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THE INTERRACIAL CHURCH AND RACIALISED MEMORY

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***Abstract**: Racial integration, reconciliation, and interracial culture have presented difficulties within churches, often seen as intractable problems. Situated in racialised America, the churches have to counter the social/context, which members are born into and are thus prone to reproducing in their interracial encounters. Fostering a balanced ethical remembering can help conceive the self in terms of the other to negotiate mutually acceptable identities.*
***Keywords**: ethical remembering, interracial church, racialised society, racialised memory*

1. Introduction

Urban population development in the post-civil rights era has resulted in growing multi-ethnic communities (see Jones et al. 2021), raising the question of racial integration in congregations and the successful establishment of interracial churches. For many theologians, black and non-black, the church has signified a segregated entity, which stands in the way of a post-racial community. It remains a problem for interracial churches as the difficulty of planting and managing an interracial congregation becomes palpable for the overt/covert racial tension and cultural differences representing diverging truths. On the one hand, the cultural truths each group maintains through religion appear to oppose, even negate each other. On the other hand, it is exactly the notion that religion is the denotation of particular cultural truths that interracial churches can serve as major experimental fields to probe into ways that can contribute to dealing with America's race problem. The paper seeks to explore some of the problems related to culture that interracial churches face in America and posit that shared memory work can offer a starting point for reconciliation through reconstructing relational schemas in terms of mutuality.

2. The Interracial Church in a Racialised Society

Much as interracial churches have grown significantly in number in the post-civil rights era, the problem of racial integration remains an obstacle even in interracial churches. For many, it is due to the apparent white normativity regarding the culture and structure of the respective interracial congregation. As Korie L. Edwards concludes her sociological study of interracial churches,

> [. . .] interracial churches work to the extent that they are, first, comfortable places for whites to attend. This is because Whites are accustomed to their cultural practices and ideologies being the norm and to being structurally dominant in nearly every social institution. What this means is that, for interracial churches to stay interracial, racial minorities must be willing to sacrifice their preferences, or they must have already sufficiently acculturated into and accepted the dominant culture and whites' privileged status. Consequently, the chances for a widespread movement of interracial churches are slim. It depends on African Americans' willingness to compromise in the one area of American society where they are able to have power and control: religion. (2008:139)

As she has found, most such churches are characterised by white leadership, white cultural patterns, and white religious practices (idem: 117). Importantly, black acculturation into white culture and dominant society fosters acceptance of white normativity. On the other hand, embedded in a racialised society, both black and white members of the congregation will find it hard to unlearn previously indoctrinated ways of (self-)perception (Emerson and Christian Smith 2000:160). Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith conceptualise racialised society as "*a society wherein race matters profoundly for differences in life experiences, life opportunities, and social relationships* [i.e.,] one that allocates differential rewards by race" (2000:7). Even if racial differentiation is not overtly practiced, racialised society remains a defining societal framework, which may latently condition practices even within a congregation with the result that "the racialized society is reproduced in everyday actions and decisions" (idem:11) and the consequence of "the invisibility of normative whiteness" (Roelofs 2005:95) accompanied by black hypervisibility for "being recognized for their 'otherness' or deviance from the norm" (Settles 2018). As Monique Roelofs claims, "When white culture becomes an invisible datum, an unmarked given, the cultures of those who are not normatively white, that is to say, of white people's 'others', can acquire hypervisibility" (2005:96). On the other hand, whiteness can also become hypervisible in the sense that, as Maureen T. Reddy remarks, "whiteness makes itself hypervisible to those who are not white, much as heterosexuality forces itself upon the consciousnesses of gays and lesbians. And one way that these constructs reinforce their invisibility to those who benefit from them is precisely through this hypervisibility to those who do not" (1998:55). In contrast, white hypervisibility can also become stigmatizing and, consequently, inhibiting, especially if in a minority position, for not meeting expectations of whiteness (see, for example, dirty/clean whiteness [Beider 2015:33]) or for the supposition of meeting them.

What appears to be a major obstacle in planting and maintaining an interracial multiethnic church is the numerical proportions of the different ethnic/racial groups in the congregation. As a result of the niche edge effect, the lower the number of members of one group, the higher the probability of abandonment of the congregation by members of this group, partly because "the larger the group, the lower the rate of outgroup relations" (Christerson, Edwards, and Emerson 2005:157). So it means, for example, in the case of white membership that the likelihood of their leaving the interracial congregation is higher if their number is smaller, despite the expectation that it could prompt the forming of outgroup relations (idem:157), especially as added factors like higher mobility, higher expectations, higher concern with legitimacy, lower willingness to participate in non-white programs can work as triggering effects (idem:173) along the fact that importance of minimising the costs is less a need for white members due to the wider white-oriented societal setting. It seems that proportions are relevant; however, the congregation's willingness to minimise costs for all groups bears vital importance. For Christerson, Edwards, and Emerson, it is less individual conduct than organisational policy that proves determining in achieving interracial balance.

