

# Reproducing Inequality in a Formally Antiracist Organization: The Case of Racialized Career Pathways in the United Methodist Church<sup>1</sup>

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Victor Ray argues organizations are racial structures that legitimate the unequal distribution of resources and stratify the agency of racial groups through organizational processes that treat White identity as a credential and decouple formal rules meant to reduce disparities from practice. This study demonstrates the utility of this theory in an empirical case study of disparities in earnings, job quality, and advancement among clergy in the United Methodist Church. Despite the preferences articulated by Black clergy, the formal organizational policies that ban race as a consideration in appointment making were decoupled from managerial practices; thus, clergy and congregations were matched on race. Because of local control over salaries and major resource disparities between congregations, race matching led to Black-White disparities in pay, advancement, working conditions, and professional support. The most promising remedy is a common salary scale with a more comprehensive redistribution process to address resources inequalities across congregations.

Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

—John Wesley (letter to William Wilberforce, 1791)

Logical explanation fails before the patterns of contemporary racial discrimination so close in intent to, if different in form from, those practiced in earlier times.

—Derrick Bell (1987)

<sup>1</sup> With gratitude, we acknowledge that this research would not be possible without the willingness of Black United Methodist pastors to describe their experiences to us in focus

Racism is a social process through which social and material resources are distributed unequally according to the relative social position of racialized groups (Blumer 1958; Bonilla-Silva 2001). A variety of mechanisms (re)produce racial disparities in observable outcomes through the inequitable distribution of resources. For example, in the United States, work-related inequalities persist between Black and White workers in terms of the availability of jobs, wages, quality of employment, and opportunities for advancement (Moss and Tilly 1996; Maume 1999; Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson 2000; Elliott and Smith 2001; Western and Pettit 2005).<sup>2</sup> Occupational racial disparities stem in part from the facts that racial groups are unevenly distributed across occupations and occupations compensate differently (Weeden 2002). On its own, this sorting is consistent with expected patterns from a broader racialized social system in which resources are differentially distributed according to racial status (Bonilla-Silva 1997). However, net of occupation-level differences, what do Black-White disparities imply? Some suggest that within-occupation disparities reflect the premarket acquisition of differentially rewarded skills driven by the correlation between racial status and access

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<sup>2</sup> We choose to capitalize the terms “Black” and “White” following the logic of Catherine MacKinnon: “I do not regard Black as merely a color of skin pigmentation, but as a heritage, an experience, a cultural and personal identity, the meaning of which becomes specifically stigmatic and/or glorious and/or ordinary under specific social conditions. It is ... no less specifically meaningful or definitive than, any linguistic, tribal, or religious ethnicity that are conventionally recognized by capitalization” (1982, p. 516). By the same logic, we also capitalize White, Asian, and Latinx. Our goal is not to essentialize race but merely to recognize that the embedded social meanings attached to race exert powerful influences on people’s lives.

to socioeconomic resources (Neal and Johnson 1996; Heckman 1998; Lang 2007). Those sympathetic to this perspective also argue that racial disparities are largely being replaced by class disparities, particularly in fields that require advanced education or training (Wilson 1980, p. 19; Wilson 1997; Heckman 1998).

We take a different approach and argue that, in large part, occupational racial disparities generated unfold *within the labor market* (Darity and Mason 1998). Organizations—social groups where individuals' efforts are jointly coordinated to accomplish a set of tasks and/or goals—are key drivers of inequality. They create and accumulate resources (money, wealth, technical skills, etc.), which are redistributed unequally through networks of social relations (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019, pp. 2–5). In this research, we are interested in how racialized processes come to govern the distribution of organizational resources and create situations in which people with similar sets of credentials and qualifications, working in the same profession and in the same organization (Carrington and Troske 1998; Sakamoto, Wu, and Tzeng 2000), receive different organizational rewards based solely on their racial status (Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell 1999; Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Pager, Bonikowski, and Western 2009; Skrentny 2013). In some organizational contexts, including the one highlighted here, these disparities emerge due to race matching between employees and clientele, which previous research has demonstrated is a major driver of large racial gaps in performance pay (EEOC 2007; Bielby 2012; Heywood and Parent 2012) and executive compensation (Collins 1989).

We expand this line of research to demonstrate how race matching emerges and impacts wages and opportunities for advancement among religious workers in the United Methodist Church (UMC), an organization that is formally opposed to this practice through its policy of open itineracy. In the UMC, race matching represents a case of racialized organizational decoupling between formal rules and informal practices (Ray 2019). Our case centers the experiences of Black clergy navigating the UMC, a predominantly White organization, which, across the three large regional bodies observed in this study, employs more than 3,000 clergy (2018 data, Lewis Center for Church Leadership 2020) and serves a membership of 717,000 people (General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church 2018a). Our approach follows calls for scholars of inequality to use hybrid research designs to examine the processes generating inequality in specific organizations (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019, p. 24). In-depth case studies of individual organizations are vital to understanding the more general processes that generate racial disparities across a range of outcomes. While our approach does not necessarily generalize across professions, it provides a comprehensive view of the conditions under which racialized organizational processes can exercise a large and durable (Tilly 1998) effect on

the distribution of organizational rewards that employees receive. Our study is also motivated by Harrison's (2013, p. 333) observation that "in an increasingly diverse America, understanding how race operates in the few remaining racially homogeneous outposts of privilege is essential to the project of dismantling its power."

#### THEORETICAL APPROACH

This study is primarily informed by Ray's (2019) theory of racialized organizations. Ray argues against theoretical approaches to organizations as race-neutral structures and instead exhorts scholars to view race as constitutive of organizations (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993; Bhatt 2013; Wooten and Couloute 2017). A racialized organization is defined as a set of social relations limiting the agency and collective efficacy of subordinate racial groups while magnifying the agency of the dominant group. Organizations encode socially shared understandings about race into formal and informal rules and practices that govern the unequal distribution of social and material resources. Attending to the processes undergirding racial inequality can shed light on how organizations amplify or dull what might be expected due to individual-level prejudice alone. Further, this approach can help us better understand how racial inequalities can be reproduced or exacerbated even in formally antiracist organizations governed by ostensibly well-intentioned actors and racially progressive policies. A similar argument has been made for studying gender in organizations (Acker 2006; Ely and Padavic 2007).

Ray's theory of racialized organizations has four main tenets: "(1) racialized organizations enhance or diminish the agency of racial groups; (2) racialized organizations legitimate the unequal distribution of resources; (3) whiteness is a credential; and (4) the decoupling of formal rules from organizational practice is often racialized" (Ray 2019, p. 26). One important way to advance social-scientific knowledge on racialized organizations is to provide an empirical assessment of the mechanisms at play in Ray's theoretical model regarding the processes producing and reproducing racial inequalities in organizations. While our major focus is on demonstrating the utility of a structural theory of racialized organizations, we also glean insights from relational inequality theory (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019), which emphasizes the importance of understanding the particularities of a given organization's context and history and how the social relationships between people and positions in an organization produce a specific racial inequality regime (Acker 2006).

Looking at one profession within one organization and in one geographic area does impose limitations on the generalizability of our findings. However, it also has advantages. We eliminate the problem of interorganizational heterogeneity. If multiple organizations are studied simultaneously, it can make

it difficult to discern the mechanisms that contribute to racial inequalities. Even within a single occupation there is considerable heterogeneity, which may make understanding how organizational structure impacts worker outcomes difficult (Baron and Bielby 1980). By using the case of one group of professionals in one religious denomination in one geographic region of the United States, we clarify how individuals' perceptions and experiences of occupational inequality unfold in relation to a variety of observed and unobserved occupational and contextual factors that might be obscured in a larger-scale study. Focusing on a specific group of professionals allows us to explore and identify ways that formal organizational rules combine with informal processes to contribute to the persistence of racial inequality.

#### CASE DESCRIPTION: THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

In this study, we focus on clergy, the dominant occupational group in the UMC, to advance our understanding of the mechanisms contributing to the persistence of racial inequality (Reskin 2003). The UMC is a large, complex, multilayered bureaucratic organization that coordinates a wide array of programs and services. With about 6.8 million members and 31,000 congregations in the United States, the UMC is one of the country's largest Protestant denominations (General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church 2018*b*). At its core, the UMC is a global network of nearly 44,000 local religious congregations to which the denomination appoints individuals to serve as pastors. The organizational structure of the UMC is outlined in table 1.

The focus of this study is on the professionals who lead local churches (usually called pastors or ministers and collectively referred to as clergy). In the UMC, clergy salaries are set by congregations but are influenced by several factors at other levels of the organization; these are summarized in table 2. Pastors are assigned to specific congregations by midlevel regional managers (also ordained pastors) known as district superintendents, who work under the authority of a bishop who presides over a geographic region known as an annual conference. Annual conferences coordinate together through an international organization known as the General Conference. The General Conference sets high-level policies, including many of the policies that govern the appointment of pastors to churches, which are then enacted by the annual conferences. Within the UMC, there is a nine-member ecclesiastical court known as the Jurisdictional Council, which rules on the constitutionality of laws passed by the General Conference and determines whether the actions of churches, church agencies, annual conferences, and bishops are in accordance with church law. This study focuses on the interplay among congregations, which manage resources at the local level (including member donations and the terms of employment, including salary, offered to pastors),

TABLE 1  
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE UMC

Level of Organization	Description
General conference . . . . .	Global denomination of annual conferences (U.S.) and central conferences (global), with resource agencies and commissions that serve the entire church. Meets every four years to set policy and polity for the denomination. Meetings attended by 1,000 delegates: 500 clergy and 500 laity.
Jurisdictional conference . . . . .	Geographic area of annual conferences. Jurisdictional conference, held every four years, elects and appoints bishops and sets annual conference boundaries. There are five jurisdictions in the United States.
Annual conference . . . . .	A geographic area composed of several districts, with an elected bishop and resource facilities and staff. Annual conferences are governed by lay and clergy members of the annual conference, which sets vision, budget, and policy. Bishop and district superintendents appoint pastors to charges on an annual basis. There are 54 U.S. and 70 international conferences.
Districts . . . . .	Geographic area with appointed district superintendent; manages a group of charges.
Charge . . . . .	Individual or small number (two to four) of local congregations served by appointed clergy and elected lay leadership. Sets salary and terms of employment for the pastor(s).

the annual conference, which manages the pool of pastors and distributes those resources to congregations, and the General Conference, which has established the constitution by which the annual conferences are bound.

