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In the Name of Love: White Organizations and Racialized Emotions

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ABSTRACT

This article bridges the gap between insights from a theory of racialized organizations and insights from a theory of racialized emotions by asking what role these emotions play in organizations. Drawing on a combined four years of ethnographic data from two predominantly White organizations in the Pacific Northwest – a conservative evangelical mega-church and a progressive public high school – we argue that these two organizations address racial inequality with a set of racialized emotions that we call a "love discourse." A love discourse is a seemingly apolitical way of addressing inequality that frames the solution to it as a matter of individual feelings of love and kindness rather than as a social problem that requires collective, political, or systemic solutions. A love discourse is grounded in and supports White racial ignorance. By providing a way to avoid politics, a love discourse allows two organizations with different political cultures and value systems to engage in diversity work that seems to address racial inequality, without actually challenging it. Love, in this sense, is a racialized emotion that appears to address racial inequality while also sustaining it.

KEYWORDS: racialized emotion; racism; organizations; church; school

In response to widespread social activism regarding racial inequality, businesses, schools, and other social organizations have been issuing statements about diversity, formally removing the names of racist benefactors from buildings and assembling committees on diversity, equity, and inclusion to review aspects of organizational life, from hiring processes to organizational culture to networking opportunities. While efforts like these, efforts Sarah Ahmed (2012) calls "diversity work," may be commonly hailed as effective organizational responses to the problem of racial inequality, recent scholarship (Ahmed 2012; Ray 2019; Wingfield and Chavez 2020) suggests that such inequality is constitutive of organizations themselves in ways that may be obscured rather than solved by such statements, renamings, and committees. Organizations, in other words, are not race neutral structures but are themselves racialized in that they constitute and are constituted by racial processes (Ray 2019). Rather than effectively addressing racial inequality, this diversity work may rely on and deploy

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ideologies and practices that sustain inequality, resulting in organizations that are no less racially unequal, but that are able to mask this inequality through bureaucratic deployments of diversity.

Recent theorizing suggests that racial inequality is also sustained by what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva calls "racialized emotions" (2019). Bonilla-Silva defines racialized emotions as those that characterize and are specific to "racialized societies" (2019:2). Negative emotions, those typically associated with racist belief systems, such as hate, distain, or revulsion, may be easily interpreted as racialized emotions. However, Bonilla-Silva suggests that such emotions span the "emotional gamut," from hate to love and disgust to pleasure (2019:2). Positive emotions, such as love and kindness, can be racialized ones. While organizations have been studied in terms of their emotional culture (Guenther 2009), feeling rules (Hochschild 1979), or emotional labor (Sobering 2021), the role of racialized emotions in organizations is less developed (Wingfield 2010). As such, this article asks, what role do racialized emotions play in organizations?

Drawing on a combined four years of ethnographic field work in two predominantly White organizations—a conservative evangelical church, Lakeview Church, and a liberal public high school, American High School—we argue that the racialized emotions of love and kindness serve as the dominant mode of understanding and responding to racial inequality. We call the deployment of this positive emotional language a "love discourse." A love discourse is a seemingly apolitical way of addressing inequality that frames the solution to it as a matter of individual feelings of love and kindness rather than as a social problem that requires collective, political, or systemic solutions. As such, a love discourse, like some other forms of diversity work, serves to mask the tenacity of racial inequality while seeming to address it.

In looking at the role of racialized emotions at Lakeview Church and American High School, this article makes four points. First, it establishes the existence of a love discourse as the dominant frame regarding racial inequality in both organizations. Second, it suggests that the ability to frame understandings of and solutions to racial inequality in terms of love and kindness relies on and reproduces "White racial ignorance" (Mueller 2020). Third, it shows that a love discourse suggests that the solution to racial inequality is one of individual emotion rather than systemic change. Fourth, our data reveal that while leadership at each organization deploys a love discourse, some members of American High can resist, to an extent, this framing.

This article bridges the gap between insights from a theory of racialized organizations (Ray 2019) and insights from a theory of racialized emotions (Bonilla-Silva 2019) by documenting the roles that such emotions play in these organizations. Importantly, we show the seductive power of positive, apolitical, emotional language to frame social inequality. By providing a way to "avoid politics" (Eliasoph 1998), a "love discourse" allows two organizations with different political cultures and value systems to engage in diversity work that seems to address racial inequality, without actually challenging it.

WHITE ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations, or "socially constructed spaces in which individuals' efforts are coordinated to jointly accomplish a set of tasks to fulfill some goal or set of linked goals" (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019:2), are racialized spaces (Ray 2019). Conceptualizing space as racialized is central to analyzing racialized social systems (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Embrick and Moore 2020), and extends an analysis beyond the demographic make-up of a space to allow for an examination of the way race is embedded in "hierarchies of power," social values, practices and logics (Embrick and Moore 2020:1940). Understanding space as racialized allows for a conceptualization of racial inequality that extends beyond individual action and suggests that it is important to examine spaces that White people occupy and seek to dominate (Du Bois 1920).

More specifically, "White institutional spaces" are those spaces that are organized in such a way that ideological and material resources flow disproportionately to White people (Moore 2020). Such spaces constitute the "infrastructure of U.S. organizations and institutions" (Embrick and Moore 2020:1941), institutionalizing a racialized logic that both goes unrecognized and normalizes White superiority (Embrick and Moore 2020). These institutional spaces are often not recognized as racialized, such that White spaces themselves are seen as normal and unremarkable.

As a specific form of White institutional space, White organizations have been seen and treated as "normative and neutral" (Ray 2019:13). As such, the ways in which organizations institutionalize race is under-theorized (Ray 2019). An explicit focus on racialized organizations can bring to the fore the ways in which organizations, as meso-level social forms, can contribute to both institutional-level and individual-level racial inequalities, highlighting what Ray calls the "stunning consistency" of inequality (2019:23). Including organizations theoretically and empirically in structural theories of race and racism can help us better understand stability, change, and the "institutionalism of racism" (Ray 2019:5; Ture and Hamilton 1967) by highlighting how racist ideologies and racist structures work in tandem to connect organizational rules, resources, ideologies and emotions (Golash-Boza 2016; Ray 2019).