It is insufficient to blame it all on perceived white dominance as it would oversimplify the source of obstacles and diminish other relevant constraints accounting for divergence between different groups in the congregation. Much as internalised white dominance is a prevalent issue, class (see Wilcox 1999), gender (Hackett 1995), age (Kaminow 1999), and ethnic cultural differences prove factors for divergence. The inherent differences between cultures must be especially accounted for, which can trigger conflict within the interracial church. Hofstede and others have identified different cultural layers and dimensions within cultures that help identify core values and orientation through an indexed categorisation. In his dimensional paradigm with "country dimension index rankings" (Hofstede 2011:22), based on 6 dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus

restraint [8]) light is shed on the diversity within/between cultures, which when read together with the deep-seated racialising history of America of all non-white races (see Takaki 1993; Lee 2018) can allow seeing the layered complexity of perceived white privilege throughout American history. Reading difference as a racially laden category only often reasserts racial stereotypes by both white and non-white members of a congregation, blurring the fact that members of a congregation with different cultural backgrounds will have different expectations as to what they will find culturally acceptable.

From a cultural perspective, besides the numerous differences and intersections on individual and group levels, it is the collectivistic nature of African American culture and the individualistic character of the wider American culture (see Rose et al. 2014:462) that appears to fundamentally be responsible for differing responses and expectations. Kelley M. Duncanson confirms the cultural difference between African American culture and Hofstede's country ranking of the US. As she concludes her analysis of Hofstede's dimension among African American college students, "African-Americans do not fit in the same cultural dimension as the country in which they have lived for over 380 years. African-Americans are more collectivists, more sensitive to uncertainty avoidance, more feministic, more recognizing of power distance and more receptive to Confucian Dynamism" (2016:15). While there are studies which like Marieke de Mooij and Jake Beniflah's establish "the convergence of cultural values of ethnic groups in the United States" (2017:7) and, in particular, that "African-Americans score as individualistic as white Americans" (idem:6), most studies support Duncanson's results—while it is probable that the different results may be shaded depending on the different intersections of cultural layers within the US represented by the study participants and the fact that African Americans can be seen as bicultural (Toldson and Toldson 2001:418), enabling them to offer mixed responses in particular situations. In this vein, George V. Gushue and Madonna G. Constantine show using Triandis's model of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism that context-dependent as responses may be (2003:11), African American women may produce individualistic as well as collectivistic responses (idem:12). More directly toward an understanding of African American culture as more collectivistic than US culture in general, Ziad Swaidan, Mohammed Y. A. Rawwas, and Scott J. Vitell establish "a positive relationship between collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and idealism" (2008:127) among African American consumers.

The collectivistic framework is acknowledged by black psychologists who relate African American life to an essentially Africanist context. The African-centered philosophical framework Shawn O. Utsey, Eve P. Adams, and Mark Bolden identify, in which they find African American stress management is grounded, substantiates "culture-specific coping behaviors" (2000:197) endowed with a "survival thrust" deriving from the African American experience of racial oppression in America (idem:211). The framework they validate "recognizes spirituality, harmony, balance, a collective group orientation, and the emphasis on rituals as comprising the core personality structure of people of African descent" (idem:197). Their view is reasserted by Alfred B. Pasteur and Ivory L. Toldson, who in their *Roots of the Soul* address black expressiveness as a defining reference of African Americanness:

> Many things contribute to the value base of black culture-priority of group identity (inherent in collective and communal participation) over individual identity; respect for elders (who are closer to that which is divine or spiritual in the universe); acceptance of unseen forces as real, visible elements (i.e., having life, with feelings and intelligence) in the organization of one's behavior; respect for fertility and procreativeness as manifested in praise for generative powers (ability to bring the vital, spiritual force into being)—all combine to create the fabric of black culture and frame black behavior, under the commandership of vital rhythm. (1982:71)

In their uncritically generalising Africanist self-assertion, which appears oblivious of the diversity within the African American community and even among Africanists (see Gibbs 1999:102), they place emphasis on "group interdependency" which is posited in negating opposition to "individual independence" (Pasteur and Toldson 1982:79). Much as their manifesto of cultural assertion can be considered as "categorical universal statements about Black values and White Western civilization [. . .] promoting the positive aspects of Black culture and exposing the negative traits in White culture" (Smith 1984:130), their paradigm shows the distinctiveness of black cultural expectation as well as the intention to stand apart and to be distinguished uniquely, which in itself can be seen as diverging.