Annual conferences, which manage the ordination and appointment process, are funded primarily through a system of apportionments. Apportionments are fees that are assigned by annual conferences to congregational charges. During the budgeting process, annual conferences set the amount that each congregational charge is asked to pay to support the denomination. Apportionments are voluntary payments and are generally a percentage of a congregation’s overall expenditures. Pastors are responsible for encouraging the congregation(s) within their charge to meet the requested apportionment.

Churches do not hire their own clergy. Rather, each annual conference annually appoints pastors to charges. Charges usually consist of one or two churches, but there are cases where pastors are tasked with leadership over three or four separate congregations. For example, a pastor may be charged to serve as a solo, lead, or associate pastor in one larger congregation, as a solo pastor of multiple smaller congregations, or in an extracongregational role such as a hospital chaplain or campus minister (these extracongregational roles are outside the scope of this study). Churches, however, are not

passive actors in this process. They play an important consultative role in the process. Because the annual conference is funded by church apportionments, the annual conference leadership must be careful not to alienate local churches, especially larger and more well-resourced congregations, whose apportionments make up a large part of the annual conference budget. Most importantly, churches set the salary for their positions. Churches that can pay more, do, in the hopes that they can receive a more experienced candidate. Pastors' salaries, like most of a congregation's spending, are primarily supported through regular giving by their adherents (King et al. 2019). Some often larger, older, and wealthier congregations also have endowment funds to support their operations. In other cases, charges may receive apportionment funds from the annual conference, generally to supplement pastor salaries in cases where the congregational charge cannot meet the conference minimum salary level.

Each annual conference is divided into smaller subregions, called districts, which are overseen by district superintendents. Bishops appoint district superintendents to manage districts, which generally consist of anywhere from 50 to 120 or more congregations. The bishop and district superintendents form the cabinet. The cabinet is tasked with appointing clergy to charges on an annual basis. District superintendents work directly with individual pastors and congregations to assess the fit between the pastor and the congregation, to determine the congregation's needs when they require a new pastor, and to discuss with pastors any preferences or requests they might have on where they could be transferred during the next round of appointments. Annual reappointments can be to the same charge, but the UMC moves its clergy frequently. Junior clergy are normally appointed to a new charge every two to four years, while more senior clergy tend to be moved every six to 10 years. Larger, more prominent churches usually receive more experienced clergy. These churches often come with significantly higher salaries. Although the appointment process in the UMC is officially in the hands of the cabinet, local congregations exercise considerable control in the process. Vital to this study is that *individual churches set the salary and job descriptions for their clergy*. Churches with more financial resources, typically larger congregations and those with a more affluent membership, can offer higher salaries. While the bishop has final authority in the appointment process, local churches often work in close collaboration with their district superintendent and can appeal appointment decisions through a formal process.

Because this study draws from the theoretical perspective that views organizations as poolers and unequal redistributors of resources, we find it useful to think of the appointment process as a group resource allocation problem. Congregations, which are unified in their common United Methodist identity, are in competition for scarce clergy resources held by the cabinets. Findings from experimental psychology suggest that in groups with

TABLE 2  
 CONGREGATION CHARACTERISTICS RELEVANT TO CLERGY SALARY BY UMC ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Factor Influencing Salary	Congregation Level	Annual Conference Level	General Conference Level
Congregation's discretion over salary	The staff-parish relations committee members set specific salary; salary can not go below prescribed minimums, but there is significant discretion above the limit.	The annual conference in which the pastor serves sets the limit of what a church must pay.	
Congregational financial resources	The vast majority of operating budgets come from individual donations, and salaries are a large majority of congregational expenses. Churches may have rental income and endowment income. Rental income is generally modest, and endowments are often restricted.		
Congregation size	As salaries make up the majority of the budget, and larger churches have larger budgets, they generally offer higher salaries. Larger churches are more likely to be made up of people with higher incomes (Eagle 2012), meaning per capita donations in larger churches may be higher.		

Congregational racial makeup	<p>Giving levels are highly correlated with household income. Congregations with a larger proportion of lower SES members will have lower per capita giving. To the extent race is correlated with income, predominantly racial minority churches are more likely to have fewer resources to pay pastors.</p>	<p>Pastors are generally racially matched with the predominant racial makeup of the church. Thus, minority pastors are often placed in churches with fewer resources and lower salaries.</p>
Appointment payments	<p>Congregants give money to churches, which are then asked to give a portion to cover denominational administrative expenses. Infrequently, churches receive money redistributed from apportionment fees for salaries.</p>	<p>District superintendents plus the bishop compose the cabinet, which decides how to spend apportionment payments across the annual conference.</p>
Policies governing appointments	<p>Church needs and preferences are considered when making appointments. Congregations have the ability to appeal an appointment to the bishop.</p>	<p>District superintendents try to ensure that pastors do not take a pay cut when they move appointments. Because there are relatively fewer larger churches with higher salaries, those who get appointed to higher paying churches are more likely to earn more over their career.</p> <p>The general conference sets high-level policies pertaining to appointments that annual conferences are required to follow. Open itinerancy is established as a policy at this level. The nine-member ecclesiastical court known as the Jurisdictional Council rules on the constitutionality of laws passed by the general conference and determines whether the actions of churches, annual conferences, and bishops are in accordance with church law.</p>

high levels of power imbalance (which is the case in the UMC in terms of the financial resources, size, and prestige of individual congregations), there will be more competitive behavior and more difficulty reaching resource allocation agreements (Mannix 1993). And because this study takes the perspective that organizations are inherently racialized, our specific focus is on the ways racial difference is used by organizational actors to guide the assignment of clergy to congregations and, by extension, organizational rewards back to clergy.

### A Brief Overview of Race and the UMC

Race has served as a central factor in the social structure of the UMC. Like many mainline Protestant denominations, the UMC is predominantly White. According to national data, 89.6% of the lay membership is White, and 5.9% is Black (Johnson 2012). This mirrors the racial composition of UMC clergy. Nationally, in 2011, 6.1% of UMC clergy were Black and 88.5% were White (General Commission on the Status and Role of Women 2011). Owing to historical contingencies, the proportion of minority clergy varies regionally. In this study, we focused on three annual conferences, the North Carolina Conference (covering the eastern portion of the state), the Western North Carolina Conference, and the South Carolina Conference. The two North Carolina conferences mirror the national denomination in terms of the number of minority pastors and majority-minority congregations, with the Western Conference slightly more diverse than the North Carolina Conference. South Carolina has a significantly higher proportion of Black pastors and predominately Black congregations. In 2015, about 28% of South Carolina UMC churches were led by Black clergy, in line with national estimates of the proportion of congregations led by Black pastors in the United States overall (Chaves and Anderson 2008). Black churches are not evenly distributed geographically. As shown in figure 1, in North Carolina, Black churches are clustered in the major metropolitan areas of Greensboro (in the Western Conference), the greater Charlotte area (also in the West), and the Raleigh-Durham metro area (in the North Carolina Conference). In South Carolina, Black churches are clustered around the Charleston and Greenville-Spartanburg metro areas, with another major cluster in the rural, majority-Black counties in the east-central part of the state.

### Open Itinerary

Like many large organizations, the UMC has formal, binding commitments to eliminating racial inequality, including a policy that expressly forbids race matching in the process of assigning pastors to churches. In *The Book of*



FIG. 1.—The spatial distribution of UMCs in the Carolinas. Plotting characters are scaled by the size of the congregation, and gray lines indicate county boundaries.

*Discipline*, which constitutes the law and doctrine of the UMC, the denomination has adopted a formal policy termed *open itineracy* that governs the process of appointing clergy to specific charges. Open itineracy is defined in *The Book of Discipline* as follows: "Appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status or age, except for the provision of mandatory retirement. Annual conferences shall, in their training of staff-parish relations committees, emphasize the open nature of itineracy and prepare congregations to receive the gifts and graces of appointed clergy without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age" (United Methodist Church [U.S.] 2016, para. 425, sec. 1). Additionally, *The Book of Discipline* lays out specific guidelines governing cross-racial appointments, stating, "Cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments are made as a creative response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the church and in its leadership. . . . Annual conferences shall prepare clergy and congregations for cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. When such appointments are made, bishops, cabinets, and boards of ordained ministry shall provide specific training for the clergypersons so appointed and for their congregations" (United Methodist Church [U.S.] 2016, para. 425, sec. 4). Open itineracy and the requirement to establish trainings when making cross-racial appointments are enforceable through the judicial council, a body the UMC has established to ensure church bodies adhere to the constitution and rules outlined in *The Book of Discipline*. The concept of open itineracy is emphasized in the formal training of district superintendents and is broadly familiar to clergy. Open itineracy has been the official policy of the UMC since 1968, when Black pastors and Black churches were officially reintegrated into annual conferences. Previously, Black churches and pastors were put in a separate administrative unit known as the Central Jurisdiction (Thomas 1992). Open itineracy was instituted in response to the Civil Rights movement and out of a desire to desegregate the UMC. The language of open itineracy deliberately mirrored Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which outlawed the practice of using race in employment decisions.

#### DATA AND METHODS

In this study, we used data from the two annual conferences in North Carolina and the annual conference covering South Carolina. North Carolina was chosen as a focus due to available data collected as part of a larger, comprehensive study of UMC clergy in the state that was conducted by Duke Divinity School's Clergy Health Initiative. However, the proportion of Black churches and clergy in North Carolina, while nationally representative, was low. South Carolina, with a much larger proportion of Black churches, was added to the study to test whether different proportions of Black churches in an annual conference impacted the observed patterns.

Data for this study came from a variety of sources including statewide surveys of pastors in North Carolina, official statistics collected by the denomination, web-scraped information on clergy in South Carolina, focus groups conducted with Black clergy in North Carolina, and in-depth qualitative interviews with district superintendents in both North and South Carolina. The data and analytic strategy are described in detail below.

