the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, as were my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Most were lay leaders in the church. They often spoke about ministerial training of enslaved Black ancestors in the White Church. In the late 1800s before and after slavery ended but prior to the split between Black CPs and White CPs, Black ministers and ministers in training were regularly listed in the CP ministerial directory, though with "colored" noted next to their names (Fuqua, 2002, p. 23). During my childhood, I rarely, if ever, heard the

Presbyterian church down the road from my grandmother's home called the "Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church," as it was officially or legally titled; much later it was changed to the "Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America." My grandparents told me they never thought of themselves as anything other than Cumberland Presbyterians, but in their early development as a religious group racially separated, they were called the "Colored Cumberlands," by Whites, just as their ancestors had been on White CP records during slavery. It was not a name Blacks chose for themselves. They referred to themselves as Cumberland Presbyterians. However, as Fuqua (2002) explained in her history of the Black CPs, after first being labeled "Colored" CPs, while they sought to drop the "Colored" designation, they were forced to add "Second" to the name for the convenience of others needing to distinguish them from White CPs. Some years later, after the heat of the Civil Rights Movement, the Blacks insisted on dropping "Second," unwilling then to continue being referred to as second to anyone, and added "in America" to their denomination's name. Like persons born out of wedlock, they could not use simply the name Cumberland Presbyterian, at least not legally.

As a Black child from a religious family tradition first pushed out of the White CP, then in a "Colored," and then "Second," and then the CP "in America" denomination; as a Black Southerner born in an era of enforced segregation who integrated into a predominantly White northern residential community during my early school years and tried on various other Christian identities and perspectives; as a Black woman active in the Civil Rights Movement among men; as a Black woman in a Women's Liberation Movement that seemed mainly to benefit White women; as a wife and mother in a chosen mixed racial family; as a Black woman, then rare in higher education accumulating degrees and teaching; as a woman clergy in a man's profession; given all this, it is understandable that I might ask "What am I to do with it all? or "How can all

of who I am—all the gifts from God of my many perspectives—help all of us (with "us" really referring to "all" of us)?"

It has been of particular interest to me, since much of my professional work has involved bridge building between the Black and White races, to discover through this research that Black Presbyterians, as a group, have historically found themselves with one foot in their communities as Blacks and the other foot in a White Presbyterian world. Murray (1966) points out that Black Presbyterians "stressed their denominational heritage as strenuously as any zealous White Presbyterians" but that amidst the problems created by the American caste system, Black Presbyterian ministers, "found it necessary to adopt the role of race leader just as much as his colleague in the all-Negro denomination[s]" (p. 30). Murray further suggested that there has been a degree to which Black Presbyterians have lived "in a borderland between the Negro and White worlds" with a more indirect influence on both, serving White Presbyterianism as "an irritant to the conscience of the church, reminding it of the gap between its professions of Christian equality, and its tacit acceptance of the system of caste" (p. 30).

One of my Antioch professors, Jon Wergin (2007), described his understanding of his teaching role as a "calling" (p. 15). So do I, and I also understand that role to be inseparable from my calling as a member of the Christian clergy and as an activist for justice and inclusion. I care deeply about both Cumberland Presbyterian denominations to which I am connected, which I recognize as one. My positioning as clergy, teacher, woman, and Black American whose families have been rooted in this country for hundreds of years, renders a fullness and uniqueness to my perspective that I feel both qualified and bound to share with both the Cumberlands and others.

Included in the collection, *Stony the Road We Trod* (Felder, 1991), is an essay and literature review by Renita Weems (1991) discussing the challenge of scholars who are rightly

insistent on viewing the Bible from a perspective of liberation. Weems observed, "the emotional, psychological, and religious health of African American women has been directly related to their refusal to hear the Bible uncritically" (p. 66). She added,

Substantial portions of the Bible describe a world where the oppressed are liberated, the last become first, the humbled are exalted, the despised are preferred, those rejected are welcomed, the long-suffering are rewarded, the dispossessed are repossessed, and the arrogant are prostrated. And these are the passages, for the oppressed readers that stand at the center of the biblical message and, thereby, serve as a vital norm for biblical faith. (pp. 70–71)

Bringing my voice to the table, along with others who have not always been heard, will add to the healing dialogue we must undertake if we are to create new norms and be made whole.

In previous studies, I described my interest in the historic relationship and persistent present-day racial divide between these two Christian bodies that are identical in every way (i.e., polity, theology, doctrine, and with joined origins in the South) except race. It could certainly be said that these denominations were originally bound together in a way that also had directly and solely to do with race because the ancestors of the members of these two CP denominations were related as slaves and slave-owners.

Some denominational historians, such as Campbell (1982), have suggested that, with the invention of the cotton gin in 1792 and with the subsequent shift in most slave ownership from the North to the South where financial growth was exploding, a more expedient attitude evolved in the South toward slavery, namely that it was simply a way of life necessary for the South's rapidly developing economy. Even in the religious denominations of the time which had initially been so embroiled in internal conflict due to the significant and highly vocal numbers of their members who so strongly opposed slavery, it is suspected that the overwhelming need for labor in the expansive cotton fields caused the religious to back away from their insistence on freeing the slaves as an urgent, immediate goal. Instead, they fell silent, and, according to Campbell, the

task of abolition began to be described as an impractical, if not impossible, task.

Though not all Southern Whites aligned themselves with that position, the most intense debates about slavery were divided geographically. That is, in the northern and southern segments of some denominations, the positioning on slavery was significantly different to the point of causing full splits among them. In *A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians*, historians Barrus, Baughn, and Campbell (1971) discussed the effects of the slavery controversy, the Civil War, and the secession of eleven Southern states in the South, noting that long before the war, Northern and Southern Christians had been taking sides: “In the mid-1840s the two largest Protestant denominations split into Northern and Southern branches over the slavery issue, the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844 and the Baptist churches in 1845” (p. 146).

The third largest, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, had divided previously in 1837 over other matters¹ into Old School Church (mostly in Southern states) and New School Church (mostly in Northern states), but the slavery issue caused further splits in both these branches:

When six Southern synods withdrew from the New School Church over the slavery question after the General Assembly of 1856, the New School Church became almost exclusively Northern in membership. The Old School Church had a much larger Southern element, over one-third of its members living in slave states. Old School unity was broken in 1861, following secession of eleven states and the General Assembly’s adoption of the Spring Resolutions. . . in support of the Federal union. (Barrus et al., 1971, pp. 146–147)

The seceding element organized itself as the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America, with many members switching from Old School Church (which initially had been strongly antislavery) to New Southern Church immediately following the war. The new denomination, which eventually changed its name to the Presbyterian Church in the

¹ Related to disagreements over approaches to revivalism and adherence to the Westminster Confession

United States, became known as the Southern Presbyterian Church. Although people within the several White denominations held varied opinions, for the most part Northern groups were antislavery and Southern groups were proslavery or silent on the matter, believing it best that their groups avoid the split that other denominations experienced by maintaining a laissez-faire attitude that tolerated “differing moral views on slavery.” According to Barrus et al. (1971), “no typical Cumberland Presbyterian attitude toward slavery” (p. 148) could be identified though the extraordinary pressure on everyone in the South (except those who were proslavery) to be at least quiet on the subject, may have influenced the CPs' seeming neutrality. To engage in the controversy publicly had become increasingly dangerous. In writing about the sectionalism of the debate, Barrus et al. stated that “both the secular and the religious press [of the South] attacked abolitionism” (p. 149) and that critics of slavery in the South found it safest to “remain quiet or move North or West” (p. 149). However, Barrus et al. also reported that the CP denomination's leadership of the day was consciously intentional in their determination to prevent a disruption of the Church by keeping the more radical unionists among them in check. For example, in 1851, with a devilish twisting of words, the CP GA thwarted a potential disruption when a number of antislavery petitions were received from some of the Northern congregations calling for bans on ownership of slaves by CP GA members. The petitions, which required some kind of disposition, were referred to committee and a clever report with a clever remedy resulted. The report stated, in effect, that condition of being an enslaver of Blacks should not bar one from being a member of the denomination any more than the condition of being an enslaved Black had kept one from being a so-called member. Though slyly based on a false parallel of equivalence of Black slaves' and White owners' memberships, the following was adopted by the Assembly:

Resolved: That, inasmuch as the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was originally organized, and has ever since existed and prospered, under the conceded principle that Slavery was not, and should not, be regarded as a bar to communion, we, therefore, believe it should not now be so regarded.

Resolved: That, having entire confidence in the honesty and sincerity of the memorialists [petitioners], and cherishing the tenderest regards for their feelings and opinions, it is the conviction of this General Assembly that the agitation of this question, which has already torn in sunder other branches of the Church, can be productive of no real benefit to master or slave; we would therefore, in the fear of God, and with the most earnest solicitude for the peace and welfare of all..., advise a spirit of mutual forbearance and brotherly love; and instead of censure and proscription, that we endeavor to cultivate a fraternal feeling one towards another. (Barrus, et al., p. 151)

Even for those Southerners who remained sympathetic enough to the plight of the Black slave to still be willing to risk incurring criticism for causing a “disruption,” the growing sentiment among southern branches of denominations was that freeing the slaves was simply unrealistic and, at best, might be considered as a very gradual goal. Instead, freeing the souls of the slaves through conversion to Christianity was seen as a more achievable goal for the Christian Church in the South. The fervor of formerly held concerns about the captivity of the slaves' bodies seemed all but abandoned, certainly quieted. The buzz words among those who discussed slavery changed from *immoral* and *inhumane* to *secular* and *political*, the kind of issues on which many conveniently decided it was inappropriate for the denomination to have any official position. New priorities set in. Campbell (1982) further suggested that clarification from the state courts indicating that the religious status of a slave (that is, being converted to Christianity) would not alter the new Black Christian's slave status, enabled slave owners to fearlessly engage in or allow others to engage in evangelistic efforts toward their slaves. Though the practice of slavery had been called an evil by some—certainly that attitude was prevalent in CP churches of the North—a self-serving prioritizing of concern for the slaves' souls became overwhelmingly prevalent in the South, where most CP congregations were actually located.

Another reason the re-prioritized concerns might have been regarded with suspicion is that CP evangelistic endeavors had not been an especially strong priority for the denomination in the first place. Historian B. W. McDonnold (1899) recorded the denomination's relatively dismal record of missions in his *History of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church*. Often beginning with optimistic enthusiasm, the few CP missionary efforts frequently failed. There was an outreach to the colony in Liberia, where some Black slaves, freed prior to Emancipation, had been transported, but it was inadequately supported both financially and in terms of personnel or volunteers, and so it was abandoned after little success.

Part of the early evangelistic outreach toward Black slaves in America included the training and ordaining of some of the Black male slaves whose owners felt were spiritually inclined and amenable to learning. The Black men then helped save the souls of other slaves through preaching and bible teaching. However, their preaching notes were mandatorily reviewed before the delivery of their sermons, to be sure nothing was said that might be interpreted as encouraging insubordination, rebelliousness, or especially any thoughts of equality. During this general period Blacks began to occasionally meet separately as a worshipping group, but they were never allowed to do so without the supervisory presence of a White man (Frazier, 1962).

Meanwhile, from the earliest periods of slavery in America, Black slaves had been learning about freedom and equality through Christian theology. In CP congregations, those lessons took place in the same worship services attended by the slave owners, albeit for the slaves the sermons were heard from the rear of the sanctuaries, in balconies, while seated on the floor by the doorways, or even in crawl spaces. The monitoring presence of Whites could not keep the Black slave from hearing and believing the message of freedom, an essential part of the

Christian gospel, or from applying it differently than the owners intended. Despite civil laws enforcing a system of superiority and inferiority, many came to understand that holy laws of a Christian's God called for something entirely different. As early as the 1700s, Blacks rebelled against the notion that the hierarchical system under which they were forced to live their secular lives was justifiable, and that it was certainly not justified in Christian scripture, nor did they believe that their plight as slaves or some as marginalized so-called freed Blacks in their secular world should limit their participation in church life.

A widely known part of American Christian history took place in 1787 when two Blacks, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, knelt in prayer at the altar of St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. They were immediately accosted by White church members, pulled up from their knees, and ordered to the rear of the church solely because of their race and despite the fact that Allen had been licensed to preach three years earlier, a solemn event which, in fact, had taken place at that same church where he and Jones were insulted. The now famous episode is widely credited with having influenced Allen to establish Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church seven years later (Wood, 1996). There were enough Whites who vocally abhorred the treatment of Allen and Jones to stir up the periodic Church opposition to slavery and the treatment of Blacks, leading to the Methodist Episcopal denominational split along geographic lines over the issue of slavery in 1844, as mentioned previously.

It was a terrible conundrum, as slave-owning was so financially profitable but, as William Sweet (1930) described in *The Story of Religion in America*, many could not deny that slavery was wrong, at least certainly wrong for Christians. Sweet noted that Baptists in Virginia first resolved in 1797 that, based on civil polity if not good religion, the nature of slavery was "a violent deprivation of the rights of nature and inconsistent with a republican government and

therefore recommend it to our brethren to make use of every legal means to extirpate this horrid evil from the land” (p. 291). Yet, nearly 50 years later, enslavement and arguments about it persisted in the Baptist Churches. They split in 1845 over unresolved differences on slavery.

All Christian denominations in the South were going through similar internal, chronic denominational stress, and the CP denomination was no exception, though claims have been made in the few writings available from early CP historians that the denomination was kept from much of the turmoil other denominations experienced. That is not true. In 1848, an Ohio branch of the denomination (at the presbytery level), pushed to exclude any member who owned slaves. Yet, a presbytery in West Tennessee countered that it was a civil matter which would only interrupt the denomination’s ecclesiastical purposes if put into effect (Campbell, 1982). While some CP ministers chose not to purchase slaves, a number of them inherited slaves and kept them, some voicing the opinion that, while slavery was wrong, Black slaves were incapable of freedom (Barrus et al., 1971). Others who inherited slaves felt that, particularly because of the ruthless practices of slave traders, the Black slaves were better off with owners who treated them more kindly. In other words, there was among CP, as in other denominations, serious conflict over slavery. However, it is true that the CP was unique in two ways. First, influential people in the denomination worked very hard to keep it from splitting into separate North and South denominations, as happened in numerous other protestant church bodies. Second, as noted in *A People Called Cumberland Presbyterians*, it was the only unified denomination with parts in both the northern and southern portions of the country, that is, in both the seceding and the Union states. Authors stated, “How the Church managed to avert ecclesiastical division under this great stress makes one of the most interesting chapters in its history” (Barrus et al., p. 147). Within the CP denomination, the debate was often quieted but never stopped. And, while the

discussions may have sometimes been less strident than in other denominations, differing moral sensibilities regarding slaves and the place of Blacks in church life were often acutely felt. Heated discussions about slavery and what it meant for church life and practices was, off and on, the cause of sometimes bitter tensions between individuals, congregations, and the denomination's various administrative bodies. Some felt that emancipation should be gradual. Others, sided with CP minister Finis Ewing who freed his slaves and preached that everyone should, and he especially condemned those who continued to divide slave families for financial gain. Yet, others claimed they were the slaves' keepers. CP minister Richard Beard, for example, considered his inherited slaves to be something akin to dependents for whom he was as responsible as he might be for a relative with no means, property, or opportunity (McDonnold, 1899). Part of the responsibility presumed by Beard and such others was for the spiritual development of the Black slave, but there was just as much disagreement about exactly how their soul saving should proceed as there was about slaves' status. Some factions thought that it would be safer (for Whites, that is) if only White ministers preached to slaves, to be sure that slaves heard the gospel according to owners. Others were of the opinion that Blacks should be encouraged to learn and to preach in order to help themselves and other slaves begin preparation for eventual freedom from slavery. Opinions, positions, and practices by Whites ran the gamut regarding all aspects of Black lives.

CP historian B. W. McDonnold (1899) wrote with enthusiasm about the Black slaves ordained to help with the evangelistic efforts among other slaves:

It was everywhere the custom among Cumberland Presbyterians to ordain white and colored preachers in precisely the same way and by the same presbyteries, except that the necessity of the case made it necessary to use leniency about literary requirements. The education of the colored preacher in the days of slavery was secured with no little disadvantage. Generally his teacher was his "young master," usually a lad of from twelve to eighteen. His theological

instruction was obtained partly at church, partly at the meetings of the presbytery, where he was catechized, and partly in private interviews with his pastor. (p. 104)

While other ecclesiastical bodies built separate worship facilities for their slaves and even hired preachers deemed appropriate for them, as noted by Wood (1996) in *The Cumberland Presbyterian Church in America: Her Roots and Character*, the CP denomination was proud of the fact that it did not. Everyone—slaves and masters—worshipped together, or at least in the same buildings. Also, as mentioned previously, names of Black ministers brought up through the denomination were listed in the minutes of the annual meetings, the General Assembly (GA), which is the highest governing body of the denomination (Campbell, 1982, p. 21–23). In fact, as Sweet (1930) pointed out, CP congregations happily considered the “servants” (slaves) who attended worship as well as their owners to be members of the church and were listed on the records as such, though Blacks on the records had the further designation of “colored” clearly noted next to their names (p. 294). Interestingly, those “colored” members were often the majority of the membership, being in number up to four times as many as the Whites.