It is the aspect of self-validation through cultural ethics that Christerson, Edwards, and Emerson identify as a serious obstacle that is difficult to tackle in the process of establishing an interracial church. As they state, "religious organizations seem particularly susceptible to conflict because of the heightened tendency to hold absolute positions on the rightness or wrongness of a particular action, due to the religious nature of the organization" (2005:160). Conflict then derives primarily from the absolutisation of cultural truths. Cultural differences will yet then prove prevailing despite the fact that "All Americans share the orienting ideas of the culture" (Naylor 1999:4). Christerson, Edwards, and Emerson base their hypothesis on Larry L. Naylor's claim that

> As culture represents truth, when people of different cultures come together, the consequence must always be some conflict, for it is more than people coming into contact. It really means that truths come into contact and that means conflict. Each group tends to believe that its beliefs and practices are the right or more correct ones. They judge others by it and being convinced of its correctness, each group makes every effort to impose their truth on everybody else. As everybody does the same thing, cultural contact will always mean conflict. (2005:7)

Conflict, in this way, depicts the "general fragmentation and complexity" (idem:6) of the nation, community, and congregation as the truths considered by the different groups as infallible sustain individual and collective identity. Cultural truths often prove mutually exclusive despite attempts to establish a comprehensive, all-fit framework or the multidirectionality of experiences for cultural consensus. Culture-based conflict reasserts the idea of cultural diversity within culture and reveals the inevitability of coercion of cultural values and discourses. As Renato Rosaldo verifies through the observable change in cultural studies, "a sea change in cultural studies has eroded once-dominant conceptions of truth and objectivity. The truth of objectivism absolute, universal, and timeless has lost its monopoly status. It now competes, on more nearly equal terms, with the truths of case studies that are embedded in local contexts, shaped by local interests, and colored by local perceptions" (1993:21). In a likewise fashion, conflicting truths in the condense environment of an interracial congregation verifies the necessity of "a pluralistic vision of culture and truth" (idem:xxii).

Contradictory as it may seem, religion can add to the problem of deracialization. It can be seen as the expression of core cultural values and in that as the precipitation of social ideals since "sacred things are simply collective ideals that have fixed themselves on material objects" (Durkheim 1973:159). As Emile Durkheim sums it up, "Religious representations are collective representations that express collective realities; rites are ways of acting that are born only in the midst of assembled groups and whose purpose is to evoke, maintain, or recreate certain mental states of those groups" (1995:9). The social conceptions of the community are thus recreated through religion in a process that proves inflexible as it resists change and withstands intergroup negotiation. Since in America social conceptions exist much in the function of race history, the interracial congregations will reflect it in overt and covert ways. Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith argue that as racial inequality proves a determining factor of the access to resources, which is due to the social ties formed within the ingroup network, the ingroup will

be positively biased, hemming interracial relations (2000:160-161). While they address "homogenous religious ingroups and the segmented religious market" (idem:154) in the first place, their assessment can be read as obstacles within interracial congregations and religious networks as well. In their assessment,

> these patterns not only generate congregational segregation by race, but contribute to the racial fragmentation of American society, generate and sustain group biases, direct altruistic religious impulses to express themselves primarily within racially separate groups, segregate social networks and identities, contribute to the maintenance of socioeconomic inequality, and generally fragment and drown out religious prophetic voices calling for an end to racialization. (idem:154)

Ingroup membership then proves more salient in interracial contact than individual characteristics in a racialised society with the result that the homogeneity of the ingroup is strengthened and, due to the bias toward the outgroup, partially based on stereotyping fueled by autostereotypes, ingroup boundaries are fortified: "Part of the irony of religion's role is that in strengthening micro bonds between individuals, religion contributes to within-group homogeneity, heightens isolation from different groups, and reduces the opportunity for the formation of macro bonds—bonds between groups—that serve to integrate a society" (idem:155).