### Surveys and Supplemental Quantitative Data Sources

Data on the key characteristics of North Carolina UMC clergy came from the Clergy Health Initiative Longitudinal Survey (hereafter, CHI Longitudinal Survey). The CHI Longitudinal Survey was, at the time of analysis (it has since expanded to include three additional waves), a four-wave panel that was distributed to all actively serving UMC clergy in North Carolina in 2008; subsequent waves included any new North Carolina UMC clergy in 2010, 2012, and 2014. Response rates were high across all waves of the survey—95% in 2008, 87% in 2010, 83% in 2012, and 76% in 2014. We used the respondent's self-report of salary, net of housing allowance, as the key dependent variable to test for racial disadvantage among clergy. Clergy either received income tax-free housing allowances—based on the fair market rental value of their home, plus utilities—or lived in a church-owned parsonage. Analyzing salary differences net of housing allowances allowed us to make equal comparisons between clergy regardless of whether they lived in a parsonage or received a housing allowance. The CHI Longitudinal Survey gathered information on key demographic and occupational characteristics of clergy, including their gender, race, age, educational attainment, number of hours worked per week, number of churches served, whether they were a solo, lead, or associate pastor, and whether they served a rural or urban/suburban congregation.

To augment the CHI Longitudinal Survey, the UMC provided us with church-level data collected from annual administrative surveys mandated by the General Conference. Because the information gathered in these surveys is used by district superintendents to make decisions about where to appoint clergy and are made publicly available, these data are typically of good quality. We used these data to identify key congregational characteristics, including the racial composition of the congregation, solo/lead pastor salaries (where they were missing or not available from the CHI Longitudinal Survey), church location, church property values, church budget, size of church membership, size of weekly worship attendance, and information on the amount of apportionment paid. We also used these data to identify ordination status—either local pastor or elder. Ordained elders are guaranteed continuing appointments as long as they remain ordained, are subject to a minimum full-time salary (about \$42,000 per year in 2016), and

can serve any congregation in the conference. Local pastors are not promised full-time employment, are only guaranteed appointment for one year, and can only serve the congregation to which they are appointed. Local pastors in the North Carolina annual conference were subject to the same minimum full-time salary as elders (\$42,000); in Western North Carolina and South Carolina, they were subject to a minimum of about \$33,000 per year.

We classified churches as predominantly Black if more than 90% of the members were identified as Black or African American; White, if more than 90% of the members of the church were identified as White; other, if the church was made up of another ethnic group that comprised at least 90% of the membership; and mixed if no one ethnic group made up 90% of the membership. While some have used 80% as the threshold for monoracial churches (Dougherty 2003), because the degree of segregation was so high, the choice of cutoff between 80% and 90% made no substantive difference to our results and we used the more stringent criterion. With these categories established, we examined the prevalence of cross-racial appointments (where a pastor of one race was appointed to lead a church of a different racial group) for clergy who identified as White, Black, or another racial identity (from the analysis, we dropped the “other” racial category in South Carolina and retained only Black or White pastors).

One limitation of conference statistics is that they do not include key pastor-level information on race and gender. Project budget limitations did not allow us to conduct a survey of South Carolina pastors to determine their race and gender. Instead, to code the pastor’s race and gender in South Carolina, we web scraped images of the solo/lead pastors from the South Carolina UMC webpage. We collected 559 images this way; 103 pastors did not have pictures on the website, so we manually searched online by their name and the church they served. We found an additional 70 clergy pictures this way—mostly through the Facebook pages of churches. We then used Mechanical Turk to ask a pool of workers located in the Southern United States to code the clergy for both race and gender.<sup>3</sup> Three workers independently coded each image. For gender, workers were asked, “Indicate whether the person in the image is a man or woman. If you’re not sure, make your best guess.” Similarly, for race we asked, “Indicate whether you would identify this person as Black or White or some other race/ethnicity. If you’re not sure, make your best guess.” For both race and gender, coders could skip images they could not classify. Workers were paid four cents to code each image. Intercoder agreement was high on both race and gender.<sup>4</sup> In total, all three coders agreed on the race of the clergy 99.6% of the time and on the gender

<sup>3</sup> Mechanical Turk is a service offered by Amazon, whereby the client can assign small tasks to a large pool of workers around the world.

<sup>4</sup> Because the focus of our study was Black and White pastors, we only asked workers to code for these two specific racial identities. Coders could select “other” for people who did

of the clergy 99% of the time. In cases where there was disagreement, we chose the category that was agreed upon by two of the coders. We then examined differences across North Carolina and South Carolina in terms of the frequency of cross-racial appointments and salary. One limitation of this approach was that we could only collect the information on solo or senior clergy in South Carolina, as associate pastors were not included in these data. Owing to small differences between the North Carolina and Western North Carolina conferences, we aggregated statistics statewide.

After linking the CHI Longitudinal Survey and the North Carolina conference data, we aimed to quantify racial salary differences. To maximize our analysis sample, we searched across all four waves of available data (2008, 2010, 2012, and 2014) to find all the uniquely occurring active pastors and adjusted their reported salary by the consumer price index to put it into 2014 dollars. For respondents who appeared multiple times, we chose their most recent data. We dropped all cases where clergy did not report the number of hours worked per week.

To quantify differences in compensation, we first calculated raw salary differences. We used descriptive statistics to establish baseline differences in compensation and other key factors that were related to compensation. Because clergy can serve more than one congregation simultaneously, we calculated total salary and congregation size across all congregations served; in the reporting of categorical differences, we chose the characteristics of the largest congregation.

We used multiple regression to investigate the congregation-level factors that influenced the salary offered to clergy, including the key independent variable, the predominant racial makeup of the church. In this analysis, the dependent variable was the square root of salary. Normally, income models are log-normal. However, because we were focused on one group of employees with a narrower band of salaries, a square root transformation was more effective at normalizing the outcome variable. The key independent variable was a three-category variable for the predominant racial group in the congregation with indicators for Black, White, and other racial identity. We added several control variables, including an indicator for the annual conference (the North Carolina Conference was the reference), the average annual worship attendance, and the per attender annual operating budget

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not fit these categories or skip coding if they could not classify the image. Previous research has shown that there is a high degree of correspondence between interviewer-observed and self-reported Black racial identity (Saperstein 2006). We worried that coders would have a hard time determining people who were of Hispanic, Asian, or Native American origins and code them as Black. However, the impact of this problem is likely small, as African-Americans make up more than 95% of the minority clergy in South Carolina (Johnson 2012). In addition, research has shown that interviewers rarely, if ever, mistakenly classify non-Black racial minorities as Black (Saperstein 2006; Herman 2010).

(both pooled for all churches served). Attendance and per attender budget were log transformed, which made the coefficients on these highly skewed variables more interpretable. We excluded one congregation reporting more than a \$10,000/year per worshipper budget and two congregations reporting five or fewer attenders at all worship services.

### Qualitative Data

We collected and analyzed primary qualitative data from two sources: two focus groups with Black clergy and interviews with key organizational decision makers in the annual conferences.

*Focus groups with Black clergy.*—Two focus groups were held with Black clergy in February 2011. Focus groups collected information about participants' conceptualizations of health, barriers to and facilitators of health, and the perceived relationship between the congregation and the health of the pastor. Focus group participants were recruited by an invitation extended to all Black UMC clergy from North Carolina (a total of 104 clergy) from the Duke Clergy Health Initiative. Lunch and travel reimbursements were offered as compensation. Each focus group lasted about 90 minutes and was attended by a total of 14 pastors. A Black man facilitated the first group, and a White woman facilitated the second. Each focus group was audiotaped and later transcribed. No systematic differences emerged in the range of themes identified across focus groups.

Using Atlas.ti, three members of the research team iteratively coded the focus group transcripts by identifying regularities and patterns in the data. This strategy allowed descriptive codes to emerge from the data (Charmaz and Mitchell 2007). Two members of the research team independently coded each transcript and reached consensus through discussion about any discrepancies. In addition, all three coders independently combined descriptive codes into broader themes—explanations that did not merely describe the unit of data but illustrated deeper constructs (Miles and Huberman 1994). This analytic approach allowed us to better understand how the mechanisms identified in the quantitative data regarding racial segregation and pay disparities unfolded in the everyday experiences of Black clergy. This approach also generated insights regarding how Black clergy understood the psychosocial costs of racial inequality, possibilities for occupational advancement in the context of a majority-White organization, and the availability of social support resources.

*Qualitative interviews with district superintendents and bishop's staff.*—District superintendents, bishops, and their staff are the central organizational decision makers in the appointment-making process. We conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with nine district superintendents, three respondents from each of the Western North Carolina, North Carolina, and

South Carolina annual conferences. Four respondents were Black, five were White, four were men, and five were women. We also interviewed one former bishop and one staff member in a bishop's office (we masked the annual conference affiliation of these individuals due to confidentiality concerns but note that they worked in the Southeastern Jurisdiction, which encompasses the Carolinas). We conducted interviews via phone between January and April 2020. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interviews covered four major domains: respondents' understandings of the formal policies governing the appointment process, the informal policies governing the appointment process, the thought processes involved as they make appointments, and the reasons for racial inequalities among clergy in their conference. Three members of the research team analyzed interview transcripts using applied thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2011) by structurally coding each interview according to each of the four major domains listed above, independently identifying major themes using content coding and iteratively developing a codebook. The team met to discuss similarities and differences, reach consensus on the content codes, and identify representative quotations from each domain.

## RESULTS

Most UMC congregations in this study were predominantly White, although this varied across North and South Carolina. Averaged across the two North Carolina conferences, in 2014, 90.7% of congregations were White, 6.0% of congregations were Black, 0.7% were of another racial identity, and 2.7% were of a mixed racial identity (where one racial group did not make up at least 90% of the membership). These numbers were largely unchanged from 2008 and were representative of the denomination as a whole (Dougherty, Martí, and Ferguson 2021). By contrast, in South Carolina, in 2015, 71.4% of congregations were White, 26.6% were Black, and 2.0% were not predominantly White or Black.