With Emancipation came a new dilemma for Whites, namely the immediately felt need to reassess the status of Black members who were suddenly no longer slaves. Despite all the worship togetherness so often emphasized by CP historians, as Campbell (1982) pointed out, “Not surprisingly, most decisions in the churches were that former slaves would still be subordinate and without authority in congregational life” (p. 34).

The CP had successfully (though barely) managed to survive the Civil War without the North-South rift it feared, and in the GA of 1866 the CP’s northern and southern members who had just been at war with each other met together. One of the main topics at the 1866 Assembly was the question of what to do with their recently freed Black slave members. As author

Matthew Gore (2000) stated, “Although often opposed to slavery, many Cumberland Presbyterians had no desire for the freed slaves to live among them” (p. 229).

The decision of the General Assembly of 1866 was that while the slaves had been emancipated from their secular status of enslavement, there was no reason to raise their status in their church. Freedom of the former slaves was viewed as having created a problem for their church, in fact, rather than an occasion for shared celebration. A special Committee was appointed by the GA and given the task of addressing moral and religious training of the colored people who were then seen as spiritually worse off than ever (Wood, 1996). The Committee met and developed a plan.

Wood (1996) quoted the Committee’s statement presented to the 1866 GA, a presentation which was fully adopted with no change. The language in the statement presents a startling revelation of paternalistic and racist attitudes toward Blacks held by the White Christian CP men with whom the slaves had worshipped. It is quoted here in full:

The present condition of this (colored) people calls loudly upon every American Christian—not for the inconsiderate enthusiasm that would bestow honors which they cannot appreciate, and burden them with responsibilities which they cannot support—but, for the prompt and sober attention that will patiently and faithfully train them in their duties to God and their fellow man in the new relation which they now sustain to society. We believe that their moral and religious destitution, taken as a whole, is perhaps greater at this time, than it has been at any other period, within the history of our Church. Whilst it is true that there are at this time in successful operation for their benefit, many well-regulated schools, it is also true, that they, as yet only occupy the great centers of population, and cannot for a long time, if ever, reach the distant hamlet of honest labor, or the children at the hut of the miserable vagrant. It is also true that the sudden violence of the stroke that severed the tie which bound them to their former master, has likewise, for the present, dislocated the channel through which flowed to them, not only many of the restraints of religion, but many of its duties and precepts. Your Committee are of the opinion that no class of citizens are so well prepared, nor are those any more willing to aid them, than those with whom this people have always lived, and having this confidence, we recommend the adoption of the following resolutions: That the General Assembly recommend

that all the Presbyteries of the Church, take such steps as may be most expedient to organize for them Sabbath Schools, and supply them with suitable books and teachers. That they cooperate with the American Bible Society in supplying them with the Word of God. That they use every means, so far as they can, to afford them the means of grace and encourage them to sustain the same, as God may prosper them. That they aid them so far as they can, in obtaining houses suitable for such school and the more public worship of God. (Wood, 1996, pp. 24–25)

Apparently the statement above gave at least some persons pause, as it is not referred to in records of subsequent GAs, though the subject of assistance to former slave members was discussed numerous times. In fact, the 1866 Committee's statement cannot be found exactly as it is above in whole form among accounts of White historians; whenever it is mentioned, only the final several recommendations are repeated. The full and regrettable Committee report is available, however, as is, in the writings of at least two Black Church historians. In the next General Assembly, there was no longer a committee on the "moral and religious training" of the former slaves. Assistance to the freed Blacks was, instead, referred to the Education and the Missions committees; however, subsequent work of those committees was essentially guided by all the recommendations of 1866. As stated by authors Barrus et al. (1971), "in the immediate postwar period the General Assembly encouraged separation of the races" (p. 166) in places of worship and in all other activities.

The 1866 General Assembly had undoubtedly set in motion the necessary organization of a racially separated Black CP by former slaves, though the new denomination was not solidified until 1874 when the freedmen who were CP members formalized their own general assembly.

Considering the entire history in its American setting of the interactions of the two main racial groups who comprise the two existing CP denominations, the difficulties and extraordinary complexities of their contemporary relationship can perhaps be more easily appreciated.

A number of times over the succeeding 140 years, these two historically segregated denominations have attempted to unify as equals—cultural, social, and political equals—into one historic racially integrated denomination. The first weak attempt, initiated in the 1800s, unsurprisingly, failed. However, attempts to achieve formal oneness continued; nevertheless, each one failed. The last unsuccessful attempt ended in 1991. Yet, two decades later, both denominations decided to try again. That most recent attempt is now in process.

Review of the literature on Black-White racial segregation and integration in Christian congregations and review of previous failed attempts to unite these two CP denominations reveal the need for applying collaborative strategies such as racially integrated team leadership and supportive strategies like appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) when researching and working toward racial integration. Clearly a review of racial assumptions and the influence of White race privilege must be part of race research. Some of the existent research seems to place the onus as well as the spotlight only on the minority races integrating into congregations dominated by Whites. Terms like transcendence are used, insinuating the obligation of the minority to comply with the practices of the majority and preferential treatment of that majority. However, in congregations where this has been the unexamined tendency, racial integration has not been sustained. New ways of thinking about what it means to blend races in one congregation must be developed and can perhaps come from research that recognizes the dynamics of race history and which is based on different premises.

Chapter III: Methodology

Why Participatory Action Research?

A review of the research literature on racial integration in Christian congregations, as noted in the previous chapter, revealed that a variety of approaches have been used: case studies (Becker, 1998; Christerson & Emerson, 2003; Marti, 2010; Pittman, 1945; Rusaw, 1996), literature reviews (Emerson, 2008; Garces-Foley, 2007b); multi-methods approaches (Edwards, 2004; Emerson & Kim, 2003) qualitative analyses (Marti, 2009); and, mostly data analyses with a quantitative approach (Dougherty, 2003; Emerson & Yancy, 2008; Hadaway, Hackett, & Miller; 1984; Parker, 1968; Porter & Emerson, 2012; Scheitle & Dougherty, 2010 ; S. Smith & Yang, 2009). While racial integration and segregation in Christian congregations may certainly be a research topic that lends itself to variety of methodological approaches, Action Research (AR) or Participatory Action Research (PAR) may well be the methodology of choice, given the sensitive nature of the topic and the difficulties interpreting nuances in addition to the unclear meanings and undefined terms prevalent in the field. Considering that the timing of this study coincided with ongoing conversations regarding unification of two racially separate denominations, of which the researcher and participants were all members, the assessment of Greenwood and Levin (1998) regarding AR was found to be apropos: “The core element in pragmatic AR is to create arenas for cogenerative learning for dialogue . . . the encounter between participants and researcher is the cornerstone on which mutual learning is built” (p. 153). However, no previous studies of racial integration in Christian congregations have involved AR or PAR as the principal methodology.

In this study, I used PAR with modifications. This methodology, combined with my positioning and researcher motivation in this area and all participants' timely association with

this topic, altogether added a significant contribution to this still new area of study.

In an interesting article on the use of PAR in research on the problem of health care disparities, it was described as being "at its heart . . . collective, self-reflexive inquiry" (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006, p. 854). Greenwood and Levin (1998) also referred to PAR as a reflective process that constitutes what they called *cogenerative* research which will create useful knowledge regardless of whether remedies to the problems being researched are immediately developed. PAR is especially about social change. It was a befitting methods choice since change was an intention and ultimate hope of this study. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000), researchers with PAR expertise, agreed and stated that stakeholders' (insiders) access to inside knowledge makes PAR the method of choice for social research, though it necessitates "the development of processes of education and self-education that makes critical enlightenment possible" (p. 591). Brydon-Miller, Kral, Maguire, Noffke, & Sabhlok (2011) also noted that PAR "provides a space within which community partners can come together and a process by which they can critically examine the issues facing them" (p. 387).

Although PAR as used in this study was modified in that I, as the researcher, proposed the research questions and initiated the study, it was clear that understanding the issues surrounding racial integration in congregations and finding strategies that alleviate those issues were foremost in the minds of these particular participants since they were long-term and highly involved members of denominations facing those very same issues. In addition, as observed by Brydon-Miller et al. (2011), PAR is the best method to be employed when a study is focused on "collaboration, political engagement, and an explicit commitment to social justice" (p. 388), all clear aspects of this study. Not only was it explicit in this study that the goal was to enable atmospheres in Christian congregation in which racial integration might take place, but enhanced

equity in the resultant cross racial relationships was also key. While making the decision to commit the time to being a part of this study was not an easy decision for any of the participants, each expressed concern for finding solutions related to the problems that were the focus of this work. Indeed, some participants described frustration and skepticism because of having been involved in discussions on the focus of this study for many years but with little resulting progress when it came to Black-White integration and relations in particular.

The general topic of race relations is a difficult one for most groups of people to encounter in conversation, particularly cross racial groups. It was clear at the start that cross racial dialogue would occasion some discomfort as the participants' interacted. In a pilot study, a group of White participants anticipated attending a Black congregation with significant anxiety, as was apparent in their comments and questions in advance of the visit. Thus, I had expected in this study to see even more fully the first stage from Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, described by Chapman and Randall in Wergin's (2007) *Leadership in Place*:

When adults are confronted with a way of thinking that is completely different from what they are used to, if they do not reject it out of hand, they will feel like they have been knocked off their keel. They have had their orientation shaken . . . [T]hey have had a disorienting dilemma. The dilemma is to accept the new beliefs and values and allow their perspectives to change or to reject it and to continue with the perspective they already have. . . whether it should be rejected or whether it will be accepted, and they transform their perspectives. (p. 66)

Though people generally flounder in figuring out how to make change happen, positive change in race relations is a persistently voiced desire, increasingly so among many in this new millennium. Yet, within the last stronghold of segregation—the Christian Church—racial integration has been an incredibly slow growing movement. Though it has been happening to quite a limited degree and only at a very slow pace, the momentum may now be increasing, despite an apparent overwhelming lack of research supporting the slow growing trend. Up to

this point, except in huge congregations, such as Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, racial integration of congregations has typically not been sustained. Furthermore, the integration is happening only in one direction, namely non-Whites into White congregations. Both these areas within this topic warrant study, and PAR may be particularly useful.

PAR is research that can create change. First, while most previous studies using other methodologies have examined reasons why integration in congregations has not worked, this study has added to the few that have looked for factors that aid integration. Second, most studies have examined the dynamics of the integration of America's racial minorities (particularly Blacks) into congregations made up of America's racial majority (Whites). This study took a look at integration of Whites into a majority Black congregation, which is even more of a rarity and a more difficult process, as confirmed by Chaves (2011) in his work, *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*. He noted that racial integration has been generally in one direction: non-Whites into White congregations. Third, while nearly all studies matching the focus of this study used methodologies other than Action Research, this study used PAR—modified as discussed previously and below—because of its ability to enhance the capacity of congregations to manage the difficult, slowly growing trend toward racial integration in congregations.

Reflection sessions were an integral part of the study since critical reflection is needed for significant transformative learning and enlarged perspectives, according to Mezirow's (1998) transformation theory which asserted that "human learning is grounded in the nature of human communication; to understand the meaning of what is being communicated—especially when intentions, values, moral issues, and values are involved—requires critical reflection of assumptions" (p. 187). One-to-one interviews were done with all participants, and some additional re-interviews were included in this qualitative process. In-depth interviewing is a

valuable tool to use when working on sensitive issues, and re-interviewing may reflect changes over time (Rubin & Rubin, 2011, p. 4).

Lastly, PAR has always involved participant learning, a critical feature of improved race relation. Misinformation resulting in myths and stereotypes has added greatly to the problems. Histories told solely from the point of view of the captors or the privileged have misrepresented, maligned, and denigrated racial minorities in America. School textbooks are still being rewritten to correct this injustice. Therefore, a limited number of informative readings (sociological as well as theological) were also employed as handouts to participants to encourage consideration of a variety of perspectives and to stimulate dialogue. The list of these readings, with limited annotation, is in Appendix A.

PAR is social research for social change. According to Greenwood and Levin (1998), “action is the only sensible way to generate and test new knowledge” (p. 9). Furthermore, they argued that social change growing from new social knowledge that has validity, comes only from “practical reasoning engaged in through action” (p. 6), with action being equally important as collaborative participation. PAR, especially engages stakeholders (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013) such as the CP members from both denominations recruited as participants in this study. These volunteer participants were all “insiders,” as Greenwood and Levin (1998) used the term (p. 104). That is, participants were established in their identification as part of their CP denominations, Black and White. They were all long-term, active members of their two denominations separated by problematic race relations. As active members of those two institutions, the participants had been involved in the dialogue going on between their denominations and among members of their congregations as the possibility of uniting their denominations was being discussed. Thus, the participants anticipated finding value in the study

as a source of new learning that could aid in their preparation for possibly being members of a single new denomination composed of two former denominations that had been separate by race.

While both AR and PAR can involve the shared research decisions of professional researcher and participants and an emphasis on making change through action, PAR has more of an emphasis on the participants and the researcher having a shared political agenda of changing the power dynamics in situations for the purpose of enhancing empowerment of all participants (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). Enacting PAR with this particular cross racial group and researcher within the uniqueness of a local Black congregational setting meant it was well sculpted to fit the particular time, place, and people.

Design Plan and Procedure

A limited number of participants were recruited in order to allow opportunity for development of intimate relationships through joint participation in religious events and shared reflection following the events. Participants were recruited from an adult population of Black and White CPs with a minimum of ten years of denominational membership. The Black CPs were all members of the Black congregation where the participation events took place. The study was set in a Black congregation for two reasons. First, no existent research discusses the integration of Whites into Black congregations, leaving a gap in the literature on the dynamics of White to Black congregational integration. Second, previous research has suggested that in integrated congregations in which Whites are the majority (even those with significant numbers of non-Whites), the worship needs of Whites are catered to and the needs of the non-Whites are secondary. In this study, the Whites constituted less than 10% of the congregation during the gatherings that took place for the duration of this study.

An initial gathering of the participants—an equal number of Black and White CPs—was arranged. The study was described and all questions were answered. Input was solicited from the participants regarding the study design, and the importance of their equal involvement at all points was stressed. Participants suggested an alteration to the plan initiated by the researcher, and their alteration to the plan was adopted by consensus. My initial research plan had called for two weeks of one-to-one interviews following the fourth week of congregational gatherings and participant reflection sessions; after the interviews, the group was to reconvene for the concluding session at some time mutually convenient for everyone and in a location other than at the church where the study would take place. However, the participants suggested that the interviews be completed within one week following the fourth session and that the final conclusive session be conducted at the church, like all the other sessions. The altered plan was adopted by consensus. At the end of the fourth session, one-to-one interviews were done and data collected. A closing meeting (concluding session) took place during which possible uses of data were discussed.

Within three weeks of the introductory meeting, participants began attending regular worship gatherings of the designated Black CP congregation. Immediately after the congregational gathering events (nearly all were worship services), the group convened for a meal and time of shared reflection. The meetings were recorded, as was agreed upon in advance. Reflection on all aspects of the experience was encouraged, including any concerns or thoughts about the next congregational worship gathering or the group's reflection session. Four consecutive weeks of such worship gatherings, meals, and group reflection sessions took place.

I was a participant-observer at all events, engaging in the worship and the following meals and the reflection sessions, making recordings, taking notes, and journaling later about my

observations made during the worship gatherings and reflection sessions. Upon the completion of the fourth jointly-attended congregational worship event and reflection session, I began the one-to-one interviews, as was the agreed-upon change in procedure requested by the participants. Two of the interviews were completed less than 48 hours prior to the scheduled concluding session. Given that limited time between interviews and the meeting, a report summarizing the data could not be prepared for presentation to the participants at the concluding session. Furthermore, I realized that providing a summary at that time would be premature for another important reason: PAR calls for participant input into conclusions about the summary and meaning of data. Therefore, at the concluding session, I guided participants in a discussion about their learnings, journaling, patterns observed, and other observations or input, which each shared with the whole group, as well as their thoughts about how the study findings might be shared.

In completing the fieldwork, I added data from the concluding session, as well as two additional re-interviews, my final journaling, and journaling given to me by participants at interviews and at the concluding session. An analysis, discussion, and recommendations for further study is presented in Chapter V.

Overview: Participants, Context, and Setting

Participants. There were eight participants and myself as researcher-participant. Four participants were recruited by me and four by the pastor of the church where most of the research took place. All nine participants shared some things in common. All were from families that have lived in America for a number of generations. Each participant was an adult between the ages of 50 and 70. All were Southerners now residing in the South, all high school graduates or beyond, and all volunteers in this PAR study. Participants had no expectation of monetary compensation nor any other significant immediate tangible benefit, though lunch was provided

following the worship services to lessen the inconvenience of staying after services for the reflection sessions. All participants were active members of one of the two parallel denominations (the two Cumberlands) which are identical in polity and theology, including a shared co-written constitution.

