ABSTRACT

Belonging and Participation in Mixed-Race Congregations

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There has been a recent push towards racial diversity in congregations by many religious leaders. However, racially diverse congregations, which have been a popular subject amongst researchers, are both rare and seemingly difficult to sustain (Emerson, 2006). Testing an underlying assumption of organizational ecology theory, this study contributes to the discussion of race in congregations by examining belonging and participation in congregations with more than one racial group. Results of multilevel modeling using data from the 2001 U.S Congregational Life Survey indicate that those who are a part of the numerical racial majority in a congregation experience higher levels of belonging and participate at a deeper level than those who belong to a numerical minority racial group. Moreover, cross-level interactions between numerical majority status and the racial proportion of the congregation reveal that these differences increase as mixed-race congregations become more racially homogenous.

Belonging and Participation in Mixed-Race Congregations

by

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A Thesis

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Multiracial congregations have become a popular topic amongst researchers as well as religious leaders, and there has been a substantial amount of research in recent years devoted to them (Christerson, Edwards, & Emerson, 2005; Christerson & Emerson, 2003; Dougherty & Huyser, 2008; Edwards, 2008; Emerson, 2006; Emerson & Smith, 2000; Garces-Foley, 2007; Marti, 2005, 2009; Scheitle & Dougherty, 2010). Multiracial congregations are seen as a venue that can help reduce racial division in society (DeYoung, Emerson, Yancey, & Kim, 2004). Others have noted that multiracial congregations help individuals transcend racial and ethnic differences (Marti, 2005, 2009).

While multiracial congregations offer many benefits to both their followers and society as whole, they are extremely rare and difficult to sustain (Emerson, 2006). One race typically tends to maintain the majority of power within a congregation; this leaves members of a numerical minority race at a social disadvantage. Members of a numerical racial minority often experience higher costs for membership than those of the numerical racial majority. These costs include social isolation, not having their concerns heard and not having access to leadership positions. (Christerson et al., 2005; Christerson & Emerson, 2003; Emerson & Smith, 2000). Members of a numerical minority race in a congregation also have shorter durations of membership (Scheitle & Dougherty, 2010).

This study looks to further the discussion on race in religious organizations by examining belonging and participation in congregations with more than one racial group. Applying organizational ecology theory I hypothesize that members of mixed-race congregations who are a part of the numerical racial majority experience higher levels of belonging and participation than those in the numerical minority. I also hypothesize that these higher levels of belonging and participation increase concurrently with the size of the congregation's largest racial group. I test these hypotheses using a nationally representative data set, the 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Survey.

Challenges of Diversity

It is estimated that nine out of ten U.S. congregations contain more than eighty percent of one racial group (Emerson, 2006), and that almost half of the congregations in America are completely racially homogenous (Dougherty & Huyser, 2008). Multiracial faith communities are so rare because they are hard to create and sustain. At least one group tends to have less representation and power within the organization, making them more marginalized.

According to the homophily principle people prefer to associate and interact with those who are like themselves (Blau, 1977; Burt, 2000; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954). This principle has been studied and applied to a number of social relationships ranging from marriage (Kalmijn, 1998) to contact or appearing with an individual in a public location (Mayhew, McPherson, Rotolo, & Smith-Lovin, 1995; Wellman, 1996). Homophily exists on a number of dimensions including race and ethnicity, gender, age, religion, and social class, but race is the most divisive category in American social networks (for an overview see M. McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Therefore

the majority of voluntary organizations in the Unites States, including religious congregations, specialize by race in order to attract and retain participants (Emerson & Smith, 2000; M. McPherson, 1983). Church growth literature reflects an awareness of homophily. Donald McGavran, a founder of the church growth movement, advocated the Homogenous Unit Principle noting that "people like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers" (1990, p. 163).

Organizational Ecology Theory

A number of studies utilize organizational ecology theory in order to understand the dynamics of multiracial religious organizations and explain the overwhelming number of racially homogenous congregations (Christerson et al., 2005; Christerson & Emerson, 2003; Form & Dubrow, 2005; Scheitle & Dougherty, 2008, 2010). Organizational ecology theory draws from plant and animal ecology, and it has maintained a vital role in explaining the dynamics of social organizations (Blau, 1977; Blau & Schwartz, 1984; Carroll, 1984; M. McPherson, 1983; M. McPherson et al., 2001; Popielarz & McPherson, 1995). This theory maintains that organizations that provide similar products or services (such as faith-communities, beverages or automobiles) comprise organizational populations. Organizations within a population compete with one another for similar resources since they offer like products and services. These competing organizations draw their resources from particular parts of the environment known as niches. A societal niche could be comprised of a number of things such as volunteers, consumers, or driving-age individuals, to match the above examples (Carroll, 1984; Hannan & Freeman, 1977).

There are two primary approaches organizations take as they attempt to maximize their ability to obtain these resources; they either become niche generalists or niche specialists. Niche generalists take a shotgun approach and attempt to appeal to a number of niches within their population. This allows them to target a broad audience and better withstand environmental changes. Niche specialists utilize a more narrow approach. They focus their efforts on a specific segment of the population in hopes of maximizing their return on the resources within that segment.

The majority of successful organizations, whether voluntary or not, are those that are niche specialists. According to Popielars and McPherson (1995) this is primarily on account of the niche edge effect and niche overlap effect. The niche edge effect argues that atypical group members are on the outskirts of a niche, and they would have more extra-organizational ties and less intra-organizational ties. Since membership duration in voluntary organizations is closely tied to social networks, those who are on the outskirts, or edge, of a niche are more likely to leave a given group faster than those within the niche's core (McPherson, Popielarz, & Drobnic, 1992). Take for example a single female in her early twenties attending a congregation comprised of predominately retired couples. This young woman would most likely have stronger social ties outside of the congregation with individuals more similar to her demographically. While she could have close ties to individuals within her congregation, it would be unlikely that she would have as many strong ties as the average married retiree in the congregation.