Most organizational research focuses on workplaces as paradigmatic organizational forms, but schools and churches may also serve as generative examples of organizations (Barron 2016; Stewart, García, and Petersen 2021; Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019), adding to what we know about the way organizations can be sites for the reproduction of economic, gender, racial, and intersecting inequalities. For instance, research indicates that schools reproduce racial inequality (Lewis and Diamond 2015) through tracking and course taking patterns (e.g., Lucas and Berends 2007), teacher expectations (e.g., Gillborn et al. 2012), segregation (e.g., Shedd 2015), discrimination (e.g., Hope, Skoog, and Jagers 2015), and school discipline (e.g., Ferguson 2020). Similarly, research finds that churches reproduce racial inequality through continued segregation between Black and White churches (Bracey and Moore 2017; Emerson and Smith 2001; Lee 2016), the prioritizing of White congregants' feelings and comfort in integrated churches (Edwards 2008), White theological understandings of social problems that privilege myths of individual success over structural inequalities (Edgell and Tranby 2007; Emerson and Smith 2001; Lee 2016; Lewis 2004; Oyakawa 2019), the continued whitewashing of racism and promotion of a color-blind gospel (Butler 2021), a church's support of white Christian nationalism (Whitehead and Perry 2020), and the very ways in which people of color are admitted into White churches so as to avoid accusations of racism (Bracey and Moore 2017).

While schools and churches are workplaces for some, they are also examples of organizations characterized by voluntary association (churches) or compelled government participation (schools), and as such they may highlight additional aspects of racialized organizations. While organizational research on adult workplaces often focuses on the way organizational inequality relates to employment-linked resources (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019), a focus on churches and schools as racialized organizations can unveil the work of everyday, less formalized inequality-sustaining processes in organizations with members who are in social roles other than, and in addition to, workers and bosses.

IDEOLOGY, IGNORANCE, AND EMOTION

Racial ideologies, racial ignorance, and racialized emotions all work to sustain racial inequality across a variety of social contexts. Racial ideologies shape organizational commitments to addressing racial inequality. Historically, these ideologies have reflected a "colorblind" approach, an approach that frames inequality as a relic of the past and the product of individual racists (Bonilla-Silva 2010). However, Sarah Mayorga-Gallo suggests that "a diversity ideology" (Mayorga-Gallo 2019) may be replacing a colorblind one. A diversity ideology is one that acknowledges "inequality in the abstract" and frames "fair representation" as a solution (Mayorga-Gallo 2019:1793). A diversity ideology addresses racial inequality by emphasizing inclusion and good intentions, thus framing the organizational existence of people of color as a sign of White commitment to racial equality. In addition, a diversity ideology relies on the premise that there is a correct amount of diversity, beyond which such diversity would actually threaten the existence of a racial hierarchy from which White people benefit. When organizational diversity work rests on a diversity ideology, it allows White organizational members to engage in what Kiara Wyndham Douds calls a "diversity contract," an agreement by which race is acknowledged in terms of diversity but not in terms of inequality (Douds 2021).

A diversity ideology relies, in part, on the existence and cultivation of "White racial ignorance" (Mills 1997; Mueller 2020), or a willful lack of knowledge about racial inequality. Feminist theorist bell hooks suggests that ignorance is a key feature of White, calling it a "state of unconsciousness," an invisible element of the lives of White folks (1994). This ignorance is a cognitive accomplishment

(Mueller 2020), not a passive accident, such that White people are active participants in sustaining this lack of knowledge. The White racial ignorance of organizational members may be mirrored in organizational practices and policies themselves (McVeigh 2004; Mueller 2018).

There may be an emotional component to racial ideologies and ignorance. Emotions play an important role in reproducing various forms of inequality (Schwalbe et al. 2000). Research on emotions and inequality in organizations has primarily focused on "feeling rules" (Hochschild 1979) and their role in reproducing workplace gender, class, and to a lesser extent, racial inequalities (see, for instance, Gruys 2012; Kang 2003; Otis 2016; Wingfield 2010). These "feeling rules" may be a way that racialized emotions operate, setting up, for example, White emotional expressions as the norm in workplace environments in ways that penalize and marginalize Black workers (Wingfield 2010).

Racialized emotions are "group based, relational phenomena," that "generate a hierarchical structure of feelings" that can serve to normalize the feelings of the dominant race (Bonilla-Silva 2019:8). Examining emotions as racialized can show how emotions are a central component to the reproduction of inequality. Drawing on insights about how organizations are racialized, we suggest that racialized emotions are central to the work done by a diversity ideology in that they rely on and sustain White racial ignorance and obfuscate the systemic nature of racial inequality while seeming to address inequality. Building on the burgeoning scholarship of White institutional spaces (Bracey and Moore 2017; Brunsma, Brown and Pacier 2013; Chou, Lee and Ho 2015; Evans and Moore 2015; Moore and Bell 2017; Schneider 2018) and specifically racialized organizations (see Byron and Roscigno 2019; Carrillo 2021; Lerma, Hamilton and Neilson 2020; Rao and Neely 2019; Roscigno 2019; Vargas and Villa-Palomino 2019; Wingfield and Chavez 2020), we suggest that the power of racialized emotions is illustrated in its similar deployment in two quite different White organizations—a conservative evangelical church, and a liberal public school—in the form of what we call a "love discourse." While social scientific research on love typically interrogates love in terms of its romantic, filial, or friendship dimensions (Seebach and Núñez-Mosteo 2016), this article addresses the deployment of a language of love and kindness as a way organizations work to address racial inequality while simultaneously upholding it. A love discourse relies on and sustains White racial ignorance and is a way to interpret systemic inequality as apolitical, individual and solvable by love.

METHODS

This article is based on ethnographic data, collected independently by each author as parts of larger research projects. Author 1, Sarah Diefendorf, conducted two and a half years of ethnographic field work at a predominantly White evangelical mega-church in the Pacific Northwest to document the cultural battles at the intersections of gender, race, and sexuality in which the church was engaged. Author 2, C. J. Pascoe, conducted two years of qualitative research at a working- and middle-class high school in central Oregon to investigate how various forms of inequality are reproduced, challenged, or reduced interactionally, culturally, and organizationally in a progressive high school.