The Black Cumberland denomination developed after Blacks were separated from the White denomination because of race when Black slavery ended in America in the late 1860s. Specifically, original members of each of these present-day denominations were people who worshipped together in the same single White CP denomination founded in 1810, except that the Black members were slaves owned by White members. Black and White Cumberlands separated in the late 1800s after Black slaves were freed but not allowed to have voice or vote in the White denomination in which their faith had developed and where they had become members of the White CP denomination. For more details of this split, see Chapter II. Both denominations eventually attempted some international outreach. The Black denomination had little success abroad, due to limited resources, but was gradually able to develop congregations beyond its Southern base. The White denomination also expanded beyond the South, even more so, claiming congregations in several different parts of the world—Hong Kong, Colombia, and Japan, for example—some of which were already fully developed before joining the denomination. Such congregations were segregated, homogeneous in language, and culture-specific. Both in other parts of the world and in America, congregations of both denominations continued to be racially segregated. Both of these CP denominations that began in the Southern part of the United States, share a history related to slavery, continued Black racism beyond slavery, and the modern-day vestiges of both, as described throughout in this paper. This

research study explored racial integration in a single American congregation within the distinct and unique shared story of these two Cumberlands.

All participants in this study were members of and regularly participated in majorly segregated congregations in this new millennium. The four White participants were members of two different congregations, both of which were more than 95% White, with no Black members. Four of the Black participants regularly participated in one congregation (where the research took place), which was more than 95% Black. Although the majorly Black congregation had two Whites on its membership rolls, according to the study participants, those White members rarely attended. Another fact in common was that all participants lived through legally enforced American racial segregation as well as legally enforced racial desegregation in the United States. The participants' congregations all held traditional worship services with some paid musicians, traditional volunteer choirs, and typical Sunday school classes. All but one participant had married at least once. Most were parents. Lastly, in terms of commonalities, all but one were part of their congregational or denominational leadership.

There were also some differences among the participants. Six were women and three men. Several (male and female) had experiences related to military service while the others had none. Two were clergy members while seven were lay members. Half the participants were White, and half were Black. The participants also worshipped in congregations of differing sizes. Four were members of CP congregations with memberships of 50 to 75. Two regularly attended where the membership reached approximately 150 people. Two others were part of a CP congregation composed of 300 to 350 members. One participant routinely visited a wide variety of CP congregations, though mostly with less than 40 members. The range of educational background of the participants was wide. Two had continued with formal education beyond

secondary school and had obtained one or two years of college credits. Two had completed high school only. Four participants had finished college. One had continued formal education beyond the undergraduate level. Most participants were married when the study took place, but three were not. Several had been divorced and married more than once, though about half had not had more than one marriage. Three were retired or unemployed, but six were employed either full or part time. The types of work in which participants were or had been engaged also varied greatly, from assembly work in a factory to business ownership and numerous differing occupations in between.

The general physical and mental health of the participants also covered a range but not a great one. All were able to transport themselves to and from the primary location of the study without assistance. Two described occasional difficulties standing, hearing, or remembering, stemming from previous injuries, accidents, or work-related conditions, but these participants saw these as neither extreme nor as limiting in their daily lives; however, the difficulties they described could be observed at times during the fieldwork. One participant with a relatively serious chronic illness self-described as functioning very well day-to-day and appeared to be doing so, at least to the extent that casual observation might have confirmed the status. Three of the participants noted family or job stress taking place during some portions of time coinciding with the study, stress which did interfere with their sleep and energy levels at some point while the research was being conducted. Their stress was noted (shared or observed) minimally at a few points during the study.

Contexts of data collection. Most data were collected at the congregational setting in which participants regularly met during the course of the study—between approximately 10:45 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on five consecutive Sundays in the early fall of 2015, beginning the last

Sunday of August. Participants also previously attended an introductory meeting several weeks prior, during which the study was explained fully and signed permissions obtained. Data were collected from my journaling notes written following that initial meeting; this was not recorded since signed permissions were not collected until the end of the meeting after all questions were answered. Starting several weeks later, in addition to agreed attendance at the congregation's worship services, participants began gathering immediately following the worship services for the five reflection sessions. Participants shared a meal during each reflection session as well as during the introductory meeting. About half of the participants were members (and regular attenders) of the congregation where the research took place and lived within five to twenty minutes from the location. Two participants drove nearly two hours to attend the worship services and reflection sessions. Three participants routinely traveled from approximately 45 minutes away. For the entire duration of the study, including the introductory meeting, the weather was mild and did not hamper attendance.

The setting of the congregation in which the study took place—one in the Black Cumberland Presbyterian denomination—is discussed more fully below under the heading, “Description of Congregational Setting.” Each reflection session following the worship services was recorded, as agreed upon by all participants. Other data were obtained from journals of those participants who maintained journals and who were willing to share from these and from my own journaling. The concluding reflection session was also recorded and data collected from it.

One-to-one interviews of each participant were additional significant data sources. Every interview was taped, as had been agreed to beforehand. An initial interview of all participants took place during the one week after the fourth reflection session and before the concluding reflection session. Additionally, as described below, two re-interviews took place approximately

two months after the concluding reflection session. Since the contexts of the one-to-one interviews could compromise anonymity, some aspects of the descriptions of the settings are altered here, but the type of setting is accurately conveyed.

The locations of all interviews, which were scheduled at the convenience of the participants, varied greatly. Since three participants live very close to each other, those three interviews were arranged to take place in a borrowed private facility in their town at a time when no other activities were taking place in the facility. Three of the interviews were done in private homes. Two were carried out in a borrowed conference room near the residence of two participants who had regularly driven extensively to participate in the research; therefore, they were spared travel for the one-to-one interviews. Another of the interviews was completed in a public space, a favorite hangout of the participant. No one else was present in or near the immediate space where the interview took place. The tape recording device was able to record the interview with full clarity. At each interview except one, all participants appeared to be mostly at ease and indicated an eagerness to share their thoughts and opinions. Two participants had family or work obligations that limited the amount of time available, though each of those participants shared eagerly, engaging with all the questions and volunteering information not asked, utilizing the full extent their time constraints allowed. Another participant was notably less talkative and more guarded than that participant had been in the group sessions.

The two re-interviews were conducted approximately two months after the original round of interviews were completed; one person from each of the two denominations was solicited for their further post-sessions reflections. Both persons enthusiastically agreed. One of those two re-interviews took place in a private home and one in a private club. As with the other interviews, no one else was in the interview space.

Description of congregational setting. The setting for most of this study was the worship sanctuary and the fellowship hall of a small-membership congregation (usually no more than 50 in attendance) in an urban area of a small but growing city of approximately 68,000 inhabitants. Participants agreed to attend four consecutive worship services taking place during the study. Those worship services took place in the sanctuary, and the introductory meeting as well as all reflection sessions took place after worship in the fellowship hall section of the church building.

The congregation was part of one of the two CP denominations mentioned above, specifically the historically Black African American side of the parallel previously described. Most members of the congregation lived in the area, commuting an average of 15 minutes or less to attend. The congregation's building sat a mile or so from a major highway and was close to various types of housing, from new and older single-family homes to rental complexes. Though the building had not been modernized, the congregation maintained it adequately, and, within the last two years, made some visible improvements to the outside of the property.

The city in which the congregation met had a population of nearly an equal number of Blacks and Whites, together accounting for 95% of the city's population with a variety of other racial groups accounting for the remaining 5% of the population. According to information provided by the 2010 census, the city's population of 65,000 was then comprised of 29,802 Black African Americans, constituting 45.7% of the city's total, and 32,092 Whites, constituting 49.2% of the total population. Projected growth patterns anticipated that same racial balance in general to continue.

The membership of the church was aging, with most who attended appearing to be over 60 years old, and the rest appeared to be 10 to 20 years older. No children or youth were evident

in regular attendance, other than a single occasional young grandchild and one older teenage son of two members. The style of worship was traditional, and the pastor—male, married, and seminary-trained—was a traditionalist. He was a well-liked, skilled preacher respected by the members and by many others throughout the denomination. He was present for worship and was the presider and preacher at each of the services the study participants attended.

I provided lunch at all six gatherings at no costs to the congregation or the participants in order to minimize participant inconvenience. Since planned catering fell through at the last moment, I brought in meals each week. While no negativity on the part of the congregation about use of the building was reported or perceived as the study initially got underway, I soon realized that potential for certain concerns had been overlooked. When preliminary arrangements were made with the pastor, it was determined before the start of the study that no events were on the church's calendar for Sunday afternoons when the reflection sessions would take place. Therefore, it was deemed that inconvenience to the congregation would be minimal, and indeed with each Sunday, as the research proceeded, the response of church members who were not a direct part of the study appeared to increase in warmth and welcome. Study participants who were not members of the congregation repeatedly noted a sense of increasing goodwill toward them by members of the congregation who were not participants in the study. However, it soon became clear that some issues related to use of the building and some necessary partial meal preparations at the church, impacted participants and non-participant church members in unanticipated ways. In a later reflection session, one of the participants, who had been a member of this congregation since birth, called the setting "home." As the study continued, an incident or two helped me to more fully appreciate the impact on the member-participants and on the congregation as their "home" was used by outsiders, especially as non-participant church

members were necessarily excluded from the reflection sessions and luncheons that took place in their own fellowship hall.

Description of data types. Data were drawn from observations, reflection sessions, interviews, and journals. In the summary of data in Chapter IV, in order to maintain as much anonymity as possible, mention of gender identity of participants (except for mine) is avoided. For the same reason, the order and setting of some interviews has been changed. Although the race of the participants has not been altered, participants' initials were changed. Using "W" as the second initial to indicate participants' race as White, the following initials are used for the four White participants: WW, AW, JW, and OW. Using "B" as the second initial to indicate participants' race as Black, the following initials are used for the four Black participants: DB, VB, TB, and PB. In all summaries of reflection sessions, some limited partial detail is provided to convey the tone of the interactions between the racial groups in this research. Interviews are similarly summarized with some limited dialogue quoted for the purpose of illustration.

Chapter IV: Data and Findings

In this chapter, I present samples of certain fieldwork data, specifically some highlights of the dialogue from sessions and interviews. Other data have been noted previously, are noted here, and are integral to the discussions and considerations in Chapter V. Such other data include all observations from worship events, sessions, and interviews, as well as information and insights from participants' journals and researcher journaling. Table 4.1 shows the schedule that was followed for the worship events, sessions and interviews, which were primary data sources for this research. Worship events lasted from one to one and a half hours. Sessions lasted from one to two hours and interviews lasted from 30 minutes to over one and one half hours. Although worship events were not recorded, all sessions (except the introductory meeting) and interviews were recorded. Presented in this chapter are selections from the recordings, along with selected observations, explanations, and insights on the gatherings and from the journaling.

Table 4.1

Timetable of Worship Events, Sessions, and Interviews

	Dates (all in 2015)
1. Introductory Meeting	August 9
2. Worship-Reflection Session One	August 30
3. Worship-Reflection Session Two	September 6
4. Worship-Reflection Session Three	September 13
5. Worship-Reflection Session Four	September 20
6. One-to-One Interviews	September 21–26
7. Concluding Reflection Session	September 27
8. Additional Post-Session Interviews	December 6–12

Preliminary Observations

Data collection began with observations before the introduction meeting. As soon as I stepped onto the property where the fieldwork took place, observations were made, noted and later committed to my journal. It was apparent that the congregation had been reminded that the study would begin on that day and that a group of people, mostly unknown to them, would convene at the site and, also, that I would be leading the group. This was confirmed when a member of the congregation greeted me and expressed happy surprise at my arriving in time for worship that day rather than coming only for the meeting that would take place after the service. Kindly assistance was provided by another member to get food bundles inside the building and back to the fellowship hall, where the meal and introductory meeting would later take place. It seemed that the congregation had no anxiety about the study taking place in their church. In fact, we were welcomed.

Upon inquiring about how to turn on the oven, it also quickly became evident that a proprietary relationship existed between the kitchen area of the fellowship hall and one particular elderly woman in the church. Her son said, "I'll go get my mom; she runs this area!" At that, I immediately realized that the eating arrangements (the plan to eat all meals at the church), though convenient and perhaps even necessary, might have thoughtlessly caused someone's discomfort or displacement due to the reflection sessions' privacy requirements. Members of the congregation normally volunteer kitchen duties during preparation of other meals at the church and, as I soon understood, are normally assumed to be not only invited but in charge of the meal.

This realization created significant awkwardness for me—and sadness. I had originally hoped the food would be dropped off in disposable containers by an independent caterer with no emotional attachment to the setting. However, the catering plan fell through. The awkwardness

of that moment in the kitchen during the unplanned set-up and partial on-site preparation was a surprise, as was my embarrassment at the smell of cooking food wafting into the sanctuary and around the noses of congregational members who were not invited to the participants' private meal to be served during the introductory meeting. Unfortunately, the error in judgment could not be corrected at that point. There was nothing to do but learn from this, as is reflected in this chapter.

At the introductory meeting after that worship service, participants signed agreements to attend four consecutive worship services once the study got underway. Attendance at the worship service that took place just prior to the introductory meeting was not required of the participants, but I noted that two other participants who were not members of the congregation were present during that service along with me. As the service progressed, the pastor acknowledged those two participants whom he knew from other denomination-related events and duties as well as from their prior visits to the church.

While his acknowledgement of them was an expected and typical practice, I found another of the pastor's comments—instructions, actually—surprising and wondered if they possibly connoted some degree of discomfort with the presence of White visitors, despite some visits in the past from the same people. His surprising instructions came after the pastor acknowledged the special visitors and reminded the congregation that the study project was beginning, noting that it would include these present outsiders and a few others who would be coming to a meeting after worship and that the entire group of them would attend again on the next several Sundays for worship together and for meetings afterward. The pastor instructed the congregation to continue to "be ourselves," and "be on our best behavior"—which could have been perceived as contradictory instructions. Though the level of his nervousness was low (if my

assessment of this was accurate at all), it was still surprising, considering what I knew of the pastor's extensive exposure to and dealings with diverse groups of people over many years. Later, upon much further reflection, I concluded that the pastor had not been at all nervous for himself but rather for his congregation. In fact, I realized that he was likely more cognizant of possible responses than I had been and, in fact, he may well have been worried that, like the mother who normally ran the kitchen, his congregation might feel varying levels of displacement or imposition for the duration of the study.

Introductory Meeting

Shortly after the worship service ended, the other two outside (non-member) participants arrived. Some church members leaving the building directed them to the fellowship hall, a large meeting and dining area at the back of the church building and where the luncheons and sessions would take place. Within just a few minutes, the pastor walked briskly into the hall and warmly welcomed the newly arrived participants, neither of whom he had met before. The pastor indicated that he did not want to hold up our meeting but wanted to be sure the additional visitors were personally greeted by him before he left. He had clearly gone out of his way to do this, as his office and the exit were at the opposite end of the building. This is mentioned because in a later reflection, one of those White participants he had greeted, WW, made pointed reference to this pastor's heartfelt greeting, calling it something quite wonderful though "totally unexpected."

This is in sharp contrast to two other experiences relayed in the study, one by a Black participant (VB) and one by a White participant (WW), both of whom had felt a distinct lack of welcome and no greeting at all when attending (not together) two separate events at churches where people of their race did not normally attend. Both these Black and White participants had guessed the lack of greetings to be race-related slights. Whether their guesses were wrong or

right, this local pastor's greeting was distinctly different and noteworthy: on one hand, his behavior, usual for him, had led his Black parishioners to expect to receive such warmth wherever they might visit, especially in other Cumberland congregations; on the other hand, his behavior had shown the White participants visiting his church for the first time what a warm personal greeting from a local pastor could feel like. It was warmth they were not accustomed to receiving when visiting away from their home congregation, according to the visitors (White participants) themselves.

At the introductory meeting, participants all ate lunch around one small table and chatted a little about miscellaneous unrelated things before the main portion of the meeting began. As the components of the research were described and discussed, confusion was apparent. Though participants understood the research was part of an academic program, they had also assumed its purpose directly related to the unification dialogue going on between the denominations and throughout many of the churches. In fact, they had assumed my purpose was to promote unification. Despite my attempts to clear this up, the misconception persisted. Despite explaining that the research was not about unification per se but that race relations in congregations (the focus of this research) related to unification issues, participants continued to overlap both in questions and conversations, not only during this meeting but throughout the entire study. This confirmed the obvious connection between the two topics, at least for these participants.