The niche overlap effect also contends that atypical group members are more likely to leave an organization than those in the niche's core. When multiple groups

partially overlap, they end up recruiting some of the same-type members. Competition between similar groups is felt the strongest by individuals who are atypical in their group because they generally are less embedded in their groups (McPherson et al., 1992). Atypical group members would be more susceptible to the recruitment of other organizations that specialize in their niche, whether it is theological, generational, or racial/ethnic. In our hypothetical example, the young female's congregation would devote the majority of its resources to the retired couples that make up its core. Meanwhile a competing congregation that specializes in young singles would be more successful in recruiting the young single female than they would a member of the other congregation's core. The young single female would me more likely to leave her congregation not only because she lacks intra-organizational ties but also because there is greater competition for her to join another congregation.

Previous studies have found that the niche edge and overlap effects apply to multiracial congregations. An ethnographic study of a Filipino-dominant multiracial congregation found that non-Filipino members experienced higher costs of membership than those who belonged to the ethnic majority, as they had less representation in leadership positions and intra-organizational ties (Christerson et al., 2005; Christerson & Emerson, 2003). Furthermore, non-Filipino members were more likely to leave and look for another congregation where they fit better. These findings align with other studies, which have contended that in racially mixed congregations the members who do not belong to the organization's dominant racial groups will experience higher costs of membership and leave the organization sooner than those who are a part of the dominant group (Emerson, 2006; Scheitle & Dougherty, 2010). Therefore racially

heterogeneous organizations are inherently more unstable than their homogenous counterparts (Emerson & Smith, 2000; M. McPherson, 1983; Popielarz & McPherson, 1995).

Scheitle and Dougherty (2010) utilized organizational ecology theory to compare the length of membership duration between those in the numerical racial majority and those in the numerical minority in congregations. In accordance with the niche edge and overlap effects they hypothesized that members of the numerical racial majority would have longer durations as congregation members than those in the numerical minority. They also predicted that this difference in membership duration would proportionally increase with the size of the majority group. Using multi-level modeling and a cross-level interaction in a nationally representative sample, they found that those who belonged to the dominant racial group did in fact have longer membership durations than those in the numerical minority. This difference in membership duration grew proportional with the size of the numerical majority, but it was the same for both groups when the racial proportion of the majority group was at sixty percent. This indicates that there is point when multiracial congregations can achieve stability.

Theorizing Race, Belonging and Participation

A pivotal component for the vitality of any voluntary organization is having members feel a sense of belonging and participate in the organization. This is especially true for religious organizations, as highly committed members make for strong congregations (Iannaccone, 1992, 1994; Stark & Bainbridge, 1996; Stark & Finke, 2000).

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A common assumption in the study of multiracial congregations is that members of the congregation's largest racial group experience a greater sense of belonging to the congregation than those who are a part of a less-represented racial group. The greater sense of belonging felt by those in the largest racial group of a given congregation is often accompanied by increased levels of participation. These assumed notions of the racial majority are typically credited with causing those in the racial majority to be more embedded in the organization than those in a racial minority.

This assumption and its resulting consequence have never been directly tested using data from a nationally representative sample. Scheitle and Dougherty (2010) utilize a national sample in the application of organizational ecology theory to account for membership duration. They theorized that numerical minorities leave congregations faster because of low levels of commitment, but they did not test commitment levels. I intend to test these assumptions, which leads to my first two hypotheses.

> H1: In mixed-race congregations, those who belong to the numerical majority race will experience higher levels of belonging than those in a numerical minority race.

> H2: In mixed-race congregations, those who belong to the numerical majority race will participate in the congregation more than those in a numerical minority race.

If my first two hypotheses are true, then the gap in belonging and participation levels between the numerical majority and minority should widen as the proportion of the largest group increases. When the racial proportion of a given group increases, then the power that race has within the congregation should also increase. This increase in power would translate into the congregation catering its infrastructure to the needs of the dominant racial group. Therefore the levels of belonging and participation of the

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members of a given racial group should proportionally increase with their numerical representation within the congregation. This leads to my next two hypotheses:

H3: In mixed-race congregations, sense of belonging for members of the numerical majority will increase as their racial proportion within the congregation increases.

H4: In mixed-race congregations, participation for members of the majority race will increase as their racial proportion within the congregation increases

CHAPTER TWO

Data and Methods

Data for this study come from the 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Survey
(USCLS), a national sample of both U.S. congregations and their attendees. This survey
used a hyper-network sampling procedure which relied on a random sample of
individuals to identify a random sample of congregations. Individuals used in the hyper-
network procedure were respondents in the 2000 General Social Survey who indicated
that they attended religious services. These individuals were asked to name the
congregation they attended. This produced a sample of 1,214 verified congregations, 434
of which participated in the study and returned completed surveys from their worshippers
(36 percent response rate). Attender data are from individuals 15 or older who attended
worship services on or about April 29, 2001. A total of 122,404 respondents participated.
In addition to the individual respondents, a leader within the congregation completed a
congregational profile producing a nationally representative multi-level dataset
(Woolever & Bruce, 2002). The attender surveys provide individual-level data for people
within each congregation and the congregational profiles provide organizational level
data.

Since the focus of this study is mixed-race congregations, I excluded all
congregations that were one hundred percent racially homogenous. I also excluded all
respondents who indicated that they were a visitor or attending the congregation for the
first time as well as those under 18 years of age. The final sample consists of 74,015
individuals and 347 congregations.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study are sense of belonging and levels of participation within congregations. They are from the USCLS attender surveys. Two measures of belonging are used. First, the individuals' subjective sense of belonging is measured from the question: "Do you have a strong sense of belonging to this congregation?" There are seven possible responses to this question: "yes, a strong sense of belonging that is growing;" "yes, a strong sense - about the same as last year;" "yes, but perhaps not as strong as in the past;" "no, but I am new here;" "no, and I wish I did by now;" "no, but I am happy as I am;" and "do not know or not applicable." Since these responses do not create an unambiguous ordinal progression, I created a dichotomous variable where 1=those who have a strong sense of belonging that is consistent with or growing from how they felt the previous year and all other responses coded as zero. Coding of this variable follows Dougherty and Whitehead (2011).