Ethnographic fieldwork is, at its best, simultaneously scientific, creative, and ambitious (Nippert-Eng 2015), and allows for an in-depth understanding of a group, organization, or culture. These independent research endeavors were not originally envisioned or designed as a collaborative project. However, after conversations about our data and time in the field, we chose to combine a subset of our data (see also Balogun and Hoang 2018; Mooney and Manglos-Weber 2014; Schilt and Westbrook 2009: Winchester and Green 2019) for analysis. We modeled this approach on Evans and Moore who also brought together data from two White institutional spaces (2015) as we saw the opportunity to leverage both their commonalities and differences.

First, drawing on data from two organizations helps to mitigate the problem faced by ethnographies of a single organization in that it is difficult to distinguish more generic processes from specific organization contexts (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019). Second, combining data from a "liberal" and a "conservative" organization, data that highlight similar organizational processes, furthers an understanding of how organizations are racialized even in quite different cultural and political

contexts. Third, these two cases address a gap in knowledge about how inequality works in non-workplace organizations (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019).

The authors chose to analyze only ethnographic data from their larger studies for this work, as the interview data each author collected used different sets of questions that may have hindered the ability to meaningfully compare them. Each author recorded extensive jottings during fieldwork at their respective field sites and turned this material into comprehensive field notes in a timely fashion after leaving the field site each visit. The authors collected fieldnote data coded under race and race-related codes. The authors recoded this data together and identified emerging patterns and themes from this combined data set through a memoing process to develop key concepts inductively.

Both authors are White women whose race, gender performances, and educational and class statuses allowed us to "fit in" at both of these organizations in a way that likely increased our ability to gain access to these spaces and solidified our receptions once we were there. In the church, this was especially important as Diefendorf did not have to pass a "race test" (Bracey and Moore 2017) to gain entry into the organization.

Lakeview Church

Lakeview, a member of the Foursquare denomination of Protestant churches, was founded in the 1970s and still exists in the same building today. Harvard Chaplain Janelle Ibaven describes Foursquare evangelicals, jokingly, as "Pentecostals with a seat-belt on." In the spectrum of evangelical denominations, we might understand those who belong to Foursquare as among the more conservative, but not quite as socially and politically conservative as most Pentecostals. Lakeview is one of 1,600 Foursquare churches in the United States and one of 66,000 Foursquare churches worldwide. Lakeview's membership in this denominational network makes it representative of a more "typical" mega church than other stand-alone nondenominational churches across the country.

Lakeview Church is located in a suburban city in Washington. Lakeview is home to a majority White, economically and generationally diverse congregation of about 1,500 members, qualifying it as a mega-church. About 15 percent of the congregants at Lakeview Church do not identify as White, which makes Lakeview Church about as diverse as the evangelical community that makes up the state of Washington. Evangelicals in Washington state are 84 percent White, 5 percent Black, 5 percent Latino, 1 percent Asian, and 5 percent Other/Mixed according to Pew's Religious Landscape Survey from 2014.

Evangelicals in Washington State are more highly educated than evangelicals across the country (Pew 2015), and Lakeview Church reflects these higher rates of education. Every person interviewed in the larger study completed at least some college. In comparison, this is true for only 35 percent of evangelicals across the United States (Pew 2015). These levels of education, combined with the types of employment reported by those Diefendorf spoke with at Lakeview, suggest that Lakeview's congregation reflects a highly educated, majority middle- and upper-middle-class population typical of the Coastal Pacific Northwest (Diefendorf 2023). Members of the Lakeview community work in the technology industry, in software and graphic design, in human resources, in the military, in engineering, as nurses, social workers, or lawyers, and some work for Lakeview Church itself.

Diefendorf completed just over two years of ethnographic observations totaling about 300 hours of observation, 41 formal interviews with individual congregants, couples who attended Lakeview together, and church staff and church leadership, as well as informal interviews. Diefendorf observed a weekly small support group for adults at Lakeview, weekly Sunday services, and a variety of church-sanctioned events, such as barbeques, prayer meetings, holiday pageants, and parishioner-specific events, such as weekend women's luncheons.

American High School

Approximately 1,000 students attend American High School. Forty-five percent of the students eventually attend college. Fifty percent are classified as economically disadvantaged. The high school is the most racially diverse school in the district with 1 percent Native American, 2 percent Asian, 1 percent Pacific Islander, 3 percent Black, 17 percent Latinx, 10 percent Multiracial, and 67 percent White students. The school is located on the edge of the city in which it is located, drawing from the urban fringe and outlying rural areas.

The school was recognized by those who work and learn there as a progressive school (Pascoe 2023). For instance, in attempts to reduce gendered and racial/ethnic inequalities American High had done things such as ending the tradition of a gender segregated homecoming court and regularly announced guidelines warning students not to engage in "cultural appropriation" in choosing Halloween costumes and graduation adornments. A group of committed teachers advised student clubs such as Latinos Unidos, Black Student Union, Pacific Islanders Club, Asian Club, Women's Empowerment Club, Climate Action Club, as well as the Gay/Straight Alliance. The school had an ethnic studies class taught by a popular and award-winning teacher. It also featured a "school within a school" where students could focus on environmental education.

Pascoe completed two years of ethnographic observations for a total of over 500 hours, and conducted 51 formal interviews with students, parents, and staff at American High School as well as informal interviews. Pascoe observed football games, classes, dances, club meetings, assemblies, youth-led protests, after school events, social media posts as well as before and after school socializing.

FINDINGS

Findings from two case studies of a conservative church and a progressive high school indicate that racial inequality is addressed in these organizations through racialized emotions, specifically an apolitical language of love and kindness. This love discourse enables and is enabled by the maintenance of White racial ignorance in both organizations and sustains the way these organizations emphasize individual rather than systemic understandings of racial inequality. These two organizations differ in the extent to which members resist and provide alternatives to a love discourse, a difference that suggests the power of and limits to racialized emotions.