No hesitation was voiced by any participants about being present at the introductory meeting or about being fully involved in the research, including the commitment to participate in four worship, lunch, interviews, and reflection sessions for four continuous weeks—a schedule which meant that two of them would not be able to attend their own church for more than a month because of the travel time. Neither was any hesitation noted about attending a final

concluding session soon after the four consecutive sessions were done. However, when it came to actually signing the permission forms, an unexpected change in the comfort levels of some participants was displayed. After the general discussion, everyone seemed completely agreeable, but immediately as I began to read aloud the permission form for their review and questions prior to signing, one Black potential participant (TB) suddenly voiced the desire to "think about it some more." Also, a potential White participant (WW) spoke up before signing and asked about possible profit I might receive in the future from articles or books written about the research. However, most participants simply verified the dates and the time obligations, some of them making notes in their calendars. A few signed their forms immediately and handed them over without asking any questions and before the contents of the form were reviewed. It was at this introductory meeting that I first observed differing levels of trust and began to journal about this after the meeting. Trust, not only between me as the researcher-participant and the participant group, but also trust between participants fluctuated from this point through to the end of the study and that fluctuation was apparent in some of the reflection sessions and interviews.

After a full review of the permission form and description of the research, no further hesitation was admitted, and all forms were signed. WW, who had asked about potential profit, was given the simple verbal assurance that all such things could be discussed as a full group, with everyone having input, during the closing session. TB, who had wanted more time to consider terms of the permission form, no longer required more time and handed over a signed permission as the discussion proceeded. In fact, walking out with me, TB said, "I'm with you on this." Input from my journaling was integral to writing this section and each of the following.

Worship and Reflection Sessions

A preliminary statement about relationships among participants must be provided, as they impacted the conversations recorded as well as the interactions I observed. For the sake of anonymity, those relationships are not made explicit in this dissertation. It is important to note, however, that there was a balance regarding this between the two groups. That is, there was one married couple within the Black group of participants and one in the White group. Likewise, within the group of White participants, though two participants are from one church and two are from another, in both sets of people, one had been a member of their churches much longer than the other. There was a similar parallel in the group of Black participants, though they were all members of this local church where the meetings take place.

Reflection Session One

The session began with participants milling around, choosing items from the lunch display, and with everyone talking about the food and beverages available. Fairly quickly the participants sat down and began to eat while continuing with miscellaneous chatting among the group. I invited the group to start talking about the study by asking if anyone had any thoughts about the readings emailed to them after the introductory meeting or if anyone wanted to comment on or ask about anything observed during the worship everyone had just attended. WW and JW, who were from two different churches and who had shared that they did not know each other very well began by asking some questions about the worship service everyone had just attended together. Two Black participants responded with polite answers about some of the worship practices, two with slightly more extensive explanatory comments. One Black

participant noted the variance in traditions in different historically Black denominations, and some information about the origins of those differing traditions was discussed. Antiseptic answers to the equally sterile questions from WW and JW guided the group discussion initially. The other White participants spoke no more than a few words through the rest of this first session, and while three Black participants provided most of the answers, as if acquiescent guides in a foreign land, one Black participant was mostly silent. It appeared at first that a pattern of White dominance and a level of superficiality was quickly setting into the conversation. In reviewing the recordings from the reflection sessions as well as the one-to-one interviews, an interesting statement from one of those two White participants (JW) was revealing: "In such groups, when people first get together, they have to figure out the pecking order."

The tone and balance of the group talk soon changed, however, when one of the Black participants, VB, began a long statement that seemed at first to be somewhat rambling and disconnected. In fact, it was difficult to follow VB's train of thought, and it was unclear where it was headed until VB finally got to a main point, which was one of great significance and which immediately brought the group well beyond the superficial level of sharing that had been taking place and past what may have been a typical instance of White dominance, at least for a short while.

"Now you all coming here into *this* environment, and we know *we're* going to accept *you*," VB said pointedly, "but if *we* went to a White church, then we'd have to *pick* and *choose* which one we're going to go to if *we* want to be accepted. We'd have to go through all *that*."

The tone and feeling level of VB's statement was intense, so much so that one of the Black participants, DB, attempted to reduce the intensity by redirecting the conversation away from VB's point. "I don't think we all have as much of a race problem as we do an education

problem. It's a matter of education," DB said, nervously.

However, VB was not willing to be distracted. Displaying obvious impatience with the conversation that had been taking place and wanting to get the dialogue immediately back to what VB thought was more relevant, VB said, "And, see, I'm looking at you here, and you are the *good* ones that come from the White church to do this . . . We might as well be honest about it."

Looking at me, VB asked, "but how are we getting information from those who *aren't* here, who are *not* caring at all to do what is right?"

It was difficult for the group to bear the intensity of VB's directness. One of the White participants, AW, commented about how great the worship service was and about the freer nature of the worship in the service everyone had attended together, as compared to the worship at AW's church. VB brought the conversation right back around to the previous point. "Of *course!* When you come here, you're *naturally* feeling more at ease because, though maybe some few Black congregations might not accept you—*very, very few*—but I do believe that far, far more Black congregations will accept you than White congregations will be inclined to accept *us*. We've all got to be more *honest!*"

While JW made brief comments now and then, always in agreement with VB's emphatic and tenacious negativity, the other White participants said little else. In this first session, one Black participant, TB, was quieter than any participant, Black or White, as the conversation continued. I wondered at the time if TB was as uncomfortable as DB (who had tried to redirect the conversation) was with VB's confrontation or simply a more naturally quiet and private, person. The latter turned out to be the case, as was revealed throughout the remainder of the sessions and interviews. In fact, TB said far less than all the other participants, Black or White

during the entire study. One of the White participants, OW, was nearly as quiet as TB, though OW did manage to speak a few times without prodding. TB rarely spoke, even when prodded, making it difficult for me, as the leader, to assess his needs.

As the session continued, VB and PB shared that off and on for much of their lives—and to no avail—they had been involved in cross racial conversations similar to the reflection sessions but focused specifically on unification of the denominations. That history of futile cross denominational participation seemed to be the reason VB and PB were consistently negative regarding the likelihood of the Black and White denominations resolving their differences and unification taking place anytime soon. JW was equally as negative—but why? Reasons for JW's negativity were less clear, though at several points it was suggested and assumed that JW's exposure to many more White CP congregants than other participants in this study would have allowed JW to hear Whites express the kind of negativity which may have been typically held back in cross denominational meetings. Although VB and PB had not heard such negative comments, they seemed to be indicating that they had certainly felt it.

VB said, "We've been through this all before over and over, Carolyn. We've talked about this for years and years and years, but nothing has changed! Nobody wants it to change! Nothing is ever going to change!"

"Experiencing a bit of unification burnout, VB?" OW perceptively joked, and everyone laughed, enjoying some momentary relief through the humor.

I wondered if VB's ability to be so forthcoming during this first of the sessions, might be explained in part by the fact that the study was taking place in VB's own worship and fellowship space, a space where Blacks were a majority. Additionally, after participating for more than twenty years in race-related discussions within the denominations, with no results apparent to

that participant, had VB (and PB) assessed that there was nothing to lose in revealing their honest and perhaps angry feelings? Reasons for JW's negativity were not so apparent, though the other participants had guessed that the reasons related to insider information received from other White CPs at various times.

The level of honesty and intensity reached appeared to be difficult for most other participants to hear, but VB and PB wanted to get some things off their chests. Returning to an earlier question raised by WW and JW about traditions in the worship service, VB said, "One day we might have 15 [Whites]. Then we'll need to change our format. Until churches are more integrated, it's just difficult to get used to thinking about worship services with different races and their concerns in mind."

PB nodded vigorously in agreement.

VB continued, "It's not that we here aren't conscious of the need or aren't sensitive. Enough of those circumstances haven't presented themselves. No church seems to be doing that." Looking at me, VB added, "We just haven't gotten there yet, Carolyn, and probably won't until that time comes."

I responded with a smile and said, "It's closer than you think."

JW immediately interjected, vehemently, "No, it's *not*. You must not have been at the same GA that I was at!"

Possibly JW was alluding to the White denomination's recent annual governance meeting, which had taken place approximately two months before this session of the study took place, but JW's meaning was unclear. A review of the minutes from the annual meeting revealed that the Task Force for Unification (a joint body with members from both denominations) was commended and that continuation of its members' efforts was voted on affirmatively and funded

again. I had not been able to attend that most recent GA of the White denomination. Committee or floor debates regarding unification at that annual meeting may have been more contentious than the minutes conveyed, but approval of the Task Force's work had prevailed. As was true of the tense moments throughout this study, and as was suggested in a study paper adopted at that annual assembly for distribution throughout its congregations, "conflict isn't . . . always a sign that something is wrong. It might indicate that we're embracing diversity rather than avoiding it, which means we are striving to be the Body of Christ" (Minor, 2015, p. 114).

It was attested in this first concluding reflection session that talking about race relations and being in the midst of what is or what feels like conflict can take a toll. Thus, it was not surprising that VB softened at times, made conciliatory remarks, and, as above, displayed disappointment and impatience with fruitless attempts at dialogue. It was clear VB felt a greater need to redeem time spent in what might have seemed to be a repeat of futile discussions that VB had already been a part of for a lifetime. That was proven by VB's occasional blunt returns to what VB considered being "more honest" later in this session and in other sessions.

Some participants (TB, AW, OW, and also WW, eventually) retreated to, or never ventured far from, silence in this first session. At least one participant, DB, continued to be very talkative, but on review, DB's comments revealed that DB coped with the tension and perceptions of conflict with sometimes animated appeasement and avoidance. For example, in the midst of this conversation, DB declared, "I spent years in racially mixed congregations. Never thought a thing about it. Never thought about any of the issues we're talking about now. Just didn't think about it! Maybe I'm just one of those who frolics through life."

At another point, DB further sidetracked the discussion by describing how traditional dietary trends among Blacks varied by region. In a long and winding talk about differing ways

spaghetti dishes are prepared and consumed, DB stated that Blacks are "as different from each other as Blacks are from Whites."

Can the often blunt negativity of VB and PB be explained in part by the session being an opportunity to say in front of Whites exactly how they really felt, rather than the more usual pattern of sitting silently and keeping it all in? Were they more patient in earlier years and now impatient and fed up? Or burned out, as OW had joked? Was DB's lively positivity or minimizing of racialized difficulties a matter of DB's discomfort in witnessing negative views being voiced fiercely (and publicly)? Did DB's behavior reflect another common pattern, one of fear and appeasement? In the one-to-one interview later, DB commented about something that "shouldn't have been said in front of Whites," and had added, "It's all too painful."

At the end of the first session, several participants repeated some questions already asked and answered several times about journaling during the introductory meeting. For that reason, I wondered if the repeated questions were reflections of distrust. That is, were questioners trying to get at some underlying motivation they suspected? They said, for example, "What are we supposed to be doing?" and "What exactly will you be looking for in our journal books?" and "I'm not sure I get your goals." Were they actually looking for a hidden researcher agenda? This was a reasonable hypothesis, I thought, because I had even said that submitting journals to me at the end of the study was optional and that primary journal use could be to provide participants with a single place where questions or thoughts about the reflection sessions, readings, and the worship services could be held. When the questions had first come up in the introductory meeting, I responded by providing an example of my own journaling, specifically mentioning questions I would journal at home that afternoon about my observation of the pastor's possible uneasiness during the worship service preceding the introductory meeting, as has been already

described above in detail.

Although it had been simply offered as an example of the range of questions or thoughts their journaling might include, VB had strongly protested that everything said and done by the pastor had been entirely appropriate. I had then attempted to convey that journaling about an experience or observation or question shouldn't insinuate criticism, stating that it was simply something I had noticed and wanted to consider, explore, or further observe. However, my explanation did not sit well at all with VB, PB, and JW. "You see, you're not a Southerner. So, you wouldn't understand." JW had said.

Looking back on that exchange at the end of the introductory meeting and on this first reflection session that already included some intensity, I wondered if the discomfort this study was causing some participants in exploring the usually unspoken relationship between Black and White Southerners overwhelmed their desire to change it, despite its tenuous and troublesome nature.

Reflection Session Two

When we started eating, I called the group's attention to the purpose of our gathering. I did not direct the group toward a review of the intense exchange from the previous meeting but decided to see if participants would revisit it.

"Who wants to get us started?" I asked, "Does anything stand out from your readings or this morning's worship service or the last session that anyone remembers?"

"Spaghetti," AW said, and everyone burst out laughing.

It was a welcome start, as everyone undoubtedly recalled how DB led the group on a long detour about various Black cooking styles when the last session had become so tense, and spaghetti had received lots of attention.

Much talk about cultural similarities and differences with regard to attitudes toward women in congregations also carried over from the end of the last session. Considerable regional distinctions among Black participants were discussed by several of them who grew up in various areas of the South, surprising even each other with new information from their numerous illustrations. I noticed that the White participants were not mentioning any differences among their traditions. Only the Black participants were talking energetically about the wide range of diversity among them and laughingly recalling DB's long description about the different ways Blacks cook, serve, and eat spaghetti (and other foods) in different parts of the country. Finally, WW mentioned being exposed to people of various races while growing up in a military family and how that compared to the "limitations" of that participant's father's Southern roots, which the participant "did not explore until later" in the participant's life. Other participants were also from military families, but no one engaged WW about that. No one asked any questions, or explored it in any way. This surprised me since I knew that WW had attended a private (and nearly all White) Southern secondary school during the years of enforced public school desegregation. The participant who was a fellow church member (AW) may not have known that or was unwilling to risk challenging WW. Was this an example of the effects of the usual pecking order?

This was one of numerous times when I struggled with how much of a participant to be versus being a leader versus a researcher. A leader's role would have involved nudging WW, but I decided that in the sessions it would be best to err on the side of being more of an observer and a recorder. Though I did participate and, in fact, was concerned that I talked too much at times, I decided against being a participant who challenged other participants, except minimally. Confusion already existed in the group regarding my research purpose. Challenging WW may have appeared to be related to a hidden agenda. Of course, I did have personal hopes about the

outcome. I did want to develop strategies that enable Christians of different races to have important conversations, to "be more honest," as VB has said, to do so persistently, and to also be more loving while challenging each other. I did want to see the two CP denominations become one but more than that to aggressively work at racial integration at all levels of the new united denomination. However, I didn't want my personal hopes to force or to direct the process. Therefore, I was possibly more passive in my interactions than I might otherwise have been.

In the later interview, WW admitted to "holding some of my cards close to my chest, like in poker" during the reflection sessions. In the same interview, WW questioned why I had not pushed much harder against what several other participants said during sessions. WW said that my "middle position" would have justified more challenging of some participants' comments, particularly those that seemed extreme in their negativity. In reviewing the tapes of the first session and the interview, I realized WW might well have wanted to be challenged more by me.

The conversation in the session turned to questions about denominational differences, revealing that even among these long-term and knowledgeable members of these two identical denominations, there was more awareness of the few, limited differences in style of religious practices than the long list of commonalities. Are the perceived differences—none of which are a matter of substance—more related to race than anything else? Despite there being one shared and co-written Confession of Faith, containing the constitution of the two denominations, the conversation proceeded as if there were differences in the theology, polity, and practice between the two denominations though there are not.

The discussion moved on to perceived differences in the training and education among clergy of both denominations. PB said quietly, "That's one of the reasons a lot of people in the

(White) denomination don't want to unite with us. Because they think our pastors aren't as well educated." JW quietly agreed, conceding also that the perception had to do with race and was, therefore, part of the problem. Ironically, disagreement about the need for seminary education had been one of the reasons the White Cumberlands had parted ways with a larger Presbyterian body. As JW had put it later, "That's why we started," referring to the 1810 split when the group that then became known as the Cumberland Presbyterians separated in protest against several issues, but one of them was the clergy educational requirements the larger group imposed, a requirement CPs rejected. However, two centuries later, despite there being proportionately a similar number of non-seminary trained pastors in the White Cumberland churches as among Black clergy in the Black Cumberland denomination, a prevalent attitude was that the Black clergy were lacking in education. Members of the Black denomination contended that such questions about adequacy of training and education were race based, making it a bitter point of discussion for some. But I noted a sense of peace in that moment when JW confirmed PB's perception of a race-related basis of the education issue. That moment of the two participants being "more honest" with each other was perhaps a moment of calming authenticity.

VB was absent. I wondered if the quiet tone of that second reflection session had something to do with VB's absence. Indeed, a Black participant who had agreed with everything VB said in the first session, prefaced a comment—in VB's absence—with the phrase, "when we merge or unite," a significant departure from last week's pessimism, so full of doubt about unification ever happening. It reminded me of something WW had said at the previous intense reflection session, a comment that was unfortunately either not heard or was passed over by everyone. When VB described having been a part of such talks, with no success, for a lifetime already, WW had observed that though VB was, on the one hand, expressing a level of

hopelessness about race relations in the denominations, WW had rightly assessed that VB actually "isn't without hope" because, as WW had observed, "VB is here." WW was right. VB was participating in such a project, yet again, attempting to make a positive change in race relations in the CP denominations.

I wondered if VB had been present, would WW's military reminiscences have been challenged? Would that have been helpful to WW? Would JW and PB have agreed quietly on the element of racism impacting the issue they had just discussed if VB had been present?

