

An Aspirational Rhetoric of Anti-Racism: A Participatory Study of Responsive Engagement

A dissertation submitted in partial completion of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Rhetoric.

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Abstract

Dismantling racism in the U.S. is as important today as it has been since our country began. Following many scholars of race and whiteness, I understand racism to be an action of closing oneself off and controlling, and anti-racism to be a contextual process of putting oneself in uncertain situations, receiving people's guidance and critique, and correspondingly acting. From this understanding, this dissertation argues that a process of responsive anti-racist action is also in part language skills; anti-racism is rhetorical. In particular, when white people talk about wanting to act against racism but not knowing how, it shows the limitation of anti-racist approaches centered on people's beliefs, suggesting instead that we should develop rhetorical concepts to address people's deep-seated habits around race. This dissertation analyzes rhetorical strategies adopted by a group of mostly white people in their efforts to act more strongly against racism, developed in the context of a three-year participatory study with local people from two progressive churches.

I expand and use an analytic framework in which the core of anti-racist rhetorical practice is a process of seeking exposure, receiving people's guidance and advice, and acting. Three practices are developed in collaboration with participants for their potential to maintain this rhetorical process: call-and-response, debriefing, and a strategy for researchers of participation. I find that the scripted, community-authorized nature of call-and-response makes participating a way of speaking so as to be shaped. People's willingness to participate creates habit, teaching them to yield control and stay exposed. Debriefing is a strategy for white people to support each other, by talking through day-to-day stories that might otherwise make them feel stuck. Debriefing gets people out of their own interpretive ruts, opening themselves up to insights by others that can support continued and new action. Finally, participation addresses researchers' need to also learn to maintain exposure to others. Participation yields the researcher's control to people in and around a project, and exposes ethical calls that would otherwise remain hidden.

Ultimately these three strategies contribute to a responsive anti-racist engagement, which builds on emerging directions in rhetorical scholarship that emphasize vulnerability. In contrast to much of rhetorical theory focused on how effectively a rhetor changing the audience, responsive anti-racist engagement attends to how effectively rhetors respond to others. This is particularly important when responding to systems of injustice. Theorizing and practicing responsiveness may facilitate more robust, thoroughgoing, transformative anti-racist ways of being in the world.

Transcription Conventions

Hesitations

Um, uh retained unless otherwise noted. Restarts indicated with a dash (—). Cut off words indicated with a hyphen(-). When a word is cut off, and then restarted, an extra space is added to separate the hyphen from the dash. Pause length not indicated. Accidentally mispronounced words indicated with *.

Punctuation and format

All punctuation is my own, to give a sense of the flow and intonation. Quoted speech is often given interlinearly and backchannels are omitted. Some extended passages are formatted with reference times, backchannels, and line numbers, in order to have easy reference, and to show the beauty of people's everyday speech (see Denzin, who conceives of a "reflexive" or "performative" transcript that highlights the drama and dance of speaking).

Other

Uncertainty about what someone says from the recording is indicated with double parentheses, e.g. (()). Additional contextual information is indicated when necessary with brackets ([]).

Table I.1 Participants and their roles in this project, by race and church

	<i>First Church</i>	<i>Second Pres</i>
<i>Black participants*</i>	Ms. Di - planning, inter-church meetings	Charley (female)- single inter-church meeting
	Ms. Esther, Ms. China - inter-church meetings	Mr. Sparkle - guest facilitator to affinity group
	Ms. Rose, Terron, Shèniya - single inter-church meeting	
	Nakita, Kim - guest facilitators to affinity group	
<i>White participants*</i>	Nikki - inter-church meetings, planning, affinity group co-facilitator	Aviva - planning, inter-church meetings, more planning, affinity group
	Anthony - affinity group co-facilitator	Lena - inter-church meetings, affinity group
	Johanna - single inter-church meeting, FCF advisory board	Ryne, Mark - inter-church meetings
		Gwen, Jim, Sky, Bob, Turbo - affinity group
		Allison, Pastor Alex - FCF advisory board, planning
		Nick - single inter-church meeting, FCF advisory board
		Greg - single inter-church meeting, prayer group
		J.B., Kyra, Elya, Joseph, Lena L., Lexi - single inter-church meeting
		Gustave, Bethany, Maggie - FCF advisory board
		Jane, Ariana - prayer group
	Pastor Robert - planning	
<i>Asian participants*</i>		Steven - single inter-church meeting

*Racial designations follow participants' self-identifications as they emerged through interactions

Roles. Inter-church meetings: summer/fall 2015. Affinity group: summer 2016 - spring 2017. Prayer group: fall 2016. Planning: throughout.

Ages. Mostly in late 20s/early 30s. Exceptions include people with Ms. or Mr. (60s, black); Lena (50s); Pastor Robert, Pastor Alex, Bob, and Johanna (40s/50s); and Terron and Shèniya (early 20s).

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Introduction

White people are astounded by Birmingham, black people aren't. They are endlessly demanding to be reassured that Birmingham is really on Mars. They don't want to believe, still less to act on the belief, that what is happening in Birmingham is happening all over the country. They don't want to realize that there is not one step morally or actually, between Birmingham and Los Angeles.

—James Baldwin, *I Am Not Your Negro: A Companion Edition to the Documentary Film*.

Baldwin's commentary on police brutality in Birmingham was situated in a media environment that helped many white Americans have moments of discovery and exposure about race and whiteness in America. In the early 1960s, over 90% of American homes had TVs. And motivated by Cold War fears, federal pressure for TV networks to educate citizens had led to the creation of the prime-time news documentary genre, and would lead in 1963 to the nightly news format (Bodroghkozy, 44; see also Dudziak). This meant that the core of the civil rights movement, from sit-ins, to the Birmingham campaign, to the March on Washington, was the "first major, ongoing domestic news story" that television networks reported on (Bodroghkozy, 44). Through the nightly news and through images in magazines (Gallagher and Zagacki), then, some of what had been hidden about racial injustice in people's day-to-day lives was now popping through. It is these moments of people's exposure to systemic injustice that I'm interested in.

This dissertation, almost 60 years after Baldwin, takes place in a similar cultural moment: Black Lives Matter. Like Birmingham, in 2014 Black Lives Matter was galvanized by disclosures of racist structures disseminated through new media. This time it was videos taken on people's phones that showed Eric Garner, Philando Castile, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, and other black people being killed by the police (Gilmer and Chester; Poniewozik), and it was social media that allowed the videos to easily spread and enter public debate under the hashtag #blacklivesmatter. While for many people, this was a chance to close back up (often under the counter-slogan All Lives Matter, or more pointedly, Blue [i.e. Police] Lives Matter), for others it was a new awakening. As Turbo would speculate, maybe America's tenuous relation to black people had "always been apart and it's just been my ignorance, I'm seeing it more now." Based on a three-year participatory study with people from 2015-2017, this dissertation examines how the US's legacy of racial injustice prompts us to complement rhetorical theory to focus on how people develop their responsiveness to others.

This dissertation does two things. First, at a theoretical level, this dissertation provides a three-part rhetorical process of responsive anti-racist engagement. Second, it provides several practices to support such a process.

A PROCESS OF RESPONSIVE ANTI-RACIST ENGAGEMENT

1. A rhetorical process of responsive anti-racist engagement involves white people putting themselves in places where they can/will encounter uncomfortable situations, ideas, stories, and people. This is important because scholars of race and whiteness show that racism qua structure hides its injustice. Thus, people who benefit from white privilege need to be exposed to the injustices that complement and make possible their benefit, rather than coming up with these injustices themselves. This perspective is that people on the receiving end of oppression often understand it better than the people dishing it out.

By situations, ideas, stories, and people, I mean to get at a whole range of things that white people need to learn in order to act out anti-racism. In this project, that range included critique and guidance that was more reactive (“you shouldn’t have prioritized calling people back who sounded white”), as well as critique and guidance that was more proactive (“you might gentrify Familyfield if you move there as a white person”). Sometimes it was solicited (“what do you think?”), sometimes it was unsolicited (“I have to tell you...”). Sometimes it was tailored to individual action (“please volunteer at the food bank”), and sometimes to structural action (“divest yourself of white supremacy”). Sometimes stories and situations were personalized (e.g. through relationships) and sometimes they were public (e.g. through a Cornel West book). Sometimes this was from a contemporary source (“mass incarceration is the new Jim Crow”), and sometimes it was historical (“Du Bois said that...”). Sometimes it came from people of color, and sometimes from other white people. Sometimes it was aimed at people’s ideas/beliefs (“don’t think people of color can’t advocate for themselves”), and sometimes it was aimed at people’s actions (“put your body on the line for justice”), and sometimes at people’s feelings (“don’t be so preoccupied by your own guilt that you don’t actually do anything”), and sometimes even at people’s habits (“how are you unsegregating your own life?”). Uncertain and vulnerable situations, moreover, took people out of their comfort zones in one way or another, whether that was cooking for people of color, attending a challenging talk, or attempting to build a relationship to learn about that person’s experiences. It includes exposure to the realities white people normally don’t have to confront.

This part of the process is both passive (something that happens to a person) and active (something they choose). It’s active from the perspective of people putting themselves in these situations, but passive from the perspective that they can’t control what they will actually hear; what they hear may push beyond what they were expecting, and vice versa. For instance, at the start of

this project in 2014, I went to a conference for Black Urban Growers (BUGs). In doing so, I was putting myself in a position to hear some kind of critique and guidance about farming and food production and race, but I was not expecting to be drawn into national grocery chains as “black wealth extraction sites.” This was a moment of being in an uncertain situation, exposed to critique of the stores I shopped at, that I both chose and had thrust upon me. This both/and is important because it means that being exposed (seen passively) is also a rhetorical choice, concerned with how people change in the interaction. Rather than audiences being taken as a given, this process examines deciding to be part of an audience as itself rhetorical: who are people putting themselves in a position to hear from? Who are they being an audience to?

2. The second part of a rhetorical process of responsive anti-racist engagement is for white people to **receive uncertain situations, people’s guidance and critique, and the truth in people’s stories when exposed to it.** Seen in terms of persuasion, this reception means allowing oneself to be persuaded to do/act/feel/think something new regarding race and racism. Seen as a continuation of becoming exposed (see above) to what hadn’t been encountered before, this part of the process is to **remain** exposed, practicing vulnerability.

Receiving people’s critique and guidance is complex. It means seeking ways to engage with it rather than focusing first on judging, arguing or defensiveness. For instance, people at First Church asked me to volunteer at their monthly food bank, and even though at the time I disagreed with the food bank’s triage approach to addressing Splitsville’s hunger needs, I said okay. My assent and my reception of their call came before my intellectual agreement with it. This dizzying yielding of control is particularly useful for white people who have been culturally raised to always be in control.

Receiving people’s critique and guidance also means not demanding closure (i.e. resolution, finality, certainty) in one’s interpretation. Different people’s critique and guidance will differ, so demanding closure reinscribes uniformity from people of color. Moreover, people’s critique and guidance often goes beyond what we can fulfil (see below), so demanding closure misconstrues anti-racism as something that can be completed or fully satisfied. Finally, waiting for closure can be an excuse for not doing anything.

Receiving people’s critique and guidance also means acknowledging when critique and guidance goes beyond one’s capacity to respond. That is, it’s healthy to feel a little overwhelmed at critique and guidance. Calls to “divest yourself of white supremacy” should be lamented as something that we aren’t able to fully do.

Finally, receiving people’s critique and guidance means desiring to do what is recommended. This is in conjunction with the above, of acknowledging when what is recommended goes beyond one’s capacity. In our group, desiring to act was mostly assumed, but this is the focal point of much anti-racist scholarship (i.e. those who seek to create a “willingness” for people to take action).

For Christians, this desire to respond well might be understood as part of repenting from racism. In this study, desiring to do what is recommended was often emotionally difficult when there was disagreement or uncertainty about what is asked (i.e. when there isn't closure).

Like with the first part of seeking opportunities to hear critique and guidance regarding race and racism, then, this second part of receiving uncertain situations and the critique and guidance that can come along with them is taken to be a rhetorical skill: an (in)ability to help people change (in this case, it's oneself that is expected to change). That is, having become an audience, skill in reception means making themselves open cognitively, affectively, and otherwise to acting out the recommendation.

3. The third part of a rhetorical process of responsive anti-racist engagement is for white people to **act in response to people's critique and guidance**. In other words, people need to enact the actions, feelings, ideas, beliefs, and habits that people have been persuaded they should do/feel/think/believe/be. This responsive action creates material change for people of color. It also affects one's own future tendency to act, i.e. one's habits. This dissertation treats acting responsively as part of being persuaded (i.e. if people don't act out the consequences of their new beliefs, then they have only assented to a proposition), rather than as a follow-up to being persuaded.

Overall, then, this three-part process can be summarized as: 1) show up; 2) say yes; and 3) act accordingly. Or, equivalently: 1) seek to be exposed; 2) allow yourself to be vulnerable when exposed; and 3) act responsively.

This dissertation makes several arguments related to this three-part theoretical process of responsive anti-racist engagement. First, it argues that this is **ongoing** work. In the process described above, anti-racism does not consist of a limited set of propositions that, once learned, are sufficient. Rather, anti-racism is an ongoing process of responsiveness, with one part feeding into another. This follows from arguments made by scholars of race and whiteness that racism is deeply sedimented into white people, and requires lifelong anti-racist work to undo and reconstruct. As an ongoing process, anti-racist responsiveness is well worth rhetorical scholarly effort to address and scaffold.

Second, this dissertation argues that this process of responsive anti-racist engagement is **progressive**. Each of the three parts of the process can be done clumsily or with sophistication. For instance, in the beginning, many of the people in the project didn't know about the US's history of discriminatory "redlining" housing. (That is, it wasn't something they knew how to seek out; they didn't know they didn't know it.) When Lena learned about redlining at a local anti-racist workshop, and passed her notes on to us, it gave us new sources to put ourselves in a position to be exposed to a structural housing reality shaping our own lives and those around us: we could talk to Lena, we could go to similar workshops, we could research more about the practice now that we knew the term "redlining," etc. As people understand the lay of the land, they

can seek out being exposed to critique and guidance in more effective, sophisticated ways. Receiving guidance and acting it out are similarly progressive. For instance, Gwen began our small group by taking small actions, and ended the group talking about anti-racist actions that would develop it into a “lifestyle.” This is a progression of her ability to enact anti-racism. As a process that’s progressive, anti-racism deals with people’s **capacities**: their ability to seek exposure to challenging new situations, stay responsive to what emerges in those, and act responsively. Part of the task of a rhetorical practice of anti-racism, then, is to build people’s capacities for these three rhetorical tasks.

Finally, and most importantly, this dissertation argues that this process of responsive anti-racist engagement is malleable and **can take many shapes**. In other words, the three parts above are often taken as a linear order: 1) show up, then 2) be willing to change, then 3) actually do it. But this dissertation identifies some people who talk about being stuck in taking action. With regard to this theoretical process, this “aspirational rhetoric” shows a willingness to change (i.e. a vulnerability, a staying-exposed) without a corresponding capacity to easily, adequately enact that change. This dissertation suggests, then, that especially in this case, taking anti-racist action in the midst of/despite uncertainty (3) can have a significant role in shaping that interpretation (2) and seeing what’s present in the first place (1). Acting responsively can jumpstart people’s interpretation; it can dislodge people’s stuckness. These alternative orders, in which responsive action leads reception, were something that people in the project aspired to. Sometimes they quoted their favorite Christian writer, “act your way [3] into a new way of thinking [2].” Sometimes they critiqued their overreliance on receiving (2) by calling it “overthinking.” This isn’t to dismiss thinking, but seen from this dissertation, a process of anti-racism expects people’s action to take place before they really make sense of it. It suggests that capacity-building interventions should be focused on people’s actions, and teach people to be attentive to how those actions are themselves affecting and enacting their reception of critique and guidance.

This also adds a new aspect to people’s rhetorical skill of being persuaded—namely, that taking action is intimately tied up with the cognitive and affective reception of uncertain situations, and people’s critique and guidance. Being exposed, remaining vulnerable, and acting responsively are thus intermingled.

PRACTICES OF RESPONSIVE ANTI-RACIST ENGAGEMENT

The second goal of this dissertation is to identify three rhetorical practices that support this rhetorical process of responsive anti-racist engagement. Each practice engages with each of the three parts of the process and treats them as ongoing, progressive, and malleable. That is, it treats responsiveness as a lifelong skill that can be developed and that can (in some cases) be useful to interpret through the lens of actions already taken.

The first practice is “call-and-response,” which was used unself-consciously in this project and is therefore simply a possibility to develop into a more explicit anti-racist practice. Call-and-response subordinates receiving critique and guidance to being exposed to it and responsively acting. One person (or a group), acts to “call” people into speech (1). (In the anti-racist application, this is a call that relates to race, like a call to confess participating in racist structures, or to denounce police shootings of black men.) The people who show up have a script that makes it easy for them to act responsively (3): simply read aloud. Call-and-response thereby somewhat defers the receiving part of the anti-racist process (2) and provides some guiderails. That is, in a very literal sense a scripted response comments on and helps interpret the call’s critique and guidance; participating in the call-and-response can go some way toward receiving the critique and guidance vulnerably (without being defensive), with an openness and “yes.”

The second practice is “anti-racist debriefing,” in which a group of people begin by representing some action they’ve taken (or are considering taking) (3). Through collaborative interpretation, they then consider together how that action exposes them to things they hadn’t confronted before (1) and work to actively listen (especially emotionally) to the truth of those stories/experiences (2), sometimes building plans for how to act in the future. Here, responsive action is at the forefront of anti-racist engagement, charting what critique and guidance are being made available, and how that’s being received.

The final practice is “participation,” meant for researchers who want to practice responsive anti-racist engagement as part of their scholarship. To use participation as a methodological anti-racist practice, scholars view participants as offering critique and guidance (1), receive that (2), and design a research project that adjusts accordingly (3).

Overall, then, these three practices help develop people’s capacities to enact a rhetorical process of anti-racist engagement.

RELATED WORK

Examining a responsive rhetorical engagement vis-à-vis systemic racism contributes to three interdisciplinary bodies of intellectual work. First, it contributes to the study of race in the U.S. In the immense body of work in this area, scholars of race and whiteness have examined how racism emerges as everyday interactions (including from scholars) and articulates structures of injustice (Yancy, Coates, Bonilla-Silva, Nakayama and Krizek, Wanzer). For many scholars, this leads to a focus on unrepentant white people, who react defensively with “white fragility”/“white tears” (DiAngelo) and “white rage” (Anderson). This study builds on this by investigating what’s next for people after they begin to acknowledge white privilege.

Second, this study contributes to rhetorical theory that emphasizes expo-

sure and vulnerability. Scholars have recently begun to conceive of rhetoric as involving more than just persuading others (Burke; Young, Becker, and Pike; Foss and Griffin; Bone, Griffin, and Scholz; Ratcliffe), to the extent of seeing rhetoric defined by interconnectedness between beings and the world (Davis; Gries; Bennett; Rickert). This new materialist turn has often been criticized for its lack of attention to pressing issues of social concern (Ahmed, “Some Preliminary Remarks”; Harding; see Rickert, “Afterward,” 231). This study works to bridge these two areas, as well as to provide concrete practices that people can use to act on and develop such theoretical knowledge. What critical race theory brings is questions of racialized perspective; and what new materialist rhetorical theory contributes is a strong attention to the movement between discourse and action. Race has structured our country so closely (Kendi; Painter; Mignolo; Coulson) that it takes great imagination to pursue right relations. And more than other systems of injustice, talking “about” race is also “talking race.” In other words, people’s discursive explorations of race are connected to anti-racist work itself.

Finally, this dissertation extends participatory research methods used by scholars in communication studies and community literacy. Communication scholars have developed “participatory critical rhetoric” (Middleton et al.), while community literacy efforts have focused on ways that scholars can enter into real-world problems with groups of people and use communication (including written communication, i.e. literacy) to address those (House, Myers, and Carter). This study contributes new ways to bring people together to address anti-racism. Moreover, by examining a group of white people who are about ten years out of college, we can gain insight into how older adults can comport themselves emotionally and rhetorically regarding systemic issues: namely, over several years and with jobs and kids. This complements many studies of undergraduates’ semester-long anti-racism efforts.

In addition to these three primary areas, this study’s work with people from two progressive Christian churches naturally gives scholars an opportunity to glean rhetorical insights from religious practices, moving toward a *rapprochement* between rhetorical study and religion (DePalma and Ringer; Vander Lei, et al.; Jost and Olmsted).

OUTLINE

This dissertation is divided into four parts. In each part, the first chapter is more empirical, and the second chapter goes over the same ground in a more theoretical way. This structure is meant to show how empirical work can support theoretical contributions, and vice versa. Close textual analysis in the first chapter of each pair invites readers into a sense of loss and confusion, and also (when appropriate) into small transformation. Theory-building in the second chapter links to wider philosophies of race and language use.

Part I develops the three-part rhetorical process of responsive anti-racist

engagement outline above. Chapter 1 introduces the group of people who this dissertation is focused on: people from the mostly white church of Second Pres and the nearby mostly black church of First Church. In talking about their life stories regarding race, their institutional efforts, and their day-to-day situations, many of the white participants felt at a loss for reacting well to their role in racist structures. They spoke with commitment to acting against racism, but diagnosed themselves as unable to carry it out—or as I call it, they spoke with “aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism.” In contrast, the black participants expressed nuanced, confident stances toward anti-racism. This chapter argues that aspirational rhetoric fractures the sense that a person’s belief that racism is real is sufficient for them to enact anti-racism. Aspirational rhetoric also shows in a very practical way the necessity to investigate people’s racial affect. Chapter 2 continues to examine aspirational rhetoric from a more theoretical perspective. As many people of color argue, systems of injustice not only distribute benefits to some people at the expense of others, but also hide those benefits as unjust. Thus, whiteness (as an action) is a process of staying closed off, invulnerable, blissfully unaware. This agrees with recent rhetorical work that frames rhetoric itself in terms of people’s (in)vulnerability. This chapter moves to combine these threads, arguing that white people’s anti-racism involves developing increasing capacity to stay exposed to people’s (especially people of color’s) critique while also taking action.

Given this general framework, Parts II, III, and IV together describe three strategies for practicing the exposure side of rhetoric and for working through aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism. Part II corresponds primarily to a set of inter-church meetings from 2015; Part III corresponds to a white affinity group in which members debriefed day-to-day stories about race together from 2016-2017; and Part IV backs up to an in-between time in 2016 of collaborative reflection to develop the white affinity group.

Part II describes call-and-response as a way that people can speak so as to be shaped themselves. In the inter-church meetings, call-and-response was a strategy of racialized *imitatio*, an approach to rhetorical training in which people repeat models in order to scaffold creating their own compositions. In Chapter 3, people from Second Pres practice call and response weekly in church. They adapt this liturgical call-and-response spontaneously to inter-racial, inter-church communication as well as to prayer about race. This chapter argues, then, that call-and-response can be a racialized strategy for scripted rhetorical invention in which white people can listen, participate without dominating, subordinate themselves to a common spiritual goal, and encounter their interdependence. Chapter 4 extends this by articulating a set of assumptions inherent in call-and-response regarding what language does. This means supplanting a typical set of assumptions with an alternative that centers on people’s attention rather than intention. Such an attention-based language ideology may be useful pedagogically as scholars seek to lead students into similar anti-racist rhetorical action.

Part III explores debriefing as a way to practice the exposure side of rhetoric. If call-and-response is a strategy for interracial speaking, debriefing is a strategy that white people can use with each other. Chapter 5 examines how debriefing helps people stay vulnerable without remaining stuck regarding day-to-day situations; Chapter 6 pulls back to see how, over the course of 10 months, people were able to conceptualize their recent life history regarding race in a way that was vulnerable but not stuck.

Finally, Part IV examines how researchers themselves can practice exposure. In other words, scholarly work is not exempt from racist structures. As Wanzer argues, “we all (regardless of whether we are interested in discursive con/texts explicitly marked by colonialism or imperialism) must seek to become decolonial rhetoricians” (654). Participation is explored in this Part as a methodological way for researchers themselves to remain exposed. Scholars have the chance to be shaped themselves when they actively participate with people in some activity. This yields control and also draws them into the process. Chapter 7 shows this in action by describing five ways to yield to participants while developing new action together. In this case, it examines the contours of the process of imagining and planning the white affinity group explored in Part III. Chapter 8 develops this idea of a researcher’s participation more theoretically, by examining how participation impacts our sense of research ethics. The chapter argues that a paradigm of ethical “accountability” is misleading in its drive toward justifying ourselves. Rather, it advocates for ethical “interdependence.”

Overall, these three strategies for practicing a responsive anti-racist engagement join other work in attempting to help people in privileged social positions act toward a more just world.

Part I: Responsive anti-racist engagement

Chapter 1

Aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism

“I desperately want to do that. I don’t know how.”

—Allison, Black Urban Growers national conference, Nov 10, 2013

“We’re kinda af- —afraid of hurt—of being politically incorrect. And we’re afraid of being offensive somehow, of not saying the right thing, or saying something that might come off as being awkward.”

—Ryne, inter-church meeting, Aug 16, 2015

“How do you feel about your ability to accomplish that goal?” (Will)

“Like how it translates? Yeah, like I ha- —I have no idea where to start, really.”

—Aviva, one-on-one planning, Sept 29, 2015

“It’s been a subject I’ve kinda sat with of late, um, but not really had anywhere to go with it.”

—Turbo, first white affinity group meeting, June 6, 2016

The quotes above, drawn from participants in different stages of this project and with different groups of people, hint at what seems like a marginal and uncomfortable type of speech about racism: people saying that they’re stuck in acting against racism. Marginal because we don’t often hear this kind of expression in public discourse about race. Uncomfortable because this stuckness is difficult to buy, especially as disembodied text; who would express something so viscerally uncomfortable for themselves and for the people listening? For many people of color, this kind of stuckness over race is even more excruciating for being expressed by white people. White people and their feelings! At a talk in 2018, for instance, I heard Damon Young, blogger and ironically self-described “professional black person,” viscerally express his exasperation at people’s stuckness: “If you really don’t know what to do, go to Home Depot. Buy some plywood. Nail your window shut. Nail your door shut. And just die.” Young’s exaggerated step-by-step process is based on the premise that people who feel stuck are hopeless to work with. And with less oomph but just as much conviction, Charley, a young black woman who participated in this project, similarly sug-

gested when I showed her statements like these that white people's stuckness is a symptom of white savior mentality ("What should I do?" Charley mimicked, "I have to do something") and is also dishonest: "Is it really that hard?" Taken together, many people of color's reaction to stuckness is that white people need to get their shit together and not be such milksops.

There is similar scholarly ambivalence about stuckness, under the concept of *aporia*, which designates an achieved lack of understanding, an unlearning, a transition between deconstructing (racial) conceptions and experiencing a rhetorical rebirth. *Aporia*, from a-poros in Ancient Greek, literally "without passage," is used frequently in Plato's dialogues to describe the outcome of Socratic questioning. *Gorgias*, for instance, is "at a loss" (ἀπορεῖν, aporetic) about the status of rhetoric after Socrates shows that rhetoric must not be an art. Thus, *aporia* results from *Gorgias* carefully considering (and eliminating) of all the perceived options; it takes work to be aporetic about something. That said, *aporia* has an ambiguous status within philosophy and rhetoric. Within philosophy, *aporia* is argued to involve blame-shifting and nihilism. For instance, when Socrates leads *Meno* into *aporia*, *Meno* lashes out: "in your appearance and in other respects you are extremely like the flat torpedo sea-fish; for it benumbs anyone who approaches and touches it" (*Meno* 79e-80d). *Meno*'s insult displaces his own discomfort onto Socrates. Moreover, *Meno* is incredulous at Socrates' willingness to be aporetic. For *Meno*, *aporia* equates to nihilism: "on what lines will you look, Socrates, for a thing of whose nature you know nothing at all?" Pursuing truth, in this view, requires having some bearing, and so the bewilderment of *aporia* disqualifies a person from pursuing truth. When rhetoricians circulated the term "aporia" in Renaissance handbooks, it was in the context of "being at a loss" as a manipulative verbal ploy: seed the audience with a question or sarcastic uncertainty, and then delight them with a ready answer later in the speech (e.g. Puttenham). Within rhetorical study today, Warren and Hytten apply *Meno*'s skepticism of *aporia* to white people's stuckness over race, finding the "Torpidified," or stunned, reaction to the weight of racism. The Torpidified reaction, they claim, can only lead to "self-pity and immobilization" (332).

However, *aporia* has also been investigated as a kairotic moment for personal transformation. Some of Plato's dialogues themselves end in *aporia* (Gordon). Derrida revived the concept of *aporia* for deconstructive purposes, redirecting it to how people both cannot pass the limits/boundaries of language and knowledge representation, but also must pass. This paralysis "is not necessarily negative" (Derrida, 12). For rhetoricians in this tradition, then, *aporia* is positive or even necessary as a process of inquiry. Raign applies *aporia* to the teaching of argumentation, asking how students can "use such an impasse, in the spirit of *aporia*, to open the discussion up rather than close it down" (Raign, 92). Similarly, Ingram asserts that "self-transformation requires some sort of rupture with everyday attitudes and beliefs. The experience of *aporia* can be useful to that end. Struggling with dialectical tensions ... promotes critical thinking" (Ingram,

302). Most eloquently, Ann Diller writes, “The capacity to be torpified bears close family resemblance to the ability to be awed, to be surprised, to be astonished, to be moved in a deeply moral, or ethical, or aesthetic, or epistemological, or ontological way. It takes considerable courage, self-knowledge, a brave heart, and honest openness to face one’s own ignorance” (Diller, 8). This dissertation contributes to this ongoing debate about the value of aporia, especially in the context of race and racism.

In other words, I think there’s more to the story about people’s stuckness. This first chapter details a pattern of many white participants talking about their own anti-racist efforts with a mixture of desire to act against racism and stuckness about how to do that. I call this combination “aspirational” rhetoric of anti-racism (i.e. they have something good that they want, and they say that they can’t enact that). The first section describes the local context of Splitsville and the project in which observing stuckness emerged analytically. The following three sections each detail a different situation in which white people used aspirational rhetoric: in describing the institutional partnership of the Familyfield Community Farm; in describing, when entering the project, their own life stories regarding race; and in describing day-to-day interactions involving race. The conclusion draws three implications from these observations: that aspirational rhetoric is not well captured by existing concepts for white people’s talk about racism; that aspirational rhetoric is pervasive, spanning many situations; and that aspirational rhetoric introduces questions about rhetoric itself and its relationship to habit, embodied action, belief, persuasion, and affect. This sets up the theoretical work that Chapter 2 does to describe the temporality of aspirational rhetoric.

ACTING AGAINST RACISM IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF FAMILYFIELD

Before examining aspirational rhetoric in this project, it’s important to briefly examine the demographics and racial history of the U.S., city of Splitsville, neighborhood of Familyfield, and two churches (First Church and Second Pres) involved. After all, possibilities for anti-racism are contextual to places and their history.

According to census numbers extrapolated to 2017, white people made up 77% of the U.S. population, black people made up 13%, Hispanic and Latino people made 17%, and Asian people made up 5% (Census QuickFacts). But these populations are not evenly distributed geographically. More than half of black people in the U.S. live in the South. And people of all other non-white racial ethnic categories live in the West more than in any other region: the West has 42% of U.S. Hispanic and Latinx, 46% of U.S. Asian Americans, 48% of American Indians and Alaska Natives; 68% of Native Hawaiians, 37% of the U.S. “two or more races” population, and 46% of those designated “some other race” in the U.S. (“Race and Ethnicity in the United States”). Meanwhile, the Midwest

is more than 81% white, although numerically, the South has more white people than any other region.

This conditions the racial demographics in Splitsville, a medium-sized city in the northeast, Rust Belt region of the United States, which is primarily a black and white city:¹ today, the metro area of Splitsville is the whitest of any metro area that has more than 1 million people, and the city of Splitsville itself is 25% black, with only a small share of Hispanic and Latinx people.² In the early 1900s black workers emigrated to Splitsville from the South as strikebreakers and thereby gained a foothold in the thriving steel industry. After World War I, African Americans continued to migrate to Splitsville from other cities, working in manufacturing, transportation, and trade. Black Splitsvillers endured disproportionately high rates of arrest, high Klan activity, and discrimination in almost every establishment, from restaurants, to pools, to theaters. In addition, because of discriminatory housing markets, they clustered into a few neighborhoods and made one in particular a dynamic, thriving cultural Renaissance and a source of activism. After World War II, Splitsville went into a period of decline, although the proportion of African Americans continued to grow. In response to continued educational, economic, and geographic barriers, black people in Splitsville escalated their efforts to receive fair treatment. During the Civil Rights movement, people engaged in non-violent direct action, but after MLK was killed and the 1968 riots happened, people began drawing on the philosophy of black power. This led to increased opportunities, but in a city that was beginning to de-industrialize. Many black people left, but others sought education and new avenues for work. Now Splitsville is reinventing itself again in health and technology.

Today in Splitsville, just like at the national level, the city's racial populations aren't distributed evenly geographically.³ Splitsville has become less segregated over the last thirty years, but according to census data from 2010, at the census tract level Splitsville's black-white dissimilarity index (a traditional measure of segregation) is high enough that the city is still "highly segregated."

Certainly there's a feeling of racial separation around Splitsville's neighborhood of Familyfield. In the 1970s, white flight from Familyfield caused it to become a black neighborhood, and strict code enforcement led to hundreds of demolished homes. In the 90s gangs reigned in the neighborhood; in the 00s, laws that favored slumlords held the neighborhood back despite community organizing. During the time of this project (2015-2017), the historically black neighborhood of Easton, adjacent to Familyfield, was quickly gentrifying and

1 References for local history are omitted for the sake of preserving Splitsville's anonymity, but are available upon request. In particular, I thank the authors of referenced sources for their helpful explanations of Splitsville's history

2 Racial differences also correspond to class differences: 15% of white people in Splitsville live in poverty, whereas 33% of black people do.

3 This is also exacerbated by the continued legacy of discriminatory housing practices, which persisted in Splitsville into the 1990s.

thereby was generating a considerable amount of racial tension in that part of Splitsville. Participants in this project suspected that Easton's gentrification would soon spread to Familyfield, although currently many people in Familyfield were connected generationally, through family.⁴ Neighborhood boundaries in Familyfield, like all of the city, are stark. Familyfield's southern border, Main St., which divides Familyfield from the very white, upper middle-class neighborhood of Quakertwon, has been described to me as "the most segregated street in Splitsville." And, according to another participant, the road that divides Familyfield at the north is similar: "to the south of Macy Boulevard is black, to the north is white."

This project takes place with reference to two institutions around Familyfield: the racially mixed, mostly black church of First Church, and the almost completely white church of Second Pres (**Table I.1**, pg v).⁵

First Church is a mostly black church in the heart of Familyfield. It's a neighborhood church that reflects Familyfield's predominantly black population and serves those people through traditional outreach programs like a summer vacation Bible school and a monthly food bank. First Church is mostly black with services of about 40 people, skewing older with some younger people. About fifteen years ago, several white families, including Pastor Malcolm, his wife Johanna, and their family, began to make Familyfield and First Church their home. Their commitment to the neighborhood has been an intentional attempt to build interracial trust, creating a bank of experiences that black people from First Church drew on in working with white people from Second Pres, and creating a template of sorts that white people from Second Church referred to.

As an institution, I never heard people talk about First Church with anti-racist stuckness. Ms Di expressed frustration that the monthly food bank didn't have more volunteers, and wanted younger people who grew up around First Church to be more involved, and held a vague hope that maybe Second Pres would merge with First Church to create one church, but had no lack of confidence about the work or direction of First Church.

Second Pres, only half a mile from First Church, has a more complicated relationship with Familyfield. As a church, it bridges evangelical and liberal Christians while also connecting to Catholicism. Denominationally, Second Pres is part of the Presbyterian Church (USA), which is more theologically and so-

4 Hence "Family"-field, the pseudonym for the neighborhood that Terron suggested for this project; his close second was for me to call it the neighborhood of Truth. These asset-based pseudonyms contrast with many outsiders' negative, deficit-based assessments of the neighborhood.

5 Ms. Di picked the pseudonym of "First Church" to indicate their church's goal of racial reconciliation derived Biblically from the first Christian church (ergo, "First" Church). Aviva picked "Second Pres" to follow ordinarily. (Ordinal church names are common in Splitsville, going up to Sixth Presbyterian Church of Splitsville.) Aviva's choice was partly an enactment of being deferential to First Church (i.e. being second). It was also partly an intentionally humorous, self-deprecating commentary on the churches themselves: First Church is a fairly expressive congregation, whereas Second Pres—as is stereotypical of Presbyterians in general—is more stiff, staid, and orderly.

cially liberal than other denominations in the Presbyterian tradition.⁶ But Second Pres uses its denominational latitude primarily to be a next step and breathing point for recovering evangelicals, who grew up in very conservative Christian traditions and burned out on church in some way.⁷ Yet despite being generally wary of evangelical articulations of Christianity, Second Pres does not pendulum swing to a vague metaphorical understanding of Christianity or a blanket affirmation of many issues in vogue; it had not (as of 2017), for instance, affirmed LGBT expression within Christian leadership as a church, which is a tentpole for much of the denomination. Rather, Second Church’s innovations are similar to what has been described and analyzed as “new monasticism” (Wilson-Hartgrove; Markofski) or “radical orthodoxy” (Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward), and involve bringing creativity and embodiment to Christian practice (see Chapter 3). This bridge comes through in part with several people who work part-time as trained “spiritual directors,” who are trained in Catholic spiritual practices and help others develop their relationship with Jesus through those practices. Many people at Second Pres take on activities that would be seen as suspiciously libertine by evangelical Christians and as embarrassingly sincere by more committed liberal Christians. For instance, one person at Second Pres who has served as an elder (a rotating leadership position) blogs about how Christians can learn spiritually from doing yoga—this counters evangelicals’ suspicion of yoga, while retaining a Christian focus. As another example, when Pastor Robert took a sabbatical, he arranged to visit several monasteries to learn to brew beer with monks—this challenges evangelicals who are suspicious of drinking, while developing a theological depth and passion in beer brewing that goes beyond many liberal Christians’ do-good-ism. Second Pres’ innovative, nuanced theology is taken up in Part II as a possible resource for anti-racist rhetorical work.

But despite being a theological bridge, in many ways Second Pres participates in the racial separation around Familyfield. Second Pres is comprised of people who are almost all white, mostly in their early 30s, and very well-educated. (A joke a few years ago was that with so many MAs, PhDs, and MAs of Divinity, there were more degrees at Second Pres than people, although I think as the congregation has had more kids they’ve tipped the scales.) Besides a class and educational difference with many people in Familyfield and at First Church, Second Pres’ building wasn’t in Familyfield itself during this project, but was only on the border. And no one from Second Pres lives in Familyfield, but only in the nearby white neighborhoods of Quakertown and Washington.

Like with First Church, people talked about Second Pres comfortably regarding race. Second Pres had, through this project, three or fewer black people

6 E.g. the PCA—Presbyterian Church of America, the EPC—the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and ECO—the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians

7 Thus, people at Second Church relish their informal slogan: “A church for people recovering from church.” Some people at Second Church burned out as their intellectual inquiry butted up against fundamentalist beliefs in Biblical literalism, e.g. in creationism. Some people burned out as their interest in social issues like race and LGBT rights clashed with their upbringing in the Religious Right.

among the roughly 60 people in the church.⁸ On one hand, this could easily be read as a sign of exclusivity. For instance, Ryne and Mr. Sparkle at different points in the project both quoted Martin Luther King Jr. that 11am on a Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of the week. But people had a variety of other interpretations that preempted anxiety about not being a very racially diverse church. For Jim, it was okay for a church not to appeal to everyone—he liked Second Pres’ contemplative worship style, and didn’t need it to be universal for it to be holy. For Mr. Sparkle, it was okay for Second Pres to be mostly white because Familyfield was gentrifying and becoming whiter itself. For Aviva, having a multiracial congregation was no guarantee of significant multiracial relationships. And for Pastor Robert, not stepping into anxiety was actually a way to listen to the African Americans—namely Mr. Sparkle—around him. When I met with Pastor Robert and Aviva in mid-2016, he described this process of responsiveness: “People like Sparkle say, ‘What if Second Church was planted here to, like, reach out to the young hipsters?’ And I hate when he tells me that, but I trust him, and I want to, like, listen to his leadership in this situation, that what if we’re not supposed to be as integrated physically, on a given Sunday morning? But we’re empowering and equipping people to be about racial justice in their neighborhood and in their workplace and in their families.” In other words, Pastor Robert’s steady hand comes from hearing from the people of color around him that Second Pres doesn’t need to feel anxious about its racial composition.⁹

Second Pres and First Church have been partners for years. Before and after this dissertation project, this partnership took place/continues to take place through: quarterly joint church services, providing volunteers for the other church’s needs, and giving support for an urban farm in Familyfield, the Familyfield Community Farm (see next section).

This project with people from Second Pres and First Church came about formally in 2015. I had been volunteering at the Familyfield Community Farm for a year already and was interested in how white people at the farm related to the mostly black neighborhood of Familyfield. I was told that Aviva, a white woman from Second Pres who I knew well, was interested in doing community

8 Aviva described this as “a few folks in and out.” One African American guy stopped attending around the beginning of the project, because as Jim told it, he grew to think that Second Pres was “just a bunch of white people trying to fix problems they don’t know anything about.” Two others, Charley and Mr. Sparkle, participated in the project but largely stopped attending Second Pres by the end of it. A fourth person began attending around the beginning of this project.

9 Rather, Second Pres should seek to undo areas of privilege and to help empower and equip white people for their lives outside of Sunday morning. Pastor Robert noted that “There’s a lot of investment in the way we do things, and having to identify places of privilege, places of things that we assume are just kind of normal, but they’re actually white in cultural expression, you know?” Here, “white” is not being used in the sense of necessarily carrying oppression, but in the more neutral sense of a culture that has good and bad aspects. Recognizing areas of a church as culturally white (for instance, the congregation being quiet during the sermon, rather than joining in) helps reduce the sense that Second Pres’ approach is the only way to do it. It also gives Second Pres opportunity for asking if they are being unwelcoming to others by maintaining that practice. Pastor Robert’s posture of receiving leads to a certain confidence for Second Pres; this is developed further in Chapter 2.

building at the farm. She and I had limited relationships with people at First Church, but we got in touch with Ms Di, a retired black woman who both of us were acquainted with. Ms Di said she had herself been feeling led by God for First Church and Second Pres to talk about race head-on.

Together, the three of us designed a sequence of topics that would structure an inter-church small group through four meetings during the summer and fall of 2015. Then, after reflective conversations I had with who had participated in those meetings, as well as others at Second Pres (see Chapter 7 for an in-depth explanation of this process), the second phase of the project was to form a small white affinity group. This group met monthly from the summer of 2016 through the spring of 2017. An offshoot of the affinity group engaged in several prayer meetings in the fall of 2016. Throughout both phases of the project, I met with people to plan and reflect on the project to that point.

All told, the project involved about 30 white people (mostly from Second Pres), and about 10 African Americans (mostly from First Church). **Table I.1** (pg v), summarizes who was involved and how, from First Church (left column) and Second Pres (right column).¹⁰ As **Table I.1** (pg v), shows, First Church' participants were more balanced racially than Second Pres'; this roughly reflected the relative proportion of each church's racial make-up.

Within this larger context, this chapter primarily examines how people talked when they came into the project for the first time, whether that was joining the inter-church meetings, or joining the affinity group.

ASPIRATIONAL RHETORIC INSTITUTIONALLY, AROUND THE FCF

Because I entered into this projec through volunteering at the Familyfield Community Farm (FCF), it's worth examining aspirational rhetoric in that context first. Although this project ended up working more with people individually, institutions like the FCF, when considered as institutions, have distributed agency and a history of their own. So if systemic problems like racism deserve systemic solutions (Coogan), then examining discourse about race institutionally is significant.

This section finds that white people talked about the Familyfield Community Farm with significant anxiety and stuckness. The FCF has high stakes for Second Pres because it was largely how Second Pres enacted its commitment to the neighborhood of Familyfield. The FCF was also coming to have high stakes in the city of Splitsville as a model for other emerging urban farms. The important theme about stuckness here that will appear again in the following sections is that people recognize that the farm is embedded in structures of racial inequity, are troubled by that, and respond with anxiety and stuckness.

¹⁰ I didn't attend either church and told people that, but during my time in Familyfield, sometimes people still assumed that I attended First Church (when I was working with Ms. Di and Ms. Esther at their food bank) and sometimes people assumed that I attended Second Pres (when we did the inter-church meetings).

■ Farming as anti-racist practice

The Familyfield Community Farm was designed to intervene materially and rhetorically in Splitsville's food production and distribution. At a national level, in the 1970s, grocery stores in the United States followed white flight from city centers to suburbs (Morales), leaving behind urban "food deserts" like Familyfield: areas in which reasonable access to ingredients is non-existent.¹¹ Nikki's Master's thesis examined Familyfield specifically as a food desert. She found that residents must contend not only with distance (e.g. "no grocery stores within one mile"), but also with geography (hills, weather conditions), transportation options (buses, car availability), type of store (bodega, convenience, grocery, big-box, etc.) and price of goods that exacerbate Familyfield's lack of access to food.

Moreover, the FCF was a chance for Second Pres to work against a kind of theological deficit regarding poverty relief generally and food production specifically (Bahnson). A foundational Christian text for Second Pres and the FCF is *When Helping Hurts*, by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. Corbett and Fikkert show that Christians often give aid in ways that actually exacerbate everyone's poverty: "exacerbates the poverty of being of the economically rich—their god complexes—and the poverty of being of the economically poor—their feelings of inferiority and shame" (62, emphasized throughout in original). Similarly, John Perkins, African American community development expert, emphasizes that Christians must work holistically: the gospel "doesn't single out just spiritual or just physical needs and speak only to those" (23). These two aspects, of food production in the U.S. participating in racial/ecological violence, and of Christian efforts often ignoring or not addressing the roots of this problem, constitute a discovery for Second Pres of racism within the maturity of the institution of the Familyfield Community Farm.

And in many ways, the FCF was designed to address these very aspects. The idea for the farm began in 2005. Second Pres was just being founded, and Pastor Alex from Second Pres had the idea to create a church-led community farm.¹² Theologically, this would undo much of what Christians in general had unleashed. A church-led community farm would require more stability of place and ministry than most churches are willing to commit to; it requires a sense that, unlike some pre-millennialist Christian thinking, God is at work to redeem all of creation, not just people; and it would facilitate a deferential position to-

11 The financial is also racial, here: Eisenhower has called grocery stores' refusal to enter low-income markets "supermarket redlining," and Sloane et al. has shown that African American areas in the LA metro area had significantly less variety and quality of fresh fruit and vegetables than whiter areas, and had significantly less availability of healthy food such as skim milk, whole-grain pasta and breads, and low-fat meat.

12 Terminologically, "community" farm tends to be used synonymously with "urban" farm (even though one describes the participants and the other describes the location) because they are both part of the alternative food movement, which pushes for "food justice" contra big agriculture (Sbicca). The Familyfield Community Farm calls itself a "farm," meanwhile, because it sells food; urban "gardens," on the other hand, tend to produce food for (and by) the household unit. This highlights that, unlike many community gardens, the Familyfield Community Farm is largely centrally planned: people do not have individual plots or control the distribution of the produce.

ward people in Familyfield, rather than a colonizing approach that many churches take in the name of knowing what's best. A farm would also put a twist to what pastoral work includes: Pastor Alex would work half time as a traditional pastor (meeting with people, preaching, etc.), and would work half time as the director of the farm, where his theological training would be pushed to inform how he guided the farm and its volunteers. The farm, then, emerged from Pastor Alex's theologically rooted vision for ecological restoration, and to a lesser extent, his desire to act against racism in Splitsville.

At every point in beginning the farm, people at Second Pres tried to follow the best practices that they had learned for inter-racial community development. Second Pres identified one location in Familyfield of vacant land, with First Church' blessing. They hired a consulting firm to help enter Familyfield well, canvassing the public housing at the top of the hill near the future farm to have a situated understanding of the local needs. They also began a partnership with the school in Familyfield to teach organic farming and get to know the kids in Familyfield. And over the years, the farm itself grew. By 2015 it had expanded to roughly three acres, with a bioshelter, fruit trees, a chicken run, high tunnels, raised beds, a large sign, and more. It had worked with the city to buy the land officially. Infrastructurally, Pastor Alex still spent half of his pastoral time doing farm work, and hired summer interns annually to help with the work. A robust weekly volunteer night attracts many (young, white) volunteers, most of whom are not connected to a church or to Familyfield. The produce, meanwhile, went into a small community-supported agriculture (CSA) which people could pay into, as well as a weekly market held at First Church, priced for Familyfield residents. "Microgreens" grown in the bioshelter were sold to local restaurants. And some produce was given to First Church's monthly foodbank. Each year the advisory board recommitted to anti-racist patterns and structures by experimenting with new ways of drawing in and yielding to Familyfield residents. They've made a food truck for selling produce around Familyfield; hired black summer interns; canvassed the neighborhood to understand convenient times for the produce market, and other initiatives.

■ Desire and stuckness around the FCF

So far, so good. But there is a shadow side to this narrative about the farm that people at Second Pres were attentive to and concerned about, and that drew me into this project academically. First, the partnership that the farm has with Familyfield residents generally and First Church specifically is tenuous. The FCF's early partnership successes hit trouble when the city evicted the tenants of the public housing in order to begin a multi-year construction project to rebuild them; and then closed down the school. Thus, early work to get to know kids in those schools didn't pay off. A more recent partnership with First Church involved developing one plot of the farm into a "prayer labyrinth," where herbs are grown in a circular pattern that allows people to walk prayerfully in a spiral

from the edge to the middle and back, smelling the herbs and asking for God's work to be done. This married the best of Second Church's creative thinking—multisensory, innovative, theologically sound—with local need from First Church, being done in response to gun violence in Familyfield that impacted some of the mothers from First Church. However, I never saw anyone from Familyfield use it.

Moreover, the material environment of the FCF is very white. When I started volunteering at the FCF in late 2013 in what ended up being a precursor to this project, I saw that there were no regular African American volunteers (or indeed, any volunteers who lived in Familyfield). No African Americans were on the farm's advisory board; and the average volunteer interacted with no black people in the course of a volunteer night. These were not promising signs for what is supposedly the "Familyfield" "community" farm.

The academic literature here shows that although urban farms have been touted as environmentally sustainable and socially just alternative to our racist, consumptive food supply system (Kloppenburg et al.), urban farms have also been criticized for reinforcing white supremacy. The very commonality of needing to eat makes it easy for white people to figure food production as outside of racial problems (Slocum). White people often use a universalist discourse of food ("If only people knew where their food came from...") that encourages them to denigrate people of color who don't participate in alternative agriculture as uneducated or uninterested in healthy food (Guthman; Kato). Urban farming spaces, moreover, are also marked as white when a person of color's presence is a conversational topic (Harper). And white people easily see themselves as central, not deigning to learn the local non-white history (Mares and Peña). For a review of these critiques, see Baker, who had first-hand knowledge of the FCF. She concluded in her thesis, with a side eye to the farm, that urban farms have become "a way for many people to perceive progress when in reality there has been no challenge to the greater oppressive structure." Overall, then, systemic racism does not leave urban farming untouched; urban farming is an area of society rife with racist communication structures and actions.

These concerns have made it difficult for people at Second Pres to evaluate the farm's status, and caused the leaders at Second Pres to feel uneasy and ambivalent about their response to racist systems. The FCF continued through this project to hover over Second Pres as a source of anxiety. The farm's advisory board wondered/wonders:

- Does the FCF reinscribe white supremacy?
- Every year when the farm seeks interns and plans events, the advisory board tries to build a partnership with and deference to the community; is lack of progress a practical problem or a heart problem?
- First Church doesn't seem particularly bothered by the asymmetry of the farm, but perhaps that's a problem with Second Pres's listening. Is white leadership—being "a white idea in a black neighborhood," as

Aviva often put it—a fatal flaw?

- If so, how can Second Pres think through next steps? If Pastor Alex and Second Pres stopped leading the farm, it would likely not be picked up by people from Familyfield or First Church (and certainly not with the same attention to permaculture techniques). And it's hard to see giving the farm over to the weeds as a particularly meaningful gesture for being against racism.

This use of aspirational rhetoric from the advisory board and others will appear again in people's life stories. Some expressions of stuckness were from people who feature in the main parts of this project. For instance, in one of the inter-church meetings, Ryne said that the farm has "a lot of good intentions," but "a lot of lack of knowing how" to build relationships and operate as a mutually held endeavor. Similarly, Lena made several separate comments that directed our final inter-church conversation toward the systemic challenges of food deserts. "It just seems like the problems are so intractable"; "is there anything to be done about this?"; and culminating in a rare direct appeal to me as the facilitator of that meeting, "I'm just curious. So lead us, Will." That is, although Lena has a lot of confidence building relationships one-on-one (see next section), she was still susceptible to paralyzing uncertainty regarding the farm: "in the sense of institutional, sort of, systemic problems, I have a lot more uncertainty," she told me later. In her analysis, white people's hesitancy comes because "you wanna do it in a serving way, not in a—a way of 'Oh, we just fix things, cos we're white'-kinda way, you know, 'cos we're the people in charge.'" In other words, white colonizing habits include a certain way of taking over projects, and white people's hesitancy in community projects like the FCF results from trying to undo that.

Aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism also extended to how others talked about the farm. Pastor Alex, who led the farm, told me he resonated with feeling stuck. "We find ourselves with great opportunity for kinda racial reconciliation because of our proximity and the relationships that are being built." However, he asked, "What do we do? {laughs} To really foster that?" He elaborated, "What does it take to really, uh, yeah, to really change?"

Second Pres's stuckness about the FCF hit home with me in 2014 after volunteering at the farm for a few months, in what would be the intellectual genesis of this project. As I was trying to find an intellectual framing for my interest in race at the FCF, a professor recommended I attend the Black farmers and Urban Growers (BUGs) conference. On a lark, I invited Allison, who at the time was an elder at Second Pres and on the FCF's advisory board, to drive to New York City with me to attend. Allison and I were both white and looking for advice about how to increase local black people's ownership of the FCF. The first day of the conference, I was blown away in a workshop when the leaders challenged the race-neutrality of common research methods (for the ways that workshop has percolated through the research methods I've used, see Chapter 8). On

the second day of the conference, Allison was herself blown away when panelists strongly admonished white people to get out of the way for black leaders. The panelists criticized white people who had not “divested themselves of privilege and white supremacy.”

Allison was deeply affected by this, and lined up at the end to ask a question in the big auditorium. “I desperately want to do that,” she affirmed into the mic. “I don’t know how.” In theory, since the panel had started late, lasted longer than expected, and had a large number of people wanting to ask a question, the panelists had agreed not to actually respond to any of the questions. But they intervened after hearing Allison’s plea, recommending anti-racism groups as a path and saying that there were lots of opportunities out there. Their answer was meant to be affirming, but Allison and I were still transfixed by discovering that structural racism was related to inter-racial farming efforts (and research methods), and we left feeling discouraged: daunted by the task of divesting ourselves from white privilege, daunted by the vagueness of how to move forward, and unsure whether it was even possible as a white person to work effectively in a black community like Familyfield.

I’ve come to see Allison’s statement at BUGs as the prototypical expression of aspirational rhetoric. Commitment in the midst of structural injustice: I desperately want to do that. And stuckness: I don’t know how. Allison repeated this again to me a few months later in 2014 regarding the farm itself: “it feels sort of insurmountable in so many ways, there is so much work to do and so much to overcome, and so much complexity to it.” The Familyfield Community Farm, then, prefigures and underlies at an institutional level the affective dismay toward anti-racist efforts that people surface in this project in their life histories and day-to-day situations.

For my budding project, the Familyfield Community Farm provided a venue to examine anti-racist rhetorical analysis at Second Pres and First Church. Because of the farm, many white people at Second Pres are attentive to structural racism, deeply invested (theologically, infrastructurally, financially) in long-term efforts to work against racism, are part of a sustained partnership with people of color, and yet feel anxious and uncertain regarding their efforts. The following two sections examine how this plays out for those people, who are the subject of the rest of this dissertation.

ASPIRATIONAL RHETORIC IN RACIAL SELF-CONCEPTIONS

In 2015, this project officially began when Aviva, Ms. Di, and I planned a set of meetings for black and white people from Second Pres and First Church to talk openly about race. What emerged in these meetings was more aspirational rhetoric from many of the white participants. I was already tuned to the possibility of stuckness through my experience with the farm, and the inter-church meetings crystalized this as of analytic interest.

This section examines aspirational rhetoric as people used it when telling their life stories during those meetings. The following section examines aspirational rhetoric as people used it when talking about day-to-day situations in those meetings. Both of them emphasize how people's desire to act against racism outstripped their ability to do so, and generate rhetorical questions described in the chapter's conclusion.

Examining people's life stories regarding race from a rhetorical perspective is important because it foregrounds the contextual aspect of people's racial self-understanding/racial life projects. From a rhetorical perspective, people's racial life stories are products of a certain moment and audience. And at a broad level, participants contextualized their life stories regarding race with current events,¹³ a mostly white audience,¹⁴ factoring in our time available,¹⁵ and commenting on our physical environment.¹⁶ More than that, seeing stories as contextual means that they are therefore also open to change over time. What will people's racial life histories be like in the future? In particular, when people separate what is true from what **could** be true, what is **actual** from what is **possible**, when people draw on this nexus that I call aspirational rhetoric—it allows us to ask, What can people choose now that might affect how they tell their life story regarding race in the future? That is, observing stuckness in people's racial life stories helps develop stuckness in a uniquely rhetorical way that the rest of this dissertation examines. This question of futurity is then answered from the participants' perspective in 2017 (i.e. two years later) in Chapter 6.

Life stories are also important to begin with because participants viewed them as a way to build trust with each other. In the first two inter-church meetings, Aviva and Ms. Di emphasized how telling our stories would show our mutual concern about race. "Why are you here? Why does this matter to you?" Aviva asked. "I ask everybody's heart be open, everybody's mind be open ... this is very, very important, very important, very important," Ms. Di exhorted. It wasn't until after these two initial context- and trust-building talks that the group's schedule had us move into discussions about our possibilities ("What HOPE do we have?") and next steps ("Now what? Bringing Light to the Darkness!"). Similarly, a year later in 2016 when we were getting the affinity group going, I onboarded Bob, and then onboarded Jim and Sky, by asking to hear their

13 E.g. referencing the drama of a woman taking down the Confederate flag in South Carolina, or the recent release of the Martin Luther King Jr. biopic *Selma*

14 As Ms. Di's prompt for the meeting shows (see below), this meant that both black and white people's stories were an act of trust and vulnerability concerning a sensitive topic. The mostly white audiences also amplifies Charley's claim that as a black woman she's "very unapologetic" when it comes to white folks, and Ms. Esther's declaration that "you can't make me not love you," and gives rhetorical significance to the white participants' verbal and nonverbal reception of those stories.

15 People tuned the length of their stories so that everyone would have a chance to speak, whether that meant telling very brief stories (e.g. Nakita and Kim) when there were a lot of people at the inter-church meeting or very lengthy ones (e.g. Jim and Sky) when it was just me and them preparing for the affinity group.

16 E.g. we held our first inter-church meeting in the Familyfield Community Farm's spice garden, and we commented on the deer that were wandering through it.

life stories regarding race. So in the same way that people in this project used their life stories to build trust with each other and lay the foundation for more extended conversations about future collaborative actions, this opening chapter presents people's life stories to build trust with you the reader as well, entering into the participants' journeys for the remainder of this dissertation.

This section analyzes people's life narratives thematically. As Riessman says in an overview of methods for narrative analysis, "The thematic approach is useful for theorising across a number of cases – finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report. A typology can be constructed to elaborate a developing theory" (3). Specifically, people's stories are summarized with focus on 1) how/when they became aware of racism; and 2) what their current approach to opposing racism is (see **Table 1.1**). Three types are found, the first of which is the type that uses aspirational rhetoric. Last we think that this is the only way for a person to tell their life story regarding race, white people's use of aspirational rhetoric is then contrasted with the life stories that nearly all the black participants told (and some of the white participants as well, with minor variation, see third line of **Table 1.1**).

	How/when people became aware of racism	Current approach to opposing racism
White participants	As an ADULT, TROUBLED by SYSTEMIC racism	STUCKNESS
Black participants	In CHILDHOOD, through being subjected to PREJUDICE	Intentionally LOVING people in various DAY-TO-DAY interactions
White participants	In CHILDHOOD, esp. through parental RESISTANCE to racism	Intentionally LOVING people in various DAY-TO-DAY interactions

Table 1.1. A summary of themes in people's racial life histories, as told at the beginning of their participation in the project (2015-2016)

■ White participants' stuck stories

Aspirational rhetoric in the scope of white people's life stories was visible when they described coming to take racism seriously as an adult through becoming troubled at accounts of systemic racism (notated here, where applicable, as ADULT-TROUBLING SYSTEMS). Their response, in turn, is to be by turns anxious, paralyzed, stuck, uncertain, overwhelmed, and frozen (STUCKNESS). This connection between discovering systemic racism and feeling stuck motivates Chapter 2 in developing a rhetorical theory of aspirational language. Five people's stories show this pattern.

Foundational to this pattern is Aviva, a white, early 30s stay-at-home mom of three kids. She helped plan the inter-church meetings with me and Ms. Di, and had the most consistent and overt expressions of stuckness. In our first meeting together, she began her story by saying that she grew up in a rural town where "I wouldn't say that there was any overt racism." Rather, it was through

her father's comments that Aviva understood race: "whatever was on the news, and whatever he complained about seeing on the news, essentially." He worked at a prison with incarcerated young black men, and would complain about Martin Luther King, Jr. Day because the Civil Rights era was "just a disruption to the norm." Aviva felt uncomfortable with this attitude, but at the time she thought, "Well, folks in the city will deal with that, and I just live out in the country, so it doesn't really matter to me. I'm not racist, cos I don't know any black people, so how could I be racist?" Aviva's irony is obvious, and foreshadows her reversal later in life, where not knowing any black people would affirm rather than deny her participation in racism. In college several years ago, and now especially in the last year since the Black Lives Matter movement started, Aviva feels like "my mind has been transformed," mostly through reading political commentary and literature by African Americans. Now, she affirms MLK's contribution to American history ("obviously") and acknowledges that she has white privilege (ADULT-TRouBLING SYSTEMS).