LOVE DISCOURSE

In the United States, both churches and public schools are widely considered to be non-political spaces. Lakeview Church and American High are no different. In both organizations a love discourse frames issues of racial inequality as an apolitical one. At Lakeview Church, a love discourse is deployed to frame political violence as well as racial and international inequalities. At American High School, a love discourse appears in formal school activities regarding racial inequality.

Love Discourse: Lakeview Church

On the weekend before Easter in April 2017, Pastor Dave, a White man in his early 50s, and the lead pastor at Lakeview Church, started the morning sermon by referencing a Trump administration executive order related to immigration. Pastor Dave shared that there are "a lot of racial divides and immigration in this country. The root of these divides comes down to whether or not you love people." Rather than grounding these divides in a history of chattel slavery or racially motivated immigration policies that sustain White dominance, Pastor Dave suggests that such divides stem from a lack of love for others.

Pastor Dave continued, telling his congregation, "We don't bring that stuff in here. [The] race thing, age thing, gender thing, that's what's modeled for us in the outside world, we don't bring that in here." This approach to race renders it equivalent to other individual differences, such as age and gender. Importantly Pastor Dave's claim defines the church as a place free of race by suggesting that race is a problem of the outside world. The solution to this problem of the outside world is not found in the form of social change, but in congregants' ability to love each other. This solution defines the church as both an apolitical and seemingly racially neutral space.

This love discourse permeates the church's approach to issues related to racism and racial inequalities, locally and globally. For instance, according to one White guest speaker, the problem of Islamic "terrorist organizations" can be solved by conversion to Christianity through "friendship" with Christian missionaries. This emphasis on love and connection extends to the church's efforts at international disaster relief. Mark, a White man who helped lead the congregation's "disaster relief" efforts,

shared a story about a boy from Iraq who was healed from his war-induced birth defects through prayer on the part of congregants, saying, "*That* is what we are doing. We are not just about giving out food, but having people come to Christ. There are lots of great groups that give out food, but we don't want people to go to Hell with a full belly. We want them to meet Jesus." Rather than framing the human toll of political violence, food scarcity, or poverty as topics related to racialized international inequalities, congregation members at Lakeview deploy a discourse of love, specifically God's love. That is, the priority is communicating God's love, even if families are experiencing malnutrition. The outreach teams at Lakeview set themselves apart from secular relief organizations by suggesting that while such organizations may meet an individual's physical needs, Lakeview's understanding of the problem is a spiritual one.

Members of Lakeview Church are reminded to love each other, love their neighbors, and love their enemies. But this discourse of love, while deeply related to a central component of evangelical Christianity to "save" other people by introducing them to Jesus Christ, erases the ways missionary work can sustain the very social problems it purports to address.

Love Discourse: American High School

From the town-wide "Kindness Campaign" to a "Be Nice" club on campus to the antibullying phrases that greet visitors as they walk into the school under the banner of "No Room For Hate," love and kindness become the language of inequality at American High school. Like Lakeview, American High is defined as an apolitical space. For instance, the White principal of American High School, Principal Walt, once sent out an email to school parents that read, in part, "The schoolhouse is no place for politics" when addressing student protests about gun violence. Such a statement from school leadership exemplified how activities labeled as political by the school were often ones that dealt with inequality without using a framing of kindness and love.

At the school's Martin Luther King Jr. Day Assembly and during a later Black Lives Matter display, a love discourse competes with more systemic understandings of racial inequality. At the Martin Luther King Day assembly, for instance, students from the Black Student Union (BSU) opened the assembly, welcoming students and saying that "in social justice and equality the spirit of Dr. King lives in us today." As part of their opening, the students in the BSU each responded to the prompt, "We need Martin Luther King Day because... " One of the emcees walked down the row with a microphone as each student answered by emphasizing legal, cultural, and interpersonal dimensions of inequality:

"Our president expresses and condones racism."
"People don't want immigrant students to be educated in our district."
"People take pride in their confederate flags in our community."
"Interracial marriages were illegal in the U.S. until 1967."

However, in a slideshow that followed where mostly White school members completed the same prompt, the answers shifted to a focus on love and emotion:

"We all have the same heart."
"My family and friends are my world."
"The Lord rejoices when his children are together."

The assembly concluded with a focus on love, as the choir ended it by singing U2's famous anthem about racial inequality, "In the Name of Love."

When students had the opportunity to respond to a much-contested Black Lives Matter display at American High, their responses illustrated a similar tension between systemic understandings of inequality and ones grounded in a love discourse. The display consisted of a stage filled with tri-fold red displays on tables. Each display showed eight full sized pieces of paper that documented a police murder of a Black person, with the victim's name, age, the story of their murder and their picture. Behind the stage, a slideshow that covered a wide swath of Black American history played. A series of black and white posters lined the aisle leading to the stage that outlined the "guiding principles" of the Black Lives Matter Movement and defined "institutional racism."

In front of the stage, students had the opportunity to write their reactions to the display on butcher paper that covered two tables. The comments sorted into three approaches over the course of the display: Colorblind approaches (for example: "Skin color does not matter"), systemic approaches (for example, "Awareness is power. Education is power. Please let this movement create a platform for our country to realize how much of an issue this is"), and racist approaches (for example, "White lives matter"). Racist comments like the final one were outliers, constituting less than half a percent of the total comments. The responses were evenly divided between colorblind and systemic comments. Half of the colorblind comments, like the following, echoed a love discourse:

> "Kindness matters!"
> "Why can't we all JUST love each other, no matter what we look like, who we love or how we identify"
> "PEACE, LOVE, AND POSITIVITY"
> "Love one another"

This apolitical language of love, peace, and kindness echoed the anti-bullying posters one sees when one walks into the school.

At both American High School and Lakeview Church, love becomes the language of inequality. At Lakeview this language is used to explain racial inequality in the United States and racial and ethnic inequality globally. At American High this language is deployed as the frame for inequality, defining racism as "hate" and exhorting people towards "love." At Lakeview this language includes God's transcendent love, love that can conceivably solve problems of terrorism and hunger rooted in racialized global politics, whereas at American High, this is an abstract, secular love that seemed to echo exhortations of kindness in the ubiquitous anti-bullying campaigns found in public schools.