The second measure of belonging is whether or not an individual has close friends that are a part of their congregation. Previous research has found friendship networks to be a key component of belonging in multiracial organizations (Christerson et al., 2005). Respondents were provided four answer choices to the question: "Do you have any close friends in this congregation?" The possible responses are: "No, I have little contact with others from this congregation outside of activities here;" "No, I have some friends in the congregation, but my closest friends are not involved here;" "Yes, I have some close friends here as well as other friends who are not part of this congregation;" "Yes, most of my closest friends are part of this congregation." Once again, this variable is recoded

into a binary variable where 1=those who selected either of the "yes" responses, and 0 representing those who responded with either of the "no" categories.

I also use two measures of participation. The first is religious service attendance. Respondents were asked "How often do you go to worship services at this congregation?" The provided responses form a six category ordinal scale, with 1="Hardly ever/special occasions only;" 2="Less than once a month;" 3="Once a month;" 4="Two or three times a month;" 5="Usually every week;" and 6="More than once a week."

The second measure of participation is whether or not a respondent was involved in group activities within the congregation. Congregational groups such as small groups, prayer groups and community service groups provide another venue for obtaining the social benefits afforded by religious congregations, and involvement in such groups are positively correlated with commitment to the congregation (Dougherty & Whitehead, 2011; Wuthnow, 1996). This variable derives from the following question: "Are you regularly involved in any group activities here? (Mark all that apply)." The five provided answers are: "Yes, in Sunday school, church school, or Sabbath school;" "Yes, in prayer, discussion, or Bible study groups;" "Yes, in community service, social justice, or advocacy activities of this congregation;" "No, we don't have such activities;" "No, I am not a regularly involved in group activities." I created a dichotomous variable so that those who selected any of the "yes" categories are coded as 1, while those who responded with either of the "no" categories are coded as zero.

Independent Variables

The primary individual-level independent variable in this study is whether or not one is a part of the numerical racial majority within their congregation. The racial proportions within congregations are determined from the aggregated means of individual-level data. From these aggregated means a dichotomous variable is used to measure majority status. Those whose racial group holds the largest proportion of attenders within a congregation are coded as 1. Those who belong to a racial group that does not have the majority membership in a congregation are coded as 0. This coding is equivalent to Scheitle and Dougherty (2010).

On the congregational level, I include the proportion of the congregation members in the numerical majority race. I calculated this variable from the aggregated racial means of the attender surveys. To test my third and fourth hypotheses, I created a cross-level interaction term of majority race member*proportion in majority race.

Several control variables are used on both the individual and congregational levels that have previously shown to be correlated with belonging and participation in religious organizations. The individual level controls are gender (1=female), age (in years, limited to 18 and older), education (ranging from 1=no formal education to 8=Master's doctorate or other graduate degree), income (ranging from 1=less than $10,000 in total income before taxes to 6=$100,000 or more), marital status (1=married), and children living in the home (1=yes), and congregational membership (1=member). I also control for theological exclusivity since a number of studies have shown that these are positively correlated with religious commitment (Iannaccone, 1994; Kelley, 1972; Scheitle & Finke, 2008; Smith, 1998; Stark & Bainbridge, 1996; Stark & Finke, 2000).

Respondents were asked to express their level of agreement (1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree) with the statement: "all the different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth." The final individual level control is race/ethnicity, which is measured using a system of dichotomous variables: white, black, Hispanic, Asian, other race, and multi-racial. Those individuals who identified as Hispanic were classified as Hispanic regardless of their race; all other races were determined by the respondent's self-identification. If a respondent identified with two or more races, they were classified as multi-racial. White is the contrast group in all multivariate models.

Finally a series of congregational-level controls are used in all models, including region (1=south), congregation size (measured by the average weekly attendance), and religious tradition (measured by a series of dummies). Following Steensland *et al.* (2000) respondents are categorized as Black Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or Other Religion based on the USCLS congregational profile. Evangelicals serve as the contrast group in all models. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for all the variables featured in the study.

Analytic Plan

Analysis begins with an individual-level bivariate tests. Using chi-square and t-test, I compare those in the numerical racial majority and minority, on the four dependent variables. Next I move to multivariate analyses. Because data in this study include both structured organizational and individual-level data, multilevel modeling is the best analytical strategy. This method allows for the groups' effects to be tested on individuals

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Variables of Interest					
Member of Majority Race	74,015	0.864	0.342	0.000	1.000
Size of Majority Group	74,015	0.850	0.155	0.389	0.994
Dependent Variables					
Sense of Belonging	73,351	0.747	0.499	0.000	1.000
Close Friends in Congregation	73,208	0.674	0.468	0.000	1.000
Attendance	74,015	4.894	0.829	1.000	6.000
Involved in Group Activities	74,015	0.489	0.499	0.000	1.000
Individual-Level Controls					
Female	74,015	0.602	0.489	0.000	1.000
Age	74,015	50.731	16.189	18.000	101.000
Education	74,015	5.639	1.719	1.000	8.000
Income	74,015	3.652	1.474	1.000	6.000
Married	74,015	0.702	0.456	0.000	1.000
Children living at home	74,015	0.416	0.493	0.000	1.000
Congregation Member	74,015	0.821	0.383	0.000	1.000
Exclusive Theology	74,015	3.184	1.281	1.000	5.000
White	74,015	0.771	0.419	0.000	1.000
Black	74,015	0.043	0.204	0.000	1.000
Hispanic	74,015	0.112	0.315	0.000	1.000
Asian	74,015	0.038	0.191	0.000	1.000
Other Race	74,015	0.008	0.094	0.000	1.000
Multi-Race	74,015	0.021	0.146	0.000	1.000
Congregational-Level Controls					
Congregation Size	347	3.616	1.254	1.000	5.000
South	347	0.287	0.452	0.000	1.000
Evangelical	347	0.193	0.395	0.000	1.000
Black Protestant	347	0.032	0.176	0.000	1.000
Mainline Protestant	347	0.196	0.397	0.000	1.000
Catholic	347	0.549	0.497	0.000	1.000
Jewish	347	0.002	0.050	0.000	1.000
Other Religion	347	0.025	0.156	0.000	1.000

Source: US Congregational Life Survey (2001)

(Hofmann, 1997; Luke, 2004; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002; Snijders & Bosker, 1999).