Aviva has ideas about what an approach to confronting racism would be, but feels unable to carry that out. Instead of just reading commentary on Facebook (which is "passive"), she wants to "pursue authentic relationships in a way that matters," but "where I am now, though, is this not knowing how to." Not-knowing-how-to, or being stuck, extends to dealing with white privilege generally. Aviva floats that she might "relinquish," "give up," and/or "offer" white privilege to someone else, but again, "I don't know how." Her stuckness is more than a lack of procedural knowledge (knowing "how"); it's a visceral experience (Ott, Larson). (STUCKNESS)

We can also see Aviva's hesitation and uncomfortable, awkward self-doubt at the sentence level. The left side of **Table 1.2** is a transcript of a part of Aviva's narrative where she's describing, again, that she doesn't know how to come alongside people of color. On the right is a set of fears and concerns that could plausibly account for the meticulous repairs that she's making. While we obviously can't get into Aviva's head, these imagined questions and comments help get at the sheer effort involved in trying to say the right thing about race. At a discourse analytic level, Aviva's fluidity of modals ("can," "do," "can't") shows uncertainty; her pronouns are carefully adjusted ("I," "we," "a lot of us") so as not to rope people in. Her stutter-stepping ends up emphasizing and instantiating her final declaration "but I don't really know how." Her gesture at that point consisted of raising her hands palm up (metaphorically [Kendon] holding something), then bending at the knees and sinking her hands as if burdened by a weight, while grimacing for a beat in a disgusted and pained expression of her own rhetorical inability. Aviva's stuckness, in other words, is multimodal, affective, agonized and agonizing. (STUCKNESS)

Ryne tells a similar life story regarding race as Aviva. Ryne, also in his early 30s with two young kids, is a visiting professor of philosophy and religion. He began his story with a transformation about race that came in grad school

Aviva, transcript from first inter-church meeting	Imagined considerations that would account for the next phrase
How can I—	Is “can” too passive?
how do I turn it arou- —	Maybe “I” is a little too strong
how do I help turn it around?	What’s my answer?
I can’t do—	Isn’t that pretty obvious?
I, obviously—	Maybe I should get away from myself?
and that’s why I’m so glad that, Charley, that you’re willing to be here, and I know that folks from First Church are willing to be here,	Good
but, I need—	Not just me, really
we—	But I shouldn’t tell others what they need
I think there are a lot of us who want to be people who care,	Is just “caring” too weak of a commitment?
genuinely care, and care to listen, and care to come alongside, um, whatever struggles are happening— um, and racial struggles are specifically related to that and um,	Now for my answer...
but I don’t really know how [with gesture]	

Table 1.2. Part of Aviva’s story, with plausible questions that account for her repairs

a few years ago: “this really became an issue I became more aware of and concerned about in grad school.” Through a class on African American philosophy, he learned that white privilege is real and that the philosophical canon is oversaturated with white thinkers. This is particularly troubling to him in terms of the scholarly legacy he’s inherited: “You read a lot of these thinkers and they are explicitly racist!” More broadly, “on the macro level there’s all sorts of things I’d like to see changed in our culture.” (ADULT-TROUBLING SYSTEMS)

Like Aviva, Ryne has some ideas about what an appropriate response would be, but feels uncertain of how to pursue that. One area that he feels relatively confident of is exposing his students to black authors and talking about race issues as part of his teaching. But beyond that, he feels “very convicted”¹⁷ that his expressions of liberal outrage on Facebook about racist incidents are insufficient. “Whoop-de-doo,” he says sarcastically in evaluation of himself. Similarly, Ryne says he’s convicted by a statistic that 85% of white Americans don’t have any black friends. “How many black people do I hang out with on a regular basis?” he asks himself. Aside from a few black people he sees at church, “that’s

17 In the Christian context of Second Pres, “conviction” means feeling remorse and guilt at committing a wrong against God, and a desire to change.

basically zero.”¹⁸ He thus locates himself as an average white person, not defensively to justify himself, but rather in a vexed way, as part of a poorly performing norm, someone embedded in habits and zones of contact that don’t facilitate significant interracial understanding. A third time he says he’s “convicted” about these things, and comments “I’m not really sure what *rak—racial reconciliation looks like entirely.” This is an optical metaphor (what it “looks like”) that complements Aviva’s procedural metaphor (“how” to do it). Ryne closes his story by gearing himself up emotionally for this process: “I think it’s gonna be a lot harder work than, than I—than I’m anticipating. Um, you know, so I think probably a big thing is to not be discouraged by the slow, grueling process of it.” This is affective self-talk designed to confront his feelings of stuckness. (STUCKNESS)

Jim and Sky’s stories came in a different context. In 2016, I met them for breakfast to bring them onto the project. I prompted them to tell their stories regarding race, and—I think especially because they had recently started dating—they both shared at length (1 hour, and 40 minutes, respectively). Their stories add texture to this basic pattern of discovering (and being troubled by) systemic racism as an adult, and feeling stuck in responding.

Sky, a late 20s therapist in an emotional support classroom for kids with behavioral and emotional disturbance, applied her discovery of systemic racism by flipping back and forth between her perspective at the time and her current perspective. The “umbrella,” she said, or guiding theme, was that in last five years (three in grad school, two working as a therapist in schools), “a lot of stuff came up for me related to race.” This has brought her into a new “awareness of having racism in me, having racism in my past. By being white, I already represent lots of oppression.” From this frame, she began telling the racial story of her early life. Sky grew up in Japan, to parents who work for the same missionary organization that my parents do. At the time, she thought of herself as being a minority there because she was white. But flipping to today’s more aware perspective, she now also views her family’s presence in Japan as a continuation of US “imperialism and stuff like that.” When she was 12, her family moved to Arkansas, where her elementary school held a race blindness philosophy. Like Aviva, Sky could easily repeat the commonplaces of race blindness: “the ‘I don’t see color’ kind of thing that people will say. ‘I’m not racist, I just don’t—everybody’s the same.’” This was a confusing time for Sky, trying to learn American norms at the same time as trying to interact in a de facto segregated black-white school setting. One year, she recalled, the school retracted the yearbooks to literally paste over traces of the Confederate flag from students’ clothes, and her reaction at the time was exasperation. Flipping to today’s vantage point, she rebutted this exasperation with psychological concepts she had likely learned in

¹⁸ He glosses this by saying “that’s the extent of my—my engagement with people who are different from me.” Here race stands in for sources of difference broadly, a common trope at Second Pres and First Church.

grad school: “I wasn’t the one that it [the Confederate flag] was bringing up and triggering for.” In college in Chicago, Sky thought she would find a melting pot, but found a stark racial black/white divide. She volunteered in organizations with a paternalistic, “I’m gonna help you, because you need my help, you need God” attitude. But one encounter with an aggressive student made her begin to realize, “nobody was calling it white privilege yet, but I was very much like recognizing the privilege I had of safety.” Sky’s history with race, then, has two lenses: one full of naivete and good intentions, and another, newer lens that is able to see the troubling ways that she was participating in imperialistic, triggering, paternalistic patterns. (ADULT-TROUBLING SYSTEMS)

Sky’s primary context for opposing these troubling racist systems is her work. Race comes up constantly with her students, who are all black, except one boy who’s mixed. He gets called “white” by the others as an insult, and her students call Sky a “white bitch.” She feels glad that she’s been able to incorporate art as well as complex books about race like *The Help* as part of her therapy sessions. But she’s still torn by the power dynamics of her job itself: “I don’t like that I’m white and I’m their therapist, you know.” In Familyfield, Sky wants to “figure out what is—what is the balance” between developing inter-racial projects and respecting racial safe spaces that black people have already formed. If not quite anxiety, then, Sky does describe a constricting pressure on her approach to opposing racism that takes the form of active questions, and she draws on metaphors of seeking equilibrioception (sense of balance, “what is the balance?”) to describe this. (STUCKNESS)

Finally there’s Jim, a late 20s/early 30s small-business owner of a construction and house-flipping company. Jim was born in Splitsville, grew up in Kansas City and Houston, and then moved back to Splitsville, where he’s lived for the last six or so years. A year or two ago, he attended a museum expo on racism, “and that was the first time, uh, I really was shown concrete evidence of systemic racism.” In general, “it woke me up,” and now he looks skeptically at the Republican mindset that he used to adopt, in which “everyone with less than me is lazier than I,” and, “I’ve earned everything that I have.” Now, he can recognize that he grew up with “at least a 9 out of 10 on the privilege scale.” (ADULT-TROUBLING SYSTEMS)

Jim’s current approach to race is difficult to summarize. On one hand, Jim has had exactly the kind of confident, intimate personal relationships with black people that Ryne, Aviva, and I were craving. For instance, he regaled me and Sky with stories about his employee and friend Steve. Steve was an older black guy who smoked crack for twenty years and was “a con man of con mans, a hustler of hustlers.” (This certainly ratchets up Ryne’s general hope to know “people who are different from me.”) One time, Jim’s friends incorporated a funny incident between Jim and Steve into a song, and Steve attended a concert where the band played it. Steve jumped on stage and joined in the chorus. “He was singing at the Hard Rock. He was a rock star, friends with rock stars.” Jim commented

on this, “He was just—I mean, this was beautiful on so many levels, right? And it was so awkward on so many levels, because, um, you’re not supposed to be screaming, like in a lot of—it was just weird, you know. He’s out of line by most people’s opinions during some of the show, uh, drinking more than most people. And also, he’s like sixty. Um, he’s not fifteen, he’s not eighteen. He’s sixty.” Jim’s ability to cultivate and welcome these “beautiful and weird and awkward dynamics” with black people was awe-inspiring to me and made him someone we wanted to learn from.

At the same time, Jim described with unsparing bluntness his own increasing prejudice against poor black people since moving to Splitsville. For instance, he said of his time in Houston, “my racism in my heart and in my head was much less than it is now.” I clarified: “Meaning you’ve become more racist?” And he affirmed: “Absolutely, yeah.” This is an unusual admission for a white person to make about their trajectory,¹⁹ and might easily be construed as being resigned to continuing racism patterns. But like Ryne, Jim has a “conviction” that drives him to fight against racism. Jim wants to love people who are hard for him to love: “God doesn’t talk much about hate being a good thing. Uh, it’s easy to love those who love you.” He wants to avoid being like Donald Trump, who “doesn’t appreciate the privilege that he grew up in” and “doesn’t appreciate the dis-privilege that other people have.” In other words, Jim wasn’t seeking to take on new inter-racial relationships so much as to transform his anger and resentment in the ones he already has.

In this light, Jim’s aspirations become clearer. He is frustrated and stuck that he has ongoing negative encounters with black people in Splitsville.²⁰ Jim’s recurrent pattern is that he hires black people and they steal his tools. So he feels tempted toward racism, which he described as a strong embodied, learned, self-defense mechanism: “A people group has routinely hurt me. Uh, and to forgive them and then to lean in would be like having sour milk six times in a row, and reaching into your fridge and drinking milk out of a carton without smelling it, you know?” His stuckness is thus most strongly emphasized with this olfactory metaphor (“drinking milk out of a carton without smelling it”) that he doesn’t know how to rewrite. He wants it to change, but has little confidence that it can: “I don’t know that we’re gonna fix anything” through meeting together, he says. (STUCKNESS)

I participated in the inter-church talks myself, even though I don’t attend Second Pres or First Church, and so I told my story with race as well. My narrative particularly deals with good intentions and a sense of history. I built up to my own transformation by starting with my parents, whose work was to help missionaries develop cross-cultural skills. Thus, I said, I had a working assumption about inter-group contact: “cross-cultural differences can have

19 For more on Jim admitting he was wrong, see Chapter 5

20 Jim mostly put the burden of this on the black people he knew, with only moderate attention to his own response through things like meditating and reminding himself of systemic factors.

strategies that can, um, help make those [interactions] richer.” When traveling internationally in college and afterward, this philosophy of good intentions being sufficient was affirmed, as I felt an “equality” of interaction with people I met. However, when I moved to Splitsville for grad school, I noticed that instead of “cross-cultural” interactions in an international sense, Splitsville’s attention was on black-white interactions. This attention to black-white interactions, I realized, gets at a sense of history between races, a past that is also in the present, lingering and impacting my day-to-day interactions. “That was like a huge revelation for me,” I said. I ran through a list of my old cross-cultural strategies, then lamented that they were “insufficient.” Rather, I felt that I needed to use “privilege” as a key concept for understanding how the history of white people’s interaction affects what we have today and how white people are received by people of color. This was a scholarly project, but also a personal one that I “care so much about.” (ADULT-TROUBLING SYSTEMS)

My response to newly discovering systemic injustice was murky. At the Familyfield Community Farm, I said that I could strongly identify with the other white volunteers who said, “Yeah, I just don’t know how to reconcile or deal with our history as white people in this context.” I also noticed I had some insecurity in planning these inter-church meetings with Aviva and Ms. Di, because “my fear is that we would be doing this in a way that would somehow still perpetuate inequality and power differences.” Thus, my broad anti-racist program was to identify where privilege is active and then counteract that, but “I don’t always know where that’s happening,” which “just makes things, like, very difficult.” Thus, I indicate the same sense of stuckness as the others, drawing for my part on a spatial metaphor of “where” white privilege is active. (STUCKNESS)

In total, then, these racial life histories set an expectation, explored below, for the ways people talk about race in day-to-day settings. The stories all demonstrate our acceptance of fundamental principles about whiteness in the U.S. (Wise): that we inherit systemic oppression, have ongoing white privilege, must take responsibility for our own knowledge, and be willing to suffer costs to resist, for our own and others’ sake. The participants don’t say this defensively, but openly lament their current and past involvement, from Ryne’s sarcasm (“whoop-de-doo”), to Sky’s self-critique read backwards onto past incidents, to Jim’s straightforward confessions of prejudice. In particular, people foreground their stuckness and express it with a variety of sensory metaphors: of procedure, sight, space, equilibrioception, and smell.

■ Non-stuck racial approaches: childhood discovery of race, and day-to-day love

Stuckness isn’t the only way of talking about race. This sub-section briefly examines an alternative type of story that all of the black participants in this project told, as well as some of the white participants. It’s a story of discovering racism as a child—either as the subject of prejudice (annotated, where applicable, with CHILDHOOD-PREJUDICE), or for the white participants, through childhood practi-

cal resistance (CHILDHOOD-RESISTANCE)—and currently opposing racism through intentional day-to-day interactions in which they demonstrate love to people (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE). Eight of the ten black participants (mostly from First Church, see **Table I.1**, pg v) in this project told their stories, and everyone drew on one if not both of these two components. This story type shows the anti-racist models that people from Second Pres were exposed to.

Almost all of the black participants were in their 60s, telling their stories in a special meeting format in which the white people present only listened rather than speak themselves (see Chapter 3). Ms. Di is similar to Aviva in role and prominence: a central planner in our meetings, with a consistent expression of the the DAY-TO-DAY LOVE story type. Ms. Di grew up in Familyfield. When she was young, her best friend was white and they “didn’t know a difference.” But after Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, she remembers the neighborhood becoming black because white families moved out (CHILDHOOD-PREJUDICE). At one point, she adopted a militant, black Muslim position toward race, but now “I don’t have no issues.” Racist actions, like insisting that the Confederate flag be hung, do hurt, but “what can I do about it?” Rather, Ms. Di focuses her energy on day-to-day inter-racial interactions: she greets white people warmly, she calls white people friends, and even calls some white people like the pastor’s wife “cousin” (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE).

Ms. Esther was also a strong voice in our conversations. Like Ms. Di, Ms. Esther says “I just saw people as people,” but she grew up in North Carolina in the 50s in a segregated town and school. “We weren’t welcome, but that’s okay.” (CHILDHOOD-PREJUDICE). She came to Splitsville as part of an early adulthood rebellion against her parents. For her, racism comes down to feeling powerless, “Who you gonna run to? Who you gonna tell? Who’s gonna hear what you have to say?” Many of her friends wasted away from this helplessness, but Ms. Esther’s Christian commitment made her see that “this was the work of the enemy. This was Satan in his worst behavior, causing division and strife and envy.” Thus, Ms. Esther’s goal is “be obedient and do what He [God] says do.” Racially, that means that she chooses not to be overwhelmed by racism, or to give in to hatred: “You can’t make me not love you. I don’t care what you do and what you say; you can’t make me not love you” (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE).

Two other older people shared their stories in that meeting as well. Ms. China grew up in a Splitsville suburb in a poor family. Her father was an entrepreneur and “a shaker and a mover in the community” who lobbied the Five and Ten to hire African Americans. Like Ms. Esther and Ms. Di, Ms. China had good memories of early interracial interactions, but “soon as we began to move into, like, middle school age, you can see us separating” (CHILDHOOD-PREJUDICE). At school, she experienced racism when school counselors encouraged people of color not to go to college. Even as an adult, she feared crossing the tracks to go to the white part of town. Ms. China has a long perspective on racial dynamics in Familyfield: “by the time I got to Familyfield most of the folks were African

American; the whites were still moving out of the community.” But “from 1975 to the present, I’ve seen that shift. Now we have, um, uh, white folks moving back into the community.” In addition to this gentrification, she also experienced discrimination at her old church: “it was almost like you have to be a certain color to be in leadership, or we weren’t trusted to be in leadership.” Now, she views racism in part as a set of issues that need to be worked out interpersonally like any other conflict: “we don’t stay there; we work through that” (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE).

Ms. Rose, who also lives with mental illness, was around the same age as Ms. Di, Ms. Esther, and Ms. China. She told what might be considered a paradigmatic narrative, in which her grandfather was a slave and married to a white woman, her father escaped from Tennessee to Splitsville via the Underground Railroad for fear of being lynched, and her mother cleaned white women’s toilets to make a living. Racism thus figures for her as a commonplace explanation for making sense of differential treatment; she was under the impression that she was pregnant, and answered her own rhetorical question about why she couldn’t get health care from Splitsville’s hospital by saying “it’s because I’m black.” Despite this, Ms. Rose’s position is that addressing racism begins with loving yourself: “Love yourself. If you don’t love yourself, you’re not gonna love me.” This especially affects people’s self-presentation: white people can love themselves by not tanning, since it will give them skin cancer; black people can love themselves by not wearing wigs to fit in (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE).

One younger person drew on this story pattern as well. Shèniya, a young woman in her 20s who came to the meeting through her fiancée Terron, grew up in Splitsville, and now works at the daycare her mom runs. She focused her story on her efforts to train up the kids: “All the daycare kids, all of ‘em, black, white, Indians, everybody, we loved ‘em all.” And yet, at an age where the kids were still a “sponge,” she saw parents teaching their kids racism. For instance, a young white boy used to innocently say that he was brown like Shèniya, but by the time he was 4, he changed course and told Shèniya that his mom was prettier because she was white. Shèniya learned from him that his father influenced this shift: “‘My daddy says only white girls are beautiful. Black girls are dirty’” (CHILDHOOD-PREJUDICE). Shèniya confronted the father, who denied it, and now she worries for the boy: “I don’t want him to be confused.” In contrast, Shèniya views First Church as a church that “welcomes everybody” (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE).

But the other younger participants pushed on this template in some way. For Terron, a young guy in his early 20s whose family is a fixture in Familyfield, racism wasn’t very present growing up. “I never encountered racism.” Rather, “most of my problems is from, like, my other black people.” At Johanna’s prompt, however, he did tell a story of being stopped by cops at the Familyfield Community Farm, because his blackness made him suspicious. “They pulled up on me and just, you know, put their sirens on. Like, ‘What is ya’ll doing?’ I mean, I’m here to just do the water, my job! You know, pat me down, check me.”

Overall, he refuses to let isolated racial incidents like this distract him; “you’re white, I’m black, but we’re still brothers. Some type of way we’re brothers” (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE).

For Kim, in contrast, racism was ever-present. She told her story as a guest to our affinity group in late 2016. Kim, a woman in her 30s who became a pastor at First Church after this project was over, grew up in the projects outside of Splitsville, where there were low expectations for the people in it, and constant run-ins with the almost all-white police force. So “I’ve always had this black-white tension.” Kim thus doesn’t follow the CHILDHOOD-PREJUDICE theme but emphasizes always being aware of racism because of racially tinged policing. But her family tried to set her up to beat the system, and sent her to a diverse magnet school. After graduating, she has often been the only black person at work, but she chooses to say “I don’t care” to that possible awkwardness. Instead, she is willing to change people’s mind about what “all black people” think and not take it personally: “race is really not an issue with me, it’s an issue for other people” (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE). (This stance echoes James Baldwin’s logic that “If I am not the nigger, and if it’s true that your invention reveals you, then who is the nigger?” and George Yancy’s more recent formulation, “How does it feel to be a white problem?”)

Finally, Charley, a writer in her 30s, explores an alternative to day-to-day love. She attends Second Pres and shared with other Second Pres people at the first inter-church meeting. Charley grew up in a very racially mixed setting outside of D.C. “I went to school with Latina kids, and Asian kids, and Jewish kids, and um, like I just remember—oh biracial kids—like, I remember, you know, couple of the kids, it was like parent day, and like, her dad was white and her mom was black and I was just like, ‘Oh.’” But since middle school when her family moved to a suburb outside of Splitsville, Charley has since spent most of her life as a minority in a very white environment. Racism came to her mostly in the form of people saying “ignorant things” and affected how she viewed herself: “feeling a lot of shame and trying to, like, assimilate as a result” (CHILDHOOD-PREJUDICE). But in the last five years, she’s gone through a “rebirth” where she wears her hair natural, she doesn’t starve herself, and she doesn’t hang out with people who have views that offend her. Instead, given how tired she is, she says that it’s more privileged people, like her white husband, who should be triaging that: “Well, you do that, white male! Like, you do that! You’re not as tired as I am, and they’re gonna listen to you more than they’re gonna listen to me.” Thus, Charley articulates a self-care approach to opposing racism, in which her tiredness contrasts with many white people’s naivete and energy, and therefore demands a differential response to racism.

In general, then, many of the black participants describe an originary innocence from racism (CHILDHOOD-PREJUDICE) and an interpersonal anti-racist emphasis (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE).

It wasn’t just black participants who told this story type. Some of the

white people told a slightly modified form, in which they also discovered racism as a child, often through their parents' resistance to racism (CHILDHOOD-RESISTANCE) and expressed anti-racism through DAY-TO-DAY LOVE.

One white participant who told this story type, for instance, was Lena. Lena grew up in Maryland in the 60s, where her dad would make the family go to the public (de facto black) beaches, rather than the private (whites-only) beaches. In 1973, 19 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, her school integrated, and even though many other white families' kids were taken out, her father forced her to go to school, saying "we're not giving in, we're not giving in on this." (CHILDHOOD-RESISTANCE) After college, Lena began a life-long habit of having meaningful long-term friendships with black women and "it was really, really comfortable." (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE)

Similarly, Nikki, a late 20s woman who attended First Church and ended up leading our affinity group, grew up in the 90s in a small town with a lot of black people, and her father often made her and her siblings go to the bad parts of the city for church, as well as to tutor people and build relationships (CHILDHOOD-RESISTANCE). As her dad would say, "people are people," and so race is "superficial." Nikki would rather focus her efforts on establishing just policies and structures regarding poverty.

A third white person like this was Bob, who grew up in Brazil, Paraguay, and Thailand, and holds an Italian (and US) passport. Thus, he sees racism in the US from a more global perspective, as a symptom of a more general tendency for people to divide "in-group" from "out-group." He moved to Splitsville after 9/11 for grad school, and learned about racism in the US through a black woman at his church who basically "adopted" him. His approach now includes living in a black neighborhood and "trying to build relationships with neighbors, even if they're annoying and maybe have ideas and values that really grate under your skin {laughs}" (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE).

Finally, Lena's husband Mark, who is married to Lena, father of seven, and works as a programmer, told us of being discriminated against as a kid because he was white. Mark described growing up in Boston where gangs of black and Portuguese kids picked on him many times because he was white. (CHILDHOOD-PREJUDICE) Once in the work force, his best friend, who was black, committed suicide after being racially mistreated, which he noted left "little pockets of disturbance in my soul." Mark "didn't form any prejudice or anything" from his bad experiences; if anything, he was horrified by the rural white people he and Lena used to live by, when Obama's 2008 election "just drew out the racism, just incredible, uh, blatant uh, hatred, vitriol, lies being spread that you hear." His response, or "personal code," is "to exercise love for everybody," like opening doors for people and being polite (DAY-TO-DAY LOVE).

Thus, at least in this context, describing stuckness was a uniquely white problem that seems to follow from those people recently discovering systemic racism. This is taken up in more detail in Chapter 2.

ASPIRATIONAL RHETORIC IN DAY-TO-DAY SITUATIONS

Finally, and significantly, many white people used aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism to describe everyday situations regarding race. As the project went on, we developed a debriefing structure to tell these kinds of everyday stories about race, with the hope that a dialogic debriefing might transform people's ability to act in the world (see Chapters 5 and 6); this section describes times early in the project in which people told day-to-day stories of racial stuckness in relatively unstructured settings. The situations serve to show that aspirational rhetoric is not just an institutional disclaiming of confidence, and it's not just a narrative tic from a difficult task of summarizing people's own life projects; for many participants, aspirational rhetoric helps negotiate the way they move through the world in mundane situations. What's important to notice here is people's attempt to reckon with the newly discovered systemic impacts of their actions. In other words, as Aviva put it when summarizing the inter-church meetings, Ms. Di and Ms. Esther had suggested that we be "natural," but Aviva felt like she was doing lots of "second-guessing" and was "hyper-sensitive."

Around the time of the inter-church meetings, Aviva would tell multiple stories of being stuck in day-to-day situations in a single conversation. For instance, when I met with her a few months after the inter-church meetings, she first told me the story of volunteering for the PTA at her son's mostly black elementary school aspirationally. On one hand, her capacity to volunteer was a result of class and racial privilege, which she didn't want to affirm. On the other hand, if she could build relationships with the other parents, then she could amplify those people who might not have otherwise be represented. But even if she did choose to make friends with some black parents, "I have no idea where to start, really." She could email some parents, but maybe that would be too "presumptive" in assuming they wanted to be involved, a re-establishing of white dominance and leadership.

Or, she continued, this was similar to another recent situation, of bringing a meal to Terron and Shèniya, who had just had a baby. Aviva's husband cautioned her not to make a "crunchy [i.e. nature-oriented, organic, hippy] white meal," but Aviva also didn't want to make a stereotypically black meal for them, either. "Kinda up against the same presumption walls, I guess," she summarized dejectedly.

These hesitations even extended for Aviva recursively back to scheduling the meetings with First Church the year before. We had to reschedule with Ms. Di several times to coordiante times to meet with First Church; in the process, Aviva and her family had bagged most of their potential summer plans, and Aviva wasn't sure what to make of this rescheduling. On one hand, she had recently heard the critique that "white people really need order over everything else." Her willingness to reschedule several times with Ms. Di, then, could be seen as a yielding of a controlling racial desire for order. But Aviva didn't feel comfortable with this. "I don't want to give myself too much credit." She continued, "Was it

enough? Is it enough?”

In our inter-church meetings, Ryne also shared day-to-day situations that paralyzed him. He offered the scenario of saying hi to a black person on the street. This might seem benign, he suggested, but he’s been learning that these moments are actually fraught with racial history: “if you were to say something, that would enact this whole long history of assumptions.” So Ryne has questions about this: “what’s going on when I, like, try to say hi to a black stranger on the—on the sidewalk, you know? And—or smile at someone who looks different than me?” Incorporating his recent understanding of systemic racism, in other words, leads him to paralysis in anticipating the effect of his day-to-day actions. In a later meeting, he gave a similarly mundane encounter as an example of something shot through with anxiety. He used a neat alliterative contrast to ask Ms. Esther about dancing to rap music as a white person: “does that look like an appreciation, or does that look like appropriation?” He noted that these situations are communicative and “can be read different ways.” White people in general are “afraid of being offensive somehow, of not saying the right thing.”

Even people who had a fairly cohesive life story described stuckness in day-to-day situations. Lena described blowing a red light recently in order to get past a group of young black guys late at night. On one hand, she thought her fear was somewhat justified because she had a previous similar encounter in which some young black guys ended up rocking her car back and forth. On the other hand, Lena’s split-second reaction was disturbing to her: “I felt tormented a little bit about that, too, about what—to what extent am I—are my—you know, when you get those kind of fears are they—are they rational? Are they just conditioned racism, or?”

More of these stories could be described, but the common thread in these day-to-day situations is their “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” character. A mundane action is considered (volunteering, cooking dinner for someone, saying hi), but then is questioned with regard to its systemic racial effects (respectively: dominating space, assuming white culinary habits, denying a history of racial wrongs). And this move to bring systemic thinking into the mundane isn’t wrong; it’s actually the very move that many people of color encourage white people to learn. Philosopher George Yancy, whose work Ryne was familiar with from grad school, reflects at length about the racial dynamics of getting into an elevator with a white woman (*Black Bodies*, 17-51)—a very similar situation to Ryne’s hypothetical encounter on the street. And Ta-Nehisi Coates excavates a history of white oppression in the sound of rap music (15)—a similar move to Ryne trying to assess the historical impacts of joining bodily to rap music. What’s new and destabilizing here to these theories is that the white people involved end this application of systemic thinking in stuckness, confusion, and paralysis.

CONCLUSION

Anxiety mixed with desire pervades the racial rhetoric in this chapter, giving off a nervous, sweaty scent. The participants felt uncomfortable with their stuckness, and the literature often agrees that it's distasteful. Stuckness, then, joins a range of other "ugly feelings" (Ngai) that scholars of affect have examined, including depression, envy, irritation, anxiety, paranoia, and anger. Yet the people involved are not defensive. And they are engaged in small actions that show their commitment to transforming themselves and their world: they showed up to talk about race—they showed up to listen to people of color talk about race!—they told their stories, they admitted they've been wrong, they don't see a pat on the back as the goal, they are on years-long journeys of discovery. And (one hopes), they are on long journeys of changing the way they enact race.

Thus, this chapter argues that the stakes of examining stuckness are at least three-fold. First, stuckness as described in this chapter escapes many of the constructs we have for white people's relationship to racism. Stuckness is not the deceptive "colorblind" approach to race (Bonilla-Silva; Nakayama and Krizek; Omi and Winant), where white people paper over a history of racial oppression by advocating for equal treatment now, and elevate blindness of their own ongoing participation in racist habits to a political virtue. In fact, this chapter shows that for the people involved, aspirational rhetoric emerges precisely *after* learning and assenting to fundamental principles of systemic racism (Wise). Aspirational rhetoric emerges from a newly discovered fraught position: damned if you do, damned if you don't. For these people, breaking out of a colorblind mentality is not sufficient for enacting a more robust anti-racism.

Aspirational rhetoric as observed in this project is not colorblindness, but it's also not "white fragility" (DiAngelo), in which people are defensive as a result of being unable to handle difficult aspects about race. As this chapter shows, although people were certainly paralyzed and anxious, they didn't express defensiveness, and in fact hungered for direct feedback about race even when it was hard to swallow. That said, there is the lingering question and danger that aspirational rhetoric is an excuse for apathy—stuck white fragility as a tactic to protect and reinforce whiteness (Warren and Hytton).

If aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism is not colorblindness and it's not (necessarily) white fragility, it's also not the "good white person" type identified by Sullivan and Applebaum: people who work against racism only so far as to appease their own conscience, reinforce middle-class boundaries, and reclaim a sense of being a good person. Rather, with rare exceptions, the people in this project show little investment in the possibility of doing "enough" and actively push that away as a goal.²¹

Aspirational rhetoric is also not described by the only positive discursive pattern available for white people to talk about race, that of the "white ally/ac-

21 I argue in Chapter 3 that this may be a fruit of their religious conviction that their place before God is not determined by their ability to act perfectly, but depends on ongoing grace from God and others, and depends on recognizing that they are insufficient. I take it up again in terms of research ethics in Chapter 8.

complice” (Bishop; Tatum; Wise; DiAngelo; for other aspects of allyship, such as a person’s knowledge, awareness, skills, and action, see, e.g. Jones and Brewster; for an interesting alternative, see Flores and Moon’s “race traitor”): people who confidently and productively join people of color in their political quest for equity and justice. In some ways acting as an ally is the goal for the people in this project. But for the most part, they don’t see themselves as being particularly effective allies, and don’t see political activism as appropriate for their efforts and life stages.

Finally, compared to popular Christian accounts that describe white people’s response to racism as a set of linear steps, aspirational rhetoric falls through the cracks. Harris and Schaup describe a set of five stages for anti-racism: encounter, friendship, displacement, white identity, and then the just community. But for the people in this project, displacement and questions of white identity have come first, and structured their next steps. John Perkins’ 3 Rs (relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution) as well as Gornik’s additional R (repentance) also don’t neatly map onto the work that people in this project do. Similarly, McNeil and Richardson propose five steps (worship, affirming our true ethnic identity and renouncing false identities, receiving and extending forgiveness, renouncing idols, and ongoing partnership), and McNeil later proposes four phases (realization, identification, preparation, and activation) that people in this project had to some extent already been undertaking. Perhaps the most recognizable set of stages is provided by Daniel Hill, who details encounter, denial, disorientation, shame, self-righteousness, awakening, and active participation. The affective component of these is very congruent with the examples given above.

The effect of all this is that aspirational rhetoric is a relatively unexplored way of talking about race. (And to the extent that race is enacted through language, aspirational rhetoric is a relatively unexplored way of “talking race”). This illegibility, I would suggest, is itself a source of anxiety for people of color and for white people, because it doesn’t fit within a known type; it doesn’t have a prototypical trajectory attached to it. A study of aspirational rhetoric, then, contributes to understanding what happens *after* white people discover systemic racism. It covers the ugly, uncomfortable adolescence of white people’s anti-racism.

A second insight from this chapter is that people’s aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism spans situations. People talk aspirationally about race when 1) describing interracial institutional efforts; 2) summarizing their life stories; and 3) exploring racially charged day-to-day interactions. In all these, many white participants used aspirational rhetoric to deal with the weight of systemic racism, and worked to figure their stuckness in multisensory, embodied ways. This means that simply at a practical level of capacity building, we should understand the course of aspirational rhetoric, because it is a dominant theme in some white people’s approach to race and racism. The many examples in this chapter, and throughout, are meant to do two things: 1) give enough context to see

people's genuine desire for racial justice (i.e. develop a small amount of trust); and 2) mimetically evoke an overwhelming reading experience itself, amplifying through repetition the sense of paralysis that people feel. People's pervasive affect also begins to get at just how embodied anti-racist rhetorical performance is.

Third, and most important to this dissertation, is that aspirational rhetoric foregrounds important questions about rhetoric itself that contribute to emerging scholarly conversations. These are the questions that the remainder of this dissertation takes up. The first question that aspirational rhetoric forces us as rhetoricians to ask is: what exactly is the status of these white people's belief in anti-racist principles? On one hand, we might say that they must not really believe that systemic racism is operating within them, or they would do something about it. On the other hand, we might say that they must not really be expressing the truth about their own condition (this is Charley's "Is it really that hard?"). However, both of these stem from the assumption that a person's beliefs about racism are tantamount to their enactment of anti-racism. Beliefs and actions are wedded together in this view, with belief (and its harbinger, persuasion) in the lead role. Aspirational rhetoric, though, creates a fissure between beliefs about racism and actions against racism, tied to the body. Thus, it prompts us to question the priority of cognitive assent: what role does affect play in acting out our beliefs? And from there, we come to a deeper, more radical question: can actions lead us into beliefs? That is, can our actions themselves be rhetorical, directed at reshaping our world and those around us? To answer "yes," as this dissertation does, steps into a materialist turn that is less interested in people's intention than in their willingness to answer a call.

From there, then, the follow-up research question: what would it look like to theorize rhetoric in terms of this embodied possibility to be persuaded? To imagine that developing our capacity to be shaped by others (including our own actions) is itself a process of becoming rhetorically advanced? This focus on being-persuaded is not simply about people's bodies but about race and undoing whiteness: How might this responsive anti-racist engagement shed new light on white people's anti-racism efforts?

At stake in aspirational rhetoric, then, is our conception of rhetoric itself, and our efforts to theorize rhetoric so as to provide conceptual tools for people who want to undo systemic injustice. Chapter 2 develops this theme further, by itself drawing on people of color who argue that white people's (in)ability to receive wisdom is at the heart of whiteness and race relations. Together, these two chapters set the stage for three concepts related to developing the discovery side of rhetoric: call-and-response (Part II) debriefing (Part III), and a methodological strategy of participation (Part IV).

Chapter 2 picks up where this leaves off, by theorizing rhetoric in an enactment-focused way in which belief is secondary and undetermined, and people's evolving bodily capacity to be shaped is foregrounded and an area for personal agency. From there, Parts II, III, and IV develop three strategies that intervene in the stuckness characteristic of aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism.

Chapter 2

Seeking exposure to hidden systems, rhetorically receiving

When people feel committed to acting against racism, but also feel stuck about what to say and do, they can express this with aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism. Aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism expresses that where they currently are is not where they want to be; it expresses that there is a tear in their rhetorical performance. In particular, in Chapter 1 this seemed related to people's recent discovery of systemic racism.

This chapter goes over stuckness again from a more theoretical perspective, in order to investigate the temporality of stuckness and its relation to enacting anti-racism rhetorically. What about stuckness, if anything, should be retained as people move into anti-racist action? In fact, is there anything about aspirational rhetoric that sheds light on what anti-racism means?

First, it is argued that stuckness is an affect that emerges from privileged people encountering situations and people who **expose** hidden systems of injustice; this is a moment of vulnerability that contrasts and works against typical white invulnerability. This offers a guide for future action; the core of white anti-racism is taken to be remaining vulnerable to people of color.¹

Second, this prioritizing of vulnerability is tied to emerging materialist directions in rhetorical theory, especially those who develop the work of continental philosophers like Heidegger and Levinas. These scholars argue that rhetoric should not be seen as simply the art of persuading others; there is another side to rhetoric in which people develop their ability to **be shaped** by others. This section thus affirms vulnerability as deeply rhetorical and gives this scholarship an urgent push to be applied to white anti-racism specifically and rhetorical action for privileged people more generally.

Third, this method of approaching rhetoric as involving vulnerability in the context of anti-racism is explored through George Yancy's concept of white "suturing" and potential for "un-suturing." Yancy helps move beyond new materialist insights into a consideration of what people should actually do next. In particular, this helps develop a conception of rhetoric as involving responsive-

¹ Here, whiteness is treated as an action (Nakayama and Krizek), one component of a hybrid whiteness as a skin color or as a socially recognized racial designation. Whiteness-as-action tries to get at the actions that sustain racial ways of seeing, in contrast to our frequent reduction of racism to a set of beliefs someone has, or the related idea that someone "is" (or "isn't") racist.

ness. It implies that moving past stuckness involves increasing people's rhetorical **capacity** to be affected. In other words, for the people in this project, moving through aspirational rhetoric involves developing a confident vulnerability that would play out in three parts of a process of anti-racist engagement: in seeking exposure (by putting oneself in uncomfortable situations), in receiving what has been exposed, and in taking corresponding action. This creates a framework for understanding Parts II, III, and IV, which can be read then as practices that develop various shapes for these three parts.

Overall, this chapter hopes to show that acting against racism can be viewed as a process of responsive anti-racist engagement. This process is something that the remainder of the dissertation takes up as its subject: what practices can structure and support such a process?

HIDDEN WORLD, INVULNERABLE WHITENESS

This section considers how the concept of vulnerability can help make sense of people's stuckness. Vulnerability is first explored as a necessary component of white people discovering systemic racism, because systemic racism carries an invisibility and hiddenness for white people and others who benefit from it. This means that the stuckness that emerges from some people's discovery of systemic racism is also a vulnerability, an openness or responsiveness toward people of color and what they can reveal about the world that had been hidden. Invulnerability is then extended, based on a variety of marginalized authors, to be the core feature of racism, on the understanding that whiteness is an **action** of closing oneself off, of rejecting vulnerability.

■ **Unjust systems hide their history from people who benefit from them**

In order to see understand the jolt that some people feel at being exposed to the realities of structural racism, it's helpful to examine first how racism and anti-racism are commonly presented.

Since the Civil Rights movement, the mainstream American belief has been that racism is personal prejudice against people of another race (often white against black). Accompanying this is a narrative of progress: black leaders in the Civil Rights movement in the 60s justly fought to create legal protections from white people who were set on enacting racial prejudice in everyday transactions like restaurant service and public transportation. They won legislative victories that affirmed black equality, and over the decades these laws effectively cordoned off and sanctioned the increasingly socially unacceptable set of people who were consumed by racial prejudice, i.e. racists. Although racists still exist now, they are anti-social criminals, like thieves or murderers, who most people will never befriend or even meet, who are dangerous for their implacability to legal boundaries, and who are best exemplified by the strange and hidden rituals of the KKK. This narrative figures racism as a bug, a small error in our social

programming that can be worked around.

People work around racism-as-personal-prejudice by trying not to trigger the problem. Three communicative actions support this anti-racism effort:

1. **Denounce racists** when they surface publically. Denouncing racists functions epideictically to reaffirm the justice of equal protection laws, as well as to recover the public's sense that overall, things are moving in a good direction and the recent horror—a black man being beaten by a cop; a black woman being denied employment—is an aberration that society doesn't stand by.
2. Follow anti-discrimination laws by being “**blind to race**,” e.g. in hiring or in assessing quality of labor. Race blindness means trying not to notice black people as such. This is a social fiction that there is no difference between races. It's best supported when black people act professionally (politely, neutrally, whitely), but even when black people embarrassingly use black language, dress, or desires, white people acting against racism will generously recover neutral interaction styles. For instance, if a black person has been convicted of a crime, a white person can help show all races are equal by politely not using race to explain the cause of their crime, instead looking to alternative causes such as schooling (“uneducated”), culture (“single parent”), or location (“inner city”; “hood”).
3. **Don't say “racist” things.** This is a negative rhetorical act, of what not to do. Racist statements include an ever-changing set of vocabulary, e.g. from “Negro” to “African American” (to—is it “black” now, or “people of color”?)—anti-racism, then, requiring periodic updates. There are also racially charged words (nappy, nigga) that, confusingly, are not racist when black people say them, but are when white people say them. Although this seems like a double standard, the white person opposing personal prejudice will indulge this black sensitivity, with some grumbling.

In sum, in the regime of racism as extreme interpersonal malice, people only need to oppose racism when they 1) hear of a public outrage about race; when they 2) have an unsavory encounter with a black person; and when they 3) are tempted to say a racially charged word. Some of the best white anti-racists, then, are those who are not interested in race and have never encountered a black person. (See Aviva's articulation of this in recounting her life story, Chapter 1.) Many white people who grew up before Black Lives Matter were acculturated into this understanding as part of the rhetorical performance of being a responsible citizen in America who contributes to the smooth functioning of the nation.

As might be expected, a multitude of authors argue that this meager set of rhetorical practices is not only insufficient, but is actually counterproductive (McIntosh; Warren; Bonilla-Silva; Nakayama and Krizek; Ratcliffe; Rowe; Allen;

Hill; Crenshaw; Applebaum; Inoue; Royster; Alcott; hooks). Each of the three practices above, they argue, actually *hide* the benefits of racism:

1. Denouncing racists wrongly locates individuals as the source of the problem; while that (sometimes) achieves justice in a specific case, it actually hurts societal prospects for acknowledging—let alone intervening in—social systems that white people constructed deliberately to exclude people of color. In other words, laws and other social systems do not simply curb/encourage people’s individual prejudices; they can be a sort of agent in themselves that *hide* racialized effects without individuals’ racist intentions. As an example of this in a material setting, we can look to Robert Moses’ architecture. Moses designed a causeway from Long Island to Jones Beach in the 1920s with overpasses less than eight feet tall—tall enough, he suggested to his biographer, for (wealthier, more often white) people in cars to pass under, but short enough that (less wealthy, more often black) people in buses wouldn’t be able to (Caro in Schindler). White people who utilize the parkway today, almost 100 years later, facilitate and participate in the differential access promised by the bridges’ structure, even if they aren’t aware of it or have particularly prejudicial aims. Thus, white people who oppose “racists” turn those people into scapegoats. This scapegoating function allows regular, complicit white people to see themselves as uninvolved, as not part of the problem. They didn’t build the bridge and don’t need to know its history. Despite the mainstream narrative of progress, in moments of political struggle, most people just don’t want to be disrupted:

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Gallup Poll (AIPO) [May, 1964]

Do you think mass demonstrations by Negroes are more likely to help or more likely to hurt the Negro's cause for racial equality?

16%      Help
74%      Hurt
4%       Make no difference (Vol.)
6%       No opinion

Methodology: Conducted by Gallup Organization May 22-May 27, 1964, and based on personal interviews with a national adult sample of 1,640. [USGALLUP.64-691.R11]
Dataset: USAIPO1964-0691
Data provided by The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

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Figure 2.1 Poll from 1964 showing overwhelming opposition to black demonstration efforts.

Thus, structural racism hides its injustice from white people and others.

2. Race blindness doesn’t create equality; it orchestrates whiteness as the transcendental norm against which difference is marked: whiteness is the default; blackness becomes a transgression, a negative. This combines with other dispreferred markers of identity, such as woman,

gay, etc. to form a compounding kind of oppression that is “intersectional.” So race blindness, in fact, doesn’t contribute to equal access; it actually elevates white culture so far above (especially) black culture that white people can’t even see **their own situatedness**. This creates a double standard especially for language use, where black speech forms the grist of new white slang (e.g., within the last few years of my writing, “bae,” “ratchet,” “squad,” “fleek,” “fuckboy,” “twerk,” and “basic” have been lifted from black culture into mainstream youth culture), while at the same time black speech is also denigrated as a violation of white language norms. Thus white people benefit from the creative labor of black people without compensating them.

3. The rhetorical self-control involved in not saying “racist” terms is not magnanimous. Shifting terms only appear to be arbitrary because of an ahistorical approach to language in which offense to black people is only assessed in the moment rather than as an aggregating weight over the course of a person’s and community’s life. Moreover, avoiding specific words or lines of inquiry (e.g. “can I touch your hair?”) and priding oneself on keeping up with changing norms **misses the very reason that racial terms change**: because they are used to undercut and appropriate black people and black speech.

Emerging from these critiques, then, overt acts of prejudice are still denounced, but are secondary and an outflow of racist social structures rather than the problem itself. More importantly, naive strategies that people used to oppose racism are actually diagnosed as counterproductive. They do not weaken whiteness, but strengthen it; they do not abolish racism, but reform it; they do not erase whiteness, but reinscribe it. When white people acknowledge systemic racism, then—as in Chapter 1—they are acknowledging these critiques.

Thus, for white people who grew up under the theory that racism was primarily personal prejudice, and who recently discovered racism as a system that operates collectively, ongoing, without any particular individual malice, their stuckness regarding anti-racism can now be seen with greater clarity. Stuckness can be understood as a moment of unveiling, discovering, being exposed to what had been hidden from them. This make sense of several emotions identified in Chapter 1:

- Guilt - People’s previous efforts to oppose racism unintentionally re-established whiteness; in beginning anti-racism again, they start with the weight of past personal failure
- Wariness of self-assessment - Similarly, affirming that one is acting against racism is no guarantee that this is an accurate assessment
- Lack of agency - Systemic racism means that people’s individual agency is definitionally circumscribed, yet their culpability is not erased, but diffused.

And complicating these is a pressure that lays hold of these affects themselves:

- Affective pressure - Prominent anti-racist activists (DiAngelo; Wise) communicate negative value judgment about some racially induced affects. White people's inability to handle racial stress (called "white fragility" or "white tears") as well as "white guilt" are criticized as narcissistic because they center white experience and draw black people into a role of comforting white people

Moreover, acting against racism in this revised perspective is not straightforward. At a minimum, anti-racism must include a set of communicative actions that a) are sustained over time; b) are both interpersonal and structural; c) go beyond advocacy to in themselves resist and support justice for black people; and d) take place under a variety of highly contingent and unpredictable situations in which race can still be relevant even if it isn't the topic of conversation or people of color aren't present.

■ Invulnerability

Racism is structural and thus tends to remain **hidden**; for white people and whiteness to feel innocent is thus a lie (Yancy, *Black Bodies*, 107). In fact, most people's attempts to combat racism end up refining it. This hiddenness lays the groundwork for understanding marginalized people's argument that whiteness is fundamentally an ongoing rejection of responsiveness to marginalized people.

We can begin to see how whiteness is theorized as invulnerability by examining an argument made for the public sphere, in the register of Twitter wit:



Figure 2.2 Tweet by darcie wilder

The text of wilder's tweet is a noun phrase, the traditional form for captioning images like the one she attaches. Yet its unpunctuated lowercase and informal "pic" for "picture" signal from the beginning a subversion of the genre.

“[C]andid” suggests that Wilder has found a rare unguarded look at something; it humorously sets up the image of the house on fire as not metaphorical but as literal, as an unveiling of what is usually covered over (in this case, of white fragility covered over through a tight-lipped white smile, through a Stoic retreat to “reason,” through lashing out in self-defense, etc.). In this unguarded access is also a certain exposing function: privileged people become the object of gazing and recrimination, caught in their natural environment. The multiple identity markers “straight,” “white,” and “male,” indicate compounding sources of privilege, mashed together as one unit with no commas. Compounding privilege means compounding hiddenness, an extreme predisposition to **not see**, to be **oblivious** to, to recognize straightforward structural descriptions of the world **with rejection and hostility**. “[A]dult” seems not to indicate a source of privilege so much as to mark how inappropriate the person’s anger is. The straight white male’s hostility is practiced; it is not the unwitting rage of a child whose toy is taken from them (or if it is, “adult” marks this as immaturity, as childish). We are ready for the punch line: “responding to feedback.” Responding to feedback—this everyday activity that is central to professional interchange and personal relationships alike, this non-threatening activity that intentionally downplays any criticism by including the possibility of praise within the very term “feedback”—this is the activity that is unveiled through the accompanying image of a disastrous, all-consuming fire that engulfs the house and roars from each of its orifices. Privileged people have built a beautiful house, but a fragile one that will burn to the ground at any demand for responsiveness. Wilder suggests that the house that privilege built is only safe when it seals itself off from feedback, insulates itself from the outside world, and tries to ignore the oxygen within and around it that makes it go up in flames when any breeze of interactivity reaches it.

This theoretical argument about whiteness as invulnerability can also be seen in a poetic mode of exposition. Alexis Gumbs approaches white invulnerability from the perspective of a researcher after the apocalypse. This apocalypse, “the end of the world,” has finally triggered a recognition of black feminist truths and a cessation of the din of white denial: “the previous energetic reality of how we are not whole and change each other and are not ourselves except in the most limited version of our imagination became impossible to ignore on the physical level” (17). Gumbs’ multiple descriptions for interdependence (we are not whole, we change each other, we are not ourselves) aggregate and inform each other. These rhetorical truths about our interdependence were concealed under the guise of autonomy and invulnerability, but eventually (with great narrative hope) became “impossible to ignore.” The narrator, a post-human being, excavates knowledge of our present time through an archive initiated by M, symbolic of dispersed, life-giving feminist resistance to oppression. This knowledge is only possible to exist as science after the end of the world, after whiteness has ended, because previously people would not listen, even to truths of

mutual concern like the earth's endangerment: "the real scientists spoke about it and nobody listened, but they kept talking, knowing the recording would rewind eventually" (25). This explanation of what happened—this history—turns white ways of knowing on its head, as the "real scientists" are the ones who listen to the earth, whereas the official scientists were defined by not listening, thereby missing crucial information for themselves and those around them. That the real scientists "kept talking" develops a philosophy of prophetic black speech that is not dependent on white recognition but expects it after the end of the(ir) world.

In a more sustained way, Ta-Nehisi Coates explores white unpersuadability through the conceit of people being asleep. In *Between the World and Me* he affirms in epistolary form to his son that systemic racism has created an illusory innocence: "There exists, all around us, an apparatus urging us to accept American innocence at face value and not to inquire too much. And it is so easy to look away" (8). Looking away, or having the luxury to lack awareness of America's history, puts people in an alternate reality. Coates recounts talking about race with a white journalist who wanted to end the interview on a note of hope. He comments with wonder, "it was like she was asking me to awaken her from the most gorgeous dream" (10-11). This white dream—the American dream (see p11)—is a kind of obstinacy, a lack of personal involvement, in which white people live defensively, mostly in the passive voice: "Mistakes were made. Bodies were broken. People were enslaved. We meant well. We tried our best." Coates concludes that this approach is "a sleeping pill that ensures the Dream" (33). In other words, white people keep themselves sedated to the history of America; their unwillingness to admit fault or to be confronted maintains their slumber.

More than 50 years before Coates, James Baldwin was making the same point. In *The Fire Next Time*, published in 1963, Baldwin takes white people's unpersuadability as a nominalizable fact: "the intransigence and ignorance of the white world" (346). This makes black people know more about white people and their world than white people know themselves. For a case in point, see the recent Holocaust. "White people were, and are, astounded by the holocaust in Germany. They did not know that they could act that way. But I very much doubt whether black people were astounded" (317).² That white people are so easily astounded actually gives black people the option to be "parents" to white people—"and they very often regard white Americans that way [as parents]" (344). Overall, Baldwin argues that white people are characterized by a drive toward seeing themselves as "innocent and well-meaning" (292). And ultimately, "it is the innocence which constitutes the crime" (292). Baldwin cannot change this; he can only present the situation for white America to hear: "The white man is himself in sore need of new standards, which will release him from his confusion and place him once again in fruitful communion with the depths of his own being. And I repeat: The price of the liberation of the white people is

² This study took place during a similar national shock for many white people: Trump's rise to power and election as President in late 2016 (see Chapter 5).

the liberation of the blacks” (342). Whiteness, that is, means lacking receptivity and connection, even to one’s own self; anti-racism is “liberation” and “release” through “communion” between self and African Americans.

And 60 years before Baldwin, we even see black writers like W. E. B. Du Bois glance across white intractability. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois asks forcefully: “Will America be poorer if she replaces her brutal dyspeptic [i.e. heartburn] blundering with light-hearted but determined Negro humility? or her coarse and cruel wit with loving jovial good-humor? or her vulgar music with the soul of the Sorrow Songs?” (9) Du Bois identifies three faults in white America to make the case that black Americans can be productive, equal members of society. And one of those aspects is an attitude toward others: black Americans have a humility that sees others, but white Americans speak vain, aggravated, self-harming errors.³

RHETORIC DEFINED BY VULNERABILITY AND EXPOSURE

Initial evidence has been given above that racism can be seen as white people’s invulnerability to people of color. As Aviva put it to me when reading a draft of Chapter 1 after the project ended, “‘Vulnerability’ is maybe the word that you’re looking for?” Vulnerability, exposure, openness, susceptibility—these speak to aspirational rhetoric’s disconcerting sense of vertigo and possibilities for change. The question at this point is what vulnerability has to do with rhetoric.

Conley reminds us that rhetoric hasn’t just been defined in terms of persuading others. For Hellenistic Greek times, teaching rhetoric was a cultural project of assimilating new territories to Greek norms; for Cicero and medieval followers, it was a comprehensive description of civic behavior; and for thinkers from Boethius to Ramus, rhetoric was embellishment that was better subordinated to dialectic.

In the last few decades, rhetorical theory has also been considered from the perspective of vulnerability and responsiveness. This section suggests that this gets at a responsive anti-racist rhetorical engagement, in which people seek to be affected by others. This section first reviews early articulations of responsiveness and reception within rhetoric, from rhetoric as “identification (Burke), to “discovery and change” (Young, Becker, and Pike), to “invitational rhetoric” (Foss and Griffin; Bone, Griffin, and Scholz) to “rhetorical listening” (Ratcliffe), then examines these themes in the new materialist turn in which the realm of rhetorical agency is expanded beyond the human, to “rhetoricity” and “ambient rhetoric.”

What emerges from this section is the sense that whiteness is a rhetori-

³ For more in this vein, see *Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White*, ed. David Roediger. Viewing structures as hiddenness accents more typical ways to view structural racism as different from prejudice, such as structures being overwhelmingly large (as Gwen said to me after the project was over, people can be “immobilized by the enormity” of structural racism); or as structures being so interconnected that it’s difficult to know where to start.

cal deficit. Whiteness is an unwillingness to be persuaded by or to be responsive to people of color.

■ Identification

In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke defines rhetoric with a rich set of interlocking rhetorical concepts⁴ centering on the concept of identification. Rhetoric, Burke argues, can best be seen as ontological work between what is the same and what is different: “put identification and division ambiguously together, so that you cannot know for certain just where one ends and the other begins, and you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric” (25). If this sounds too philosophical, Burke also recasts the history of rhetoric through Aristotle, Cicero, Longinus, and Augustine, concluding that at the level of the utterance, “assent on the formal level invites assent to the proposition as doctrine” (59). Identification has been accepted and nuanced by various other authors (Davis; Ratcliffe), who seek to qualify just what it means for something to be different or the same, but already we see that Burke’s conception pushes against a one-way understanding of rhetoric that is focused just on persuading others. In an oft-quoted passage, Burke asks for rhetoric to “lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counterpressure, the Logomachy, the onus of ownership, the War of Nerves, the War” (23). These all emphasize a mutuality that de-centers the rhetor as speaker.

■ Discovery and change

In their influential 1970 book *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change*, Young, Becker, and Pike argue that the goal of rhetoric is “not skillful verbal coercion, but discussion and exchange of ideas” (8). This theme of mutuality is most pronounced in the authors’ discussion of Rogerian rhetoric, which they adapt from psychologist Carl Rogers. Before people can be persuaded of something, Rogers suggested, they must not feel threatened by that idea. Thus, counterintuitively, a rhetor should spend most of their effort on explaining the other person’s idea and building trust with them, in order to lower the threat they might feel to a new idea. Young, Becker, and Pike suggest that this is especially appropriate for heated disagreements like those about race (274).⁵ A Rogerian rhetorical approach might end up having a persuasive impact on the rhetor herself: “this may well involve changes in both your opponent’s image and your own” (282, emphasis in original). Young, Becker, and Pike, then, reconceive of rhetoric as discourse

4 Many of these have religious connotations (see also *Rhetoric of Religion*). Communication as between kinds is epitomized by humans and an invented “God” (99-301); persuasion is also a “spiritual” force (176) because it induces people to action without material means; identification involves “consubstantiality” (21) and “transcendence” (326), and taps into an element of “mystery” (115). These show the inventive possibility that religious conceptions of the world can have for rhetorical theory; this is taken up extensive in Part II.

5 For a similar argument, see Asante, who is attentive to countering the threatening (to white people) possibility of implementing reparations. “This will come not as a threat but as a rational attempt to address the issue of justice” (*Understanding African American Rhetoric*, 287).

that facilitates cooperation with others, and they suggest that certain practices like affirming the valid parts of the other person's argument may be a way to be persuaded as well.

■ Invitational rhetoric

A more thoroughgoing exploration of mutuality in rhetoric comes from a controversial 1995 article by Foss and Griffin, as well as a follow-up article several years later by Bone, Griffin, and Scholz. These both advocate for “invitational rhetoric” as a complement to the persuasion side of rhetoric. Seeking to persuade others, Foss and Griffin argue, is patriarchal and dominating because it has instrumental ends of changing other people. Persuading others is often motivated by someone trying to achieve a sense of their own self-worth through having power over them, and operates from a paternalistic attitude of knowing better than another person. It often has destructive, violent impacts, showing more continuity with physical violence than separation from it. In contrast, invitational rhetoric affirms the feminist values of equality, immanent value, and self-determination. Like Young, Becker, and Pike, invitational rhetoric seeks a “relationship” (Foss and Griffin, 5), it seeks “understanding and appreciation” of another person's perspective (6). In order to do this, rhetors must develop their own “openness” (6) and “willingness to yield” (7), so that they can listen well to others' diverse perspectives, and offer their own perspective without giving in to patriarchal persuasive tactics. Bone, Griffin, and Scholz add that although invitational rhetoric was designed as a corrective to patriarchal social norms, rhetorical theory also has a “‘white’ bias” (Bone, Griffin, and Scholz, 443). While this dissertation doesn't take so negative a view of trying to persuade others (characterizing persuading others as something especially appropriate for people who have been oppressed), work on invitational rhetoric suggests that persuading others can in certain cases function as a kind of racist colonizing.

Invitational rhetoric's emphasis on mutuality thus develops what Young, Becker, and Pike advocated for, and helpfully critiques traditional rhetorical commonplaces from a structural perspective. Mutuality can be helpful; as critical race theorist Richard Delgado says regarding stories about race, “Stories and counterstories, to be effective, must be or must appear to be noncoercive” (2415). My criticism is not that invitational rhetoric is too radical, but that its goal of self-determination (and corresponding condition of “freedom” for a person to choose) doesn't account for the hiddenness of structural injustice. Foss and Griffin argue that “When others are seen as experts who are making competent decisions about their lives, efforts by a rhetor to change those decisions are seen as a violation of their life worlds and the expertise they have developed” (4). This is a liberating perspective for people whose expertise has societally been distrusted and shut down, yet for people with male and/or white privilege (to use their examples)—people who benefit from structural injustice in hidden ways—it is precisely their expertise and competence that is called into question

when seeking to be exposed to uncertain situations and corresponding critique and guidance.⁶

■ Rhetorical listening

More recently, Krista Ratcliffe's work on rhetorical listening has used gender and race as starting points for theorizing rhetoric beyond persuading others. Less interested in critiquing the persuasion side of rhetoric than Foss and Griffin, Ratcliffe instead makes a strong complementary case that we need another side of rhetoric. White privilege, Ratcliffe affirms, creates "blindness" (22); it allows white people to be "blind" to non-white ways of being (75). Rhetorical listening⁷ is thus designed in part for people to "contemplate the existence of that-which-they-cannot-see and even of that-which-they-cannot-hear" (75). This requires a stance of openness (1, opposed to denial, dismissal, indifferent compliance, and defensiveness, 138) and an understanding that the past is also in the present (110). In a similar move to this dissertation, Ratcliffe explores three ways for people to be affected by others: listen to people as associated with identity groups but not as the essence of those groups ("listening metonymically," 99); keep reading even when your identity group isn't the subject ("eavesdropping," 127); and acknowledge your resistance to new ideas, especially by identifying what cultural logic that resistance emerges from ("listening pedagogically," 146). She also provides a helpful list of tactics that other scholars have developed to approach the discovery side of rhetoric.⁸

Ratcliffe's exploration of the discovery side of rhetoric is compelling, and helps us see how rhetoric might be more closely identified with vulnerability in light of the hiddenness of systemic injustice. However, Ratcliffe conceives of rhetorical listening as distanced from people's embodied habits and their affects, in ways that make it difficult to understand aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism. Ratcliffe describes her own process of realizing that, even though she was deconstructing gender-blind approaches in her work as a feminist scholar, she had been operating under a race-blind mentality. This provoked guilt and a desire for absolution, but, "convinced that wallowing in guilt and in the desire for absolution is not only nonproductive but narcissistic, I determined to bring my embodied racism to consciousness (well, as much as possible anyway) and use it to complicate my feminism, my scholarship, and my daily life" (6). Here Ratcliffe

6 Lozano-Reich and Cloud make this same critique: "What is missing is any analysis of systemic obstacles to individual agency in the context of oppression and inequality" (222). In a later article, Foss and Foss propose something analogous to persuasion-based rhetoric ("constricted potentiality" for change) and an understanding of rhetoric centering on people's reception ("constructed potentiality" for change)..