Could VB have quietly received the confirmation PB got from JW, or would JW's admission, if it had come, only fueled the heat of VB's pessimism? Does JW's confirmation reflect in JW a level of hopeless resignation to the impact of racism on the relationship of these two denominations and the people in this room, a view perhaps hardened by insider information that all is even more doomed than VB's negative outlook?

Another moment of quiet and deeply felt openness occurred when DB described an incident during worship on one Mothers' Day at this church. A White member of the congregation—a woman—had felt racially slighted as Black mothers were specifically mentioned during a litany read from the congregation's African American hymnal. "We were caught off guard," DB said, explaining, as if someone had challenged the story, even though no one had said a word. "The White member who was present took offense, but she's almost never here," DB added, attempting to minimize the harm. After a pause, DB argued, "You see, typically this is an all-Black congregation," debating no one. The other participants watched her silently. The expression on DB's face was one of discomfort. When VB had suggested in the first session that more honesty is needed in these conversations about racial integration, unification, and diversity, the assumption may have been that Whites were the ones who needed to be more

honest. However, more honesty is apparently needed from everyone in such conversations. In the midst of justifying the racial exclusivity of the liturgy for that Mothers' Day, DB seemed to have had a sudden revelation, and then added: "That was wrong, wasn't it?" DB laughed and said, "You know, maybe all that's getting to be outdated now since we're having more and more mixed congregations. We need to do it differently." In fact, DB's congregation is not all Black, minimal as White membership may be. How should racial or cultural *others* be reflected in planning worship and in gatherings in American Christian congregations if their attendance is rare?

WW spoke up, "We talked about that on the way. You want your congregation to respect your own culture but also invite others. But, do you get hymnals in Farsi in case a person who speaks Farsi will come? Where's the line?"

WW seemed to be supporting the racial exclusion that DB had rather guiltily described. I thought to myself: VB really should have been here for *that* comment. No one commented on or challenged the extremism in WW's statement. After a moment of silence, I ventured a challenge and asked if having a hymnal that included songs in Spanish might be a reasonable attempt to encourage inclusion. I said, "A number of traditional hymnals I've used in the past from other denominations included a few things from other cultures. So, see what's already there, even in one like the African American hymnal, which could be put to use."

Suddenly WW asked DB, "What would happen if, as a result of this wonderful study, five new Whites decided to join this church?"

"We'd be so happy!" DB responded, gaily.

"Would you?"

"Yes!"

"What if it was 10?"

"We'd be so happy, even if it was only one."

"Because?"

"Because we need to grow. And it doesn't matter if they were White or Black."

"What if, say, it was three Koreans?"

DB didn't address the specific question about Koreans but launched into a complicated account about looking for a church home before settling on this one. Ending the story, DB confessed coming close to joining other churches instead of this Black church where we sat.

"Some were White," DB said. "Everywhere they seemed to rally around me, though one church was cooler than the rest. But! If I had gone on a regular basis, I truly believe any of them would have invited me to join!"

WW didn't succumb to DB's possibly unconscious attempt to sidetrack the conversation.

"So you're not afraid of change at all?" WW persisted.

"No, I'm not!" DB insisted.

I joined in and said, "Because 10 White people suddenly attending here would require change."

"Really?" DB responded, sounding genuinely surprised at the thought. "What kind of change—other than changing our song book?"

"Well, what if three of us wanted to join the choir?" WW continued tenaciously, "Or five of us?"

"That would be fine. Our pianist played for a White church before," DB countered.

I recalled the choir's performance during the worship service we had all just attended before this session began. About eight singers generally comprise the choir, all Black people who have sung together each Sunday for a number of years. Two were study participants.

PB, a choir member, joined in, "We're talking *adaptation* not change, adapting to others being here. We want our humanity uplifted, recognition for our contributions to America. We'll need to recognize theirs, add White mothers to litanies about Black mothers, like Pastor did one time."

"So, do you think that adaptation is going to happen?" WW asked.

"Do I think it will?" PB asked.

"Yes, do you?" WW asked. "VB said before that—"

"Yes, I know," PB interrupted. "Some of us in our generation will just have to die out, like the Israelites circling around in the wilderness, some of us."

JW declared, "They're not going to adapt. They're just going to have to die."

Reflection Session Three

On the Saturday before the third reflection session took place, the local Black presbytery held a workshop attended by some of the study's Black participants who were part of that presbytery. Unification was one of the two topics discussed. Attendance at the workshop was not a required part of this study. However, I was on the program as one of the clergy members of the presbytery leading a discussion on the overview of unification. Having heard the announcement about the workshop during the previous worship service, one of the White participants had asked to attend that workshop. During that workshop, a significant amount of tension was felt. Concerns about some aspects of the unification proposal were expressed by workshop attendees, all of whom were local presbytery members of the Black CP denomination and some of whom were part of this study. Stories portraying racial discord and distrust were shared with great energy during the workshop. The depth of negative feelings conveyed was a surprise to the White visitor, though some of the same feelings had already been expressed in the first two reflection sessions. During the third reflection session, talk about what happened in the workshop

the day before consumed the gathering.

Later in the session, VB voiced a need to see alternative ways of thinking about the issues. VB's expression of openness to the possibility of alternative thinking or approaches or options appeared to be one of the positive results of this study. VB's changed attitude energized the session. It seemed to reflect some of that hope WW believed VB had held within but was then in the study more open to expressing. VB's attitude seemed to have transitioned over the course of the study, as WW had pointed out again in the session. As the session continued and as remedies to racial conflict were explored, VB suggested one: "More exposure to each other is needed!"

The intentional and extended face-to-face dialogue had made a difference.

I asked, "How can that increased exposure take place?"

VB answered, "You need to show us that."

About half the group had recently seen a newly released popular movie about the power of prayer. Talking about it had occupied some of the light chatter as participants had helped themselves to food at the start of the session and as they found their seats. Some said entire churches were taking groups to see it. I had not heard about it before.

Now, after VB's last statement, and remembering the enthusiasm shown about the movie and how several who had seen it were strongly recommending it, I asked, "Regarding the deeply rooted problems of race relations in the Church, should this be approached by prayer?"

"Well, sure," one of the women said, quietly.

I asked, "Is there a prayer group in any of our churches dedicated to this issue?"

The question may have made DB nervous. It certainly made DB emotional. "Do we really have a race problem?" DB asked, loudly, with a shaky voice, "Or, is it more a problem

with politics, power, and position, and money, do you think?" DB became tearful. "I just don't understand why it's so difficult. Aren't we all Christians? It really breaks my heart!"

With compassion, VB said, "We haven't reached perfection yet. Just because we're the Church doesn't mean we get it perfectly."

Reflection Session Four

In this last of the four sessions (prior to the first round of interviews and the concluding reflection session), I wanted to start the session with talk about any of the participants' personal experiences with changed perceptions about race relations over their lifetime and causes of that. However, the group was distracted with some news related to unification of the denominations, and that was discussed for quite a while. Then WW, reported to the group a comment made by one of WW's fellow (White) church members in one of the small group meetings of WW's congregation. WW said that the fellow member had said, "A major problem with unification is that it would mean White churches in the denomination would be forced to financially support those Black churches that are in disrepair."

PB, a member since birth of the church where our study participants had been meeting, looked as though kicked in the stomach by the remark. It was visible. In an interview later, WW expressed never having felt sorrier to have passed along something someone else had said. "I knew it would be uncomfortable to hear, but I hadn't quite understood how painful it would be to a person like PB until I said it." When WW had repeated the fellow member's comment, PB did not say anything, but her facial expression had spoken.

DB, also having difficulty witnessing PB's pain, asked, "Should they just be left alone to be alone? Those Whites who are comfortable being separate—and probably true for some older Blacks as well as those Whites. Maybe that's acceptable. Why change things? They're

comfortable. Leave them alone!"

AW, who had been mostly silent during the preceding sessions, strongly disagreed, saying, "But we *shouldn't* be comfortable with it! We *can't* leave it like that, for goodness sake!"

WW said, "Well, that person said I should be sure to tell you he'd be glad to welcome Black people into his church, but small churches are a thing of the past. It's just a practical reality, is what he said."

PB, looking as though salt had just been rubbed into a wound, still said nothing.

I asked if the group thought unification would have been a done deal if it were between a financially strong and much larger Black denomination that didn't have church buildings needing care.

VB said, "I truly wish I could said yes. I know it's mainly now about economics on the surface. Big money issues, buildings, salaries, retirement, and on and on."

I asked, "Earlier, at points in the 1900s, when the Black denomination *was* so much stronger, why didn't unification work then?" No one answered.

AW tried again, "Staying separate, we're standing *still!* We're not teaching children the way things should be in Christ's Church. We *must* do something, get *out* of our comfort zone and *lead* the way. We can't *wait* for the younger generation."

JW then made several statements which caused me to wonder about JW's motivation for participating in the study.

"With unification, the new united denomination will lose anywhere from 10 to 40% of its membership," JW said, "and the Unification Task Force ought to be *open* about that, so that people *know*." JW continued in a firm voice, placing emphasis on some words, "Also, they *lie* when they say that nothing *different* will happen to the local congregations, because that just is

not true!"

When I asked what is it that will happen, JW said, "*This* is what will happen! Your families will have an opportunity to attend churches. There could possibly be the opportunity for pastors who would then no longer be of different denominations."

Somewhat stunned, I said nothing for a moment. Neither did anyone else. I took in a deep breath and led the group in a quiet prayer to close out the session. On the way out, VB called me aside and said, "Remember what Jesus taught his disciples when he said we 'needs must go through Samaria' and he knew they didn't want to get out of their comfort zones but had to. So, take us on through. You keep going!"

Interviews

AW's interview. Of all the participants, this participant exhibited the most transition in the study. Speaking up became easier (or at least much more frequent) by the last two sessions and the participant's convictions about the issues became firmer and were spoken with greater boldness. The participant's spirited commitment to action was apparent throughout the interview, which was one and a half hours long. CG is me, the researcher.

AW: There was so much negativity throughout the whole study. All that negativity was so discouraging. Are we going to stand around and wait for a Moses to deliver us!? We've got to get started! We've got to do it ourselves. I'd love to do more, but I need someone to help me, show me, what to do. If the small churches are going to die out anyway, we don't lose anything by taking a chance.

CG: Tell me how you feel the study changed you or your perspective.

AW: I always wanted to be in a diverse congregation but hadn't worked at it. Now that I've studied it some more and see more of the possibilities that I didn't know were even there—and I think that can be true with many others, well, I'm enthused and want to go forward with it.

CG: Sounds like you're saying you've discovered something that was missing.

AW: Yes! I think that's right! I know it was missing from my perspective. I just didn't think about it enough or mostly not at all. I know that there are all kinds of people. But the study has changed the way I look at different races, people, and all around the world. I guess I've learned for the first time about how strong a feeling it is with African Americans, how they feel like they are pushed back. The suspicions and distrust!

CG: Is there any way beyond all that?

AW: We need more understanding and more communication. I even think we need to combine two congregations. We need to include each other more. We need to reach out more and let people know we really care. The church should be the very first place where we start that! My past church life has been all White and everybody was the same. There is no challenge in that, no space to learn about how different people struggle. I think the study brought these new ideas out or I'd say expanded these concepts already in my mind.

CG: When you spoke about combining two congregations—and I'm assuming you mean Black and White—I think about the difficulty as well as the cost. What do you think about that part?

AW: There's been so much talk about money! Money! Whenever there's talk about the denominations combining! I know that money is important, but it shouldn't define or restrict us. I have trouble thinking that the money won't come if we need it. Money is not the main issue with the Church, not if it's the Church! We need to grow and draw closer to each other and closer to God. I can't help but think God will provide the money as it is needed.

VB's interview. This participant was the one most vocally pessimistic toward any positive change in race relations in the denominations, and this pessimism had dominated much of the first session. As noted previously, however, VB had shown some surprising though possibly limited change in the third session. This participant was also the second most guarded of all the participants. In the concluding reflection session, VB had admitted to no change, despite the changes that had been observed, though those changes were apparently tentative and may have even been temporary.

The interview, which was 45 minutes long, was also one of the two most difficult, which perhaps had to do with the participant's unique communication style, differences in our use of

some terminology, or because of the VB's guardedness. In response to being asked if the study, particularly the group sessions, had been a challenge, the participant answered,

VB: Well, I'm glad (the study) happened because, as far as I know, this is the first time a group like this has met in this environment that wasn't above us. By that I mean, a group of regular people at a regular level. But, no, it hasn't really been challenging to me because it's just an everyday life experience.

CG: What do you mean by that?

VB: It's just life. Learning, adjusting, adapting, learning the ins and outs of people. It's what happens with people all the time.

CG: Don't let me put words in your mouth, but I'm just not understanding what you mean. So, I'm wondering are you talking about that issue about Blacks, especially years ago, needing to be always on guard? The necessity of Blacks to watch and judge and deal with whatever comes from White authority figures? I want to get a fuller understanding of what you're saying, but I don't know what you mean by the study being a matter of 'learning the ins and outs of people' and the other things you said.

VB: I mean it's just life! Dealing with my mother every day, dealing with the people you run into in the grocery store, in the barbershop. It's just what you have to deal with as a human being and as a Christian. It's just life! Just like I was saying about this whole thing. And maybe I don't know just what you've been looking for, what you're trying to accomplish. What we were really supposed to be looking at? The (White) people who are coming here for this thing are the ones who are wanting to do the right thing, like I said. So, you're not going to get . . . I mean, someone might bring up something they don't quite understand, but they're not in the rejection mode. So, my whole thing about the whole thing is that if we don't get to the people who don't want to do it, who don't want to deal with it now, then how do we really know where we are going just from our group? Because it's easy to come up with positive stuff from the people who want to do the right thing, but what about the people who aren't willing, who aren't trusting, who still have the fears? Maybe I can see it a little bit, but I don't see it a whole lot. I didn't quite get what you wanted us to accomplish in this setting, since everyone was of the same mind. So what have we really proven? So what can the data show to help us move forward, when we haven't gotten feedback from people who don't want to go there?

OW's interview. This participant was one of the two quietest of the group, a person with a humble carriage, very polite and careful to not offend, embarrass, or upset anyone. This participant appeared to be the least invested in study outcomes and the one with the most recent connection, relatively speaking, to one of the two denominations and to the issues related to unification of the denominations. This participant also did not have a role in the local church other than as an attending member. The interview lasted 30 minutes. The participant walked in, smiling cheerfully, and greeted me. I was already seated at the table in the room where the interview took place. After answering OW's thoughtful inquiry about my trip to the participant's town, I started the interview.

CG: You've heard me being called a 'Northerner' a couple of times, so I am perceived as an outsider, to some degree, by some members of the group. There can be advantages to being an outsider because they can sometimes see things that the insiders have become accustomed to and overlook, you know, just don't notice any more.

OW nodded and smiled but didn't say anything, so I continued.

CG: You're a relative newcomer to your denomination, aren't you? And you're newer to what's going on between the two denominations than the others. But not new to race issues in general in this country, I'm sure. So, have you noticed anything that maybe the others haven't?

OW: About what?

After some prodding, OW said a number of things generally related to the topic.

OW: I grew up Catholic, and there were always a few Black people in the church...About 20 years ago, I went to a Baptist church, and there were no Blacks . . . When I first started going to my current church about 10 years ago, there were a couple of Black people, but I stopped seeing them around after a while . . . My pastor, Rev _____, hasn't mentioned unification at all, unless he said something when I wasn't there . . . I hear more about the politics of the whole unification thing from _____ . I think Black folks and White folks get along much better than they did years ago.

CG: Where did you grow up?

OW: Memphis. When I was 16, that was when MLK, Jr. was killed.

CG: What was that like for you?

OW: Well, you just had to be careful.

CG: Would you say more about what you mean?

OW: You just didn't get into it with anybody.

CG: Have you felt it was important to be careful in our study?

OW: You know, I've worked side by side with Blacks for many, many years, but we never talked about these kinds of things. Only sports or something like that. We avoided these topics.

CG: So, how's it been to be talking about such things in a group where that was what you were supposed to do?

OW: Well, I already knew that you don't know someone just because you work with them for years, but this whole thing did open my eyes.

CG: Open your eyes?

OW: I mean about how people really feel.

PB's interview. This interview was 40 minutes long. After answering some general inquiries from me and about the well-being of a member of the participant's family, who had been ill but was improving, PB warned me that the interview needed to get started because the participant was scheduled to do some volunteer work as part of an ongoing commitment. I responded,

CG: Wow. I really admire you for sticking with something like that, as well as our study, while (name of relative) has been in and out of the hospital. You're really committed to your community, and I've seen, as I've been coming to your church over the course of the study, how committed you are to it. Thank you for sticking with the study! Has it been worth it?

PB: I think it was helpful because I think that WW and AW learned a lot about us. Maybe some [Whites] don't know what kind of a reception they would get from us. Now those two know. They might try it again sometime somewhere. I know that the kind of a reception I would receive from some of them [White churches] wouldn't be good. But we need to do myth-busting on both sides.