### Correspondence of Pastors and Congregations by Race

In table 3, we report the proportion of clergy who were in cross-racial appointments in North Carolina in 2008 and 2014 and in South Carolina in 2015 (2008 and 2014 were the first and last time periods when data were available in North Carolina and are presented to demonstrate any significant change over time; 2015 data are presented for South Carolina as that was the year in which we web scraped clergy data). Several key pieces of information demonstrate that clergy and congregations are overwhelmingly matched by race. First, across time points and states, churches were largely racially homogeneous. In North Carolina, in 2014, 97.3% of congregations represented by our data had memberships where 90% of members shared

TABLE 3  
RACIAL IDENTITY OF CLERGY BY CONGREGANTS

	RACIAL IDENTITY OF AT LEAST 90% OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION				TOTAL
	White	Black	Other	Mixed <sup>c</sup>	
North Carolina, 2008: <sup>a</sup>					
Black clergy . . . . .	16 (.9) <sup>b</sup>	111 (95.7)	0 (0)	9 (23.1)	136
White clergy . . . . .	1740 (96.4)	3 (2.6) <sup>b</sup>	2 (11.8)	21 (53.8)	1,766
Other clergy . . . . .	49 (2.7)	2 (1.7)	15 (88.2)	9 (23.1)	75
Total . . . . .	1,805 (91.3)	116 (5.9)	17 (.9)	39 (2.0)	1977
North Carolina, 2014: <sup>a</sup>					
Black clergy . . . . .	14 (.9) <sup>b</sup>	88 (89.8)	1 (.9)	6 (13.6)	109
White clergy . . . . .	1,438 (96.4)	6 (6.1) <sup>b</sup>	2 (18.2)	28 (63.6)	1,474
Other clergy . . . . .	40 (2.7)	4 (4.1)	8 (72.7)	10 (22.7)	62
Total . . . . .	1492 (90.7)	98 (6.0)	11 (.7)	44 (2.7)	1645
South Carolina, 2015: <sup>d</sup>					
Black clergy . . . . .	4 (.6) <sup>b</sup>	239 (100)	5 (27.8) <sup>e</sup>		248
White clergy . . . . .	638 (99.4)	0 (0) <sup>b</sup>	13 (72.2) <sup>e</sup>		651
Total . . . . .	642 (71.4)	239 (26.6)	18 (2.0) <sup>e</sup>		899

NOTE.—Data are presented as *n* (%). Data are taken from North Carolina, Clergy Health Panel Survey, and UMC conference records (for North Carolina) and web-scraped data and UMC conference records (for South Carolina).

<sup>a</sup> This includes both head/solo pastors and associate pastors who were respondents to the Clergy Health Panel Survey.

<sup>b</sup> Cross-racial appointment.

<sup>c</sup> Mixed racial identity churches are those where no one racial/ethnic group comprises 90% or more of the congregation.

<sup>d</sup> This includes only head/solo pastors and only codes the pastor’s race as Black or White.

<sup>e</sup> Here the categories Other and Mixed for racial identity were combined because we only coded pastors as Black or White.

the same racial identity. In South Carolina, 98.0% of the congregations were in this category. There was a low incidence of cross-racial appointments in both predominantly Black and predominantly White churches. In 2014, in North Carolina, 14 of the 109 Black pastors (12.8%) in the respondent pool were appointed to White churches; in South Carolina, only four of the 248 Black senior/solo pastors (1.6%) had appointments to White churches. Appointments of White pastors to Black churches were even less common, with only six out of the 1,474 White clergy (0.4%) in North Carolina appointed to Black churches; in South Carolina, among lead pastors, there were no such appointments made. Looking at the trends over time, in North Carolina, the situation had changed little since 2008.

To put the observed patterns in context, it is helpful to consider how far the observed patterns of racial correspondence between churches and clergy deviated from what would be expected absent race matching. If we assume clergy are geographically mobile within annual conferences and Black and White clergy have similar levels of experience, then were race matching not

occurring, it would be reasonable to expect that the overall proportion of Black and White clergy in an annual conference would be relatively evenly distributed across all congregations. In figure 2, the expected versus observed proportion of clergy assigned to Black and White congregations is presented. Because part-time clergy may not be mobile because they may have another job, in figure 2 we present only senior or solo full-time pastors; we also only report predominantly Black and White churches. Because the proportions of Black and White clergy are different in the two annual conferences in North Carolina, we also provide a breakdown by conference. As this figure shows, there are huge disparities between the observed and expected number of cross-racial appointments. In South Carolina, we would expect 202 cross-racial appointments (either White pastors in predominantly Black churches or vice versa), whereas there are only three such appointments. In the North Carolina and the Western North Carolina annual conferences, the expected versus observed counts are 31 versus 3 and 82 versus 8, respectively.

### Managerial Accounts of Race Matching

If open itineracy was being generally applied, the pattern of pervasive race matching would not emerge. Obviously, in the appointment process, cabinets are choosing to match clergy and congregations by race. But why are policy and practice so completely decoupled? Assuming district superintendents and bishops are aware of the policy of open itineracy, what accounts do they give for why race is being considered in the appointment process?

Interviews with district superintendents revealed several important insights into the appointment process. All the interviewees were familiar with the concept of open itineracy, and many had been taught about the policy in official trainings. This statement by a district superintendent was representative of how they defined open itineracy: "Open itineracy, in theory, is that any pastor should be able to be appointed to any church, regardless of age, gender, race. The system is open and that when you make appointments you should be looking principally at the leadership capacity, skills, gifts, abilities of the pastor and the missional needs of the church and matching those. Not looking at the gender or ethnicity of the pastor."

In addition, there was broad acknowledgment that racial gaps in salary exist. When asked to explain why these gaps exist, three district superintendents noted the role of church size. As one district superintendent put it, "For the most part, it's very large churches [that] pay very large salaries. The very large churches in our conference tend to be whiter." This leads to racial disparities, because in the words of another district superintendent, "Pastors of color are not being afforded opportunities to serve in some larger churches." In addition, two district superintendents stated that White churches typically have larger budgets from which to pay their pastor than Black churches; this, coupled with, as one

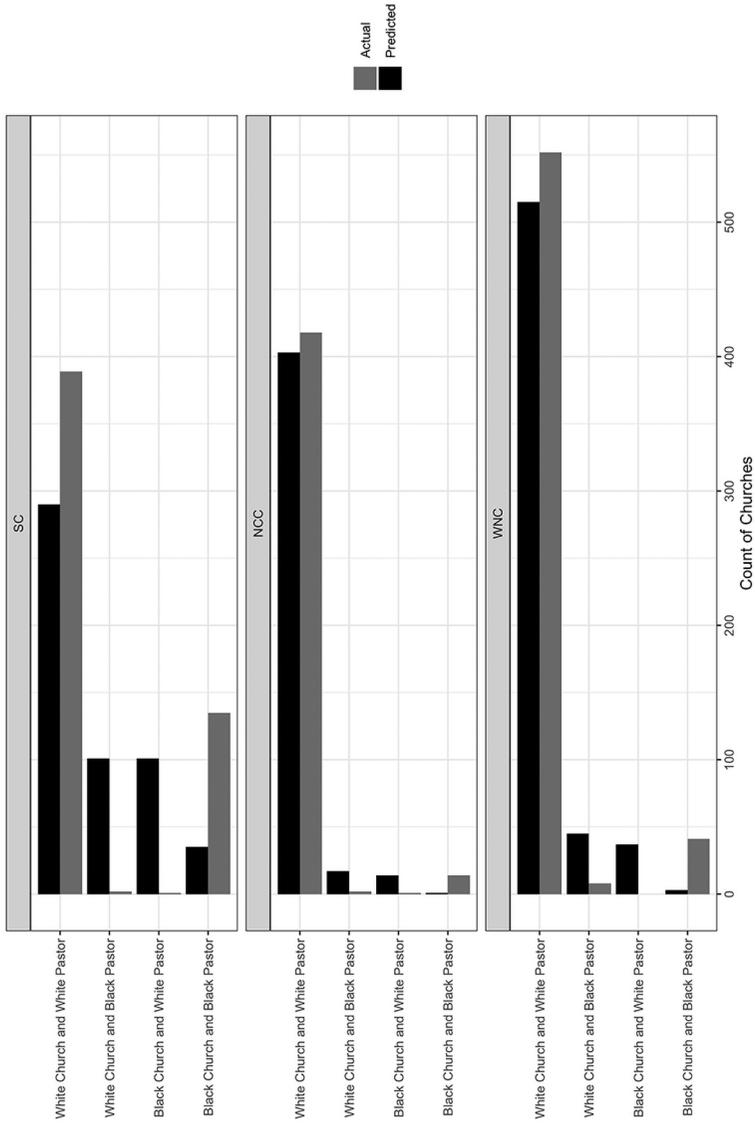


FIG. 2.—Expected versus observed counts of church by racial correspondence of senior/solo elder and predominant racial group represented by 90% of the congregation in the South Carolina, North Carolina, and Western North Carolina annual conferences.

White district superintendent put it, “the hesitancy . . . to make a cross-racial appointment created a smaller pool of possibilities for people of color.”

Analysis of the interviews revealed a consistent narrative of why there is such a high degree of racial correspondence between pastors and churches. This was expressed by one White district superintendent from South Carolina who said, “Open itineracy looks great, *on paper*.” In other words, while open itineracy is the official policy of the church, district superintendents offered accounts of practical realities that they perceived made open itineracy impossible to implement. Through the analysis of the interviews, several major barriers to implementation emerged. Most commonly, district superintendents related how, within the appointment process, they needed to strategically navigate the anti-Black racist ideology of laypeople to avoid detrimental outcomes for clergy and the church. On the congregational level, district superintendents frequently related stories of White congregations being resistant to cross-racial appointments. One White district superintendent shared, “I’ll say I ask every church during the consultation process if there was a move that’s being anticipated, will you receive a cross-racial appointment? Some churches don’t even bat an eye, ‘well, of course.’ [They] look at you like, ‘I can’t believe you would ask something that stupid, of course we will.’ Other churches will flat out tell you, they’ll start hemming and hawing and say, ‘no, we’re not there yet.’” Likewise, from a Black district superintendent, “And so, I do still have the struggle, especially in rural areas of South Carolina, where most of the churches that I serve are Anglo and conservative. I still have the challenge of trying to get them to be open to an African-American, an African-American female or male, especially when I have more African-American females than African-American males who are available to serve as local pastors in many of those churches, and, to my disappointment, they’re not willing to have them.” District superintendents expressed the worry cross-racial appointments might drive people away from the congregation. One district superintendent asked rhetorically, “Do you do that move when . . . the folks [in the church] look you in the eye and say, ‘You can send that pastor here, but we’re not coming, we’ll go to the Baptist church down the street.’” District superintendents expressed the worry that a cross-racial appointment might create conflict in the church, which may lead to a loss of membership and associated financial contributions. While they differ from secular organizations in important ways, congregations are still voluntary organizations (Harris 1998), which compelled district superintendents to strongly consider the stated preferences of members of the congregation.