7 Although "listening" and "reading" are both modes of reception, Ratcliffe prefers listening in part because listening includes conflicting voices; listening allows for ongoing ambiguity and dissonance in what is heard (22)

8 These include (Ratcliffe, 132): rereading (Jarratt), remapping rhetorical territory (Glenn), resisting empiricism (Mountford), listening (Royster, Middleton), speaking as a listener (Ballif), interrupting (Reynolds), hearing a/new (Davis), speaking the unspeakable (Logan), piece-making (Gil-Gomez), and composing storied cultural critiques (Worsham).

portrays being “convinced” as sufficient for her resulting “determined” action and describes racial emotions as “wallowing”; her rejection of them is then also a rejection of being “narcissistic.” This kind of just-do-it approach also explains her assertion that “We all possess that capacity; what must be supplied is the willingness” (30). Yet for the people described in Chapter 1, it seems to be the reverse: a persistent willingness without a corresponding capacity. Indeed, as it will be argued in the next section, it seems to underestimate racism to assume that anti-racist rhetorical listening is not something that people need to grow in their “capacity” to do over time.

■ New materialisms: ambience, rhetoricity

A recent philosophically rigorous approach to rhetoric has gone far past mutual-ity between speaker and audience—and has even gone past Ratcliffe’s “listening” that parallels “speaking”—to suggest that rhetoric itself is primarily about the speaker’s responsiveness and ability to be affected by others. This section focuses on Diane Davis and Thomas Rickert as illustrative of a wide variety of recent thinkers (Lipari, Gries, Barad, Bennett), who characterize persuading others as just a special type of a more general rhetoric, in which there is no “speaker” before there is a community, and there is no shaping others before being-shaped.

Thomas Rickert works from a Heideggerian rhetorical perspective. Heidegger’s insight was to reverse the priority that Descartes gave to the mind. We don’t think our way into existence, Heidegger argued, we first exist in a web of immediate sensations, desires, relationships. This means, for one, that what things are changes according to how we use them. There is no hammer as an independent essence: there is first a ready-to-hand item that appears in the course of hammering something; and only afterward, in some more reflective or disturbed context (“What I really want to do is screw something in!”), is there another, conspicuous entity, a present-at-hand thing (a “can’t use it for screwing something in”). And these various things only appear in a wider environment, e.g. a workshop which makes sense of hammering as an activity (Heidegger, 95-107). Heidegger’s insights lend themselves to a similar alternative consideration of humans ourselves as being first people who are (as an activity), and then people who think, and our knowledge as being something first embodied and immediate and then abstracted and thought. For Rickert, this means that we need to be attentive to the ways non-living things have an energy, a fittingness within the whole, a persuasive aspect. “Rhetoric is a responsive way of revealing the world for others” (162, emphasis in original). Persuading others, then, is subsumed under a broader understanding of how people, animals, and non-living beings are open and persuadable: “It is not that persuasion needs to be abandoned or completely redefined. Persuasion needs to be **intensified**” (161). This is his titular ambient rhetoric.

Diane Davis continues this through the work of Emmanuel Levinas (see

Chapter 8 for an extended discussion of Davis). Levinas' contribution was to claim that Heidegger waits too long on ethics. Heidegger theorizes people as Being-with the various entities that make up an environment; Levinas argues that this dependence is also relational and ethical: a Being-for the Other, in which we are brought into being through an infinite obligation to each Other. Davis reworks this into rhetorical terms, arguing that this idea reveals us as vulnerable beings. This is rhetoric—or, more technically, this vulnerability is prior to rhetoric; our vulnerability creates a rhetoricity that grounds our specific interactions with other people. As Davis puts it, “The goal is to expose an originary (or preoriginary) rhetoricity—an affectability or persuadability—that is the condition for symbolic action” (2).

The closest that Davis comes to investigating how a person encountering their interdependence feels is in an analysis of one particular episode of Star Trek. One of the characters, in the midst of complete confusion about what is happening with an alien, is cold and accepts the alien's gift of fire. This is visible *qua* encountering his interdependence, Davis suggests, because it is

marked by an instant of silence, a suspension in the interrogation, a shift in countenance, and then: a hoarse “thank you.” His barely audible expression of gratitude for the present (the fire) is also the gift of a response, a return call, which both affirms and repeats the sharing that “we” are, prior to any hermeneutic understanding. (79)

That is, encountering our interdependence breaks our communicative expectations and templates; it is a connection that is affective and “prior” to cognitive understanding. Davis goes on to argue that encountering our interdependence requires being “vulnerable, desituated” (79).

Neither Rickert nor Davis apply these ideas to race, and indeed largely leave unaddressed what changes for us when we acknowledge that we are rhetorically interdependent. What they add to an analysis of stuckness, however, is a philosophically rich grounding of rhetoric within vulnerability, and an attention to gaps between that fact itself and how people respond. They leave open the possibility that someone might grow to embrace their vulnerability, and that this might be an affective process within a larger interconnected social and material environment.

UN-SUTURED: A RESPONSIVE ANTI-RACIST ENGAGEMENT

The argument in this chapter has moved in two converging directions to this point. From one side, critical race scholars explain stuckness as a crisis that emerges from discovering injustice that had been hidden, and identify a stance of *invulnerability* as central to sustaining white invisibility. From the other side, rhetoric scholars (especially those working from a continental philosophical perspective) have begun to theorize a person's *vulnerability* as rhetorical, and have given this vulnerability ethical weight through appealing to a pre-exist-

ing fundamental interconnectedness between a person and the world.

This section brings these two together through the work of public philosopher George Yancy. Yancy agrees that whiteness is characterized by invulnerability, or as he calls it, “suturing” (i.e. sealing off); he extends this by coining a parallel possibility that names a vulnerable stance: “un-suturing.” In other words, it’s not just that closing yourself off corresponds to racism; it’s also that opening yourself is the central stance of anti-racism. In encouraging people to “tarry” (*Backlash*, see index, 143) in racial “crisis” (*Backlash*, 113), Yancy thus seems to respect stuckness and gives parameters for it to be fruitful. Yancy also writes from a continental philosophical perspective that makes him easy to read rhetorically, agreeing that a person’s natural state is to be vulnerable and open to being wounded. Specifically, he helps us see two important aspects of anti-racism. The first aspect deals with where and for how long white being-persuaded needs to happen: namely, that the body is a site of persuasion, indeed a place of having-already-been-persuaded. This helps envision a white person’s being-persuaded as a process, an ongoing rhetorical activity of gradually stripping away deeply ingrained whitely habits. The second aspect deals with how being-shaped actually involves speaking. Being-shaped is not just receptive listening, but an alternative type of speaking: receptive speech, speaking-so-as-to-be-persuaded. This means that a responsive anti-racist engagement also includes disclosure and discursive action. Together, this understanding of anti-racism creates a framework of exposure, reception, and action that the rest of this dissertation pursues.

■ Suturing/un-suturing

George Yancy is a philosopher of race and whiteness who also works as a public intellectual; his 2015 letter “Dear White America,” published in the *New York Times* on Christmas Eve, presented a “gift” of hard truths about whiteness that went viral. In addition to some reflective, positive letters, Yancy received an outpouring of white hatred, vitriol, and threats from the letter that led to him needing ongoing police protection. His most recent book *Backlash* explores whiteness from this perspective of having been hurt from vulnerably talking to white people. The letter and its aftermath gives his philosophical developments that much more power from being lived into.

First described in *White Self-Criticality Beyond Anti-Racism* and subsequently elaborated on in *Black Bodies*, *White Gazes* and *Backlash*, Yancy has begun describing whiteness (which in his usage is synonymous with “racism”) as an action of “suturing.” The most familiar context for suturing is medical, in which a wound is sewn back together to prevent infection. We associate that as positive and natural—helping people heal—but Yancy wants to challenge our impulse to separate ourselves from something we think is dangerous (in the racial case, of the black body). Suturing defines racism because it stands for activities of staying “‘invulnerable,’ ‘untouched,’ ‘patched,’ ‘mended together,’ ‘complete,’ ‘whole,’

‘sealed,’ and ‘closed off’” (*Backlash*, 105), especially to people of color.

Yancy extends other people’s articulations of this white invulnerability (see section above) by putting suturing in a philosophical frame that builds on Heidegger and Levinas.⁹ Taking the interconnectedness that they affirm to its logical endpoint regarding race, Yancy argues that white bodies don’t finish at the skin; our bodies—all bodies—include what’s around them, to the point where our bodies are all defined by everyone else’s body; I am touching Yancy right now. This is an ontology and ethics of “no edges” (*Backlash*, 111). Suturing, here, does violence to this connection; it rejects our true interconnectedness among different races. Suturing is a fearful and ultimately ineffective response to being tied to what we hate or fear.

From suturing, Yancy coins “un-suturing,” anti-racist practices of recovering the vulnerability that we naturally have with others. Un-suturing is not self-driven; it is called forth, surprising, overwhelming. Although Yancy doesn’t talk about stuckness specifically, he seems to articulate and affirm many of its aspects. He suggests that a posture of responsiveness is affectively involved and difficult: “The truth can hurt, stun, unsettle, and unnerve” (*Backlash*, 3). Moreover, white people who allow themselves to be affected can create “a powerful sense of white disorientation, perhaps even panic. You might have even lost your way, which can be a frightening experience” (*Backlash*, 107). This takes the negative affective part of stuckness seriously, without trying to justify it or praise it. Similarly, “un-suturing troubles and overwhelms the senses” (*Backlash*, 113). And just as white people’s aspirational rhetoric involves a deep desire to do more than what you can currently, Yancy describes un-suturing as provoking a crisis with an embedded commitment to change:

When I say that I attempted to prompt crisis, I mean not only the sense of losing your footing, losing your way, of a process of disorientation, but also the etymological sense of the word crisis (from Greek *Krisis*, meaning decision). Crisis, as I am using the term here, is a species of *metanoia* or conversion. (*Backlash*, 114)

Reading stuckness with Yancy’s concept of un-suturing, then, suggests that people are on the right track when they are able to be open to discovering how they participate in racist systems, when this wounds them, and when this conjures deep desire to grow and change. This affirms many aspects of aspirational rhetoric, and suggests that moving forward means building on the un-suturing that aspirational rhetoric has begun.

Yancy’s concept also gives us insights for what un-suturing should look like as an anti-racist set of actions. Un-suturing is complicated and delicate.

- Un-suturing involves awareness and confession, but does not distract itself with absolution: “Absolution runs the risk of being all about you” (*Backlash*, 118). This means that white people do not become

⁹ In this way, Yancy also works to recover phenomenology for anti-racist use. Heidegger was famously a life-long Nazi supporter (Farias; Rothman).

anti-racists; they are more accurately “white anti-racist racists” (*Backlash*, 98), remaining embedded in racist structures even as they seek to oppose it

- Un-suturing involves savoring the stuckness, without staying there: “Part of the **doing** is in the tarrying, which doesn’t mean navel-gazing or going off into some corner and crying in despair” (*Backlash*, 119). In other words, Yancy sides with the view that aporia can be an inventional moment for people racially (see Chapter 1).
- Un-suturing means staying/becoming open to new areas of one’s life. As a man, Yancy describes his own ongoing need to discover his distorted impact on women, even while as a black person, Yancy calls for un-suturing from white people.¹⁰

More generally, it’s easy to read Yancy rhetorically. In a racial context, un-suturing describes an anti-racist affective process of white people **learning to be persuaded** by people of color around them regarding the hidden systemic impacts of their actions. This leads to the following two additions that ground and make sense of the remainder of this dissertation.

■ Bodies as sites of persuasion

For someone to make an effort to **be persuaded** can sometimes appear generous, collaborative, and sympathetic: “Persuade me!” Other times, self-directed persuasion can appear weak, wishy-washy, or even incompetent. It can seem to abdicate critical thinking and rather be moved by whatever winds are blowing.

Yancy helps us see being-persuaded as of exceeding importance for rhetorical theory today, helping to bring new materialist thinkers into considering race. Yancy’s key move to do this is to identify bodies as historical, meaning that our modes of expression and experience of the world are informed by the past. Applied racially, this means that “white gazing is an historical achievement” (*Black Bodies*, 243). Again, “racism is not a miscalculation, or simply a cognitive distortion, but whiteness is a way of being embodied, a white way of being” (*Backlash*, 115). A historical body means that there is weight to the work of undoing such ways of being. For a white person to learn to be persuaded by people of color around them—staying present to that challenge, remaining un-sutured—is to go against centuries of historical racist work.

Not only is racism deeply sedimented into us, but it plays itself out in a very broad set of ways. In a list that recalls Lena’s sense of fear at a group of young black guys at night, Yancy notes that racism plays out as “orientation; modes of comportment, style, emotion, aesthetic responses; feelings of threat, neuronal activity; the activation of sweat glands, breathing patterns, heart rate, auditory and olfactory responses” (*Black Bodies*, 245). All of these, Yancy suggests, are communicative, living out a white way of being. This is “whiteness

¹⁰ Ratcliffe makes this same humble intersectional move, identifying her shock that being a feminist (i.e. un-sutured, responsive to other women) did not ensure that she was taking an anti-racist stance (4-8)

all the way down” (245, emphasis in original), he argues.

Bodies as historical bearers of racism has an implication for rhetorically enacting anti-racism, too: bodies are therefore sites of persuasion. Or to go further, bodies are sites of having-already-been-persuaded. Bodies articulate beliefs. These embodied beliefs (in the form of habits, dispositions, tendencies, ways of being—see above) may be in tension with or even outright opposed to the beliefs that we consciously hold to. Thus, seen rhetorically, historical white bodies means that we have persuasion encrusted into us. The body is not a strange, marginal site of persuasion; it is part of the warp and weft of American society. Without rhetorical concepts and practices to address this, to make ourselves more persuadable to people of color, we reinforce the status quo, or at least reduce our resistance to racism to intellectual affirmations: black people are equal; I am not racist; I treat everyone fairly. This hamstring a person’s lived anti-racism, and in fact creates more dissonance between their internal beliefs and their lived racial rhetoric. Rather, un-suturing “will require constant striving” (*Black Bodies*, 257).

In the context of this dissertation, seeing bodies as sites of persuasion means that approaches to un-suturing must be embodied and enacted, and must be able to persist over time, making growing impact. The first strategy our group developed, of liturgy, comes from a religious rhetorical structure that people are meant to engage in every week for their entire lives (in practice, as I explore in Chapters 3 and 4, many of the participants had engaged in liturgy for just the last few years). The second strategy, of debriefing, lasted ten months and even then was still growing roots in people’s lives. The final strategy, of researcher participation, led to a project design that pushed on the temporal assumptions of dissertations (see Chapter 8). All of these practices were applied over and over, “nurturing a disposition to be un-sutured, to crack, re-crack, and crack again the calcified operations of the white gaze” (*Black Bodies*, 14).

This contrasts with many approaches that expect instant results. Simply identifying structures of power does not naturally transfer to solving them. As Pruchnic and Lacey (2011) note with regard to postmodern exposés of power, affect “helped complicate the notion that an ‘intellectual’ understanding of the contingency of contemporary forms of social power automatically provides some purchase on resisting them” (483). To some extent, this has already been realized within the rhetorical literature on anti-racism. Endres and Gould disappointingly report from a service learning course that “having an awareness of Whiteness and White privilege does not automatically result in the ability to renounce it or change practices” (424). Similarly, Simpson acknowledges in her optimism that her advice on being against racism “should not be taken to imply that such behavioral or conversational changes can or will come easily” (154). Putman also reports back from the field to reveal how a three-day seminar with college students has not erased three ideologies that support oppressive whiteness (Pluralism, Meritocracy, and Reverse Racism).

■ Speaking so as to be shaped

Finally, Yancy helps direct us toward rhetorical strategies for moving through aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism when he argues (drawing on Levinas, Luce Irigaray, and Martin Buber) that the change process of un-suturing takes place through speaking. We see this in his retelling of the story of Trayvon Martin being killed by George Zimmerman (“the killer”). The killer’s body was well trained in whiteness, Yancy argues (and as a Hispanic man, the killer shows that whiteness is an action, not fixed by race); thus Martin’s body was “always already known” (*Backlash*, 113, emphasis in original) as a problem. What the killer could have done, Yancy suggests, was ask a question that showed concern: “Perhaps I can help you?” Or more theoretically, “Who art thou?” (113, emphasis in original) Here, the killer’s possible speech would shape the killer himself, who could then add on: “I am and I become thanks to this question” (113, emphasis in original). In other words, an address to someone is a moment of transformation, of recognition, of acknowledgement: “it would’ve been the killer’s white gaze that was shattered and not the life of Martin” (114).

This the remainder of this dissertation picks up this line of thought: people’s embodied anti-racist rhetorical practices are not just receptive, but involve speaking so as to be shaped. In the first anti-racist rhetorical strategy of call-and-response, a script leads people into saying what they might not have been able to say otherwise. In the second strategy of debriefing, people told day-to-day stories about race during the group meetings with the hope that opening up to others would help rewrite their racial logics and increase their capacity to act confidently in the next situation. In the final strategy of researcher participation, I went beyond observation to join participants and learn from them in the process of deciding on a plan.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined aspirational rhetoric from a theoretical perspective to determine its temporal relation to anti-racism, and how we can support people who use it. Aspirational rhetoric emerges from a person’s surprising discovery that they benefit systemically from unjust processes. In this surprise and shock is a seed of vulnerability, one that many scholars of whiteness argue is important to maintain. Vulnerability can be seen rhetorically—indeed, can be seen as the foundation for rhetoric itself. So we can theorize aspirational rhetoric as part of a person’s process of building capacity to remain vulnerable to people of color. At a practical level, vulnerability/openness reverses a sense that race is a zero-sum game, and reduces feeling threatened by diversity. More theoretically, anti-racist rhetorical practices of vulnerability un-suture people from white ways of being. They are a process of learning to be persuaded. Being-persuaded is an embodied process, and thus it often takes the form of acting our way into stronger belief. Parts II, III, and IV develop three strategies are all actions in which people speak their way into anti-racism enactment.

Part II: Call-and-response

Chapter 3

Adapting call-and-response for anti-racist rhetorical action



Figure 3.1 Stills from “I’m Not Racist,” by Joyner Lucas

The images above are stills from Joyner Lucas’s late 2017 viral YouTube music video, “I’m Not Racist.” In the video, Lucas raps two verses. The first verse is from the perspective of the white man (see left image), who wears a Trump hat and mouths the words. This verse conveys typical angry expressions of resistance to the idea of systemic racism (e.g. “Talking about slavery like you was around back then”), while maintaining repeatedly, “but I’m not racist.” The white man finishes by sitting down at the table and saying that he’s ready to listen: “But there’s two sides to every story, I wish that I knew yours.” Lucas’s second verse, acted by himself, is from his own perspective (see right image). He angrily rebuts the white character’s claims (e.g. “Even if I wasn’t picking cotton physically, that don’t mean I wasn’t affected by the history”). In parallel form, Lucas also repeatedly affirms, “I’m not racist,” and also concludes, “But there’s two sides to every story, and now you know mine.” The video closes with the two men hugging and a message on-screen: “We were all humans until race disconnected us, religion separated us, politics divided us, and wealth classified us.”

This video has been an incredibly popular articulation of common points of tension between white and black people, with 65 million views as of this writing. But in form and content, it’s the epitome of the “conversation” model of inter-racial interaction. Since Bill Clinton’s national “conversation on race” in the late 1990s, the conversation model of inter-racial interaction has been popular in local, national, and institutional discourse (for a critique of Clinton’s effort

at the time, see Carcasson and Rice; a popular current instantiation for workplace training is “courageous conversations” [Singleton]). The metaphor of a conversation provides white people with a discursive template for talking about race. However, as Damon Young argues regarding Lucas’s song, the problem with the conversation model of inter-racial interaction is that it promotes a false equivalence. It’s one thing for Lucas’s character to be willing to explain how systemic racism exists; it’s another for Lucas’s character to consider his own verse to merely be offering an equal and opposite perspective.¹ When the closing message says “until race disconnected us,” this “removes the very active role white people had in creating race specifically to disconnect” (Young, “The Problem”). In the terms developed in Chapter 2, “conversation” doesn’t acknowledge white people’s need to un-suture and remain rhetorically vulnerable, dependent on responding to the call of the other for their direction.

This chapter develops an alternative discursive model for talking about race as a white person: call-and-response. Call-and-response is viewed within Second Pres’ church context as a form of imitative rhetorical training. Compared to conversation, call-and-response recovers a sense of **being called into speech**. Call-and-response models discursive turn-taking for roles of anti-racist leader and anti-racist follower. Moreover, when call-and-response is repeated over time, it allows a person to attend to shifts within themselves over the course of multiple iterations. And when call-and-response is communally authored, it develops a trust that what people say is what the community thinks should be pursued. Call-and-response thus provides a model in which a person is shaped through a speaking community. As people in this project put it, this is “acting your way into a new way of thinking.”

This chapter examines how call-and-response functions for people at Second Pres, and how they adapted liturgical call-and-response to scaffold their anti-racist rhetorical action. Liturgy is a Christian practice of speaking so as to be shaped into people who are like Christ. Adapting liturgical call-and-response for anti-racist use, then, means considering what religious rhetoric has to offer a study of aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism.

The first section develops the context necessary to see liturgical call-and-response in action from a rhetorical perspective. Christian practice at Second Pres has many similarities to anti-racist ideals; thus, rhetorical strategies rooted in Christianity may be assets for people and scholars to embrace our interdependence. This section draws on James K. A. Smith for a broad usage of liturgy that points to how all language use forms us.

Then, liturgical call-and-response as practiced at Second Pres is examined, to see this formation in practice. A typical church service at Second Pres is described in experiential terms and then analyzed. As part of weekly church

¹ This is actually the same critique that the Right has of the conversation model, but for the opposite reason: they are nervous that the conversation model covertly requires white genuflection. (Rothman, “Conversation”)

services, congregants at Second Pres use call and response to be discursively active in the process of receiving God's grace, forgiveness, and guidance. Receiving and being open to God, then, are something that they speak their way into. They seek out a responsive anti-racist engagement through call-and-response.

Finally, two situations during this project are examined in which participants unselfconsciously adapted call-and-response for anti-racist use. In the first, a responsive prayer enacted white attendees' desire to model reception, and prepared them for challenging discursive instructions for the rest of that meeting. In the second, a responsive prayer structure helped scaffold people into more fluid talk about race. Together, these suggest that call-and-response can be a strategy for rhetorical invention in which white people can listen, participate without dominating, subordinate themselves to a common spiritual goal, and encounter their interdependence. The view of language itself that makes call-and-response possible is examined then in Chapter 4.

LITURGICAL CALL-AND-RESPONSE IN RHETORICAL CONTEXT

This first section develops context necessary to see liturgical call-and-response in action from a rhetorical perspective. Christian rhetoric as such is analyzed to see what its connection might be to anti-racist rhetoric. Then call-and-response is explored within liturgical scholarship (a subfield of theology) and rhetoric. In particular, liturgy is described as a racialized approach to *imitatio*.²

■ Christian rhetoric

The move to examine Christian call-and-response in the midst of a dissertation about race may be counter-intuitive; for some scholars (e.g. Crowley), Christian rhetoric is a **problem** in need of a rhetorical intervention. A corresponding approach would be to view a Christian field site as a liability and compensate by abstracting out until the specifically Christian aspects are not visible in the analysis.³ There would be some justification for doing so; anti-racism is especially vexed from a Christian perspective. While Christianity has no dearth of critiques in general (Hume; Nietzsche; Adorno and Horkheimer, etc.), scholars have also outlined the ways that Christianity has promulgated and encouraged racism and carries with it that legacy. Wadsworth names the rhetorical technique of interpreting the Bible in racist ways "theological racism," and observes that it

2 Kirt Wilson piercingly notes that during Reconstruction, many black activists advocated for black people to show their equality by learning through imitation of white people. However, white people who felt threatened by this proposed moral and intellectual achievement made an exclusionary re-definition: that black people weren't really becoming what they were imitating. Wilson suggests that this racist reaction can continue to be seen today in imitation's connotation of "inauthentic." Thus, *imitatio* (and liturgy as a Christian variety of it) is connected to race and prompts the question: what role can *imitatio* have today for white people who want to learn to rhetorically enact anti-racism?

3 Or, as another approach, Burke tables religious questions themselves in order to investigate parallels with language use in general: "In this book we are to be concerned not directly with religion, but rather with the *terminology* of religion; not directly with man's relationship to God, but rather with his relationship to the *word* "God" (vi).

continues to shape today's evangelical churches. In a meta-analysis of 55 religion and social science articles since 1964, Hall et al. find that, counterintuitively, the more a person identifies religiously, the more likely they are to hold racist attitudes (with some reduction over the years). Furthermore, Christian thinkers themselves have lamented that many common ways that white Christians develop social programs is patronizing and harmful to both them and program participants (Corbett and Fikkert), is blind to real need (Reed in Perkins), and treats people instrumentally as numbers (Stone). All told, Christianity has a "diseased" social imagination (Jennings, 6). Christianity, then, can be an aggravating factor for people who want to be against racism.

Nevertheless, this chapter and Chapter 4 both examine people's specifically religious communication patterns (e.g. prayer, liturgy, descriptions of action within a spiritual register, references to Christian books, etc.) for three reasons.

First, a Christian framework was how the participants ultimately viewed their anti-racism. This Christian framework was what also structured their approach to environmental care, work, family, community, other marginalized groups, wealth, daily activities, and the direction of the world as a whole. Examining specifically Christian rhetoric, then, contributes to a more integrated, thorough view of anti-racism efforts at two (progressive) churches. As a brief example, in late 2016 Aviva's mom passed away, and she was effectively absent from the rest of our affinity group meetings. Yet after the project was over, when I talked with her in mid-2018, she identified her mother dying as having an impact on her future anti-racist efforts: along with being a companion to a friend suffering from depression, her mom's death has "led me to a place of, um, understanding wellness and healing in a different way. And I think those things, um, give me a tool to, um—to, like, re-enter the world of racism." Thus, just as her mom's passing created a sense of vulnerability for Aviva, her anti-racism efforts also needed to embody that same vulnerable spirit. These two aspects of her life were connected based on her Christian framework.

Second, Chapters 3 and 4 consider Christian roots of anti-racist practice because it's an interesting case of anti-racist intersectionality. Several authors consider how a person's gender impacts their anti-racism (Ratcliffe, Yancy); this part of the study contributes to understanding how religion can impact a person's anti-racism as well. In many parts of America, being a Christian is a privileged position (in the sense developed in Chapter 2, of feeling innocent regarding hidden injustice). White Christian anti-racism, then, helps remind us how anti-racism is never just about race; privilege is additive and intersectional. Many of the participants in this study are white Christians, and attending to their Christian rhetorical practices points to other sources of privilege that many of the participants hold: being able-bodied, heterosexual, cis-gendered, male, upper-class, well-educated, fluent in Standard English, etc.

Finally, and most significantly, there are actually many parallels between

Christian ideology at Second Pres and anti-racist ideology, suggesting that Christian rhetorical insight may be adaptable to anti-racist rhetorical learning more generally. This would join other recent work in religious rhetoric that seeks a *rapprochement* between rhetoric and religion (several recent edited collections include DePalma and Ringer; Vander Lei et al.; and Jost and Olmsted). A deep examination of similarities is outside the scope of this chapter, but **Table 3.1** suggests an initial set of similarities between theological underpinnings of Christianity at Second Pres and anti-racist rhetorical practice. (Quotations from the Bible in the footnotes are meant to indicate a reference point that is common to Christians at Second Pres and elsewhere, rather than a strict Biblical literalist or proof-texting approach.)

This may be an unsettling set of parallels between Christian thinking and anti-racist practice. For Christians, this parallel can be uncomfortable because it suggests that political anti-racist work (Miller) might actually be an important subset of their spiritual growth. In other words, *not being responsive* is here diagnosed as the core of sin. This puts anti-racism in a theological register, and suggests that, just as this dissertation recasts rhetorical theory in light of systemic racism, there is a parallel theological dissertation possible that would recast the Christian salvation story in light of systemic racism.

For scholars, this parallel may be uncomfortable because it goes against the grain of much work on Christian rhetoric, which doesn't include expectations for rhetorical growth and change. For instance, studies of in-group conflict over Christian belief include women's roles in a church (Burton; Adams-Roberts, Eves and Rohan; Seat), environmentalism (Prelli and Winters), and homosexuality (Lundberg). Studies of out-group conflict over Christian belief include discourse norms in politics (Crowley; Jackson) and composition classrooms (Perkins; Daniell). Crowley explores fundamentalists' belief in the apocalypse and its connection to a contrarian approach to politics that is impervious to liberal argumentation. (She seeks to reverse this political approach through an appeal to rhetoric).

However, many of the participants at both churches found it helpful to consider how Christian life had prepared them to enter anti-racist work. In what would be an additional line to **Table 3.1**, they often noted that God's assurance of grace (regarding their sin) gives them a confidence to enter anti-racist efforts, where they don't often feel met with a sense of grace. For instance, Lena contrasted how people jump down each others' throats online, but in faith communities "we can be forgiving, and we can still love each other even if we mess it up." Similarly from First Church, Nikki suggested during one inter-church meetings that unity as Christians creates more complete racial healing than coalitions that have to rally around something else: "We tell [people], you know, 'Well, we're fighting the same war,' or the god of economics and money, or the god of fashion and beauty. And so we give people these false gods that they can all rally behind, and it doesn't address the root problem. It just makes people walk in the

Table 3.1 Similarities between Second Pres’ theology and widespread anti-racist principles

Theological principle operative at Second Pres	Anti-racist principle
All humanity has been tainted by sin beyond what we can undo. ^A	White people perpetuate racism beyond what they can undo; even anti-racist people are “white anti-racist racists” (Yancy)
Sin is corporate and holistic, not just limited to individual acts of malice. ^B	Racism is corporate and holistic, not just limited to individual acts of malice
Sin is significantly an embodied problem of not being responsive to God. ^C	Racism is significantly an embodied problem of white people not being responsive to people of color (see Chapter 2)
People have been called into God’s plan, but are not the bearers of it. ^D	White people have been called into racial justice efforts, but are not the solution
Belief in Christ’s salvific work is a marker of people’s entrance into Christianity. ^E	Belief that racism is systemic and that people have a responsibility to change is a marker of people’s entrance into being against racism
Affirming one’s belief in Christ’s redemptive work is not enough; living as a Christian involves a counter-cultural, challenging rhetorical enactment of being like Christ: being loving, just, merciful, etc. ^F	Affirming one’s belief that systemic racism is real is not enough; living as someone against racism involves a counter-cultural, challenging rhetorical enactment of renouncing privilege, coming to see and love people of color, etc.
Living as a Christian is a whole-body experience that is affective and spiritual, not just cognitive. ^G	Acting against racism is a whole-body experience that is affective and spiritual, not just cognitive
People’s understanding of God is shaped by actually following God ^H	People’s understanding of anti-racism is shaped by actually resisting racism (this chapter)

A. “If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?” (Ps 130:3).

B. “I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s house, have committed against you.” (Neh 1:6)

C. “But they refused to pay attention: stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped up their ears. They made their hearts as flint and would not listen.” (Zech 7:11-12)

D. “In [Christ] we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:11-13)

E. “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Rom 10:9)

F. “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (James 1:22)

G. “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Deut 6:5, see Luke 10:27 and Matt 22:37)

H. “‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.” (Matt 4:19-20). “In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (1 Cor 11:25-26).

same direction. So from the outside it looks, ‘Oh, we’re walking together now,’ but it’s not walking together in reconciliation.”

And to some extent, participants saw anti-racist work influencing their theology. Aviva commented to me after the project was over that working with race was helping Second Pres in the last few years to “embrac[e] the mystery and mysticism and uncertainty and doubt and, like, confusion around what—what God is, how we define God.” In fact, in the winter of 2018 Aviva and Ryne led a small group at Second Pres about doubt. Admitting to mystery and uncertainty about who/what God is butts up against popular and scholarly perceptions of Christian belief as static and closed. It suggests a theological inflection of Yancy’s un-suturing.

This chapter takes up the final line in **Table 3.1**: the possibility that people can use language to act their way into stronger belief. In the Christian case, this is exemplified through liturgical call-and-response.

■ Liturgical call-and-response and rhetorical habit

Liturgy can be used in multiple senses. For some scholars, it means a particular fixed progression in (or “shape of”) a church’s worship (Dix, Ross). For others, it refers to any shape of a church’s worship (Haldeman). For others, it is still broader, including where people sit in church, who is admitted and when, who is allowed to talk and when, etc. (Berger). For James K. A. Smith, liturgy is at its broadest, simply meaning habit, any and all “formative practices” (Smith, 24). This chapter examines liturgy insofar as it develops a call-and-response structure. On one hand, this is a narrow interest, related to what happens in a given type of worship service. But it’s also a broad interest in that liturgical call-and-response extends beyond a Christian container, sharing resonances with Smith’s broad conception. Examining these two understandings rhetorically, then, prepares us to see liturgy in action at Second Pres, and to see call-and-response adapted for anti-racist rhetorical formation.

A narrow understanding of liturgy helps us connect it to its most common meaning: a fixed progression of speech (including call-and-response) that structures certain kinds of church services (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, some mainline services). This progression begins with a call to worship; moves to greetings, song, confession and assurance of pardon, baptism, creed, and prayer; then moves through sermon, Eucharist, offering, and being sent out (Smith, Chapter 5). Scholars have examined the development of each of these parts through time (Berger, Spinks). As Melanie Ross observes, while different denominations have small differences, there is a “deep structure” to the service that liturgical scholars have emphasized, which revolves around the four symbols of Scripture, baptism, communion, and prayer. These “take on meaning in action” (6), i.e. liturgy is an embodied activity, something that must be participated in rather than just observed. This narrow sense of liturgy as a par-

ticular shape of worship contrasts with evangelical church services.⁴ Evangelical churches are derided within liturgical studies and caricatured as having an inferior three-part order that developed in the US in the early 1800s: begin with songs that soften up an audience, develop with an emotionally wrenching sermon, and conclude with a call for new converts (15). But Ross argues that many evangelical churches have progressed beyond this order to a more nuanced shape; some evangelical churches, then, “have developed responsible norms for worship” (Noll in Ross, xi, whose surprise carries a whiff of condescension). With regard to Second Pres and First Church, Ross’ blurring of liturgical and evangelical is helpful. The mostly white Second Pres would fall **more** as a liturgical church (see next section), while the mostly black First Church would be **more** an evangelical church whose structure is nevertheless a “faithful way of embodying the shared confession of faith” (99).

Liturgical call-and-response builds on simply calling and responding. First, liturgical call-and-response is **fixed**: in practice, this often means it’s written down. Second, liturgy is **communally written**. Its author(s) may be unknown or from many centuries ago; what’s more important is the community of people who take it up, especially when what is written is in continuity with liturgies that came before it (Spinks). Third, liturgical call-and-response is often **narrative**, meaning that it has a progression within itself or functions as one part of a larger set of discursive actions. Finally, liturgical call-and-response is often **seasonal**, meaning that within some shape, it is adaptable to multiple situations. These additions provide rich possibilities for interpreting non-Christian call-and-response settings. For instance, call-and-response chants in a protest (e.g. “No justice, no peace / No racist police”) are often also communally authored and seasonal. Individual protesters don’t have to sum up their own philosophy afresh; “no justice, no peace” comes as the community’s articulation, since the 80s and 90s (James; Zimmer), of what it wants. The addition of “No racist police” seems to be seasonal in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement.

We can also gain insight from a broad understanding of liturgy, championed by James K. A. Smith, which simply means habit. For Smith, going to the mall is liturgical, because it forms us and shapes us to be certain kinds of people (e.g. capitalistic, hungry for fashionable objects), who desire certain material things (e.g. a new sweater).⁵ Smith applies liturgy this broadly, to activities that

4 However, as Ross notes (127-129), any congregation could be called liturgical (since its Biblical Greek counterpart also referred to Christ’s work on humanity’s behalf), just as any congregation could be called evangelical (since its Greek equivalent simply meant “good news”). Haldeman thus discusses white and black church traditions in the US both under the rubric of their liturgy.

5 Smith’s mock phenomenology of going to the mall gives a good re-reading of the practice as liturgical. In the process of buying new clothes, people “don’t leave this transformative experience with just good feelings or pious generalities, but rather with something concrete and tangible, with newly minted relics, as it were, that are themselves the means to the good life embodied in the icons who invited us into this participatory moment in the first place. And so we make our sacrifice [i.e. pay], leave our donation, but in return receive something with solidity that is wrapped in the colors and symbols of the saints and the

seem disconnected from religious life, because in shaping our desires, any habit also shapes what/who we love (25), and thereby also what/who we worship (25). Liturgy, then, means a habit that should be evaluated. Involved in this is a rejection of the idea that Christian faith is about simply cognitive belief; rather, “we pray before we believe” (34, emphasis in original). Although this is broader than call-and-response, Smith affirms the position taken in this dissertation that examining people’s responsiveness means attending to the practiced, embodied ways of moving through the world.

Smith’s take on liturgy is thus a Christian application of the Heideggerian insight that we are not first thinking beings but acting beings. As Smith puts it, “That’s the kind of animals we are, first and foremost: loving, desiring, affective, liturgical animals who, for the most part, don’t inhabit the world as thinkers or cognitive machines” (34). Smith is helpful here because he echoes in a theological register the claim explored in Chapter 2, that our bodies are sites of persuasion. What this means for Smith is that we need to devote attention to our bodies and their actions; liturgy is one such connection point. Yet because in his usage liturgy is not restricted to Christian practice, there is thus the possibility to adapt church practices to anti-racist work; the two are not so separated. As liturgical animals, we are always engaged in liturgies (habits) of race.

Rhetorical theory of the persuasion side of rhetoric has had a difficult time interpreting practices like liturgical call-and-response. George Kennedy describes how, beginning with Augustine in the 4th century, Christianity and rhetoric became united. Augustine reasoned that if Christianity was Truth, then bishops and others authorized to give instruction should utilize all of the tools of persuasion available to them to reveal that truth. This position was decisive for many medieval thinkers, who composed preaching manuals that drew on Cicero and other Latin rhetoricians. Rhetorical theory thus survived, adapted, and was transmitted through religious genres such as homiletic preaching, saints’ lives, and devotional treatises.

But Kennedy explains another thread of Christian thinking that is not so easily assimilated into traditional rhetorical theory. Early Christian rhetoric, he recounts—delivered by Jesus, his apostles, and perhaps some Christians before Constantine—was unattached to persuading others. In his summary of rhetoric in the New Testament, for instance, Kennedy notes features from Jesus’ instruction as represented in Mark, such as “the importance of testimony up to and including the example of martyrdom; the fact that no special eloquence is required, for as in Exodus God will provide the words; and an apparent assumption that the disciples cannot expect to persuade their judges of the righteousness of their cause: that is God’s work, and as with Pharaoh, he seems to intend to harden their hearts” (145). Kennedy concludes: “All of this is contrary to the assumptions of the classical orator, who expected to use his eloquence to over-

season” (22). For his reading of who this shapes people to be, see the section “Worship at the Mall,” p93-103.

come opposition to his ideas.” We might add to Kennedy’s list the rhetorical function of liturgical call-and-response, in which people also forego persuading others in order to participate in being shaped themselves.

Similarly, rhetorical research has tended to view ritual as something that embodies dominant (i.e. oppressive) culture and therefore can be appropriated (Ray) or contested (Rand) by rhetors. Ritual, then, is portrayed as the brain-washing communitarian foil to the persuasion side of rhetoric’s individualistic illumination.

LITURGICAL CALL-AND-RESPONSE ON SUNDAYS AT SECOND PRES

With an understanding of call-and-response as developed related to liturgy above, we can examine how Second Pres actually enacts this weekly.

First is a description of a Sunday service at Second Pres told in the second person, through the perspective of someone attending. This is a concise way to introduce the sights, activities, spaces, and people of Second Pres’s weekly Sunday service. It also serves to guide readers into the embodied practice of liturgical call-and-response and remind readers that call-and-response is an action that cannot just be observed. This examination reveals that congregants at Second Pres are by no means passive recipients of information. Rather, at every stage of the service (except the sermon), they participate discursively, calling and responding in ways that are both informal and very formal, traditional yet also creative. An analytic view of this service follows it, which applies Smith to make connections between how people respond to calls in church and who they are being shaped into as people.

■ An experiential view of Second Pres’ weekly service

It’s February of 2016. In a little bit more than a year, when the project is over, Second Pres will move into a new building in Familyfield proper, but for now, you meet where you’ve met for the last several years, at the border of Familyfield, Easton, and Washington.

You likely attend Second Pres regularly. Visitors to Second Pres are rare, since you’re miles away from the student district of town, with its constant flux of people. You are likely also young, white, well-educated, maybe married. You likely have a firm spiritual background, but maybe a bruised spiritual journey, and what attracts you to Second Church is that you heard it’s a “church for people recovering from church.”

You aim to arrive at 10:00. In acknowledgement of people’s propensity to be late, the service is winkingly listed online as starting at 10:10, and in actuality it starts even later. But you live nearby. If you’re Aviva, it’s just a 3 minute drive. (With kids, you move slowly, so you often drive rather than walk). As you come up the steps, you enjoy the sight of the church building: an old stone building that has been renovated into a multipurpose area, shared during the week with

several non-profits. The building still has the beautiful stained glass windows from when it was exclusively a church. In the foyer, someone from the greeting team hands you a bulletin as you come into the main worship space. The floor is a very short carpet; the space is wide.

You look to the front, where this week's two- or three-person music team is setting up mics, speakers, drums, and guitar equipment. Sky is part of the worship team this week; she'll join the project in a few months when the affinity group gets going. There are three wings of seating that stretch out, arranged at right angles to each other so that with the music team it all forms a rectangle. Each wing is made of three or four rows of black plastic fold-up chairs (the church has to be ready at the end of the service to tear down), arranged with enough space so that the corners of adjacent wings form very short aisles.

The chairs all face a table in the center that's oriented longways, so that when you walk to the front you pass by its whole length. This communion table is a rectangular folding table about 6 feet long, covered with a white tablecloth and a colored table runner hung over the short side of the table. At the front of the table is an icon of the Last Supper. Behind the icon is a clear bowl with water, where people will dip their hands before communion. Behind the bowl is a wicker basket where you will put your weekly offering. (You keep meaning to set up direct deposit with your bank, but since you haven't, you write out a check every month.) Behind the basket is a lit candle in a curved wooden holder. Behind the candle is the bread and cups of juice that will be used for communion, covered with a cloth during the service until the time to use them. Second Pres takes communion really seriously; at every other Protestant church you've been to they do it maybe once a month, but it's a staple of services here. As you come in, there is a table at the back where two people from the A/V team work the sound equipment and project the slides onto the front wall.

You chat with people before the service starts, letting your kids loose to run around with other kids. You get a small cup of coffee from the table at the back left, and riffle through the book that the church is going to be reading for Lent. Gradually, you find a seat, in a somewhat routinized spot as a family or couple or next to friends. Or maybe you're one of a few lonely people still trying to find your way in to the church friendships. It's pretty typical at Second Pres for people to feel lonely for their first year or two. On the back right, there's a row of chairs that track the wall around the corner, with a mat and books out for small children. Ryne will spend some time with his young daughter over there during the singing portion of today's service. Second Church keeps the kid space there to make it feel like a family—when you take the babies out of the service into another room, sometimes you lose the parents, too. As you sit down, you hang your coat on the chair you sit in. There's Mr. Sparkle at the back; he'll join the project through being a guest facilitator for the affinity group. Other than Steven, the one Asian guy at Second Pres, Mr. Sparkle is the only person of color present. There's Lena and Mark, sitting in the center aisle, front row. There's

Bob, with his wife and kid. He'll join the affinity group too. Lexi gets there late; she was part of the inter-church meetings last year.

The service starts with a playful crash of the cymbal. When all's told, there are about 20 people in each wing, including children (plus another few in the children's corner and another few running the sound, leading the music, etc.) About 70 people total, but it feels bigger: you would peg the number at 80-100 adults and 30-40 kids if you had to guess. The service starts with a few worship songs that you stand for and sing. Then Pastor Robert comes in front of the music team to frame the corporate confession. You read it from the slides, then read the declaration of forgiveness. He sits down as you sing another song. The last few stragglers trickle in. The songs at Second Pres use modern instruments, unlike the incessant hymns at your parents' Presbyterian church. But the songs aren't all sunshine and internal feelings of salvation, like at your old Evangelical college ministry.

Before the sermon, Pastor Robert invites the kids in the congregation up to the center. Six or seven kids stretch out on the floor around the communion table. This week, the recently appointed children's pastor leads everyone in a 5-10 minute prayer activity, a kids version of the Examen. A recorded voice comes on to guide you all; you close your eyes to join in with the kids. "What made you happy today? ... Did you say or do anything that made you feel good? ... Thank God for those things now" the voice instructs. Then the recording leads you in reflecting on "sad" things, and then thinking about your day tomorrow. The children's pastor congratulates the kids, and asks them to share, letting them speak haltingly into the mic. One kid was imagining that it would be sad not to have any parents. Another kid talks about going to a party. Then at the same level of importance, the children's pastor asks, "Any adults wanna share something that came to mind?" One woman, worried her mom had cancer. Eventually, you all pray from the slides. The 2-8 year old kids are dismissed when the pastor says, "Let's pass the peace."

Your spouse wrangles the kids down the steps to the back room, where the kids will work on a spiritually-themed craft during the sermon. This week Aviva and her family are gone, but sometimes her husband Dirk leads all the kids in crafts. One week, as an engineer, he helped them each build a small boat to instantiate the story of Jesus calming the storm. You pass the peace by shaking hands with someone and saying, "Peace be with you," who responds, "And also with you." Then you shift into an informal register with that person and catch up briefly. You try to greet a few people who you haven't seen in a while at church. After about five minutes, Pastor Robert gets people back to their seats by saying into his mic, "Peace be with you!" He gives announcements, several people get coffee, the musicians go off the stage. It's about 10:50.

Pastor Robert is dressed in jeans, a brown patterned button-up shirt, tan suede shoes, and a plaid hat. A head mic wraps around his chin. He holds a few sheets of paper. He preaches most Sundays; Pastor Alex's work at the farm

counts as pastoral time, so he preaches once a month or less, usually about something ecological. Pastor Robert begins the sermon by praying, “We thank you that you are not only in the process of changing us, but all of creation ... Use your word to continue that process of transformation.” He crosses himself as he closes the prayer. That’s really more of a Catholic thing, but you’ve started to care less about the differences since you’ve come to Second Pres. You have a small journal to take notes on his sermon. If you’re in your mid-20s like Lexi, you might prop up your feet on the empty seats in front of you. Allison, who went on the trip to BUGs, is the greeter. Job now done, she sits on the floor at the back, her legs folded up to her chin in reflection.

Pastor Robert gives a lot of explanation about the church season that Second Pres is in: a special week during the winter called Transfiguration Sunday, sandwiched between Epiphany and Lent. You didn’t think about the church year before you came to Second Pres, so you’re glad for his explanation. He reads three passages from the Bible back to back, and then begins slowly reflecting. He allows space for response through repetition, often based on Scripture. At one point, a boy who’s remained for the service answers Pastor Robert’s hypothetical question about whether anyone can see God: “No!” You all laugh. Pastor Robert doesn’t view it as a distraction, but takes it in stride: “Excellent answer, Sam!” Pastor Robert preaches for about half an hour total, interpreting the parts of the Bible stories so that they relate to your own journey as a Christian. He concludes with several questions, the outcome of his interpretive work. You feel particularly struck by his second question, which draws on the language of the passages used that day: “Do people want to build a tent and camp around my life?” He qualifies with a smile, “I don’t think that’s a prideful question,” because, as in the story, people would be doing it as a way to come close to God, and because we should each be spending time camped around others, too, including non-Christians. That’s a relief from the exclusivism that you experienced at other churches. Then he asks the same question for Second Pres as a whole. Do people want to build a tent and camp around Second Pres? You think about the challenge this poses to the Familyfield Community Farm, and how today, it seems like—no, people don’t want to do that. The pastor adds that habits, practices, patterns, and scripts are all kinds of “veils” (more language from the Bible story) that in his own life are “dulling and darkening the glory of God.” You think about your own veils that keep you from displaying God.

Then it’s time for communion. The kids come back up the ramp with craft in hand, led by the children’s team volunteer. Pastor Robert asks for elders or deacons to help serve. Two people come up and stand on the left side of the table, one holding the bread, the other the cup. Another person joins Pastor Robert on the right side of the table, one holding the bread, the other the cup. You wait a minute, then go up one of the lines with your family to receive communion. On your way, you dip your hand in the bowl of water at the table, thinking of your spiritual death to self, then lift it out of the water, reborn into

new life, a remembrance of your baptism. The person holding the bread greets each person in your family by name, and says, “The body of Christ, broken for you” to which you respond, “Thanks be to God.” You dip it in the cup of juice as the person holding it says, “The blood of Christ, shed for you,” to which you respond “Thanks be to God.” You eat it and move back to your chair. Once served, the music team comes back up and plays an original song that Sky wrote. It’s beautiful and helps you reflect. On the far left and right sides of the room, people stand below the stained glass windows who you could approach for prayer. Kids are running around, and your spouse corrals them slightly.

Then you say a prayer all together, and sing the closing song, dropping your offering in the basket at the table. This song is more upbeat and a few people clap. For Pastor Robert’s benediction, each person holds hands with their whole row. Then the service is over, around 11:50. You stand chatting. Five minutes later almost everyone is still around, but the chairs are being stacked and the drums are being taken down. Kids have been snacking at the communion bread; they’re getting more rambunctious as there’s increasingly more space. Ten minutes after that, you leave, too, as the last few people are transforming the space back to a bare multipurpose atrium. You’ll see everyone again next week.

■ Receptive speaking in Second Pres’ liturgical call-and-response

We can complement this experiential view of Second Pres with a more analytic, textual one focused on how liturgy shapes a person. The examples here are from the weeks before the observation above, during the church season of Epiphany.

First, as suggested above, liturgical call-and-response is narrative. If we consider the order of the service, we see that the congregation declares that humankind turned/turns its back on God and needed/needs redemption (confession). But God has promised salvation to his people (assurance of pardon), which came/has come through Christ’s perfect life and sacrificial death, the hope of which is evidenced in his resurrection (communion prayer and communion itself). As a result of following Jesus, congregants’ lives in general will transform and will lead to new ways to live (post-communion prayer). Importantly, this narrative that is created by considering the service as a whole is also a straightforward description of the gospel message itself. That is, the structure of the service itself creates a re-enactment of the Christian message (Smith).⁶

Liturgical call-and-response is also seasonal. Each “season” in the church year has a set time, a Biblical occasion, certain personal and corporate spiritual

⁶ This helps us understand allusions and quotations to Scripture in the service. These are plentiful: the assurance of pardon is based on Psalm 139 and Isaiah 60; the sung section of the communion is based on Isaiah 6:3/Revelation 4:8 and Matthew 21:9. We can explain these allusions to Scripture by noting that acting out the gospel story at church every week is made stronger by repetition of the source materials. So where there is redemption in the Bible, people are redeemed; where there is pain, people are in pain; where there is thankfulness, people are thankful. The service itself provides an interpretation of the important plot points of the Christian faith.

practices to accompany it, certain Bible passages that are read during the service, and a color. In the season of Advent (November-December), people prepare for Jesus' coming; in Christmastide, they celebrate Jesus' birth; in Epiphany (shown here), they celebrate how Jesus brought light to non-Jews; in Lent, they walk with Jesus to the cross; in Holy Week, they lament Jesus' death; in Eastertide, they glory in Jesus' resurrection; and in Pentecost, they see Jesus' ministry continue. Congregants who participate in the church year are, in their call and responses, joining with other Christians across nationality, culture, and time period who follow the church year.

Overall, congregational responses are written as performative responsive actions. The call to worship comes first in Second Pres' service, after the gong sounds:

<p>Epiphany Call to Worship</p> <p>O come, let us worship the Lord and consider what wondrous things God has done:</p> <p>The Magi who study the heavens follow a guiding star!</p>	<p>O come, let us worship the Lord and consider what wondrous things God has done:</p> <p>The people who live in the shadows see a glorious light!</p>
<p>O come, let us worship the Lord and consider what wondrous things God has done:</p> <p>The Christ who embodies the Word unveils the hidden plan, making us joint heirs of the promise of salvation through the gospel!</p>	<p>O come, let us worship the Lord, for God has done wondrous things!</p> <p><i>— from The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship.</i></p>

Figure 3.2 Second Pres' 4-part call to worship during Epiphany, 2016 (the leader reads aloud the regular text, and the congregation all responds in what is bold)

The leader's voice here frames the congregation's call to worship as "worship" and "consideration" of what God has done. The congregation responds with three different declarations (The Magi follow; the people see; the Christ unveils⁷). In the fourth call and response, the congregation joins in saying "for

⁷ This order becomes meaningful within the seasonality of the liturgy. The Magi—i.e. Gentiles traveling to greet Jesus—have traditionally been read as an early indicator of Jesus opening the gospel to

God has done wondrous things!” This was previously part of the leader’s call, a justification for why they should worship God. By joining in, the congregation linguistically occupies the role of encourager to worship. Like all the call-and-response parts of the service, this is fixed, communally authored (in this case, written by *The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship*), part of the narrative, and seasonal.

In the confession as well we see how multiple roles are in play. Here the leader gives a short introduction to Christ’s light, and then frames the congregation’s response as confession (“Let us confess...”). The congregation uses a central contrast (“we have seen... we have not”) to convey an acknowledgement of sin. The connection to being shaped is explicit: people ask God to “guide” them in God’s holy way of peace. After a moment of silent confession comes the assurance of pardon. The leader initiates “good news,” which the congregation joins in on alternatingly. This culminates in the final proclamation that everyone says: “So arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Thanks be to God!” Again, people take on roles of leader and follower that flex and intermingle. In encouraging someone, the speaker is herself changed. The archaic subjunctive construction “Thanks be to God”⁸ creates a sense of active thanking.⁹

During communion, the congregation joins in another prayer. The first three calls and responses are traditional, dating back to the third century:

Call: The Lord be with you.

Response: And also with you.

Call: Lift up your hearts.

Response: We lift them to the Lord.

Call: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Response: It is right to give thanks and praise.



Here the congregation participates discursively through acknowledging

Gentiles. Thus, the call to worship begins by the congregation noticing the Magi, then constructs them as representative of all Gentiles, then focuses on Jesus as the author of the transition that makes Gentile believers “joint heirs” of God’s kingdom..

⁸ People also use the subjunctive to emphasize greeting each other as action: “The peace of the Lord be with you”

⁹ Smith elaborates regarding the next phase of passing the peace: “In short, God’s welcome is a gracious way of reminding us of our utter dependence, cutting against the grain of myths of self-sufficiency that we’ve been immersed in all week long. This dependence and lack of self-sufficiency is then often affirmed horizontally, as it were, by encouraging the congregation to greet one another, expressing welcome (‘Good morning, welcome...’) and extended blessing (‘Christ be with you’ or ‘The peace of Christ be with you’)” (169). Here Smith reads the liturgical call-and-response as practicing the exposure side of rhetoric: it works to rewrite American cultural myths of independence.

God's presence, lifting up their hearts, and thanking God. (The icon on the right depicts a scene with Abraham, the father of the Israelites, in a way that connects it to Christ and to communion.) This liturgical call-and-response is not just authorized by the community, but a means of joining with past and present other believers.

Then Pastor Robert's prayer indicates that the congregation is all in the process of "prais[ing]" God, which continues through a short sung section that everyone joins for. Finally, they "proclaim" the mystery of faith. (An icon of Christ on the cross is shown while the pastor repeats the "words of institution" that consecrate the bread and wine.)

After communion, the congregation prays together:

Almighty God, Holy Father, we have sat at your feet and listened, we have learned from your Word, and eaten from Your table. We give You thanks and praise for accepting us into Your family and encouraging us today. Send us out with Your blessing, to give and witness for You by encouraging others through the power of Your Spirit, through Jesus Christ, the first born from the dead. Amen.

The five verbs highlighted here are also highlighted on the Powerpoint slide that the congregation reads from. These correspond to Second Pres's five "practices": to listen, learn, eat, encourage, and give. The prayer figures each of these out-of-church practices as flowing from what has happened in the church service. For instance, the congregation engages in a practice of "eating" with others outside of the service because (from the perspective of the communal prayer) people have "eaten" Christ's body and blood during communion during the service. Participating discursively in the church service (i.e. by listening), then, is figured institutionally as the model for "being" the church outside of the building (i.e. by listening to people in the neighborhood).¹⁰ The prayer also characterizes listening to the sermon as having "sat at your feet," a traditional posture of learning, deference, yielding, being-shaped.

At a typical Sunday service at Second Pres, then, at nearly every step of a service, the congregation participates in ways that take discursive action, thanking, confessing, forgiving, worshiping, and proclaiming. In the narrative context of the service, people's call-and-response re-enacts the gospel. In the seasonal context of the church year, people's call-and-response joins with other believers. People's speech is not structured so as to seek some effect on others or to advocate specific points to others, so much as it is to **do something**. Intensely performative speech here serves as an alternative to persuasion. Congregants heavily participate in discursive action with no other end in sight than the ends accomplished through the actions. Indeed, those ends go beyond their intentions: people have chosen to attend, but may not have foreseen exactly how they

¹⁰ This is not just scholastic meaning-making. When I met with Mark and Lena a few months after the inter-church meetings, Mark took up Second Pres' benediction. "That actually is how I take off, or go away from Second Pres, where it says 'go out and be the hands and feet of Jesus.' Means don't just think it's for your church members. Love, and—and service with—to the stranger, uh, so—or the oppressed." For him, African Americans in the US were simple instantiations for loving the oppressed, "low-hanging fruit" so to speak.

would emerge; they are speaking to each other, but may be themselves partly affected.

This is the exposure side of rhetoric; the persuasion that Kennedy tells us is characteristic of classical rhetoric is little to be found in the congregation's discourse. Overall, then, while people joining in may have a persuasive impact on other congregants, they are also speaking in a way so as to be persuaded. The service doesn't teach strategies to influence others so much as it teaches strategies to be **influenced**. Liturgy, in other words, yields control of what is said to the community, remaining exposed and vulnerable to the impacts that might have on their habits and actions.

LITURGICAL CALL-AND-RESPONSE IN ANTI-RACISM

Liturgical call-and-response is a Christian way to practice the exposure side of rhetoric. During the project, I observed two times that people from Second Pres adapted liturgical call-and-response explicitly toward anti-racist efforts.¹¹

In the first case, Aviva had participants in an inter-church meeting pray responsively before a challenging meeting structure, in which black participants would have the floor for the whole meeting to tell their stories, and white participants would be quiet, in order to model the listening and relationship they wanted to have. For white participants, I suggest, the call-and-response was a verbal instantiation of and preparation for the responsiveness that they wanted to have toward each other in the meeting.

In the second case, Gwen structured a prayer meeting about race with a liturgical progression that moved through set prayers, song, and Scripture. I interpret this use of call-and-response as partly related to the challenge of praying about race as white people: adapting liturgy in this anti-racism setting drew people into new speaking who might otherwise have been stuck.

Overall, these situations are suggestive for liturgical call-and-response to be a model for understanding how people can speak so as to be exposed themselves, including in anti-racist rhetorical action.

■ Adaptation 1: "Truth tellers and active listeners"

Let us revisit the inter-church meetings of 2015 from a different angle. In one respect, they revealed that many white people told life stories and recounted day-to-day situations regarding race with desire and stuckness, which contrasted with the black participants (Chapter 1). In this sense, the meetings were a diagnostic that showed some white people's aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism, a double-edged sword in which people were remaining exposed to structural injustice while also being overwhelmed (Chapter 2). But the inter-church meet-

¹¹ These two times were not undertaken particularly intentionally as an anti-racist strategy. Then again, part of the argument in these chapters is that our action outstrips our intention. I see them as both suggestive of a direction for anti-racist call-and-response.

ings weren't just talk about racism; they also enacted an approach toward anti-racism simply to the extent that people in the US are racialized beings. And in that sense, we can see how Aviva experimented with a liturgical structure for our conversation in order to help us all do inter-racial contact well.

Because of scheduling mismatches, the first meeting only had people from Second Pres (not much of an "inter-church" meeting, although with Charley there, it wasn't just white people). With only six people at that first meeting, each person could tell their stories about race at length (see Chapter 1). Aviva and I came into the second meeting, then, with lots of apprehension about whether First Church really wanted to participate and whether Ms. Di was stringing us along out of politeness.

As I remember it,¹² early in the planning process we decided that the second meeting would be held at Second Pres as a potluck after both churches' Sunday services. Based on the first meeting, Aviva anticipated that there would be a lot more people from Second Pres than people from First Church. And given the racial makeup of the two churches, this meant that we were expecting a lot more white people to be present than black people. (This was accurate: there ended up being 16 white people, 1 Asian person, and 6 African Americans.)

To see Aviva's decision in context, consider the options Ms. Di, Aviva, and I had. It would be natural, in the face of a wild mismatch between anticipated white and black participants, to leave speaking time up to each person individually (i.e. with about 25 people present, an individual shouldn't talk for more than 4% of the time). Or, we could imagine a stronger version in which people tried to balance the time that their racial group spent talking (i.e. white participants would have to split half the time into their 16 attendees, while black participants would only need to split their half the time into 6 attendees—this would obviously put Steven, the lone Asian person, in a strange category of not being expected to talk at all, or being assimilated into the white or black speaking roles, or at the extreme getting a full third of the time as a representative of Asians in general).

In both of these possibilities, though, time is approached with a scarcity mind-set; it needs to be allocated and divided up. Aviva suggested to me and Ms. Di a way to approach our meeting that rejected a scarcity mind-set for our time: for the white people to not say anything. If the white people didn't say anything, it would be a gesture of reception, honor, respect, and even love. It would be an affirmation that God gives us all that we need. Ms. Di and I thought it was a fine idea.