Multilevel regression not only provides statistical corrections that are absent in single-level models, but it also allows the modeling of cross-level interactions between congregational and individual properties. This is analogous to taking the slopes of

individual characteristics (e.g. being a member of the majority race) and seeing how they vary across congregational characteristics (e.g. the proportion of the racial majority). This enables us to test whether levels of belonging and participation experienced by those in the numerical racial majority increase with their racial proportion. For the models with attendance (an ordinal-level variable) as a dependent variable, normal specifications are employed. Since the other three dependent variables are dichotomous (perceived sense of belonging, having close friends in the congregation and involvement in group activities) estimation uses Bernoulli distribution with a logit link function. The analysis is done with SAS 9.2 statistical software.

Null models were run on all four dependent variables, and they all found that significant variation existed between each dependent variable across congregations (the second-level unit of measure). For each dependent variable three models are run. The first model is a conditional model with level-one effects specified; all of the level-one variables are fixed measures. This is a standard model predicting the individual-level dependent variables (Singer, 1998). The second model is a conditional model with level-one and level-two effects specified. This model determines if congregational context moderates individual traits, and it helps reveal which congregational-level variables influence belonging and participation at the individual-level. These first two models test hypotheses one and two. The final model in each table is a conditional model with level-one, level-two and cross-level interaction variables specified. This model provides a test of hypotheses three and four.

CHAPTER THREE

Results

Table 2 provides the results from the binary analyses, and it shows that the numerical minority racial group has significant lower means than those in a numerical majority in mixed-race congregations on all four dependent variables. Three-fourths of majority race members (75.4%) report having a strong sense of belonging to their congregation, as compared to 70.6% of numerical minority race members. Similarly, more members of the congregation's dominant racial group report having close friends in these congregations (68.8%) than those who belong to a numerical minority racial group (57.9%). The mean for self-reported attendance is higher for those in the racial majority (4.90) than those in the numerical minority (4.85). Although the difference is small it is statistically significant. More drastically, just over half of the majority race members (50.5%) are involved in group activities, while slightly less than two-fifths of those in numerical racial minority groups are (39.7%).

Table 2

Belonging and Participation for Members in the Numerical Minority and Majority Race in Mixed Race Congregations

Variables	Minority Member	Majority Member
Strong Sense of Belonging	0.706	0.754
Close Friends in Congregation	0.579	0.688
Attendance	4.850	4.900
Involved in Group Activities	0.397	0.505
N	10,069	64,096

source: US Congregational Life Survey (2001)
All differences are significant at p ≤ 0.001 (chi square or two-tailed t-test)

Belonging

The three models in Table 3 predict the likelihood that an individual feels a strong sense of belonging to a mixed-race congregation. According to Model 1 female, education and income are negatively correlated with belonging in these congregations. Age, marriage, attendance, congregation membership and having an exclusive theology are positively correlated with belonging. Interestingly, every race, except for other races, are more likely to experience a strong sense of belonging than whites. Membership in the numerical majority is positively correlated with belonging, as the odds of feeling a strong sense of belonging are 22 percent higher for those in the dominant racial group in these congregations than those in a numerically smaller group.

Model 2 incorporates the second-level variables. Mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish religious traditions significantly differ from Evangelical congregations. Size of the congregation significantly relates to whether or not an individual feels a strong sense of belonging in a mixed-race congregation. Surprisingly, the proportion of the largest group does not have a significant impact on belonging. Comparing the intra-class correlations of these two models reveals that the inclusion of these second-level variables reduces the differences between congregation variance from 5.3 to 3.4 percent.

While the majority race becomes non-significant in Model 3, all of the other significant variables in Model 2 remain so in the third model. Also the cross-level interaction between majority race and majority size is significant. As the racial proportion of the majority group increases the likelihood of an individual reporting a strong sense of belonging decreases; however this decrease is significantly attenuated by being a member of the racial majority.

Table 3

Effects of Racial Position, Individual and Congregational Attributes on Perceived Sense of Belonging in Mixed-Race Congregations

Variables	M1: Conditional Model with Level-1 Effect Specified		M2: Conditional Model with Level-1 and Level-2 Effects Specified		M3. Conditional Model with Cross-Level Interaction Specified	
	Estimate	Odds Ratio	Estimate	Odds Ratio	Estimate	Odds Ratio
Intercept	-2.908*	---	-2.504*	---	-2.205*	---
Individual-Level						
Female	-0.083*	0.920	-0.085*	0.918	-0.085*	0.918
Age	0.005*	1.006	0.005*	1.005	0.005*	1.006
Education	-0.059*	0.942	-0.060*	0.941	-0.060*	0.941
Income	-0.024*	0.976	-0.024*	0.975	-0.024*	0.976
Married	0.059*	1.061	0.057*	1.059	0.057*	1.059
Children at home	0.022	---	0.024	---	0.024	---
Attendance	0.596*	1.816	0.602*	1.827	0.602*	1.827
Congregation Member	1.368*	3.930	1.364*	3.914	1.364*	3.913
Exclusive Theology	0.054*	1.056	0.056*	1.058	0.056*	1.058
Race[a]						
Black	0.299*	1.349	0.291*	1.339	0.336*	1.400
Hispanic	0.271*	1.312	0.303*	1.355	0.347*	1.415
Asian	0.438*	1.551	0.455*	1.576	0.500*	1.650
Other Race	0.131	---	0.130	---	0.195	1.216
Multi-racial	0.199*	1.221	0.201*	1.223	0.278*	1.322
Member of Majority Race	0.200*	1.222	0.192**	1.213	-0.227	1.347
Congregation-Level						
Congregation Size			-0.096*	0.908	-0.096*	0.908
South			0.012	---	0.013	---
RELTRAD[b]						
Mainline Protestant			0.141*	1.152	0.138*	1.149
Black Protestant			0.010	---	-0.030	---
Catholic			-0.244*	0.784	-0.244*	0.783
Jewish			0.816*	2.263	0.814*	2.259
Other			0.220	---	0.225	---
Size of Majority Group			-0.172	---	-0.663*	0.879
Cross-level						
Majority Race x Majority Size					0.618*	1.885
N (Individual)	73,351		73,351		73,351	
N (Congregation)	347		347		347	
ICC	0.053		0.034		0.033	