District superintendents were also quick to point out that concerns about declines in attendance were not the only factor to consider. They were also concerned about the safety and well-being of Black pastors. As one White district superintendent put it, “I wouldn’t say that it was just yielding to the congregation’s preference. It came down to a concern for the pastor

and the pastor's family as well." Another said, "A bishop . . . would not want to send an African American pastor to a racist church. Because that would destroy that ministry of that pastor." Still another respondent put it as follows, "Well, as you surely know, we as a traditional denomination have made a commitment to appoint without regard to gender or ethnicity. That said, plainly sometimes that does get discussed. Sexism and racism are very real, and we sometimes have to allow for all that. By allow, I mean recognize it because you do not want to put a pastor in a place where the person is rejected before they even show up because they are Black, of a different ethnicity, of a different gender, whatever." Most district superintendents expressed that it was important to balance the health and well-being of the pastor with the concept of open itineracy. District superintendents related they did not want to send pastors to churches where they were destined to fail. They worried a cross-racial appointment could create this situation. As one Black former district superintendent put it, "You know something, I do not want to put someone there where they're going to fail. I just don't want to do that if I see that that's going on." A White district superintendent expressed a similar sentiment: "There are appointments where probably the very best person for the church would just not be open to that. You have to navigate how hard do you want to push that with them and how much will the pastor want to tackle that with this church. I wouldn't want to force the pastor to go fight a battle that they don't want to have to deal with."

District superintendents also worried that a Black pastor in a White congregation would face the pressure to conform to White expectations for pastoral leaders. As one former district superintendent said, "They bring the pastor in who is of a different race and they want them to become like them, they want to change them into becoming like them and when the pastor does not or they exhibit habits that oh, that's not something we're comfortable with. Now something's wrong with the pastor, not something's wrong with them." In another interview, a former bishop provided another window into how Whiteness may be operating as a credential to render some Black pastors more likely to be seen as able to fit into White congregations than others: "We sent [Black pastor's name] to a White suburban church. He had been in the [branch of the military]. He had gone to [a prestigious White college]. I just said, 'I believe God has been preparing you for this, this whole way through.' What I was thinking was, 'You really know how to work White people. You've been around White people so much you're perfectly trained for this. You know all of the ways that we lie, deceive, and hurt you.' And he did great." For a Black pastor to serve cross-racially, this respondent highlighted the importance of learning the ways of White people. Tellingly, merely being a Black person in a White-dominant society was not considered sufficient training in White ways. Pastors also required a prior history of participation in multiple institutions classified as White.

Learning to “work White people” was seen as an important dimension of the pastor’s training; it prepared them to survive the hardships that are expected in the everyday work associated with serving a White, suburban congregation.

Only in one interview did a district superintendent mention consulting pastors about their willingness to serve in a cross-racial appointment—in that case the district superintendent, who was Black, reported that, in his experience, Black pastors did not want to be appointed cross racially. He said, “It’s interesting to me, I ask the pastors during their consultations each fall, especially when we’re looking at a move, if they are open to being placed in a cross-racial appointment. Some of the answers are surprising. The majority of my African-American pastors are straight with me and say, ‘No, I would rather not.’” This sentiment stands at odds with data from the focus groups, which we report below. In our focus groups, Black pastors consistently indicated their willingness to be appointed to a White congregation to help advance their careers.

#### The Toll of Race Matching on Black Clergy

The decision to match congregations and pastors by race has consequences: Black clergy are paid less, have fewer opportunities for advancement, and have difficulty finding social support from other clergy in the denomination.

Salary was one important way in which inequality was manifest in our data. In table 4, we present descriptive statistics of White and Black clergy in North Carolina. These statistics represent all pastors who participated in the CHI Longitudinal Survey from 2008 to 2014. We found a large and significant pay gap of \$9,051 ( $P < .001$ ) between White and Black clergy. In table 5, we report salary differences between lead pastors in White and Black clergy in both North and South Carolina. In the case of solo or lead pastors, White pastors in North Carolina were paid, on average, \$5,950 more than Black clergy; in South Carolina the difference was \$4,164. Another way to quantify the salary gap is to look at the percentage of clergy earning more than \$75,000/year. In North Carolina, 12% of White clergy earned more than this amount, in South Carolina, 13%. This compares to 3% of Black clergy in North Carolina and 4% in South Carolina.

How did Black clergy experience these disparities? In focus groups, participants expressed frustration that their compensation differed systematically by race. Participants described the emotional toll these differences took on them and their families. They explicitly mentioned experiencing the emotions of anger, disappointment, and hurt. For example, one pastor said,

I have not quite understood why we have certain people on one salary—our White counterparts at one salary—and yet we’re all United Methodist Church and we’re on a lower salary because it’s only what a church can afford to pay.

TABLE 4  
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF UMC CLERGY IN NORTH CAROLINA, FOR CLERGY REPORTING WORKING 10 OR MORE HOURS PER WEEK

VARIABLE	RACIAL IDENTITY OF CLERGY			P value <sup>b</sup>
	White	Black	Other <sup>a</sup>	
N clergy <sup>c</sup> . . . . .	1,618	115	67	
Annual clergy income, \$2014, mean (SD) . . . . .	41,253 (22,004)	32,202 (19,589)	32,895 (16,422)	<.001
Local pastor, <i>n</i> (%) . . . . .	618 (38.2)	56 (48.7)	32 (47.8)	.029
Hours worked per week, mean (SD) . . . . .	46.7 (15.1)	40.4 (19.0)	42.7 (17.1)	<.001
Works fewer than 40 hours per week, <i>n</i> (%) . . . . .	377 (23.3)	51 (44.3)	22 (32.8)	<.001
Head or solo pastor, <i>n</i> (%) . . . . .	1480 (91.5)	111 (96.5)	62 (92.5)	.163
Serve only one church, <i>n</i> (%) . . . . .	1,237 (76.5)	77 (67.0)	53 (79.1)	.058
N churches served, mean (SD) . . . . .	1.29 (.58)	1.35 (.51)	1.28 (.60)	.579
N years professional experience, mean (SD) . . . . .	14.60 (11.90)	12.35 (9.79)	11.97 (10.65)	.035
Educational attainment, <i>n</i> (%):				.025
Associate's degree or less . . . . .	192 (11.9)	20 (17.4)	14 (20.9)	
Bachelor's degree . . . . .	289 (17.9)	25 (21.7)	12 (17.9)	
Master's degree . . . . .	987 (61.1)	54 (47.0)	34 (50.7)	
Doctoral degree . . . . .	148 (9.2)	16 (13.9)	7 (10.4)	
Female, <i>n</i> (%) . . . . .	434 (26.8)	39 (33.9)	11 (16.4)	.036
Married, <i>n</i> (%) . . . . .	1,413 (87.4)	83 (73.5)	57 (86.4)	<.001
Appointment is in rural location, <i>n</i> (%) <sup>d</sup> . . . . .	1,021 (63.1)	59 (51.3)	48 (72.7)	.009
Average income in county (church's physical location), <i>n</i> (%):				.798
Bottom tertile . . . . .	602 (37.3)	40 (34.8)	29 (43.9)	
Middle tertile . . . . .	519 (32.1)	39 (33.9)	18 (27.3)	
Top tertile . . . . .	494 (30.6)	36 (31.3)	19 (28.8)	
Average total attendance at all worship services, mean (SD)	338 (460)	209 (226)	274 (542)	.008
Median total attendance at all worship services . . . . .	50	54	46	.25
95th percentile of total attendance at all worship services . . . . .	1090	518	775	.001

NOTE.—Data are taken from the Clergy Health Initiative Panel Survey (2008–14) and UMC conference statistics (2008–14).

<sup>a</sup> Other racial identity category includes Hispanic (11), Native American (23), Asian (19), and mixed/other (14).

<sup>b</sup> *P* value for a chi-squared test for the difference in proportions between Black and White pastors.

<sup>c</sup> All clergy who responded to the Clergy Health Initiative were included in this table. For clergy who appear more than once, only their most recent data are used. All clergy who do not report data on their income are dropped.

<sup>d</sup> Survey-based measure based on the size of community the church is located in; it does not consider proximity to a metropolitan area.

TABLE 5  
 CONGREGATIONAL DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS IN NORTH AND SOUTH CAROLINA, FOR ALL PREDOMINANTLY WHITE AND BLACK CHURCHES

	NORTH CAROLINA (2014)				SOUTH CAROLINA (2015)			
	All	White	Black	Black-White Difference	All	White	Black	Black-White Difference
Churches, #	1,890	1,681	122	1,559	1,006	715	259	456
Median congregational membership	134	144	86	59	119	125	116	9
Median weekly congregational attendance	52	54	50	5	46	45	56	-11
Weekly congregational attendance, 95th percentile	344	360	179	181	282	342	202	139
Weekly attendance of largest church	2,022	2,022	480	1,542	1,598	1,598	720	878
Median congregational operating expenses paid, \$2014	87,769	93,220	59,238	33,982	65,104	72,312	54,309	18,003
Median congregational operating expenses paid per attendee 2014 dollars	1,742	1,790	1,318	472	1,614	1,833	984	849
Property value of congregation, \$2014, 1000s (median) <sup>a</sup>	950	1,021	538	484	877	1,142	563	579
Property value of congregation per attendee \$2014 (median)	18,380	18,978	12,000	6,978	19,196	23,028	10,274	12,755
Total apportionments billed per attendee, \$2014 (median) <sup>b</sup>	202	206	138	68	196	221	127	95
Total apportionments paid per attendee, \$2014 (median)	160	164	114	50	153	178	95	84
Churches paying 100% of apportionments (proportion)	.76	.77	.64	.13	.77	.79	.73	.06
Churches receiving equalization funds (proportion)	.03	.02	.08	-.06	.04	.03	0.08	-.05

NOTE.—Data are taken from the conference statistics for the UMC.