I had little confidence in Second Pres, honestly. I thought the meeting would be a disaster, a data point that might stand in contrast to Second Pres' future rhetorical ability to yield to others. But that wasn't the case at all. The

¹² Because of our scheduling challenges, Aviva and my decision-making process going into the second meeting was full of anxiety and consequently off the record; this was one case where me being committed to the participants needed to trump being committed to collecting good data (Hess).

white people from Second Church really did stay quiet. Sure, Ms. Di helped this by calling on the next black person in the circle after she told her own story. This created a pattern in which the black attendees told their stories with race one after another (see these in condensed form, Chapter 1). And because this ended up being black participants from First Church, Charley was skipped over as a black woman from Second Pres, and Steven was skipped over as an Asian guy from Second Pres. I checked in with them after to apologize if they had felt excluded.

But the bigger story is that the white participants really did stay silent. There were no outbursts, no interjections, no storming out, no arms folded in skepticism, no defensive qualifications that one might expect (Anderson). Once all the black participants from First Church had shared, Aviva opened the floor for a few minutes, and Greg, a white guy from Second Church, did say one sentence. I personally experienced listening together as a beautiful, humbling act. People from First Church displayed such courage that I had to check in with Ms. Di later that week by email to understand: “I was amazed at how gracious all of the African Americans were in what they said - ‘you can’t make me not love you!’ [said Ms. Esther] Is that genuine?”

This was a demanding rhetorical task of being silent and receptive. It required being open, first of all, to an approach not rooted in a scarcity mind-set, of being willing to let go of that time to talk. In her introduction to the afternoon, Aviva anticipated some of these concerns. While I was getting the video camera set up and people were pulling their chairs into a circle in the main area at Second Pres (torn down already from its set-up for worship earlier in the day; very hot, with fans being arranged to blow onto us), Aviva acknowledged that “we all have something to say, and we all should be heard.” Yet she asserted a collective willingness for people of color to be the “truth tellers” and the white people present to be the “active listeners” (indeed, “truth tellers and active listeners” was the name of our IRB proposal, see Chapter 8): “we want you to be the truth tellers, we really want to hear from you, um. And white folks: we want to be active listeners.”

To prepare us for this time, Aviva opened and closed our time with call-and-response. Like in church, this was a fixed and communally authored prayer. For people from Second Pres, using a call-and-response prayer in this context right after the Sunday service helped extend practicing the exposure side of rhetoric to anti-racist use. The call-and-response that everyone prayed modeled in its very structure the listening and receptivity that people hoped to demonstrate through the meeting. In this sense, the call-and-response functioned as preparation.

The call-and-response Aviva selected for us to open the meeting was not just preparation; its content itself was paradoxical, emphasizing requests for reversal. It reads in part:

Sunday, July 19, 2015, 1:07pm

All
 1 Where there is hatred, let me bring love;
 where there is injury, pardon;
 where there is doubt, faith;
 where there is despair, hope;
 5 where there is darkness, light;
 where there is sadness, joy.

In this excerpt, participants commit to counterintuitive, others-centered action. The prayer goes on to give an explanation for seeking these reversals by reference to the ultimate Christian paradox: “for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life” (ln 13). Here, counterintuitive, others-centered action (practicing the exposure side of rhetoric) is authorized by Christ and expected for Christians. In the meeting about race, this ancient prayer took on new meaning. Did the participants really believe that they needed to “bring love” (ln 1)? Or that they needed to “pardon” or be pardoned (ln 2, 12)? In the meeting, bringing love meant being quiet, as a small corrective to society’s unequal racial treatment. Joining the call-and-response makes that belief present and prepares them for the rest of the meeting.

This meeting structure was memorable to those present. Months later, in early 2016, Mark brought it up to me as an example of not having a savior mentality. He recalled the lunch as a time when “the people from First Church had the floor to talk, and we were just supposed to learn and listen. I think that was sort of like an exercise in showing humility, and you know, active—active demonstration that, we wanna walk the walk or something.” Here he identifies an action that people were taking in the process of speaking (“showing humility,” overall an “active demonstration”). Similarly, more than a year after this, his wife Lena brought it up in our affinity group as “the one where white people were not supposed to talk, and we said, ‘We’re just gonna sit.’” Notable in this recollection is Lena’s inclusive “we said” that figures the effort as collaborative among all the white people.

■ Adaptation 2: Praying about race as a white person

A second time that people from Second Pres adapted call-and-response for anti-racist work was a year after the inter-church meetings, in late 2016. We were toward the beginning of our debriefing group (see Part IV), and Gwen, Lena, and I decided to get together several times to pray about race. At our first prayer meeting, in October 2016, Lena, Gwen, and I gathered at Lena’s house. Gwen had created a liturgy for us to follow, which she titled “Prayer Liturgy for Racial Reconciliation.” Like a church service, it had a narrative structure, moving from a call to worship, to a prayer of confession, to words of assurance, to a prayer of response, to intercessory prayers, to a closing communal prayer. Each of these sections involved call-and-response, and were specific to race. For instance, the prayer of confession articulated a set of truths (e.g. “You created us in divine likeness, diverse and beautiful: In every person, every race is your image”), with

everyone joining in to confess failure (e.g. “But too often we fail to recognize your image in all: Forgive us.”)

The liturgical call-and-response that Gwen had assembled was also communally authored, which we could see in the handout that Gwen gave us: she included citations for the authors of the prayer of confession and the closing communal prayer. This authorized the prayers in a way that let us not have to worry about whether we were saying things the “right” way. In a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” feeling of stuckness, liturgical call-and-response allowed our desire to take discursive shape. In part, these call-and-response segments had us directly take up and affirm the words of people of color. Part of the closing prayer, for instance, had the leader initiate with King’s call: “Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote: ‘The cross we bear precedes the crown we wear. To be a Christian we must take up our cross, with all of its difficulties and agonizing and tension-packed content and carry it until that very cross leaves its mark upon us and redeems us to that more excellent way which comes only through suffering.’” The response, then, picks up King’s attention to those who suffer, as well as to the idea of having a cost to following God (through the symbol of the “cross we bear”): “God of the oppressed and suffering, we pray for all those who suffer in any way. Grant us the strength to bear whatever crosses are in our lives and the grace to know our losses, grief, and pain as part of the mystery of your love for us.”

Gwen developed another liturgy for us in our second meeting, partly at my prompting. In this meeting, several others from Second Pres attended. Lena’s husband Mark was there at home, who had participated in our 2015 inter-church meetings. Greg was present, who had participated in just the silent inter-church meeting. Jane had visited Second Pres the week before and decided not only to come at Gwen’s invitation, but also to bring her roommate Arianna. Like the first prayer meeting, then, we were a group of white people meeting to pray about race and the country; we had hoped people from First Church would attend, because the prayer meeting took place only a few days after Trump had been elected.

Gwen designed this call-and-response to be seasonal to our moment of dismay at Trump’s election the week before. For instance, Gwen had us prayerfully listen to a song, whose theme she linked to our national condition. “It’s called Sacred Darkness, and I feel like our country’s in a dark time. So, it just talks about sitting in the darkness and learning from the darkness.” After the song, she made this posture of exposure more explicit for us as a group of white people. As white people “that are concerned with justice, we do want to speak. And I think there’s a place for that, but also an invitation to sit in the stillness, um, especially like as like the earth is still trembling from this earthquake [i.e. the election]. And, um, like, be attentive to God and attentive to our sisters and brothers of color, um, and to be people who will just be silent and listen to them.” Here our exposure is both asked for and presumed, an “invitation” to

listen.

In that meeting especially, the call-and-response structured our spontaneous, unplanned prayers. One person would read a verse from Psalm 12. Then after a pause, anyone could say a prayer. Like the fully fixed prayers that Gwen had us use in the first meeting, hearing one verse from the psalm at a time gave us an authorized template on which to base our following speech. For instance, toward the end, Arianna read out loud, “The LORD will keep the needy safe and will protect us forever from the wicked” (Ps 12:7). After a pause, Jane prayed by drawing on this language, adopting two positions. First, she prayed as someone who is wicked: “Just help us to see the wickedness in our own hearts.” Then she shifted to identify with the psalmist and pray for God’s protection, adapting “wicked” to the current political climate of harm, fear and distrust: “Um, and I do pray that you would protect us from those who seek to harm, to create even more fear, and to stir up even more distrust.” Thus, call-and-response provides Jane with a language to talk (about) race.

Overall, whereas Aviva used call-and-response to help people be quiet, Gwen adapted call-and-response to help draw people into new speech that was about race and also was enacting exposure.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I’ve argued that Second Church structures their weekly services such that congregants take discursive action. This tunes them in to their own affect-ability, practicing the exposure side of rhetoric in ways that can be adapted to anti-racist efforts. Thus, rather than envisioning inter-racial communication as an even “conversation,” liturgical call-and-response is intentionally lopsided, racializing roles of caller and responder to prepare for and enact new anti-racist rhetorical communication. As a practice, it shows potential for being applied beyond a Christian setting. The theory that underlays call-and-response is considered next, in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Attention-based language ideology

“Intentions and ethical fortitude were of little help in terms of staying off the disruptions of the habituated white body.”

—George Yancy (*Black Bodies*, 247)

“‘Good intention’ is a hall pass through history, a sleeping pill that ensures the Dream”

—Ta-Nehisi Coates (33)

“The intentional arrows that define the situation, give me my identity, and call me to a responsible response do not emanate from me but from the Other toward me.”

—Westphal (118, in Kaplan’s *Reading Ricoeur*)

“I recognize that some might be uncomfortable with this claim [that people absorb an understanding of liturgical call-and-response without intending to], since it seems to suggest that there can be some sort of virtue in ‘going through the motions.’ On this point I’m afraid I have to confess that I do indeed think that this is true.”

—James K. A. Smith (167)

Call-and-response is a way for people to practice a rhetorical process of anti-racist engagement. Call-and-response draws people into new speaking and pushes them to affirm what they might not yet fully be living. Yet in the process, it also treats language outside of our normal expectations that people only “say what they mean.” If the examples in Chapter 3 are to be taken seriously, call-and-response involves a more adventurous relationship between what people intend and what they actually say—indeed, call-and-response sometimes lets the saying get ahead of the intending. After all, in a church setting at Second Pres, people don’t always believe that “the people who live in the shadows see a glorious light” (**Figure 3.2**), and they certainly wouldn’t have put it that way themselves. Rather, the claim in the previous chapter is that responding to the call in church is what **creates** and **develops** that belief. People thus offer the saying itself as an invitation for God to make it more true for them. And when approaching African Americans at First Church, people at Second Pres are asked to respond by af-

firming that “it is in giving that we receive.” Here, it’s the saying that proves the intention, not the other way around.

This interesting use of language in call-and-response accords with people of color who argue that people’s intentions were not so stalwart in the first place (see first two quotes in epigraph): anti-racist intentions aren’t always enough to change your body’s reactions (Yancy), and white people’s good intentions can cover up for their apathy (Coates). Continental philosophy after Ricoeur agrees here, trumpeting an “inverted intentionality” (i.e., coming into being as the object of someone’s intention, Westphal). And Smith is only slightly bashful in admitting that liturgical call-and-response flies in the face of much Protestant thinking that language should articulate what is already true for a person.

This chapter takes these ideas up more extensively to argue that part of a process of responsive anti-racist engagement involves making an alternative set of assumptions about what language itself is good for. This alternative “language ideology” (Silverstein; Woolard and Schieffelin; Irvine and Gal) shows how theorizing responsiveness is a more far-reaching task than we might think. Specifically, it deals with the implications of anti-racist action and exposure leading conscious reception.

First, a conventional, intention-based language ideology is described, which anthropologists label the “Protestant” language ideology. The Protestant, or intention-based, language ideology views language as primarily useful for sending messages to other people, which as messages can then be true or false. Using language rightly, then, requires that people have sincere intentions; the biggest language sin is lying, because it means knowingly sending false messages to others. This set of assumptions about what language is good for is at once religious and also deeply woven into modern, secular institutions like the American legal system, which depends on “honest” testimony. It is familiar to academics as well through speech-act theory, à la J. L. Austin’s *How to Do Things With Words*, which depends on the slippery concept of “sincerity.” Linguistic anthropologists critique intention-based language ideology for ignoring the material impacts of language, and for reifying an individualistic conception of the world; scholars of race and whiteness contribute a visceral skepticism of white people’s intentions and seriousness. Overall, this section makes the argument that people’s sustained process of responsive anti-racist engagement will necessarily involve something other than the Protestant language ideology.

The second section examines how call-and-response is authorized by and enacts an alternative language ideology, focused not on a person’s **intention**, but on their **attention** to the impacts of their discourse. (Such attention-based language ideology is likely present in other liturgical contexts, including in Christian churches historically. An examination into this might investigate early Christians’ or Jews’ hesitations to persuade others [Kennedy 145; Zulick], or examine parallels between language ideology and historical ideologies of Christian mission [Bevans and Sch Schroeder]. Non-religious attention-based language

ideologies are also possible. This chapter focuses on Second Pres specifically and leaves a consideration of wider attention-based language ideology to future research.) Although the intention-based view of language is popular among Christians (hence the anthropological name “Protestant” language ideology), people at Second Pres tend to suggest that we affect God and God affects us in surplus of our intentions. Thus, it’s more helpful for people to become attentive to the actions that they take in what they say. Language, then, isn’t message-passing; it’s assumed to be relational. The worst language sin isn’t lying to others, but disregarding the actions that happen in the process of speaking. Specifically, Second Pres articulates three assumptions about what language does, and what language is good for. First, they see all discourse as also creating multiple spiritual actions across multiple levels concurrently. For instance, a person at Second Church may see “apologizing” in some situation as also, at the same time, being “showing humility,” which may also at the same time, be “modeling their life after Christ.”¹ This idea of actions that take place at multiple levels at once has not been well described in the literature to this point. Second, building on this, people at Second Pres claim that it’s not obvious what the concurrent actions that people take through speaking are; an action must be “discerned.” This means that people must draw others into an interpretive process in order to better understand how their discourse affects them. Finally, seeking to enact something specific through language requires creativity, because any given action is contextual. This means that an attention-based language ideology is deeply *kairotic*.

Like call-and-response adapted from liturgy, Second Pres’s attention-based language ideology is obviously set in a spiritual register. This chapter implies that this can also be reconceived in a broader sense for people who aren’t approaching anti-racism through a Christian lens. Like in Chapter 3, then, Christian practice functions as an asset for rhetorical theorizing.

These three assumptions about language are given specificity through two of Second Pres’ institutional explanations of/instructions for taking on “spiritual practices.”² One text is from Second Pres’ website aimed at visitors; the other was posted on Second Pres’ Facebook page for active attenders. Spiritual practices are wide-ranging activities, often enacted outside of an explicitly religious context, through which God develops people’s virtues, or capacities, over time. Spiritual practices, then, are actions that people take on so as to be exposed to God’s call for their lives in a variety of ways; they thus foreshadow people from

1 It is at one of these “higher levels” of action that developing an urban farm makes sense for some people at Second Pres as an action that a church should pursue. As Gustave, one of the people on the Familyfield Community Farm’s advisory board, put it to me before the project started, “Our investment [in the farm] is not an attempt at absconding with property, so much as it is an attempt of the picture of a community that is intentionally diverse and that where we are orienting ourselves as learners in that community.” Here, “picture” and “orienting ourselves” describe something that is already happening through the farm, not a set of goals to accomplish.

2 “Practice” here, like “practicing” responsiveness, is the practice of medical doctors and rhetoricians (ongoing, attentive), rather than the practice of athletes before a game (preparatory). It has a wide literature in Christian and philosophy circles, see, e.g. MacIntyre; Hauerwas.

Second Pres’ effort to practice a rhetorical process of responsive anti-racist engagement.

THE INTENTION-BASED “PROTESTANT” LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

Ideologies about language can be expansive or narrow; everyone holds multiple ideologies about language. For instance, one common ideology is that English is a discrete language that can be spoken more or less correctly. This “correctness” language ideology embeds assumptions about what actions people do in what they say. For instance, within the correctness language ideology, speaking Standard English **does** “being cultured,” “following the rules,” and “respecting the US’s shared history of English.” This language ideology would also structure people’s assessment of what a person does when they speak in a dialect like African American English, e.g. “being lazy,” “revealing their ignorance,” and “rejecting professional standards.” Obviously, such assumptions about language have political impacts. (This is why “ideology” is used; it’s a tacit philosophy that has material consequences.) For instance, the correctness language ideology supports mandating teachers to teach Standard English. For extensive commentary about this regarding African American English, see scholarship in the wake of the Oakland School Board controversy of 1996 (e.g. Perry and Delpit; Rickford; Wolfram). More recent scholarship has argued that scholars still hold traces of the correctness language ideology; they advocate for new approaches to teaching writing like translanguaging (García and Wei) and code meshing (Young; Young, et al.). What’s important here is that the intention-based language ideology described below does not cover all possible aspects of language, but is intimately tied up with pedagogy. That is, the language ideology promoted at Second Pres may begin to get at the politics of responsive anti-racist engagement.

Intention-based language ideology has been written about by linguistic anthropologists of religion (e.g. Keane), who have found common characteristics in almost all Christian communities. The commonalities are so apparent that they refer to the “Protestant” language ideology, or even the “Christian” language ideology.³

Bialecki and Pinal summarize the characteristics of the Protestant language ideology in their introduction to a special issue on it in *Anthropological Quarterly*:

a rather small though recurrent constellation of features, chief of which are a marked predilection for sincerity, interiority, intimacy, intentionality, and immediacy as an ethics of speech, and a privileging of the referential aspects of language. (579-580)

The rest of the special issue shows these features in American Evangelical Bible studies (Bielo), in body gestures in South American charismatic worship (Pinal),

³ As implied in the introduction to this chapter, Second Pres is a Protestant congregation but does not hold to this language ideology; I thus prefer to call it an “intention-oriented language ideology.”

and in fundamentalist preaching (Harding), among others—a global, multi-denominational language ideology. By “ethics of speech,” Bialecki and Pinal mean that we associate sincere, intimate, intentional speech as not only socially important but also morally important, i.e. as truth-telling.

A simple explanation of these in everyday American life prepares us to see them in anthropological context. We draw on these features when we interrogate language with questions like:

- Is it true? (where “it” can refer to: media coverage, women’s experiences of sexual assault, accounts of slavery)
- Did the speaker really mean it? (where “it” can refer to: micro-aggressions, outright racist language, Trump’s campaign comments about disabled people, mass incarceration)
- What was in the speaker’s heart when they said it? (where “it” can refer to: threats of deportation, calling the cops on a person of color, etc.)

All of these questions assess language based on someone’s intent (usually to mitigate negative impacts), and put this assessment in terms of what language refers to (i.e. “the referential aspect”), rather than what language *does* or how language *relates* us together.

Anthropologists view the introduction of Christianity to a population as the ideal opportunity to see the Protestant language ideology in action. Robbins provides an illustrative and foundational treatment with the Urapmin people of Papua New Guinea. Traditionally, Robbins claims, the Urapmin held a language ideology in which they assumed language was necessarily dissociated from people’s intent, so that what people said could never communicate commitment. Men in the society were even led in a secret ritual in which language was used to repeatedly let them down. This wasn’t “lying” as such; rather, it was intended to progressively entrain the men who were undergoing the ritual into approaching language itself as deeply untrustworthy. When the Urapmin converted en masse to Protestantism in the 1970s, however, Robbins finds that the churches promoted new practices, such as prayer and confessions of faith, that were predicated on being a sincere, intentional speaker. For instance, in Robbins’ analysis, supplicatory prayer—asking God for things—only makes sense if that’s what a person “actually” wanted. Confessions of faith—publicly repeating a set of Christian doctrines—only become meaningful if people have the possibility for it to be a “sincere” declaration of their “internal” beliefs that bystanders could witness and call the person to account for later.

Robbins’ analysis of an intention-based language ideology available in Christianity isn’t wrong; many Christians do find it easy to follow this sincerity, intention-based language ideology, and people at First Church and some people at Second Pres drew on it. For Biblical support, we might look to Jesus’ claim that “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45). In this passage and its surrounding context, what is true begins internally (in the meta-

phorical heart), and proceeds outward (through the mouth). Speaking is subservient to a speaker’s heart. Jesus’s meaning is that in general, a person’s actions can be taken as a reflection of who they really are: from actions, we can read backwards to a person’s prior position toward God.

And indeed, an intention-based language ideology has been used to sow suspicion of liturgical call-and-response specifically. The early Protestant reformer John Calvin (who was far from anti-liturgy) noted, “Many repeat prayers in a perfunctory manner from a set form, as if they were performing a task to God, and though they confess that this is a necessary remedy for the evils of their condition, because it were fatal to be left without the divine aid which they implore, it still appears that they perform the duty from custom, because their minds are meanwhile cold, and they ponder not what they ask” (*Institutes*, Bk 3, Ch 20). For Calvin, it is a person’s internal mind that determines the value of their words. When their mind is “cold” (i.e. inactive, “ponder[ing] not”), the person is merely acting out of duty, out of custom, in a rote and perfunctory way. Language does not shape a person, it relays what is already true. Thus, “set” prayers are dangerous, having the potential to be performing, to break the correspondence that Calvin saw as natural between a person’s internal state and their external actions.

■ Reading the Protestant language ideology with respect to race

The Protestant language ideology bears on Second Church’s anti-racism efforts because both the Protestant language ideology and anti-racism are tightly bound up in the projects of modernity. We can begin with critiques launched by anthropologists of religion. Bialecki summarizes:

The religious autonomous subject that is produced by this [sincere] stance towards language is one that is closely related, either in genealogy or structure, to the confessional, agentive, self-fashioned subject of contemporary modern secular language ideologies, and therefore, Protestant language ideology points to some of the disavowed religious aspects of secular modernity’s logic regarding concepts such as originality and the self. (Bialecki 2011, 682)

In other words, the Protestant language ideology looks familiar because it’s also a secular language ideology (one more reason to call it intention-based language ideology). Intention-based language ideology undergirds the Western modern concept of an individual, autonomous self. We can see this in legal statutes, where a person’s “intention” is a deciding factor in their crime and its punishment. We can see the “self-fashioned subject” in mass culture, in which “originality” and the “autonomous self” are foundational (Bialecki overreaches somewhat in suggesting that these are “disavowed” aspects of identity formation; certainly they aren’t disavowed in pop culture).

Thus, the Protestant language ideology may be subject to the same limitations racially as “secular modernity’s logic.” After all, when you focus on

“sincerity,” you focus on individuals rather than systems; when you focus on speakers’ “intentionality,” it’s difficult to capture the actual effects (Bialecki and Pinal, 580) When you focus on the self-fashioned subject, you dissociate from historical domination and downplay material impacts of oppression. When you focus on the individual, you drive toward only personal change and are skeptical of collective apology (Bialecki and Pinal, 580). All of these run counter to effective anti-racism efforts. Overall, the Protestant language ideology expresses “discomfort with, if not an outright rejection of the social, material, and historic substrate of language” (Bialecki and Pinal, 580).⁴

People of color echo this critique from personal experience. For them, intention-based language ideology has never held much cultural sway. Call-and-response, after all, is a feature of black church culture. Smitherman describes four functions of response: affirming (“Well,” “yes,” “uh-huh,”), urging the speaker to continue (“take yo time”), repeating, and completing. She notes that “consequently, communication itself takes on an interactive, interdependent nature” (Talkin and Testifyin, 108). (For more on call-and-response specifically, see Foster, “Pay Leon”; Foster, “Cookin Now”; Britt; Rambsy II and Whiteside)

Scholars of African American rhetoric elaborate on this further. For them, a black language ideology (or African American “rhetoric”) is important to separate from an individualistic, intention-based language ideology. For instance, Clinton Crawford explains the Nubian and Egyptian concept of “Ma’at,” a principle of balance that authorized “unity of persons, unity of group, and unity with nature; the development of social responsibility; the development of character; and the development of spiritual power” (124-125). In the process, he notes that “This approach means going beyond the conventional limited boundaries of Western thought of selfish, materialistic, and punitive behaviors” (132). Similarly, Vorris Nunley argues that “Africans in America have had to flip the script of the prevailing paradigm of the dominant culture to affirm African American epistemology and to ensure psychological, spiritual, and cultural survival” (240). From the white perspective, such rhetoric by and for black people is “often misunderstood by the general public as angry, hostile, uppity, arrogant, and uncivil rhetoric” (231). Maulanga Karenga elaborates on *nommo*, a concept regarding the “communal character of communicative practice” (3), developed by Molefi Asante in the 1960s from the Dogon people of Mali. Karenga notes at the outset that considering such an Afro-centric rhetorical understanding “contains an implicit critique and corrective for the dominant consumerist conception of a rhetoric pressed into the service of vulgar persuasion, advertisement, seduction, and sales” (3).⁵

4 As with anti-racism generally, there are some surprising intersections here with new materialist scholarship, who have theorized how algorithms have an impact on people, disrupting our sense of intention in persuasion, see Gallagher; Brock and Shepherd.

5 Thus we do see some connection between intention-based language ideology and the persuasion side of rhetoric, just as I’m arguing there’s a connection between attention-based language ideology and responsive anti-racist engagement.

This brief overview shows that although the Protestant language ideology is alive and well, anthropologists of religion and scholars of race critique its capacity to sustain meaningful anti-racist activity. This sets the conceptual stage for an alternative language ideology based on attentiveness. At the same time, it should be noted that some people in this project occasionally drew on intention-based language ideology when they affirmed our efforts as “sincere” or “authentic” (see Mr. Sparkle in Chapter 6; Nikki in Chapter 7). While this chapter suggests that intention- and attention-based language ideologies are different, each with their own divergent assumptions about how language works, they do also co-occur in complex ways.

AN ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY BASED ON ATTENTIVENESS

How does church-based call-and-response lend itself to an alternative to the hegemonic intention-based language ideology prominent in American and Christian life? This section first describes an attention-based ideology with three parts as the results of such an inquiry. Then, it explores these three aspects from two sets of instructions on spiritual practices that Second Pres makes available.⁶

Instructions in spiritual practice are a helpful data source for two reasons. First, spiritual practices are defined by people’s attentiveness, not their sincerity; analyzing them thus builds toward an alternative to the Protestant language ideology. Spiritual practices are activities that people take on for a time with the hope that the activities will shape them in some way. The church service itself, then, with its liturgical call-and-response is just a special case of a spiritual practice that everyone takes on. Other spiritual practices include things like saying a certain prayer every day, developing a budget, exercising daily, journaling on a particular topic, fasting, resting, not watching TV, reading the Bible, and inviting people over for dinner. Something becomes a spiritual practice not because it’s on an approved list of spiritual practices, nor even because it is “good” to do, but because the person undertakes it with particular watchfulness for its spiritual effects.

Second, spiritual practices provide a procedure for people to understand mundane activities as spiritual action; they are thus metapragmatic processes. For instance, developing a budget may in some sense be “good” to do, but it becomes a spiritual practice for someone when they undertake it while being watchful for, say, God’s provision. Maybe they notice that in constructing a budget, they have more income than they remembered, and thank God for that. Or maybe in budgeting they set aside part of their money to give to the church as a tithe, doing so as a way to acknowledge God’s abundance. Or maybe they create a “vacation” category to ease tensions with their spouse about vacation planning, in the process experiencing God’s relational abundance to not have

⁶ Methodologically, this is an “ethno-metapragmatic” analysis of Second Pres’s language ideology. (Silverstein, “Language Ideology”; Silverstein, “Indexical Order”)

planning vacations be a sore spot. In this example, the mundane activity of budgeting is connected to spiritual realities like God's provision. By examining instructions in spiritual practices, we can see what the contours are of such procedures, and how they are described and explained.

■ Three features of an attention-based language ideology

Institutionally, Second Pres uses three assumptions of how language works, creating an attention-based language ideology. This poses an intriguing anti-racist alternative to the "Protestant" language ideology, suggesting that linguistic anthropologists of religion have been more successful at studying modernist Christians than at studying Protestantism itself in its range of temporal and philosophical approaches. More broadly, it shows how people who are engaged in action and exposure as sources of new (spiritual and anti-racist) insight can also conceive of language differently than what is commonly assumed.

1. All discourse is also spiritual action, getting its reference point from Christ

People at Second Pres understand all discourse as spiritual action, on the understanding that any utterance has multiple "layers" of action.⁷ This is an assumption of concurrent action that goes beyond speech act theory, sociolinguistic "framing," and ideological meaning-making individually.

Consider, as a running example, something I said over coffee with Nikki in early 2016, in reference to her invitation to be part of a working group about farming: "I'm a little bit nervous about this thing next week, by the way. I'm not gonna have anything to contribute." This example is both mundane and also, as seen in the next sections, an instantiation of Second Pres's spiritual practice of "eating together."

Speech-act theory from traditional pragmatics scholarship explains a narrow understanding of what I was "doing" through saying this. First, I was *self-disclosing* because I describe my own feelings (i.e. nervous); I was also *soliciting encouragement* indirectly: Nikki invited me to the working group because she expected me to contribute my expertise; by saying I was worried I wouldn't have anything to contribute I was calling my ability into question and linking my uncertain ability to my attendance. Pragmatics research would say that Nikki can make this inference because we share some principle, whether that's a principle of "cooperation" (Grice), or "relevance" (Sperber and Wilson), or "face" wants (Brown and Levinson), or "politeness" (Leech). Moreover, I was *building trust* and *growing relationships* through this vulnerability (these are explicitly part of Second Pres' theory of discursive action, see below).

These speech acts function as warrants or connective tissue to the spiritual action beyond it. In this case, self-disclosure is one of the reasons that eat-

⁷ In fact, all action has multiple layers of action; discourse is simply a subset of this broader understanding, a particular type of action that comes out incidentally and without fanfare.

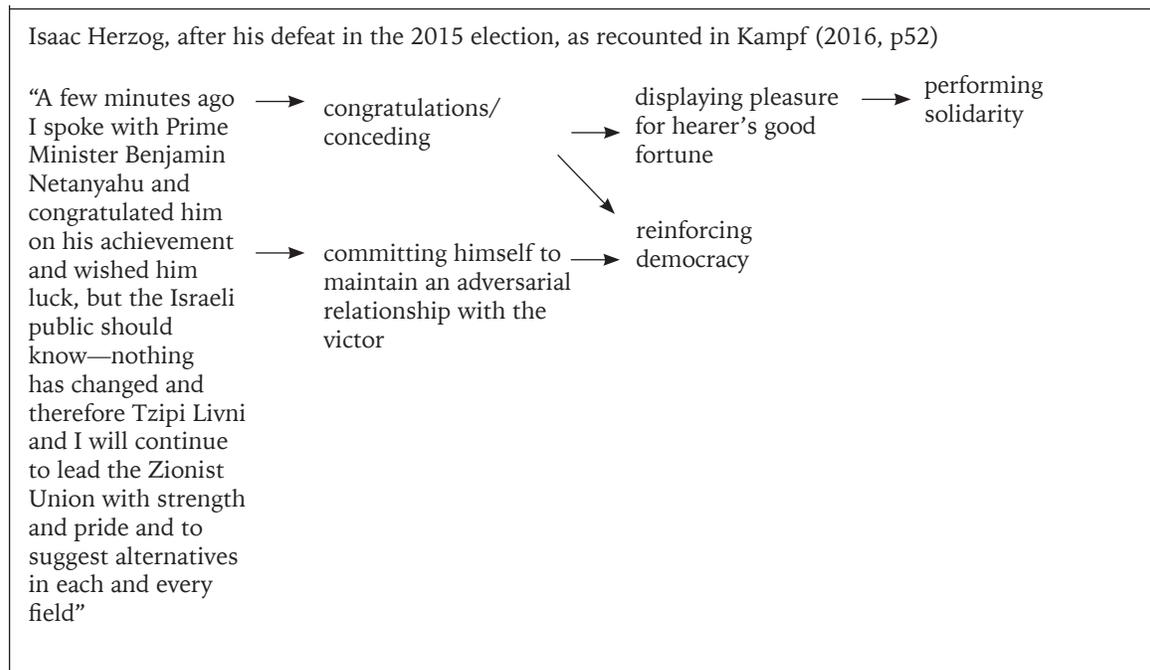
ing together builds trust. Thus, we see that Second Church’s spiritual practice of eating together isn’t itself a magic bullet for following God—which makes sense since we can easily imagine other situations in which these same speech acts would be destroying relationships and damaging trust. Rather, eating together is a heuristic that Second Church uses for the kind of situation in which self-disclosure and encouragement (among other speech acts) can grow relationships and build trust. Pragmatics research allows us to see Second Church’s five core practices in general, then, as shorthands for situations that are likely to facilitate speech acts that are also positive spiritual actions.

Sociolinguists who study frames of talk⁸ pick up where speech-act theory leaves off.⁹ In my conversation with Nikki, we were *eating together*, an interactive

8 According to Dewulf et al and Tannen and Wallat, frames of talk have been described as either cognitive frames (i.e. schemas that include expectations for what goes into something) or interactive frames (i.e. a co-constructed understanding of what is happening).

9 Pragmatics research hesitates to incorporate the broader levels of concurrent action because of a desire to be as universal as possible. Many early pragmatics scholars actually do acknowledge that any action can be understood at multiple levels. Austin, for instance, in a typically violent sample sentence, describes a train of concurrent action: “Thus if asked, ‘What did he do?’, we may reply either, ‘He shot the donkey’ or ‘He fired a gun’ or ‘He pulled the trigger’ or ‘He moved his trigger finger’, and all may be correct” (106). Similarly, Leech notes that in kicking a ball, a player may score a goal, and in scoring a goal, she may win the match (202), and even visualizes this through a hierarchy. And Searle and Vanderveken note that “in making a promise, he may want to reassure his hearer, keep the conversation going, or try to appear to be clever” (121). But despite these tantalizing prospects of a train of concurrent action beyond a single layer, these early pragmatics scholars all ultimately reject it.

Interestingly, recent pragmatics research has been expanding into more nuanced and expanded trains of concurrent action. In a recent article in the *Journal of Pragmatics*, for instance, Kampf writes about speech acts that perform political functions. Sketched visually, one of his examples would look like this:



In this train, the upper branch of concurrent action terminates in “performing solidarity”; this is a traditional application of Brown and Levinson’s theory, i.e. that conceding saves face and “performs solidarity.” Kampf’s innovation is to extend the concurrent action to observe that actions that express solidarity can

frame that Nikki and I do together: through sitting down together, through talking about a range of topics, and (in part) through me self-disclosing and asking her to encourage me. Frames, in other words, begin in abstractness where speech acts leave off. Eating together, in my case, was also at a broader level *doing fieldwork*, since I had my phone's recorder running and I was taking notes. Doing fieldwork, in turn, was also *dissertating*, because I viewed myself as "on the clock" and was working toward a specific project. And dissertating, at a broader level of activity, was also *becoming a scholar*, because academic work shapes me into the kind of person who can do academic work. Unlike literature on speech acts, sociolinguists who study frames of talk are comfortable with these multiple layers.¹⁰ Frames of talk are less universal than speech acts because they describe co-constructed discursive activities.

But even frames of talk have their limits: if Nikki weren't a Christian and didn't believe in God, for instance, there would be a lack of co-constructed activity such that *living in the way of Christ* an untenable activity frame based solely on what I said. But from Second Pres' attention-based language ideology, this kind of action is happening whether everyone in the conversations picks it up or not. There is thus a third meaning-making system at work, an **ideological** meaning-making system. Here, an action reflects a person's working hypothesis, which is subject to revision and re-interpretation just as the actions themselves are subject to revision. In my example with Nikki, "living in the way of Jesus" theorizes what is happening. It is an ideological interpretation that other people may agree with, but not necessarily the people involved in the conversation. We can expand this so it isn't necessarily spiritual, e.g. *taking a stand on my being*. This is Heideggerian language that theorizes a monistic philosophy (I have no other choice as human Dasein than to take a stand on my being). Like ideological interpretations, the "reality" of this layer is philosophically uncertain; it isn't dependent

also reinforce democracy. On one hand, this is because congratulations/concession acknowledges a peaceful, democratic political process (the downward arrow toward "reinforcing democracy"); on the other hand, this is because committing to an adversarial political stance reinforces the democratic principle of working together despite differences (the horizontal arrow toward "reinforcing democracy"). Kampf's argument is interesting because the warrant for linking these actions to "reinforcing democracy" is a kind of commonsense reasoning about what democracy is; this participates in what I call philosophical or theoretical meaning-making below.

10 For instance, in *Frame Analysis*, Erving Goffman is interested in multiple interactional frames because they present an analytical problem of describing how one frame is brought into focus. Particularly relevant here is his idea that any activity can be "regrounded" into a different frame, which he defines as "the performance of an activity more or less openly for reasons or motives felt to be radically different from those that govern ordinary actors" (74). One way to phrase an attention-based language ideology, then, is that it is a language ideology of continuous regrouping. Goffman lists as examples a princess "volunteering" at a charity (regrounded from "performing royalty"), or a person chopping wood who is "taking recreation" or "following the doctor's orders" (regrounded from "working"). A related concept within sociolinguistics is "orders of indexicality" (Silverstein, "Orders of Indexicality"). This creates a hierarchy over time: "speaking Pittsburghese," over time came to mean socially "being working class," which over time transformed to mean "being a local Pittsburgher" (Johnstone). Also, phrases like "the construction of _____" and "performing _____" can both be seen as sociolinguistic indicators of a broader branch on a train of concurrent action. Constructivist accounts of the presentation of self usually aren't connected to pragmatics or frames of talk because the unit of analysis is so much larger: a whole conversation or longer.

on near universal principles of communication (like with speech act theory) or co-constructed understanding (like with interactive frames of talk; I doubt Nikki is a Heideggerian). Rather, it is felt, believed, argued for, debated, thought out—but, at least in Second Pres’s case, at the end of the day it is or isn’t true; things like “following God” are not viewed as just discursive constructions.

What these layers imply is that any discursive act is a whole variety of things at once. My statement of insecurity to Nikki over coffee didn’t establish a “goal” to become a scholar, it was a small part of instantiating that. It wasn’t “just” self-disclosing, it was also (potentially) a small part of living in the way of Christ. We can notice that these actions are not just universal, or co-constructed, or internal; they are a mix of them that pulls apart intention until it’s no longer visible. This aspect of an attention-based language ideology raises the stakes for anti-racist enactment, because any interaction is enacting some deep relational stance toward (or against) people of color.

2. Spiritual action, including even its direction toward or away from Christ, must be discerned

This aspect of an attention-based language ideology elaborates on how people know what actions they do in what they say. In short, those actions must be “discerned.” This is a Christian term referring to a process of seeking wisdom from a variety of sources as a way to locate God’s meaning and direction (Barton). Discernment implies that interpreting or identifying your own or another person’s spiritual action is not obvious. In other words, this is an assumption about language use that immediately understands how privilege brings hiddenness (Chapter 2). It affirms the idea that people can be wrong about labeling spiritual action and that others can provide insight into it.

This need to discern is taken to the extreme: even the “direction” of an action (i.e. whether it’s toward or away from God) needs to be discerned. In the example above, it would be presumptuous for me to suggest that in making a simple statement I was “living in the way of Christ”—not because it’s grandiose, but because the wisdom to affirm that label would need to be sought out. Perhaps I was actually taking over the conversation, shutting her down, and rejecting Christ’s humility? Perhaps I wasn’t building trust with Nikki, but was coming off as unflatteringly timid, asking her to do too much emotional labor, living selfishly? For an action with high stakes, someone operating from an attention-oriented language ideology would try to discern their action, through asking trusted friends, praying for wisdom, consulting the Bible, observing their own self-history, and taking into account the impact that their action had. Within an attention-oriented language ideology, this effort isn’t just “seeing how they perceived it”; it’s finding the action itself.

3. Conversely, people engaging in discourse can be—and indeed must be—creative, if they are to act in accord with Christ’s character.

Finally, an attention-oriented language ideology at Second Pres is deeply *kairotic*, attentive to the context. This means that certain phrases or interactions don’t necessarily create a given action; something that is “rote” is actually multivalent and uncertain. To undertake a specific action, like “being loving” or “caring for neighbors,” people at Second Pres rely on discursive creativity. Creativity here means an openness to new experiences, done as a reflection of people’s need to be contextual. From a spiritual perspective, Christ lived in a certain context (spoke a certain language, lived at a certain moment in history, ate certain foods, used certain figures of speech), and so any faithfulness to Christ must be done equally contextually (Bevans and Schroeder).

Applied to my conversation with Nikki, the assumption that linguistic action requires creativity and *kairos* means that if I wanted to take a specific action through what I said, I would need to use my imagination. What was she expecting based on our history? What were my tendencies in conversations? How had I seen her enact this action in the past? This is an inquiry mind-set (Flower), one that is open to new possibilities and interpretations, yet (ideally) is not stuck in intellectualizing and second-guessing.

Overall, then, an attention-based language ideology parts ways with the intention-based language ideology on nearly every focus (see Bialecki and Pinal, 579-580 above): rather than sincerity, an attention-based language ideology supports objective Christ-likeness; rather than interiority, it centers witness and display; rather than intimacy, it locates roles as important for interaction; rather than intentionality, it features being-shaped; rather than immediacy, it provides a procedure for analysis; rather than privileging referentiality, it lifts up the actions that people take in the process of speaking.

■ Attention in Second Pres’ community spiritual practices

Two sets of instructions about spiritual practices shows an attention-based language ideology in action. The first set of instructions comes from a unique page on Second Pres’ public-facing website:¹¹ the “Community Practices” page (**Figure 4.1**). The title displaces emphasis away from Second Pres’ doctrine toward corresponding action, making it a good place to examine the assumptions Second Church has about what actions people take in what they say.

First, we see that any utterance instantiates multiple layers of action. At the broadest level, this means “living in the way of Jesus” (opening). (This is a spiritual action that gets its reference point from Christ. Practices, like giving, are not giving moralistically, as good or bad by fiat, but through referencing Jesus: “in giving he received.”)

At a narrower level, the ellipsis at the end of that opening statement

11 The “Community Practices” page is part of “About Us,” along with “Values,” “Leadership,” and “Statement of Faith.” Those others are relatively traditional ways for a church to describe itself

Home About Us Contact Us Calendar Get Involved Ministries

Community Practices

We seek to live in the way of Jesus by practicing simple weekly rhythms – to regularly...

Listen to God

We seek to practice listening by setting aside at least 1 focused time of listening to God's "still, small voice." each week.

In doing this, we will follow Jesus' example of seeking time alone with God: "After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray" (*Matthew 14:23*). And we will trust God's promise to meet us when we come to Him: "You will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (*Jeremiah 29:12-13*). The methods can vary: take a walk, journal, pray, meditate; listen to music, or any other way you find to be still with God.

Learn from God

We seek to practice learning by devoting at least 1 focused time of learning, from Christ, through scripture each week.

Jesus says, "take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble at heart and you will find rest for your souls" (*Matthew 11:29*). Learning from Jesus can take a variety of forms but scripture is the primary text we seek to learn through (though not limited to that). God's Word is living and active (*Hebrews 4:12*); useful for shaping and molding us and therefore we desire to sit under it and allow it to teach us. Consider the following passages to contemplate the dynamic power of God's word: (*Deuteronomy 11:18-21*; *Psalms 119*; *Luke 6:47-48*; *Colossians 3:16*; *Hebrews 4:12*).

Eat with others

We strive to eat with at least 2 people we don't live with (1 from Second Pres and 1 not) each week.

Jesus regularly ate with friends and strangers. He culminated his ministry in the last supper, where he told us to do likewise. Eating with others is a place of conversation, community and hospitality and it is practiced throughout scripture in regular celebrations, feasts, sacrifices and gatherings of the people of God. Whether with one or many, whether coffee or a feast, whether serving or being served, sharing a meal together provides an opportunity to grow in relationships, to build trust, and ultimately for Christ to work through us in those relationships. (*Numbers 10:10*; *Matthew 22:1-14*; *Luke 22:7-20*; *Revelation 19:1-9*)

Encourage others

We seek to practice encouragement by intentionally encouraging 2 people (1 from Second Pres and 1 not) through words, gifts or actions each week.

Jesus said we will face difficulty in life but that we should be encouraged in the midst of that because he has overcome the world! God encourages the afflicted and listens to their cry. We seek to pass on that encouragement on to others. Through an encouraging note or email, a phone call, a gift, or an act of kindness we hope to empower others, lend courage, give strength and bless people as God has done for us. (*Psalms 10:17*; *Proverbs 12:25*; *Romans 15:4-5*; *1 Thessalonians 5:11, 15*; *Hebrews 3:13*)

Give ourselves away to the world

We look for regular ways to give away our time, money, skills and/or passions to others and the world.

The great paradox of the life and ministry of Jesus is that in losing his life he gained it, in humbling himself he was lifted up and in giving he received. We strive to follow the way of Jesus by giving to neighbors, strangers and other communities, to serve them and grow the Kingdom of God. Examples of this are regular and structured giving like tithing, financial support, mentoring a child, fixing homes or child sponsorship, as well as the spontaneous prompting of God to give of our selves. (*Matthew 20:25-28*; *John 15:12-14*; *Leviticus 23*; *Luke 12:22-34*; *2 Corinthians 9:6-11*)

Figure 4.1 Second Church's "Community Practices" webpage (c. mid-2016)

indicates that each of the church's five spiritual practices is an action that accomplishes this.¹² So "listening to God" is also, at the same time but in a more specific way, "living in the way of Jesus." The practice of "learning from God" is also, at the same time but in a more contained way, "living in the way of Jesus," etc. Again, these are not simply more or less specific goals; in the ideology that this document presents, encouraging others is also, at the same time, living in the way of Jesus.

A third layer of action, intermediate between the first two, sometimes appears in these explanations as connective tissue. For instance, "sharing a meal together provides an opportunity to grow in relationships, to build trust, and ultimately for Christ to work through us in those relationships" (second subsection). This makes the connection clear for readers: "eating together" is also one way of "building trust" (among other things), which is also one way of "living in the way of Jesus." (See above how speech act theory helps do some work to make these connections.)

A fourth layer of action, most specific, emerges in the description through day-to-day concrete terms. For instance, "having conversation over a coffee," if done in a certain way, can also be "eating with others," which can also be "growing in relationships," which can also be "living in the way of Jesus." (This accounts for my choice of something said over coffee with Nikki above.)

Second, each of Second Pres' five community practices show a **process of discernment** around them. Each one comes with a list of references from Scripture, which models a visitor's discernment about what these actions are doing by tracing their steps back to the Bible.

Finally, these community practices emphasize **freedom and creativity**: "the methods can vary" for listening to God; learning "can take a variety of forms"; eating with others is very open: "whether with one or many, whether coffee or a feast, whether serving or being served"; encouraging can be done "through an encouraging note or email, a phone call, a gift, or an act of kindness"; giving is explained with "examples."

These five spiritual practices are referenced every week at the end of Second Pres' church service (see Chapter 3). The assumptions embedded in them, as shown here, lay the groundwork for a language ideology that supports anti-racist call-and-response, and that supports receiving uncertain situations and people's critique and guidance as a rhetorical art.

■ Attention in the Examen, a spiritual practice for a time

The second set of instructions on spiritual practices regards the Examen, a spiritual practice Second Pres took on for a time. In many churches, pastors encourage congregants to meet together to read Christian books and interpret the

¹² Through these five spiritual practices, discourse (or at least, reception of discourse) is active in the practice of "listening" and "learning"; it lies latent in the practice of "eating"; it is definitely involved in "encouraging"; and it may be involved in "giving."

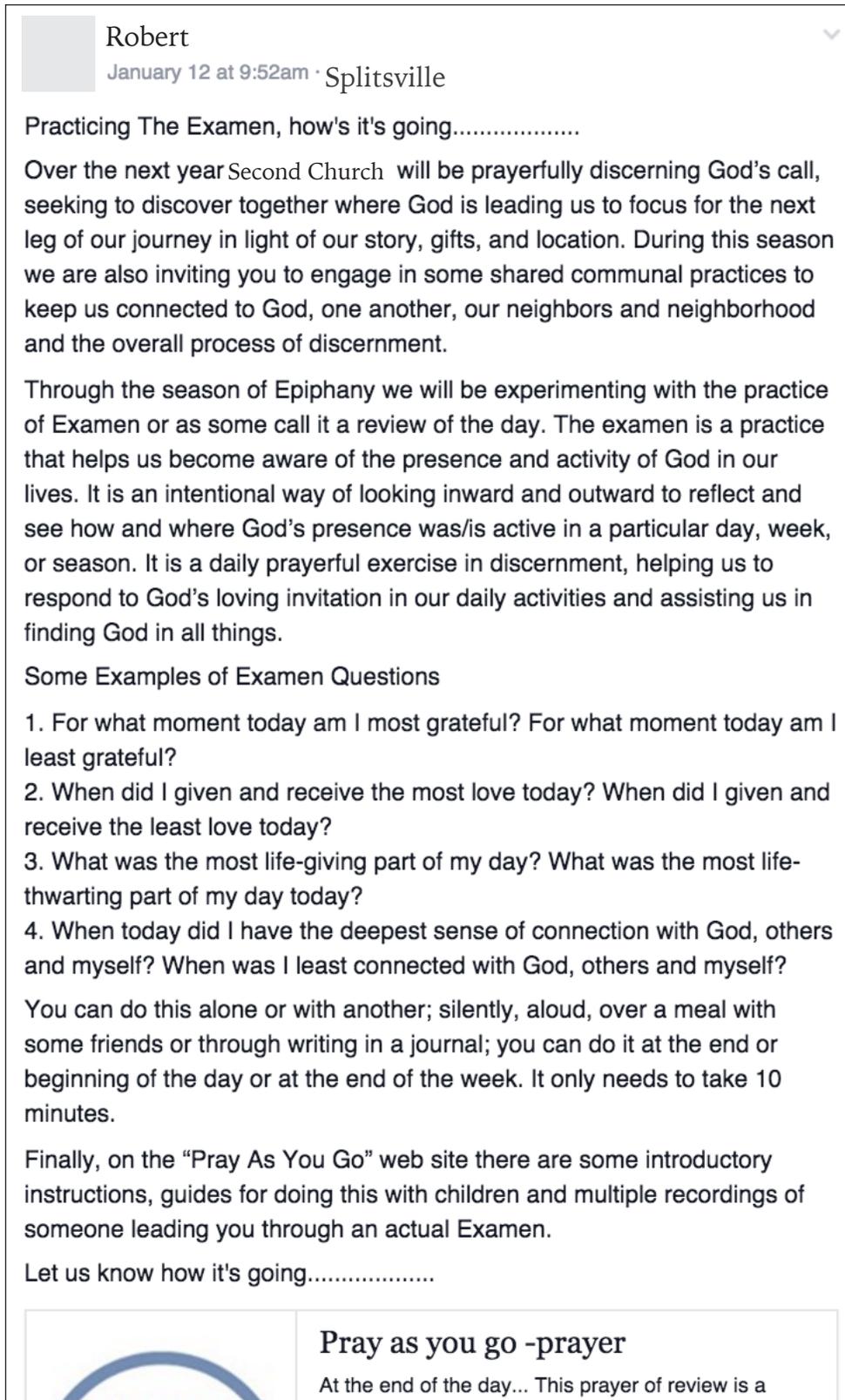


Figure 4.2. Pastor Robert explains the Examen to Second Pres over Facebook, early 2016

Bible; this increases their adherence to and understanding of Christian doctrine, and seems to straightforwardly connect to an intention-based language ideology. In contrast, Second Pres has no running studies of the Bible. Rather, every few months or so, in relation to the church year (Lent, Easter, etc.) and/or to what the church is trying to pursue (e.g. discernment; joy), Second Pres invites people into a new spiritual practice.

In this case, Pastor Robert was encouraging Second Pres as a whole to practice a reflective prayer called the Examen for a month in 2016. Second Pres adapts the Examen from St. Ignatius of Loyola, a 16th century Spanish soldier-turned-theologian who founded the Jesuits.¹³ **Figure 4.2** shows Pastor Robert on the church's active Facebook page instructing the congregation in the Examen. Whereas the web page describing the church's shared spiritual practices was written formally for possible visitors, this post is written informally for people who are already active at Second Pres.

Pastor Robert's explanation of the Examen (**Figure 4.2**) displays the same assumption that **language is concurrent action**, even when God isn't mentioned and when people aren't at church. This is "finding God in all things" (second paragraph). Similarly, he glosses the practice as a "review of the day"—everything in the day is fair game. The Examen helps us see that any evaluative term (Pastor Robert uses gratefulness, love, life-giving, and connection) can be used as a level of action that helps people conceptually bridge everyday action with some ultimate level. This is the language of virtues and vices, actions that mediate between very specific speech acts or frames of activity and very diffuse ultimate actions like "living in the way of Jesus."

Compared to the church web page, Pastor Robert's instructions here are primarily about **discerning** what actions people are doing through what they say. The Examen itself is a "daily prayerful exercise in discernment." In doing the Examen, a person surveys their discursive moments from the day and interprets their internal, reflective feelings about it (which may be different than how the moment felt at the time) as an indicator of God's judgment.¹⁴

The Examen provides a procedure for relating everyday action to spiritual reality, in the form of an open-ended, non-exhaustive set of diagnostic questions. Each question encourages a person to order their moments by a different

13 The Examen, then, is a spiritual practice borrowed from a Catholic setting. This is in line with Second Church's emphasis on spiritual practices over specific points of doctrine. Although some Protestants fiercely guard a boundary between Catholics and Protestants, practicing the Examen shows a more ecumenical spirit in which unity comes from common devotion to Christ as seen in action. It is also a nod to some congregants' more disciplined engagement with Ignatian spirituality: Second Pres has several people, such as Gwen, who are trained "spiritual directors," who work through Ignatius' spiritual practices professionally with clients who seek to grow spiritually.

14 Involved in this is the idea that spiritual action is dualistic, which we see in the binaries of the Examen questions: life-giving/life-thwarting, etc. In practice, needing to discern even the direction of an action reveals a deep distrust of people's self-rationalizations: evil actions often hide under the cover of good philosophies. As Jesus is recorded putting it to the intelligentsia of his day: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean" (Matt 23:27)

vector of experience. Pastor Robert lists four: gratefulness; love; life; and connection (see numbered questions in **Figure 4.2**). These are things for people to be watchful for in reflecting on their day. Implicit in these categories is an idea that God is continually offering these things (love, life, etc.), and therefore moments of them are relational moments of experiencing God and reflecting God's character, while moments which lack in love, connection, etc. are moments of, in some ways, rejecting God's presence and character. (That is, actions are spiritual because any human is in relationship with God as creator. Negative spiritual actions like lust, rage, greed, etc. are equally spiritual as love and mercy.) It is this belief in humans' unavoidable relationship with God that grounds the assumption that all discourse is also spiritual action. In the Examen, people are not just identifying love as a descriptor of their behavior; they are identifying that they were loving as a relational action. For any given action or moment, a person can explore spiritual possibilities relative to God, assessing their applicability to that action or moment.

Finally, Pastor Roberts hints at the necessity of **discursive creativity**. Simply because the Examen is of Catholic origin, many people need to be willing to try something new to do it. Moreover, through language of "experimenting," we see an expectation of failures and a focus on discovery. And Pastor Robert also emphasizes the practice's flexibility: "You can do this alone or with another; silently, aloud, over a meal with some friends or through writing in a journal; you can do it at the end or beginning of the day or at the end of the week. It only needs to take 10 minutes."

CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that Second Church's institutional orientation to responsiveness as it emerges through a church service (Chapter 3) is a subset of broader church teaching about the role of language for Christians, broader even than anti-racism. By analyzing church teaching about spiritual practices, we can observe an attention-based language ideology that may be helpful for people pursuing anti-racism and that may be prevalent in other liturgical or even non-Christian contexts. It is not just engaging in call-and-response, then, that helps develop a person's practice of the process of anti-racist engagement; it's also reworking what assumptions we have about interpretive language in the midst of a process of responsive anti-racist engagement.

Part III: Debriefing

Chapter 5

Rhetorical moves in anti-racist debriefing

This section of the dissertation examines anti-racist debriefing. Anti-racist debriefing is a more tightly conceived discursive scaffold for anti-racism than call-and-response, in that it directly addresses common situations when people would draw on stuckness. Regarding the three-part process of responsive anti-racist engagement taken up in this dissertation (see especially the Introduction), debriefing assumes that people are taking action, and in the process are being exposed to new ideas, situations, and people. While giving priority to those actions, people's actions and exposure are mostly "off-stage," and debriefing meetings themselves are focused on people's process of receiving what those moments have to offer. This suggests, then, that we can examine the rhetorical moves involved in such an interpretive activity, while also attending to how that interpretation feeds into people's further action.

This chapter presents anti-racist debriefing as an alternative to simply "discussing" race. This is similar to how call-and-response provides an alternative to the "conversation" metaphor for inter-racial interactions. With discussion, the fear is that it might not lead to responsive action. Sky pointed to this possibility in our September meeting, when we were talking about how we wanted the group to go.

I think there's a certain point when, even being, like, white, European descent, we talk a lot, we need to like talk a lot. We talk about what we're gonna do, and when we're gonna do it, and when we're gonna talk about when we're gonna do it, and just, like, there's—getting so stuck in this. And I think that, you know, one of the beautiful things about African American culture and many others is that community and that action.

I am hesitant to adopt a binary between talk and action, but I see Sky's concern that we would approach each others' interactions with race as topics of discussion that actually contribute to being "so stuck," rather than as places to become more capable of acting. As we designed it, anti-racist debriefing treats people's stories about race as potential problems for that person, and seeks to bring understanding and confidence to the person's future actions.

Our planning process for a group to debrief is described in Chapter 7. To anticipate those results, debriefing stood for us as a working hypothesis for how

people might seek out uncertain experiences and stay receptive in the midst of those, while also developing a capacity to act: a capacity to support people of color, defend them, root out one's own tendencies to oppress, rewrite one's bodily logics of separation and discrimination, make relationships, suffer costs, yield plans, donate time, align with people of color, and all the other communicative and material actions that might go into anti-racist enactment. Debriefing, we thought, would help people not "overthink" situations, would take people's emotions seriously and honestly while expecting them to transform, would challenge our views, would take responsibility for working on race ourselves as white people, and would help us see each other grow. Moreover, focusing on the particular, rather than the abstract, would allow for situated rhetorical insights to emerge (see Flower's idea of "critical incidents" [*Community Literacy*; "Intercultural Knowledge Building"]).

When we formed our white affinity group to debrief situations about race, we met monthly from June 2016 to the end of March 2017. At the final meeting, the seven of us white people who were present in Jim's basement closed by praying. Sky's part of the prayer is instructive for how she viewed these hypotheses about debriefing from coming into the group as having played out:

God, we just praise You

for being with us,

and for not forsaking us,

and for working through us—

through our flaws, God,

through our racism,

through our emotions,

through our stress and anxiety,

God, and just showing your power,

that none of those things can block your Spirit

from working through your people.

Even though we feel tired and broken and judgmental,

God, You, um, You can just shine, and make all those things seem small

when so often all those things seem overwhelming,

So, God, thank You for showing up in big ways,

and for increasing my faith,

in this group,

and in people,

and in the strength of letting go,

in the strength of making space.

God, thank You for the—the needs of mine

that were met by this group that I couldn't voice,

and thank You for the inspiration

that came from others' stories and others' processes

and God, thank You for the truth

that was reflected back to me, um,
 that I couldn't see myself.
 And I thank You that, um—
 that we are stronger for this experience.
 God, we are—we are stronger for the irony
 of learning how to better speak up about our weaknesses and our faults.
 To do that more quickly
 in order to be refreshed
 by saying it out loud.
 And God, I pray that, um, that we would take that with us.
 Um, and I do pray that You would illuminate the next steps for each of us
 in what activism looks like,
 and what working against racial prejudice looks like, God.
 —Not for the sake of our own egos or our own guilt,
 um, but entering into this broken society the way that Christ did.
 And God, may we lean into that and may we find life in that.
 And thank You that Easter is approaching
 and that it's just such a time for resurrection.

Sky's part of our closing prayer. Final group meeting, Mar 27, 2017

This prayer is beautiful, both theologically¹ and prosodically.² More important for this chapter, Sky also describes the rhetorical practices that our white affinity group led her and the rest of us into. Sky articulates an “irony,” or inversion of rhetorical stance, that she sees as emerging from working against racism as white people. Namely, she finds an ironic strength in the vulnerability of “letting go” and of “making space”; she experiences truth only as it’s “reflected back” to her; and she counterintuitively views speaking (about) “weakness” and “faults” as a kind of strength—in fact, she characterizes this mode of speech as actually “refreshing.” Thus, Sky’s prayer shows an orientation toward exhibiting a responsive anti-racist engagement, and her prayer suggests that our debriefing meetings helped support that responsive rhetorical stance. This anti-racist debriefing, then, would also address Yancy’s call: “How you live your whiteness and its impact upon me is the problem, which means you are the problem. Begin there, begin with you, begin with telling the truth to yourself and telling it to others” (*Backlash*, 118). This chapter asks in light of Yancy’s question, How can rhetorical debriefing help people tell the truth to themselves and to others? How can people use it to enact a responsive rhetorical stance, without being stuck? And especially, how does it create a shape for a process of responsive anti-racist

1 Sky manages to express thanksgiving, confession, discernment, supplication, and sanctification both individually and corporately, before a Trinitarian God, with attention to the church year.

2 Sky makes effective use of repetition and parallelism at multiple levels (reflected in my indenting) to aggregate terms and to create a rhythm that was easy for the rest of us listeners to join with in praying.

engagement? In doing so, this chapter introduces debriefing as this dissertation's next contribution to the theory and practice of responsive anti-racist engagement.

In Chapters 1 and 7, day-to-day situations are a common site for people to express aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism, i.e. to show a desire to respond to people of color's critiques, but paralyzing uncertainty about how to put that in place. As an intervention, then, anti-racist debriefing began for us with people's stories. The first section of this chapter analyzes the stories that people told in our group as falling into one of four broad types, to examine what kinds of ways people were getting stuck. Then, this practice of beginning with people's day-to-day stories about race is compared and contrasted to debriefing as it's used colloquially and technically. The chapter then examines three rhetorical moves that debriefing supported: representing what people did and said; actively listening; and collaboratively interpreting. Each of the three aspects is grounded in rhetorical literature on exposure, but beyond that is described descriptively within our group. This provides a jumping-off point for others who might want to facilitate rhetorical debriefing themselves. Finally, the chapter examines how people's acts of reception in the debriefing meetings themselves translated to ongoing action outside of our meeting.