Source: US Congregational Life Survey (2001)
[a] Contrast Group is White non-Hispanic
[b] Contrast Group is Evangelical Protestant
* p≤.05

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The models in Table 4 predict the likelihood that an individual would have close friends within their congregation. Model 1 displays that age, having children living at home, attendance and congregational membership are positively associated with having close friends in mixed-race congregation. Education is negatively correlated with close congregational friends. Whites are more likely to have close friends in a mixed-race congregation than are blacks but less likely than Asians and other races. The odds of having a close friend within a mixed-race congregation are 28.5 percent higher for those in the numerical racial majority than those in the numerical racial minority.

Model 2 incorporates the second-level variables. It shows that persons in mixed-race Evangelical congregations are more likely to have close friends in their faith community than persons from Mainline Protestant, Catholic, or other traditions. Congregation size is negatively correlated with close friends in the same mixed-race congregation. The proportion of the largest racial group is not significantly associated with congregational friends. The intra-class correlation drops from .082 to .058 from Model 1 to Model 2, indicating that the between congregation variance is reduced with the inclusion of these second-level variables.

Belonging to the numerical racial majority becomes non-significant in Model 3. However, the cross-level interaction between those the racial majority and the proportion of this racial group is significant. The odds of having a close friend in a mixed-race congregation increase with the proportion of dominant racial group for those in the racial majority, but not for those who belong to a numerical minority race.

Table 4

Effects of Racial Position, Individual and Congregational Attributes on Having Close Friends in Mixed-Race Congregations

Variables	M1: Conditional Model with Level-1 Effect Specified		M2: Conditional Model with Level-1 and Level-2 Effects Specified		M3. Conditional Model with Cross-Level Interaction Specified	
	Estimate	Odds Ratio	Estimate	Odds Ratio	Estimate	Odds Ratio
Intercept	-2.109*	---	-1.517*	---	-1.216*	---
Individual-Level						
Female	-0.014	---	-0.014	---	-0.015	---
Age	0.015*	1.016	0.015*	1.016	0.015*	1.016
Education	-0.016*	0.984	-0.015*	0.985	-0.015*	0.985
Income	0.007	---	0.007	---	0.007	---
Married	-0.018	---	-0.021	---	-0.021	---
Children at home	0.052*	1.054	0.052*	1.054	0.052*	1.054
Attendance	0.287*	1.333	0.285*	1.330	0.285*	1.331
Congregation Member	0.978*	2.660	0.981*	2.668	0.981*	2.667
Exclusive Theology	-0.012	---	-0.005	---	-0.005	---
Race[a]						
Black	-0.149*	0.861	-0.210*	0.810	-0.163*	0.849
Hispanic	-0.057	---	-0.042	---	0.004	---
Asian	0.157*	1.170	0.163*	1.178	0.213*	1.238
Other Race	0.099	---	0.087	---	0.154	---
Multi-racial	0.278*	1.321	0.270*	1.310	0.349*	1.419
Member of Majority Race	0.250*	1.285	0.240*	1.272	-0.191	---
Congregation-Level						
Congregation Size			-0.094*	0.910	-0.093*	0.910
South			0.056	---	0.056	---
RELTRAD[b]						
Mainline Protestant			-0.433*	0.648	-0.436*	0.647
Black Protestant			-0.106	---	-0.151	---
Catholic			-0.612*	0.542	-0.614*	0.541
Jewish			0.268	---	0.265	---
Other			-0.341*	0.710	-0.336*	0.715
Size of Majority Group			-0.043	---	-0.538	---
Cross-level						
Majority Race x Majority Size					0.633*	1.883
N (Individual)	73,339		73,339		73,339	
N (Congregation)	347		347		347	
ICC	0.082		0.058		0.057	

Source: US Congregational Life Survey (2001)
[a] Contrast Group is White non-Hispanic
[b] Contrast Group is Evangelical Protestant
* p≤.05

Table 5 presents the findings from three models predicting attendance at worship services in mixed-race congregations. Model 1 reveals that being female, age, education, marriage and congregational membership are positively correlated with attendance. Income, having children at home and theological exclusivity are negatively correlated with attendance. Whites attend mixed-race congregations more frequently than blacks, Hispanics, Asians or other races. Interestingly being a member of the numerical majority race is not significantly associated with attendance.

Model 2 incorporates the congregational-level variables and finds religious tradition is the only second-level control significantly associated with attendance. The Evangelical Protestant tradition contains members who report more frequent attendance in mixed-race congregations than every other tradition with the exception of Black Protestants. Surprisingly, the racial proportion of the largest group is negatively correlated with individual attendance in mixed-race congregations. The inclusion of these second-level variables reduces the amount of variance between congregations by over half, from 15.2 to 6.0 percent.

Nearly all of the significant variables in Models 1 and 2 remain significant in Model 3. The only exception is that the proportion of the racial majority becomes non-significant. The interaction between those in the numerical racial majority and their racial proportion is also non-significant.