<sup>a</sup> Value of church property includes all land and buildings owned by the congregation, including the parsonage, where applicable.

<sup>b</sup> Apportionments are the program and administrative expenses charged to congregations by the UMC regional denominational levels.

When we united, that should have been addressed and taken care of. We didn't do it then, so we still deal with it now. And at some point in time, we're going to have to address that, because as a pastor in full connection, [we] should all make the same thing and it shouldn't be the difference that we experience, and it does cause anger. It does cause stress, because . . . my family of four wants to eat just like anybody else's family of four.<sup>5</sup>

Given that clergy working in congregations already face a wage penalty in their chosen profession (Schleifer and Chaves 2016), facing an additional racial penalty adds to the toll of working in this system.

While the denomination has established minimum full-time salaries, resource-poor churches may only offer part-time appointments and expect their clergy to work an additional job or work full-time for part-time pay. This creates considerable insecurity and stress for clergy trying to succeed financially. The Black clergy in our focus groups knew they earned less than White pastors for similar work and responded with expressions of resentment and anger.

What is driving the salaries differences offered by Black versus White congregations? Broader patterns of racial inequality, coupled with the extreme segregation of local UMC churches, mean that congregational resources vary considerably in predominantly White and predominantly Black congregations. Local congregations are responsible for raising sufficient funds to cover their pastor's compensation, and congregations with fewer resources offer lower salaries. Our analysis revealed significant differences in the resources available to White and Black churches in both states. In table 5, we present descriptive statistics, by congregation, for predominantly Black and White congregations in North and South Carolina. In terms of median expenditures per attending member, Black churches spent considerably less than their White counterparts. In North Carolina, the median expenditures per attending member were \$1,790 in White churches and \$1,318 in Black churches; in South Carolina, they were \$1,833 for White churches and \$984 for Black churches. The per member value of church property provides another window into resources available to a congregation. Higher church property values indicate that congregations are in more desirable neighborhoods, possess better facilities, and have increased borrowing potential. In terms of the property values of Black and White churches on a per attender basis, in both states, Black churches had far lower property values than White churches. The median difference between White and Black churches in North Carolina was almost \$7,000/attender, and in South Carolina, it was \$12,000/attender.

Black churches are also consistently much smaller than White churches, which has a major impact on the salaries they can offer. Research has also

<sup>5</sup> To reduce the risk of disclosure of a person's identity, individuals were not identified in the transcript.

demonstrated that larger churches have, on average, a higher proportion of attenders from households with high incomes (Eagle 2012). In addition, larger churches can capitalize on economies of scale and offer higher salaries. As table 5 reveals, in terms of membership, Black churches in North Carolina were significantly smaller than White churches (median difference of 58.5 members); in South Carolina, the differences were negligible. And while median size differences between Black and White churches were small, by focusing on the 95th percentile of congregations, we see that the largest Black churches were much smaller than the largest White churches. For churches in North and South Carolina, respectively, White churches at the 95th percentile for size were 50% and 40% larger than Black churches at the 95th percentile. Also, the largest White church in North Carolina had 2,022 attenders; the largest Black church had 480; and in South Carolina, those numbers were, respectively, 1,598 and 720.

To understand the relationships among congregational resources, size, and salary, in table 6 we present the results of an ordinary least squares regression model predicting the square root of pastor income. This model estimated that, on average, the salary for a full-time pastor in a White church was about \$40,800, whereas in a Black church it was \$32,500, a gap of \$8,300 per year. While congregation size was predictive of higher salary, adding a control variable for size, which is done in model 2, did not significantly change the relationship between the salaries of Black and White churches. In other words, the difference in pay is not only related to size, but there were also differences in what White and Black churches pay net of size (although size is positively correlated with salary). In model 3, the per-attender annual expenditures of the church were added to the model. With this variable in the model, the pay gap between Black and White churches was no longer significant. This is consistent with the fact that the average level of resources available in Black versus White churches accounts for the difference between the salaries offered in Black and White congregations of a similar size. Again, size is strongly positively correlated with salary, and systematic differences in the size of Black and White churches will also drive disparities.

As an additional measure of resource differences, we examined the receipt of equitable compensation funds from the conference. These funds are paid by the denomination to help churches that cannot afford to pay the mandated minimum salary. Equitable compensation funds are available for a limited amount of time (generally 3–5 years) and are meant to help move a charge to self-sufficiency. Black churches in both states were more likely to receive equitable compensation payments; the average value of these funds was similar in Black and White churches.

In our focus groups, pastors related how they experienced the major resource differences between Black and White churches. In a denomination that emphasizes its connectional nature, Black pastors felt that allowing

TABLE 6  
OLS REGRESSION OF CLERGY SALARY AND CONGREGATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	DEPENDENT VARIABLE: SQUARE ROOT (Clergy Salary)		
	MODEL 1	MODEL 3	MODEL 4
	Coefficient (SE)	Coefficient (SE)	Coefficient (SE)
Predominant church racial make-up (reference = black)			
Predominantly white church . . . . .	21.815*** (4.60)	21.807*** (2.52)	-2.196 (2.29)
Other/no predominant race . . . . .	-1.836 -10.015	11.656** -5.489	-4.174 -4.638
Conference (ref = North Carolina Conference)			
South Carolina . . . . .	1.361 (3.80)	-1.991 (2.08)	-1.588 (1.74)
Western North Carolina . . . . .	11.085*** -3.683	4.230** -2.02	5.427*** -1.693
Log(average worship service attendance), mean centered . . . . .		60.567*** (.97)	56.645*** (.82)
Log(annual expenditures per attender), mean centered . . . . .			42.952*** (1.61)
Constant . . . . .	180.202*** (5.25)	183.499*** (2.87)	203.761*** (2.52)
<i>N</i> . . . . .	1,686	1,686	1,686
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> . . . . .		.708	.795
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	0.024	.707	.794

\* *P* < .1.  
\*\* *P* < .05.  
\*\*\* *P* < .01.

these major inequalities to exist created an unfair system that privileged White clergy. One pastor gave voice to these frustrations in this way:

One thing that I think is problematic, too, is if you have a similar size White church, similar size Black church, usually there will be more money in the White church than there is in the Black church. . . . [White churches will] have some kind of endowment, something; Grandma left some money, left a house or something like that. But in the Black church, there are usually not as much cash reserves there and that's because Black people historically have not been able to make as much money and have enough money left over to endow and . . . have trust funds and all that. And that keeps churches struggling to pay appor-tionments and being able to make their budget.

Black pastors spoke frequently about how the long history of systemic in-equalities has harmed Black churches and expressed anger that the denom-ination has failed to address these disparities. Black congregants continue to

have less education, opportunity, and income than their White counterparts. Black churches have fewer resources to draw upon to pay the pastor's salary and to pay apportionments. These disparities have significant consequences for how Black clergy experience their work. Focus group participants related how the more limited resources available in Black communities created significant stress for them as pastors. One way this stress manifested was through the pressure annual conferences put on pastors to make apportionment commitments. As one pastor said, "Why haven't you paid your apportionments in the last three years?" "Well I—hey, the county I'm in, you know, it's 80 percent all's on unemployment. There's nowhere for people to get money." So, when you're leading a congregation that is unemployed, where you've got some of your most faithful people been unemployed for the last five years, how do you get them to pay apportionments?" In focus groups, participants also pointed out another way in which the structural disadvantages experienced by Black Americans contributed to financial stress for pastors: they could not rely on getting paid on time or even receiving their full salaries. As one focus group participant related, "So I'm even wondering if I'll get paid my full salary this year. When you're wondering whether you're even going to get that, you know, it gets to be stressful. There are a lot of stressors."

Black congregations are typically small, which also was a major focus of conversation in the focus groups. Small churches often could not afford to pay full-time pastor salaries, which resulted in a large proportion of Black pastors serving multiple churches, or only earning a part-time salary. Pastors related how part-time positions often came with full-time expectations, creating a difficult work environment, "It's a fact that . . . most of our [Black] churches are economically challenged, and we have a lot of 'part-time' pastors. There's no such thing as a part-time pastor." For many, working a part-time UMC pastoral appointment also meant taking on a second job to make ends meet, which created extreme time pressures for many Black clergy. Pastors noted that as a consequence of working part time that they did not have access to employer-provided health insurance coverage. This, in turn, exacerbated the hardships they experienced. As one pastor shared, "Some may not believe that our health is affected by economics, but someone that is in a small church working part time cannot afford . . . what it takes to be able to go to a doctor. Unless you're doing this full time, you don't get health insurance."

The consequences of persistent structural disadvantage in Black communities were not only on the salary and benefits side of the equation. Participants also reported how working in smaller churches with fewer resources made their job more difficult. Black pastors indicated that they still felt pressure to create a church experience equivalent to a larger or better-resourced congregation. As one pastor put it, "African-American pastors in churches are judged on the same scale as any other church, but we don't have the

funding to have the Christian educator, the associate pastor, the paid musician, director of music. So it seems as if we're not producing, but we're producing the best we can with what we're able to financially support. And it takes money to get some of the things done that we want to get done." More well-resourced and often larger churches have created specialized paid roles—associate pastors, youth pastors, children's ministers, choir directors, and musicians. There is also evidence to suggest that churchgoers have less discretionary time to devote to church-related activities (Jacobs and Gerson 2009) but that, conversely, their membership has higher programmatic expectations (Eagle 2016). Black pastors felt trapped. They were expected to develop the same set of specialized programs as more affluent congregations, but they lacked the resources to do so.

Another major way in which the system of race matching systematically disadvantaged Black clergy was in the opportunities for advancement because of the relatively few larger Black churches in the UMC. For White pastors, the path to higher salaries and, arguably, better working environments was to gain experience and move to larger churches. Black pastors, who were effectively shut out of access to White churches, had few opportunities for advancement. The frustration is evident in the following quote, "Recently, I was talking to my [district superintendent] about moves. The question came up about moves and I told him that I would be interested in moving, and he flatly looked [me] square in the face and says, 'Where can you move to? . . . We only have four Black churches within our district.' So there's nowhere for me to go."

Another said,

As Black clergy . . . there's a constant thought in the back of your mind when it comes time for appointments, "Will I pay [for being Black]?" because there may not be some place for me. Because in some cases, you may not be "acceptable" to a particular congregation, because even though [churches are] told, "You receive who we send you," they still have inquiries. So there's always a certain thing in the back of your mind every year—because you are appointed from year to year—as to whether or not we're going to be able to continue to do what we're called to do.