WHITE RACIAL IGNORANCE

When leaders define the church and the school as apolitical organizations, either overtly as in the case of American High, or tacitly, as in the case of Lakeview Church, they are also defining them as spaces characterized by "White racial ignorance" (Mueller 2020). At Lakeview Church, White racial ignorance appears in everyday talk in small group ministries. At American High School students engage in practices that sustain White ignorance, even as some teachers provide lessons about racial inequality.

White Racial Ignorance: Lakeview Church

Disciples' Journey, one of the many small adult support groups common in large evangelical churches, started a series of lessons on how to approach missionary work. One night, the group began a lesson entitled "Life in the World" in a brightly lit conference room as the small group leader, Carrie, a White woman, gave them the prompt for the evening:

> Our access to adventure in the world is like no other time in history. Within a matter of hours, we can walk along the Great Wall of China, run on island beaches in the Caribbean, roam the jungles of the Amazon, wander the markets of Hong Kong, search the African tundra for lions, or climb the highest peaks. Not only can we go, but the world now comes to us. We can explore the world and communicate with people who are thousands of miles away instantly on our technological devices. Ray Bakke, author of *A Theology as Big as the City*, notes that "Yesterday, cities were in the nations; today all the nations are in our cities." Cultures from around the globe are in our neighborhoods.

The group interrupted Carrie's introduction to the lesson plan, and started debating whether or not there is such a thing as the "African tundra." Carrie, as one of the authors of the prompt, seemed both embarrassed and annoyed, as two people in the group pulled out their smart phones to help answer the question at hand, reinforcing part of the message in the passage up for debate. This started a broader conversation about how, as Marjorie, a White woman, put it, the "world has changed now that we have smartphones at our fingertips." Notably, although group members had phones in hand, ready to look up the existence of the "African tundra," no one in the group ever followed through with this search nor corrected Carrie as the author of the prompt.

Similar dynamics appeared as the group discussed missionary work that evening. The attendees broke into small groups, each of which was assigned a card that included the information about a member of Lakeview Church serving a mission outside of the United States. Each group read about the missionary's work and planned to pray for the missionary as well as contact them via Facebook or a letter. Paula, a White woman, read her card aloud, sharing information about a woman named Lauren, stationed in Uganda. Heather, a White woman, told the room that Lauren is working against those in Uganda who are "struggling with spirits." Becky clarified that these spirits come in the form of both "voo-doo witchcraft" and "the Muslim influence." The group nodded in understanding and continued with their conversation about who would contact Lauren directly, and who would pray for her mission.

Katherine, a White woman who was knitting in her lap during this conversation, recalled aloud her first memory of seeing a Black person in church. "Well, I guess I saw some [Black people] when we would put on our gloves and church dresses and go downtown when I was little." She continued, talking about her neighborhood, "People used to not want to sound foreign, but now people come in groups, and it's a patchwork quilt instead of a melting pot!" Katherine had limited her knowledge of Black lives to an excursion to a downtown church as a child and her knowledge of seemingly racialized others to language or accents she has overheard in her neighborhood that are not English or American.

From congregation members' lack of knowledge about the continent of Africa, to the racialized and colonial assumptions about Ugandan religious practices to a comment about any connection with a Black person, this group conversation illustrates the role White racial ignorance plays in sustaining white people's understandings of racial inequality. The "African tundra," the "Muslim influence" and "voo-doo witchcraft" are discursively linked to imagined Black people who occupy urban spaces (downtown), the foreignness of which make them places for the White missionary work of love. White congregants' lack of knowledge of the lives of people of color is accompanied by a twin assumption that the congregants actually possess this knowledge. This is a specific form of racialized learning, a cognitive accomplishment of White racial ignorance (Mueller 2020) that occurs within the church walls.

White Racial Ignorance: American High School

Much like at Lakeview Church, the primary mode of White racial ignorance at American High has to do with an active refusal to know about the lives of non-White people. At American High this ignorance manifests through a refusal to know about non-White topics, a refusal to engage in an analysis centering race, or a refusal to hear non-White perspectives.

On one of the most meaningful days of the school year, graduation, the students rehearsed walking across the stage as the White female guidance counselor, Ethel, read their names. Ethel told the students to write out the pronunciation of their names for her, instructing "within reason use your legal name or a phonetic spelling." Regardless of the phonetic spelling, Ethel proceeded to mispronounce the names of multiple students of color. As she mispronounces Imani's name, Imani shrugged and said "sure" as if used to this sort of treatment. At another point, Ethel apologized to Aliyha after misreading her name, saying "sorry about your name" to which Aliyah responded "I'm used to it." Several Latinx students repeatedly sounded out their names for her to learn. When a name Ethel found particularly challenging appeared, she commented, "that's as bad as Barry's." When Barry's name did appear, Ethel said, with dread, "I knew that would come." She made a "time out" sign to stop reading and study Barry's full name, Barry Kealoha Okahonua Johnson. After failing to say it right multiple times, Ethel requested in front of everyone, "Barry Johnson, can you please see me after you are done, so I can figure out your name here." In the final ceremony Ethel said, as Barry appeared on stage, "I need some help with this one, I call him Barry but his name is…" as Barry, a Pacific Islander student, stepped forward to huge cheers as, indeed, Ethel mispronounces his name. The repeated mispronunciation of names of students of color (Kohli and Solórzano 2012), and a refusal to know or engage with names that do not emerge from a White naming tradition, are a paradigmatic example of a practice of White racial ignorance.