CG: Did you learn anything?

PB: There needs to be more groups like ours, and more people need to be in it, like the people who think they need to carry us financially, people who are uninformed.

CG: At this point, how are you feeling about the experience of being in the study, in terms of any changes in your thoughts about race or race relations?

PB: I wish I could be a fly on the wall in some of the White Sunday School classes or White worship services where there is a reference or a lesson about loving everyone; what do they *make* of that, do you think? . . . We're all too suspicious of each other, even within the races too. Until we have many, many more small groups and more interactions, we won't get anywhere. We have issues; they have issues.

JW's interview. I had observed this participant's discomfort and what had seemed to me to be like controlled anger from the beginning of the study. Deciding that to address the participant's anger might enflame it, I had ignored it entirely, choosing to respond to the participant with total positive regard and patience, utilizing tactics of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) in interactions with this participant as much as possible throughout the study. Previously and during the interview, this approach had met with occasional limited and brief success, after which the participant reverted to anger or discomfort. This interview was 40 minutes long. I was already in the room when the participant arrived. I observed JW getting coffee from a dispenser.

CG: I just grabbed some more coffee, too, to keep myself awake.

JW did not respond but was humming and appeared to be uncomfortable and did not look at me. The humming seemed tense. The space was borrowed for the interview and neither of us had ever been in the room before.

JW walked around the room looking at some framed things hanging on the walls, and still did not say anything to me.

CG: That's what I did when I came in; I wondered what they were.

JW: It's ___ stuff (referring to the city in which we were meeting)

The humming continued. JW sat on the sofa across from me.

CG: What are you humming?

JW: I have no idea.

I asked JW about gains in insight or new learning from participating in the study.

JW: No, there was no new learning. There were some confirmations.

CG: What were those?

JW: Well, in race relations, people in the United States look at it as Black and White, singular, just those two races. But, especially when it comes to unification, it is NOT only Black and White. I'm so sick of that! And so my learning is that I have to be reminded that not everyone has that same filter that I do. I don't see the Church only through a U.S. filter. So, when I hear *race relations*, what I hear is not the same as what other people may hear. That's a limited perspective, especially when it comes to unification.

CG: And it's the Blacks who have that limited perspective?

JW: I did not say that.

CG: Well, who does have that limited perspective? And are there ways you can now apply what was relearned or reconfirmed? I guess I'm asking what you learned about others in the group, White and Black.

JW: Well, things people have shared [in our group] aren't being discussed in presbyteries, but those conversations need to take place.

CG: Which things aren't discussed?

JW: Like about retaining elders orders if unification takes place, fears like that, or what the difference in education looks like.

JW went on to say that without such discussions, people will jump to race as motivating the "difficult decisions" that must be made after unification.

JW: No one is saying why equal representation is important.

JW added that the Unification Task Force had not provided a clear explanation for why unification should take place at all.

JW: I also hear most, if not all, the people on the Unification Task Force telling people: Now, don't you worry, you're not going to notice *any* change at your local church level.

JW reminded me of what I said during one of the sessions, namely that racial integration is inherently valuable and should be one of the ultimate goals of unification.

JW: So, *y'all* need to get together. Somebody needs to decide why unification? Is it *really* what God is calling us to do, or is it really about two dying denominations?

CG: It can't be about both?

JW: Survival doesn't have anything to do with following God's call. God calls us to *lose* ourselves. To die. God doesn't call us to be concerned with our *survival*. Or our *place*.

CG: What would dying look like?

JW: I don't know, Carolyn.

DB's interview. The interview takes place in DB's home. DB was relaxed and friendly.

DB began the discussion right away with general comments about cultural and regional differences among the participants. As during the sessions, this participant's comments seem a little scattered and often off-topic, possibly guided by this participant's protective tactic of avoiding uncomfortable feelings. The interview was one hour and fifteen minutes long.

DB: You aren't Southern but I am; yet, they see me as different, too. I don't remember anything serious happening regarding race when I was growing up. The others [in the group] saw it, you know, being treated differently. But in my childhood, we were more unified and diversified. And we had Hispanics coming each year to work on the farm. When we integrated the schools in the area where I lived in 1968—the Blacks and Whites—you see, the Hispanics didn't stay, well apparently some ugly stuff happened

after that point, but I didn't experience any of it. My brothers said they knew, but I didn't.

CG: Are they older? Was that why?

DB: No, I'm the oldest . . . [laughs] I guess I should have seen some stuff, but I just never did. My family says I'm that giddy person just tiptoeing through life. I guess I knew about the *Whites Only* signs. I guess I did. But I just didn't pay any attention to that sort of thing. I graduated in 1969, and Blacks knew their place. We all just got along. But when boundaries were pushed, some ugliness came out. Then everything changed. [The participant begins to cry but continues.] It breaks my heart about the [Black] children now. I've taught Sunday school but there was only one! Just one student! They're all gone. And they need it so much; they need the church. We need to get the youth back. I think we do need unification. Some say the Black Church will lose, but it's dying anyway. It's dying anyway.

WW's Interview. At WW's request, the interview takes place in a public park. It was a beautiful day and other people passed by occasionally, but did not stop near the interview space. The interview was one hour long. The participant initiated the discussion by describing a learning that had made a big impact. It was a "simple learning" (as WW put it), but it was also considered profound by the participant. The participant struggled with emotion as the learning is described with a long speech that began the interview.

WW: I learned something important that I never knew. Some of this comes even within the last few weeks, especially from that workshop [referring to the Black presbytery event that this participant had attended and where this participant had heard tense talking among Blacks about race]. As a fairly simple White person, I never understood that race underlay a person's experience. I don't think I ever really realized—I know I didn't—that in America of 2015 that there was a life-long experience that was so different in Black America than it was in White America. I had taken to heart that saying you hear, "our blood's all red," and thought, too, that I understood regional differences—say, between Northerners and Southerners. Or, that people brought up in different countries—England versus the United States . . . and I thought that these were just cultural differences that didn't have any heart foundation. But what I think I learned from the study, despite the briefness, was that diversity is very difficult! Because it's a heart issue—especially for Black people. It may be less difficult now, because everybody goes to school together and goes to college together. Even though there are different cultures in my own family now, like Asians, and having seen more of the world, I still did not realize that at the

heart of diversity were hearts. And so, for me, the study opened up a whole can of worms.

CG: Well, what did that mean for you as a part of worldwide Christian religion that is segregated in different ways in so many places? Is diversity especially difficult within Christianity?

WW: It made me think about how the Church—with a capital C—used to be so central to life and to society. But now, the Church no longer has any power. But it does have vital power within its walls to make some changes. And how can it not do that? We've got to talk about justice more! White churches don't talk about justice because they don't need to! That's one thing I realized. We get justice. Black people largely don't get justice. So, I realized there's this difference between the way a Black Christian might talk about *going home* to heaven than me as a White person because that's where full justice is that's missing here on this earth, at least for now. So, my church, the White Church, is too limiting as it sees itself now, to be fit for diversity. That has to change, somehow.

TB's interview. This participant had been the most quiet of all the participants throughout the entire study, rarely speaking unless prodded, though gracious, polite, and friendly. TB, who was a member of the church where the study took place, also acted at times as a host would, kindly attentive to the needs of the visiting non-member participants. It was discovered in the interview that this participant had plenty to say and wanted to say it, as I had suspected all along. Although the interview was only 40 minutes long, the participant had apparently put considerable thought into what to say, some highlights of which are shared here. Like other participants, TB had assumed that the primary aim of the research was to promote unification of the denominations, a tenacious misconception even after several attempts at clarification. I began by asking TB to describe the worst and the best aspects of being a participant in the study.

TB: The worst of my experiences in class [referring to the reflection sessions] was the pessimism shown in class as far as unification is concerned. That bothered me.

CG: Why is that?

TB: Because we must have it. In the long run, unification will be a success, but there may be some setbacks. There may be some who want to leave the denomination but in the end we will have accomplished our goals. Anytime you have a change, there will be some setbacks. Still, I think in the long run, it will turn out for the best.

CG: Did your participation in the study, seeing and hearing close up the pessimism you mentioned, give you any thoughts about how to manage or what to do about that pessimism regarding race relations in the Church?

TB: Well, I do now see that there were some under-the-radar issues that weren't talked about. I do think they'll come out eventually, and if we don't talk about it, we'll live through the consequences. I think that we must just have the attitude that there will be problems but that we must simply have the mindset that we will resolve the issues, even if it takes a lot to do that.

CG: And what about the best of it? Were there any parts of the study that you had a good response to?

TB: Oh, I enjoyed the meetings. I learned quite a lot. I found out that the [White denomination] has as many problems as the [Black denomination] has, and some are the very same issues. The [Blacks] and the [Whites] have issues that need to be talked about.

CG: So, since it sounds like getting the races together in the churches is important to you, I'm wondering where do you go from here?

TB: We are not yet getting lots of information down to the grassroots, and I think our leaders need to do more to get information down to them. And they need to assure the grassroots people that things will work out. I do believe that in the long run, we will be glad that we took this step. I think that the ones coming after us will see the positive results, and it may not—probably won't—be successful now, but eventually we will see good and successful results.

CJ: You didn't say very much at all during the sessions.

TB: [laughs] Well, I like to pay more attention than talk. It's good that we got together to talk about it. People may be thinking about all the negatives, what they will lose. But after continuously talking about it, then the people will see the positives. That's what the leaders need to do: convey the positives. And to assure the people that there isn't anything major to worry about. And I think that if we do that, if the leaders do their part, it will be ok.

CG: You echo what was said by several other participants, that it's more a leadership

issue than anything else. Tell me more about new things you learned.

TB: I learned that the [White denomination] has some of the same type of issues that we do, that there are no differences, really. Some of their issues have to do with us. [The study] led me to believe that the whole thing will end up being a give-and-take situation.

CG: Hmmm.

TB: Oh, and the most positive thing I experienced from the study was that I learned that there are some on the [White denomination] side who want this to happen [referring to unification]. I didn't really know that. I'm not sure of the real reason that they want this to happen, but I see that they do. Maybe because they're shrinking, like we are. So, on both sides, since there are some who want to combine to keep our [religious] beliefs alive, in order to do that, we must talk about it and be willing to [compromise] . . . I think that once we come together, the [problems] will be resolved.

CG: Is maintaining the shared Cumberland Presbyterian beliefs of both the Black and White denominations enough of a reason for you personally to go through the difficulties involved in making unification happen?

TB: It's enough of a reason.

CG: Hmmm.

TB: Also, I think God wants us to . . . We call ourselves Christian believers. So, we all should act like it. I think God wants us to be together as one organization . . . And I think we can.

CG: Any new insight regarding race that you gained from the study, aside from unifications issues?

TB: I could see that there are so many race issues under-the-radar that no one is talking about and that no one talked about in our group.

CG: Want to mention one, as an example?

TB: Yeah, one of the issues is that they [people in the White denomination] think Black organizations tend to be a liability, that they would need to support us because we can't manage our affairs adequately. That seems to be a race issue because of the assumptions that we don't have the capacity to manage. It's racist thinking. Those are the kind of issues that we tend not to talk because people are too uncomfortable to talk about it.

CG: If this kind of a group were tried again, would you think having more time would get us to a point of a willingness to talk about it? Or, is it just too hard to talk about?

TB: I think it's possible. Yes. But you'd need to let people know ahead of time what you're going to ask them. They need to be warned about those under-the-radar kinds of questions because they are so hard to talk about. They may not want to talk about it, but let it be known ahead of time that they will be talking about them, so people will feel less uncomfortable with warning, perhaps.

CG: You've given me quite a lot in this interview that you didn't get to say in the sessions. Do you have any last thing to add?

TB: Only thing I'd say is that you should keep going forward. It will be a slow process, but keep going forward. We have a lot of people on both sides who want it to happen but small in number by comparison on both sides.

CG: You're saying you feel more people in both denominations don't want the races to come together in congregations than do?

TB: Yes, I think that's true. And I also think that pastors of the local churches should be supporting and talking about it to their people and in their various church committees. If some of the local pastors don't want it or don't support it, that's really unfortunate. But I hope you find others who will help you move forward. You're one person. It's too big for one person.

Concluding Reflection Session

After our opening prayer was done and we began eating, I reminded the group that at this concluding meeting a decision could be made regarding what to do with the study results.

OW spoke up, "I'm going to speak to the pastor at my church and say that we should have VB come and preach. I think that would be a good idea."

I asked, "Do you want to say anything about what you learned and what we might do with it all?"

OW said, "Since my pastor hasn't really said anything, I think that if VB came, it would be good because people don't know about unification."

I asked again, "And what about sharing the findings?"

JW interrupted, in a shrill, raised voice: "Well, what are the findings?! I need to know that first!"

"That's a good question," I said. "What we have all learned and what has happened here constitute the findings. Each participant has as much to say about that as anyone. The questions I've been asking, especially in the interviews, about what you're taking from the sessions or any change in your thinking or learning, those are the findings. So, what do we see as the findings? And maybe people do want to talk about that and hear that before deciding whether you want to share it or not. That's fair."

VB said quickly, "Do anything with the findings that you want to! But what I've said all along is that nothing has changed!"

WW said, "The Apostles' Creed hit me on the head yesterday. Here [at this church] y'all say it every Sunday. We don't often say it in our church, but I truly feel it deeply. And I think that we need to all be in one universal *catholic* Church. So, whatever it takes to make us into that kind of Church all together is what we need, and that's what I want. I believe this is a start. I know we're just a small microcosm, and we don't represent everyone. I don't care what you do with the findings. I thought everyone was honest at the table. I thought everybody grew from week to week. We softened a little; we hardened a little. But those kinds of things in our past are like anybody's past, and somehow we have to get past the past or we will have no future. This is my idea."

PB said, "I don't have much to say. I don't really care what you do with the findings. I didn't say anything that I wouldn't repeat in front of anyone. But I do have a question for OW talking about having VB come and preach. How open would your pastor be about that?"

"Oh, he'd be very open, I believe," OW answered without hesitating.

JW said, "I'm not having any objection to anything I've said being shared, but I would like to know what are the findings."

I suggested that we give everyone else a chance to talk and added, "Then I'll be glad to mention trends I observed. But everyone in this group has a legitimate voice in this sharing."

TB spoke next. "I have no objection to anything being shared anonymously. I think that a lot of important points came out. We learned from each other. I learned that lots of things go under-the-radar and don't get said or raised or discussed. We still need to take more steps, even if it's baby steps, especially when it comes to talking about these important things that don't get talked about."

TB elaborated on some possible legal ramifications of unification, stating that the smaller (Black) denomination needed legal protections to prevent it being dissolved by the larger (White) denomination.

JW responded to TB's concern about the White CPs overwhelming the Black CPs in unification by referring to part of White CP history JW had alluded to previously, namely the 1906 merger of two (White) Presbyterian denominations, one of which was the White CP represented in this study. The merger ended poorly. The White CPs withdrew after a while and regrouped but lost many members. JW explained that the size difference of those denominations from 1906 was proportionately the same as between these Black and White CPs in current discussion about unification. JW said that shortly after the 1906 merger, "there were not many, if any, of our CP leaders [from the smaller denomination] left in place." I couldn't help but wonder if JW (or the other participants) had any idea that the 1906 merger of two White denominations JW had described took place only after one specific condition required by the White CPs was

agreed upon: separate racial judicatories (M. Anderson, 1905; Grimké, 1904; Hutchison, 1905).

AW said, "I think the results should be shared with anyone. I'd like to know the results myself. I think our group was honest. I think I agree, too, that it's going to take work to get us all together. I've learned that I was a little more optimistic than I guess is realistic. It's going to take more of our mingling together as Blacks and Whites before we can convince and show others that this is the way it should be. We as Christians need to be worshipping together. I don't think that it is going to be a very quick process. But I think it is possible, and I think we need to start."

After everyone had spoken, I said, "We can all go around and talk about trends or patterns we've perceived, whether it is perhaps differences in how we began and what we felt in the middle and now at the end. Everyone's voice has equal weight in this, not just mine. JW, do you want to start us off with that?"

"I see no patterns," JW replied.

"Ok," I said.

OW then said, "Well, I think the longer it went on, the more people opened up, and the more we got to know each better."

"And that was a good pattern, wasn't it?" I commented, "I noticed that, too."

PB said only, "Pass," which surprised and troubled me. When asked about that response later, PB explained that it was not a matter of being upset or angry but simply anxious for the session to end as soon as possible because a family member who wasn't feeling well (the one who had been released from the hospital during the preceding week) was waiting in another part of the building for a ride home.

DB spoke up, "I saw a pattern within myself. I thought I knew what the problems were. I

was all for unification but didn't have a realistic idea of what it would take. I'm still for unification— don't get me wrong—but my change came in my realization of how deep the challenges are."

I asked, "And that was through meeting as a group?"