The limited opportunity was also readily apparent from our analysis of the quantitative data. In table 7, we report on differences in opportunities for advancement in North and South Carolina. The limited opportunities for advancement can be most clearly seen in comparing the percentage of clergy earning \$75,000 per year: 12% of White pastors in North Carolina and 13% in South Carolina were paid more than \$75,000 per year. In contrast, among Black pastors, just 3% in North Carolina and 4% in South Carolina were paid above that level. While the median number of attenders served by White and Black solo/lead clergy was similar in both states, there was a significant difference in the largest churches—the largest White

TABLE 7  
 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF BLACK AND WHITE LEAD PASTORS IN NORTH CAROLINA (2014) AND SOUTH CAROLINA (2015)

VARIABLE	WHITE CLERGY		BLACK CLERGY		DIFFERENCE (White - Black)	
	North Carolina	South Carolina	North Carolina	South Carolina	North Carolina	South Carolina
N pastors	811	395	62	139	749	256
Mean annual clergy income	46,000	44,630	40,050	40,466	5,950	4,164
Largest clergy salary, \$	180,000	140,838	97,500	149,564	82,500	-8,726
Proportion of clergy earning > \$75,000	.12	.13	.03	.04	.09	.08
Local pastor (proportion)	.31	.36	.44	.53	-.13	-.17
Serve multiple congregations (proportion)	.24	.32	.44	.47	-.20	-.15
Serve a rural appointment (proportion) <sup>a</sup>	.36	.30	.28	.38	.08	-.08
Number of churches served (mean)	1.29	1.38	1.48	1.63	-.19	-.25
Female (proportion)	.26	.22	.34	.35	-.08	-.13
Weekly worship attendance at all churches served (median)	92	90	91	100	1	-10
Weekly worship attendance at largest church	2,022	1,613	290	783	1,732	830
Proportion of appointments serving 150 or more attenders	.27	.26	.15	.29	.13	-.02

NOTE.—This table excludes all pastors who are retired or associated members of the conference; it also excludes all churches who report paying their pastor nothing. Data are taken from UMC conference statistics (North Carolina, 2014; South Carolina, 2015).

<sup>a</sup> Defined by USDA Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes. Primary appointment is in a metropolitan area or has predominantly commuting flows to a metropolitan area. RUCA codes 1-3 are coded as urban and 4-10 as rural. Rural/urban indicator derived from the USDA RUCA codes (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-commuting-area-codes/documentation.aspx>).

church in North Carolina had 2,022 attenders, compared to 1,613 in South Carolina. Among Black churches, the church with the largest attendance had 290 attenders in North Carolina and 783 in South Carolina. This corresponded with a large salary disparity at the upper end of the distribution, but only in North Carolina. In North Carolina, the highest salary of a White pastor was \$180,000, while the highest salary of a Black pastor was \$97,500. In South Carolina, the gap was reversed but was considerably smaller. The largest White church in South Carolina paid \$140,838, and the largest Black church, \$149,564.

Race matching had major implications for salary, working environment, and opportunities for advancement. It also took a significant toll on the emotional and social well-being of Black pastors. Black clergy described the vital importance of having other Black colleagues to draw on for social support. Working within a majority-White organization, these relationships were essential for their well-being. However, their relationships with other Black clergy were made more complex because of the extreme competition for the few higher-paying appointments. This created feelings of isolation.

Pastors in the focus groups were clear: fellow Black colleagues were their main source of support. However, because there are not very many Black UMC pastors in North Carolina, and Black churches are highly spatially clustered (see fig. 1), this support was not always available. Speaking of the importance of social support, one pastor related,

The saving grace of my current appointment is that there is a number of African-American churches and clergy in [this] district, more so than in the other districts, and because of the camaraderie that has been nurtured among the African-American pastors. . . . I have colleagues that I can share things with, that I can express myself without it being held against me, that I can just let my hair down with. It has been a saving grace, because I have been in those appointments where there are only two or three African-American churches and they don't get along. So they don't have any fellowship with one another and it makes you feel like you're out there by yourself.

And,

You're right about that. Like I was in [my old] district and I can remember the fellowship that we had with all—and now I'm in a district where I don't even see the other Black clergy. Never see them. Never at meetings, whatever is going on. So I end up calling my good friend here and we talk, "What's happening?" And so that's my grace of sort of letting somebody know what's going on with me, because there's nobody within say thirty, forty miles that I can—Black clergy that I can share with. And it does make a difference.

But race matching made seeking social support a more complex calculation. Even when support was available, Black clergy indicated that intense competition for the few better-paying appointments made them hesitate to

seek out this support. One pastor spoke of their frustration in this way: “One thing is everybody is trying to get everybody else’s job. Maybe some other thing is you get so busy you don’t have time to celebrate somebody else’s [i.e., a Black clergyperson’s] successes. And we just stay distant to try to get the work done.” A pastor in a large Black church expressed it this way,

They are waiting on me to die or retire so that people can move up [and be promoted]. And as long as I stay here [in this desirable Black church appointment], my sisters and brothers can’t move up. They can go to a cross-cultural appointment. Well, it’s okay to go to a cross-cultural appointment as an associate [pastor], or maybe you get lucky, you go to [a nearby city with one of the few large, Black churches] and you become the senior pastor, but my God you’ve got to prove yourself every day. Every day. And then you are isolated from your own people.

Still another put it more succinctly, “The trust isn’t there . . . we don’t trust one another.”

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study, following Ray (2019), we explored the case of the UMC as a racialized organization. We found race matching between clergy and congregations generated durable racial inequalities in earnings, working conditions, and opportunities for advancement. Our findings are in line with Grodsky and Pager (2001), who observed income inequality to be highest in occupations where Whites benefit from differential access to more affluent White clientele and lowest in occupations where the resources of the clientele do not impact the compensation of the service provider. In our interviews with district superintendents, they acknowledged the widespread practice of race matching stands at odds with the UMC’s formal policies of open itineracy, yet they justified this practice on the grounds that they did not want Black clergy to be harmed by the prejudice in White congregations and they did not want to drive people away from congregations that would not accept a Black pastor. Analyses revealed race matching driving large income inequalities between White and Black clergy. The testimony of our focus group participants serves as a powerful reminder that racialized organizations exact a very real toll on people who work within them. Black pastors viscerally described how the UMC created an oppressive work environment that negatively impacted their overall well-being.

Overall, while our case provides broad support for Ray’s (2019) theory of racialized organizations, it also resonates with key aspects of relational inequality theory (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019). Relational inequality theory asserts that the allocation of resources in an organization is done by specific actors who, constrained by field-level power dynamics

and broader cultural understandings, invent local strategies of action to pool and redistribute resources (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019, p. 225). The case presented here provides clear empirical support for this model of how organizations generate inequalities. The theory of racialized organizations extends these insights to provide a general understanding of the racial patterning that emerges from these localized organizational processes and how they uphold and reproduce this racialized social system's inequitable distribution of resources. Although the UMC has a unique system for appointing pastors to churches and a very specific set of relational dynamics between clergy, congregations, and cabinets that generate this racial inequality regime, the major tenets of Ray's (2019) theory of racialized organizations were clearly observed in our study.

First, there is little doubt the appointment practices of the UMC greatly diminish the agency of Black pastors. As the quantitative data demonstrate, the system has created major income disparities. In the focus group data, we saw that these income disparities were both recognized and viewed as corresponding with deeper organizational processes that generate feelings of relative powerlessness among Black clergy. Respondents described adverse effects of the racialized appointment process as linked not only with salary disparities but also with disparities in the extent to which they might feel comfortable trusting other racialized clergy for social support. Black clergy reported how racialized occupational advancement possibilities constrained their agency to develop and use peer social support resources, which demonstrates ways in which racialized organizations may disproportionately expose racialized workers to stress (Bowman 1991; Mays, Coleman, and Jackson 1996; Evans and Moore 2015). Social support is important for clergy well-being (Eagle, Hybels, and Proeschold-Bell 2018); support from other Black clergy is particularly important as they navigate a majority-White denomination (DiPrete et al. 2011). Our study shows how race matching can disrupt the generally positive association between social support and health (LaRocco, House, and French 1980; Moak and Agrawal 2010).

Our study also raises questions about how racialized organizations may inhibit collective agency (Hayward et al. 2018). Summarizing social exchange theory, Akerlof and Yellen observe, "When people don't get what they think they deserve, they get angry" (1990, pp. 261–62). Because salaries are made public, pastors are acutely aware of wage differences. In some situations, wage inequality can be motivating (Stark and Hyll 2011) in that it may provide an aspirational goal for workers. However, wage inequality, particularly between positions at a similar level in an organization, can be demotivating for workers at the lower end of the pay distribution (Akerlof and Yellen 1990) and can increase feelings of relative deprivation, concerns about inequity, and job dissatisfaction, all factors expressed by Black pastors in the present study (Kacperczyk and Balachandran 2018). In a system

where managers have a great deal of control over appointments, this may constrain the extent to which racialized workers feel free to speak out about their concerns. The system also inhibits support seeking between Black clergy, which may also mute the potential for collective action.

In line with the theory of racialized organizations, we found that district superintendents were aware of the negative consequences of race matching for Black pastors and constructed a narrative to justify this practice. This narrative centered on how a cross-racial appointment may activate the prejudice of members of local congregations, which, in turn, may harm both the pastor and the congregation. This finding highlights how overt racial prejudice may still play an important role in generating inequality (Virtanen and Huddy 1998). While it is possible that district superintendents overstated parishioners' racial animus and resistance to cross-racial appointments, in nearly all the interviews with district superintendents, we found that these respondents related how the unwillingness of White congregations to accept a Black pastor made them extremely hesitant to attempt to appoint cross-racially. We suspect that because religious congregations are intimate spaces (Sharma 2012), resistance to placing Black people in charge of predominantly White congregations will be especially high. What is especially important to highlight from this case is how the process of legitimation does not concern only post hoc justifications for observed inequalities. Narratives of legitimation were constraining district superintendents' actions and thereby generating organizational inequalities.