It will be noticed that there is little analytic effort here to show "what people learned" in the sense of specific anti-racist actions. In part, this is because they didn't represent their own learning this way (see Chapter 6). But more importantly, this is because the underlying argument of this dissertation is that anti-racism is a process, not a set of positions or actions. Ms. Esther's call to "Just do it!" resonates here, that a specific answer isn't really the point.

STORIES ABOUT RACE AS SITES OF POSSIBLE STUCKNESS

When examining our 10 monthly white affinity group meetings, people's stories about race are front and center. In reminder emails before the meetings, I cued people to think about their recent stories. In the meetings themselves, our facilitator Nikki (who was also white, see Chapter 7) organized our time through people's stories.³ And people did tell stories about race, lots of stories, ranging from sentence-long recollections to chained stories that lasted 20 minutes or more. With four different kinds of stories identified (see below), I counted more than 450 stories told in our meetings over 10 months. For a summary of each of these, see the Appendix.

Sociolinguists have analyzed narratives with a variety of foci; this chapter

³ Of course, our group did more than tell stories with each other. We prayed, which didn't involve stories. We heard the life stories and speculations of guest black facilitators, which for the most part we didn't debrief. And our informal conversations before and after our meetings rarely resulted in debriefing, which is not to downplay the other socializing functions that they had. Debriefing, then, is just one possible mode of speech that enacts white people's anti-racist rhetorical practices of speaking so as to be shaped.

focuses on interactional aspects of storytelling (De Fina and Johnstone). As De Fina and Johnstone note, some scholars have found that the audience's response to a story can "completely change the point of [the storyteller's] story" (156). Similarly, a practice of anti-racist debriefing structures the rhetorical work that's involved in receiving people's critique and guidance.

■ "The other day, I..." stories

The broadest, most frequently told, and most intuitive type of story is "the other day I..." stories. "The other day I..." stories describe some actual experience that person had. These experiences ranged from short and simple to complex, long, and nested.⁴ To get a sense of "the other day, I..." stories, we can turn to our December meeting as an example, in which we debriefed several "the other day I..." stories. Each story's possibility for making the person stuck is also indicated:

- Jim felt very frustrated by the black tenants he had started renting to. This negative emotion aimed at black people posed a problem for him that he was seeking advice on.
- Jim and Sky attended a performance of a black man facing the police, done as an opera. Jim and Sky's feelings of being invited into a sacred space was more emotionally impactful than they had previously acknowledged.
- I felt encouraged when I went to the Splitsville-wide white anti-racist group for the first time; I sensed that I was increasingly confident in attending race-related gatherings, and I was interested in hearing if the group saw it the same way.
- A black man approached Lena, and she opened her car door to talk to him; he was surprised that she wasn't afraid of him. This encounter could have been a problem for her physical safety, and it posed a contrast to previous stories she had told in which she had not let herself be physically vulnerable around black men.
- Aviva met with her son Rufus's teacher for lunch, who was black. The teacher's stories of Rufus' black classmates were disheartening for Aviva.

These examples of "the other day, I..." stories show several things. First, "the other day, I..." stories are diverse in intensity and focus, but their possibility for being involved in the person feeling stuck often related to incorporating the experience into a coherent and publicly (within the group) acknowledged trajectory of anti-racism. Thus, among other things, "the other day, I..." stories facilitate an agenda to explore: How does this experience relate to my anti-racist goals or trajectory?, or more simply: Was this experience good or bad? Several

⁴ For instance, in February, Sky began, "Okay, um, so the short story is, I'm trying to quit my job." From this overview, she then launched into a set of seven stories lasting 25 minutes that progressed toward her resigning from her job. See Appendix

stories (e.g. Jim and Sky’s co-told race opera story) seemed to simply be waiting for ratification from the group that the experience was indeed good.

Second, “the other day, I...” stories affirm the value of a debriefing group. In the samples above, most “the other day I...” stories happened recently (i.e. the other day). Indeed, over ten months, we had no shortage of “the other day I...” stories to tell in our group meetings. That is, for the participants in our group who were intentionally taking on challenging new encounters, we regularly had firsthand racialized experiences with people of color or other white people in the course of our day-to-day activities that we wanted to talk through. We can read this as an affirmation of the value of our debriefing, and as an alert that white people who don’t have outlets to talk about race might experience a build-up of pressure from their unresolved experiences (Michael and Conger).

Finally, “the other day, I...” stories sometimes went beyond race. People occasionally disavowed—despite our group’s focus on race—that their story was about race specifically. Thus, we maintained a strong sense that everyone has many relevant identities, and that race was a useful but incomplete lens for debriefing.

■ Hypothetical stories

Hypothetical stories initiate debriefing by imagining a racially charged interaction, such that the group can test out different possible responses.

For instance, in our August meeting, Turbo presented a hypothetical story about introducing race as a conversation topic with a black person he was borderline friends with:

I feel it [thoughts on top of thoughts on top of thoughts] most in that in-between stage of a relationship. Like, you just meet somebody, you’re not gonna have a conversation about race, right? Somebody you know really well, you feel okay about it. But when you’re in that in-between, it’s like, Am I close enough for this—to this person to be transparent? Or do I need to be, like, kind of tamp down the whiteness a little bit?

Turbo’s story is not a “the other day, I...” story (i.e. he hadn’t actually talked about race with someone he’s in that “in-between” with). Instead, it’s a hypothetical story, a possible experience Turbo *could* have that he didn’t yet feel prepared for. It particularly draws on aspirational rhetoric in its expression. Should he be transparent, or should he somehow modulate his self-presentation? The hypothetical aspect of this encounter allowed the group to collectively draft a response outside of the pressure of the moment. The group’s response might also give Turbo a kind of peer editing to the breadth and depth of the two responses he imagined (i.e. transparency vs modulation).

Similarly, in our initial meeting in June, Lena used a hypothetical story to bring specificity to how her political activism could be racially restorative:

I would be able to, um, get in the offices of as many politicians as I can and say, you know, “What about this?” What about instead of letting

companies come into Splitsville and incentivize, um, affordable housing, say “You have to have this percentage or you can go somewhere else, cos we’re fine.”

Here Lena’s bold imagined talk to local legislators is open for the group’s affirmation or revision.

Thus, hypothetical stories easily create questions for debriefing of: What should I do if/when this happens? What are my range of options? In this sense, they allow for more directiveness and brainstorming than “the other day I...” stories.

■ “I heard that...” stories

“I heard that...” stories (or “I read that...”, or “I watched...”, etc. depending on the mode of reception) center on the event of learning an idea about race that feels radical. The action of the story is the experience itself of learning the idea. For example, in our July meeting Aviva described reading a critique of seeking inter-racial friendships as a white person:

I don’t remember exactly what I read, and maybe I didn’t read all of an article, maybe it was just a response or something, but there was something recent, um, where—let’s see if I can get it right, the issue was that a black person was disappointed that white people only want to have a relationship. Like, start connecting on a relationship level, but that it stops when it comes to really working for justice issues, that that’s a frustration, is that relationship is fine, but if it doesn’t result in—in pursuing justice, then it’s just maybe empty or something, I don’t know—so I don’t know if I finished the article, but do you have a response to that?

Here, the radical idea for Aviva was that it might be empty or even offensive for white people to make black friends.

For Gwen, it was radical to think that she should identify more with other white people, even racist ones:

Um, well, I think I’ve been feeling a lot of tension with like, kind of like, ‘who your people are.’ Um, so I was like, reading this thing on Facebook from like, one of my university colleagues, and she’s a black woman and she’s, like, sharing all this stuff about her ministry. And like, all the pictures, all the everything was like, black people. And I was like, you know, (()). And then like, seeing the picture something just hit me and then I’m like, “Are these my people?” And then, I was thinking about that concept and thinking about like—like, white—white racist people. And then I’m like, well, like, white people are kinda my people. Like, I think I’m just trying to grasp it all.

And for Bob, it was that he shouldn’t worry about having privilege.

I was listening to Cornell West and um, he said something in—in one of the um, like, videos that I was watching about how you’re not gonna be able to undo the privilege that you have, that um, (()) like, just the lottery of the family that you’re born into. And like, you’ve been privileged in perhaps many ways and the question is, what do you do with the

privilege? So, like, um, you've had opportunities others haven't had, and you shouldn't feel bad about that. You should feel good about it, and you should do something good with it. Um, and so that sort of for me, was a really uh, I mean it was a really good thought to entertain.

Because receiving the idea is the story itself, this type of story naturally includes some distance from the idea: Aviva marks the idea as coming from an article online; Gwen marks hers as emerging from a Facebook post; and Bob marks his as coming from listening to Cornell West. This allows the group to discuss controversial ideas without making the person feel embarrassed, as if it was an idea they necessarily agreed with themselves.

In terms of the agenda these stories create for discussion, "I heard that..." stories easily embed questions of: Is this idea (that feels radical to me) widespread? Should I embrace this idea? Is there something about it that I haven't grasped? Thus, "I heard that..." stories are particularly generative and directed to feedback. They are similar to "the other day, I..." stories in being rooted in lived experience, and they are similar to hypothetical stories in being separated from concrete future action.

■ "In general, they..." stories

Finally, "in general, they..." stories are circulating cultural narratives⁵ that don't have a beginning, middle, and end; rather, they assert a trend in how some group approaches race. They aggregate isolated experiences to conceptualize the landscape of how people approach race. In our group, while these generalizations were sometimes disagreed with, they were never taken up as something that might be causing that person to feel stuck. This makes sense; by asserting something in general, this kind of story doesn't open itself to discussion about the validity of that generalization.

Although generalizations would seem counter-productive for talking about race, "in general, they..." stories sometimes helped answer the very questions of generality brought up by "I heard that..." stories. For instance, in August, Jim shared an "I heard that..." story, in which he was shocked when a close black friend of his said, "Look, if America doesn't want black people, we'll go to the Caribbean or somewhere else where they do want black people." One of the questions embedded in Jim's story when read in terms of stuckness was the extent to which this radical position was widely shared. Anthony shared an "in general, they..." story to answer that there was indeed a strand of black separatism:

There are—I mean, replacing supremacy with supremacy is never a good thing, but there are black people I've met that do—I mean, not necessarily they won't necessarily say it outright, but that will feel like segregation

⁵ Our group even labeled them as narratives occasionally. In our July meeting while we were talking about fear, Lena generalized about white people's fears: "I think that there's a fear among white people that if—that they will lose what they have [to black people]." Mr. Sparkle agreed and called this fear a narrative: "That's exactly the narrative that's being told to them."

is—is kind of a good thing. So if—kinda the way like Jewish communities historically would use Jewish doctors and Jewish barbers and Jewish businesses. Which, I mean, goes back to an economic standpoint too, because the money just stays in that community, and that community can kind of move forward.

Here Anthony gives a delicate explanation of separatism as a distinct strand of black thought. This was useful to all of us, but particularly useful as a way for Anthony to join with Jim in interpreting his experience. Anthony limits his generalizing to “black people I’ve met” to add caution to his generalization, but contextualizes the movement as having a historical parallel with Jewish separatism and as having an economic motive.

Overall, then, different kinds of stories that people tell lead to different questions to investigate, insofar as that story is considered as potentially contributing to that person feeling stuck. We can also see that most of the situations people brought up were inter-racial; although Lena’s stories about legislative action were mostly intra-racial, and especially over the holidays there was considerable anxiety about talking with our (white) family members about race. While Jim’s stories often treated black people as the “problem,” most people’s stories centered on the appropriateness of their own response, within the context of an understanding of white privilege in which white people are the problem.

ANTI-RACIST DEBRIEFING COMPARED TO DEBRIEFING IN GENERAL

Before examining anti-racist debriefing further, it’s helpful to compare and contrast how the term debriefing is often used.

■ Debriefing in anti-racist education

In anti-racist education activities, debriefing is sometimes used following viscerally engaging activities about race, not to prevent stuckness per se, but to clarify the learning objectives.

For instance, since the late 1960s, Jane Elliott has simulated the experience of racial discrimination by separating and raising up brown-eyed students in a class over blue-eyed students. She administers discriminatory history lessons and intelligence tests to the class, and accuses the blue-eyed students of being stupid, lazy, and bad, and encourages the brown-eyed students to join in. For the blue-eyed students, who suddenly become the object of scorn and derision from Elliott, this experience of being discriminated against can be shattering, so much so that for business audiences Elliott sometimes recommends simply watching a video of the process. But the prejudice-creating activity is not a stand-alone; Elliott debriefs with the students afterward⁶ to help them assimilate.

⁶ In fact, she debriefs with them twice: first about their immediate experience, and then again after lunch related to an anti-racism film. She also gives everyone a material debriefing object, a “clear acrylic key ring in the shape of an eye, the eyeball of which is a tiny green collar identical to the one that the Blues

late their raw, embodied distress with the abstract idea that prejudice is destructive, malleable, and tempting.

Similarly, Warren Waren induces his students to frustration when he rigs the rules of Monopoly in ways that simulate the US's history of discrimination against African Americans. Waren finds that debriefing the experience with his students afterward helps them develop an embodied positive stance to affirmative action policies that they otherwise reject (33-34).

In both of these cases, debriefing complements students' unsettling experiences. When compared to our group, stories that people told sometimes began with similarly unsettling experiences, but, especially since our debriefing regarded what happened "in the wild," did not have clear learning objectives behind them. Relatedly, we were particularly conscious of Yancy's guide that remaining un-sutured means not seeking resolution or closure: "The moment that a white person claims to have 'arrived,' to be self-sufficient or self-grounded in their anti-racism, she often undergoes a surprise attack, a form of attack that points to how whiteness insidiously returns, how it ensnares, and how it is an iterative process that indicates the reality of white racist relational processes that exceed the white self" (*White Self-Criticality*, xiii). For us, then, debriefing was not about solving the uncertainty people feel, but about continuing to take action within uncertainty (contra, e.g. Lester's guide to facilitating Elliott's blue-eyed activity, "Blue Eyed").

■ Debriefing in wider usage

Debriefing has a wide colloquial range. Informally, people use "debriefing" to mean talking through something that went awry. When someone witnesses a mass shooting, they debrief the experience with a health care professional. When a pilot's mission goes wrong, the pilot debriefs the mission with their superior. And when a person's conversation with their boss doesn't go as planned, we might say that they might debrief it with a coworker.

Bisson et al. (84-87) confirm our military and therapeutic associations of debriefing by exploring the varied theoretical underpinnings of debriefing:

- the *proximity, immediacy, and expectancy (PIE) model* of managing combat stress, from WWI and WWII, in which soldiers are treated for physiological needs at the war front, immediately after their stress reaction, with the expectation of returning to their unit;
- *post-battle debriefing*, in which soldiers worked toward an internal verbal representation of the event;
- *group psychotherapy*, for communities involved in disaster;
- crisis intervention, in which people use sessions to master their emotional reaction;
- *grief counseling*, in which people re-integrate their sense of self through learning (i.e. normalizing) grief behaviors and feelings, expressing

were forced to wear during the exercise" ("A Collar in my Pocket")

- emotions, and handling physical objects of the dead person;
- *cognitive-behavioral therapies*, in which people discuss their trauma to become less distressed and minimize their avoidance of that type of event;
- *psychoeducation*, in which people are given a psychological map to help them understand their own reactions; and
- *catharsis*, from Freud's psychological theory, in which people feel better after releasing their emotions

At first glance, debriefing as Bisson et al. describe may seem more procedural than rhetorical, more accommodating to military ends than many rhetoricians would be comfortable with, and more focused on mitigating people's trauma than on deliberating public issues. Yet there are also points of connection. Militaristic origins of debriefing have now employed it for organizational learning; in the anti-racism case, debriefing might help white people similarly learn from each other, and people of color might recommend it to white people who need to get on the "front lines" of anti-racism work.

Meanwhile, the therapeutic uses of debriefing treat it as an urgent multisensory tool for personal healing. This shares many similarities with the task of responding to aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism through debriefing. Just as racism is sedimented into our thoughts, speech, habits, relationships, bodies, and more, anti-racism could be similarly multimodal, purifying multiple ways of knowing (Yancy). That said, therapeutic debriefing focuses on traumatic experiences. For our group, emphasizing stories rather than experiences was a way to keep people's hypothetical stories as a source of rhetorical learning (after all, hypothetical stories are defined by their speculative quality, defined by **not** being actual experiences). Stories are also helpful in reminding us that we are examining people's discursive constructions of their experiences, not a recorded verbatim of hardly any stories. (The exception is when something that happened within our group became a story for later group times; in some of those stories, there was significant narrative development work involved in the entextualization, see Jim's story of mayonnaise, Chapter 6). Because stories construct worlds, the anti-racist question becomes: what kind of world are we creating through our race stories? And emphasizing stories that might involve stuckness rather than traumatic stories was a way to keep mild stories, including "I heard that..." stories into our purview. This also accord with the informal use of debriefing, which treats relatively minor and mundane situations as worthy of talking through. Particularly for people newly engaged in anti-racism efforts, a style of debriefing that included minor situations would be able to pop up as needed, validating but also challenging people's everyday experiences and giving them new energy.

THREE RHETORICAL MOVES OF ANTI-RACIST DEBRIEFING

In our white affinity group, people told stories that seemed to have the possibility of creating an “agenda” for continued exploration.⁷ This has many affinities with debriefing as used in a variety of settings, although for clarity I sometimes refer to what we did as “anti-racist debriefing.” The question in this section is how people in the group explored the implicit agendas from people’s stories so as to go beyond just “discussing” a story. Specifically, this section is organized around three rhetorical moves that apply what scholars of race have suggested is essential for white people seeking to be against racism, as well as extend prior arguments made in this dissertation:

1. Represent what you did and what it stirred up for you
2. Actively listen to others in the group
3. Collaboratively interpret how to apply or stay vulnerable to uncomfortable situations and people’s critique and guidance

Overall, then, these moves instantiate the “reception” part of a process of responsive anti-racist engagement.

■ 1. Represent what you did and what it stirred up for you

This representational feature of debriefing brings group members’ prior action and exposure into the debriefing meeting itself. People’s representation of events is an important feature to investigate, since stories are constructive, and there is a lot of choice about how to represent the situations people were in. Specifically, this feature draws on the idea from scholars of race and whiteness that privileged people need to especially hear from people of color (see Chapter 2).

Thus, several ways to represent interactions with/about people of color are explored: reporting people of colors’ speech and action; repeating anti-racist perspectives; and taking on a person of color’s perspective. In the process of representing a situation or interaction, this can sometimes be a moment of being exposed to something new for the people in the meeting. This reminds us that debriefing meetings are not just interpretive, or focused on “receiving,” but can also be part of “showing up” and being exposed to something new. In other words, representing is also sometimes communicating to others something that they might need to receive.

A. Reporting people of colors’ speech and action

One way we represented the voices of people of color was simply through reporting their speech and action. In “I heard that...” stories especially, black peo-

⁷ “Agenda” is more formal than we treated it. That said, especially as people from a church denomination known for its stiffness, we did approach debriefing with certain schemas that made it similar to a meeting. For instance, we treated the group meetings as though everyone should have a chance to share. When the group began, I initially declared that this was not an appropriate schema, but as our meetings progressed, we slid into it. Nikki would gently ask for other stories from the group if debriefing one person went on too long. She also occasionally solicited stories from people specifically, which, in light of this schema, could be seen as remediating their reticence. Group members participated in this schema too when they inferred a turn order as following a predictable pattern, e.g. “going around the circle.”

ple's reported voices and actions formed the crux of participants' stories. Similarly, "the other day, I..." stories often focused on what black people said or did. For instance, in our September meeting, Lena told us about attending a protest where business leaders schemed how to skirt oil and gas regulations. However, (then Presidential candidate) Trump was speaking at the summit, and so other groups like Black Lives Matter protesters attended as well and helped broaden it to an anti-Trump rally. Lena was disturbed by how the Black Lives Matter people were taunting the police: "I was really—was upset. Maybe I shouldn't be upset, but." By representing what her actions were and how upset the protesters made her, Lena would have the chance through our debriefing to reconsider and reflect on the political tactics of the Black Lives Matter protesters.

Other times we represented the voices of people of color as an answer or response to people's stories. For instance, in debriefing Lena's story above, Nikki recalled how at church Mr. Sparkle had shared his own interaction with that very protest. Mr. Sparkle was riding the bus when they ran into the protest and perceived it to be a Black Lives Matter protest. Many of the white people on the bus were grumbling about how inconvenient it was, including some coworkers who were with him. So, as Nikki told it to us, Mr. Sparkle told them off: "I'm black, does my life matter? If you answer yes, then you understand Black Lives Matter. If you answer no, then you've rejected everything that I am." Nikki's point in our debriefing session was that even if Black Lives Matter overtook the protest Lena wanted to attend, some good came out of it. And here we see a complex and accelerating circulation of Mr. Sparkle's admonition that shows how debriefing involves being shaped by people who aren't present. Mr. Sparkle originated his line to rebuke the white people around him on the bus. He then repeated it as a story to the mostly black church of First Church. Nikki was now bringing it up to Lena, and Anthony mentioned that he had also "used this story with my students today" (transforming it into a lesson or primer that can be "used"). Representing and circulating Mr. Sparkle's story, then, was a way for us to be receptive to what he thought of Black Lives Matter specifically—namely, to affirm its mission. Moreover, circulating his story provided us with a new heuristic for receiving social movement generally: "I'm black, does my life matter?", where the "I" is rooted in some personal relationship. In this heuristic, relationships themselves are persuasive. For a white person to get to know someone like Mr. Sparkle, then, is to develop a kind of ethos appeal, in which a person makes themselves more able to be persuaded, through coming to see the other person as more trustworthy, kind, human, etc.

B. Repeating the anti-racist perspectives we had internalized

We also had the opportunity to be responsive to people who weren't present in the meetings when we represented the anti-racist perspectives we had internalized from people of color. This was a chance to repeat what we had learned, making it our own. Such representation interpreted and transformed people's

stories.

Representing anti-racist perspectives was often implicit. For instance, when I met with Jim and Sky to bring them into the project, Jim recalled receiving a free trip in high school to visit the founder of Segway and to see his helicopter, as a prize for being part of an award-winning (and very well funded) robotics team. Jim commented on this by saying, “I’m privileged, I’m privileged, I’m privileged. Uh, and—and that’s not fair, either.” Jim’s repetition of “I’m privileged” seemed to be an implicit expression of how much he had internalized the anti-racist principle that as a white male at a wealthy school he was the beneficiary of unjust gain.

Similarly, in October, Bob told us that he was taking a new step by teaching his design students non-Western and feminist perspectives on futurism. To ground this step, he observed, “I’ve just been thinking about different cultures, um, and like, as a—a—a white, Western male that’s in the front of the classroom teaching about Western traditions and all that, because that’s what I know, um, I’ve just really wondered, like, um, I feel like I’m sorta colonizing people’s minds with these ideas.” Bob doesn’t explicitly mark these critiques of the Western tradition as coming from people of color, but he shows that he has internalized them and is using them to prompt pedagogical change.

C. Taking on people of color’s perspective

Finally, interrelated with the above aspects, we sometimes treated the representational work of debriefing itself as that of taking on a new perspective. For instance, in our August meeting, I shared that I had had a difficult time receiving Mr. Sparkle’s advice, because it seemed to deal in stereotypes and not be very attentive to our debriefing needs. Jim re-presented this story for me by reminding me that Mr. Sparkle had his own discursive goals: “He was a human that was venting.” “Human” emphasizes our commonality as emotional beings, suggesting that, just as we had vented about race as white people, Mr. Sparkle had been venting about race as a black person. I would be more sympathetic, Jim was suggesting, if I took on Mr. Sparkle’s perspective.

The literature suggests that taking on people of color’s perspective is a problematic stance if taken too far, a case of “ontological expansiveness” (Sullivan), in which white people assume that any experience or space is available to them. As Yancy glosses it regarding an audience member at one of his readings, “In some sense, he wanted to ‘inhabit’ the narrative space of black pain and suffering that I had delineated” (*White Self-Criticality*, xx). However, this critique is less clear-cut when a white person extrapolates from their own experience to wonder at what people of color feel. This is a representational strategy of doubling their affect.

For instance, in July, Aviva shared a story about grocery shopping (finally—Ms. Di, Ms. Esther, and Kim’s prototypical inter-racial encounter!). Trying to get in line to check out, she saw a black man in front of her. Unsure whether

he was in line or not, Aviva smiled at him politely and stood behind him. For some reason, then, he began unleashing on her. “What is it with you white people?” Aviva recounted. He was very upset, cursing a lot and going on and on about white people’s history of oppression. Of the many black and white other shoppers, no one intervened in this bizarre outburst, and it wasn’t until he finished checking out that he stopped berating her and left. This encounter “really shook” Aviva, to the point where she hadn’t even mentioned it to me until Mr. Sparkle prompted us in our group, even though she and I had met before this group meeting to plan.

Aviva had already done representational work in telling the story to describe going to the store, how shook up the encounter left her, and the anti-racist principles that the guy was expounding. In Aviva’s timing and telling of the story, it seems to have made her stuck in a way that might be significant for her future behavior. That is, many people would come away from this story feeling less able to engage with black people, worried that they would be attacked like she had been.⁸ But the representational work was not yet finished. Mr. Sparkle somewhat awkwardly suggested he might go to the store with her and beat the guy up sometime. This was a bid to minimize the man’s words and cast them as inappropriate. But Aviva adopted a different path of representing her story by doubling her affect. “What I took away from it in the end was, that’s—I’ve never been a point—I’ve never been singled out because of my color.” Aviva’s bad treatment, then, was simply a moment of not being privileged. Continuing Mr. Sparkle’s observations from earlier in the meeting, Aviva suggested that she was joining what just about everyone of color felt: “Whereas how many black people can say they’ve been singled out because of theirs [i.e. their race]? Just about everyone has probably been targeted.” Thus, Aviva integrates her shame, embarrassment, and anger as a faint double of the shame, embarrassment, and anger that people of color feel when they are mistreated.

The power of doubling affect *qua* anti-racism comes from its corresponding theory that anti-racism involves being willing to suffer. This is a less glamorous side to anti-racism than helping others. It means being willing to share the burden of racism oneself: to share in graciously bearing people’s critical generalizations, as in Aviva’s reframing. Doubling affect, then, does not equate white people’s mistreatment in intensity, prevalence, or duration to that of people of color. But it is an identification with people of color; they are a tutor in pain, an elder sibling whose encouragement can transform a person’s story.⁹

8 In fact, while for Aviva this was a moment of receiving what that experience had to offer, for some of us in the group it was potentially a moment of being exposed to something new. Here stories in the debriefing group are not just interpretive, but also communicative.

9 There is considerable theological grounding for doubling affect. A full examination of this is beyond the scope of this chapter, but one Bible passage shows how central this theme is for Christians historically: “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Jesus’ words as recorded in Matthew 5:11-12). In this famous beatitudes passage, Jesus frames suffering persecution as a spiritual blessing insofar as it doubles what holy proph-

■ 2. Actively listen to others in the group

Along with the following third feature (of collaborative interpretation), active listening describes how debriefing is interactive. That is, anti-racist debriefing goes beyond journaling and other solo reflection. This aspect also contributes to interactional analyses of narratives, in which “participants may influence the telling of a story in fundamental ways” (De Fina and Johnstone, 156).

Our group facilitated active listening by maintaining very strong rapport with each other. That is, our general interpersonal trust with each other may have supported trusting each other’s advice, wisdom, comments, etc. When our group began, Jim and Sky had just begun dating, and a few months after our group ended they got engaged. Nikki and Anthony were newly married, and became pregnant a few months after our meetings finished. I felt like I had good friendships with everyone. Most of the participants went to church together, and even though Nikki and I didn’t, we had been partnering with Second Pres through the Familyfield Community Farm for years. Moreover, as Christians, everyone had the theological expectation that being intimate and vulnerable with each other would be a way to encounter God’s truth and grace (see Aviva’s comments on grace in Chapter 7; see also the theological parallels to anti-racism, Chapter 4).

It is particularly in telling stories vulnerably that we see the pain of vulnerability. The height of this came in November. Nakita and Kim, two young black women from First Church, were guest moderators, and at the end of our meeting Kim very directly evaluated each person’s stories. She was particularly harsh toward Jim, critiquing a story he told about distrusting the black people who applied to work for him: “I feel really bad that you just said that.” Later, Jim told me he felt shut down during the meeting, and that he was considering not attending the January meeting even though it was at his house. Although neither he nor I made the connection at the time, I suspect he was referring to Kim’s criticism. If so, this episode would show the limits and challenges of vulnerability. In our meeting Jim had shared with great openness but had been rebuked. His vulnerable stance in this case resulted in him being wounded. Vulnerability is to be feared as well as desired.¹⁰ This case also shows how vulnerability is a layered process rather than a simple state. If Jim had withdrawn from the January meeting, he would’ve shut himself off from that wound specifically and the possibility of more of them. Thus, his response of continuing to attend after this incident creates more vulnerability and adds a second layer: of staying vulnerable to his earlier vulnerable moment.

Vulnerability, then, goes hand-in-hand with emotional intelligence. When people exceed their capacity for painful interactions, they can withdraw and

ets experienced earlier. Similarly, doubling affect in our context means framing some negative experiences as themselves anti-racist rhetorical acts.

¹⁰ This can go both ways; Kim’s reproach is in fact an expression of her own woundedness from Jim’s transparency (see also #3, on collaborative interpretation)

avoid similar situations in the future. Thus, white people have to monitor not only their own feelings of discomfort, but also their capacity for staying in that discomfort. As Roubos and DiAngelo both explore, this is a skill that white people often lack regarding race. Anti-racist debriefing, like clinical debriefing, uses temporal and spatial distance from the event to lower the discomfort that people feel in being critiqued.

To show how people actively listened, creating/revealing¹¹ vulnerability at a practical level in our meetings, we can see a variety of rhetorical strategies that people used. Again, the claim here isn't that these are all effective strategies, but that they may be. One function of qualitative research is to create a set of observations based on actual behavior that can be affirmed or qualified by future research; these should be seen as starting points for understanding the rhetorical moves associated with responsive anti-racist engagement.

A. Receiving people's feedback on a story

People actively listened by receiving others' feedback. These instantiate the aspect of not being defensive in "receiving."

One simple strategy for receiving people's feedback was **affirming the wisdom of what other people say**. For instance, in our October meeting Nikki offered that Jim might be frustrated by his mentee because his mentee was only 18, not because he's black. Jim responded by affirming this: "Yeah, absolutely." At other points, too, we affirmed the wisdom of other people's comments, "That's kind of exactly where I am," Aviva replied in August to Turbo's sympathetic comment about her feeling stuck. Most of the time, we showed that we were receiving other people's wisdom through short "Yeah" or "Mm" comments, or through nodding or other nonverbals.

A more specialized version of affirming people's wisdom is to **accept reformulations**. For instance, in October, when Sky described her classroom emotional support job at length, Aviva added to this by framing it in terms of power: "Even to be a person of authority over a black family is—" Sky immediately affirmed this aspect: "Exactly! Exactly. Yeah, exactly." But then Sky also incorporated that into her continuing thoughts. She rehearsed telling parents that "This is what I'm getting from your kid, but ultimately I'm trying to give you back the power." Sky's uptake of Aviva's power frame showed Sky's openness to being impacted by others in the debriefing process.

B. Sharing a story in a vulnerable way

A less intuitive way to actively listen regards how a person tells a story itself.

11 Following Levinas, scholars argue that an individual only comes into being through a prior community (Davis; Lipari; Sturgess; Arnett; see Chapter 2); rhetorical action is thus predicated on a responsiveness to those people. These scholars argue for "the 'individual's' irreparable openness to affection/alteration" (Davis, 4). Debriefing in an intimate and vulnerable way, then, is in a sense a discursive choice, but these scholars argue that it is also a revelation of fundamental vulnerability to each other.

Because someone's encounter with a person of color is not inherently "stuck" or "unstuck" (i.e. stuckness is an aspect of people's experience, not an aspect of the event itself), participants in the group must (imperfectly) dynamically assess whether a person's story is contributing to them feeling stuck or not.

Pausing after a story was a surprisingly effective way for people to open themselves up to feedback. It was easy to tell a story and add unending self-commentary, or to smush multiple stories back-to-back under an implicit theme of summarizing the month more completely,¹² something I in particular fell prey to. But if people in the group tell a story and don't let anyone get a word in edgewise, they also aren't actively listening (i.e. they aren't creating the opportunity to hear people's advice). Pausing after a story gave the conversational space (Johnstone, 108) for people to ask questions or offer their own commentary. Pausing was thus a way to yield control of the story, to make the story an intimate, collaborative effort (this contrasts with the feminist approach to silence as resistive, Glenn, "Silence"; Glenn, *Unspoken*; Glenn and Ratcliffe).

Another way to actively listen through sharing a story was to show **hesitation** in interpreting a crucial part. For instance, in our very first meeting Turbo introduced a hypothetical story and commented: "I kinda wanna be the guy who has conversations with my black friends or acquaintances, like, 'Hey, you're black, tell me about being black.' And then I don't wanna be that guy at the same time." Similarly, in our September meeting, Gwen summarized her story by saying, "So I think I've been struggling with that a little." Showing interpretive hesitation creates vulnerability; it's one of the ways that people can tell that someone wants the story to be debriefed, rather than just sharing it to go along with something someone else said.

Another storytelling move was to **confess** some reaction or response. This wasn't common in our group, partly because often our stories were positive, or murky. Confession also has deep theological meaning involving repentance and forgiveness that we didn't often try to tackle and that scholars have criticized (Applebaum). And confessions in general are fraught with power dynamics and the production of truth (see, e.g. Foucault: "Western man has become a confessing animal" [59]). They should therefore be viewed with caution. In our group, when a person admitted that something they did was wrong, it created high vulnerability: not only were they disclosing that they did something

12 For instance, in our final meeting, we had the additional task of summarizing our journeys over the course of the whole ten months: "What's next for you? How has this group related to your story regarding race?" This was a chance for people to articulate how they had been affected by the group, to show how they had let the group in. Lena struggled significantly with this. She told a lengthy recap of a black history event she had attended to hear former Black Panthers. I eventually redirected her, "So stepping back for a minute, what's next for you? How has this group—" She interjected to come back to her book, eventually turning to a long explanation of how she wants to try to crack the code of racism, capitalism, and environmental destruction. Eventually, Nikki jumped in and turned the floor over to Gwen. In this sequence, Lena's laundry list of her recent activities shows a lack of ability to articulate how she might have been changed by those experiences or by us. Lena was unable in the moment to demonstrate her vulnerability. (This doesn't indicate that the group itself was meaningless for her; she shared from a more vulnerable perspective on the car ride after the meeting with me, see Chapter 6.)

that could be seen negatively, they were admitting that it was wrong and that it was something that they didn't stand by. For instance, Jim would often candidly admit that many of his reactions and responses to black people were "racist." To the extent that this was a vulnerable move (rather than a re-suturing as scholars fear), it invited us to respond to Jim with fresh mourning at our latent, unwanted racist feelings, thoughts, and desires.

Finally, people actively listened in their story-telling by **sharing their emotions** from the situation they were in. Sharing emotions can open one up to feedback because it reveals how we are affected by a situation, and because if emotions are considered private, then it's an intimate act to share them. Gwen used this strategy extensively. For instance, in September, she said she was "feeling pretty raw." In October, Jim described a teenage guy who was his house-flipping mentee, and how "draining" their interactions were.¹³

■ 3. Collaboratively interpret how to apply or stay vulnerable to uncomfortable situations and people's critique and guidance

Collaborative interpretation is a way to respond to people's stories regarding their future action: what can/might/will that person do in the future? (As above, this feature of debriefing is inherently interactive. Thus, there is a dependence here on drawing in others to help interpret. Rhetors, or in this case group members telling a story, can "Run it up the flagpole and see who salutes. Put on a show and see who shows up" [Warner]. Similarly, audiences, in this case others in the group helping to interpret, are constituted through their response [Charland].) Following on people's representational move in debriefing (above), collaborative interpretation often involves trying to apply advice or critique that the storyteller was exposed to. For instance, when Lena told an "I heard that..." story in which she represented that "black" might be the appropriate term these days rather than "African American," the rest of the group's collaborative interpretation involved trying to apply and see the scope of this. One way to do this is to add related stories. For instance, Aviva helped collaboratively interpret Lena's story by adding a story herself, that when she was growing up, the appropriate term was African American. And Nikki also added a related story about seeing tension between immigrants from African ("African Americans"?) and black Americans ("black"?). This section also explores other ways that group members collaboratively interpret, such as prompting someone for more details, affirming or evaluating people's responses, and giving advice. Finally, this section shows how collaborative interpretation extends rational thought/beliefs to people's bodily, affective, and spiritual habits and how they interact with non-human actants.

¹³ This vulnerable rhetorical stance has been explored in psychology and other fields, see e.g. Pennebaker on "opening up" and Gilbert on "compassion focused therapy."

A. Adding related stories

The most common way people collaboratively interpreted was to add a related story. Additional stories showed that the person could relate to what someone was saying. They indirectly provided alternative responses to a similar situation, supplied evidence for an observation that a person made, and added nuance to the feelings expressed in the original story.

For instance, in our December meeting, Jim told an initial story in which he bluntly confessed that he called job applicants back more readily if they had white-sounding voices: “After being fucked over by a bunch of black-sounding voices, I call back the white-sounding voices. You know, like, and that is racism. That’s prejudice. That’s judging ‘em.” We all responded to this with many strategies, but Nikki wanted to complicate Jim’s desire that black people speak Standard English. She did this via additional an additional story: an “I read that...” story in which she recalled reading about a Kenyan guy who started wearing white people’s clothes—jeans, a white polo with a small logo, a gym bag—to become rich. Nikki acknowledged that his form of accommodation was successful: “he made it so far, because that is breaking down the barriers and making white people feel comfortable, you know?” But she also lamented, with the weight of her own year spent living in Rwanda, the man’s loss of his own cultural values to be colorful: “the little white shirt—that image just always stuck out in my head, so much of just—which is so sad, getting rid of all that color for that.” Nikki’s added story complicated Jim’s position without directly rebuking him, and her story had the added benefit for the rest of us of learning the experiential roots of her position.

B. Other ways group members collaboratively interpret

Although stories were the richest form of response to someone’s unresolved story, they were associative and implicit, not directive or analytical. Other ways that we responded to people’s stories flesh out how people collaboratively interpreted someone’s story:

- As our facilitator, Nikki was often the one to **prompt people for more details**. Sometimes this directed the person’s story, e.g. “So, do you see that as a very separate thing, like, um, African American vs. other races?” Other times we prompted someone for more details to clarify or add to the movement of the story, e.g. “That’s a big family, too, right?”, “This happened during the event at Second Pres or was pre-Second Pres?” “You said you have a picture of the painting?”
- One way to join debriefing was to **affirm or explicitly evaluate others**. As our facilitator, Nikki did this regularly: “Yeah, that’s great”; “Nice”; “That’s huge.” She also affirmed people as a kind of closing move for that person’s debriefing time: “Good”; “Thumbs up”; “Thanks for sharing.” Others joined in on this occasionally. In December, when Lena described encouraging a black man in his parent-

ing and opening her car door to talk to a black man (to his surprise), Aviva commended her boldness: “Well, those are good stories, Lena. I’m sitting here thinking that I’m just—I’m not quick to react with confidence the way you reacted to that man [...] I feel like, I don’t know, you’re a role model for me.” (Lena, for her part, responded modestly: “Well I—one thing that’s nice about getting older is you do sorta sometimes get to set the stage [for encounters].”)

- Occasionally, in a risky strategy, people would respond to others by using humor, including sarcasm. For instance, in February, Gwen told us an “I heard that...” story in which a white man was at a bar with two Indian men and went home to get his gun so he could go back and shoot them. Jim commented wryly, “Those fucking white people, you know?” Seen positively, Jim’s joke pointed to contradictions in our identities (as oppressive white people versus as people who want justice and peace). In doing so, it allowed Gwen to move past the tragic news item to the focus of her story, which was about whether to bring up the story to an Indian mentee she was meeting with. But humor could also derail a person’s debriefing or not connect with the listeners. (In this case, several of us laughed at Jim’s joke but Gwen ignored it.) In another case in December, Lena described pulling over and getting into a ten minute conversation with someone panhandling. As a counterpoint to this touching story of connection, Jim inserted a humorous reference to his ongoing frustration with black people who stop traffic: “I’m sitting behind you honking.” In this case, we all laughed.
- Another, more directive approach, was to **give advice for the future**. For instance, in February, Nikki recommended that instead of endlessly coordinating to meet up with Terron, I should just stop by his house unannounced sometime. I balked at what sounded to me like an incredible imposition, but she stuck with it as a cultural norm for black people: “It’s not weird.”
- Finally, there was one moment when we entered into debriefing with someone in a way that seemed to **protect them**. At the end of our November meeting, one of our guest black moderators Nakita questioned Gwen specifically: “I want to make sure I’m not misunderstanding you. But do you feel like there’s an obligation for you to, like, use behavior and apologize for what has happened in history?” From my perspective Gwen’s “Um...” in response made us think she might feel cornered. At the least, Anthony, Jim, Sky, and Nikki all added on to Gwen’s response to create a nuanced collaborative answer. In line with Nakita’s critical question, we all denied holding an inert white guilt, but we did, in line with Gwen’s learning over the last few months, affirm holding a sense of collective responsibility and accepting that

white people who came before us had left us a legacy that was important for us to intervene in. By joining in, we seemed to be pooling our responses, staying vulnerable toward Nakita but also collaboratively interpreting with Gwen how to answer Nakita's question.

Collaborative interpretation thus sometimes merged who was debriefing and who was being debriefed. That is, this aspect in our group reduced what might in other debriefing situations be a strong directionality to debriefing. For instance, one story described more below shows that after we had debriefed Lena's and Gwen's stories about whether to call people "black" or "African American," I later reported that our conversation helped an encounter I had.

Our group tended to come alongside others in specific ways that other research can examine the effectiveness of; in general, we were pretty indirect, and almost never issued imperatives. We tended to talk from our own experience, which I saw as a way for people to respect each other's individual journeys, and to be able to share more stories overall.

Overall, adding stories and joining into a person's interpretive process in other ways enacted the assumption in debriefing that extended, collaborative interpretation can help people not stay stuck.

C. Collaborative interpretation extends rational thought/beliefs to people's bodily, affective, and spiritual habits, and how they interact with non-human actants

Finally, although "interpretation" is often focused on what people think and believe, our anti-racist debriefing practice extended collaborative interpretation to group members' bodily, affective, and spiritual habits, as well as to how people interacted with non-human actants. As rhetoricians have recently explored, affect creates complex and unpredictable relationships between people, things, and ideas (Rand; Rice; Pruchnic and Lacey; Ott). Similarly, rhetoric scholars have begun to focus on materiality (Rickert), and place (Middleton, et al.). This scholarship, in other words, suggests that an overreliance on cognitive heuristics for anti-racism can avoid confronting the true sources of people's racial uncertainty and discomfort.¹⁴

In our group, Sky and Gwen were particularly in touch with the more-

¹⁴ For instance, one time I perceived us as jettisoning the more-than-rational was when we were debriefing one of Lena's stories. Mr. Sparkle, our guest black facilitator, had solicited times when we had been personally hurt or intimidated by someone of color. This was a challenging question for us since it inverted the usual focus on people of color being hurt. Lena prefaced her story by saying she felt "embarrassed about this, but I'm just going to tell you anyway, because I feel like I didn't react properly." Then she described feeling intimidated by a bunch of young black guys who crossed the street in front of her as she was driving. Not wanting to be trapped if they circled her car, she revved her engine, beeped, and swerved around them. In responding, Mr. Sparkle treated this story as a type of argument, saying, "Let me give you a personal experience from the other side." His recollection amounted to the admonition "Don't be afraid of guys just because they're black." As I perceived it, this was true but not helpful. Lena's story clearly dealt with more than rational components; collaboratively interpreting with her so she could respond in the future would have involved addressing those emotions, perceptions, split-second judgments, and guilty aftermath.

than-rational. For instance, in our very first meeting as a group, Gwen identified her own goals as self-discovery: “I’d like to just kind of be more aware of what’s going on inside of me with these experiences, and, uh, like, uncovering things that I have buried down in there.” Here Gwen portrays her own feelings as somewhat foreign to her. Collaborative interpretive work of her interactions with people at First Church’s food bank would be a daring exploration—excavation even—of her emotions and self-understanding. (This resonates with what George Yancy describes as “dispossession”: “if they were to go in search of who they are as white, they would find themselves at a great distance” [*White Self-Criticality*, xxiii].)

Similarly, in our late October meeting, Sky talked about her work difficulties for several minutes, until Nikki asked her what spiritual practices sustain her at work. As an initial read, we can note that this move explicitly promotes spiritual attention as an important counterbalance to her “draining” unresolved racial stories (see also Chapter 4 for a language ideology of attentiveness). What Nikki’s question also does is focus collaborative interpretive attention to spiritual habits. Sky responded with a whole range of ways that she experiences God around her work, including a practice of “finding the sky,” in which feeling small in comparison to the sky reminds her of God’s provision for her and her dependence on God. Nikki’s question didn’t tell Sky anything she didn’t already know or believe, and it didn’t solve her work stress; rather, her question aimed at a holistic transformation of Sky’s experience, in which Sky was better able to receive at a spiritual level what her work was exposing her to.

Turning to nonhuman actants, most of the stories we debriefed included a setting and some kind of action (what Labov would call “orientation” and “complicating action,” Johnstone and De Fina [154]). In that sense, our group gave representational effort to nonhuman actants. These locations included Uber rides, gas stations, grocery stores, work sites, phones, and online places. In our August meeting, we had a brief discussion of whether certain neighborhoods in Splitsville were dangerous (and if they were, whether we should talk about them as such as white people or not). This is a racially attentive version of the recent rhetorical trend to examine places (Middleton et al.; Tell). Many of the places we mentioned were *chora* (Rickert), i.e. they were not just places, but had activities (like shopping, or filling up gas) embedded in them that exerted their own forces.

In our meetings themselves, we attended to nonhuman actants such as: alcohol that Jim consumed before some of our meetings; food that we brought to our final meeting; the layout of Jim’s basement as it affected getting comfortable during meetings; and death (the ultimate in nonhuman actants), especially as it sent Aviva into a depression when her mother died early in September. These shaped our stories and our experience of the time. Personally, when I think about our times I picture myself in formal clothes (partly because I often came from teaching, partly to acknowledge to myself that I was in work mode as a

researcher). I remember the room as relatively dark, and I think of getting pretty antsy at the end of each meeting because I usually sat on the floor and would get stiff. The non-human aspects of our meetings were never brought up in our meetings as a factor for collaborative interpretation, but they may also have had a more diffuse impact.

FROM RECEIVING TO TAKING FURTHER ACTION

Anti-racist debriefing involves several rhetorical moves to help people “receive,” and that reception was expected to flow out into people’s lives and corresponding action. Thus, if a responsive process of anti-racist engagement is really a process, we would expect that people working on the “receiving” part of that process through a debriefing meeting would result in people continuing to “act” in more confident and transformative ways outside that meeting.¹⁵ There are methodological challenges to seeing people’s action outside of the meeting (since I only recorded the meetings themselves), but one way through that is to look at times in the meetings that people represented our prior debriefing as significant for their current action. Overall, this section reminds us that debriefing engages with all parts of this dissertation’s process of responsive anti-racist engagement. Three further actions are described, to correspond with each of the types of stories that people told that sometimes caused them to be stuck.

■ Taking further action after debriefing “I heard that...” stories

“I heard that...” stories turn receiving an idea into an event; they thereby invite collaborative interpretation about the popularity of that idea. We would expect, then, that after debriefing an “I heard that...” story, people would be able to later engage with the substance of that idea, not just its presence. (In other words, future interactions with that idea wouldn’t remain “I heard that...” stories, but would be transmuted to “the other day, I...” stories.)

One time we saw this was in December, when Aviva told us about talking to her son’s (black) teacher. The teacher told Aviva about how some of the black students’ families will, in Aviva’s words, “bring kids down.” Aviva and Jim recalled that we had talked about this very topic at length as a group before. These prior debriefing times had focused on *why* some black people might be culturally opposed to moving up in American society: to protect themselves from false promises, since white people might prevent black people from actually succeeding; to maintain family/cultural bonds, since someone moving up might make them feel distant and unrelatable; or as Mr. Sparkle suggested, to just be sticks-in-the-mud, resisting success out of ignorance. With this in the background,

¹⁵ In other words, people need not stay in stuckness, but continue acting within uncertainty (Ore; Coogan; Ryder; Prebel; Barlow). Participants in our group agreed. As our facilitator Nikki put it to me after all our meetings had concluded, “For me, it was really about what the person perceived and, ‘Okay, how are we gonna respond as a group in a way that affirms this person, to help them, like, grow in the way they want to grow?’”

Aviva didn't agonize over her son's teacher's idea. This time in December, Aviva didn't tell it as an "I heard that..." story. Rather, through explicit recourse to our prior debriefing, Aviva accepted that some students' families do bring their kids down and focused her response on trying to support black people being in prominent positions: "This is what I actually wrote on my [comment card] [for the black social justice opera singers]: 'Can you get in the public schools?' Not that this is an opt- —not that they have to sing opera, but that there is a wider world to them than what they're either being told at home or what they've seen. And that's not for every kid, but." Aviva, then, let us in on how debriefing facilitated new action, such that in this case she is encouraging new interventions to support black people's flourishing with a recognition of a complex idea of some people bringing kids down.

As another example, in October I recounted spending an afternoon hanging out with Terron at his grandma's house, where various family members would come and go. I reported that at one point while we were eating, Terron's aunt said, "You know what's racist? White people calling us African American" (in her mind, "I'm not 'African,' I'm 'black'"). This could have been an "I heard that..." story about me feeling paralyzed and uncertain how to react to such a statement as the only white person in the room. But I said to the group, "actually that was one of those points, where I was—I was reflecting in my journal, 'Felt pretty comfortable. We have talked about that ["black" vs. "African American"], actually.'" Here debriefing someone's story earlier¹⁶ transformed my new experience from a potentially stuck situation into a humorous "the other day, I..." story. I even drew the contrast explicitly, "So, I think former Will definitely would've been alarmed at that." The receptive part of anti-racist debriefing had led me into more confident new action.

■ Taking further action after debriefing "the other day, I..." stories

"The other day, I..." stories describe something that happened recently. Debriefing that followed often examined and affirmed the response that the person took. We would expect, then, that if such a story was contributing to a person's stuckness, new action following debriefing would consist of having the confidence to keep digging into what they're doing.

One time we saw this in Sky's explanation of her actions. In November, Sky told us about going to work the day after Trump was elected. Summarizing partly for our guest facilitators Kim and Nakita's sake, Sky said her general policy when students accuse her of voting for Trump is "I don't respond." However, "we brought it up in the group, um, I talked about it in the group, and

16 It is notable that it was actually someone else's story that led to us debriefing "black" versus "African American" earlier. This shows how collaborative debriefing can be: I felt like I was the beneficiary of our debriefing even though I hadn't initiated the story. In a similar way, in February I shared a newspaper article with Jim about how Splitsville doesn't have a black middle class. I intended it to be helpful for his ongoing work to disentangle race and class in Splitsville, but in our next meeting, Sky brought it up as helpful for her own thinking.

I said, like, but on the other side of it, it's really important for—for me—for my kids to know that I am not a part—I'm part of that because I'm white (and there's a reference point for them that I'm sure comes up), but I don't want them to put me next to Donald Trump." So Sky decided that even though it broke some professional norms, on the day after Trump was elected she would hint to her students: "I'm not happy. I'm not happy with the election." For Sky, then, our previous debriefing session about how to talk with her students about Trump had given her confidence to **keep taking** a compassionate, risky stand to show her students she was against the bullying and racism that she felt Trump endorsed.

Another example of this shows how corresponding action can sometimes take a long time to marinate. In September, I told the story of going to a game night with emerging friends from the Black Student Union. I was nervous about interacting with them but ended up showing a few people how to play the Euro-style board game *Settlers of Catan*. Nikki noted that this was the first time she could remember me telling a "the other day, I..." story where I didn't feel like there was a strong white-black racial power dynamic at work. More than a year later (and more than six months after our group had ended), in December 2017, my brother-in-law, who is black, had just discovered *Catan* and invited me to play with him and some other people at his brother's house. This would be a big step in our relationship, and the parallels to my situation during our group were striking. On my drive over to his house, I recorded an audio note on my phone in which I used the previous encouragement I had received to prepare myself to keep playing *Catan* as a step in inter-racial friendships. Nikki, I said to my phone, talked about how "I felt like there wasn't a big power aspect in play, um, because we were playing this really fun game that I enjoyed showing people how to play, and just hanging out. So I'm trying to take that with me [...] hoping that *Catan* will be a point of connection and a reference point where we can just have a really fun time." Here anti-racist debriefing helped my new action more than a year later, when I felt prepared—tentatively excited, even—to continue in an anti-racist step that I had been anxious about the time before.

■ Taking further action after debriefing hypothetical stories

Finally, hypothetical stories imagine possibilities for how to act in some situation. We often debriefed them by exploring what the best response might be. To the extent that a hypothetical story creates stuckness for someone, corresponding action following debriefing would take the shape of taking new action that they hadn't considered before. This would be high-road transfer, capacity for new rhetorical action.

The example here is more illustrative than demonstrative of this possibility. In our November meeting, guest African American facilitators Kim and Nakita talked about how colorism affected them, especially how Nakita was derisively called a "black beetle" by her light-skinned family when she was little. Then, in

our December meeting Sky brought this up as motivating her encouragement of one of her black students: “We’re having our session, and I just thought about what they both said, and I was like, ‘Has anyone ever told you that you’re beautiful?’ She was like, ‘Not really.’ And I was like, ‘Well, I need to tell you that you’re beautiful and I want you to, like, to know that.’” Sky continued by analyzing the significance of the moment: on one hand, “I can’t affect, like, monumental change,” but on the other hand, especially when thinking back to her own insecurity as a girl, Sky affirmed that, “that’s huge, like, for—for any girl especially to hear that.” For Sky, our prior debriefing had created possible points of connection with black people. Sky hadn’t quite told hypothetical stories about working with her students, but Kim and Nakita’s comments had jolted Sky out of her existing set of possibilities for interacting with her students. It had given her new options for anti-racist rhetorical action: she could relate to the girls through having been a girl herself, and could encourage them in ways that might especially resonate for them as black girls who are doubly judged on their looks.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined anti-racist debriefing as a practice of sharing day-to-day stories that might make people stuck, and representing what happened, actively listening, and collaboratively interpreting. This responds to the complex call in the literature to remain vulnerable, but also to take action. It requires moving past stuckness; by considering day-to-day stories, anti-racist debriefing works at the site of possible stuckness to build capacity for corresponding anti-racist action. Anti-racist debriefing is a relatively simple practice that others can extend and refine.

Chapter 6

Metacognition and corresponding action in debriefing

Debriefing facilitated a process of responsive anti-racist engagement in day-to-day situations through three rhetorical moves: representing what happened and what that stirred up; actively listening to others in the group; and collaboratively interpreting with an eye toward future action (Chapter 5). Within a larger process of responsive anti-racist engagement, our debriefing meetings primarily dealt with how people “received” what came up in uncertain situations. Group members’ reflections at the end of our ten months debriefing provide an opportunity to see the other two parts: of how people were “acting correspondingly”; and how people were putting themselves in places to “be exposed” to new people, ideas, and situations (this especially involved metacognition that being exposed was important for anti-racist work).

In 2017, at the end of the debriefing group, people had a chance to summarize their story regarding race during the almost yearlong time that the group had been meeting. Not all of the people from the initial inter-church meetings were part of the debriefing group, so there isn’t a perfect comparison, but this chapter provides a counterpart to the stuckness life stories in Chapter 1, asking: After debriefing with others for an extended amount of time, how do people conceptualize their own recent journey and the work of anti-racism? How do other people see that work as well? In particular, we would hypothesize that if debriefing is helping people seek exposure, respond, and act correspondingly without being stuck in day-to-day situations (Chapter 5), that it might also revitalize some people’s self-conception of their recent life history. That is, people’s reflections at the end of debriefing provide a chance to investigate how people are themselves understanding anti-racist work, and how their action and exposure has been impacted by the collaborative interpretive effort that debriefing as a practice provided. These reflections provide an indicator that people are engaged in a rhetorical process of responsive anti-racist engagement.

First, people’s reflections on the ten months of our group are described, according to their own self-assessment and then according to the assessment of

the people who facilitated our group.¹

After describing people's moves into reception-without-stuckness, this chapter find two insights about people's rhetorical development. Most importantly, participants in our group chose a wide variety of areas to push themselves on. This would likely have been stronger if done in better coordination with First Church, but regardless, it complicates narratives that make activism the normative development for people's anti-racism. Second, people's progress appears more significant when viewed at a longer scale, in the context of their recent anti-racism journey. This suggests that long-term debriefing support is helpful for participants. This chapter, then, reports on what is to my knowledge the first longitudinal study of white people's committed anti-racism.²

PARTICIPANTS' SELF-EVALUATIONS

We designed a white affinity group iteratively, collaboratively, with a self-assessed problem, in a way that was meant to be responsive to power dynamics and engage people's racial affect (Chapter 7).³ Our debriefing group (or just "race group" as I ended up calling it in the monthly reminder emails) met for ten months, beginning at the end of June 2016, and ending at the end of March 2017. I advocated for that amount of time after remembering that Aviva had missed a crucial meeting in the interchurch groups the year before. Ten months, I figured, was long enough that someone would be able to miss any one meeting and not have missed the essence of the set of meetings.

This ten-month period was a tumultuous time nationally and for First Church and Second Pres. Nationally, by the time our group started, Donald Trump had become the Republican nominee for President. At our late September meeting, Sky shared that her students had started accusing her of planning to vote for Trump as a way to get her riled up. After that meeting, several of us

1 I also attempted two other forms of assessment. One was a 19-question Likert-like assessment of a person's ally identity (adapted from an LGBT ally measure [Jones, Jones, and Brewster, 2014]). The other was a set of short written responses to three scenarios that people had mentioned earlier made them feel stuck. I intended these to be completed twice, as pre- and post-tests; however, several people in the group didn't fill out the pre-test, making a comparison untenable.

2 There is a large literature on prejudice and prejudice reduction (see Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly for a review), however, this often takes the form of assessing people's reduction in racism (often on the basis of a one-shot, lecture-based training), rather than people's ability to actively take on new steps over an extended amount of time

3 A few points of practical wisdom for implementing this affinity group might be helpful to pass on. First, we found that it was helpful to talk about the group as being "for" white people, but open to anyone who wanted to contribute to that. This was a way to be open to guidance from people of color without either forcing it or avoiding it. Second, we found it helpful to talk about putting ourselves under the microscope, not the people of color we were interacting with. That is, as a researcher, it was important to note that I wasn't studying the black people who were mentioned in our group meetings (which, as Domi pointed out, would thereby perpetuate an oppressive scholarly gaze on African Americans who hadn't consented); I was studying the white people. And as participants in a group, it was important to note that we weren't trying to gossip or bitch about our interactions. In other words, we wanted to describe the group in a way that it wouldn't feel shocking for our emerging or established relationships with people of color to discover that we had been talking about them.

stayed to watch (with the vigor and partisanship of committed sports fans) the first debate between Trump and Hillary Clinton. Our late November meeting, post-election, was solemn. We had already arranged to have Kim and Nakita be guests from First Church, so the meeting focused on their reaction as black people to his election, and on what an appropriate response was for us as white people. Similarly, in our late January 2017 meeting, we ended up telling stories about how we had each navigated Trump's (initial) "Muslim ban" and his inauguration and its trumped inauguration, the Women's March in Washington, D.C.

At a local level, late in 2016, Nakita's brother was shot and killed, and another key member of First Church died. A month after our group ended, Ms. Di's daughter died, too. At Second Pres, several people went through, as Aviva put it, "acute suffering," which was reflected in our group as well. Turbo attended two meetings, but then moved to another state to be with his wife, who was receiving medical treatment there. Bob attended two meetings, but had too much going on at home and as a professor. And most significantly, Aviva's mom passed away in September, only three months after we started. She still attended almost all of the meetings, and I was able to hear her sense of her own development later, but she was quiet during most of our meetings and said that she didn't have the capacity to engage in new relationships, let alone debrief them.⁴

Thus, six regular participants, including myself, reflected on our debriefing time. I was also able to talk with Ryne, who had been taking his own steps during this time. This section briefly describes the issues that each of the seven people identified themselves as tackling, and how that went for them over the course of the ten months.

■ Jim

Jim brought to our group a practical anti-racist approach, and an openness and generosity to people that balanced his direct speaking style. He had a wry, sarcastic sense of humor (especially while drinking, and once or twice he prepared for our group meeting by going to his favorite bar for discounted margaritas first). Jim spoke from the extremes of our group—on the one hand, he would freely tell stories in which he labeled his frustration with (black) tenants as "hate." But he would just as freely display his commitment to justice and rap-

4 This introduces another consideration of what "capacities" involve: a community and social role. This lends itself to a less individualistic notion of capacity that deserves more attention. Taken as an indicator of all white people, it's troubling that 3/8ths of our group felt unable to see the group through (because of sickness, death, and busyness), plus others from Second Pres such as Ryne, Lexi, Allison, and others who had participated in other parts of the project but didn't sign onto the debriefing group. But Aviva reflected after the group finished that not participating in our group didn't mean people weren't taking significant action. She posited that in a spiritual sense, people's internal suffering (including her own grief at her mother's death) was transforming them into people who were more able to take on the external work of anti-racism: "that's where we're landing," she said, "in the space of, like, learning through suffering." She even connected this to an idea she had heard that after age 30, people don't learn from success, but only through failure. In other words, capacities may also be wrapped up in a person's own life stage.

port-building by talking about being arrested for helping homeless people, and breaking the ice with black people by smoking weed with them (illegal in Splitsville, and a taboo practice for many Christians).

Jim dropped out of college to design off-shore oil rigs, and when he moved to Splitsville six years ago, he began his own construction and house flipping business. A few months into our group, after Aviva's mom died, we began meeting at his house, which he had renovated himself. In the living room, instead of a couch was an L-shaped stone ledge that people could sit on, behind which was a self-designed aquaponics system: fish that swam in the L between the ledge and wall provided nutrients through their waste to plants on a higher shelf, which in turn purified the water and returned it via a small waterfall. Jim's dining room featured a large painting in bright colors of a cow looking at the viewer. We met downstairs in a kind of man-cave, with a bar (where I set up my camera), a TV, a drum set, and couches, darkly lit by recessed lights.