Table 6 contains three models predicting participation in group activities within mixed-race congregations. With the exception of some racial groups, every individual-level variable is significantly correlated with participating in group activities in Model 1.

Table 5

Effects of Racial Position, Individual and Congregational Attributes on Attendance in Mixed-Race Congregations

Variables	M1: Conditional Model with Level-1 Effect Specified		M2: Conditional Model with Level-1 and Level-2 Effects Specified		M3. Conditional Model with Cross-Level Interaction Specified	
	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE	Estimate	SE
Intercept	4.246*	0.029	4.725*	0.103	4.725*	0.107
Individual-Level						
Female	0.046*	0.005	0.046*	0.005	0.046*	0.005
Age	0.007*	0.001	0.007*	0.001	0.007*	0.001
Education	0.012*	0.001	0.012*	0.001	0.012*	0.001
Income	-0.020*	0.002	-0.020*	0.002	-0.020*	0.002
Married	0.018*	0.007	0.017*	0.006	0.017*	0.006
Children at home	-0.017*	0.006	-0.017*	0.006	-0.017*	0.006
Congregation Member	0.562*	0.007	0.562*	0.007	0.562*	0.007
Exclusive Theology	-0.073*	0.002	-0.071*	0.002	-0.071*	0.002
Race[a]						
Black	-0.065*	0.024	-0.095*	0.025	-0.095*	0.025
Hispanic	-0.079*	0.012	-0.082*	0.012	-0.082*	0.013
Asian	0.069*	0.018	0.065*	0.018	0.065*	0.019
Other Race	-0.077*	0.028	-0.083*	0.028	-0.083*	0.028
Multi-racial	-0.014	0.022	-0.019	0.022	-0.019	0.023
Member of Majority Race	0.007	0.011	0.005	0.011	0.005	0.042
Congregation-Level						
Congregation Size			0.003	0.012	0.003	0.012
South			0.008	0.025	0.008	0.025
RELTRAD[b]						
Mainline Protestant			-0.471*	0.029	-0.471*	0.029
Black Protestant			-0.025	0.060	-0.025	0.060
Catholic			-0.319*	0.037	-0.319*	0.037
Jewish			-1.627*	0.109	-1.627*	0.109
Other			-0.546*	0.059	-0.546*	0.059
Size of Majority Group			-0.219*	0.103	-0.219	0.114
Cross-level						
Majority Race x Majority Size					-0.001	0.060
N (Individual)	74,165		74,165		74,165	
N (Congregation)	347		347		347	
ICC	0.152		0.060		0.060	

Source: US Congregational Life Survey (2001)
[a] Contrast Group is White non-Hispanic
[b] Contrast Group is Evangelical Protestant
* p≤.05

Model 2 indicates that congregation size is negatively correlated with individuals participating in group activities in mixed-race congregations. Mixed-race congregations in the south have higher means of group participation than similar congregations in other regions. Evangelical Protestant mixed-race congregations have individuals participating in group activities more than do Mainline Protestant or Catholic congregations but less than Jewish synagogues that involve more than one racial group. Once again the size of the majority race is not significantly associated with participation in group activities. Including congregational-level variables reduces the intra-class correlation from .205 to .079. The interaction in Model 3 is not significant, and the individual-level variable of being a member of the majority race becomes non-significant.

Table 6

Effects of Racial Position, Individual and Congregational Attributes on Involvement in Group Activities in Mixed-Race Congregations

Variables	M1: Conditional Model with Level-1 Effect Specified		M2: Conditional Model with Level-1 and Level-2 Effects Specified		M3. Conditional Model with Cross-Level Interaction Specified	
	Estimate	Odds Ratio	Estimate	Odds Ratio	Estimate	Odds Ratio
Intercept	-6.375*	---	-5.603*	---	-5.695*	---
Individual-Level						
Female	0.387*	1.474	0.388*	1.474	0.388*	1.474
Age	-0.002*	0.997	-0.002*	0.997	-0.002*	0.997
Education	0.103*	1.109	0.104*	1.110	0.104*	1.110
Income	0.018*	1.019	0.018*	1.019	0.018*	1.019
Married	0.166*	1.181	0.162*	1.177	0.162*	1.177
Children at home	0.208*	1.232	0.209*	1.233	0.209*	1.233
Attendance	1.035*	2.817	1.036*	2.818	1.036*	2.818
Congregation Member	1.474*	4.371	1.481*	4.399	1.481*	4.401
Exclusive Theology	-0.150*	0.860	-0.145*	0.865	-0.145*	0.865
Race[a]						
Black	0.087	1.092	0.057	---	0.044	---
Hispanic	-0.164*	0.849	-0.140*	0.869	-0.153*	0.858
Asian	-0.557*	0.572	-0.542*	0.581	-0.558*	0.572
Other Race	-0.070	---	-0.075	---	-0.096	---
Multi-racial	0.261*	1.299	0.260*	1.297	0.236*	1.267
Member of Majority Race	0.125*	1.134	0.118*	1.126	0.249	---
Congregation-Level						
Congregation Size			-0.121*	0.886	-0.121*	0.886
South			0.147*	1.159	0.147*	1.159
RELTRAD[b]						
Mainline Protestant			-0.406*	0.666	-0.406*	0.666
Black Protestant			-0.182	---	-0.170	---
Catholic			-1.513*	0.220	-1.513*	0.220
Jewish			1.110*	3.036	1.111*	3.038
Other			0.247	---	0.245	---
Size of Majority Group			-0.026	---	0.123	---
Cross-level						
Majority Race x Majority Size					-0.190	---
N (Individual)	74,165		74,165		74,165	
N (Congregation)	347		347		347	
ICC	0.205		0.079		0.079	

Source: US Congregational Life Survey (2001)
[a] Contrast Group is White non-Hispanic
[b] Contrast Group is Evangelical Protestant
* p≤.05

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Hypothesis 1 predicts that members of the numerical majority race in mixed-race congregations will have higher levels of belonging than those in a numerical minority race. This hypothesis is tested and supported by Tables 3 and 4. According to these tables, the odds of experiencing a strong sense of belonging and having close friends within a mixed-race congregation are significantly higher for individuals who are part of the dominant racial group. These results support the niche edge effect. Members of a numerical minority racial group in a mixed-race congregation do not identify as strongly with the congregation and have fewer intra-organizational social ties.

