

**Kathryn Trappey      Paidiea Memo—Gallagher Ch. 24      February 20, 2009**  
**Michael O. Emerson: “Race, Religion, and the Color Line**  
**(Or Is That the Color Wall?)”**

**Main Point:**

Religious congregations can either exaggerate the racial homogeneity of a community or exaggerate the racial diversity of a community. Religion helps people form micro-bonds between other people in their groups, but can prevent them from forming macro-bonds with people of other groups. Even though most religious people are also moral and not selfish, somehow, they end up staying segregated within their own congregations. Also, it is hard for members of one group to understand the needs and wants of members of a different group as well as members of their own group (because they do not come into contact as often).

**Central Issues and Concepts:**

More than 90% of religious congregations are racially homogeneous. The probability that any two randomly selected members of a congregation are racially different is 2%. Religious congregations are 10 times less diverse than the neighborhoods in which they reside, and 20 times less diverse than American public schools. In racially diverse congregations, members are much more likely to have friends (within and outside of the church) of different races than are members of racially homogeneous congregations. Although some may argue that the reason that people attend racially diverse churches is because they were already friends with those people, this is not the case. Being a member of a racially diverse congregation actually leads one to become friends with those of different races, through connections with those that they have met through the church and through an increased acceptance and understanding of those from different racial backgrounds. Also, especially for marginalized groups, average income, occupation status, and education were higher for members of racially diverse congregations. This is because of the connections made and resources that were available through these connections, such as child care and more diverse career opportunities. Americans, especially those who are members of racially diverse congregations, that defy the stereotypes of one particular race category (in the US, these would be Indian/Native American, African American/Black, White/Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian/Asian American) are considered “Sixth Americans.” Sixth Americans live in a world that is primarily racially diverse, where they have mostly racially diverse encounters, instead of racially diverse encounters only some of the time.

**Two Key Quotes:**

“Relations between groups are always mainly political rather than ethical or moral.” (Page 207)

“Consider the family. Although we are selfish if we always look out for our individual needs first, it is considered wrong and immoral if we do not consider the needs of our family first, ahead of other families.” (Page 206)

**Two Questions:**

- It seems that the only people from racially diverse congregations the Emerson interviews are those that have very, very good diversity experiences. Even though racially diverse congregations produce members that are more racially accepting than homogeneous congregations, are they really the epitome of racial diversity, as he makes it seem?

- What about other countries? Is the perpetuation of segregation by religions only an American phenomenon, or does it transcend globally.