Jim came to the white affinity group with two points of focus (see initial story in Chapter 1). First, he felt like he had become **more** prejudiced against black people since moving from Houston to Splitsville several years earlier. In Houston, he had known black people of all social classes; but in Splitsville, he predominantly encountered poor black people. This was a problem because, for the most part, Jim viewed poor people of any color as being naturally ignorant and obnoxious. This wasn't problematic for him to notice in itself; rather, what bothered him was that if the main black people he knew were poor, he would gradually come to associate black people in general as having the negative traits of poverty. This increasing temptation toward essentialist thinking about black people is what Jim meant when he called himself racist, and led him to constantly work to disentangle race and class by marking that experiences he had with black people weren't about them being black, but instead were about them being poor. One microcosm of this dynamic, for instance, was that Jim was frustrated by black people in the traditionally black neighborhood of Easton who casually walked across the street, in disregard to people driving. As Jim put it, these were possibilities for racism that lasted "30 seconds to 2 minutes."

At a longer time scale, and somewhat relatedly, Jim wanted to hire black workers to be part of his construction/house flipping business. As he put it in our July meeting, "So, since I've been in Splitsville, I've probably had upwards of twenty five black people work for me. Um, and not a single one does right now. Um, and um, another way of putting that is I've had twenty-five bad experiences." The black people he had hired, he told us, were all lazy, dishonest, or both, and he was frustrated that this had been his experience.

Over the course of our ten months, Jim felt like he was more able to act in both of these areas. He reflected in our final meeting that in terms of split-second reactions, he felt like he had grown to have increased "empathy." A key moment in this happened early on. Jim's first meeting was in late July, when Mr. Sparkle led our meeting. When Jim brought up his frustration with black people

jaywalking, Mr. Sparkle challenged it in various ways: that he is frustrated by jaywalkers himself (and therefore that it's not inherently racist), that white people jaywalk too, especially in the student area of town, and that, following Lena, young black guys might jaywalk as a way for them to be cool and exert some power.

But what stuck with Jim was a comment Mr. Sparkle made several minutes later, in the middle of a story that Lena was telling. Her story was about getting to know a black guy in high school, with a critical scene during lunchtime. Mr. Sparkle interrupted to ask of the group, "I—I have to ask this, I'm sorry, I have to ask this. Because this is helping me as much as you. Why do all white people like mayonnaise so much?" I personally took the question, along with most of Mr. Sparkle's comments, with some offense, judging it as off-topic, disrespectful to the integrity of Lena's story, and giving way to racial stereotypes (especially with the intensifier "all"). But Jim was getting a taste of his own medicine, and at the next meeting this juxtaposition between his anger at (all) black people jaywalking and Mr. Sparkle's bewilderment at (all) white people liking mayonnaise became a story for him that we debriefed. In fact, in Jim's closing monologue at our final meeting in March 2017, he tightened this story even further:

- Mon, Mar 27, 2017
 Jim
 1 Obviously I still have this frustration [with people jaywalking]
 Um, but, um, and Sparkle was great
 at breaking down some of that.
 You know, he says,
 5 "Why do white people like mayo? That stuff's disgusting."
 I'm like, "Not all white people like mayo."
 And he's like, "Not all black people jaywalk. Get the point?"
 I'm like, "Yeah, man. I get the point."
 All laugh
 10 (So, that wasn't exact word-dialogue
 but, um, that's what I—that's what I felt.)

Here he portrays Mr. Sparkle's question as a direct rebuttal to his own generalizing.⁵ Moreover, he portrays himself being challenged and forced into a new perspective by Mr. Sparkle, which helped "break down" his frustration. Jim describes enacting a responsive reception to Mr. Sparkle that helped him get unstuck.

Jim also felt like he was more able to hire black workers. Conceptually, the insight Mr. Sparkle gave him was that workers—black or white—were better if they had been referred. This resonated with Jim and made him want to ask pastors of black churches for references the next time he was able to hire a lot of people. In practice, in December, Jim was able to hire a black guy, Hooks, to do drywall (and in fact, he was able to hire Hooks after firing a white guy who did a crummy job). During the next few months, Jim was impressed by Hooks'

⁵ This goes to show that the transformation is not always textually apparent, since Jim actually didn't verbally respond to Mr. Sparkle's comment in the July meeting. This also shows the constructive nature of telling stories, as Jim notes in his parenthetical.

quality work, his work ethic, his attitude, his honesty, and his ability to resolve conflicts. Hooks even passed on some of his references so that Jim could hire the guys he knew when he wasn't available. This good experience with hiring a black guy gave Jim encouragement and hope, and helped him remember that not all black people suffer the negative effects of poverty. Here, debriefing with Jim facilitated him taking new action of hiring someone, and at the end of our meetings he was able to report that this action was exposing him to a side of black Splitsville workers he hadn't seen before.

■ Sky

Aviva and I hadn't expected Sky to join our group because we didn't know her very well, but she had started dating Jim, and he invited her. (She and Jim became increasingly close as our meetings went on, and a month after our group ended, they got engaged.) Sky brought to our group a calm, sympathetic demeanor, nuanced, self-aware stories that casually drew in concepts from psychology (stigma, triggering, re-traumatize, etc.) to explore her interactions with race, and wounds from the evangelical Christianity of her youth.

For Sky, anti-racism happened significantly with respect to her job (see initial story in Chapter 1). Since getting a Masters degree in art therapy two years ago, she had been working in an "emotional support classroom" with kids with behavioral and emotional disturbance, kids that get kicked out of the other classrooms. In the classroom, the therapist, the lead teacher, and Sky were white; the paraprofessional and all of the students were black (except for one who was mixed, and often got called white as a slur by the other students).

Race and power-knowledge intersected further at the local psychiatric hospital, when in October Sky had been one of the people to bring one of her students there for help. The clinician, the psychiatrist, and Sky, she recalled, were all white; the only racial solidarity that the black family had was with the security workers. In reflecting on this in our group, Sky wondered about her role in this institutional racism:

Mon, Oct 24, 2016, 8:02pm

Sky

- 1 And like, historically that's been one of the forms of oppression:
Like, white people pushing black people into a mental health category
when they don't have it, um.
I don't feel like I'm doing that,
- 5 I feel like that's the reality [that they have mental health issues.]
But you look at the racial demographics and it's still the same.
And that bothers me.
Like, um, and it's not something that I have like, an answer to,
but it's kinda one of those open-ended questions right now
- 10 of what does—what does being a racially aware white person
who happens to be—have a higher education—
to be a mental health therapist?

This area of stuckness was Sky's guiding focus through our group. As she became more burned out emotionally by her job, she considered more and more the possibility of quitting.

By the end of our ten months, Sky had taken a new key action: she quit her job and was able to see a black guy take over for her. One key moment for her, she said, was in January. In our late January meeting, she and Jim energetically co-told stories from going to the Women’s March in Washington after Trump’s inauguration. This gave her a breath of wind that revealed by contrast how burned out she was at work, which she described in our late February meeting in a set of stories that lasted more than 20 minutes. Sky had a prominent voice of guilt that accused her that she would be acting out of white privilege if she left when the going got tough. She noted that the black people in her life weren’t accusing her; it was a guilt-laden voice that she needed to resist, a voice that could even use spiritual language: “I just want to be there and be Jesus. I want Jesus to be big enough in me that I can heal me, I can heal them, I can heal the system, I can not be offensive, I can, you know, keep these little kids outta jail.” But when she broke her phone and then got in a car accident from stress, she took these as indicators from God that she needed a break.

This new action, in turn, led to a surprising new exposure to her students and their families. Contrary to her fears, when she did announce that she was quitting—first to her students’ parents, in order of increasing length of time working with their kids, then to her students, in descending order of who could keep a secret—no one accused her of abandoning them. In fact, several of the parents expressed gratitude and acceptance, and her students, who so often were oppositional and defiant to her, cried and said they would miss her. Sky’s story points to an undiscussed counterpart to vulnerable exposure: being able to be praised by others. Sky didn’t give this affirmation ontological weight, but appreciated it with humility. And although obviously she didn’t have control of who was chosen to replace her, she noted in our final meeting that if she didn’t make the vacancy by quitting, then the job offer that was taken by a black man wouldn’t have existed. This theme of affirmation and release featured in Sky’s other stories as well. Our group’s debriefing, then, was able to support her as she took new action and saw new affirmation, during a critical emotional and personal time.

■ Gwendolyn

Gwen was the most sensitive, emotionally present member of our group. She was quiet and reflective, speaking deliberately and simply, and not telling many stories. She often cried as part of praying about race, and agreed, with a laugh, that she best communicates “through tears.” At Second Pres, she was a deacon (a formal service role). In addition to her work as a skilled in-home nurse and as a campus minister with InterVarsity,⁶ Gwen was a trained spiritual director, who met with people monthly to be a companion on their spiritual journey. She and Lena organized a set of prayer meetings about race in October, November, and

⁶ InterVarsity is an evangelical Christian organization (although Gwen hesitated to claim the label “evangelical” herself). Gwen’s role was to get to know college students and train them spiritually.

December 2016, and it was Gwen whose prayer liturgies are analyzed in Chapter 3.

Because Gwen hadn't participated much in the inter-church meetings in 2015, I asked her in 2017 after the project ended to tell me about how she became interested in these things. Gwen said that she grew up in several places, but was always in a pretty white environment, not really exposed to people of color. She had lived in Splitsville six years, and when she joined our group, she was just starting to learn about the weight of racism, and to navigate what her response could be. One experience that had made her start dealing with race was the murder of Michael Brown in mid-2014 (one of the sparks of the Black Lives Matter movement). She also explained a key moment of coming to understand privilege while working with the Asian-American chapter of InterVarsity. She had heard about microaggressions and straightforward racism, but "it was more like, 'Okay, I know that there's white privilege.'" But in late 2015, she was at InterVarsity's national conference in order to pray during each day's sessions. One of the Asian-American students Gwen worked with had a bad experience with someone in a leadership position who was imitating an Indian accent. As Gwen and the student were going through the proper channels to address the person, it got to be late at night and Gwen felt exhausted by the day and the ongoing texts she was receiving. "I kind of thought, like, we can just figure this out another time. And then, um, I realized, like, that's—that's my privilege. Like, to—like, my Asian American sisters and brothers (or, they're people of color), they can't just, like, turn off the phone and go to bed and, like, deal with it when they feel better." She cried as she told me this story in the coffee shop. Here, Gwen's moment of exposure is well described as both passive and active: she easily could have turned off her phone, or not even engaged with her student who was offended, but having made those decisions, she was exposed to a deeper reality of ongoing privilege than she had known before.

Coming into our group at Aviva's invitation, Gwen joined in order to learn how to take "more, like concrete actions—action steps" regarding race. As she told it in our final meeting, her anti-racist efforts were focused on two areas. First, she wanted to "build it into my life, so that when life is like, so busy and overwhelming, I don't have to like, make an effort. Like, it's just there." This shows how a process of anti-racist engagement is ongoing and progressive, something that can "build." Toward this end, during our group's time she volunteered monthly at First Church' food bank, worked to get to know her Turkish neighbors, and began subscribing on Facebook to Christian contacts of color who could give insight on approaching racism through faith. By the end of our group, she was able to consider more weighty steps: of changing churches to First Church, and of thinking about buying a house in a neighborhood that wasn't just white people. She described this movement to me as "more like a lifestyle instead of just an activity here and there." That is, Gwen explains her anti-racism efforts with an attention to her habits, and toward developing deeper

and more sustained efforts that affect more and more of her life

Gwen's second area of effort was to love other white people. Loving the "other," Gwen felt, is not just about the societally oppressed ("our black and brown sisters, our LGBTQ sisters and brothers, those of other faiths, Muslims and Jews, and those who are foreigners here in this land," as she put it [Nov prayer meeting, ums removed]), but also about who it's **difficult** to love. And Gwen struggled to love white people who perpetrate hate, epitomized by people who had voted for Trump. She started our group, she told me, with a "Shrug. Maybe the middle finger {laughs}" reaction toward those white people. But part-way through, she came to the realization that "I can't just distance myself from 'those' white people who voted for Trump, because they're my people." Not distancing herself, she said, was an "arms wider kind of move." This means, she went on, "a posture of, like, spreading your arms, and welcoming the discomfort in, as well as the comfort. Like, not turning your back on what's uncomfortable." Here Gwen articulates what Yancy would call an ethics of "no edges" (*Backlash*, 111), or what this dissertation has called a willingness to put yourself in places where you will be exposed to new people, ideas, and situations. Gwen instantiated this by telling me about doing nursing for one guy in East Splitsville. She set the stage: "As soon as we leave the city limits, there's like huge Trump signs, and so I walk into his home, he has Fox News on, and like right away almost he starts talking about, 'Those effing liberals, no respect. Colin Kaepernick, and blah blah blah.'" In other words, the material, media, and discursive landscape of East Splitsville was hostile to black people. Gwen had a special position as a white person who outwardly fit in, but as someone who wanted to ally with people of color. Gwen said that while she worked with the guy, in the course of the conversation, she validated what she could about the guy's complaints, while "also offering a gentle, like, alternative {laughs}." This was putting her "arms wider" move into place, by not discounting or rejecting the patient's perspective, but also not rolling over.

Overall, Gwen explained to me that our debriefing group had helped her not feel "immobilized" because it showed "we each have our place." Lena, for instance, had a niche of attending community meetings and gathering information to share with others (see below). Gwen's niche, in contrast, was in talking gently with other unreconstructed white people through nursing and working with students. This sense that everyone is all in it together helps her feel "like I don't have to do everything." In the academic and popular literature, this has been an underexplored benefit of communal anti-racist training. A practice of debriefing, it seems, helped structure Gwen's process of responsive anti-racist engagement by giving her the confidence to act further and be open to what people had for her. Her openness and vulnerability creates an impact in very white rural communities.

■ Lena

Lena was the old hand in our group. A generation older than the rest of us, she had a life history of acting against racism (see her **non-stuck** story in Chapter 1), and was even working on a fictionalized autobiographical novel for young adults about what it was like for her to go to middle school when it was being integrated. (According to her, the “thesis” of her novel, so to speak, was, “The tragedy of the racial divide is the relationships we don’t have.” Lena’s book, then, speaks to the need to put ourselves in situations where we will be exposed to new people.) After many years of living in the rural Jefferson County to raise their seven kids, Lena and her husband Mark had recently moved back to Splitsville. Lena was surprised and discouraged to see that civil rights, especially fair police treatment and access to housing, had not improved since her days as a young woman, and was recently motivated to activism.

Lena had a nervous, scattered style of talking and was long-winded. At the same time, she was self-assured, asked people clarifying questions when she didn’t understand what they said, and had fun—she stayed after our meeting with me, Jim, and Sky at Jim’s house for drinks a few times, and not just because I was her ride home. Lena loved compiling information and giving people resources. Even at our last meeting, which was supposed to be summative, she gave us copies of her notes from a recent talk she had attended by Black Panthers.

Through our ten months, Lena told us stories about a variety of topics, from encounters doing activism, to split-second fears of young black men, to updates on her book, to stories from her 20+ year close friendship with a black woman and her daughter. But when Lena summarized her own progress to me on the ride home from our last meeting, she focused on her book project. Although she had been working on it off and on for nearly ten years, in the ten months that our group met she had found an editor very interested in the book, and had been working to revise it according to the editor’s understanding of the market. She told me that her own “deep story in us that wants justice” was passing on the lessons from her personal history down to the next generation. Our group, she noted, helped her “hone in” on that. In other words, Lena affirms that a process of anti-racist engagement involves tapping into and developing a desire to act against racism.

■ Aviva

As mentioned above, Aviva’s mom passed away only a few months into our group, and she became depressed for the next year or so. For our final race group meeting, I suggested that each person bring a food that was symbolic of their experience of the group somehow. Aviva emailed us to say that she wouldn’t be able to attend that meeting, noting self-deprecatingly, “Ironically, I may have brought ‘nothing’ to contribute for dinner, since all in all I didn’t contribute as much as I would have liked to this group.” She noted, however, that “I’m grate-

ful for your stories, so keep telling them to me! One of these days I'll have one to share, too."

When I met with her a month or two after that, relaxing in her backyard together during a beautiful summer day, she evaluated herself as having "regressed" in the sense of not having energy to devote to new efforts. But she described the group as giving her the encouragement to act her way into courage: "some of the things that I've learned over the past, you know, 7, 8 months have opened me up to an understanding of how to take risks, or how to find courage within myself to do some of that stuff." Aviva strongly emphasized how action can be formative, and can overwrite, rewrite, and bring to fruition the beliefs that people already had: "It takes practice to be a new way. So you can't just think about being a new way. You can't just have a realization that you are a new way. It takes practice to become that way." Aviva's idea that people need to know "how to take risks" and her action-oriented view of anti-racism have been influential for me in developing a process of responsive anti-racist engagement.

In addition to new action, in early 2018 (about a year after that final meeting) Aviva talked to me about the component of receiving. I wanted to see how she was doing and to ask her feedback on my writing. Although I was good friends with her husband Dirk, she and I hadn't interacted much in the last year. Again meeting in her backyard, she told me that since coming out of her depression, "I've come to a place of just open-handedness and receiving what I can learn. And the tough conversations [about race] are with, you know, my family and people who are like me but disagree with me, but who are the ones who I need to not walk on eggshells around." In other words, Aviva was trying to maintain an open-handed (i.e. exposed, vulnerable) position, while directing her focus to other white people. This shows a strong metacognitive awareness of anti-racist engagement, and a politically nuanced one, in that she saw this as helping to "undergird" the movement.

Aviva identified sending her kids to a mostly black school as a significant action against racism, in that it creates an inter-generational value to serve people of color. "They're not gonna grow up saying, 'Black people are ___.' They're just not gonna grow up saying the same things that I grew up hearing. And that will make a difference in their willingness to work alongside, or um, um, promote. And I mean that in the way of, like, putting—putting them before they would put themselves." That is, Aviva sees responsiveness as something that she can try to hand down and teach her kids.

Moreover, Aviva talked with a confidence that I had never heard her use before regarding race. In explaining "inner work," which is her own term for vulnerability and reception (i.e. external things that affect who you are internally), she stepped into the second person for an extended time. This began, "You have to get to a place where you're okay with making a mistake, or okay being criticized, or okay with, like, to get past that—the kind of insecurity that doesn't, um, that you don't have to identify yourself with that mistake" (emphasis

added). In particular, this sentence-level detail in which she recommends something (recommends vulnerability, no less) contrasts with Aviva's sentence-level hesitation from Chapter 1 at the beginning of the project, **Table 1.2**.

■ Me

I saw myself as participating as a member of the group, even though I was also recording our meetings and planned to analyze them later. I sent questions for reflection before each meeting, and in the meetings tried to bring an emotional openness to the group so that others might feel comfortable being vulnerable as well. For instance, in our late October meeting, I talked about how when I was visiting with a multi-generational black family from First Church, one of the women escalated disciplining her daughter to the point of telling her son to go get her belt (it then lay on the couch next to her for the rest of the night as a lingering threat). I disclosed to the group that I was scared in that situation, and unsure what to do.

One prong of my anti-racist desires (see initial story in Chapter 1) was wanting to have an increased capacity for relationships with black people. My existing monthly volunteer work at First Church' food bank as well as my participation in a campus black awareness club, I noted in our first meeting, were sources of accumulating stories involving race that "have just remained kind of murky and unresolved." A second area of focus for me emerged after Trump was elected, of trying to become more of an activist.

During the course of our group, I became significantly more comfortable around black people. One budding friendship was with a black guy from First Church, Terron. For a while before our group started, I had been trying to become friends with Terron, but his phone was always broken (or that's what he told me when he occasionally volunteered at the food bank), so I didn't know how to initiate with him or what we would do. Ironically, through the food bank, I got to know his grandma, who invited me over after the food bank several times to hang out and drink with her. As family members flowed in and out of the house, including Terron, I was able to get extended periods of time hanging out with him. By our group's final meeting, my wife and I had gone on a double date with Terron and his on-again-off-again fiancé. These were new actions, but also new ways of trying to become exposed to new people, situations, and ideas. Terron's grandma brought my willingness to fruition by opening her house to me.

Secondly, I also became more of an activist. I joined Splitsville's fading city-wide white anti-racist group, and attended my first ever protest during Trump's inauguration. (In fact, a few months after our group ended, I had even become connected enough with the local activist scene that I went with people to D.C. to be arrested for protesting Trump's attempt to repeal Obamacare). As our group ended, I was preparing to launch my own YouTube channel to encourage and educate other activists of all experience levels, by identifying tips for today from resistance movements in US history.

■ Ryne

For symmetry, I'll add Ryne's story, even though he decided not to participate in our debriefing group. He had been developing his own ways of practicing a responsive anti-racist engagement, especially through his work as a philosopher (increasingly, a philosopher of race and whiteness), and I met with him in 2017 after the group ended. He summarized the areas of growth that he'd made in the last year independently of our group.

I played him a video clip of his initial interaction in this project, from our first interchurch group (see Chapter 1). This was a touching moment for us to look back together on his rhetoric about race from two years before. He noted that his current direction was a direct response to the stuck, confused desires that he had expressed two years earlier: "Some of the things I just talked about [that I'm currently doing] are kind of direct responses to that sentiment [in the recording]." He included a list then of these recent actions: being more involved in his kids' school, being more involved in the community, playing basketball in the community, strengthening the inter-racial relationships he had, hosting black intellectuals as guest lecturers for his philosophy classes, and paying attention to other forms of discrimination based on gender, gender identity, and class.

More than these concrete steps, he articulated a theory of what was different for him now that stuckness felt "foreign" to him.

Tues, May 16, 2017, 2:17 pm

Ryne

- 1 Being willing to fail as you go, like,
it's not about having--getting it perfect, I think
but um, it does take a--the--I think a little bit of confidence
of just going out there and being vulnerable
- 5 being willing to ask the questions, you know, like,

Affectively, Ryne combines vulnerability (ln 4) and confidence (ln 3). The ingredient that's required is an existentially significant action: "just going out there" (ln 4). Like with Aviva, Ryne's theory and ability to articulate his anti-racist learning has helped me develop the three-part process of anti-racist engagement.

He elaborated on this by describing how people can receive best when they have put themselves in places where they will be exposed to new critique and guidance:

- 1 If I really want to be part of the solution, like,
I have to be willing
to believe their critique [from African American Muslims at a recent dinner]
and take it and—and accept that there's a warrant to that critique.
- 5 Um, you know, and I think I--
I probably believed that,
um, a few years ago in that conversation,
but I—I wasn't placing myself in those environments as much.

Here Ryne echoes Baldwin's possibility that belief can become separated from action (see Introduction), which has been an interest throughout this dissertation. Ryne says he needs to accept critique, and "probably believed that" when he was feeling stuck. But what it took for him was learning to continue entering into new discursive situations despite his uncertainty: "I wasn't placing myself

in those environments.” Ryne shows a great deal of metacognitive awareness of a rhetorical process of responsive anti-racist engagement.

FACILITATORS' EVALUATIONS

A complementary way to understand the rhetorical stance that our white affinity group promoted is to examine the evaluations that our facilitators made. Our group's primary facilitators, Nikki and her husband Anthony (both white), evaluated our group after they had facilitated it for the whole ten months. Our group also held two meetings with guest facilitators, who could then provide “spot” evaluations: Mr. Sparkle, one of Second Pres' few black congregants, facilitated our late July meeting; and Nakita and Kim, two young black women who Nikki was friends with from First Church, facilitated our late November meeting.

■ Anthony and Nikki

Anthony and Nikki, a newly married white couple, were our primary facilitators, because as young white people who attended First Church and who were very active in interracial efforts, they could be a bridge and translator for us to black culture and black people. Nikki in particular worked at the Familyfield Community Farm and was in the process of single-handedly welcoming black people from Familyfield there. As Aviva put it to me later, Nikki was “kind of a woman who does it all.” In our final meeting, when each of us went around the circle to answer “What's next for you? How has this group related to your story regarding race?” Nikki and Anthony answered as well, and included evaluative comments on our performance in the group.

Anthony works as a teacher in a mostly black school, and moved to Splitsville after working for Teach for America in the South. He framed his evaluation in terms of the position of “ally,” through the authoritative lens that black people provided during a recent panel and which he had heard during Peace Corps:

Mon, Mar 27, 2017, 9:07pm

Anthony

- 1 Well, we often call it, like, the “savior mentality” in Peace Corps
But that can apply to a lot of different places, too, so.
“Ally is not a self-proclaimed position.”
And that's a—I think, a sobering thing to keep in mind moving forward, uh.
- 5 Not that you need any sobering in that regard,
I think the group has been really helpful with anything like that

By repeating the advice that “Ally is not a self-proclaimed position,” Anthony was orienting us toward ongoing humility and reception, and also affirming our approach to that point. His evaluation resonated with us and felt like a wise application/contextualization of black people's advice. With the limited authority he felt he had, Anthony continued to venture that he was “proud” of us for doing “the work that needs to be done.”

After Anthony spoke, Nikki also affirmed our group's direction and growth in general, in the context of her own initial apprehensions:

Mon, Mar 27, 2017, 9:08pm

Nikki

- 1 When Will approached me for facilitating this
I did feel this odd like, “Should we be meeting
to talk about these things?”
Like, it felt kind of weird to like, have something like this.
- 5 But I do, like, through this [group]
and through, like, having Kim and Nakita here,
and—and just our talks
and talking with others about it,
like what Anythony said,
- 10 I feel like this has been a—a good thing,
that is in step with what we should be doing,
and like, glorifying to God in what we’ve been doing as well.
And I know it won’t end here
and I’ve seen, like, positive for all of us,
- 15 like, positive growth and all of that through this.
Um, So, that’s been great too.

Similar to Anthony, Nikki defers here to black people’s opinions of our group, in that she mentions Kim and Nakita’s involvement with our group as authorizing the work we’ve done (ln 6), as well as our own relationship-building activities with black people outside of the group meetings (ln 8). Explicitly echoing Anthony’s criteria, Nikki affirms that our group was “in step with what we should be doing” (ln 11), including spiritually (ln 12) and individually (lns 14-15). She makes the strongest claim to growth (15). What interests me is her sense of assurance that we understood that anti-racist work would be ongoing, beyond the time of the group (ln 13).

■ Mr. Sparkle

Mr. Sparkle grew up in a large city in the Northeast, but was sheltered and felt alienated from tough black culture and from middle-class white culture. He had lived in Splitsville for many years, working for the local electric company. He used to attend a mostly black church, but began coming to Second Pres when he felt God call him to it, and served there and at First Church as a musician. (Around the time our group finished, Mr. Sparkle stopped attending Second Pres and moved to a different church.) Aviva and I invited him to facilitate our group once because he asked to, and because as a black man, we thought he might be able to provide us insight.

When Mr. Sparkle facilitated our meeting in July, he didn’t make any explicitly evaluative statements about our group as a whole. Possibly that’s because the group was just getting started. We also inferred later that Mr. Sparkle seemed to simply enjoy being able to process his own thoughts about race as a black man, and to be an expert. When Aviva and I met with him before the meeting, though, he did emphasize that our genuine desire to be against racism was what made him trust us: “That’s the reason I’m here. Because I think you’re sincere.” A few minutes later, he came back to sincerity within a broader frame for understanding race: “I—I think that one of the biggest things that you can do to bridge the divide is people recognizing and seeing that people are—are the same, no matter where they are and what they do. We all have the same wants

and desires, and we mask that by—by gender and by race and by economic status, but it's all the same, really. At least that's what I feel. But the trick is navigating all that, and—and doing it in a way that's sincere." For Mr. Sparkle, then, it's important for people to emphasize the commonality that black and white people have, without being saccharine. It was the people in the group who he knew that made him feel comfortable, rather than the group debriefing structure itself.

■ Nakita and Kim

Finally, for our late November meeting, Nikki invited Nakita and Kim to facilitate our discussion. They both attended First Church, where Nikki was friends with them.

Nakita was a young black woman who completed a Master's degree in Education, and was raising a young boy with special needs. She challenged us with her statements and stories (see Chapter 5), but didn't evaluate our group.

Kim was a young black woman who was training at the local seminary to be a pastor. (In fact, a few months after our group ended, she was hired at First Church as an associate pastor.) Whereas Nakita spoke indirectly, Kim was more overt in her assessments. In response to each person's stories or questions, she gave assessments. Then at the end of our meeting, she summarized our group itself:

Mon, Nov 28, 2016, 8:58pm
Kim

1 You guys are making progress, you know what I mean?
 I am glad happy to hear this conversation.
 Because, you know what I mean, because—

5 Will, having a freaking idea to write a paper on this
 is your alignment with, you know, people of color
 to—to start this conversation.
 So, you guys are making progress.
 You may not feel like it, you know what I mean?

10 May still have some reservations or things like that,
 but you guys are doing great.
 Keep doing what you're doing.

Here Kim evaluates the group (while also addressing my insecurity about how I responded to the election, lns 4-6) as doing what it needs to do, based on that evening. She sensed stuckness that we expressed (lns 8-9), but evaluates us based on her own criteria of "making progress" (ln 1, 7), and concludes with a pastoral exhortation: "Keep doing what you're doing" (ln 11). In some ways, this dissertation is an attempt to elaborate on what exactly we were doing that Kim wanted us to keep doing.

IMPLICATIONS

These portraits show a relatively positive set of self- and facilitator-evaluations, and a consistent assessment that we were practicing responsive anti-racist engagement. Two insights emerge from these stories about how white people take

anti-racist action.

■ **“There’s not only one way to do this.”**

Most strikingly, when white people in this study set aside time and effort to grow more actively against racism, they chose a variety of things. People in our group described themselves as having grown in empathy toward black people, excitement to hire black people, ability to overcome guilt for our education systems, development of anti-racist habits, love for callous white people, knowledge of our deep story, relationships built with black people, and activist activity. Nikki pointed out in our first meeting that we all had different goals, and it was important for our actions to reflect that: “It’s important to know why you’re here.” She came back to this theme in our final meeting, “just keeping with knowing that there’s not only one way to do this.” Nikki’s insistent openness on the direction of our anti-racism efforts has shaped this dissertation in its emphasis on a rhetorical stance of reception and putting oneself in places to be exposed and challenged. Within that stance (which Nikki would add, should include being exposed to God’s leading, too), people’s anti-racism can be kairotic, flowing, and confident.

Our diversity of anti-racist efforts shows that emphasizing activism as the path or the marker of a white person’s allyship is overly narrow. Although I ended up doing some activist work, I didn’t start with that as a goal and haven’t found that it’s particularly stuck since; and although Lena consistently attended protests, it wasn’t a focal point for her personal development. That said, Domi insightfully noted that if we had more successfully collaborated with people from First Church to build relationships, then the African Americans we were getting to know could have benefited from being able to be an explicit partner in the process of what they might term racial reconciliation.

■ **“You really have to have a lot of context to—to recognize the bigness of a moment”**

A second implication that comes from our group is that people’s progress made most sense within a long time-frame of their own story. In other words, the nearly year-long format for our group was helpful for contextualizing our progress to each other. When I met with Nikki after our group ended, this is one of the things she commented on. “That’s why I think it was really cool to meet so consistently over a long period of time,” she said. “Cos those very small moments or successes, like, we knew what those meant, and how big those were. Which, I think you really have to have a lot of context to—to recognize the bigness of a moment.” In particular, she mentioned my wife and I managing to go on a double date with Terron and his fiancée. That was something that would be easy to dismiss, but our group had seen my efforts, anxieties, and frustrations over the months in a way that they could understand its significance more fully. Nikki’s insight especially deals with how progressive a process of anti-racist engagement is. Even if in a global sense going on an inter-racial double date is

insignificant (and it is, of course), that was still significant for me given my early movement within a process of anti-racist engagement.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that anti-racist debriefing does not merely have a local effect in which specific stories lead to continued specific action, but that debriefing can help people re-envision their recent life history regarding race, and show broader new action and new exposure to people, ideas, critiques, and situations. Specifically, many of the participants showed a metacognitive ability to describe a confident vulnerability (both in becoming exposed and in receiving what emerges from that uncertainty), which I've called part of a rhetorical process of anti-racist engagement. In the course of our debriefing group, people noted how they had been shaped by others and had grown in rhetorical capacity to respond without staying stuck. This positions anti-racist debriefing as a promising rhetorical strategy for moving through aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism.

Part IV: Participation

Chapter 7

The participatory creation of a white affinity group

When people express paralyzing uncertainty regarding how to respond to anti-racism and a deep desire to do so, they use aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism, which expresses a moment of being exposed to new, uncertain situations and critiques guidance. This moment of vulnerability is worth receiving and acting out in the course of one's anti-racist efforts (Part I). Call-and-response (Part II) and anti-racist debriefing (Part III) are ways for people to practice the exposure side of rhetoric, speaking so as to be affected themselves, remaining open to people of color around them. And chronologically, that's the end of this project.

Yet "people" who are practicing a process of anti-racist engagement easily reads as a kind of civilian role; at this point a reflexive turn should be made: what does it mean to practice rhetorical responsiveness as a **scholar**? That is, how do researchers maintain an openness while working with people, or even when working with texts? This question calls scholars into considering responsiveness in the academic workplace, and suggests that a process of anti-racist engagement might become part of our scholarly praxis.

First, an initial movement into research-based responsiveness is described through the research method of "participatory critical rhetoric" (PCR, Middleton, et al.). PCR rejects a distanced, observational stance, instead emphasizing a scholar's participation with people (e.g. by attending a protest with them) as a method for engaging in people's practical concerns and for incorporating into scholarly analysis the researcher's own body and the rhetorical impacts of the space. PCR, this section suggests, can be augmented to include collaborative interventions characteristic of community literacy (Flower, *Community Literacy*; Deans; Cella et al.). Community literacy techniques also work to create a "role reversal" (Flower) for scholars, and help imagine how researchers can not only join participants, but also take new action with them.

The remainder of the chapter is then devoted to the participatory process of designing a debriefing group (debriefing as a strategy is described in Part III; this chapter only describes the process of helping form the group). It describes five ways for a researcher to encounter their interdependence through the research process. The first three principles develop action research: iterative design, collaborative design, and a self-determined problem. The second two

address the specific challenges of white people's anti-racism: being responsive to power dynamics, and engaging affect. Overall, in our case it led to planning a discursive scaffold that we hoped would build people's rhetorical interdependence, and would involve white people relying on others for support. As a researcher, this process involved letting go of a lot of control. But as Anthony would put it at the end of the debriefing sessions, meeting together in that format actually answered the common call from black activists for white people to "get ya people" or "get ya cousin," i.e. to seek to develop anti-racist work within the white community. That is, putting ourselves as researchers into situations where we will/could be exposed to discomfort, guidance, and critique can lead to creating contextual community literacy opportunities where communities can build and own stronger anti-racist rhetorical performance. This examination of the scholarly exposure side of rhetoric leads to a more theoretical development of responsiveness and interconnectedness in research ethics (Chapter 8).

EXTENDING PARTICIPATORY CRITICAL RHETORIC

Participating with people as a scholar is, in any formulation, somewhat messy. It's unpredictable, uncertain, unreplicable. It affects people. In an objectivist understanding of research common in the sciences, researchers ideally avoid participating, because its messiness would threaten the universality of their conclusions.¹

Similarly, in classical ethnographic approaches to research, the researcher operates on a spectrum of participation, from "complete observer" (in which the researcher is remote, with little interaction) to "observer-as-participant" (in which the researcher is an outsider who gets a taste of what the group does) to "participant-as-observer" (in which the researcher is an insider who also reports out) to "total immersion" (in which the researcher is undercover) (Gold). This typology shows a sensitivity to and anxiety about the ways that researchers' participation affects what knowledge they gather. In all of them, the ethnographer's persistent participation over a long stretch of time acts as a smoothing function to help understand what would happen if the researcher wasn't there. Ultimately, then, in the ethnographic account the researcher is elided to give a view of what "they" do.

Rhetorical scholars have begun taking up the messiness of participating in stride and with excitement, rather than trepidation. One rhetorical perspective that has embraced the uncertainty and contingency of participating is the field-based method of "participatory critical rhetoric" (PCR, Middleton et al.). PCR theorizes that rhetorical fieldwork can be robustly carried out because a researcher participates with people who are taking rhetorical action. For instance,

¹ Research "interventions," which might seem to be a counter-example in that they involve a researcher deliberately manipulating a situation, still draw on a conception of the researcher as removed enough to have had the possibility of studying people without intervening.

PCR scholars can join in protests, attend meetings, and—in my case—take on new actions with other white people with the goal of learning to act more effectively against racism. As the name indicates, participatory critical rhetoric is designed to extend the goals of critical rhetoric (McKerrow). Critical rhetoric's contribution is the idea that critics are not neutral in political efforts; research itself can thus be approached in ways that pursue liberatory goals. Participatory critical rhetoric, then, is one way to move toward this, and may even be a more effective method in practice. After all, to the extent that people's efforts are liberatory, participating with them as a researcher is an immediately effective, "immanent" (McHendry et al.) action that doesn't rely on the winds of publishing trends. Moreover, participating allows researchers to encounter their own bodies as well as the meanings of different places in ways that are difficult working with a group of texts, from a static place like a university office.

Thus, as Middleton et al. suggest, in PCR the researcher's participation has three implications: don't worry that you are impacting the people you work with; attend to both participants' and your own embodiment; and notice how place shapes the research. **Figure 7.1** relates these three aspects to my own approach within this project. In part, it shows how well participatory critical rhetoric names my approach generally.

At the same time, it remains unclear, from a PCR perspective, how a scholar joins with a group in new decision-making. New decision-making would go beyond attending protests with people to include planning the site/time for a new protest. It would mean joining in revising an organization's mission statement, not just observing their deliberations. And in my case, new decision-making meant developing next steps with people from Second Pres who were feeling stuck enacting anti-racism rhetorically after a set of inter-church meetings.

Participatory critical rhetoricians, in other words, have participated in existing efforts, and they acknowledge the ways that their participation changes or affects the implementation of those efforts, but have not yet made the move toward taking new action and developing shared goals with participants. Taking new action and developing shared goals with participants introduces new challenges (and can even re-introduce anxiety about what forms of knowledge a scholar makes with others). In my situation, it was important for me to join Second Pres in making new decisions, because I provided the group with some energy, focus, and academic insight.²

More specifically, the shared goals that I wanted to develop with Second Pres included wanting to change people's rhetorical capacities. This is a desire for discursive **scaffolding**: assistance in the way people talk, such that over time they can sustain that talk themselves (Prebel; Langer and Applebee; Brown, Collins, and Duguid; Vygotsky). The "growing subfield" of community writing

² In what I took as a high compliment, Aviva one time publicly called me the "momentum guide" for the group. That is, she was welcoming my efforts to help plan events, and was suggesting that what we did wouldn't have happened otherwise but was congruent with the group's desires.

Table 7.1 Researchers' participation as seen in Middleton et al. and this project

Middleton, et al.	Example from this project
1. Don't worry that you are impacting the people you work with	
a. Don't prefer already documented text (38)	a. Most of my data comes from conversations and meetings with people that took place in person.
b. Be useful in the moment, rather than waiting to make your mark through scholarly publication (42)	b. We designed a new communication structure (this chapter) for people from Second Pres to draw on
2. Attend to both participants' and your embodiment	
A researcher's body affects her <i>criticism</i> :	
a. Let your body inform regularities (and therefore irregularities) in people's patterns (67)	a. As someone with my own time commitments, I could relate to people from Second Pres' feelings of not having time for anti-racism
b. Notice how your body creates and limits access to information/ideas differently than other bodies would (70)	b. My white body let me join other white people in anti-racism. My body was often read by black people as overly young
c. Don't draw on disembodied intellectual pronouncements (71)	c. As a by-product of interacting with various people in the project, I push back on both race blindness and critical race theory in this dissertation.
A researcher's body makes her <i>affected</i> by the rest of the world:	
a. Connect and correlate how you are affected by a moment in the field with the ways others are (75)	a. I checked in with others in the moment and/or afterward about how they were responding to certain things that were said
b. Remember and incorporate people's affective responses into your analysis (76)	b. Video recordings from our meetings helped me better remember people's non-verbal responses
c. Become more available to participants through your affective vulnerability (76)	c. At the monthly meetings, I expressed my own frustration, anger, disappointment, discouragement, etc. regarding race
A researcher who embraces her embodiment is also <i>risky</i> , meaning that the researcher cannot avoid having people read—whether positively or negatively—her self-presentation:	
a. Prepare your self-presentation (78)	a. I spoke openly with people at Second Pres about spiritual topics, even though in scholarly discourse that's unusual
b. Empathize with other participants whose bodies are more at risk (e.g. those who live nearby, when protesting at a nuclear waste site) (79)	b. I worked with other highly educated white people, who experience uncertainty in navigating racial privilege
c. Recognize that people will adjust what they say and don't say in response to their presence, perhaps even beyond what we anticipate (80)	c. I took participants' inter-personal relationships with each other into account when I discussed my research with them
Researchers in the field must operate from multiple roles:	
a. Be ready to adopt the roles of participant, advocate, companion, opponent, observer, and witness. (61).	a. In the course of my fieldwork, I played all of these roles.

Middleton, et al.

Example from this project

3. Notice how place shapes the research

<p>a. Notice how place affects gathering data. Where do interviews happen, for instance, and how do participants make reference to the space? (100)</p>	<p>a. Only one of the meetings took place at the Familyfield Community Farm, but the participants commented on the smell of the grass, and the limited shade, and the sounds of other people tending to the garden.</p>
<p>b. Notice how places always have histories, and their meanings can be contested. (For instance, protesters challenge spatial norms by blocking intersections) (103)</p>	<p>b. This was particularly relevant for us when we planned inter-church meetings: where should the meeting be held? What symbolic (or practical) meaning did that space have? Meeting at First Church, for instance, felt like home for people from First Church, but required the pastor’s approval, which sometimes took a few days or weeks. But meeting at night, when many people from Second Pres were free, was difficult for some older members at First Church because they didn’t like to drive at night.</p>
<p>c. Notice how place serves as the context for people’s rhetoric (107)</p>	<p>c. At our monthly meetings, we met in Jim’s basement, which has a couch and two chairs. Every month people needed to sit on the floor to fill out the circle, and several of us commented on trying out a different spot from month to month.</p>
<p>d. Notice how place serves as the “text” or statement itself (111)</p>	<p>d. The Familyfield Community Farm is the best example of this, in that people from Second Pres hoped that it in itself would be a place of reconciliation, care for nature, and attention to abandoned places.</p>

Table 7.1 (cont.) Researchers’ participation as seen in Middleton et al. and this project

(House, et al.) is one area where researchers have invested in scaffolding/being scaffolded by community members, and can inform how PCR scholars can participate in taking new action with participants.

Flower's work in community literacy is illustrative, giving a vision for how scaffolding can help a group engage in exploratory decision-making, or inquiry. In part, inquiry means approaching a problem by leveraging people's different experiences and expectations as a resource, rather than isolating the narrow strip of their experience that they all hold in common (e.g. liking the local sports team, or disliking the city's gray winters). This inquiry is necessary, Flower suggests, because reading and writing aren't just classroom activities; people need to be able to interpret and create arguments with others, especially those who have different frames of reference, in order to have an impact on the world. For instance, college students who have a job while in school face unique challenges, but college administrators, professors, the IT department, and rhetoric scholars all have a stake in those students' success and all bring different expertises and expectations. However, much like enacting anti-racism rhetorically, Flower argues that practicing inquiry is challenging. Administrators, professors, and so on, as a result of their power, can be dismissive toward the experiences that a working college student brings. In order to sustain an inquiry among the many parties and not just default to power grabs or bureaucratic procedures, privileged people need to learn new discourse strategies, because "people of privilege are even more likely [than historically marginalized people] to lack the rhetorical skills to listen when expertise comes in unfamiliar discourse packages" (55).

Much of Flower's work, then, is identifying various rhetorical scaffolds that shape people toward a rhetorical practice of inquiry. Four examples of discursive scaffolds give a sense of the range of what Flower envisions.

- collaborative planning - in order to author a public-facing text, one person uses a restricted set of questions to encourage the author to articulate their purpose, the audience's probable response, and how they can use text conventions to achieve that purpose. This invites the author into the role of active planner (rather than the role of "student" or "kid") and the usually much older and more educated helper into the role of supporter (rather than the role of "teacher" or "grammar police").
- story-behind-the-story - given some realistic situation in which a person faces a tough choice, people add in what's not said about that situation, as a way of revealing and sharing their own latent interpretive schemas
- seeking rival hypotheses - people both contribute to and solicit alternative explanations for why something happened. This is a way to add perspectives while avoiding threatening other people's face, while also sustaining the group's knowledge as provisional, i.e. as working knowledge that can change over time

- examining options and outcomes - given a set of options, or possible responses to a dilemma, people predict the outcomes based on their situated perspective. These new perspectives can challenge the viability of those options

In addition to these micro-levels discursive scaffolds is Flower's macro-level scaffold of hosting an inquiry roundtable itself.

Thus, insights from community literacy are helpful in giving a picture of what a researcher's scaffolding participation with a group can look like.³ The following section draws out five principles that guided the creation of our white affinity group scaffolding structure, exploring how participatory critical research scholars can develop shared goals with people in a project.

PRACTICING RESPONSIVE ANTI-RACIST ENGAGEMENT AS A RESEARCHER

The outcome of our planning process, as **Figure 7.2** shows, was a formal "request" to the Familyfield Community Farm advisory board to begin a small debriefing group:

<p>Familyfield Community Farm Board Will Penman Presentation Apr 11, 2016 [...] Request A small group of 7-9 white people from Second Pres begins Next Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Commit to some relationship-building activity with African Americans for 2-3 hr/mo <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Relationships can break down fear and uncertainty ii. Relationships can guide larger, systematic political activity iii. Relationships live out God's kingdom of peace, hospitality, and grace b) Attend a once a month debrief meeting together, led mostly by Nikki. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Debriefing together can challenge our views in light of Christ's work ii. Debriefing together is a way to hear and see each other's growth, giving God the praise iii. Debriefing together gives opportunity to pray regularly about race iv. Debriefing together creates a safe space for white people to work on race. This doesn't put a burden of educating white people onto our African American brothers and sisters
--

Figure 7.2 A request to the Familyfield Community Farm Advisory Board to begin a debriefing group

This document was the textual synthesis of my process of being vulnerable as a researcher, open to people's ideas about what they wanted to do. In

³ Second Pres' effort to develop a macro-level strategy for scaffolding people into anti-racist rhetorical work ended up being complementary to Flower's. She scaffolds people into inquiry while they are with people who are different from them, and our group scaffolded people within a racially homogeneous space to prepare them for informal/unanticipated encounters with people who are different from them.

practice, this emerged from a set of meetings that I had in the spring of 2016 with most of the people from Second Pres who had participated in the inter-church race conversations the year before. Thus, everyone quoted in this chapter is white, except for Charley.

The group structure we were proposing would be full of people from church, but as the description shows, this wasn't going to be a typical Bible study—or any other recognizable type of religious meeting. But at the same time, we weren't planning to do activist organizing together either, in that we weren't making plans for collective action. Neither was it group therapy; neither was it the stiff and irregular interchurch conversations from a year before. How had we come into such a strange “white affinity group” meant to “debrief” challenging situations about race? (Again, I leave the actual working of our group to Part III; this part simply investigates the process of bringing people together.)

As it happens, white affinity groups have become an established option for white people trying to grow in their anti-racism. An affinity group in general is simply “an assembly of people gathered with others who share a common element of identity in order to explore, celebrate, sustain, and process their experiences around that identity” (Michael and Conger, 1), and white affinity groups, Michael and Conger argue, can be helpful for those things (see also Ford and Orlandella). A national white affinity organization, Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ), had already formed in the wake of right-wing militias opposed to Obama's presidency (Crass), and Splitsville itself had a city-wide white affinity group that pre-dated SURJ. The Splitsville-wide group mainly facilitated “study group,” in which white people met weekly for 10 weeks to read and discuss expositions/denunciations of America's white supremacy culture, although people at Second Pres were relationally disconnected from that group.⁴ In other words, our eventual plan had some history to it in activist circles. A researcher's responsiveness and deference does not necessarily lead to bad plans (in fact, through this chapter I describe times when the group rescued me from overly academic ways of thinking about aspirational rhetoric).

This section charts five principles that established a vulnerable stance through the process of designing our group. These principles may be useful to other PCR researchers who seek to join people in making new decisions. The first three guiding considerations are in line with participatory action research: iterative design, collaborative design, and community-based analysis of social problems. The second two are more focused on anti-racism specifically: being

⁴ Ironically, the Splitsville-wide group essentially fell apart at the end of 2016 due to a fracas in Familyfield. A member of the Splitsville-wide group didn't communicate their plans for an anti-gentrification discussion group well. So when people of color in Splitsville's activist networks, including one person who lived in Familyfield, got wind of their plan, they lambasted it as white people contributing to Familyfield's gentrification problem. The Splitsville-wide group was now seen as an actor by association, with the implication that it was reinforcing white supremacy rather than undermining it. In mid-2017, I joined their effort to rebuild the city-wide group, but it quickly disintegrated, with the leaders burnt out from the conflict and the effort of running the organization for the last few years.

responsive to power dynamics by adopting a relational theory of change, and engaging affect.

■ Iterative design

Participatory action research (not to be confused with participatory critical rhetoric) provides the first principle for remaining vulnerable when taking new action with participants. Participatory action research is a multi-disciplinary qualitative method whose key features are “shared ownership of research projects, community-based analysis of social problems, and an orientation toward community action” (Kemmis and McTaggart, 273). Such projects are often visualized with a spiral that moves through time. Taking some community action, then reflecting on it, and then planning another action completes one full loop of the spiral, and leads naturally to another act-reflect-plan cycle. Knowledge is thus conceptualized as embedded within lived participation (Chevalier and Buckles, with parallels to Middleton et al.), and as an iterative process that is at best a local rhetorical response to a specific problem.

Methodologically, this leads to two insights for rhetoricians who want to take new action with people they work with. First, we should view the group’s history of taking action as the ground for future action. In other words, the history of the project almost never begins with the entrance of the researcher. That history is both a constraint on what the group sees as possible to do, but also an inventional resource that directs what kind of actions will emerge. Second, we should expect that taking a single new action with a group will not capture the group’s learning as much as following through a complete act-reflect-plan cycle, or even multiple cycles. This is a methodological reason for a PCR scholar to work with a group for an extended amount of time (see also Chapter 8, on an ethical demand in the Familyfield anti-racism case to be stable as a researcher).

These two principles of iterative design were active in developing our white affinity group as a scaffolding structure. This is summarized in tabular form in **Table 7.1**. This table shows that the white affinity group, the final “action” that I participated in, was a direct outflow of the iterative design we had implemented since the beginning of this project, which itself was a response to actions that Second Pres and First had been taking for the previous few years through joint church services.

Specifically, our iterative design led to certain features of the group that avoid criticisms that have been made of other white affinity groups. One article that Splitsville’s citywide white anti-racist group circulated and agonized over, for instance, argues that:

Today, we have a myriad of predominantly white-led racial justice groups to choose from, with memberships booming thanks to frantic constituents still in shock from the latest political regime change [Trump’s election]. That’s a recipe for disaster; and I’ve personally observed problematic behavior, lack of accountability, and outright anti-Blackness from predominantly white-led groups like Resource Generation (RG),

Act	Joint church services between Second Pres and First Church a few times per year	200x-present
Reflect	The relationship between the two churches still felt like “second cousins”	2015, Feb
Plan	We should build interpersonal relationships between the churches, and talk about Familyfield and the Familyfield Community Farm specifically	2015, May-Jun
Act	Inter-church small group (Ch 1, 3)	2015, Jun-Aug
Reflect	A small group is kind of an artificial way to build relationships. Plus, scheduling a new group between the churches is hard, and there are a lot of people around the Familyfield Community Farm who don’t participate directly (this chapter)	2016, Jan-Mar
Plan	We should take on relationships as they already exist within our contexts, and debrief those (this chapter)	2016, Mar-Jun
Act	White affinity group (Ch 5-6)	2016, July-2017, Mar

Table 7.1 Iterative design used to create the white affinity group

White People Challenging Racism (WPCR), Unitarian Universalist (UU) churches and Association (UUA), Anti-Racism Collaborative (ARC), and Capital Area Against Mass Incarceration (CAAMI)—to name a few. But arguably the most visible (and potentially harmful) white-led anti-racism group in recent years is Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ). (Delgado)

Delgado goes on to argue that many white affinity groups talk about “accountability” to people of color, but in practice don’t have the relationships with people of color to find or sustain people to hold them accountable. Out of 134 SURJ affiliate chapters nationwide (the Splitsville-wide group being one of those affiliates), only 28 responded to her survey, and of those, less than half were able to name a concrete set of people of color who serve as an accountability check for that group of white people.

In this sense, Second Pres’ and First Church’ desire for “relationships,” evident from the first reflection (**Table 7.1**), led to an affinity group that centered the voices of people of color from throughout the month. One way this happened was that each person who joined our group was encouraged to take on some new relational practice, like hiring black workers (Jim) or volunteering at her son’s mostly black elementary school (Aviva). In our design for the group, it was the month of interactions that provided accountability for our monthly meeting, through the group members vocalizing a range of people’s ideas about race as we had encountered them through the month.

Another way we were attempting to be exposed to people of color’s critique, guidance, and reality (see Chapter 8 for my critique of talking about

being “accountable” to people of color) was to draw on the church relationships with black people we already had. In June 2016, Mr. Sparkles from Second Pres led our group, and then in November Kim and Nakita from First Church led it. These times reassured them that our group wasn’t scheming against black people, and it gave us a reference point for times when our group was facilitated by Nikki and Anthony.

■ Collaborative design

A second guideline for PCR scholars is to design new actions collaboratively. Collaborating means that the researcher must not hold tightly to their own ideas. As Cella argues in the context of community literacy, “being vulnerable, letting go of authority, can be an effective way to make sure that the community’s vision is at the center of any project” (Cella et al., 42). Beyond this ethical value of collaboration, there is also a practical aspect that collaboration builds people’s ownership of the project, that it “offers an opportunity to create forums in which people can join one another as coparticipants in the struggle to remake the practices in which they interact” (Kemmis and McTaggart, 563).

Before proposing the white affinity group idea to the Familyfield Community Farm advisory board, I met with most of the people who had participated in the 2015 inter-church conversations and some others.⁵ The two components of our affinity group were generated collaboratively directly from those conversations: first, that each person would commit to some relationship-building activity with African Americans for 2-3 hr/mo, and second, that participants would attend a once a month debrief meeting together, led mostly by Nikki.⁶ Below shows the development of each of these parts.

A. Commit to relationship-building activity with African Americans for 2-3 hr/mo

My conversations with Lena and Mark, and Nikki involved significant collaboration on what people would do during the month. I talked with Lena and Mark over dinner at their house in early February, 2016, Lena suggested that it was a lack of personal relationships that was one cause of Second Pres’ tenuous connection with Familyfield and First Church: “I think that that really could be better—is best going to be addressed by relationships. I think people at—who are involved at Familyfield [Community Farm] maybe need to go spend more time at First Church, possibly.” Familyfield’s and First Church’ embrace of the farm project, she continued, wasn’t so much about the objective benefits of a farm

5 Although most of these conversations were one-on-one, in each one I often referred to the other conversations I was having, which ended up creating a fairly intertextual preparation.

6 Nikki made a good facilitator for our meetings because she was a bridge-builder. As a young (mid-20s) white woman, she could relate to the white people from Second Pres. And yet as someone who lived in Familyfield, worked at the Familyfield Community Farm, had lived in Rwanda, and was an elder at First Church, she had the experience and expertise working with black people (especially those at First Church) that we were looking for. Her skill in helping people debrief is hinted at in the end of the chapter.

(fresh vegetables, productive use of vacant land, etc.), but was rather dependent on the connections that farming could develop between people. The function of personal interracial relationships, then, is to “enable[] people to give each other the benefit of the doubt.” Lena was speaking from experience; our conversation began by her telling me story after story of how she had developed significant relationships with black people, and how getting to situations that “broke the ice” was important to those.

When I talked with Nikki in mid-February 2016, she added to the reasons why intentionally building relationships with people would be helpful: relationships can guide larger, systemic political activity. For Nikki (as I discuss in more detail below), “all structural things, when they boil down, come to relationships.” Relationships, then, are not opposed to structural activism, but are simply structures in miniature.

Finally, I provided the 2-3 hours per month guideline to mirror my own personal (i.e. non-academic) effort to build inter-racial relationships. By early 2016 I had volunteered monthly at the Familyfield food bank that First Church led for more than a year. This was only 2-3 hours per month, but it provided more than enough stories and uncertain encounters for debriefing, and I had also developed very good relationships with the other black volunteers. Here I contributed to the formation of the group, not in this case out of some particularly rhetorical expertise, but simply as someone who already had shared goals with Second Pres.

B. Attend a monthly debriefing meeting together as a group of white people

The second component of our white affinity group—debriefing together as a group of mostly white people—emerged as I collaborated with Charley, Allison, and Sky and Jim. Charley, who is one of three black members at Second Pres, argued that white people should be aware that it is a burden to black people to educate them. In early 2016, we talked on the phone about the inter-church conversations from the year before, of which Charley had only been able to attend the first two of four. In explaining why she takes a less active role in opposing racism, she referred to trauma she had experienced by living most of her life “in white spaces.” Thus, she suggested, “I guess I just hold the belief that, um, a lot of the—a lot of—a lot of the racism that we see as it like manifests today really needs to be addressed by white people.” This is because white people’s ineffectiveness is not from a lack of knowledge, but from a lack of emotional capacity: “I feel like it’s more honest [for white people] to say ‘I feel overwhelmed’ than to say, ‘I don’t know what to do.’” In other words, white people don’t need black people to reveal their oppression more. Rather, white people need to confront each other regarding their emotional fragility and unwillingness to have their lives disrupted by anti-racist activity.

Allison added to this by emphasizing how helpful it is to white people to

have a safe space. I met with Allison at her new house to see whether she would want to participate in the yet-unformed group. She was in a busy season of life—getting married, buying a house in a new neighborhood, finding a new job—so she hadn’t participated in the inter-church conversations the year before, and she didn’t end up participating in the white affinity group. But Allison had a special role in our efforts: she went to the Black Urban Growers (BUGs) conference with me in 2013, which became the intellectual genesis of this project. When Allison and I drove home from the BUGs conference, we had processed extensively with each other about what we had seen and heard. When we met in 2016, we listened to the recording I made of that drive three years earlier. Allison reflected that we had been unknowingly following Charley’s advice by processing together as two white people:

Sat, Jan 30, 2016, 4:25pm

Allison

- 1 [Charley] basically said,
 “You white people need to sort it out yourselves”
 Like, “stop talking to me,
 because I don’t have all of the answers,
 5 I don’t speak for all of the black people,
 I don’t speak for movements of people.
 Go sort it out amongst yourselves,
 like you need to sit down and have a conversation amongst yourselves.”
 And—and I realized that that’s what you and I were really doing,
 10 is we were having that conversation amongst ourselves
 where it was to work out, “Okay, I’m saying this thing,
 I think it’s a little bit offensive but I kinda feel this way,
 and maybe it’s wrong that I feel this way,
 maybe I need to think about that”

In other words, Charley’s recommendation was that white people have a “conversation amongst yourselves” to “work out” (ln 8-9) our subtle racist attitudes, and because Allison and I had done that after BUGs, in that space we were doing significant anti-racist work. A white affinity debriefing group, then, would extend and formalize these white anti-racist conversations.

To show the value of debriefing in a white anti-racist space, Allison went on to give an example of wanting to tell people a story about her recent trip to Russia, where she experienced the white Russians as pretty racist. However, she was hesitant to tell the story in a mixed-race company, because she wasn’t sure what term to use in referring to black people in Russia: “black” seemed too informal (and maybe derogatory), but “African American” was clearly inappropriate for people living in Russia. Thus, she set up one function of intentionally talking to other white people as allowing white people to bracket lexical challenges (since she was confident I wouldn’t be offended regardless of her choice) to get to deeper issues (about, e.g. the global prevalence of white racism). We can see parallels here to the strategy that writers use to intentionally bracket word- and sentence-level issues for the sake of concentrating on global compositional goals (Flower and Hayes, 373). In the same way that writers escape writer’s block by dynamically adjusting the constraints they entertain, white people in Allison’s theory can reduce feeling stuck by having a place where they

can write “shitty rough drafts,” talking about race imperfectly at a local compositional level (Brown).

I summarized her proposal this way: “Some people don’t want to be around black people so they can say whatever offensive things they want with no consequences, but I think {laughs} you’re describing really trying to come at it genuinely, but knowing that you are unsafe to be around.” Allison, that is, inverted the politically recognized function of a “safe space.” Whereas safe spaces are often leveraged as a way for **participants** to escape hearing something inflammatory, a white affinity group would instead help **non-participants** escape being collateral damage from white people’s latent racism.

C. Collaboratively evaluating plans

These collaborative aspects were directed at developing future plans together. Two examples show how we also collaboratively evaluated and instantiated plans as they took shape. First, when I proposed the idea of a debriefing structure to the Familyfield Community Farm advisory board, Aviva commented that I had read the direction of people from Second Pres well: “Well, the only other thing that I want to say, Will, is that within the past week or two, this is almost exactly what’s been on my mind. And we haven’t talked about this, so {laughs}.”

Second, Sky added to Charley’s and Allison’s claims that white affinity groups can be valuable for white people. I met with Sky and her then-new boyfriend Jim for coffee after they had signed up for the group (which was a fully formed idea by this point), and asked them what drew them to join. Sky framed her response in terms of positioning herself in Familyfield:

Thurs, Jun 23, 2016, 10:04am

Sky

1 There’s stuff here [in Familyfield] that I’m not a part of and um,
so I think I wanna, you know, continue to lean into the awareness,
but also figure out what is—what is the balance
between like respecting differences and honoring that,
5 and honoring the safe spaces that we have made for ourselves racially

Waitress You guys need anything?

Sky Nope.

Jim Um, I’ll do a little more coffee, thank you.

10 Because I don’t think white people invading black safe spaces
makes people feel safe. Um,
and just being like, “We’re here to learn!”
and like, “Good for you. We’re here to worship,
or to work, or to—you’re not part of our agenda right now,
so don’t just show up”

For Sky, then, racially segregated spaces already exist (ln 5), both for black and white people. The alternative to embracing a white discussion space, then, is “invading black safe spaces” (ln 9). She colorfully contrasts white people’s eagerness to learn (ln 11) with black people’s orientation to the task/community building at hand (ln 12-14). In other words, when white people invade black spaces for the sake of their own learning, they aren’t just being an emotional burden to those people, à la Charley, they’re also being a distraction.