"Yes, the dialogue." DB answered, and added, "And hearing myself. Sometimes you don't really know what's on your mind until you start talking about it and journaling about it. As I heard myself talk, I began to learn some more things about myself. It was really personal growth on my part."

WW spoke next. "One of the reasons this group worked well is that I think we have all been heard. I think that we didn't necessarily all show our hands, like in Poker, that we may have held back to some degree. But I do believe that we've all been heard. That calms the situation to know someone will listen to you even if disagreeing. I'd say one thing I learned is how deep the hurt is. I kinda came into this thinking it was going to be just fine, easy-breezy. I realize that was not only naive but ignorant. There are lots of ignorant people on both sides, and . . . it goes all the way from the top people to the bottom people with lots of ignorance."

WW continued, "I wish I could tell you people in my church would be interested in the findings and would want to learn something from them. But, if it's not in their day-to-day, it'll be put on the back burner."

VB said, "As for me, I'm really like JW. I see no new pattern. I've been through this for years and years, 55 years, in fact. Some say, 'Take baby steps.' We've been *taking* baby steps! These kind of teams have been put together before. *Nobody's* done anything with the findings. It's just been *stagnant*. So, I can't get all that excited about a change. I can't tell you how many times this has come up! Since I was a small child. I've been through it all the time because I've

been Cumberland Presbyterian all the time. If I've said anything you want to use, you're welcome to use it any way you want to."

I sighed deeply. VB had taken a step back toward hopelessness and doubt about the possibility of change, perhaps nudged by JW's consistent negativity. Had VB felt foolish before in that session, reaching out again a little toward hope? I didn't voice my thoughts but only I responded, "What you're saying actually does reveal a pattern, unfortunately."

WW added, "But VB keeps coming back and still has hope. VB hasn't given up, and I'm glad." WW's declaration was something WW had insisted before in an earlier session, but no one had responded to WW then. Had they heard and digested WW's insight this time? After WW spoke, there was silence for a minute or two; no one said anything in response.

TB said, "The thing that stuck with me is that we began to open up as the meetings went along. We began to learn from each other, really learn from each other."

DB exclaimed, "Well, *I'm* the one that said 'baby steps' but that didn't mean do nothing. We do need to *do* something, just nothing drastic."

AW then spoke. "I agree that we did open up more and more as we got to know each other. I did realize that sometimes we ended the meetings and it seemed like everyone was for it and then the next time we ended the meetings and everyone was against it. So, it kind of went up and down. But I think we're doing good work here."

I closed the session with a prayer.

Post-Sessions Interviews

Post-sessions interviews were requested of AW and DB. They readily agreed. These two participants, one Black and one White, were asked for different reasons. DB had voiced significant new insights, and AW had been the most optimistic participant in terms of hopes for future racial reconciliation and integration. I wanted to see if their initial responses from their

first interviews had changed significantly.

The two secondary interviews took place separately in private homes, approximately two months after the concluding session. In both interviews, the participants were relaxed and talkative, motivated to share their afterthoughts. Their sharings reflected much continued deep thinking about their learnings from the reflection sessions. One of the participants described further critical learning from the readings which I had supplied during the study but which that participant had not been able to read during the study, due to time constraints. DB reflected on having learned to confront painful feelings rather than attempt escape. AW, though still persistent in optimism from the study, described having a much deeper understanding of the painful joint history and how that history continues to affect everyone in different ways, both Blacks and Whites.

Journaling

Three participants submitted journals to me, some of the content of which I had heard them repeating during their interviews and to some extent throughout all the sessions. Two other participants preferred to keep their journaling private. Three did not do journaling or did a very minimal amount which was not shared. Journaling had been presented in the introductory meeting as an optional element in the study for all participants except me. My journaling, which was extensive, is reflected in interview questions and in all observations noted. My journaling is also reflected in recommendations, conclusions, and reflection on learning in the final chapter.

Chapter V: Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

In Chapter I, I described the confounding dilemma of racism in our racialized society and Christian congregations as conflicted contributors to the problems. Because the Christian Church has been one of the most influential institutions in the history of the world (Schmidt, 2004), I turned to Christian congregations to look for solutions to the problems, using PAR (participatory action research) to look within. I began with a number of questions, and this study has provided some answers. Strategies were identified that facilitate cross racial dialogue and relationship development, as noted in Chapter IV. Such strategies may be utilized to enable racial integration in existing monoracial congregations and in the development of new interracial congregations.

One of the main learnings was that building meaningful cross racial relationships in integrated settings must be recognized as hard and sometimes painful work, and the reasons for that must be faced. Nevertheless, some positive results were demonstrable by the end of the study. A number of factors contributed to how it worked.

First, the spiritual component was not be overlooked. After all, the group consisted of religious people of the same faith, a group which worshipped, ate, and prayed together regularly. Concerns for some individual personal matters were taken beyond the walls of the meetings and, presumably, included in participants' private prayers at home. I can attest that after the study ended when I visited the separate congregations of the participants, they were all always anxious to get updates on those various matters related to their fellow participants whom they cared about but no longer saw regularly. Meaningful relationships had developed.

Second, the group regularly engaged reflectively with intentionality focusing on matters of importance centered on race and their shared faith, despite the discomfort they expected to

experience at time. Commitment to the process was important. The group committed to being with each other and to probe deep waters—as deep as was reasonable considering the brevity of the study. The commitment to meet consistently for a specific period of time was an important factor. Intentionality was clearly key. Whenever necessary, I called the group back to the hard task of the sensitive topic at hand. They were committed to the purpose.

Third, we agreed upon a basic agenda of talking honestly, listening carefully, and to an openness to learn, grow, and perhaps change our perspectives on a difficult topic. Participants stated that experiencing continuous positive regard, notwithstanding the thoughts or feelings voiced or whether others agreed or not, was a helpful positive factor. As the leader, I held and promoted that attitude as a priority throughout the group's dialogue. Proactive leadership was critical.

Fourth, since an agreed upon aim was to learn new ways of thinking about sensitive issues, information on the topic was provided to stimulate thought and conversation, as well as to inform participants about research on race, religion, and some historical information that was, perhaps, previously unknown to them, especially regarding race relations within the denominations over many years.

Fifth and lastly, the typical power dynamics were pushed off balance. This study was led by a Black clergy woman in a Black congregational setting where Whites were greatly outnumbered. Additionally, during the study, input from lay and clergy was equalized. These components created disorienting dilemmas which broadened perspectives and enhanced learning.

Difficulty of Cross Racial Dialogue

The group's commitment to honesty and learning were two most important elements in the dialogue. Talking openly about ignorance of some information and the influence of cultural

assumptions or stereotypes while obtaining new information helped create change. While the dialogue could be painful, the group's held belief that talking together as loving people with a shared connection to God created an atmosphere for transformation.

Some of the readings that I provided (see Chapter III), also pushed participants to think deeply in ways new to them. As analysis of collected data from the sessions revealed, input from each other and the provided information (some of it surprising "eye openers," as participants said), helped the group gain perspective regarding some of the significant reasons for difficulties in talking about race issues and race relations. Such difficulty was not unique to this group of participant. Their comments supported the literature on the rarity of meaningful racial interactions in congregations. Black and White American Christians are simply not accustomed to worshipping, meeting, and talking together, especially not as equals, and not about race despite it being one of the most important topics between them. Although Jesus crossed numerous known racial and cultural barriers more than two thousand years ago (Keener, 2014), the findings of this study confirmed that his followers still do not, at least not comfortably. The tragic state of race relations in America impacts even committed Christians bound by a religious code that promulgates equality in God's eyes. Unsurprisingly, data from this study indicated fear, frustration, and confusion about race among participants, as all struggled with how to talk about and get beyond learned and internalized secular codes of inferiority and superiority.

Such confused internal conflict reaches as far back as 1624 when the souls of Black slave children were acknowledged as equal (in God's eye), and so they were baptized, but they were also deemed to be deserving of enslavement in the eyes of their fellow Christians (Simpson, 1978). Was the outreach to Black slaves a matter of sharing the emancipatory gospel of Christ or simply a way to teach Blacks to submit to the American caste system and to become better

servants? Did the White Christians—either those opposed to slavery or those who wanted to maintain the slave system—recognize Christianity as a faith based on liberation and equality?

American history indicates that many (if not most) White American Christians saw liberation and equality as separate concepts, but are they still viewed as separate in the twenty-first century? Can it be denied that some Black American Christians in the 1800s and, tragically, even much later, struggled with holding those concepts together within themselves, particularly as descendants of slaves to whom staying alive meant staying in *their place* and who typically were forced illiterates, devoid of the language and culture of their homeland. Therefore, for Black and White American Christians, their dialogue about race cannot exclude talk of justice and politics. In other words, how did Christian brothers and sisters of equal value to God and equally loved by God come to see themselves as anything but not equal to each other in every way, and how can they work together—as they must—to rectify such a moral travesty? As Murray (1966) wrote, "[I]t raises the perennial problem of American Christianity—its relation to American culture" (p. 29). Admittedly, the "unification burnout" which OW wondered if VB was experiencing (in a session described previously) parallels the certain fatigue all Americans, Black and White, experience as *race burnout* when slavery and the consequent racial injustices are raised, yet again. Nevertheless, it must continue to be raised, yet again, as it unmistakably continues to impact all Americans; we have only to stroll by and look into the windows of segregated congregations on Sunday mornings to see proof of that.

One participant (JW) was often angered by references to the CP as a *White* denomination, and insistently reminded participants of that denomination's racial diversity. While the White CP denomination eventually stretched to include language-specific non-English speaking congregations, mostly in other countries—which were at the time of this study racially separate, White CP congregations in America, where slavery and its aftermath has continued to be felt, do

not include Blacks, and Black CP congregations in America do not include Whites, though there are rare exceptions in both.

In truth, the dilemma of specifically how to be Black and White Christians together in America in both divine and human eyes continues to thwart Black and White American Christians today. The uncomfortable but conjoined history of Black and White American Christians, as well as the unpleasant and often unconscious vestiges of that ugly history, are some of the reasons for that dilemma. Participants in this study claimed that Black and White Christians know that Separate but Equal doctrine, when it comes to Christian living and worshipping, is an anathema their God of *all nations*. However, this study also confirmed that they struggle to achieve the intimacy and full actual active unity mandated by their God.

Practice Needed

Trust grew, the dialogue deepened, and change took place as the participants continued to meet together and exchange information and feelings. Meaningful positive race relations needs practice in an atmosphere of goodwill and a desire to grow. Based on findings from this study, positive racial interactions that are practiced are improved, and Christian congregations are the ideal place for that to happen. Merino (2011) pointed out that membership in same-faith groups can provide important social support, enhancing members health and well-being. Dougherty et al. (2015) found that as members participate more actively in their congregation's organized groups (for example, in study or prayer groups or in choirs), the stronger their sense of belonging but that racially underrepresented members may be less inclined to join groups due to feeling a lesser sense of belonging, creating a cycle difficult to break. Leaders must proactively assist racially different members in engaging together. Combating the crisis of racism requires intentionality and strategies, tactics and courage. Considering the origins of the relationship

between Blacks and Whites in America, considering their tragic history, how could anyone think such a distorted relationship could be repaired and change without an aggressive plan? Where should such work be centered—the work of transitioning and reorienting what happens between races—if not in all Christian congregations, the heart of moral America?

Black and White Christians need structured opportunities and guided practice in meaningfully relating deeply, honestly, and lovingly to each other. By design and by law, Blacks and Whites were historically kept separate and did not converse with each other as equals. Separation of the races became the norm and, it must be plainly stated, eventually became the felt norm. Consequently, Blacks and Whites now have little opportunity to know each other at more than superficial levels, as Bonilla-Silva (2014) described, and as was confirmed by study participants. Cross racial encounters are often filled with covert racialized assumptions or even hostility toward Blacks as well as levels of distrust, resentment, or even anger toward Whites, revealing a continuation of earlier more explicit patterns of racism and racial conflict now exhibited or carried out with greater subtlety. Courage is needed because many opposing forces work against the Christian mission of cross racial understanding and friendship. Two of those opposing forces, for example, are prevalent myths and stereotypes about racial others. Tragically, segregated congregations allow easy continuation of stereotypical assumptions about others.

It must be stated bluntly that some White Christians simply may not wish to coexist with Black Christians in worship and congregational living, judging from a study cited previously which revealed that, compared to numerous other religious groups, White evangelical Protestants were documented as having the strongest preference for same-race neighbors (Merino, 2011). As Philomena Essed stated, in *observing* racial insularity in the United States and its relationship to racism, "Whites keep avoiding voluntary contact with Blacks" (Essed, 1991, p. 27). Some Blacks

in this study suspected and suggested exactly that, particularly with regard to the current denominational talks about unification. Although Blacks in this study did not report harboring similarly negative feelings about coexisting with Whites, they did communicate concern for possibly experiencing disrespect or assumptions of inferiority in cross racial settings, as well as their bitter disdain for the hypocrisy of positive Christian language that is not matched with actions. Discussing residential segregations, Essed noted, as others have, that racial segregation had actually increased as the end of the last century drew near. Researcher A. W. Smith (1988) suggested such increasing racial "insularity" (p. 13) had allowed race relations to worsen.

What both Black and White Christians must face is that the persistent pattern of racial segregation in congregations is not a benign phenomenon. Elizabeth Anderson (2010) convincingly demonstrated in *The Imperative of Integration* that there is a relationship between segregation and social inequality, material inequality, racial stigma, and racial discrimination, as well as the unequal participation in our democracy. Her premises supported the urgency of this study for Christians. The onus for improved race relations falls within the purview of all Christian congregations, Black and White. In interview, the White participant most skeptical about racially integrated congregations in a new CP denomination complained that, regarding the ongoing talks about the two denominations becoming one, the Unification Task Force ought to be "more honest" about the fact that racial integration at the congregational level is a potential result of formal unification. The Unification Task Force is the formal appointed joint committee made up of an equal number of White CPs and Black CPs whose charge is to develop an acceptable plan of union of the two CP denominations which have been historically separated by race, Black and White. The participant (JW) said such honesty is necessary because "many White [congregants] just don't want to worship together with Blacks" but may well find

themselves in racially integrated congregations which they do not want. JW's statement aligns with some of the literature, as stated above, and with some responses of both Black and White participants. Data also showed that some of the White participants experienced varying levels of discomfort with the atypical shift in racial balance and shift in a sense of personal power due to the study taking place in a Black congregational setting. That is, in a mixed racial group, Blacks are less often the leaders and generally do more acquiescing than happened in this study.

Additionally, when the session first began, responses of the participants (both Black and White) often reflected levels of embarrassment with the topic. Early responses tended to reflect denial of the impact of race in Christian congregations or a desire to avoid the tension and redirect the conversation. All those dynamics may well be what Black and White Christians prefer avoiding. In the face of the vital work of improving race relations in this country, choosing the superficial comfort of separatism should not be considered a Christian option.

As the sessions progressed, a realization of the gravity of the impact of race set in, but when it did, the realization did not destroy the hope for improvement in race relations (and voiced acceptance of the eventuality of unification). However, though all participants continued to claim a desire for more authentic relationships with racially different Christians in racially integrated congregations, they all also showed frustration with their inability to figure out how to comfortably achieve that. At least, that is what was said, but it may be possible that something other than what was claimed may be a true preference, whether consciously or not. A 2011 study showed that White Protestant Christians have a stronger same-race preference for neighbors than do any other faith group and including the "unaffiliated" (Merino, 2011, p. 165). That study and minimal numbers of racially integrated congregations in America contradicts Christian language about diversity, equality, and togetherness. Each study participant was a member of same-race

congregations, with minimal exceptions of one or two people in their entire congregations.

Previously noted, the two White members of the Black congregation where the sessions took place were generally absentee members, and were mentioned only once in one session. It should also be noted that the few individuals of color who attended the two White congregations of participants in this study were not Blacks. Additionally, it must be pointed out that the areas where the congregations of all participants in this study were located were areas with relatively high levels of Blacks in the populations. Bonilla-Silva (2014) pointed to surveys in which Whites express "openness to and, in many cases, even preference for an interracial lifestyle" (p. 153) but that "based on their answers to questions dealing with their own behavior, Whites actually lacked a commitment to an interracial life" (p. 153).

Some study data revealed participants' deep skepticism about whether racially integrated congregations can be achieved, at least among the denominations represented in this study. Yet, data also demonstrated that the intentional, structured cross racial dialogue in this study carried out over an extended period of time dealing with significant race issues gradually increased participants' comfort and trust levels in discussing race relations, allowing more openness and honesty as the study progressed. Changes in attitudes, comfort levels, and trust were reported by or distinctly observed in all except one participant. I suspect that the one participant who denied any new learning, changes, or growth may have been simply unwilling to admit it or did not yet perceive any changes since the project had not been completed when participants were asked questions about change. That participant may have needed more time. Indeed, two other participants who were re-interviewed approximately two months after the final session, reported an increase and greater depth in their learnings than they had reported in the first interview. In *Leadership in Place*, Chapman and Randall (2007) described transformative learning as learning

which requires time, and they wrote that "having beliefs and values challenged can cause distress" (p. 65). The process we followed in this PAR study undoubtedly often created a kind of "disorienting dilemma," one of the early phases of transformative learning in the theory developed by Mezirow (1998).