White racial ignorance does not simply exist, it is cultivated. This cultivation appears most clearly in Nella's class, an ethnic studies class where students focus on issues of social inequality, with specific attention to racial and ethnic inequalities. While race is often a topic in class, the primarily White

students regularly work to avoid talking about it. After Nella's class watched a video of the Colin Kaepernick Nike ad reflecting his much publicized protests against racist police violence, she asked the class what idea, statement, or meaning in it spoke to them. The majority of the students (all White students except for two) made comments like the following: "The message was motivational," "Look outside your expectations," or "You can accomplish anything you set your mind to." As the class finished, Nella, an award-winning teacher of multi-racial – Black and White – heritage, tried to suggest an analysis that centered a racialized reading of the commercial, commenting on the fact that he is sporting an afro, wearing a military type jacket and doing, in her words, "all but raising a fist." However, with the exception of one comment, not a single student addressed the importance of Kaepernick's society-shaping protest against anti-Black police violence.

In general, White students at American High expressed discomfort when talking about race. For instance, when Nella assigned her class a short essay based on NPR's "Race Card Project," some of the White students simply refused to write about race. Jennifer, a White student, wrote an essay entitled, "All you can rely on is yourself" that contained lines like "Everyone will let you down" and "This is a lesson that has to be learned by each person." When encouraged to include some sort of racial analysis, Jennifer responded, "I really don't like talking about race. It makes me really uncomfortable." Jennifer is doing the active avoidance necessary to maintain White racial ignorance.

At both American High School and Lakeview Church, White racial ignorance frames discussions of racial inequality. At Lakeview this ignorance appears in discussions of missionary work and "foreign" lands. At American High it appears in school rituals and classroom discussions. Both illustrate the way that White racial ignorance is, itself, a learning process and a cultivated practice, not an accidental or inevitable outcome. This ignorance allows for an apolitical love and kindness to frame racial inequality, because of the refusal to know about non-White lives, topics or experiences that might highlight the limitations of such a frame.

INDIVIDUALIZING INEQUALITY

A love discourse individualizes inequality, rendering invisible the systems that support and normalize the behaviors of those who benefit most in White organizations. By deploying a love discourse, members of American High School and Lakeview Church talk about racial inequality without implicating themselves in White supremacy. We highlight two instances when each organization addressed the Black Lives Matter movement that illustrate what Douds calls a "diversity contract," or the process by which White people acknowledge race in terms of diversity, but not inequality (Douds 2021).

Individualizing Inequality: Lakeview Church

Pastor Isaac spoke at length about an upcoming visit from his good friend and mentor Pastor Darryl, an older Black man, who would be visiting Lakeview from his hometown of Ferguson, Missouri, the place where Michael Brown had been killed two years prior. Pastor Isaac acknowledged the importance of the visit the Sunday before Pastor Darryl arrived. As part of the morning announcements before his sermon, Pastor Isaac declared to the audience that this visit would be a chance for the congregation to discuss the "state of race in the country." As such, Pastor Isaac's description of the guest sermon carried much more weight than merely the excitement of a visit from an old friend. Further, his invitation to speak indicates that, as a Black man, Pastor Darryl passed the "race test" and would most likely be delivering a message that adhered to the dominant ideology of the White church and audience (Bracey and Moore 2017).

On the cool spring morning of Pastor Darryl's guest sermon, Pastor Isaac stood with Pastor Darryl in the sanctuary's front row. Both pastors held their hands in the air while the worship band played its usual rotation of songs. On a typical Sunday morning at Lakeview, congregants filter into the sanctuary with coffees in hand and chat quietly during the first songs, often slow to take their seats. On the morning of Pastor Darryl's visit, most of the seats were filled by the beginning of the first song. The room was much quieter than usual, which gave a sense of increased anticipation from the congregation about the sermon to come.

Pastor Darryl joked about this palpable energy in the room when he took his place at the front of the stage. While Pastor Isaac is fairly serious and quiet, Pastor Darryl told the crowd they would notice

a comparable shift in tone during his sermon. Pastor Darryl told the audience that when his voice got loud and fast, the audience would know he was preaching. He demonstrated this difference in cadence and tone to the seated congregation. Then he laughed and said, "I'm going to try to hold back my teeny tiny afro so that I don't Blackinize everyone in prayer today!" The mostly White audience laughed along with him. According to the Bible, he said, in earlier times "it didn't matter what ethnicity you were, they were all working together!" This comment generated lots of loud "Amens!" from the crowd, a routine practice in some Black churches but one that happened at no other time at Lakeview. Pastor Darryl's voice heightened as he proclaimed, "I don't know what it is about Lakeview, but you all bring out my Afrocentrism!" The predominantly White crowd laughed loudly.

Pastor Darryl continued his discussion of community and suggested to the crowd that when one person suffers, everyone suffers with him. Pastor Darryl then paused, Bible in hand, and looked out at the congregation intently. In a quieter voice, he said, "This isn't PC [Politically Correct], but I'm going to say it... " to which a White woman in the audience sitting towards the front of the stage loudly said, "SAY IT!" to the response of cheers around her. Pastor Darryl smiled, and continued, "I'm going to use a Mississippi-ism. I ain't interested in Black Lives Matter, I'm interested in All Lives Matter! The Devil sold us a lie!"

In this moment, the congregation rose to a standing ovation. This was the only instance in two years that Diefendorf witnessed this reaction at Lakeview. The audience roared in praise and applause, quieting only once Pastor Darryl started speaking again. Pastor Darryl pointed out a bald, White man sitting in the front row, and started talking about that man's "teeny tiny afro." Pastor Darryl then asked the same parishioner how he got to be so handsome. This too generated lots of laughter in the audience, and perhaps worked to diffuse any lingering tension after talking about the Black Lives Matter movement. Pastor Darryl relied on jokes of difference to lighten up the crowd before moving on with the remainder of the sermon.

Pastor Darryl is an older Black man visiting a predominantly White space thousands of miles from his home. In the words of his friend Pastor Isaac, he is quite literally a symbol of something larger for this congregation. The White congregation's treatment of Pastor Darryl is an example of what Mayorga-Gallo (2019) calls the commodification of people of color by which the existence of people of color in a White organization becomes proof of White commitment to diversity. As such, Pastor Darryl's claims that all lives matter becomes a legitimate response to racial inequality for this White audience, providing the answer to Pastor Isaac's question about how one should think about "the state of race in the country?"