■ Community-based analysis of social problems

We designed the white affinity group as an outflow of Second Pres' specific historical experiences (i.e. iteratively), and through dialogic interaction among the participants (i.e. collaboratively). Involved in this process was a community-based analysis (Kemmis and McTaggart) of our racial problems—a group-defined theory of what was going wrong racially, and therefore how to measure our success. In other words, this was a local theory of why people were engaging in aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism.

Nikki provided us with the most prominent theory of aspirational rhetoric. For Nikki, white people in our project were stuck because they were “overthinking” it. Overthinking is when people miss good inter-racial interactions out of uncertainty borne from self-critique. For instance, when I told her that walking the streets of Familyfield wasn't leading me to significant encounters with people of color was, her first comment was, “Were you just overthinking it, or what?” That is, she was asking if I was missing opportunities as a result of second-guessing my own walking (“Am I invading a black space? Am I walking at the wrong time? Am I not dressed the right way? Am I not starting conversations well?”). As another example, in our very first debriefing meeting, Aviva would note how slowly her idea was going of starting a summer reading group for her son and his classmates at the Familyfield Community Farm. “I don't know if I'm overthinking it,” she summarized. In other words, Aviva's anxiety might be an overcompensation of internalizing critique; perhaps in the process she was missing a simple, positive opportunity to interact inter-racially.

The most obvious part of “overthinking” is that it happens within being-exposed. Overthinking is not a lack of hearing principles of anti-racism. Rather, when white people “overthink it,” they want to be responsive to people of color while also doing that perfectly. Nikki hypothesizes that it is this very combination that makes people stuck. Her analysis suggests that people should avoid overthinking it by maintaining responsiveness to people of color but dropping a need for closure. “How much can you really, like, think about it strategic? And how much do you just, like, open your heart, and be a person, and just trust that it'll be received?” Nikki was arguing that a process of anti-racist engagement is indeed a rhetorical art; it is uncertain, contingent, involving “open[ing]” and “trust[ing].” And specifically, a debriefing group opens up deliberation about a situation to a group rather than to an internal stalemate.

The counterpart to “overthinking” as the negative aspect of aspirational rhetoric is that people need to seek and accept grace when they fail. This is why Aviva thinks that the church is an appropriate place to learn anti-racism. She expressed this to me in an elegant explanation of her desire to be “foolish.” I came to her house to process the inter-church conversations from the summer before and begin planning something new. We talked while her kids napped. The inter-church conversations, she reflected, were disappointing for not leading her to deep relationships with people from First Church, but they had sharpened and

refocused her desires.

First, Aviva gave a Biblical argument for how and why white people can develop responsiveness even when they don't receive closure. Often in the Bible, "fool" is negative; in Proverbs, for instance, "fool" is consistently used to describe someone who doesn't follow God. But when Aviva says, "I want to be more willing to be foolish," she is instead alluding to a New Testament inversion: that even though people who believe God's message of redemption are foolish in the eyes of their contemporaries, it just shows that God's foolishness is wiser than humankind (1 Cor 1:25). For Aviva, then, following God generally requires a person to be foolish, to be misrecognized. Similarly, Aviva suggests, white people need to abandon the safe judgments of other people and venture into acting with less certainty. Just as a Christian's foolishness is disorienting, so a Christian white person's anti-racism is embarrassing. This logic places anti-racism as an extension of Christian living. It also grounds anti-racist failure in radical prior acceptance—being "loved by God"; being "beloved." As Christians, Aviva, argues, white people don't need to fear inconclusive anti-racist action.

Then, Aviva expounded on what white people can accomplish if they develop interdependence on people of color. Here, the inversion required to seek foolishness anticipates an inversion of racial status: to "allow the tables to turn, essentially," such that the voices of people of color are "elevate[d]" above white people's. Overall, this yielding and deference results in "more equality"; broadly, Aviva hopes "good will come of it." Here the ends of racial equality are embedded in the means of inverted racial status, which is accomplished by white people embracing uncertainty in the midst of applying new racial heuristics.

Self-defining a problem leads to self-defined criteria for success. If the problem is that white people in the project tended to "overthink" anti-racist action, then the solution would be for white people to practice mustering enough courage to respond to people of color without certainty. A discursive scaffold, then, is successful insofar as it develops people's capacity to welcome new (i.e. uncertain) encounters with people of color. This puts into place the dictum used by other white anti-racist organizers: "Don't expect closure." Chapters 5 and 6 examine our small group in these terms.

■ A relational theory of change

Two other principles were at play in designing the white affinity group, more subtle than an iterative, collaborative, self-defined process, and more closely connected to anti-racism specifically. The first principle is that we should be conscious of our underlying theory of how people change. Many community efforts focus on establishing common goals; in our case where we had a rhetorical aim in mind regarding our own capacities, we found ourselves talking more about how our next steps would help us get there. A theory of change is a working hypothesis about how an activity will bring about the changes that a group is looking for (Shapiro, 5).

Theories of change are especially important in anti-racism effort where there are so many theories of change:

Training program	Theory of change (Shapiro et al.)
People's Institute for Survival and Beyond	Challenge and motivate people to change. Provide a common analytical frame work for community organizing. Develop new, accountable leadership.
National Coalition Building Institute	Individual change comes from self-awareness, emotional discharge, and new skills and behavioral options. Relationship change comes from hearing people's experiences of oppression, recognizing common ground, and building alliances and coalitions.
VISIONS	Awareness of one's own attitudes, emotions and behaviors; ongoing contact with own and other groups, recognizing and appreciating differences. Understanding behavioral alternatives. Ongoing or sustained work within communities and organizations resulting in redistributions of power at personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural levels.
A World of Difference Institute	Self-awareness. New behavioral options. Critical examination of social messages. New knowledge and appreciation of cultural differences. Individual change and action.
Crossroads Ministry	Institutional commitment to change. Internal change in institutional culture, identity and purpose. Racial-justice analytical framework. Accountable institutional leadership.
Study Circles Resource Center	Interpersonal and intergroup contact. Sharing personal stories and experiences. Finding common ground and building trusting, cooperative relationships. A critical mass of individuals and citizen coalitions create structural change.
Hope in the Cities	Sharing groups' experiences of oppression. New information, personal reflection and vulnerability to emotions leads to individual transformation. Rituals and symbols foster large group and social change. Recognizing common humanity helps build relationships across groups. Resilient relationships create social change.
Dismantling Racism Institute	Change comes through a cycle of liberation that empowers individuals through introspection and education, empowers and motivates communities through alliances, and transforms institutions and communities through leadership and social action.
Challenging White Supremacy Workshop	Critical analysis of political, social, and economic conditions creates new consciousness. Informal network of anti-racist leadership helps organize change. Use grassroots, anti-racist organizing strategies. Strategic collaborations with activists of color. Ongoing dialogue, action and reflection on racial justice efforts. Organize grassroots, multi-racial revolution.
White People Working on Racism	Cognitive and emotional self-awareness and self acceptance leads to more effective action. Address barriers and form support networks. Develop skills and plan individual and grassroots, non-violent social action.

Table 7.2 Theories of change in various training programs, adapted from Shapiro, et al.

Out of the planning conversations that I had, I would glean a three-part theory of change operative in determining the contours of our group:

Second Pres white affinity group	Relationships with people of color give white people opportunity for intentional exposure to uncertainty. Reflecting on those experiences provides opportunity for rhetorical learning. God helps people know what to do in the moment
----------------------------------	--

Table 7.3 Second Pres' theory of change in the white affinity group

The most succinct description of these aspects came when I met with Nikki to plan the group. She explained her theory of change mostly in a secular register of “intentional exposure” and “reflection,” as part of her understanding of how people learn in general:

- Mon, Feb 13, 2016, 11:37am
Nikki
- 1 The piece that's most important is just exposure.
It's intentional exposure, and then reflecting on that exposure.
Will Yeah
- 5 Like, that to me is how you learn everything.
Um, and so the debrief would be part of that reflective exposure
Yeah
and so me being there
and then a counterpart, like the Familyfield counterpart being there,
would just be there to, like—if someone saw
10 something that made no sense, or even heard a phrase, like,
that made no sense to them,
it's just to be that quick, kind of like, “Oh, here's what that means”
Uh huh
to kind of know, um.

Intentional exposure, in turn, comes through individual friendships that are established in mutuality. This is similar to recent community writing scholarship that has centered relationships in collaborative enterprises. Mathieu suggests:

I think a key term in community writing should be relationships. What I value, and what I find so beautiful, humbling and awe-inspiring about the community work I've studied and participated in is both the power and fragility of relationships. When relationships are strong and vital, even the most impossible project can succeed in astonishing ways. And when human relationships break down, even well-structured projects can falter or cease (Mathieu, in Cella et al., 46-47)

In our planning for a white affinity group structure, Nikki and I planned for each person to intentionally take on some new relational activity that was already needed by First Church' community. Because these were already needed, Nikki hoped that white people wouldn't be able to hold onto their privilege while engaging them. For instance, Nikki and I, and later the Familyfield Community Farm advisory board brainstormed that people could give driving lessons to teens we knew in Familyfield, do yard work for people, visit with elderly First Church members during the winter, volunteer with First Church' food bank or First Church' kids summer camp, or work alongside adjudicated youth at the Familyfield Community Farm. (As I describe in Chapter 6, this idea sadly didn't

take as well as we imagined it, and members of the group tended to report back on interracial activities they were already engaged in, which usually wasn't with people from First Church.) In all of these ideas, anti-racist opportunities for engagement came from interpersonal relationships and the systems that those were embedded in.

Finally, Nikki bid to have a spiritual component to our theory of change. She added this when restating her conception of the group to me.

15 But yeah, the exposure and reflection solves it all,
 and just {laughs} going in the spirit of Christ,
 I mean that is all you need.

Her addition of “going in the spirit of Christ” (ln 16) to “exposure” and “reflection” shows Nikki’s tight integration of spiritual and secular learning (with a laugh that I took to acknowledge her register shift and the simplicity of her spiritual formulation). It also calls the rhetorical skill of implementing broad racial guidelines in specific situations a **spiritual** skill of listening to God’s direction. Honestly, I was never able to relate to this, as it seemed to sell the rhetorical skills short or cast it as a spiritual deficit. When the group began, other participants had the same challenge, which Nikki picked up on. In our August debriefing meeting, after checking in that we were all Christians, she pointedly asked us:

Monday, Aug 22, 2016 8:21pm
Nikki
1 How—in the times where it’s comfortable.
 and the times where you’re overthinking it
 (like, talking about navigating and needing to know the right answer.
 like, “I need to be super strategic about this or I’m going to be rude.”)
5 Like, where does God fit in with that?
 Like, in grace and prayer and like trusting spiritual movement,
 Like, have you guys—has that been something that’s been a part of this?
 Just, like, praying for direction and
 just, like, going with the Spirit where you feel led? I mean, how—
10 are there any stories of that?

Here, Nikki begins with an “overthinking” situation, and throws out a wide range of spiritual terms hoping that we would grab on: God, grace, prayer, trust, spiritual movement, praying, direction, going with the Spirit, being led by the Spirit. These were part of Nikki’s theory of change that never became part of the group’s shared understanding. However, our common Christian beliefs made this component available; we respected it and were open to it.

■ Taking action affectively

Because white men can’t
police their imaginations,
black men are dying
—Claudia Rankine

Claudia Rankine’s haiku speaks out about how white society has deceived itself emotionally. Police—especially police who kill black men—aren’t containing

black people's deviance; they are a nightmarish turning loose of white people's fear, anger, and hatred of black people. To follow Rankine's line of thought, it is thus white people's affective deficiencies that underlie and perpetuate oppression toward people of color. White people's response to racism, then, must also engage themselves affectively. In this final section of considering our process of taking new action together, how did we design the white affinity group to help participants deal with the affective component of anti-racism?

Although the question is easy to pose, it goes against the grain of academic work on affect. **Figure 7.2** shows three frequent positions regarding affect, and the points of overlap that participants in this project took. These are discussed below.

A. Finding a place affectively

The budding field of affect studies has often described affect as external "forces" that only become "emotions" when they are contaminated by language and signification (Massumi; Rice; Siegworth and Gregg; Gross). This gives affect an independence and priority from other systems. For instance, in Sianne Ngai's book *Ugly Feelings*, each chapter is devoted to a negative emotion (envy, irritation, anxiety, etc.) Her effort is to show how these are not naturally "problems" but become such through social processes and discourses of control. Studies of affect, then, often hope to reclaim the validity of socially dispreferred feelings in order to imagine alternative social arrangements. But this is challenging to apply to the white anti-racist case. People at Second Pres don't want their stuckness regarding anti-racism to be vindicated; they want to change. Scholars of affect, meanwhile, don't want to change or scaffold people's affect, because that gives too much control to rational, linguistic processes.

Alternatively, the approach of Martin Luther King's "white moderate" is to consider racialized emotions as a neutral force that white people can leverage to assist the cause of ending prejudice. By consuming books, movies, songs, news outlets, and other media that take up themes of equality, white people can empathically participate in anti-racism by feeling sadness at mass incarceration, pity for the humble homeless black man, sympathy for single black mothers, disgust toward racist police, etc. Racialized emotions are thus a commodity that sensitive white audiences buy in order to perform an emotionally engaged progressive political identity. At a structural level, this is a racial version of consumer activism—the philosophy that if enough people consume the right media, then the media will have to represent people of color more positively. Racialized emotions are harmful, in this view, when white people feel any variants of anger and blame toward people of color, because it empathically pits people of color's struggle against them. A scaffold, then, would help someone "harness," "channel," "manage," "handle," "control," "get a hold of," or "keep" these negative emotions "in check" in order to sustain emotional reverence for people of color.

To correct for the white moderate's emotional instrumentality and weak

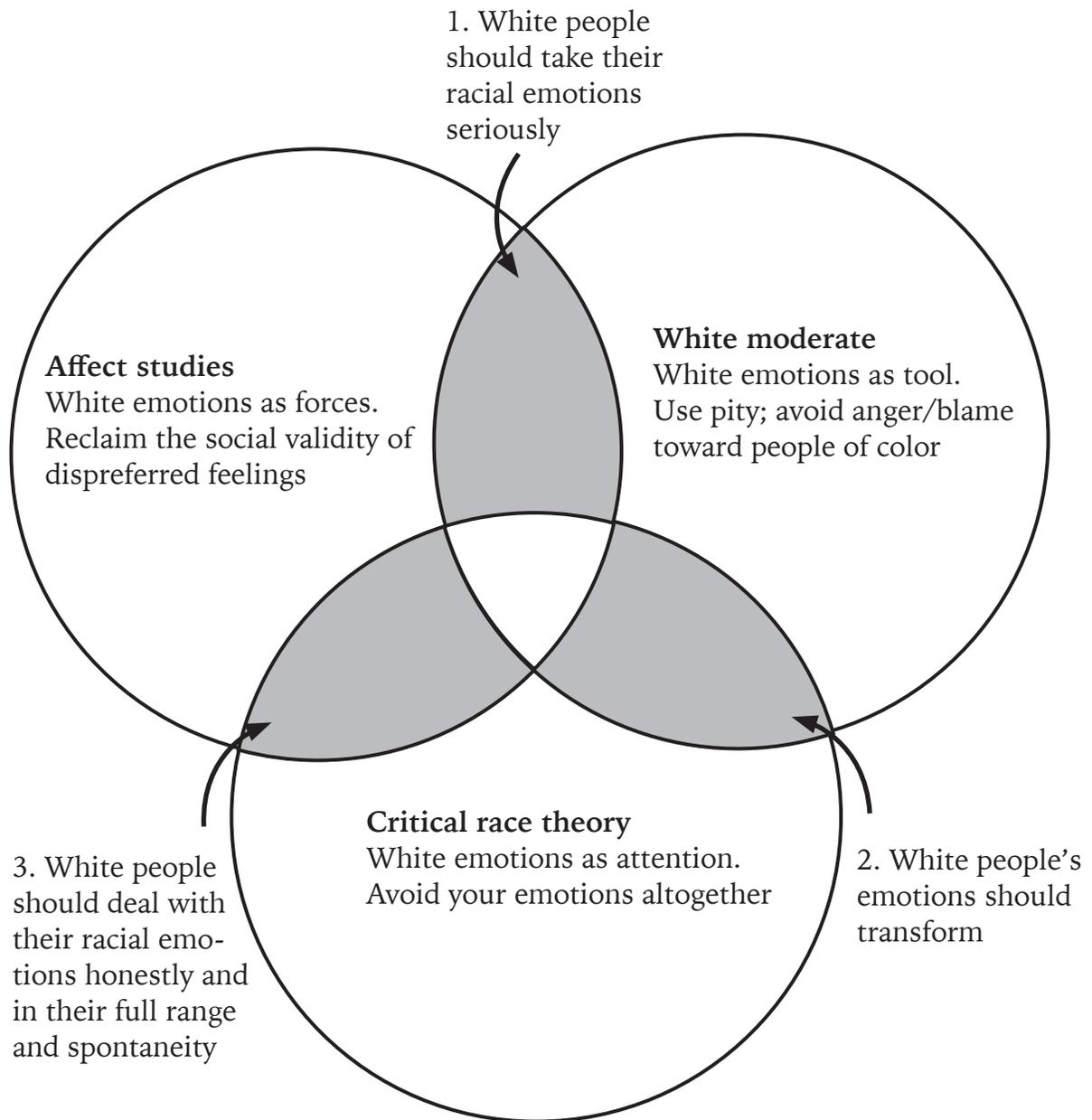


Figure 7.2 Three perspectives on affect regarding race, and three areas of overlap (gray) that our group drew on.

vision for activism, critical race theorists imply that white people should avoid their emotions altogether. When white people feel racialized feelings (even ones they don't acknowledge, see Anderson on "white rage"), they can change the conversational focus from injustice and oppression, which are centered on people of color, to their own negative emotions, centered on themselves. This attention-grabbing reveals their "white fragility" (DiAngelo), and is unhelpful to anti-racist efforts. As Hardy puts it, "Tell them that their delicate feelings and comfort level are irrelevant when lives are at stake." Rhetoricians have echoed this concern more broadly. Mari Boor Tonn takes as her point of departure "the increasing [in the 1990s] casting of social controversies such as affirmative action, escalating crime, and welfare reform in the language of 'conversation,' 'dialogue,' and the therapeutic talk of healing, dysfunction, coping, self-esteem, and empowerment" (Tonn, 405). Tonn argues that this therapeutic, conversational model of social change is counterproductive because it 1) expends people's energy without a clear goal (i.e. people are "just talking"); and 2) deals with systemic problems in an individualistic way (408). That is, both critical race scholars and rhetoricians fear that affective labor done by people in dominant social positions comes at the expense of transforming systems and the people in them. In this view, an appropriate scaffold would simply help a white person "overcome," or "push aside," or "get over" their feelings. Racialized emotions are figured as hurdles that are in the way of someone making significant personal and structural changes.⁷

Our white affinity group was shaped by a triple conviction that synthesizes and modifies these perspectives (gray overlaps in **Figure 7.2**).

First, in congruence with affect studies and the white moderate approach, but contra critical race theorists, we planned our group with the belief that **white people should take their racial emotions seriously**. Emotions should be taken seriously because they impact how long people will do something, and because they make up that thing in itself. This conviction is at the heart of identifying an aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism in the first place (see the opening to Chapter 1). Taking racial emotions seriously is an empirically rooted conclusion that comes from observing that white people's emotions do impact how they approach anti-racism (whether they should or not); moreover, that for some people at Second Pres, a feeling of being stuck is the limiting factor for their anti-racist efforts.

Thus, taking emotions seriously means differing from critical race theory. When I presented the white affinity group idea to the Familyfield Community Farm advisory board, Nick argued that a debriefing structure meant that we would not be grabbing attention back to ourselves: "if anything, like, there's no merit badge. There's no—there's no, like, prize at the end." Because the group

⁷ Sometimes there is also a punitive undertone to this. After all, black slaves weren't allowed to "process their emotions" about assimilating into a white-owned country, so white people shouldn't see that as a need either.

was externally focused through relationships with people of color, Nick argued, they would be our focus. Attending to our emotions would be for that purpose. Thus, we hypothesized that white people can take their emotions seriously without making a self-centered attention grab.

Second, in line with the white moderate's approach and the critical race approach, but contra affect studies, we believed that **white people's emotions should transform**. White people should look for their emotions to change over time because emotions are one part of a Christian whose whole being is moving toward being more like Christ. When Aviva and I met with Pastor Robert before launching the group, in late May 2016, at one point I used the metaphor of our emotions "pooling," indicating inertness and quantity. Pastor Robert picked up on that and extended it to make "pooling" a metaphor of people's emotions being part of a person's ecosystem: "I like the image of pooling, which also feels like stagnant and, like, overwhelming, and not really clean." In contrast to this emotional uncleanness, Pastor Robert argued that "what we [Second Pres] need is transformation."

Pastor Robert's image of an emotional ecosystem is not the affect/reason binary that affect studies presents. In the ecosystem metaphor, emotions are naturally present and interact with other systems in a networked way. But an ecosystem is always healthy or unhealthy; "stagnant" emotions attract bacteria and sickness. Emotions are thus important in themselves and also as carriers for unhealthy habits. They are points of intervention for transforming and better supporting the health of a person's emotional, spiritual, physical, material, rational ecosystem.

Finally, similar to affect studies and critical race theory, but contra the white moderate, we believed that **white people should deal with their racial emotions honestly and in their full range and spontaneity**. Emotions should be dealt with honestly because white people confronting their own dark emotional responses creates a better foundation for them to interact with people of color and be transformed. People of color are no strangers to white racism; so for white people to have encountered anti-black impulses in themselves goes further toward being part of right relationships with people of color than conjuring up a spotless self-image does. When I talked with Charley, emotional honesty took center stage:

Tuesday, Jan 26, 2016 6:35pm

Charley, by phone

- 1 [For white people] it's just moreso about, like,
Am I willing to go out of my comfort zone to do those things?
Am I willing to commit to those things?
Am I willing to make mistakes and be corrected?
- 5 Like—so I feel like it's more honest to say "I feel overwhelmed"
than to say, "I don't know what to do."
Or I—or I—or "I'm scared."
Will Mm
- 10 or "I'm not willing,"
or you know, whatever, I just don't know if
[saying you don't know what to do]'s the most honest thing

It is notable that Charley asks white people for emotionally honesty more than for a particularly well developed activist stance. Emotional honesty in its full range, including feeling stuck or scared (ln 8) or unwilling (ln 10), she argues, is what can lead people to evaluate and work on their capacity for racial discomfort (ln 2), commitment (ln 3), and humility (ln 4). This differs from the white moderate's desire not to acknowledge any negative emotions toward black people.

B. Affective position in action

In terms of the design of the white affinity group, two debriefing times that happened spontaneously before the group began showed promise for how a debriefing structure could help transform white people's emotions while being honest in the full range of emotions and taking them seriously. First, when I met with Allison in early 2016, we happened to work through how to apply the heuristic "white people need to divest themselves of privilege and white supremacy" that we had learned at the BUGs conference. Three years later, this was still causing Allison to feel stuck and "overthink it." To illustrate, Allison introduced a hypothetical scenario of being pulled over for speeding. Stereotypically, she noted, as a white woman she would be likely to get only a figurative "smack on the hand" in contrast to black men. This was a place where white privilege then was operative; how could a person "divest" herself of that? "I'm not going to say to a police officer, 'Well, you'd better search me and I really deserve a ticket,'" she noted, because that would be "completely irrational." Her frustration, confusion, and exasperation were evident to me as I listened to her, but rather than shut those down as disrespectful to black people or redirect the conversation away from our own reactions, I kept talking with her about it. I cautiously suggested that perhaps what society considers "rational" and "irrational" is itself subject to racism, and noted that in the Bible Jesus calls people into actions that would be considered irrational. In other words, I was pushing Allison to pursue transformation of her affective response, venturing beyond certainty in applying the racial heuristics that we had learned.

Allison really took my small push to heart, beginning a remarkable exploration of the rhetorical possibilities for divesting herself of white privilege.

First she reiterated her initial idea, of asking for a ticket when being pulled over for doing something wrong, and rejected that—not because it's irrational, this time, but because it wouldn't create the desired effect on the police officer: "I just don't think the police officer would know what to do with that." Then she reworked her initial formulation, introducing a sense of justice: "{sigh} I'm trying to think how to phrase it. 'You—you need to do what's fair.'" She revised it again to the idea of deserving a ticket: "If you have to write me a ticket, because I deserve a ticket, okay."

But as she briefly evaluated her progress, this wasn't satisfactory either, because she noted that the general speech act of communicating don't-treat-me-special-because-I'm-white hasn't yet been accomplished. At the same time, she

doesn't want to "accuse" the officer. "Maybe he's actively thought through all of these things, and is—you know, I don't know him or her."

Finally, Allison goes back to defining what action she wants to accomplish in speaking: "I would also want to use it as a moment of 'Hey, you—you should make sure that you're not giving me special privileges.'" This ends up leading toward a new script for herself that she seemed fairly happy with: "'Yes, I was speeding, I'm really sorry, I know I don't deserve any special privileges.' Maybe that's the—maybe that's the response."

Through this inventional process, I didn't say anything, even while Allison paused an immense amount of time (e.g. after she finished, we left a full 15 seconds of silence in case she wanted to add on.)

In this debriefing experience, I note that I gave only a small push, but managed to dislodge competing heuristics enough that Allison could re-engage. On her own, Allison was stuck, having not been able to make any progress in the last few years about it. Moreover, Allison's rhetorical thinking was from the beginning sophisticated, contextual, audience-oriented. Finally, although Allison had a somewhat conclusive final phrase "maybe that's the response" (my emphasis), I would suggest that she's actually thinking quite provisionally, treating this formula as something to be acted on and potentially revised again later. And most importantly, the formula she lands on allows her to be responsive to a heuristic that felt literally unreasonable before: that white people divest themselves of privilege. Crucially, our conversation didn't seem to solve her **uncertainty**. If I had to guess at her emotions afterward it seemed something like resolve, possibility, and hopefulness. Allison's transformation was rapid, self-propelled, rhetorically savvy, emotionally engaged, and relatively complete; it thus stood as an ideal or prototype for what a white affinity group could offer to people.⁸

A second example of debriefing uncertain racial experiences without a formal structure shows how reciprocal debriefing could be, and suggests that it is the structure of seeking input and transformation that is determinative rather than the capacities of the people present. In my time with Allison, I may have seemed like an expert, but when I proposed the affinity group idea to the Familyfield Community Farm's advisory board, I was the subject of debriefing myself and experienced how affirming and encouraging it can be. To agree with Aviva's comment that "it's okay for it [relationships] to be awkward and uncomfortable and weird at first," Nikki prompted me to tell a story I had told her before. I duly recounted with self-deprecating humor: when I had just moved to Familyfield (two years earlier by this point), a group of black teenagers worked for sev-

8 This isn't to say this is the "perfect" response; indeed, the concept of responsiveness suggests that there cannot be a perfect response. As my colleague Ana Cooke beautifully commented when reading a draft of this passage: "Seems like privilege starts before we get pulled over, when we leave the house, w/o looking around to see if any cops are following us. Can I authentically generate fear + paranoia in myself that might imitate that experience? I have often wondered this when trying to explain to white men the sense of being afraid while walking down the street and then realized: there is no way for them to 'get' this because the privilege pervades their experience + shapes mine before I ever even leave the house."

eral days to clear away knotweed from the lot next to the house I was living in. I wanted to get to know them as a community-building gesture, but didn't know how, so I just stood awkwardly on the sidewalk hoping to strike up a conversation. Eventually the adult leader of the group, Mr. Mike, felt too uncomfortable and banned me from talking to them. Everyone at the meeting laughed at this low note in the story, and although I described it humorously, I still felt ambivalent and like a failure. But Johanna, who had lived in Familyfield for more than 15 years, and Nikki, who was going to lead our group, chimed in to coach me:

Mon, Apr 11, 2016, 7:40pm

Nikki

1 I just love—I mean, give yourself props, Will

Johanna No, seriously

I mean that's great determination,
and keep going out there and doing this,

5 it's so great, it's so good

Johanna Awesome

When I had first told the story to Nikki, she had taught me some practical moves: I could have offered the teens water, or cooked them hot dogs. I mentioned those in my retelling to show that I remembered, and Nikki and Johanna cautioned me that even if I had known what to do, Mr. Mike still might have banned me. In other words, although it was good for me to know what I could have done, “success” in my small relational anti-racism didn't lie in the outcome of the interaction, but in the effort to put myself in an uncomfortable, vulnerable situation around race. Similarly, in the context of the conversation, Nikki had framed my story as providing an example of how it was okay for relationships to be awkward and weird at first. Rather than failing, I was being characterized as modeling an appropriate uncertainty and responsiveness.

I transitioned then to the second part of my story, in which, when Mr. Mike banned me, I asked him if he could give me information about volunteering with the organization he was with, Familyfield Jubilee. He was hesitant, but I was persistent in getting in touch with Familyfield Jubilee, and once I became a GED tutor with them, Mr. Mike came to trust me. Again, Nikki encouraged me to focus on the arc of the story: “See? That is a great redemptive story, you should be proud of that story.”

Indeed, “that story” was hard fought, and happened over the course of more than a year. I had never thought that an embarrassing story like that could be something to be proud of. In fact, it would be pretentious to ever assess myself as having shown “great determination” (ln 3)—that needed to come from a group that I trusted in their pursuit of anti-racism. Letting the group evaluate my experience, then, was a way to distribute my sanity or my meaning-making processes. Through this debriefing interaction, I felt a level of clarity and purpose in that experience that I had never felt before. Like Allison, my uncertainty was not solved (except in the small sense of having better strategies for welcoming people when living in a black neighborhood); but my emotional experience of that interaction was transformed into a life-giving, healthy part of my self-as-

ecosystem. It was our hope that a debriefing scaffold would extend this more broadly and make it a regular part of our racial experiences.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has worked to extend participatory critical rhetoric (PCR) in order for scholars to take new action with people. Participatory critical rhetoric, I've suggested, can draw on its nuanced participatory epistemology to incorporate scholars taking new action with people, even new action to build discursive scaffolds. In the process, and especially in a racial context, this chapter has described how to embrace vulnerability in the research process. To a surprising extent, I stand by the working hypotheses that emerged from this collaborative planning. These weren't simply imported from my own reading—if it had been up to me, I would have been using an overwrought problem analysis based in speech act theory. Thankfully, this didn't resonate with people as I talked with them, and I didn't insist on it. But neither did I tag along shaking my head and tsking people for not following a certain theorist's plan. Being vulnerable means being willing to change yourself. Our reason-giving was negotiated and bi-directional, and over time I bought into many new aspects of the proposed debriefing scaffold that people from Second Pres had advocated for.

What people came up with, then, stands as an interesting possibility for other groups to try, from a scholarly and practical perspective. People who use aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism can create a white affinity group (to honor existing racially homogenous spaces, and to give white people space to loosen certain discursive constraints), that is structured around relationships (to embed being-shaped by people of color into any conversation), with an ecosystem understanding of emotions (to both recognize and challenge white people's emotional responses), to welcome new encounters with people of color despite uncertainty (i.e. without closure, remaining un-sutured). The white affinity group that actually came to be out of this planning is analyzed in Part III.

At a broader level, this chapter suggests that scholars are not exempt from being exposed to critique, guidance, and uncertainty ourselves. The epistemological innovations in participatory critical rhetoric emerge from critiques that much of academic research is abstract, useless for people's praxis, inaccessible, and to the extent that it even interacts with real people, benefits the scholar more than it does the people who are being worked with. These concerns are taken up in terms of research ethics in the next chapter. Here the five aspects presented intentionally diminish the authority of the scholar, and create more self-involvement for the scholar in field-based work.

Chapter 8

A field-based rhetorical critique of ethical accountability

Carnegie Mellon University promotes the responsible conduct of research through high standards of ethics and accountability in planning, conducting and reporting research. The responsible conduct of research is demonstrated through behavior that meets generally accepted standards. These standards are set forth by state and federal regulations, institutional policies, professional codes of conduct and personal convictions. The building blocks of responsible conduct of research include:

- Honesty - conveying information truthfully and honoring commitments,
- Accuracy- reporting findings precisely and taking care to avoid errors,
- Efficiency- using resources wisely and avoiding waste, and
- Objectivity- letting the facts speak for themselves and avoiding improper bias

—CMU web page, “Responsible Conduct of Research”

Taking ethics seriously draws rhetoricians to reflect on and account for the process of what we do when we collect and analyze textual and field data and the politics inherent in that process. Doing this accounting work increases the openness and vulnerability of our scholarship as it allows others access to the methodological process, which provides space for further conversation and critique.

—McKinnon, et al., “Rhetoric and Ethics Revisited”

These two explanations of ethical research conduct, one from Carnegie Mellon’s website and the other from a recent article in *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, represent very different approaches to research ethics. The university text espouses a conservative view of research ethics, taking a high view of institutions: it constructs ethical action as a relatively settled matter that responsible people all agree on, which trickles down from the State, to the university, to the discipline, and finally to the individual, and thereby presupposes that universities can be straightforward agents of ethical conduct. In contrast, the rhetorical research text advocates for what is called variously a postcolonial, decolo-

nial, anti-racist, or feminist view of research ethics¹: it constructs ethical action as naturally opaque to those with social power, and therefore as being inherently political (i.e. potentially at odds with institutionalized ethics), requiring serious ongoing attention to do well, and necessarily including reshaping who has access to ethical decision-making processes. These different views of ethics lead to different ethical practices being recommended: the university text, making sense of the world through an objectivist lens, recommends that researchers pursue as a moral good what is true, error-free, efficient, and unbiased; while the field-based text recommends that researchers take a quite different stance of openness and vulnerability.

Rhetorical work, especially field-based rhetorical work,² has almost universally sided with the postcolonial approach to ethical action, and has viewed its different recommended actions as a corrective to the conservative stance. But however different the recommended actions are, both explanations above unobtrusively describe a goal of “accountability,” and both use accountability syntactically as a gloss of or equivalent to “ethics” itself. That is, from this small sketch, the endpoint of postcolonial ethical action is articulated as being the same as traditional research ethics. I suggest that this is not an isolated case or poorly worded gaffe, but is a pattern, a discourse of ethical accountability that invites rhetorical attention and critique. This chapter, in other words, investigates how we articulate what a postcolonial research ethic is *for*. The stakes of this question are high: if postcolonial ethical actions like “vulnerability” are shoehorned into the goal of holding ourselves “accountable,” I suggest that we lose a more radical and thoroughgoing reordering of our social relationships, i.e. a more radical and thoroughgoing ethics. By approaching the question at the level of naming an ethical end, we can align the goal of postcolonial research ethics with the ethical actions that people and institutions already (haltingly) undertake.

The essay proceeds in five parts. To begin, I examine recent field-based rhetorical scholarship (McKinnon et al.; Rai; Cintron; Middleton, et al.; McCreavy, et al.; Hess; Pezzullo; Middleton; LeMesurier; Endres and Senda-Cook; Senda-Cook) that theorizes research ethics through a postcolonial lens. According to McKinnon et al., rhetorical field-based scholarship is at the forefront of rhetorically theorizing research ethics (McKinnon et al., *Text + Field*, 18). That is, scholars who work through ethical questions interpersonally in the context of fieldwork are positioned to speak to questions of relevance that rhetoric scholars

1 See, for instance, bell hooks, who characterizes these in relation to the “foundation” of our nation’s politics: “I often use the phrase ‘imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy’ to describe the interlocking political systems that are the foundation of our nation’s politics” (*Will to Change*, 17). I use “postcolonial” to refer to these broadly, although I often focus on how a postcolonial research ethic must undermine white supremacy culture specifically. For catalogues of rhetorical strategies that white people use to maintain cultural supremacy, see e.g. Nakayama and Krizek; ones et al.

2 McKinnon et al. define the field as “the nexus where rhetoric is produced, where it is enacted, where it circulates, and, consequently, where it is audienceed” (*Text + Field*, 4). Rhetoric observed in the field is also sometimes called “in situ” rhetoric (McHendry et al.).

have about research ethics more broadly. After all, despite the general affirmation that research ethics is a concern of rhetorical scholarship,³ ethics is an understudied, almost taboo, area for regular discussion (Middleton et al., *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 137); research ethics “has not been a central preoccupation” (McKinnon et al., *Text + Field*, 197, note 76). for rhetoric scholars. This review highlights two recommended ethical practices, of rhetoric scholars reincorporating their own and others’ corporeality in their research texts, and rhetoric scholars carrying out research projects with “reflexivity.” Rhetoric scholars working in the field, then, make a powerful case that research ethics is relevant to all scholars, and explain concrete practices in the field and on the page that correspond to a postcolonial awareness that scholars are embedded within systems of historical oppression based on race, gender, class, and more. At the same time, I show that this same scholarship almost always articulates the goal of such ethical action with a discourse of accountability.

I then move to two critiques of accountability being an ethical end. First, based on a case study from a recent field-based rhetorical research project, I describe an aspect of that project that I experienced as an ethical dilemma, but that is not legible as a dilemma within a discourse of accountability. I then provide a more theoretical critique of a discourse of accountability, arguing that accountability is at odds with postcolonial efforts. One way to view the promise of accountability is as a bargain in which people receive recompense for wrongs, in exchange for allowing colonizers to reclaim a clean conscience. A discourse of ethical accountability, then, relies on a traditional vision of a self-sufficient rhetor, allowing us to critique accountability on rhetorical grounds and identify several areas in which it fails us ethically.

To provide a rhetorically more complete alternative, I turn to Diane Davis, whom I consider rhetoric’s foremost scholar of vulnerability. Her concept of rhetoricity, which is often taken up as a purely theoretical claim *that* people are interconnected, can be extended to provide grounds for people to pursue a sense of our interconnectedness. I call this a pursuit of our interdependence, and suggest that it provides a rhetorical telos for research ethics that is rooted in responding to others (an inversion of our usual attention to persuading others).

In the final section, I return to the case study to see how pursuing interdependence as an ethical standard transforms ethical dilemmas. When interdependence is our ethical goal, it leads us to expect that dilemmas will characterize our fieldwork, and that our ethical task is to embrace this interdependence on multiple parties rather than seek to be justified. I introduce the practice of “ethical lament” (an expression of grief before/with others so as to be both present to the moment and open to critique) as a textual way to embrace our interdependence, and describe creative, inventional (i.e. rhetorical) ways to respond in the field to dilemmas we face.

³ Wayne Booth enjoins rhetoricians/readers to consider their ethical responsibilities to the authors of the texts they analyze, to themselves, and to society, 134-136.

A DISCOURSE OF ETHICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

In the epigraph, postcolonial ethical action includes “openness” and “vulnerability.” In this section, I give a more thorough account of the ethical actions recommended by postcolonial rhetorical scholars working in the field, and identify how these compelling actions are nevertheless articulated as pursuing the goal of accountability. This prepares the way for a critique of accountability in the next two sections.

Postcolonial approaches to rhetorical fieldwork draw on anthropological research on ethnographic methods and iterate on rhetorical work in critical rhetoric (McKerrow; McGee; Ono and Sloop).⁴ At their heart, postcolonial approaches seek to displace the neutrality and presumed morality of people who operate with social power. With regard to the history of ethnography, for instance, de la Garza notes that the earliest ethnographers attended explorers like Hernán Cortés, and were sponsored by the state to document colonial conquests and encounters with native peoples. Although these proto-ethnographers did provide detailed facts and cultural insights, their documents generally “were written in order to justify, legitimize, and perpetuate the colonization of those about whom the texts were written” (78). That is, we would be mistaken to envision an innocent birth of ethnography, or to think that the researcher’s methods, intentions, and scholarly impact can be cleanly separated from the structural inequities that make ethnography possible. Conquergood adds that when Malinoski and others in the 1920s began formalizing ethnography, the method naturally participated in the colonialist project; thus, ethnography presents “a particularly sensitive site for registering the aftershocks of critical theory” (Conquergood, “Rethinking Ethnography,” 179).

Within rhetorical theory, a postcolonial research approach (which, in light of the ethical implications of colonialism, also embeds a postcolonial research ethic) is often carried out through two moves. First, scholars make a textual move to reincorporate themselves into their research accounts, to subvert an objectivistic view of the world, resist fearful writing that excludes personal commitment to ideas, and in the process, better approach the relationships that research texts represent. Rhetorical field researchers have done this in a variety of ways. Many rhetoricians, for example, argue that observation itself is embodied, and therefore they cannot help but make their bodies-in-the-field more present in their research text (Conquergood, “Ethnography, Rhetoric, and Performance”; Conquergood, “Performing as a Moral Act”; Pezzullo, “Resisting”, 350-351; Senda-Cook, “Rugged Practices,” 132-134; Middleton et al., *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 59-90). Middleton et al. use personal anecdotes from when they were in the field to motivate and explain theoretical concepts about fieldwork. (They use

⁴ Recently, Middleton et al., *Participatory Critical Rhetoric* argue that many of the political/ethical aims of critical rhetoric are more easily met through fieldwork, 33-58. For anthropological work, see Maria Cristina Gonzalez [now Sarah Amira de la Garza]. Her work is cited approvingly in McKinnon et al., *Text + Field*, 19, and McKinnon et al., “Rhetoric and Ethics Revisited,” 562.

several of these per chapter. For their own explanation of this, see Middleton, et al., *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, xx.) McKinnon and colleagues partner to write dialogically, with each section made up of one person's reflection on their fieldwork and another co-author's response (McKinnon, et al., "Rhetoric and Ethics Revisited," 561). And Ewalt, Ohl, and Pfister include themselves into their texts through a bold mix of recorded and invented transcripts, done in collaboration with people with whom they work ("Rhetorical Field Methods in the Tradition of *Imitatio*" in *Text + Field*, 40-55).

A second move rhetorical scholars make to enact a postcolonial research ethic is to reconsider their actions in the field in light of power differences with participants. This is a methodological and analytical move of "reflexivity," a turning of the analytical gaze back onto the researcher herself. As Middleton et al. put it, reflexivity "prods critics to be as analytical about themselves as they would be of rhetors (and audiences)" (*Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 84). Thus, in the same way that we might as scholars ask who benefits and who is harmed from a rhetor's argument, we can ask who benefits and who is harmed from our own (textual or field-based) research. This, in turn, creates a more nuanced sense of harm, consent, and privacy (Guillemin and Gillam). For instance, while basic accountability processes assess what harms there might be to possible participants in a research project, a reflexive methodology might additionally assess a deep but difficult-to-locate harm to participants in the research design itself, if benefits to the scholar of a project are direct (career, prestige, knowledge), but benefits to the participant are indirect, "transcendent," and not supportive of those people's agency (McHendry, et al. "Rhetorical Critic(ism)'s Body," 297-298). Reflexivity can also suggest more radical forms of research that are initiated, sustained, and even written up by participants themselves for the sake of their own communities.⁵ Reflexive research design expresses the researcher's learned distrust of their own goodwill, a conviction that we should focus on the impacts and consequences of our research, not our intentions, as a stronger starting point for ethical decision-making (Middleton et al. *Participatory Critical Rhetoric* 83; Guillemin and Gillam, "Ethically Important Moments," 277).

An ethical practice of reflexivity can also be present in the research text. De Onís calls the people she works with in Puerto Rico "compañer@s" (partners, companions, and/or colleagues, where the @ combines -a and -o feminine and masculine endings) to adopt a local, non-English-centered understanding of relationship possibilities, to work against gender exclusivity, and to diminish her power as a researcher (de Onís). And Ralph Cintrón turns the benign practice of assigning pseudonyms into an ethical tribute. By naming the city in his book after one key participant, he not only represents the people as noble,

⁵ In this direction, see Roberta Chevrette. In Chevrette's examination of a museum in Phoenix for native history, she found that the museum's exhibits erased native people and knowledge. She reflexively observed that although her study would unveil this, it might perpetuate that erasure, and therefore she added a component to the project of incorporating indigenous voices about the area's history.

he also hopes to perform “a kind of symbolic conquering of the city itself” (xiii). But the institutional strain of this postcolonial ethic is evident; Middleton et al. note that in rhetorical scholarship, researchers’ moves to be reflexive in their texts are often discouraged in subtle and overt ways (Middleton, et al., *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 174). (See also Haliliuc p146, on researchers risking “losing face” by writing self-reflexively.)

Rhetorical critics working in the field, then, have acknowledged ethics as fundamental to their research, and have suggested compelling ethical practices that work against colonizing, racist, and/or patriarchal systems. Yet surprisingly, many rhetorical scholars working in the field in a postcolonial way have drawn on a discourse of ethical accountability. This is important to examine because the ethical goals that we identify provide us with criteria for success; conversely, goals are benchmarks for failure. Metaphors that we use for goals often alert us to wider meaning-making systems (Ceccarelli; Osborn). And ethical endpoints are wrapped up in how we take action: they are a reference point that aligns diverse actors, a point of appeal in times of conflict, and an intentional handrail for new situations. Given the postcolonial critique of academic work itself, it is especially important to ensure that we analyze and evaluate postcolonial ethical efforts within a postcolonial ethical telos.

Accountability is a system of redress for wrongs, a system emerging from both market and legal metaphors (Biesta). Market metaphors for ethical accountability are transposed from a financial context in which organizations guard against incompetence and dishonesty by presenting auditable accounts of their financial activity (235). It is no wonder that when it comes up in field ethics, this form of ethical accountability is panned as a neo-liberal cancer that’s not relevant to researchers. Rob Asen, in his part of an article on rhetorical field ethics, cites Biesta, who himself cites Epstein for a critique of market-driven accountability (Biesta, 238, 248; Epstein; Asen in “Rhetoric and Ethics Revisited,” 565. Their example is “school choice,” in which parents receive education vouchers from the state to choose which school to send their child to, framed in public debate by proponents as a way to keep schools “accountable.”) They observe that market-driven forms of accountability are 1) anti-democratic, in that citizens are interpellated as consumers, who aren’t allowed to deliberate over ethical goals, but only select from the slate of options that are presented; 2) a fantasy of empowerment, in that market systems are predicated on inequality, and consumers in general are captive to multi-national producers, not the other way around; 3) a deliberately ineffective system, in that the state mediates accountability procedures, e.g., between students and their school; and 4) a weak moral recourse, in that they simply seek to *contain* wrong-doing—and only in aggregate and in the long-term—rather than provide specific people with timely recompense. For Asen, talking with lawmakers as part of his rhetorical research created a conflict for him between holding lawmakers accountable for their failings by criticizing them on behalf of other constituents, versus performing the

role of interviewer, with its attendant deference. Asen, that is, sees himself as having a moral responsibility to hold the lawmakers accountable through his research, but qualifies market-driven accountability by appealing instead to the “democratic potential of accountability” (Asen in “Rhetoric and Ethics Revisited,” 565).

Thus we come to a set of legal metaphors for ethical accountability that is accepted by most scholars doing qualitative fieldwork. Gilligan explains the features of a legally-driven discourse of accountability: the pursuit of justice and justification in the midst of competing claims to various rights; in which conflicts are mediated impersonally through logic and law and adjudicated in terms of people’s obligations and responsibilities; and in which people define themselves by their moral autonomy (24-39). The prototypical example of legally-rooted ethical accountability is our federally mandated system of scholarly review boards.⁶ Review boards consider a mix of purportedly universal principles (e.g. “respect persons”) and the likely effects of an action (“e.g. “do the benefits of this research intervention outweigh the harms?”) to determine what, if anything, needs to be adjusted before a scholar can ethically carry out a specific research project.

We see a discourse of ethical accountability used nearly without reservation by rhetorical scholars doing postcolonial fieldwork. In the introduction to their collection on rhetorical field methods, for instance, McKinnon et al. explicitly call rhetoric scholars to an “accountability ethic” (McKinnon et al., *Text + Field*, 19). This is followed by many contributors freely using “accountability” to name their ethical goals.⁷ And writing with many of the same contributors in a recent article, McKinnon et al. reiterate their commitment to accountability (McKinnon et al., “Rhetoric and Ethics Revisited,” 560). Similarly, in their book on rhetorical field methods, Middleton et al. regularly recommend that rhetoric scholars “account for themselves” to other academics in their research texts (Middleton et al. *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 83, 80, 174). The only hint of suspicion toward a discourse of ethical accountability comes through the commonplace that accountability should contain a narrative component: an “accountability,” or ability to give an account (i.e. tell a story).⁸ Account-ability is thus offered as a postcolonial strategy of making the researcher’s judgment visible.

6 The “institutional review board” (IRB) in the US, “human research ethics committee” in Australia, and “local research ethics committee” in UK. (Guillemin and Gillam, “Ethically Important Moments,” 278). In addition to IRBs being legally mandated, Hammersley and Traianou note that the Belmont Report, which inspired the IRB system, was also influenced by casuistic (i.e. case-based/analogical) ethical reasoning, which is “the most familiar form of legal reasoning” (Sunstein).

7 “Transparency about research processes... aids in accountability” (Ewalt, Ohl, and Pfister, “Rhetorical Field Methods,” 52). De Onís asks: “who would (1) be most helpful in holding me accountable for any colonial or U.S. mainland assumptions I might be perpetuating...” (116)

8 McKinnon et al. “Rhetoric and Ethics Revisited,” 562, and McKinnon et al. “Introduction,” 19 give this the most emphasis (via de la Garza), but the same trope is used by Middleton et al., *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 150, and even Epstein, 249.

MAKING DILEMMAS VISIBLE

Before critiquing a discourse of ethical accountability on theoretical grounds, I offer a case study from my own field research that presents a felt difficulty with accountability.

In 2015, I joined with Aviva (white, from Second Pres) and Ms. Di (black, from First Church) to help coordinate what ended up being a set of four inter-church, inter-racial conversations between Second Pres and First Church, structured around race. Aviva especially wanted to “have a better understanding of, I mean for lack of a better way to say it, the black experience”; Ms. Di thought the conversations might help “not just to have collaborative stuff [between Second Pres and First Church], but to have cohesiveness between the members and, uh—as it pertains to this community”; and I was interested academically and personally in how white people come into effective anti-racist action.

Race was the topic for the inter-church conversations, but we were met by race before we came to it: Splitsville’s history of redlining scarred our city; places that had been marked in red on federally-commissioned maps in the 1930s for having an “undesirable population or an infiltration of it” (and thereby used to deny people home-buying loans) were still visible today in the form of predominately black neighborhoods, including Familyfield. The intellectual white participants were enraced as well, as Ryne, a white university professor of philosophy, summarized in our first conversation: “academia is especially a place where, you know, people who are considered thinkers are all basically dead, white, male, Europeans. And, you know, that we—so we have this long historical tradition of—of what we think is proper thinking and proper reasoning.” As a white researcher I had recognized that I was positioned as a scholar but was a racial learner myself, seeking to undo the impacts of white supremacy in my own life.

In the course of the inter-church conversations, both black and white people articulated a local theory that anti-gentrification in Familyfield depends on white people embracing “stability,” or chosen rootedness in a place. For instance, in our third meeting, Ms. China, an older African-American woman from First Church who had lived in Familyfield for decades, observed that neighborhoods in Splitsville are often rich *and* white or poor *and* black, and worked to historicize the causes of that as coming out of discriminatory city practices. Then she held up Johanna, who has lived in Familyfield as a white woman with her family for fifteen years, as the exemplar of wisdom (for being able to distinguish people who are “really” part of Familyfield from those who are seeking some kind of “advantage”) and stability: Johanna was “part of the community” regardless of whether Familyfield was profitable. Ms. China, then, set up a nuanced analysis of gentrification in which white people should address macro-level racist forces of black wealth extraction in part by rooting themselves in one place.

Similarly, for Lexi, a young white woman from Second Pres who spoke next, Ms. China’s explanation was helpful for her own thinking, in which she’s

stuck regarding anti-racism after buying a house in Oakwood, another gentrifying neighborhood. Even though Oakwood is a mostly white area, Lexi's housing choices qua social action is the primary way that she relates to the goals of the conversations about race. Lexi acknowledged that, despite buying a house for "arbitrary" reasons, she and her husband were individual instantiations of market pressures, and so "we very much, like are a part of that—the gentrification that's happening." She echoed Ms. China in characterizing gentrification as being not just a one-time housing choice, but also an ongoing choice that a person can "live into" or not; gentrification is an orientation toward the neighborhood where a person "doesn't care what people are already there." Stability, then, is a rhetorical practice (Senda-Cook, 131-134), the desire for which grounds Lexi's response/relationship with Ms. China.

Theologically, people from Second Pres had done a book study the year before on a then-new book *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus*, by C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison, that added weight to what was being said. Ten or so people from Second Pres came to someone's house for dinner every week, and after eating, Pastor Robert led the group in conversation about the book chapter that everyone had read. I attended most meetings and considered it a preliminary look at Second Pres' efforts to enact anti-racism rhetorically. One chapter in Smith and Pattison stands out with regard to stability, titled "Stability: Fidelity to people and place." Smith and Pattison argue that many people in America (including Christians) are living hypermobile, individualistic lives that cause people to lose the motivation and ability to resolve conflict; to participate in a "disembodied" Christianity that commits racial, social, and environmental injustice (64) to be "tourists of life" (64, 65, 68); and to miss God's "leaven" that makes creation rise (62). Smith and Pattison find an alternative ideology in the "slow food" movement (riffing on this in its title, *Slow Church*), arguing that Christians should also learn to do church slowly. In order to develop stability, Smith and Pattison recommend, among other things, that people should be part of a church that values the neighborhood (71); spend time with neighbors in work and relaxation (71); engage in local history (72); interact with the neighborhood's natural world (72); and send people out to a new place as an exception rather than the rule, a result of church discernment rather than a person's pursuit of individual self-fulfillment (77-8), the effect of all this being that people will "become more sensitive to the work God is doing all around us" (71).

This working theory that stability is the key to anti-gentrification efforts relies on and draws out a web of interconnections among people that includes me. On an ethical level, the people in the project implied that as a white person involved in anti-gentrification work in Familyfield with them, I should also pursue stability. There is the danger, in other words, that if I dropped my involvement with Familyfield suddenly and (from the neighborhood's perspective) carefreely, I could be participating in "pushing people out," in "taking advan-

tage,” in giving white people a “stigma,” and in “not caring,” as Ms. China and Lexi put it. My actions in this regard would speak to my whole racial group⁹; my disappearance from Familyfield would not simply have ramifications for how I personally was treated by black people from the neighborhood, but would likely be extended to how white people in general were taken up in the neighborhood. That is, not seeking stability in Familyfield could subvert and undermine the very inter-racial trust that my project was designed to build, as well as ignore one of the findings of my own research about how people in the project think gentrification should be resisted. Embracing stability would mean that I should only be involved with Familyfield to the extent that I’m willing to commit to it long-term, and should be hesitant to leave, especially for financial reasons. At an extreme, I should view moving from Familyfield as a decision that should be undertaken with community approval. In the field, this dilemma sometimes came to me at a visceral, affective level: as an internal constricting, a squirming need either to throw caution to the wind by planting down in Familyfield, or to cash in on my academic labors and abandon Familyfield with my shoulders bashfully shrugged.

However, the IRB process sees no ethical implications to how stable I am as a researcher, and is unable to affirm Second Pres’ convictions.¹⁰ Moreover, when a postcolonial approach is bound to the goal of “accounting for” my decisions in my research texts, my available range of options is still limited because my department had an active moral claim on my pace of work. “Mobility,” or temporal and geographic flexibility,¹¹ is a professional value that departments create to be accountable to universities, state legislatures, ranking systems, and more. Individual scholars become acculturated to mobility through accountability measures such as tenure requirements, a tenure clock, an expectation of nationwide job searches, and so on. From my department’s perspective, my prior work to establish an analytic focus and a network of people at Second Pres and First Church should have been sufficient fieldwork for a dissertation project. Thus, a discourse of accountability was operative around my status as a student “in good standing,” as well as when the sensitivity that I felt to the people in Familyfield was rationalized as me being unrealistic, naïve, fragile, self-important, extravagant, and unfocused.

⁹ See DiAngelo. This is the opposite movement from many black people, of course, who critique “respectability” politics of being overly concerned with public perception of black people as a whole.

¹⁰ My stability might in some ways relate to “respecting persons” and being “beneficent” (“The Belmont Report”), but not in the informed consent and cost/benefit analysis ways that the IRB uses to operationalize those.

¹¹ As with pace of work, geographic flexibility has an internal and self-serving logic to it: individual scholars are not in control of the location of colleges, or an institution’s funding for positions, or the years that positions are available. (Although since universities are both the supplier and the demander of academic labor, the job “market” might be more accurately compared to a guild, yet without the security of placement for graduate students that an apprentice would receive. For a comparison of academics to the financial incentives of workers in drug gangs, see Afonso.) The shadow side to individual scholars’ mobility is smoother and more stable institutional efforts: making individuals contingent supports the institution’s adaptation. This pseudo-stability shares little in common with what Second Pres calls “stability.”

Thus, rather than a “dilemma,” a discourse of accountability would characterize my situation as simply a challenge related to “exiting the field,” in which I might have an emotional weight to participants in the project, but would only have an ethical weight to the institutions that I was already wrapped up with. Not seeing this situation as an ethical dilemma comes with costs: it inhibits outsiders’ (personal, social, and spiritual) critique of academic mobility; and it denies the felt problem that I had, and the kind of problem that others may have, forcing me to bear my specific dilemma on my own. My quarrel here is not with the IRB or my department, *per se*—stability is not so global an ethical requirement as to warrant every researcher mentioning it to earn institutional approval, nor would I expect an alternative to a discourse of ethical accountability to spring up immediately. Rather, it shows a longing for ethical endpoints that are more flexible, contingent, and satisfy more directly the ethical demands of the communities with whom scholars work. I suggest that what we need is not more accountability, but a revised conception of the relationships that ethical action cultivates.

A RHETORICAL CRITIQUE OF ETHICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

This section extends the felt difficulty described above into a more theoretical critique of a discourse of ethical accountability. It does so by applying postcolonial thinking back onto itself, focusing on how accountability depends on the Enlightenment-era conception of rhetors as independent, isolated beings.

First, it’s easy to see why rhetoric scholars would draw on a discourse of ethical accountability. After all, extended activist efforts to increase what people in power are accountable for can gradually improve the landscape for people at risk—civil rights movements on the basis of race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and others have often measured their success by this metric. Once in place, a system of legal accountability is public, objective, and (relatively) effective against intransigent colonizers. For people in some civil rights movements, accountability is thus a given ethical goal.¹²

Moreover, a discourse of ethical accountability is treated as innocuous within scholarly circles. Some field-based scholars treat accountability as a synonym for reflexivity: Landau suggests that “accounting for” what the researcher does is the definition of reflexivity (Landau); and Hess joins the two as “self-reflexive accountability” (98, which, he notes, is an uncontroversial standard, “common to critical-qualitative researchers and ethnographers”).

Institutional accountability procedures also structure any scholar’s understanding of ethics. Fieldwork requires IRB approval, and even scholars who don’t do fieldwork are embedded in a variety of other (market- and legally-infused) university accountability systems: accountability to accreditation bodies,

¹² For an example of how accountability is used as a standard to critique white anti-racists, see Delgado.

to students, to the university, (at public institutions) to the state, and more. Accountability in this sense feels flexible and egalitarian; even institutional review boards themselves have been called up to account for themselves (Abbott and Grady).¹³

However, accountability is fundamentally a back-up for pursuing right relations. It can be understood as a bargain with colonizers in which people isolate and quantify their harms to receive some kind of recompense, in exchange for allowing colonizers to reclaim a clean conscience. While it may be an appropriate compromise in the face of recalcitrant populations, white people and other colonizers should recognize that our moral endpoint should not simply be paying people back for the harms we cause them.¹⁴ Legal accountability, that is, operates under the same transactional logic that scholars reject in market-driven accountability. The law is an alternative mechanism for supporting ethical systems than the market, but the same transactional model.

Rhetorically, a discourse of ethical accountability is problematic because it buys into an Enlightenment understanding of rhetors as people who are in their essence self-sufficient and independent. Begin with this independent rhetor, and we move straightforwardly to a discourse of ethical accountability. He—if not strictly a man, he or she operates patriarchally¹⁵—is trained to persuade others without any conception of the mutuality of being influenced; all persuasion and no being persuaded. This independent rhetor considers himself magnanimous for using words to influence others rather than physical violence (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca; and see Foley). He is normatively a self-sufficient adult; early- and late-life dependence are embarrassing aberrations for his world, as are disabilities that require ongoing personal assistance.

Still, the independent rhetor is liable to overstep someone else's independence. It is through violating another person's autonomy, then, that unethical behavior emerges as such. Harming someone is an exception to the rule of his conduct and is caused by too close of contact; his default mode of behavior is thus assumed to be distant and ethical. Structures for accountability are then only needed to remediate egregious, malicious conduct. Accountability is thus like the bumpers at a bowling alley: meant for novices, and an embarrassment to touch. When threats of accountability effectively disincentivize wrong conduct, it's because they promise to limit the independent rhetor's autonomy; we talk

13 The IRB was the subject of two federal reviews: by the U.S. Government Accounting Office (1996), and by the Inspector General's Office of the Department of Health and Human Services (1998) (Abbott and Grady, 5).

14 And since colonialism, racism, sexism, etc. are systemic, it is especially important for people to let go of their innocence. We have never finished "paying people back" for the wrong we've done; the accountability model is a charade, after all. Research review boards, for instance, historically became federally mandated as a result of embarrassing moral lapses committed by Nazi researchers, and then repeated against African-Americans in the US over several decades in the Tuskegee syphilis experiment (Berg). These instances remind us that while review boards may now appear obvious, they are reactionary, incentivized from self-preservation; IRBs fundamentally protect research institution from lawsuits and public outrage.

15 "Embedded in efforts to change others is a desire for control and domination, for the act of changing another establishes the power of the change agent over that other" (Foss and Griffin, 3).

about him as being “held” accountable, rather than being free to roam in what is metaphorically his natural (autonomous) state.

This independent rhetor is thus the model for a discourse of accountability and also a paragon of colonial conduct. A postcolonial research ethic, then, is limited by speaking of accountability as the endpoint of ethics. First, scholars who draw on a discourse of accountability have few conceptual resources to develop or initiate more accountability practices. One bromide of reflexivity is that “if there ever is a conflict of interest, the people studied *must come first*” (Madison, 129, cited in McKinnon et al., *Text + Field*, 18). This is an inspiring ethical guideline, but seeking additional accountability as an individual is seen as overzealous, appropriate only for lovers of red tape or for pessimistic scholars who want to make everyone out to be unethical.¹⁶ Advice to instantly resolve dilemmas in favor of participants, then, can easily in practice be a protective tactic, an incentive not to notice dilemmas.¹⁷ This qualifies the impact that a narrative focus on accountability can have. It’s true that in making our decision-making process more visible to other scholars, we resist a detached and independent persona. Yet being able to give an account for one’s actions still yields the heavy lifting to accountability by doing little to put us in a position where our judgments will be challenged, especially by those most directly affected by our actions in the field. When scholars don’t give opportunity for the research participants’ communities to define, identify, and remediate the researchers’ ethical conduct, the research must still be asymmetric (and even paternalistic).