This study confirmed Parker's (1968) conclusion from a quantitative study he did many years ago of an interracial church: cooperative, intentional, persistent cross racial interconnectedness, and deep dialogue may create positive change, though it was undeniably hard and painful work. It became clearer from the study that the problem is not whether improvements in race relations can happen through integrated small group dialogue. This study shows that it is possible. A bigger and clearer problem, however, is the absence of leaders to facilitate it and the need to educate members of congregations on the value of such hard work, the wisdom of such an expenditure of the time needed, and the great potential gain not only for individuals, congregations, and denominations but for the entire world. It is not easy, but it is necessary, and Christians are invited to bear, as their crosses, the initial discomfort in order to achieve it. Christian congregations are called to it and can do it.

Leadership Needed

Over the course of the study, all participants grew increasingly aware of the limited clergy leadership efforts in improving race relations in and among congregations and communities. Moreover, all participants came to recognize that changes in race relations requires strong, committed, consistent leadership around the issues. Indeed, the state of race relations in America and between the two CP denominations may call for development of lay leadership to assist clergy in this area. Skills are needed to duplicate the kind of small group conversation used in this study to enable changes in attitudes and perspectives about race. Participants in this study

expressed dismay over clergy lack of attentiveness to a matter of such critical import for congregations, communities, and the country. In all fairness, clergy may lack knowledge of how to proceed or the tools needed, and that underlying handicap may be the reason so many clergy avoid the task. One participant said that although it was an important issue, it gets “pushed to the back burner” by other busyness that captures their congregation's clergy. Another participant wondered if concerns about continued employment kept some of the pastors or others in leadership roles from taking bolder steps to push congregations in improving race relations in their communities. All participants stressed that studies such as this one need to be duplicated. Some participants encouraged me to set up such studies in various congregations and to be more “pushy” in focusing the conversation around the “hard things to talk about” regarding race relations. The most negative participant, who had denied learning anything new, agreed with that latter need, and stated that concerns and issues were raised with honesty by participants in our sessions but were not being heard elsewhere, due to an absence of leadership, according to that participant.

It may also, frankly, be a choice on the part of some clergy who do not understand or agree with the value of racial integration or who do not know how to manage their own discomfort with race talk or their own racism. Such clergy shortchange their congregations and undermine institutional teachings and goals. Heads of denominations must take responsibility for retraining and updating clergy in all aspects of race relations as often as possible.

Learning Outcomes

Role of Christian clergy. Most of my learning outcomes have been discussed already throughout this paper and this chapter. I will highlight two additional outcomes here regarding my professional work as clergy. This study has made cogent my recognition of the phenomenon

of racism as a spiritual problem at root. It can be healed. Skills and strategies can be employed to engender the healing. Congregations are not impotent. I am not impotent in the face of such spiritual illness. This research contributes to practices that can address the illness of racism. This recognition has changed my professional practice as clergy because I now see evident the validity of my role—and also my culpability—as a called spiritual change agent. I recognize my responsibility to continue to contribute to the reduction of racism through research or writing or in whatever way my positioning and training allows. It calls me to deliberately plan and execute catalytic interactions and programs contributing to the spiritual evolution of the denominations and communities I call home.

One direct result of this study has been the development of a new ministry, one intentionally racially integrated with a focus on promoting diversity and inclusion and on attention to justice issues. After approximately seven months of planning, the first worship service took place on Easter Weekend, 2016. Learnings from this study were utilized in the planning stages, especially regarding the importance of seeking a racial balance in input and in leadership roles, as well as allowing time for critical dialogue and reflection.

Unification. It is apparent that unification of the two CP denominations and racial integration of all Christian congregations in America is a moral necessity which undoubtedly requires sacrifice. The two CP denominations and all the clergy and congregations that compose them have the opportunity to respond to God's call for healing of the nation. I urge immediate and continuous Unification of the Black and White Cumberland Presbyterians. I say "continuous" because, just as civil actions that forced racial integration could not force racial harmony, neither can Unification regulate the development of cross racial relationships, but unlike the limited one-time desegregation orders issued by limited courts, the two CP bodies

have—just as does the entire body of Christ—the God-given opportunity to develop and model continuous programming aimed to develop and sustain integration in congregations and to foster positive cross racial relationships throughout the new denomination at every level, particularly aiming toward healing the relationship between Black and White American Christians. Indeed, such is the CP's God-given duty which urgently needs action at this time and in this place.

Study Limitations and Recommendations

Setting and time limitations. While the specific setting and on-site after-worship timing of the study provided important insight, both also limited the study in a several ways. For one thing, privacy was somewhat compromised, as described previously. More importantly, the length of each individual reflection session had to be limited because of the restricted access to the setting and time constraints on participants following the worship services. Thus, because the effectiveness of each session required a period of warm-up time before in-depth dialogue could be resumed from the previous session, sustaining critical reflection on various points or concerns was difficult, as the group's time would sometimes run out just as the participants were approaching what I have called deep water. If each session had been longer and if the study had been extended a few more weeks, there undoubtedly would have been more time for in-depth reflections and relationship development.

Further studies utilizing reflection groups will benefit from an extended introductory meeting, perhaps taking place over a full Saturday or as an overnight retreat, before going on to weekly or biweekly sessions. Additionally, meeting every other week may allow time for greater absorption of readings.

Resource limitations. Readings provided to the participants in this research study were optional because of the time constraints all participants were under. However, readings were

vital as conversation stimulants and introductions to sensitive information. In future groups, an option would be to include readings and other stimuli (videos, for example) within the session meeting time to assist participants in achieving deeper engagement without imposing additional time requirements outside the sessions. Longer sessions may allow coverage of materials without further impacting participants' time constraints.

Researcher limitations. My participation was self-limited to being an observer (data collection and analysis) and fellow participant. I took pains to limit my input as a participant so that my participation would not be seen as directing the conversation but as simply moderating it, with the aim that my input would not be perceived as more important than that of any other participant. Since this PAR study was researcher-initiated, I felt this was important to allow participants to engage as fully as possible and take ownership of the study process. Furthermore, I realized that those two roles were the only roles and purposes for which I had obtained informed consent from the participants. I did what we had agreed I would do. In future PAR research on race relations with such groups, a broader agreement with participants could be negotiated. If achieving change not only in their congregations and communities but also, specifically, within themselves first, were included in the group's goals, as the researcher, I would then openly carry the additional role of change leader by agreement.

Conclusion

This study is an addition to the scant literature on race relations within Christian congregations and the difficult process of racial integration in congregations. It is distinct in three ways. First, other studies on this topic focus on racial minorities integrating into predominantly White churches, while this study was set in a Black congregation with White participants integrating into a setting where they were the minority.

Second, existing studies primarily explore reasons why racially integrated congregations do not work. This study began with the different assumption, namely that since racial unity—living together as sisters and brothers within Christian congregations—is mandated in Christian scriptures, it can be assumed to be possible. Therefore, learning about how to achieve racial integration by trying it and observing what is needed to facilitate it, was a reasonable approach. For that reason, PAR was used. No other published research could be found making use of that methodology in this specific topic area.

Third, many of the works dealing with race in American congregations have been written by White males. This study, carried out by a Black clergy, adds additional perspective to the literature. As Felder's (1989) critical work has reminded us, the translation, interpretation, and even the canonization of Christian scripture as we have it today has been limited to an unnecessarily narrow White, Westernized perspective; for Christian theologizing, more discussion about how race impacts it and greater inclusion of Black perceptions is due. William Jennings (2010) also lamented what he said was a sad lacking of a conversation about the intersection of race and theology between White Christians, Jews, and Blacks. My work as a marginalized member of the global body of Christ may serve with other marginalized voices as a corrective to traditional hermeneutic. Furthermore, as a woman Christian, I can add another variant layer to male perspectives. In *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory*, researcher Philomena Essed (1991) observed that "the experiences of Black women are structured by converging systems of race, class, and gender oppression" (p. 5) and that such simultaneous oppression "leads to forms of racism that are unique to Black women" (p. 30). This, Essed refers to as "gendered racism" (p. 31).

Negativity (such as stereotypes and fears) impacting race relations should be especially

troublesome for Christians who believe that love and trust are the bases for Christian relationships with God and others. However, as this research shows, despite the significant lack of trust and frequent absence of positive regard that impacts cross racial interactions, thinking and behaviors can change, given consistent exposure to racial others and leadership that guides discussions and thinking into significant depth.

While data from this research study reiterates the generally accepted fact that Blacks experience racism far more than Whites and that racism against Blacks is perceived to reach much further into the lives of Blacks and for much longer, Blacks also learn racial stereotypes and negativity, both regarding themselves and others. Thus, in racially integrated reflection or study groups in Christian congregations, understanding racism and correcting ongoing vestiges of racism among Christians is everyone's work. Of course, racial minorities in America are critical information resources for understanding how overt, subtle, and daily racism impacts their lives as Christians and as citizens. Indeed, one White participant came to realize, "Justice is an essential part of any true improvements in race relations" (WW's Interview) and that it is lack of justice that makes the Black-White relationships sick. Even with improved race relations within the walls of Christian congregations, in addition to repetition of such PAR studies as this one, congregations must be led to do justice work if cross racial relationships are to be genuine and sustained. Clergy leaders must attend to justice issues in preaching, in small group focus on race relations, and in creating or participating in projects that directly relate to remedying racism or its impact. Congregations must think and act as though racial diversity is an expectation, a new norm.

The participants in this research voiced numerous times that they learned how much work is involved in improving race relations through the development of in-depth relationships. It is

not simple or pain free, and there is no quick fix. It is a process. However, this study revealed that while Christians do want to make substantive changes in the troubled area of race relations and racism, they are generally overwhelmed by the prospect and uncertain how to proceed. It is easier to accept the status quo. Change is possible, however, and leadership support is critical. Other researchers have suggested that racial integration in congregations is an abnormalcy that few people can achieve (Emerson, 2008; Emerson & Woo, 2006; Garces-Foley, 2007b; Scheitle & Dougherty, 2010). Those researchers have approached racial integration in congregations as an option undertaken by some few limited congregations with special circumstances or abilities. This research suggests that racial integration in congregations is an achievable biblical norm in any setting with careful, informed planning and with committed leadership.

As important a symbol and as noble an achievement as the joining together of the Black and White CP denominations will be, racial segregation will likely persist as business-as-usual at local levels in the absence of the kind of strategies used in this study. Like H. Richard Niebuhr (1951), I believe the work of the Christian Church is to transform the culture around it, but the Church must be transformed first. This research has shown that, at the grass roots level of individual congregations, racially integrated small groups committed to deep listening and reflection on race issues is one authentic way forward, one small group at a time.

Appendix

Appendix A: Readings for Participants

A variety of readings were emailed to the participants in response to comments or questions. Readings were discussed in sessions or during the interviews, though not all readings were discussed, nor did all participants read all the readings offered. Brief descriptions of the readings and source information are listed below in the order in which they were distributed to the group.

Reading 1. Congregations and Communities. Since I believe that congregations can be critical change-agents in communities, this is an article that was shared early on. The author discusses views of congregations as community institutions and describes the American history of their changed function as well as the changing relationship between congregations and the communities in which they are located. This article was recommended after a question was raised: Do congregations impact communities or do communities impact congregations?

Charlton, J. (2007). Congregations and communities. In R. A. Cnaan & C. Milofsky (Eds.), *Handbook of Community Movements and Local Organizations* (pp. 267–280) New York, NY: Springer.

Reading 2. Religious Trends in America. Since the group dialogue often turned to participants' thoughts about the challenges involved in the potential unification of the two racially separate Cumberland Presbyterian denominations, this article was recommended. A section in the article subtitled "Trend 12: Increasing Ethnic Diversity" was pointed out. The article describes a number of changes in American Christian communities, including an increase in ethnic diversity within congregations.

Chaves, M. (2011). Religious trends in America. *Social Work and Christianity* 38(2), 119–132.

Reading 3. Creating Stable Racially and Ethnically Diverse Communities in the United States: A Model for the Future. The authors write that “the importance of identifying the characteristics of stable diverse communities comes from our beliefs that diversity is a value to be treasured and that cities are and will continue to be critical to America’s economic, political and social future” (p. 37). Authors discuss impact of residential racial segregation on communities. Based on their findings, these researchers draw conclusions about what contributes to those rare stable racially and ethnically diverse communities. This article was recommended after a discussion about participants' experiences of fear or discomfort in settings when participants are a racial minority.

Peterman, W. & Nyden, P. (2001). Creating stable racially and ethnically diverse communities in the United States: A model for the future. *Social Policy & Administration*, 35(1), 32–47.

Reading 4. Practicing Biblical Reconciliation in Multicultural Congregations. This article was shared after a discussion in the group about difficulties women, particularly single women, sometimes encounter in Christian congregations. The conversation involved a recognition that American Christian congregations are challenged with various types of reconciliation concerns, not just racial. The group talked about the early Church and the difficulties believers of the same cultural and race faced in getting along.

DeYoung, C. P. (2012). Practicing biblical reconciliation in multicultural congregations. In C. Jehle, S.-C. Rah & B. Wrencher (Eds.), *CCDA Theological Journal 2012* (pp. 61–72). Eugene, OR: CCDA.

Reading 5. An Argument Against the Union of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. This speech was shared with participants because of its important historicity. Though the author, a northern Black Presbyterian minister, was very well known in the Presbyterian religious community in the north during his career, this material was difficult to find. He adamantly opposed the union (proposed in 1903–1904) of the southern CPC and the northern PC (USA), though joining together would mean a much-desired increase in membership. He opposed it because the union could only be formalized if the PC (USA) agreed with the CPC's request to keep Southern blacks and whites separate in the new denomination to be formed and wrote there is the danger in "overestimating the importance of mere numbers . . . the value of a church or denomination or church as an instrument in the hand of God in effecting His purpose . . . does not depend upon numbers" (p. 2).

Grimké, F. (1904). *An argument against the union of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*. Washington, DC: Hayworth

Reading 6. National Institutes of Health Addresses the Science of Diversity. This article was offered to the participant group after a conversation about whether good Christian folks who would rather not be involved with diverse congregations should be left alone. What's the harm? Isn't diversity optional? Is the lack of it always all that critical? This article suggests it is. The authors stipulate that, "the U.S. biomedical research workforce does not currently mirror the nation's population demographically, despite numerous attempts to increase diversity. This imbalance is limiting the promise of our biomedical enterprise for building knowledge and improving the nation's health" because "recruiting and retaining a diverse set of minds and approaches is vital to harnessing the complete intellectual capital of the nation" (p. 12240) The article describes the challenges to achieving diversity that the NIH face and the reasons why overcoming those challenges is vital.

Valantine, H. A. & Collins, F. (2015). National Institutes of Health addresses the science of diversity. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 112(40), 12240–12242.

Reading 7. Race vs. Class: Is the Market Colorblind? This article was presented to the participants as the discussion continued about concrete consequences to the entire American community when racism persists. This article discusses *colorblindness* as the new racism and the impact of such racism on the marketplace.

Luke, D. (2015). Race vs. class: Is the market colorblind? *disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory*: 24(1), 24–42. Retrieved from <http://uknowledge.uky.edu/disclosure/vol24/iss1/3>

Reading 8. Breaking Barriers: Racism at Iowa State. This is an article that came to mind when in a dialogue and reflection session a question was raised about why there seemed to be so much focus on the dynamics between Blacks and Whites compared to other ethnic and racial groups. One participant wondered where other racial minorities were in the conversation. I had come across this article about a year before the fieldwork began. It appeared in *Ethos*, a student

magazine (of Iowa State University) which has been in existence since 1947. Iowa State is considered by many to be a very liberal and diverse educational institution. The article discusses racism from White students as experienced by Asian students.

Anderson, Jasmine; Eilers, Becky; and Wu, Yue (2013) "Breaking Barriers: Racism @ Iowa State," *Ethos*: Vol. 2014, Article 14. <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos/vol2014/iss1/14>

Reading 9. "The Complicity of Silence." Sent to participants after a tense dialogue and reflection session in which the participants struggled with issues of trust and distrust between races in America and in the Church, this article—a disturbing piece of writing—describes an equally ugly and disturbing reason why American Blacks may distrust American Whites, namely the perception of Blacks that racial allegiance allows Whites to overlook and remain silent about the racism of other Whites whether they are in agreement with that racism or not.

Lane, J. C. (2015). The complicity of silence: Race and the Hamilton Holt/Corra Harris friendship, 1899–1935. *Rollins College Faculty Publications*. Paper 116. Retrieved from http://scholarship.rollins.edu/as_facpub/116

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