Individualizing Inequality: American High School

In the middle of nationwide uprisings about racist police violence in the United States several teachers knelt at an assembly during the national anthem. As the choir sang the anthem, Max, a White teacher, dropped to one knee. Slowly, four other staff members, some Black and some White, followed suit. Nella, who was among the kneelers, described the experience as "intense," saying she was "shaking" but when she saw Max kneeling, she knew she had to join him. The district responded to this act of protest by a "letter of reprimand" in the participating staff members' files, a letter that instructed teachers not to "engage in acts of political expression during the workday."

Similar organizational resistance countered the Black Lives Matter movement elsewhere at American High. Two staff members, for instance, offered to bring a Black Lives Matter display from a neighboring school where it had been hanging in a hallway. Opposition arose fairly quickly, the beginning of a multiyear conflict that took a toll on teacher morale and employment, as well as student activists' attachment to and belief in the school. Part of this conflict involved a message Principal Walt sent to parents assuring them that the school would "address the police perspective." The announcement led one staff member involved in bringing the display, Lillith, to say that it made her feel "boxed in" because there wasn't "anything specifically anti-police" about the display in the first place. Nella suggested that "addressing the police perspective" was akin to trying to plan for Pink Prom and "inviting people from organizations that oppose homosexuality." The White school resource officer and a White woman staff member were widely reported to be "offended" by the display and their emotional responses were strong enough to lead another staff member to be "very scared" to be at the display alone.

As part of the argument against the display, Principal Walt claimed that the students weren't prepared to understand the content, suggesting that some parents might be upset because students "don't have the context to push back against the display." As an alternative he offered to hold an event at night for the display, structuring it as a "healing circle," that students could "opt in" to participating in. The "lack of preparedness" argument echoes a dynamic that Margaret Hagerman documents, suggesting that White youth find witnessing racism so upsetting that their parents seek to protect them from the apparent harm of knowing about it in the first place (2018).

When the display was finally allowed to go up, the poster introducing it stated that it "is not intended to be anti-police, anti-white, anti-unity, or anti-anything. Instead, the poster presentation is meant to raise awareness of difficult facts in our world and to remember the humanity of African American individuals who have been killed." Similarly, the introductory poster stated "American HS unconditionally values and honors police officers who put themselves in danger every day to help keep communities safe. We believe that police officers act in overwhelmingly moral ways to serve and protect, and we are so thankful for their work." There was, however, an attempt to balance these claims with statements about systemic racism:

> At the same time, we want to offer a sustained focus on the disproportional level of violence confronting African Americans in the context of altercations with police. While this exhibit focuses on individuals who were killed by police, we believe violence involving African American people is not limited to issues of policing but is the result of systemic conditions that impact a vast range of issues including education, health care, secure housing. and access to safety and prosperity for Black Americans.

In organizations framed by apolitical discourses of love and kindness, there is little room for a statement about the systemic nature of racial inequality as embodied by the Black Lives Matter movement. In Lakeview Church this means understanding the Black Lives Matter movement as the work of the devil and at American High School, as one that is political, unkind to police, and one for which (White) students are simply unprepared. These represent two different aspects of a "diversity ideology." At Lakeview, the presence of a Black minister who actively addresses racial difference serves as an example of the "commodification" of people of color, whereas at American High, the equivocating language around police and racism that accompanies the Black Lives Matter display exemplifies the way in which there may be limits on how much "diversity" is acceptable in a White organization. Additionally, the work it took to put up the Black Lives Matter display, from kneeling, to refusing a healing circle to insisting upon at least some language that included "systemic conditions" illustrates the way that the power and function of a love discourse may vary across racialized organizations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Both Lakeview Church and American High School approach racial inequality with an apolitical language of love that relies on and contributes to the active maintenance of White racial ignorance and supports individual rather than systemic explanations for and solutions to racial inequality. There is a striking similarity in the way a love discourse manifests in these two organizations. However, the ways in which the organizations differ from each other in approaching racial inequality suggests that the nature of organizations matters and highlights the varied ways racialized emotions can work in organizations.

A love discourse frames inequality as a non-political problem, one that can be solved by emotions rather than social change. However, an apolitical love is deeply political and politicized. What a love discourse does is allow a way of avoiding explicitly political talk, including talk that would be confrontational and, as such, can uphold the racial status quo. In the United States, a language of politics has long been seen as a contaminant in terms of civil discourse. Political talk is that which "specifically addresses issues of power, resource distribution or public morality" (Perrin 2006:43). In other words, talk that addresses systemic inequalities is political talk, regardless of whether or not it is partisan talk or has anything to do with a formal governing apparatus. Scholar Nina Eliasoph, in her research about

American civic life, suggests that the very ability to build and sustain community actually depends on the explicit avoidance of political topics. Introducing such topics to discussions is thought to threaten the capacity to build and be in community with one another. In both organizations then, a love discourse helps members and leadership to avoid a political framing that might interpret racial inequality as systemic, and not a matter solely of feelings. In this sense, both Lakeview and American High show how White organizations socialize people to accept something quite contradictory—that a deeply political perspective is "apolitical"—and that there can be negative consequences for those within the organization who do not comply with this view.

This apolitical love discourse sustains racial inequality through affirming and relying on White racial ignorance. Whether it be through conversations about the nonexistent "African tundra" that are never corrected, even while everyone has phones at their fingers, ready to look up the actual answer, or through students' active refusal to participate in conversations about racial inequality, White racial ignorance is cultivated and sustained in both organizations. This ignorance is not the mere detritus of White people's *not* knowing, or fear of their own fragility—that they will "mess up" in their efforts to begin the process of allyship and anti-racism. Rather, as Mueller argues, ignorance is the twin, not the opposite, of knowledge (2020). This dual organizational tactic of an apolitical love discourse and White racial ignorance matters for understandings of and responses to racial inequality.