3. White/Black Fragility and Racialised Memory

Naturalised into whiteness and fixated in the majority position in racialised America, whites often do not see themselves as raced but, instead, "the invisibility of whiteness as a racial position [will prevail] in white (which is to say dominant) discourse" (Dyer 2016:11). Undoubtedly, it presents the danger of "disconnect[ing] [. . .] from history" and denying connection to and favoured embeddedness in "historical and institutional white supremacy" (Simpson 2003:35). Furthermore, "non-raced white" enjoys the lack of categorisation and evades thus any (self-)critical scrutiny with the possible result of standing apart, in a distance of the race problem. Some, like Jeffrey Scholes, contend that whiteness is universal in that "Their norms are universal and hence absolute and inscrutable [whereas] norms of blackness are and hence relative and easily exposed to critique" (2020:3). While "white" in America remains encapsulated as a privileged framework, universalisation also means that inner stratification, the shades of white are eliminated in the discourse—presenting one possible obstacle in identifying similarities to build interracial relationships. Richard Dyer among many others conceptualises white as a homogeneous category assigning to it a ubiquitously universal label. Disregarding "enormous variations" (2016:12) within communities in the West regarding strata like gender, class, age, or geography (what is the West anyway?), he understands white in terms of power ("For those in power in the West," "the equation of being white with being human secures a position of power" [idem:12]). At the same time, Dyer's observation about whiteness may not simply describe the (unconscious) self-perception of white people in America but it can also reveal the perception of white people by non-white people of colour. African Americans tend to associate whiteness with power, which preconditions their perception and also determines black self-perception. Toni Morrison brings up the same question as a writer in a "race-conscious culture," which she presents as "a singular landscape for a writer": "What happens to the writerly imagination of a black author who is at some level always conscious of representing one's own race to, or in spite of, a race of readers that understands itself to be 'universal' or race-free?" (1992:xii).

As bell hooks contends, African Americans "do not know themselves separate from whiteness" (2015, 166), which, due to the oppressive racial history in America, boils down to the fact that "whiteness in the black imagination is often a representation of terror" (idem:172). The power-induced response can have many overlapping expressions, including "suspicion,

fear, and even hatred" (idem:166), or as Morrison concludes the perception of "white," "Whiteness, alone, is mute, meaningless, unfathomable, pointless, frozen, veiled, curtained, dreaded, senseless, implacable" (1992:59). While the "sense of terror" (hooks 2015:177) is inexorably present in the black mind, the complexity of the race problem has also yielded varied responses with the common denominator of resisting racism. Mia Bay shows in her monograph that "Black ideas about white people are inextricably entwined in this history of African-American intellectual resistance to racism" (2000:8). Whether it was armed protest, artistic expression, or the "mantle of invisibility" (hooks 2015:168), their response crystallised a "rearguard defense of black humanity" (Bay 2000:8) and ardent criticism of white morality (idem:79).

In the diverging flux of the perception of the other, the multiplication of perception can be of aid. One model can be that white members of the congregation recognise their contextual identities. Through drawing whites inside of race (Simpson 2003:58), i.e., acknowledging white as raced with all its historical and socio-cultural implications, white can be placed in relation to non-white identities as racialised and socially constructed. Jennifer S. Simpson models the reliance on racialised memory as a possible vista toward interracial negotiation. In line with the idea that whiteness is seen as universal and transparent, while "positing history-lessness and context-lessness for blacks" (Morrison 1992:53), she insists on an emphasis on white racialised memory. This is not easily done as cracking open one's identity inevitably threatens to disrupt their hermeneutically coherent social context of interpretation that has granted them the comfort of orientation and the localisation of self. As Simpson calls for the reinterpretation of personal stories with "clarity, frankness, and responsibility, rather than guilt" (2003:25) to alter historical understanding as a racialised grand narrative, for white Americans to bring to consciousness the "impenetrable whiteness" and "blinding whiteness" (Morrison 1992:33) of their narrative stand demands distancing from the embedded self and the featherbed of taken-for-granted, unquestioned understanding of situations. Reality is constructed through contextualisation in/through narratives that are homogenous for their "narrative seduction" and "narrative banalization," meaning that multiple interpretations are preempted through the careful orchestration of reality and the automation of interpretation through familiarity (Bruner 1991:9). The difficulty arises, as Jerome Bruner contends regarding the narrative construction of reality, as hermeneutical composability demands that "the cultural toolkits and distributional networks" (idem:3-4) support the construction of reality as a story in a single interpretative way in that "interpretation is forced on us only by a surfeit of ambiguity" (idem:9).