Racialized organizations also treat racial status as a credential that structures the distribution of resources. We highlight the role of relationships between workers (clergy) and managers (district superintendents) in dynamically generating inequality: race matching is a central feature of this inequality regime. By virtue of their relative racial status, White clergy enjoy greater levels of access to congregational appointments associated with higher pay, better working environments, more opportunities for advancement, and less complicated relationships with their peers than Black clergy. Whiteness was explicitly spoken of as a credential by district superintendents and bishops, who shared that they expected Black pastors to gain the requisite training in navigating White institutions to be appointed cross-racially (Moss and Tilly 2001; Brief, Butz, and Deitch 2013).

In this case, decoupling of the policy of open itineracy from practice featured prominently. Decoupling may occur because an organization is proactively trying to avoid government sanctions, because the policy looks good to the public, and/or because it does not cost the organization much to implement. Research has shown how many organizations responded to Civil Rights legislation by creating visible but effectively ceremonial compliance with these rules (Edelman 1992). As a policy, open itineracy is not well suited to a situation where employers feel they need to consider race in the hiring

and appointment process (Skrentny 2013), further encouraging decoupling. Our study underscores these insights and suggests the importance of creating employment policy that managers cannot easily dismiss as unrealistic and enforcement mechanisms that anticipate where managers might feel justified in bending or breaking the rules. In a very straightforward way, our interviews with district superintendents revealed that racial realism is a key means by which the denomination's antiracist policy has become decoupled from everyday practices that reproduce racial inequality among clergy.

### Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. The bulk of our data came from United Methodist clergy in North Carolina, which limits the generalizability of the study's findings to the wider denomination. We did compare the situation of Black clergy in North Carolina to that in South Carolina and found evidence of similar patterns of racial disparity, despite the larger proportion of Black UMC churches in South Carolina. However, we acknowledge that the specific context of the participants may affect their responses and may diverge from experiences in other geographic settings (particularly those outside the South). In addition, although each theme arose spontaneously in both focus groups, which were held separately, we are mindful that the small size of the focus groups and the low rates of participation from Black clergy may not fully capture their experiences. Also, the UMC is unusual in its appointment system, which may limit generalizability to other religious groups. Most churches in the United States engage in more direct hiring processes. However, as nationally representative data from the National Congregations Study (Chaves et al. 2020) show, there is a high degree of correspondence between the pastor's race and the majority race of the congregation (Dougherty, Chaves, and Emerson 2020), and we expect broad inequalities to exist across the landscape of congregations in the United States. An additional limitation was due to the very small number of clergy of other racialized identities in our samples, which means our study does not necessarily speak to the disparities experienced by other groups of clergy. Owing to the structural disadvantages and racial prejudice in the wider society, we suspect that similar disparities may be present in other settings where minority clergy work within a majority White organization.

Another major limitation of this study is that we focus only on race and do not consider other sociodemographic characteristics. A theory of racialized organizations focuses specifically on racial inequality and does not directly speak to inequality regimes more broadly (Acker 2006). We limited our focus to contain the scope of this study, not to suggest race is the only salient factor at play in generating organizational inequalities. Previous research has shown clergy careers are often "dualized" by gender, with men more likely to receive

appointments to larger, more prestigious churches and women more often shunted to specialized positions (Nesbitt 1993; Chaves 1996). One large study of Episcopal and Presbyterian Church (USA) pastors showed a large, temporally stable overrepresentation of women in subordinate and lower-status positions (Sullins 2000). While little is known about the structural disadvantages sexual and gender minority clergy face in access to better-paying jobs, research supports the conclusion that sexual and gender minority persons experience major barriers to equal attainment in the labor market (Berg and Lien 2002; Waite 2015). Applying an intersectional lens (Collins and Bilge 2020, p. 1) to clergy inequality regimes is an important area for additional research, particularly as it relates to race and gender (Wingfield 2021). At the time of writing, the UMC is currently embroiled in a wide-ranging set of controversies centered on gender and sexuality that will fundamentally alter its policies and governance structures. Attending to the ways in which splits and fractures in religious denominations alter the inequality regimes also deserves sustained attention.

### Pathways to Organizational Change

In light of our findings, what strategies might create racial equity in compensation among clergy working in the UMC and, by extension, workers in other similarly structured organizations? Our findings underscore how longstanding, deeply rooted inequities among UMC clergy will not be altered by formal organizational policies alone. As Bonilla-Silva argues, “Social systems and their supporters must be ‘shaken’ if fundamental transformations are to take place” (Bonilla-Silva 1997, p. 474). To create a more equitable organization, organizational leaders must create solutions targeted at the mechanisms creating these disparities. Research clearly shows that diversity training programs, which have been widely implemented in the UMC, are rarely effective (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006); these programs often increase animosity between groups and fail to improve the relational dynamics in the organization. Drawing from the insight that “robotic recipes” (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019, p. 225) are insufficient to disrupt a specific inequality regime, we see several potential targets for intervention that could move the UMC to become a more equitable organization.

Transparency initiatives have been shown to be effective at reducing pay inequalities (Castilla 2015), and while the UMC does not make public the race of individual pastors, the racial makeup of congregations is made public. Given the segregated nature of churches, this could be used to publicize denominational progress on the racial pay gap. In the current context of broader social movements calling for racial equity, this may enhance efforts for change.

It is widely recognized that decentralized wage-setting processes increase wage inequality (Blau and Kahn 1996). It is common practice to use wage

compression—where management reduces pay disparities between workers at the same level—to combat the negative effects of wage inequality. Removing the discretion churches have in setting salaries and creating a common salary scale holds promise as a way to reduce racial inequalities in the denomination. To enhance equity, this scale would have to be based more on years of experience and less on congregational characteristics like size. It would be challenging to create an agreed-upon salary scale that does not continue to advantage White pastors and does not contain loopholes that let White churches obey the letter but not the spirit of the law.

An even greater challenge is that a common pay scale could not be implemented without a system for redistributing resources in the annual conferences. A congregation's ability to pay pastor salaries varies widely, and more well-resourced churches would be required to share their resources with less well-resourced churches. One strength of a denominationally organized religious group is that the infrastructure often exists to redistribute organizational resources. In the UMC, the apportionment system could be leveraged to reduce racial inequalities in clergy pay and benefits. While apportionments currently only assist congregations in meeting minimum clergy salary requirements, they could be used as a tool to specifically address racial inequities in earnings across the clergy income distribution. Re-envisioning apportionments as a tool to achieve racial equity in clergy earnings could be part of a larger strategy developed by the organization. Although redistributive projects targeted at reducing racial inequalities are often met with ambivalence or outright hostility by White Americans (Bobo 1991; Gilens 2009; Bobo et al. 2012; McCall 2013), organizations like the UMC may be better positioned for these types of interventions. In 2019, as part of a major restructuring proposal, General Conference leaders proposed the creation of a \$38 million fund, distributed over eight years, to address systemic racial inequalities in the denomination. This at least shows a willingness on the part of some in the organization to take a redistributive approach. In addition, research suggests Americans are concerned about economic inequality and they are not necessarily opposed to redistribution as a way to address inequality (Smeeding and Osberg 2006; Almås, Cappelen, and Tungodden 2020).

Another potential avenue to achieve equity would be to reduce or eliminate the practice of race matching. The current policy of open itinerancy is problematic because it asks district superintendents to ignore race when it is obviously a major factor in how congregations are organized. As our analysis shows, district superintendents are deeply skeptical of open itinerancy. More broadly, colorblind policies like open itinerancy often fail because they promote the decoupling of organizational rules from organizational policy (Apfelbaum, Norton, and Sommers 2012). Open itinerancy, as presently articulated, may also fail to consider the unique role the Black church plays in Black communities. It is potentially problematic for district superintendents

to force a Black church to accept a White pastor and a Black pastor to serve a White church. Allowing Black self-determination and addressing the large disparities between Black and White clergy require a more equitable compensation and resource-sharing system.

It is hard to imagine that greater equality between Black and White clergy would emerge in an organization that is so highly segregated at the congregational level. As is the case with residential hypersegregation (Massey and Denton 1993), the segregated nature of the UMC means poverty is concentrated in Black churches. Within UMC congregations in North and South Carolina, extreme segregation also means there are very few opportunities for contact between Black and White congregants. If White congregants are not aware of the struggles in Black congregations and among Black clergy, it is difficult to see how widespread support for denominational efforts to address racial disparities can develop. Even though multiracial congregations are becoming more common (Dougherty et al. 2020), they remain rare and require concerted effort to form (Yancey and Emerson 2003; Edwards and Kim 2019).

Extraorganizational pressures such as legal action also provide a possible, although less promising, remedy. In a case with parallels to the situation in the UMC, a lawsuit was brought against Walgreens drugstores in Florida for their policy of placing Black managers in Black stores. Because compensation was tied to sales, and Walgreens stores in Black neighborhoods served a poorer clientele, Black managers did not earn as much as White managers. Walgreens settled this case for \$27 million (EEOC 2007). However, a legal remedy in the UMC is unlikely to succeed. Courts have generally allowed churches broad ability to engage in discriminatory hiring practices, making external legal remedies difficult to access (Lupu and Tuttle 2009). The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld a lower court's ruling that permitted churches to use race as a criterion for hiring (*Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School vs. EEOC*, 597 F. 3d 769 [2012]). The establishment clause of the U.S. Constitution prohibits courts from adjudicating in matters of "ecclesiastical doctrine, cognizance and polity" (U.S. Const. amend. 1). Seeking remediation in the secular courts seems unlikely to succeed.

The bigger question is whether the collective will for organizational change exists. Addressing the inequalities perpetuated within the UMC will require new policies and procedures that translate formally articulated symbolic commitments to racial equity into the policies *and practices* of the denomination and local churches. Meaningful reforms aimed at reducing racial inequality are often met with covert and direct resistance (Bell 2009, p. 5). Even if bureaucratic change at one point in time is enacted, to be effective it must be done in ways that anticipate how, as a racialized organization, the UMC may dynamically adapt to new circumstances to maintain advantage for White clergy. In spite of the inherent difficulties of dismantling the racialized

nature of a large organization, unraveling the ways in which Christian churches and denominations are complicit in perpetuating Black oppression remains a vitally important task (Carter 2008; Jennings 2011).

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