Hypothesis 2 proposes that those who belong in the numerical majority race in mixed-congregations will participate in the congregation more than those in a numerical minority race. Table 5 does not provide support for this hypothesis. This may be a result of the sample consisting solely of attenders, as the survey was only administered to those who were in attendance at the congregation. Among attenders, numerical majority and minority races attend mixed-race congregations with similar frequencies. While Table 5 does not provide support for hypothesis 2, Table 6 does. The odds of participating in group activities at one's church are significantly higher for those who are part of the congregation's racial majority, regardless of their racial proportion. Again, this is supportive of the niche edge effect.

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Hypothesis 3 postulates that in mixed-race congregations, the sense of belonging for members of the numerical majority race will increase proportionately with their size. The cross-level interactions in Tables 3 and 4 test this hypothesis. Interestingly, Table 3 reveals that the racial proportion of the dominant group is negatively correlated with individual subjective belonging. However, the negatively correlation is significantly greater for those in a numerical racial minority than it is for the racial majority. Figure 1 illustrates this and shows how the gap in strong sense of belonging widens as the mixed-race congregation becomes more racially homogenous. This figure also reveals that regardless of the racial proportion of the congregation, those in numerical racial majority always have higher levels of subjective belonging.
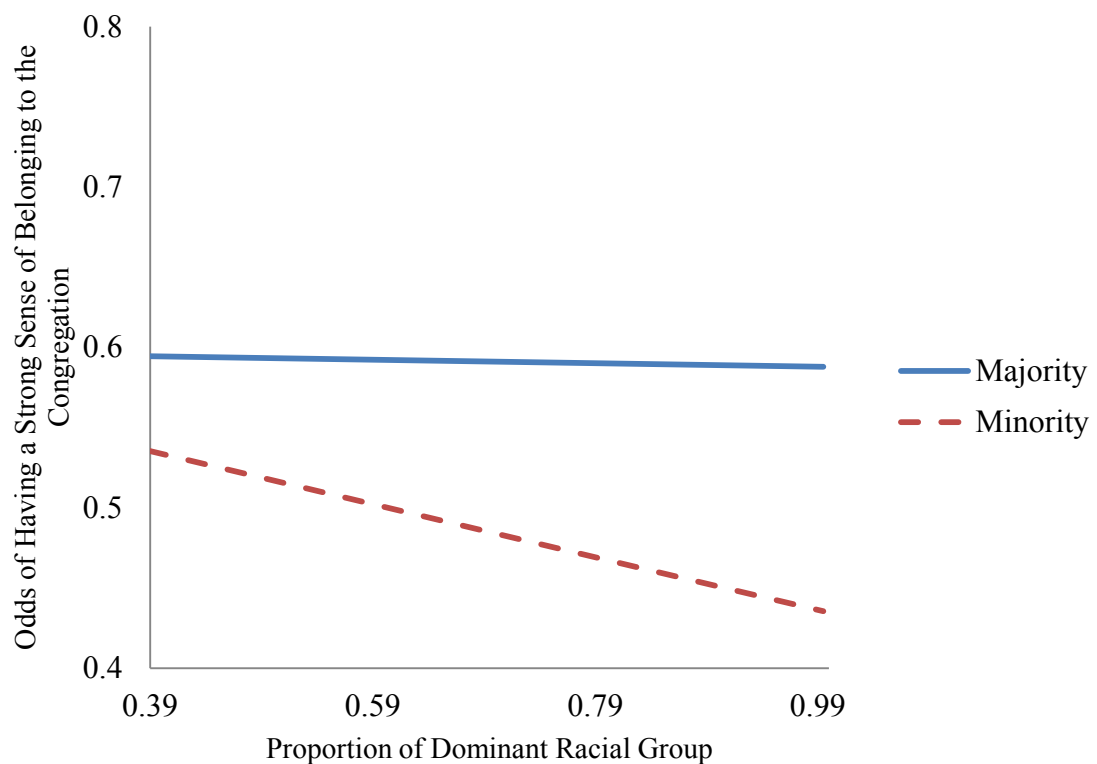

Figure 1. Predicted odds of having a strong sense of belonging to the congregation by majority and minority racial status. S*ource: US Congregational Life Survey (2001).*