Racialising memory therefore disrupts the ways of seeing the world as familiar and forces the individual to move out of their comfort zone (Wise 2016:166). Beyond the mere fear of letting go of privileges for others to gain privileges, distancing, or even disconnection, from one's own group means considerable tension even for those who mean well in interracial situations. When their identity becomes targeted, many will choose to go with their group as it causes simply anxiety and uncertainty to do otherwise. This explains why "group transmutes individual unselfishness into group selfishness" (Emerson and Smith 2000:158). Ethical remembering as purported by Simpson (2003:60) to achieve racialised memory becomes burdened by anxiety and the lure of familiarity, which can obscure the ability to enter the position of the other, as Emerson and Smith point out in interpreting Niebuhr's diagnosis of immorality. The defence mechanism activated may appear selfish but when it meets the featherbed of collectivity, selfishness perceived as such "is not called selfishness, but morality, service, sacrifice, or loyalty" (Emerson and Smith 2000:159), accentuating the possible incommensurability of interracial negotiation.

The conscientisation effort of ethical remembering can further be hindered by the feeling of injustice done to the whites by overgeneralising the motivation of white conduct and white privileges and shame perceived on an individual level, despite the fact that historical

injustices and even the continued existence of contemporary white privilege are brought to awareness and the facts thereof are accepted by them (see Strayed and Almond 2018). James Baldwin, for example, presupposes an always already feeling of guilt in white responses to black people or seeks to instill it in them: "the white man prefers to keep the black man at a certain human remove because it is easier for him thus to preserve his simplicity and avoid being called to account for crimes committed by his forefathers, or his neighbors" (1998a:122). This "curtain of guilt" (1998b:725) is reiterated by the much proposed "white fragility," which entails for Robin DiAngelo responses by white people in an interracial situation like "silence, defensiveness, argumentation, certitude, and other forms of pushback" (2018:8). Robin DiAngelo terms "white fragility" as a state of whites withstanding any challenge to whiteness for their "unaware yet inevitable racism" (2018:113) through defensive mechanisms with the intention "to reinstate white racial equilibrium" (idem:103). Some critique her stand as often plausible, though mere conjecture (see Sokal 2023:545), "reinventing racism" for the lack of unstratified view at whiteness (see Church 2021:44; Paslay 2020:2) since "an abstraction is not a concrete thing" (Church 2021:48), reification giving way to speculation and falsification (idem:48). Not allowing for other interpretations, what DiAngelo's scheme shows is that any of the responses work contrary to interracial relationships. The outcome is also dissatisfying in that it is debilitating for many whites in the long run to have to feel guilty a priori of an original sin (see Hughes 2020). It becomes tangible especially in cases where black competitive victimhood is complemented by white compulsory perpetratorhood, the amalgam of which will block a balanced interracial consensus.

The "good/bad binary" (DiAngelo 2018:72) can have the same effect on African Americans. What may appear as self-victimisation or the assumed perception of blacks by others as victims denies them an always already agency. They may feel that it denies them the value of their achievement and can even lead to underperformance in situations, while blurring the complexity of the intersectionality of gender, class, ethnic, or other constraints, representing the mesh of inequalities, i.e., the "multiple causes and effects interacting in complex and non-linear ways" (Lather 1991:21). Insistence on dualisms can be unfruitful without being problematised (see Davison 2006:135) since oversimplification can lead to misrepresentation as in the process "description becomes inscription" (Denzin 1997:5), using racial categories as a "blank screen" allowing for the inscription of multiple meanings (Arnesen 2011:8). As also Kevin G. Davison points out: "Purposefully replicating and interpreting the experiences of others can only produce a flawed realist tale" (2006:134). It is this threat that Coleman Hughes draws attention to regarding African Americans in his criticism of DiAngelo's book: "Blacks, as portrayed in DiAngelo's writing, can neither be expected to show maturity during disagreement nor to exercise emotional self-control of any kind. The hidden premise of the book is that blacks, not whites, are too fragile" (2020). While his vehement argument requires careful consideration, his point that black people may feel "emotionally immature and essentially child-like" (idem) in the objectifying scheme of white fragility raises the point that if whites are categorised rigidly, black people can in a likewise manner be deployed in a binary as an inflexible category, which is oppositionally and relationally to be considered. Further than that, DiAngelo's arguments can lead to the assumption that African Americans perceive whites in an undifferentiated way and respond to social problems similarly psychologically. While similarities of experience are undoubtedly prevalent as hooks (2015), Utsey et al. (2000), and Pasteur and Toldson (1982) show, as discussed previously, the ubiquity of the black experience in America and similar modes of conventionalisation cannot be taken for granted. In sum, "Not everything that appears on the social plane is internalized, nor is the psychological plane simply a reproduction of the social plane" (Wagoner 2012:1049). Concomitantly, the insensitivity to individual and ingroup diversity does not serve the purpose of interracial reconciliation for the

very reason that in the microorganism of a congregation, it is primarily on individual, interpersonal levels that interracial relationships are constituted.