Second, because a discourse of accountability emphasizes formal, independent structures like the court system or university appeal processes to mediate claims to harm, research ethics unnecessarily adheres to a public/private split.¹⁸ For instance, as a scholar working in the field I am considered “accountable” to funding institutions (for, say, working hard in the field) and review boards (for being beneficent to participants), but it would seem metaphorical to say that I am “accountable” to a private entity like my wife (for, say, working only hours that support our family’s well-being). Yet it’s unclear how the ethical demand on me is different from that of those “public” parties, leading to frag-

16 Incidentally, I once accidentally offended a senior scholar when I asked what they had done in their project to protect participants beyond the IRB. Whereas I was hoping to hear some ideas for how to pursue ethical interactions, I was implying within the logic of accountability that the scholar had failed to act ethically.

17 Two notable exceptions to this are McKinnon’s article, “Rhetoric and Ethics Revisited,” which moves through dilemmas, and to some extent, Gary Alan Fine.

18 Rhetoricians have pushed against public/private splits in accounts of the public sphere. For instance, Nancy Fraser notes that what we think of today as the public crime of domestic abuse was earlier considered to be a private harm. Similarly, Linda Flower notes that issues are not by nature public or private but can be brought into public deliberation through rhetorical work: “By the critical-rational norms of the public sphere, such concerns [as those of students who depend financially on working through college] would be intentionally excluded as merely *private* with little likelihood of rising to the status of a compelling *public* problem ... So our challenge was to render the status quo as indeed, not just a problem but a misrepresented, even controversial situation that called for deliberation” (“Difference Driven Inquiry,” 323, emphasis in original).

mented, disjointed ethical considerations.

Finally, a discourse of accountability institutionalizes what a postcolonial perspective can only see as white people's and other colonizers' anemic desire to ethically excel, by making ethical pursuit a nonissue. Scholars cannot "pursue" ethical interactions without acknowledging that they are in some ways insufficient, or at least that their ethical behavior requires ongoing discernment and continuous effort. Yet accountability structures are relatively static and difficult to modify. Accountability structures make do with our failure of ethical desire, and in the process, fail to cultivate our ethical desire. Accountability, as a system of redress, manages and disincentivizes people's wrongdoing; it doesn't support people's right-doing. Ultimately, a discourse of accountability doesn't hold hope for the possibility of colonizers and other people transforming ethically.

In a promising direction, rhetoricians have begun displacing the discourse of accountability by experimenting with how rhetorical concepts can bear on research ethics.¹⁹ Middleton et al., for instance, categorize ethical issues according to participants' rhetorical roles (Middleton, et al. *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 138-151). When a group is acting in the role of advocates for something, they are more likely to require that a researcher be aligned with their goals; and if that group is working on a sensitive issue, they might make the ethical demand that a researcher not publicize their rhetorical strategies. Alternatively, when that group is in focus as dialogue partners, they might be offended if the researcher tries to remain neutral, and they might question whether the researcher is the right person to tell their story. This effort has been insightful and nuanced. However, the concept of rhetorical roles is limited in its ability to generate, mediate, and interrogate ethical questions about how a researcher acts.

Another possibility has been explored by Aaron Hess, who argues that *phronesis*, or judgment, is a skill that researchers develop in the field that might go some way to helping us understand research ethics (Hess, "Embodied Judgment"). And McKinnon et al. write about responsibility, truth, power, relationships, and representation as "points of tension" to spark consideration of ethical dilemmas (McKinnon, "Rhetoric and Ethics Revisited," 561). These rhetorical concepts help us connect the ethical work that field-based rhetoric scholars do to research ethics more generally. In the next section, I continue these efforts to bring rhetorical concepts to bear on how we articulate ethical goals.

AN ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSE OF ETHICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

I've argued that a postcolonial view of research ethics actions is hobbled by framing the goal as accountability. In this section, I argue that the rhetorical concept of interdependence has the potential to more fully complete the postco-

¹⁹ Similar moves to apply disciplinary-specific concepts to understand research ethics have been undertaken in feminist scholarship, i.e. an "ethic of care," (Hammersley and Traianou, 29); and in disability research, i.e. an ethic of inclusion and "emancipation" (Oliver; Hammersley and Traianou, 13).

lonial program by providing a rhetorical telos for research ethics.

Drawing on interdependence theoretically means upending the directionality of our analysis: in addition to examining people's efforts to affect others, it conditions us to be equally attentive to people's ability to *be* affected, persuaded, and shaped. Diane Davis argues that rhetorically speaking, any person's act to persuade someone else actually depends on a deeper mutuality between those people, on a connection and obligation that people have toward each other in some primordial way. She calls this connectedness "rhetoricity." For Davis, our interdependence allows us to change or be persuaded and not just stonily sit in our own worlds. Interdependence is thus at the heart of rhetorical exchange. Rhetoric in the traditional sense of persuasion, then, doesn't establish an influencing link from one person to another, it relies on a mutual influence and presupposes it. Davis explains this conceptual shift by using the analogy of making a phone call (Davis, 121). In one sense, making a phone call is the initiation of a communicative, connective act. But at a more structural level, making a phone call relies on and presupposes the existence of a vast infrastructure of prior networks, phone lines, signals, software, and satellites that already connect people by preparing them to talk. In fact, this goes further: even receiving a phone call from someone already depends on the same prior openness, so that there is a "yes" involved even before one can say "no" or decline their call (120). Response to another (which Davis would have us conceive of as the definition of rhetoric) is primary and unavoidable. This underlying connectedness makes for a powerful understanding of rhetoric, affecting how we theorize hermeneutics, agency, and even the concept of communication itself, which is inverted from the status of an achievement—a triumphant link forged from one independent person to other independent people—to a more collective "communal sensibility, a supplement of responsivity" (9).

I extend Davis's work to suggest that if people's influence on others relies on a fundamental interdependence with others, then there must be ways for a person to be attuned to that interdependence or not. Davis goes partway to this when she notes, "Not every communication with an other signals an encounter with the face" (12). Encountering the "face," or becoming attuned to our interdependence, happens when we have an affective, embodied discovery of our infinite obligation to others, whether that's in front of an actual person or not.

Thus, I argue that to the extent that infinite obligation has an ethical edge, ethics can become a rhetorical practice and pursuit. Pursuit, here, should be taken to mean a kind of response to encountering the other: "your capacity (and desire) to effect change is already a function of your inescapable responsibility, and not the other way around" (112). Rather than a punitive accountability that acts when violations occur, research ethics that draw on interdependence can come to look like a set of possibilities: a process of being shaped, being molded, embracing our interdependence. Extending Davis, then, helps recover the relevance of people's ethical pursuit (into what we might call love), and to

cast that within a rhetorical frame.

Extending interdependence as a rhetorical concept to theorize our pursuit of research ethics suggests an alternative to ethical accountability that better articulates postcolonial aims. First, we can revise the goal from “accountability” into something like “actions to tap into our interdependence.” This recharacterizes (and provides opportunities to adjust) the ethical work we already do. Institutional review, when theorized in terms of interdependence, is an ethical and rhetorical practice of acknowledging our prior openness to other scholars, even when being sent out to a different community. It is a way to continue to be shaped by (persuaded by) academics when working with others. Similarly, the “acknowledgments section” of books and articles, is a pre-existing, conventional way to disclose to other scholars the funding agencies and personal relationships that have shaped our work. It comes into focus as an ethical move in that it presumes and calls forth our intellectual, relational, and financial interdependence.

This move away from the language of accountability, in turn, gives license and encouragement to pursue ethical action through new, inventive action that is more kairotic than it is rigid. Interdependence asks us to “de-center” from academics being the reference point for ethical accountability. As Middleton et al. put it, something like interdependence “decenter[s] the critic’s authority relative to other participants in a rhetorical scene, and privileg[es] the influence of relationships on interpretive, evaluative, and other critical claims” (Middleton et al., *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 149). We are not interdependent with only academics, departments, review boards, etc.; we are equally formed into people by research participants and other nonscholars. Thus, we should be equally attentive to the actions we take to tap into our interdependence in the presence of research participants as much as we do in the presence of academics.

Scholars already engage in this work with what I will call unsung moral courage. For one scholar, developing interdependence through what I think of as a “research preview” to the people that scholar was working with meant discarding the whole project after it was finished, because adopting a constructivist epistemology in the research write-up was both essential to the project and categorically rejected by the participants as dismissive of their lived reality. For another scholar, a research preview took the form of asking and hearing from a disabled person that they didn’t want to be the focus of a project. From a university perspective, consent was more properly the purview of the person’s parents, whose emails would be the texts analyzed. Although the parents consented (and rationalized this by downplaying their child’s ability to consent), the researcher still decided to shift focus away from that person. These were decision points for those researchers to embrace their interdependence (even interdependence on disabled people, who are too often considered the ones who are dependent) and thereby become more trustworthy rhetors.

It is here, in fact, that the break from an ethical framework aimed at accountability can be helpful. What makes these stories powerful is that they went

beyond accepted ethical requirements, and didn't do it with the goal of trying to stay in the lines, but as a desire to be shaped by the participants directly.²⁰ Thus, the value of theorizing research ethics using interdependence is that ethical pursuit isn't burdensome, but becomes in part a matter of rhetorical sophistication. In other words, our efforts to develop our interdependence are offers to enter more fully into being a rhetor itself: someone who shapes others well, but who also knows how to be shaped with ease. Inverting Aristotle, such a rhetor knows how to be angered, calmed, befriended, made to hate, made to fear, given confidence, shamed, honored, shown kindness, shown unkindness, pitied, made indignant, made envious, and inspired (see Aristotle, *Rhetoric* II.2-11)—in short, has learned to be persuaded by people they have marginalized.

INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE FIELD

Interdependence as an ethical end doesn't solve dilemmas, but rather reconfigures them and brings them to the fore. In their impossibility, dilemmas helpfully break down the assumption that a person's default mode of behavior is ethical. They are thus a fissure in the concept of accountability, threatening the univocalic (i.e. imperialistic) conception of rights. A discourse of ethical interdependence relishes in dilemmas: they remind us of our insufficiency; and they are generative, grist for rhetorical invention. In this final section I explore two ways that the dilemma that I faced over my mobility and/or/versus stability is transformed when we consider the endpoint of moral action to be embracing our interdependence.

First, an ethics that pursues a sense of our rhetorical interdependence encourages us to emphasize how we have *not* been able to fulfill our ethical obligations. Of course, there is joy for me at what I could do in Familyfield, and it's worth rehearsing: as an extension of my learning, fieldwork allowed me to honor and carry forth the rhetorical methodologies of the professors I had studied under; to the extent that it results in publishable work, it will be a boon to our department; it built relationships with people outside of the university; it was a chance for me to listen well to people and learn to listen well, and to record their thoughts and give them feedback and ideas that they wouldn't have had otherwise (as Aviva put it once, I was their "momentum guide"). Through the responses called forth from me in these things, I have been shaped more into a scholar and anti-racist community worker.

At the same time, dilemmas as such reveal that I have ethical desires that go beyond my capacity to fill them. One way to go about this textually is to develop a practice of ethical lament, an embodied genre in which people individually or collectively hold out their grief before and with others in such a way that

²⁰ For a published account, see also Dwight Conquergood's ("Ethnography, Rhetoric, and Performance") appreciation of how Smadar Lavie used these and other mechanisms to develop a sense of her interdependence with her participants, 92-95. The two stories I tell are anonymous to protect the researchers, as well as to illustrate how it is difficult to cite essays not written.

they are present to the moment and open to critique.

In that spirit, I lament that I want to work full time on research about how white people can better and more actively renounce colonial tendencies, work full time on developing anti-racist and postcolonial pedagogy, work full time for churches like Second Pres, and work full time in areas like race and artificial intelligence. I want to be a resource to people in Splitsville, to be an old-timer like Ms. Di who lives through the neighborhood's shifts with disappointment, laughter, and hope. I also want to move from place to place, comfortable everywhere. I want to take a job wherever I need to so that my department can clear me out quickly and maintain a solid placement rate. In fact, I want to not have a paying job at all, so that if my wife and I have kids, I can take care of them and she won't feel trapped at home. Depending on how things go, I also want to live in Florida specifically, where my family lives, so we can have more support, and be able to support my parents as they get older. I also definitely don't want to live in Florida because I don't like the weather.

At first, this mode of ethical disclosure can seem child-like, undignified, and imprudent in not moderating my ethical obligation in the face of obviously contradictory desires. Yet in the interdependence model, dilemmas are the necessary outcome of having more than one other person; dilemmas make society.²¹ To appeal to interdependence is to acknowledge: I have not fully responded to the ethical obligations before me; I am not the rhetor I ought to be. That isn't to say I haven't developed over time, especially relative to earlier projects, or that I won't continue to develop. Rather, lament is one way to textually highlight my ongoing need to pursue ethical action, and a strategy that scholars can employ even if they don't do fieldwork.

A second way my dilemma has transformed in the process of working to embrace my interdependence has been a result of me feeling license and encouragement to be creative in seeking to be shaped by those around me. Dilemmas allow for contextualized, rhetorical thinking to easily emerge. In my case I considered (and have tried to draw others into this considering): Could I leave Splitsville and come back later? Could I move through the Ph.D. program slowly? Could I publish fast enough that I could get a job here? For that matter, "stability" and "mobility," when seen as opposite ends of time-in-a-place, depend on each other like any other duality, and thus may not be as opposed in an absolute sense as it appears. Perhaps in following one I could be the exception that structures the rule of the other, or perhaps I could find something on the edge of

21 Davis goes further: seen critically, (legal) justice is a betrayal and an injustice in its impersonalness (122 and 126); at best, it is a concession or let-down from the infinite obligation we have to each specific person. In this light, we do not act ethically by default, as in a discourse of accountability, but rather we enter the public sphere precisely through our reactions to a series of inescapable ethical dilemmas. As Davis summarizes, "I'll never get a clear conscience" (122). With such an emphasis on encountering the face (as opposed to faces, plural), it isn't surprising that scholarship in Davis' vein has a complicated relationship with legal systems. (See 117-118 for Davis' synthesis of other thinkers, including Rorty, Badiou, Habermas, and Laclau.)

both stability and mobility. Could I take a year or two off after the Ph.D. to live in the same city? Could I leave academia? What if being a rhetorical consultant for other white anti-racist groups was seen as a possible future enabled by being a trusted rhetor during fieldwork? (After all, in developing my interdependence with project participants directly, I was being more truly a rhetor with those people.) What does it mean for our family's long-term health that my wife's parents just moved away? This is rhetorical invention applied ethically, new movement that would appear unintelligible in a discourse of accountability.

In addition to this inventive process to work through one particular dilemma, I have also engaged in several creative methodological practices to embrace my interdependence. In a kind of parallel to academic peer review, I have reported to a Second Pres advisory board twice, and have intentionally undertaken to be under their authority by framing my findings in terms of "recommendations" and my plans in terms of "requests" that could be overridden by their advice. (Incidentally, they received this effort with some amusement.) Their guidance for my internal conduct with them has not simply replicated IRB directives to be respectful, beneficent, and just. In one meeting, for instance, they were concerned about how I planned to describe to others (especially to people from First Church) our idea to have a small group of white people meet regularly to debrief experiences they had about race. This showed a local concern for interracial transparency that IRB review did not address in my protocol and would only have been able to conceptualize as a possible advertising failure.

I also sought to be directly shaped by participants themselves by writing participant-driven IRB protocols. Protocols are often written in formal, stilted language that reflects the legal environment of the review board, and can mark the consent form as being "from" academia. Within the interdependence model, however, consent is a community-led, ongoing process that takes place natively. Using participants' language in the IRB consent form can show that even scholarly oversight is being shaped by the participants. The fieldwork related above, for instance, was conducted under a research protocol partly composed by Aviva herself on behalf of Second Pres. I titled the research study with her words, "Truth tellers and active listeners" and used her words to describe the required "risks" section: "These conversations may be difficult, intense, or emotional, at times evoking feelings of fear, guilt, embarrassment, anger, or frustration. We all commit to practicing humility, vulnerability, trust, forgiveness, empathy, and above all love and grace toward each other in the way of Jesus." Many of the participants expressed surprise and delight that the consent form used language that was so native to the community's concerns.

Finally, my project's focus on white people from Second Pres (rather than black people from First Church) was itself a result of being shaped in my preparatory stages by black voices that caution white people not to co-opt efforts by black people to represent themselves (hooks; Alcoff; see also Middleton et al.,

Participatory Critical Rhetoric, 146-151).²² The politics here is complicated (as is the history of white people's actions); in this space I mention this action simply as a way that research ethics spills out beyond the confines of a well-defined project.

CONCLUSION

Several months after the interracial, interchurch conversations in Familyfield, I had a planning meeting with Aviva and Pastor Robert about our next steps as white people. The theme of stability came up several times. At one point Aviva imagined teasing Ryne, our friend who was a visiting professor of philosophy. He had been perpetually ready for the last three years to leave Splitsville for a tenure-track academic job. She framed her words as though he was there to hear them: "It's okay for a career to not be perfectly perfect, but like, stay rooted in a place." Aviva didn't intend for her comment to be taken up as a critique of academic ethics in general, but I find it helpful to listen to her admonition and reminder that academic norms—even what feel like necessities—are not the only source of practical, personal, and ethical obligation to others. I have sought in this essay to give us a better grounding for encountering the multiple obligations that we face, especially in research projects. When ethics is defined as accountability, it is at odds with the postcolonial thrust of rhetorical research, especially in field-based rhetorical work. By critiquing accountability rhetorically as fundamentally connected to autonomy, we make space for an alternative: pursuing our interdependence. Interdependence extends the concept of rhetoricity from rhetorical theory into the process of research. It helps us reconceive of ethics as also being about becoming a more trustworthy and sophisticated rhetor,²³ a person who embraces and is sensitive to our interdependence, even with field participants. This rhetorical understanding revises the goal of ethics so that we are shaped directly by research participants, and in a reciprocal way that de-centers academics' control. This makes dilemmas visible, and does so in a way that facilitates ethical lament and dialogical, audience-interactive (i.e. rhetorical) responses.

Interdependence doesn't solve domination and systemic inequity itself. Even if interdependence is a sturdier ethical goal, that doesn't mean that scholars will automatically apply it, or that its application is transparent; in largely bracketing these in this essay, I don't want to imply that ethics is simple. More work here is needed. I think in particular of how interdependence might give voice to scholars' ethical desires when carrying out textual rhetorical criticism, as well as, for field researchers, how IRB protocols might change if embracing

²² This has, in part, been a source of criticism for Alice Goffman's book, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*.

²³ Field researchers are especially rhetors twice over: once in the field, and again at their desks. Cintrón gets at this when he separates "the tekhnē of doing fieldwork and the tekhnē of writing ethnographies" (xii).

our interdependence was the goal. The short list of creative ethical interventions I described can be amended and supplemented by other possibilities. When interdependence is the endpoint of ethics, scholars may be able to imagine new possibilities with the people they work with.

Future work on interdependence can also investigate how rhetoric as an art is impacted when it is conceived in terms of responsiveness. This may call for a new kind of vocabulary, where people's ethical "practices" affect their "capacities" to see and act ethically. Responsiveness, that is, demands accompanying concepts that mediate between our past and future actions, and between our bodies and the world.

Interdependence may also help us approach ethics in ways that are more integrated into our lives as a whole. For instance, many academics who value independent work (myself included) find it difficult to actually practice openness and vulnerability. Interdependence is particularly appropriate for people who have been brought up in the world into colonial tendencies. We should not let our jobs be winnowed into narrow teaching/researching/servicing buckets, but spill into and mingle with wider opportunities to embrace our interdependence. Contingent faculty call us to rework universities' work conditions. People injured in various ways by corporate greed call our universities to divest from committedly unjust companies. We can pursue right relations with diverse people on our campuses by making ourselves safe individually and together for people's sexual and gender vulnerabilities. Expanding in this way to recover a sense of our interdependence in all things reminds us that this essay's focus on research ethics specifically has been artificial. Interdependence might easily be extended to ground ethics more broadly.

Conclusion



Figure C.1 Singer Jamila Woods, on what white people who want to take positive action should do

Partway through this project, two people independently sent me this quote from singer Jamila Woods. In early 2016, Charley, a black participant from Second Pres who attended the inter-church meetings, tagged me in a Facebook post with this image: “I think this is a kinder and more articulate version of what I was trying to communicate to you last week,” she said, referring to statements she made about aspirational rhetoric that I’ve quoted in the introduction to Chapter 1. Similarly, a week or two later Nikki, the white woman from First Church who ended up facilitating our debriefing group, emailed me with a link to this quote to say that Woods “says some good things that speak to your project.”

Woods’ words are powerful because they acknowledge white people’s aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism: “frozen in guilt,” “thinking about what you ‘can’t do,’” “how daunting actions may seem.” They also hint at the particular social and political moment that we were in, with the #blacklivesmatter in the

bottom right corner, Woods' twitter handle as part of the attribution for the quote, and the viral Facebook medium that the quote was shared it (in tandem with a song Woods contributed to with the white rapper Macklemore, "White Privilege II"¹). Woods acknowledges aspirational rhetoric of anti-racism, but encourages people not to sit there: "take positive action," "create real impact for black liberation." She even suggests that white people have latent "skills," "communities," and "spaces" that can be turned into strengths.

This dissertation has sought to explore this process of white people moving from a place of frozen stuckness to develop rhetorical capacities for acting against racism. It has theorized that anti-racist action involves a contextual process of building capacities through taking new action; becoming exposed to new and uncomfortable situations, ideas, people, critique and advice; and remaining vulnerable and un-sutured when challenged. Within this framework, the positive part of aspirational rhetoric is its expressed desire to follow the lead of people of color. In fact, being overwhelmed can itself be positive, to the extent that it exposes a call that draws people into new action, a call that people respond to. In taking small actions, habits accrete, confidence builds, skills are developed. This maintains the vulnerability represented in aspirational rhetoric, while acting to create "real impact" for people of color and white people.

Anti-racism is a life-long journey; this project has only walked with people for a few years. The white people described in this project, including myself, continue to encounter ongoing opportunities to respond. In this sense the project is ongoing; we always face the call from the Other that goes beyond what we can supply in response.

The strategies explored here, of call-and-response, debriefing, and participation, have been exploratory, developed from the ground up in interaction with people from Second Pres and First Church. Future work can build on this by investigating how helpful they are to other groups of people, both individually and as institutions. In particular, it remains open to see how the religiously grounded strategy of call-and-response might be adapted more broadly. What other strategies can people draw on to practice a rhetorical process of responsive anti-racist engagement? How do traditional rhetorical concepts change when focused on people's reception? Scholars might also examine people's discovery of other structures of injustice besides racism. Another space for additional research is to examine how various technologies inhibit and assist in practices of vulnerability. One Facebook group, for instance, the faith-based "Be the Bridge

1 The opening lyrics from the song nicely articulate aspirational rhetoric, with the stuckness of a person who wants to act against racism, but feels uncertain of how:

"Pulled into the parking lot, parked it
Zipped up my parka, joined the procession of marchers.
In my head like, 'Is this awkward?
Should I even be here marching?'
Thinking if they can't, how can I breathe?
Thinking if they chant, what do I sing?"

to Racial Unity” (19,000 members as of writing), has complex goals and discursive structures; online support groups may help people move through aspirational rhetoric without a face-to-face community. Scholars can also examine the role of technology in racializing processes more broadly. As artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are developing that involve more autonomy and inscrutability than before, we can ask what kind of beings we are constructing, and how those beings rhetorically enact race and (anti-)racism.

It is my hope that this exploration of a process of responsive anti-racist engagement also has an affective impact for readers. I hope that by bringing sustained attention to questions about the progression of people’s anti-racist efforts, we can feel more encouraged, equipped, and affirmed in responding to the calls that our daily worlds provide us with.

Appendix: What do white people talk about when they talk with each other about race?

A summary of stories told in 10 monthly debriefing meetings from 2016-2017. The function of telling stories in these meetings was to debrief (and help others debrief) situations that might have otherwise contributed to people feeling stuck regarding racism (see Chapters 5 and 6).

- “The other day, I...” stories have unmarked summaries
- Hypothetical stories are indicated with “hyp,” i.e. a hypothetical story
- “In general, they...” stories are indicated with “generally”
- “I heard that...” stories are indicated with “learned”

The length of each story (mm:ss) is a very conservative reference point, measured until the first point that the story could be considered completed (i.e. not including time spent answering follow-up questions or debriefing the story).

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
June 2016	Lena: met black girl at Second Pres, had coffee with her	01:27
June 2016	Gwen: helping out with the food bank has led to some experiences where she doesn't know how to think	00:57
June 2016	Lena: progressive summit voted for a black slate of representatives bc "This is our one issue" this year	02:28
June 2016	Lena: father witnessing the murder of the first black midshipman to graduate	01:20
June 2016	Lena: went to the black (non-segregated, public) beaches	00:37
June 2016	Lena: forced by parents to go to integrated school despite fear of riots	00:50
June 2016	Lena: father started a chess club with black guys at the prison	00:49
June 2016	Turbo hyp: ask black friends about being black	00:32
June 2016	Turbo: black kids in school were the troublemakers	00:32
June 2016	Turbo: college ministry was pretty segregated	00:38
June 2016	Turbo: there's only one black guy at his work	00:33
June 2016	Will: grew up not thinking about race, God has transitioned me into that zone	00:20

RACE STORIES

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Month	Person and summary of story	Length
June 2016	Will commenting on how many stories I have through food bank and school's black affinity group	00:55
June 2016	Lena: people in Jefferson County don't think of themselves as racist, but don't see how tied into racist systems they are	01:41
June 2016	Nikki hyp: parents looking for a good school district when they buy a house	00:23
June 2016	Turbo hyp: black people coming to Second Pres	00:29
June 2016	Nikki: black and white church merged when she was growing up, it was an awkward transition	01:05
June 2016	Nikki hyp: going up to a black person and being like, Heyyy	00:32
June 2016	Aviva hyp: asking Rufus' teacher if she wants to hang out	00:54
June 2016	Aviva hyp: getting feedback on summer reading idea from Rufus' teacher	00:16
June 2016	Lena hyp: talking to legislators about making Splitsville good for all people	01:56
June 2016	Lena hyp: helping Barbara publish her stories	01:45
June 2016	Lena hyp: wants to encourage the black girl from the Jewish social action group	00:19
June 2016	Lena: their story of moving to the suburbs, re:white flight	01:14
June 2016	Will hyp: talking to Ms. Di about a group of white people	00:52
June 2016	Will: jumping into the conversations at school's black affinity group for the first time	01:48
June 2016	Gwen hyp: telling Ms. Di that she has a teleconference instead of being able to help at the food bank	00:34
June 2016	Turbo hyp: getting coffee with his counselee, the only other black guy from work	00:56
June 2016	Lena: being in a Bible study when she heard the idea that white people didn't steal black people, they were given up. And do you call Africans living here African Americans?	01:38
June 2016	Nikki: on the bus, a black man confronts an African refugee about how they don't understand the struggle	00:50
June 2016	Lena: son confronts her that "African American" isn't the right word any more	00:30
June 2016	Aviva: follows cues in using "black" but with hesitation	00:14
June 2016	Nikki: black friends who don't want to talk about race	00:25
June 2016	Will: going to McDonald's in Easton before volunteering at the farm	00:47
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: the cops NOT hassling him when he was on the job	01:36
July 2016	Lena: meeting the girl from the Jewish social action group	01:46

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
July 2016	Will: talking with Angela about race when she takes her break from the coffee shop	01:03
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: Nick told a story at church about talking with his neighbors	00:19
July 2016	Lena: pulled around a group of black kids late at night in Chesterton	01:31
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: a white woman locks her car doors when he, as a 10yo, walks by	00:45
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: afraid of young black guys sometimes	00:24
July 2016	Jim: friend is robbed at gunpoint by a black person	00:22
July 2016	Jim generally: frustrated driving through Easton	00:35
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: like Jim, frustrated with pedestrians	00:51
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: has seen black and white people do it	00:10
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: student-heavy Richmond neighborhood has pedestrians walk all over too	00:20
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: talking his wife down from getting angry at black guys slow to cross the street	00:23
July 2016	Will: in high school, one of two black people told me about giving head to somebody under the science desks	01:26
July 2016	Lena: getting to know Tyrone at school, not being fazed by his obscene drawings	04:11
July 2016	Aviva: berated in Aldi's for being white	00:59
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: getting worse doctor's treatment than his white friend from work	01:04
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: black people responding to news about white people overdosing on heroin	00:37
July 2016	Lena: helping her black friend get faster treatment at the doctor's by playing the white bitch	01:47
July 2016	Will: telling Angela the story of using privilege to play Assassin with Kimmi and them in North City	02:44
July 2016	Jim: using white privilege to smoke weed at public events with no fear	00:56
July 2016	Jim hyp: getting caught smoking weed as a black guy	00:13
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle hyp: getting caught smoking weed at a party	00:12
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: home video of a drunk white guy crashing into his neighbor's car and being let off	00:46
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: black people give each other "the talk"	00:19
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle (news story about Jeremy Mardis I think) autistic kid killed by the cops	00:13
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: guys complain about women and then marry them	00:11

RACE STORIES

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: generalizing from experiences with black and white people	00:10
July 2016	Lena: white people fear losing what they have	00:08
July 2016	Lena: weren't getting Norman Rockwell's America in Jefferson County	00:22
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: Nelson Mandela didn't take retribution	00:14
July 2016	Aviva: dad only knew black people from the prison	00:18
July 2016	Lena: telling white people how oppressed black people have been in housing	00:38
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle (embedded story): can pass for white by voice	00:17
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: was turned down renting a house for being black	00:16
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: what you hear happens to black people is real	00:16
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: people love children of color if it's theirs	00:11
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: loves his own part-Japanese granddaughter	00:15
July 2016	Aviva learned: some black people think white people making relationships with them is insufficient	00:38
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: white people profit from being friends with black people	00:10
July 2016	Lena: white people don't always profit, though	00:02
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: is the watermelon expert while shopping, even though he doesn't know much	01:01
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: getting in touch with Splitsville's white affinity group on our behalf	00:46
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle maybe: can sing, but not dance	00:14
July 2016	Jim: 25 bad experiences with black people in Splitsville	00:20
July 2016	Jim hyp: would look for black workers at local tech companies and universities	00:25
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: wouldn't recommend people for jobs if they wouldn't reflect well on him	00:25
July 2016	Jim: good white workers have come through connections	00:36
July 2016	Jim: hired someone from First Church, he sucked at working	00:20
July 2016	Aviva: trying to start Bookworms after volunteering at Rufus' class, feels awkward	03:23
July 2016	Aviva hyp: talking with other parents from Freedom Elementary	00:14
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: some people, like his sister-in-law, just don't learn to put effort into education for their kids	01:28
July 2016	Aviva: kids at Freedom Elementary sometimes don't try either	00:27

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: sister-in-law doesn't help her granddaughter stay fit or educated	00:39
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: his wife sees kids who aren't prepared, but their parents blame white people	00:18
July 2016	Lena generally: black people have a different life story of futility than white people do	00:23
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: if the system works against you, make a business	00:08
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: met a black entrepreneur who just made it happen	00:22
July 2016	Aviva: bringing up race with Rufus' teacher for the first time	00:41
July 2016	Lena generally: what do black people want?	00:23
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: white people don't stick around in projects	00:10
July 2016	Will: white people sometimes take on projects s.t. it reinforces white supremacy	00:11
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: Splitsville public schools struggles to get parents to help	00:21
July 2016	Jim hyp: protest racist police	00:09
July 2016	Jim hyp: tell police not to arrest people for weed	00:11
July 2016	Lena generally: get on the phones to protest	00:03
July 2016	Jim hyp: calling to vote for less funding when black people are discriminated	00:22
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: police chief admits being wrong	00:20
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: if white people sit and do nothing, they are guilty	00:07
July 2016	Lena: talking to kids about how husband's side owned slaves	00:47
July 2016	Will generally: Confederate flag is a rural thing	00:05
July 2016	Jim generally: Confederate flag is for people who feel insecure about dropping out of hs	00:05
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: Confederate flag is for intimidating	00:03
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: HR at work told people to stop playing Dixie	00:12
July 2016	Aviva generally: white people are afraid and oblivious	00:22
July 2016	Will: watching <i>Black-ish</i> in an intellectual way	00:16
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: recounting one of the <i>Black-ish</i> episodes, about Black Lives Matter	00:22
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle hyp: proposing basketball camp to kids	00:05
July 2016	Aviva: yes, some parents do emphasize sports	00:53
July 2016	Jim generally: it's a norm for white people to go to college and get loans, but not for black people	00:36
July 2016	Jim: arrested feeding homeless people	00:34

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Month	Person and summary of story	Length
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: there's lots of black on black crime	00:10
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle generally: no white person wants to wake up as any black person	00:18
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: black people think Rachel Dolezal was crazy	00:17
July 2016	Lena generally: but maybe black-on-black crime is just trying to win at something	00:46
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: but he never took it out on anyone	00:11
July 2016	Jim: black-on-black crime from organized (i.e. drug) crime	00:19
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: there are gangs in Splitsville	00:14
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: Reverend's son died because someone was jealous of him	00:44
July 2016	Will: black-on-black crime is a generational difference	00:43
July 2016	Will: people at First Church care a lot about violence in Familyfield	00:37
July 2016	Will: increasing white people's exposure was key to Civil Rights movement	00:53
July 2016	Jim: white kids are told to trust cops	00:31
July 2016	Lena: young white people like her son can't afford to just be in white neighborhoods any more	00:36
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle hyp: living in a black neighborhood	00:03
July 2016	Will generally: not having the same proportions of people at church as in your city is a problem	00:20
July 2016	Aviva: Second Pres has only ever had black people come in and out	00:42
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: the neighborhood is getting whiter	00:13
July 2016	Jim hyp: gentrification will lead to black people coming	00:12
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle hyp: upper class black people will go to the large local black church	00:12
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: black people don't come to Second Pres because of the church culture	00:11
July 2016	Aviva hyp: Second Pres could join a black church	00:06
July 2016	Will: Second Pres just does what it's going to do	00:10
July 2016	Aviva: black churches in Splitsville aren't much better at talking about race	00:34
July 2016	Will: my church tries not to make whiteness the norm and default	00:38
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: black people choose churches for the music	00:20
July 2016	Jim: white people choose churches for the music too	00:02
July 2016	Jim: personal Christian music history	00:09
July 2016	Aviva: white congregants who want to protect their music are afraid/ racist	00:32

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: other church musicians never reciprocate by playing black songs	00:19
July 2016	Aviva hyp: wouldn't want to step on his toes in appropriating a song	00:13
July 2016	Will: singing a spiritual at church made white people feel uncomfortable	00:14
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: hates it when people suggest spirituals to him	00:37
July 2016	Jim generally: churches that are authentically who they are is good	00:05
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle hyp: visit a black church together	00:26
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: First Church didn't do well with a song from Second Pres	00:38
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: First Church doesn't remember the songs either	00:14
July 2016	Lena: the Holy Spirit told her to go to First Church, so she did	00:36
July 2016	Lena: moved back from the country in a way that supported her husband's uncertain job situation	01:17
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle hyp: black people would accept Jim	00:08
July 2016	Jim: instantly accepted by his friend's family	00:29
July 2016	Mr. Sparkle: it's not race-related that it's hard to be friends w people at SC	00:06
July 2016	Aviva hyp: being corrected by Mr. Sparkle	00:10
Aug 2016	Aviva: summarizing the story of being with Mr. Sparkle in July	00:35
Aug 2016	Jim: Eli wants people to march, but Jim thinks that's silly	02:30
Aug 2016	Sky generally: black people have a lifetime of trying	00:18
Aug 2016	Anthony generally: some black people like the idea of segregation	01:09
Aug 2016	Aviva: Mr. Sparkle and Rufus' teacher think black people overemphasize sports	01:29
Aug 2016	Sky generally: people can really have pride in poverty, partly out of insecurity	01:23
Aug 2016	Sky generally: poverty pride can happen for kids who have to translate for their parents too	00:50
Aug 2016	Nikki generally: so many parents who work hard so their kids can be in a better spot	00:12
Aug 2016	Nikki generally: parents do their kids a service when they tell it to them straight	00:20
Aug 2016	Lena maybe: reasons given in the 70s for integration	00:27
Aug 2016	Lena: her black friend asked about how her arm was doing	01:06
Aug 2016	Sky: taking Uber trips is a cultural experience	00:54
Aug 2016	Sky: Uber in Baltimore	00:15
Aug 2016	Sky: Uber rides in Splitsville	01:19

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Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Aug 2016	Sky: talking to white Uber driver about Andersonville	01:04
Aug 2016	Nikki hyp: being intentional about those choices of where you sit, etc	00:21
Aug 2016	Anthony hyp: black Uber driver picks up black guy in Andersonville	00:09
Aug 2016	Nikki: accidentally serving bad American food to Rwandan hosts	00:58
Aug 2016	Sky: overcompensating to be polite and undermine stereotypes	00:53
Aug 2016	Sky: breaking the ice with a black Uber driver, "I said it!"	00:17
Aug 2016	Lena: asking Betty if her son was okay after Trayvon Martin was shot	02:39
Aug 2016	Anthony: covert (Northern) vs overt (Southern) racism	01:24
Aug 2016	Aviva generally: conversations where racial differences aren't in focus (brings up Esther later)	00:24
Aug 2016	Aviva hyp: bringing up race if people don't want to talk about race	00:22
Aug 2016	Turbo hyp: can't do this because then I'm racist	00:13
Aug 2016	Aviva hyp: introducing the topic of race with Rufus' teacher	01:04
Aug 2016	Bob: getting to know the maintenance people at his office	00:30
Aug 2016	Bob: talking to the Lyft driver	00:46
Aug 2016	Jim: coming full circle on affirmation action, through relationships	02:02
Aug 2016	Will: negative reaction to Sparkle	01:35
Aug 2016	Jim: Chad being messed up to other black people	00:59
Aug 2016	Sky: black guy who's told that black people don't eat certain things or go skydiving	00:51
Aug 2016	Anthony: read black literature in high school	00:07
Aug 2016	Anthony generally: hard to like reading without characters like you	00:24
Aug 2016	Nikki hyp: is it right for black kids only meeting one white person to defer to them?	00:36
Aug 2016	Nikki: varying comfort displaying black culture with Anthony	00:18
Aug 2016	Lena learned: a list for black people to get reparations for daily items	00:35
Sept 2016	Will: can stand by Settlers of Catan as a good part of white culture	03:24
Sept 2016	Will: seeing immature people at a party rather than them being black as being in focus	01:59
Sept 2016	Gwen learned: white people are "my people," even the racist ones	01:38
Sept 2016	Nikki learned: black people have a communal mindset, but most white people don't	00:46
Sept 2016	Sky: students calling her other student "white" as a slur	01:00
Sept 2016	Sky: students accuse her of voting for Trump	00:45
Sept 2016	Sky: student calls Sparkle's wife a "white B" because he thinks it's a slur	00:53

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Sept 2016	Sky: woman listening to vulgar music in the car, sippy cup, probably her client	01:19
Sept 2016	Sky: told her students they could be arrested in a few years	00:18
Sept 2016	Sky: talking w student about education before integration	00:34
Sept 2016	Aviva learned: white teacher talking to her students about Trump	01:50
Sept 2016	Nikki: getting race and American culture mixed up in Rwanda, bi-racial babies comment	00:38
Sept 2016	Lena: Black Lives Matter protesters came to her oil and gas regulation protest	06:37
Sept 2016	Lena: don't correct or counsel, if she doesn't want to get baptized, she doesn't have to	00:47
Sept 2016	Nikki: Sparkle's story confronting his coworkers about Black Lives Matter	01:53
Sept 2016	Nikki hyp: bringing this up at work or school won't be as controversial as you think	00:18
Sept 2016	Anthony: his black students didn't know much about Black Lives Matter and didn't support it that much	04:08
Sept 2016	Anthony generally: black kids who don't support Black Lives Matter might be from abuse	00:22
Sept 2016	Nikki generally: black kids who don't support Black Lives Matter might be since it's not personal	00:40
Sept 2016	Lena: telling Terron's story from 2nd inter-church meeting of not recognizing something as racism	01:40
Sept 2016	Nikki hyp: telling someone they're oppressed	00:07
Sept 2016	Nikki: in Peace Corps, didn't want to tell people they were oppressed	00:16
Sept 2016	Lena: being told that she was oppressed for staying home with kids (until then told she was lucky)	01:10
Sept 2016	Jim: America has tried to tell the Middle East how to be enlightened	00:22
Sept 2016	Aviva generally: does telling someone they're oppressed only go one way	00:13
Sept 2016	Lena: some 3rd world countries are more peaceful than America	00:16
Sept 2016	Nikki: some slaves resisted, others didn't	00:18
Sept 2016	Anthony: students didn't know how Freedom Summer happened	01:19
Sept 2016	Nikki: Freedom Summer required key black people to be on board	00:18
Sept 2016	Will: resisted telling a black friend that she's not Jewish	03:31
Sept 2016	Nikki: some cultures where they don't have control turn to soap operas	00:24
Sept 2016	Anthony imperative: educate people into new possibilities	00:07
Sept 2016	Anthony imp: ask Middle East what they want	00:28

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Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Sept 2016	Nikki: could tell people they're oppressed on the model of sex trafficking victims	00:42
Sept 2016	Sky imperative: get them to dream outside their reality	00:05
Sept 2016	Sky: Frankl helped people not commit suicide by asking them to dream	01:48
Sept 2016	Sky imp: ask Middle East what healthy society is for them	00:07
Sept 2016	Lena imp: society tells us what to feel too much	00:22
Sept 2016	Jim hyp imp: telling each other what to do	00:04
Sept 2016	Sky: white people talk a lot without a lot of action	00:22
Sept 2016	Nikki: moving savings to black-owned bank	00:03
Sept 2016	Nikki: hiring black people to do house repairs	00:17
Sept 2016	Will: didn't grow up praying about race	00:14
Sept 2016	Will: saw Ms. Dianne, felt awkward about this group	00:34
Sept 2016	Nikki hyp: telling Ms Di that as white people we need to get our house in order	01:53
Oct 2016	Nikki: boy play goes to prison and the hospital at Sunday school	01:41
Oct 2016	Will: being shocked when playing 500 w the neighborhood kids	01:23
Oct 2016	Sky: kids playing Halo (substory of her trying to play too)	02:22
Oct 2016	Will: At Terron's grandma's house, where she tells the boy to go get her belt	05:11
Oct 2016	Will: felt comfortable when they were saying that white people who use the term African American are racist	00:55
Oct 2016	Aviva: it used to be inappropriate to use "black"	00:15
Oct 2016	Lena hyp: wouldn't have let someone hit someone in front of her	00:07
Oct 2016	Will learned: black culture has stricter discipline	00:33
Oct 2016	Aviva: Rufus' teacher isn't his teacher again, so she hasn't spent much time w her	00:35
Oct 2016	Jim: has been getting to know his black house flipping mentee	02:24
Oct 2016	Jim generally: Race is present even at the grocery store	00:07
Oct 2016	Jim: more encouraging 30 second positive interactions than 5 second negative ones	00:31
Oct 2016	Jim: how he met his house flipping mentee	01:26
Oct 2016	Jim generally: black people don't do a high quality job	00:31
Oct 2016	Aviva: her brother is a contractor who's had the same issues, but has never hired a black guy	00:17
Oct 2016	Nikki: black worker who did repairs for them loved good craftsmanship	00:40

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Oct 2016	Nikki learned: people naturally walk in the middle of the street when it's unsafe on the sidewalk	00:35
Oct 2016	Sky: being in psychiatric hospital with a black family	02:50
Oct 2016	Sky: her students use white as a slur and accuse her of voting for Trump	00:23
Oct 2016	Sky: her students accuse each other of being racist	00:39
Oct 2016	Sky: parents of a student said they liked the old therapist bc she was black	02:05
Oct 2016	Sky: doesn't call childline just bc of the word whooping	00:37
Oct 2016	Sky: parents deferred to her	00:29
Oct 2016	Sky: listens to Pray as You Go	00:54
Oct 2016	Sky: grounding practice of looking at the sky	00:46
Oct 2016	Sky: spiritual practice to bless the classroom space	01:08
Oct 2016	Sky hyp: tell her students that she's not voting for Trump	00:20
Oct 2016	Lena: presenting her friend's portrait to Barbara	04:05
Oct 2016	Lena: finished a draft of the book	00:07
Oct 2016	Lena: her son is working with homeless things	00:43
Oct 2016	Lena: feeling stuck opening her locker with a black lockermate there	01:20
Oct 2016	Lena: everything was tense	00:38
Oct 2016	Lena: segregated associations for lawyers missed out on each others' wisdom	01:12
Oct 2016	Will: food bank has been going well	00:06
Oct 2016	Will: my friend from campus black affinity group is taking a leave	00:56
Oct 2016	Will: repeat Guys ask Girls theme this year at campus black affinity group, "body count"	02:06
Oct 2016	Will: announced a transcription position at campus black affinity group	00:43
Oct 2016	Bob learned: Cornel West says you shouldn't feel bad about privilege	02:32
Oct 2016	Bob: teaching feminist and non-Western perspectives on futurism	02:23
Oct 2016	Bob: had students watch Frontline documentaries about race	00:51
Oct 2016	Bob: Uber drivers weren't trying as hard to be nice when they were white	00:38
Oct 2016	Bob: feels mixed sending his son to privileged preschool	01:14
Oct 2016	Lena: felt left out on the street when her dad insisted she go to the integrated public school	01:45
Oct 2016	Lena: Went to school even when there were bomb threats	00:58
Oct 2016	Sky: making small talk with a black guy at the gas station	02:50

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Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Oct 2016	Aviva learned: common courtesy can go a long way	00:27
Oct 2016	Nikki: Nakita and Kim come over for lunch and ask to come to our group	00:24
Oct 2016	Jim: Sparkle processed his own race shit and tried to feel out his triggers	01:04
Oct 2016	Lena: Sparkle showed that black people aren't infallible	00:45
Oct 2016	Will: Sparkle thought Second Church didn't like their own music	00:54
Oct 2016	Nikki: her church tried to incorporate things from the other culture	01:07
Nov 2016	Aviva: why she's here in this group	02:01
Nov 2016	Jim: why he's here in this group	01:18
Nov 2016	Sky: why she's here in this group	01:32
Nov 2016	Gwen: why she's here in the group	01:58
Nov 2016	Lena: why she's here in this group	00:12
Nov 2016	Lena: her employee getting fired	02:14
Nov 2016	Jeff: he's been white for 30 years	00:08
Nov 2016	Nakita: here because she wanted to bust up the whites only meeting	00:29
Nov 2016	Nakita: thinks there may be something to black-white stuff based on a recent church experience	00:33
Nov 2016	Will: why I'm here in the group	00:49
Nov 2016	Will learned: talk about race every day for 10 years	00:49
Nov 2016	Kim: here bc she thought you need black people to have a meeting about race	00:37
Nov 2016	Kim: grew up living in a tension	02:41
Nov 2016	Kim: first memory of racism when her house was raided for no reason	00:41
Nov 2016	Nakita: earliest racist memory from her family calling her black beetle	01:42
Nov 2016	Nikki: black (as color) vs African American	00:22
Nov 2016	Kim: history of knowing white people	00:49
Nov 2016	Nakita: Asian friend from early scholars program	00:37
Nov 2016	Kim: how the election was for her (see sub-stories within)	06:19
Nov 2016	Kim: unspoken language among black people after Trump won	00:53
Nov 2016	Nakita: stayed at the house and was angry when Trump won	02:58
Nov 2016	Nakita: silver lining connecting to a white woman after Trump won	01:08
Nov 2016	Nakita generally: white people think Obama was a black President, and now Trump is a white President	00:11
Nov 2016	Kim: got off Facebook so she couldn't see people's comments	00:09

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Nov 2016	Kim learned: Christians voted for Trump to get special privileges	00:18
Nov 2016	Aviva: growing up, "black" was rude	00:12
Nov 2016	Nakita: white people at work use "black" in a mean way sometimes	00:25
Nov 2016	Nakita generally: Africans don't like to be called "African American"	00:17
Nov 2016	Kim: Africans don't like to be called "African American"	00:05
Nov 2016	Sky: calling the black paraprofessional white as a slur	00:04
Nov 2016	Kim: talking properly means that you're not black	00:37
Nov 2016	Kim: times that people tell her she either made it or she thinks she's better than they are	01:39
Nov 2016	Nakita: her boy's father thinks that she thinks she's better than him	00:48
Nov 2016	Aviva learned: be in solidarity with black people	00:11
Nov 2016	Kim: her friend checked in w her after the election and at work when people say things	01:21
Nov 2016	Sky: felt so triggered by the word "trump" afterwards that she changed the lyrics at church	00:35
Nov 2016	Sky: re-telling story of kids calling each other Donald Trump as an insult	01:32
Nov 2016	Sky: personal result of debriefing that story last month	00:36
Nov 2016	Sky: telling her students that she wasn't happy w the election results as a way to navigate professionalism and care	02:57
Nov 2016	Nakita: having to talk about the election w your kids vs before	00:23
Nov 2016	Nikki: didn't have to hide how she felt at work	00:49
Nov 2016	Kim: the election affects the nations	00:44
Nov 2016	Will learned: white people shouldn't be surprised	00:27
Nov 2016	Will learned: set of tweets about how white people can embrace their shock	01:57
Nov 2016	Kim generally: black people do fear every day	00:33
Nov 2016	Nakita learned: white women are crying, and when that happens, shit changes	00:46
Nov 2016	Lena learned: black people will not cede ground	01:18
Nov 2016	Aviva learned: we're part of a trajectory of love and justice	00:44
Nov 2016	Lena learned: progress has been down up, but hopefully in the right direction	00:36
Nov 2016	Sky: encouraged that people are still talking about it, even if she can't stand to listen to them	01:48
Nov 2016	Nikki: re-telling Gwen's discovery of her whiteness from a few meetings ago	00:35

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Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Nov 2016	Gwen: apologizing to her Malaysian friend	00:37
Nov 2016	Jim: talking with people who were excited about Trump	00:30
Nov 2016	Kim: having a hidden conversation at the grocery store while reaching for the lettuce	00:36
Nov 2016	Kim: small gestures, like at Walmart, let the other person know it's okay	01:19
Nov 2016	Kim imp: Jim should try new employment strategies	01:23
Nov 2016	Nakita: people think Nikki is black sometimes	00:16
Nov 2016	Lena: called her friend after the election and was affirmed in their friendship	01:24
Nov 2016	Will: alluding to a conversation over Thanksgiving	00:07
Dec 2016	Jim hyp: media demonizing Nakita's brother for being a drug dealer	01:16
Dec 2016	Jim hyp: black people saying "This is what you do to fix everything"	00:10
Dec 2016	Jim: hasn't hired anyone (let alone black people) in the last month	00:21
Dec 2016	Jim: black tenant has been frustrating in causing lots of problems	00:58
Dec 2016	Jim: complaints about other black tenants, including the heat	01:50
Dec 2016	Jim generally: a lot of racist people have been burned repetitively	00:06
Dec 2016	Jim generally: counter-narrative for white people that it has to do with poverty and fear	01:09
Dec 2016	Jim: generally: black people notice being oppressed and will take it out on anyone	00:18
Dec 2016	Jim hyp: hiring black people from local large black church	01:25
Dec 2016	Jim hyp: what he looks for in hiring black people	01:42
Dec 2016	Jim: Oscar, who does drywall, is a great guy	00:36
Dec 2016	Jim and Sky: the opera about race	07:14
Dec 2016	Jim hyp: hiring more drywallers, with no surplus	00:21
Dec 2016	Jim: process of helping and then firing a white guy doing drywalling	01:56
Dec 2016	Nikki learned: oppressed people will steal because they think you have everything	01:18
Dec 2016	Nikki: felt accomplished when people accepted her as poor in Rwanda	00:33
Dec 2016	Jim: black guy asked for help with quarters at the car wash	00:22
Dec 2016	Jim: he was racist to call white sounding voices back first	00:14
Dec 2016	Nikki learned: an African guy wore a white polo to be more approachable to white people	01:03
Dec 2016	Sky: being lied to by a guy at the gas station when she first moved to Splitsville	05:33

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Dec 2016	Sky: seeing her student's dad so involved when the boy is acting out	01:43
Dec 2016	Will: going to first local white anti-racist group meeting, encouraged to find others working on the same questions	03:29
Dec 2016	Will: met with a witch from the local white anti-racist group	01:02
Dec 2016	Will learned: a friend is going to be a grandparent at age 29 after adopting black kids	01:25
Dec 2016	Lena: son brought a Nigerian woman home, they had a nice moment that broke the ice	01:23
Dec 2016	Lena: other son brought home a black girl, but they broke up bc her father didn't want her to date a white man	00:47
Dec 2016	Lena: when she rolls down the windows for somebody, he's surprised and thought she'd be afraid	01:09
Dec 2016	Will and Lena: Lena almost hit someone w her car earlier when she felt threatened	00:30
Dec 2016	Lena: encourages one of the opera facilitator guys that he'll be a great father	00:48
Dec 2016	Jim: re-telling Lena's story about not rejecting black people	00:20
Dec 2016	Aviva: meeting with Rufus' teacher for lunch	02:05
Dec 2016	Aviva: felt encouraged by the opera people, thinks they should be in schools too	00:47
Dec 2016	Aviva learned: the lawyer who defended people on death row, even when white people protected themselves	01:46
Dec 2016	Aviva hyp: talking to her dad over Christmas about racism	02:00
Dec 2016	Lena: family history of having the tides turn	00:20
Dec 2016	Sky: followed Kim and Nakita by telling a dark-skinned girl that she's beautiful	02:12
Dec 2016	Nikki: able to relate to her dark-skinned dentist bc her family makes fun of her for being light	00:27
Dec 2016	Lena: Susan is 48% white	00:45
Dec 2016	Will: felt strange when relative laughed when someone else pointed out race	02:41
Dec 2016	Jim: felt stuck last meeting when he was shut down talking about immigrants	00:36
Dec 2016	Nikki hyp: how to approach Paul about joining the group	00:10
Dec 2016	Jim: Second Pres is pretty "pasty" and overeducated	01:25
Dec 2016	Jim learned: Splitsville is super not diverse	00:38
Dec 2016	Jim: got tripped up in Houson from expecting it to be as segregated as Splitsville	01:02

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Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Jan 2017	Will: felt convicted by his own question about including people into new actions	00:56
Jan 2017	Will: should start with campus black affinity group to pray and call your Congressional reps	01:43
Jan 2017	Lena learned from the Summit Against Racism: don't let economics divide us	04:35
Jan 2017	Jim generally: there's an easy parallel to say brown-skinned people in the Middle East and browner-skinned people here are all dumb	01:22
Jan 2017	Jim: Hooks bid on a drywall job and has been doing a great job	04:01
Jan 2017	Nikki: grappling with the unintended consequences of going or not to the womens march in Washington, D.C.	01:35
Jan 2017	Lena: had second thoughts about not going to the vigil for the person killed in Familyfield	01:40
Jan 2017	Nikki learned: there was backlash at the march for women w American flag hijab	00:40
Jan 2017	Lena: her daughter was worried about getting the right representation for her journalism	00:38
Jan 2017	Sky: found encouragement at the women's march for her efforts to love and include	06:04
Jan 2017	Jim: trying to go to the bathroom at the womens march	00:28
Jan 2017	Sky: showing pics of the womens march to African American workers at a cultural museum	02:26
Jan 2017	Gwen learned: some people of color feel unsafe marching, so should she march?	01:30
Jan 2017	Sky hyp: talking to the girls who wear hijab to tell them they're welcome	00:36
Jan 2017	Sky hyp: supporting people even if we aren't them, "That's my fellow human"	00:47
Jan 2017	Will: why there were rival womens marches	01:30
Jan 2017	Will: invited a friend from work to the inauguration event at Hillwood, and learned that black people see continuity	01:10
Jan 2017	Jim: there isn't continuity for him	00:48
Jan 2017	Anthony learned: how deep racism goes from the movie <i>Thirteenth</i>	02:18
Jan 2017	Will hyp: talk to people you disagree with online	00:32
Jan 2017	Gwen: responding gently to someone online	01:37
Jan 2017	Gwen: talking through a cousin's response to her newsletter	02:32
Jan 2017	Jim: how he responds to people online with statistics	03:02
Jan 2017	Sky: how she worked to respond in love to someone who posted an inflammatory comment on her picture from the womens march	04:22

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Jan 2017	Anthony: one of his students went to the march as a special Youth Ambassador, and had to process afterward about how many white people were there	02:44
Jan 2017	Will: planning 4 tips for our resistance video series	02:36
Jan 2017	Lena and Gwen: Di has dropped the ball on prayer group	01:04
Jan 2017	Lena learned: redlining history in Splitsville and how systems affect even Hillwood	04:12
Jan 2017	Jim and all: probably wasn't the intent to initiate harm to black people when building the highway	00:55
Jan 2017	Lena: encouraged by protesters at the airport over Trump's Muslim ban	00:17
Jan 2017	Jim: it's a pain in the ass to get a green card	00:41
Jan 2017	Lena: asks people online how their approach reconciles with Scripture	00:49
Jan 2017	Sky: her teacher is going to have to go to court about a student who doesn't agree with the district's placing	01:10
Jan 2017	Lena: trying to make progress on her book	00:56
Feb 2017	Lena: re-telling her dad witnessing the murder at the naval academy	00:20
Feb 2017	Will: trying to coordinate seeing a movie with Terron	05:12
Feb 2017	Nikki: guy romanticized Africa and then went and got really sick	00:56
Feb 2017	Gwen: has felt her relationships with people from the food bank are one-sided	01:30
Feb 2017	Gwen: getting into a good conversation w her Muslim neighbors because of/related to her dog	03:44
Feb 2017	Gwen: deciding whether to tell her Indian student that there had been a hate crime against an Indian guy	02:36
Feb 2017	Lena: talking with Barbara about segregation times for her book	04:43
Feb 2017	Lena: black activists were angry that white activists were taking over, she feels stuck	05:42
Feb 2017	Will: telling the local white anti-racism group about trying to get to know black people outside of activist spaces	01:19
Feb 2017	Jim: frustrating conversation w Eli about economics, protesting, etc	06:10
Feb 2017	Lena: trying to persuade people to vote	00:33
Feb 2017	Jim: accidentally offended Hooks and then was able to reconcile w him	06:29
Feb 2017	Will: noticed that Jim's workers looked out for each other	01:08
Feb 2017	Sky overview: quitting her job	00:08
Feb 2017	Sky preview: breaking her phone and getting into an accident	00:08
Feb 2017	Sky: doing Black History Month with her class	01:49
Feb 2017	Sky: her most oppressive kid is referred out	00:11

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Feb 2017	Sky: having a black guy at the gas station store not get out of her way	05:27
Feb 2017	Sky: getting into a car accident from stress and having her teachers give her the day off	06:14
Feb 2017	Sky: plans to tell her kids that she's quitting close to when she ends	01:07
Feb 2017	Sky: re-telling that the kids call her paraprofessional a "white B"	00:19
Feb 2017	Will: article on how Splitsville doesn't have a black middle class	01:19
Feb 2017	Jim: hates his tenants who turn the heat up to 90	00:57
Mar 2017	Lena: growing up her grandmother, who had helped raise her mother and other siblings, would make pie	04:38
Mar 2017	Nikki: has talked to more people while the weather is nice	00:06
Mar 2017	Will: went to see <i>Get Out</i> with Terron as a double date	02:38
Mar 2017	Will: Shenyah doesn't like upper-class white parenting	01:09
Mar 2017	Will: telling the plot of <i>Get Out</i>	04:36
Mar 2017	Jim generally: black people are better at sports	00:05
Mar 2017	Article on Rachel Dolezal	00:04
Mar 2017	Nikki: trans-racial could be a thing	00:25
Mar 2017	Sky: letting herself quit her job, and being replaced by an African American guy	06:21
Mar 2017	Sky: saying goodbye to her students and their parents	08:31
Mar 2017	Sky: remembered that Charley is one of her black friends	01:01
Mar 2017	Sky: what's next is traveling, recovering, and getting back into mental health	01:23
Mar 2017	Jim: good experiences with Hooks	00:08
Mar 2017	Jim: hired a black property manager	00:37
Mar 2017	Jim: tenants threw a couch off the balcony and then the new one had bed bugs	01:15
Mar 2017	Jim: re-telling his history with Splitsville and racism	00:37
Mar 2017	Jim hyp: Hooks being defensive, attributing it to him being ignorant	00:38
Mar 2017	Jim: jaywalking comparison to mayonnaise, via Sparkle	01:23
Mar 2017	Jim: what's next is continuing to be intentional	02:08
Mar 2017	Jim: starts working with Hooks' contact, Yahoo	01:53
Mar 2017	Sky: has realized how racist Splitsville is	01:03
Mar 2017	Lena: has been realizing while working on her book how much she doesn't know	04:54
Mar 2017	Lena: went to an all-black boys choir	00:18
Mar 2017	Lena: lessons from attending a talk by former Black Panthers	05:47

Month	Person and summary of story	Length
Mar 2017	Lena: what's next is working to crack the code of racism and capitalism and environmental destruction	03:13
Mar 2017	Gwen: has been working on building in ways to be against racist structures so that it's there even when she's stressed	01:08
Mar 2017	Gwen: what's next is maybe attending First Church and trying to buy a house and deciding what kind of person to be	01:18
Mar 2017	Anthony: heard from a panel "ally is not a self-proclaimed position" and "get ya cousin"	03:15
Mar 2017	Anthony: what's next is continuing to teach	00:17
Mar 2017	Nikki: what's next is getting to know their neighbors more and working on it being a Familyfield farm, not a Second Pres farm	00:55
Mar 2017	Will: what's next is dissertating and starting my Justice 4 All video series	01:13
Mar 2017	Will: have felt like debriefing has been instrumental to my personal journey	01:16
Mar 2017	Will: telling the story of First Church/Second Pres pseudonyms	00:43
Mar 2017	Lena learned: it's important to understand the role of spirituality so we don't slit our throats	00:20
Mar 2017	Lena: not sure about something in her handout about negro and Spanish connection	01:03
Mar 2017	Jim: Latinos don't like working for black people	00:16
Mar 2017	Jim: people in the Caribbean who speak English, but people expect them to speak Spanish	01:53

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