Table 4 also provides strong support for hypothesis 3. According to this table the odds of having a close a friend in a mixed-race congregation are positively correlated with the proportion of numerical majority. However the odds of having a close friend in one's congregation for members of a numerical minority race remain constant regardless of their racial proportion. Figure 2 provides an illustration of this relationship. It reveals that there is no point in which the odds of having a close friend in a mixed-race congregation for individuals in a numerical minority racial group are equal to the racial majority.
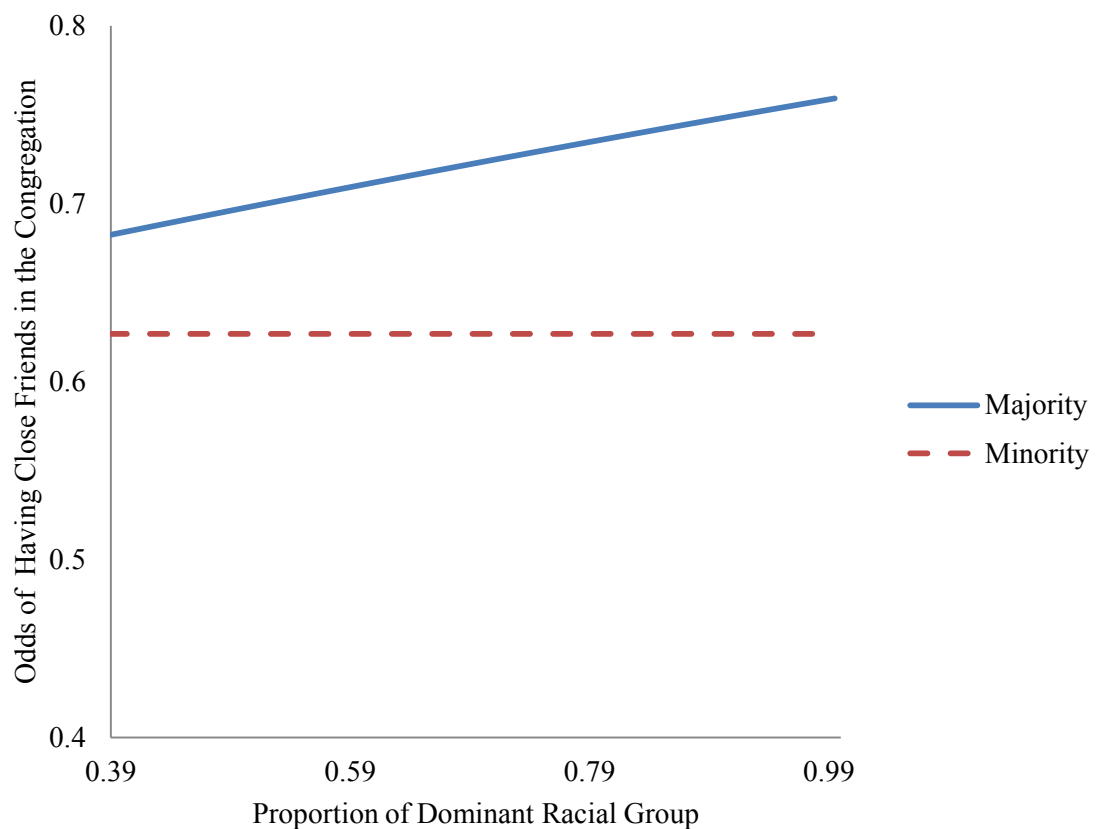

Figure 2. Predicted odds of having close friends in a congregation by majority and minority racial status. *Source: US Congregational Life Survey (2001).*

Hypothesis 4 contends that in mixed-race congregations, participation for members of the majority race will increase as their racial proportion within the congregation increases, and it is tested by the cross-level interactions in Tables 5 and 6. Neither of the interactions are significant. This indicates that participation levels for numerical majority and minority groups in mixed-race congregations are not contingent on group size. Members of the numerical majority group seem to always participate more in their congregations.

Conclusion

Multiracial congregations are difficult to create and sustain, making them rare entities (Emerson, 2006). The difficulties inherent in these organizations result from numerical minority racial groups bearing higher costs for membership than those in the majority race. These costs include social isolation, not having their concerns heard, not having access to leadership positions, and less access to the social benefits offered by the congregation. Due to these increased costs, it is often assumed that members of the numerical minority racial groups experience lower levels of belonging and participation than those in the congregation's largest racial group. Drawing on organizational ecology theory, the purpose of this study is to empirically test these assumptions and further the discussion on mixed-race congregations.

Using data from a nationally representative sample of congregations and congregants, I found strong support for the assumed notion that members of a congregation's numerically dominant racial group experience higher levels of belonging than those in the numerical minority. Being a member of the largest racial group in a congregation is related to a stronger feeling of belonging and having more close friends

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in the congregation than experienced by members of less represented racial groups. The findings were not as consistent for participation though. Rates of attendance were not significantly different for numerical majority and minority races. However, at a deeper level of participation (being involved in congregational group activities), differences did appear. Members of a numerical majority race were more likely to be involved in congregational groups that met for study, prayer, discussion, or service.

These findings align with the niche edge and overlap effects. Those in a numerical minority racial group in a mixed-race congregation are less connected to their congregation than are those from the largest racial group. Furthermore, lower levels of commitment make it likely that numerical racial minority members are more susceptible to joining another congregation that better caters to their specific racial group.

Mixed-race congregations may be at a competitive disadvantage compared to their racially homogenous counterparts. According to Iannaccone, Olson and Stark (1995) high rates of participation and commitment help drive congregational growth. Congregations are organizations that are dependent upon the contributions of both time and money from its members. Higher overall levels of commitment generate more resources to put toward outreach. The findings from this paper suggest that in congregations with more than one racial group, some groups will not be as committed to the congregation. This in turn would lower the overall rates of commitment within the congregation. Therefore, racially diverse congregations may have difficult producing vitality and growth.

My findings also illustrate that diversity is not the same as integration. DeYoung et al. (2004) contend that there are three types of multiracial congregations:

assimilated, pluralist and integrated. Assimilated congregations reflect a dominant racial group to which all other groups culturally conform. Pluralist multiracial congregations contain elements of multiple racial groups that tend to function independently of each other. While the power distribution of these congregations is more evenly distributed than assimilated congregations, the amount of inter-racial interaction between congregants is still relatively low. Integrated congregations are characterized by a culture that not only distributes power equally amongst races, but also fosters high level of interaction between its members. The majority of mixed-race congregations in America seem likely to be assimilated or pluralist rather than integrated. Higher levels of belonging and participation amongst the numerical majority racial group indicate the presence of a racial in-group defining the collective identity of a congregation. If collective identity is racially based, full integration in the congregation is unlikely.

These findings leave important questions for future research. Because differences by race do not disappear inside congregations, what is the integrative potential of religion? Is this potential different depending on the racial groups involved? This study did not consider which racial groups were in a congregation; I only examined majority and minority groups in terms of relative size. Edwards (2008) contends that patterns of white racial dominance are present in interracial congregations, even congregations in which whites are not the largest group. Future studies should test whether belonging, participation, membership duration and other outcomes differ by racial group or racial combinations. Continued research such as this

is necessary to determine if congregations are capable of helping solve longstanding

racial divisions in society.

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