An apolitical message of love goes unchallenged at Lakeview Church in a way it does not at American High. The love discourse at Lakeview is deployed without conflict by parishioners, leaders, guests and lay staff. However, dissent and alternative narratives appear at American High. By kneeling during the national anthem, advocating for a Black Lives Matter display, or drawing attention to racist policies and political climate, some students and teachers (though not administrators) at American High implicitly challenge a love discourse as a dominant framing for racial inequality. This difference was perhaps most clearly illustrated in how both Lakeview and American High responded to conversations about Black Lives Matter, and how each organization was able to reject or contain the critiques of racial inequality presented by the Black Lives Matter movement, critiques that implicate White organizations like Lakeview and American High. Lakeview Church rejected the very ideals of the Black Lives Matter movement as the work of the devil. In a church where topics of race are understood as political, and love is understood as the solution to racial divides, a statement that all lives matter reflects a sentiment of inclusion, especially if, as seems to be the case, the Black Lives Matter movement is understood as one focusing on the rights of Black people at the cost of White people. At Lakeview, a language of love is used to bring people together, to make them feel as if they are good people who are part of a caring community and to connect them (and those they share that love with) to the divine.

At American High, however, a love discourse and more systemic explanations of inequality were often in tension. Both appear at the Martin Luther King Jr. Day assembly and in responses to the Black Lives Matter display. However, these more systemic explanations may come at a cost for some. Teachers, for instance, who knelt during the national anthem were reprimanded for doing so because this way of addressing racial inequality was, unlike a love discourse, considered political. That is, at American High, a love discourse may remain dominant, not because of widespread support of organizational members but because powerful actors atop the organizational hierarchy wield, perhaps ironically, organizational tools of coercion and punishment to limit the viability of alternative discourses. Deviation from a love discourse at American High, in other words, is recognized as a problem to be addressed with organizational solutions. In this way, "apolitical" messages and understandings are systematically designated by organizations to be more acceptable than "political" ones.

The ability to challenge a love discourse, even if not fully successfully, may have to do with the nature of the organizations themselves. While both churches and schools are workplaces with employees and supervisors, the majority of participants in both of these organizations are not employees or supervisors, and, on the surface at least, the aim of these organizations is not primarily a profit-based one. A church is a hierarchical collection of people brought together by voluntary association. A school is also a hierarchical collection of people, some of whom are brought together by government mandate. And it is an organization in which the leaders wield the power of the state over other (often younger) members of the organization. While it may seem then that a church, an organization in which most members have similar legal and cultural standing may be more likely to sustain competing discourses, the voluntary nature of the association may render these sorts of disagreements

threatening to the existence of the organization itself (Eliasoph 1998). This is not to say churches do not experience conflict over social issues—certainly they do (Moon 2004), but such conflict may threaten the life of the organization in a way it would not in an organization that is not dependent on voluntary association. While formal punishment (job loss or suspension for example) may be more likely at a school, because it is an organization instantiated by the state, its state-mandated existence can sustain internal conflict. While the stakes may be higher in terms of sanctions for competing discourses at the school, the nature of the organization itself is not threatened by competing discourses.

There is nothing inherently apolitical about love as an emotion. Positive emotions such as love and kindness do not necessarily sustain racial inequality. In fact, emotions like love may be an important part of countering it. As bell hooks suggests, a love ethic can be central to working for racial justice. According to hooks, however, a love ethic is not just about expressing an emotion. A love ethic is not just being against "hate." A love ethic entails action, action that for White people may be costly in terms of their own privilege. A love ethic is the sort of love exemplified by teachers who tried to counter White racial ignorance at American High, or by the work of teachers and students to bring a Black Lives Matter display to school. A love ethic is not just a feeling, but a set of actions and commitments. Love as a feeling may be more easily deployed as an apolitical response, whereas love as an action may be more easily seen as a politicized one. When love as a feeling rather than an action becomes a dominant frame, it can be used to individualize the systemic nature of inequality, suggesting that if we just love each other, are positive and accept each other for who we are, these inequalities will no longer be systematically built into our institutions. In other words, these positive emotions are problems when they are deployed as racialized emotions that sustain White supremacy and racial inequality.

Combining data from a liberal and conservative organization brings together a theory of racialized organizations (Ray 2019) and a theory of racialized emotions (Bonilla-Silva 2019) to suggest that a love discourse in White organizations works to conceal and uphold the systemic nature of racial inequality. Doing so contributes to understandings of organizations as central to the reproduction of racial inequalities in several ways. First, our findings suggest that racialized emotions are central to the ways in which White racial ignorance is sustained in organizations. Second, non-workplaces can illustrate important and overlooked dimensions of racialized organizations. And third, the overlaps and differences in both organizations in this study suggest that love, as a racialized emotion, transcends the political make-up of these organizations in its ability to obfuscate, and, to some extent, neutralize challenges to racial inequality.

While hooks (1994) wrote so powerfully of the transformative and radical elements central to certain manifestations of love, the deployment of love as a racialized emotion in the church and the school works to prioritize an apolitical and individual approach to racial inequality. This approach helps illuminate the ways in which White individuals, and the organizations of which they are a part, are active participants in sustaining racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva 2021), even, and especially when, exhibiting ignorance (Mueller 2020). This framing allows White folks to abdicate responsibility for solving racial inequality by proposing love as the solution. With love as the language of inequality at both Lakeview Church and American High School, congregants and students can juxtapose their actions against the secular world or hate, respectively.

This work shows that, while research often conceptualizes resources within organizations as those most often associated with workplaces: wages, benefits, or promotions, research must continue to understand how emotions work within organizations as a resource that may be deployed in specific ways for the benefit of a few and at the expense of many. Future research may consider how emotion is tied explicitly to other forms of resources (Ray 2019), and how this emotion work may become a structured form of ignorance within the organization (Mueller 2018). Additionally, this work highlights the continued need to center organizations as racialized structures (Ray 2019) and to do so with White racial spaces beyond the adult workplace.

Combined, these data highlight the ways White organizations reproduce understandings of racial inequality in everyday organizational life, specifically through the deployment of racialized emotion, an apolitical love that focuses on individuals at the cost of its more transformative forms (hooks 1994). A focus on love as a feeling rather than as, in hooks' (1994) exhortation, an action accompanied by accountability and responsibility, renders organizational acknowledgement of inequality and the need for structural change difficult. As such, it is important to recognize love as a racialized emotion that sustains racial inequality.

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