Ethical remembering needs then to be a mutual concern with the understanding that, as Brady Wagoner contends, "social others and cultural tools participate in and constitute the very process of remembering" (2012:1035). Remembering to be evaluated as constructive demands that the other as a constructive constraint not be eliminated from the process—a possibility when whites or blacks are reduced to stereotyped categories. As Wagoner purports, even in the layered process of self-suggestion internalised, others will be relied on (idem:1046), and, thus, "becoming other to self" is inherent in the process of understanding the self (idem:1045). In interracial relations, the cultural toolkit-aided conventionalisation may attempt to overwrite, erase, or negate the individualistic details disturbing the inflexible culture schemas to orchestrate the homogeneity of the memory narrative as a "constructive justification of [] attitude" (Bartlett 1995:208); however, even despite the internalised social other, which is also socially mediated, the representative individual will be present, problematising the category and inciting a reconstructive process. It is then that alterations can be effected as the deep-seated categories are "reshuffled" as the remembering subject becomes conscious of their own categories (idem:208). As Frederic Bartlett puts it, "The attitude is literally an effect of the organism's capacity to turn round upon its own 'schemata', and is directly a function of consciousness" (idem:213). As a "matter of feeling, or affect" (idem:207), attitude becomes the key in rearranging schemas. Whether tuning, accretion, or restructuring, unlearning/changing previous schemas or establishing new ones takes a learning process (Rumelhart and Norman 1978:4), which also suggests that attitude can consciously be conditioned to restructure schemas: it takes "conscious reflection on one's experience, or [. . .] active efforts to reorganize what one knows" (Nishida 2005:412).

In an interracial context, the restructuring of schemas and the reinterpretation of memory evolves in relation to the other, i.e., rather than emphasise the social and cultural framework of "the invisibility of normative whiteness" (Roelofs 2005:95), what appears fruitful is the understanding of the social and cultural situatedness in relation to the other. Baldwin's unforgiving verdict that "People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them" (1998a:119) testifies that both black and white people are enwound by history and, in the American context, this often means the entrenchment of division representing ingroup cohesion in its utmost inflexibility, despite the interdependence of the self with the cultural other in conscious and unconscious ways. Besides valid claims for forgiveness and repentance, which, however, in many situations may become preempted as the object thereof cannot be identified in sufficient detail or at all, it proves necessary to realise the other in oneself—not as an oppositional but as a constructive category. Ethical remembering entails consequently setting up a shared goal structure (see Kim 2005:334) to restructure relational schemas and to enable shared remembering. It expresses new relational knowledge "as a system of mutual rights and obligations" (Planalp 1985:22). In this way, instead of emphasising the concept of guilt or one-sided responsibility, interracial relations must be seen in terms of mutuality in the mesh of intertwining lives and, in a congregation, faith.

4. Conclusion

Race continues to prove an inhibiting factor in interracial churches as members of interracial congregations experience their entrapment in history and the wider context of racialised America will condition them to make their decisions and evaluate decisions of others along racial lines even when race is not the issue. The overdetermination seems even intractable in congregations as they represent nodal points where culture and truth overlap and, consequently, separation can threaten to become entrenched due to racialised cultural consciousness. In short, in the climate of overt/covert accusations and self-defence, whites will be unlikely to accept

compulsory perpetratorhood, just as many black people will find it unsatisfying to be defined by the race of competitive victimhood. Furthermore, while whites can find it difficult to realise the advantages deriving from the salience of their race in America, i.e., from "the institutionalized white dominance" (Christerson, Edwards, and Emerson 2005:167), neither will black people find it justifiable to accept white privilege. It must be seen, however, that neither group represents homogeneous ingroups—thus, diversity within cultures must always be taken into consideration—and cultural differences are not always racial, which disallows any overgeneralised approach to interracial issues as it can give way to falsification. Hence, the acknowledgement of diversity, the understanding of the interdependence of experiences, and the recognition of the other in the self can lead to the reinterpretation of relational schemas, which enables the restructuring of memories based on shared rights and obligations.

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