

Informed Consent

Congregational Dynamics in SDA Multiracial and Multiethnic Churches

Principal Investigator: Alan Parker

Other Investigators: Nina Nelson, Alva Johnson, Raul Rivero

Introduction and Purpose

A rapid change is taking place in many Adventist congregations in the United States. Congregations are becoming increasingly diverse, as immigrants are attracted to them. You are invited to participate in a research study to provide insights into the nature of multicultural congregations that are becoming diverse in race, ethnic groups, generational dynamics, and culture. This phase of our research study is designed to gather input from church leaders and members as to their understanding of how race, ethnic, generational, and cultural issues influence their congregations.

Study Procedures

You will be asked to complete a demographic form that will include questions regarding your age, gender, ethnicity/race, involvement in your church, and the demographics of your church. The focus group will last about 1 to 1 ½ hours. The questions relate to your experience and perception of how race, ethnicity, and/or generational dynamics have influenced your congregation(s) on an interpersonal and congregational level. The interview will be video recorded so that we can accurately capture your viewpoints. In order to show our gratitude, you will receive a \$20 gift card for participating in the focus group.

Who can participate in this Study

You are able to participate in this study if you possess the following characteristics:

- a) You are a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church
- b) You are at least eighteen years of age
- c) You have attended a multiracial or multiethnic church for at least one year
- d) You have served in a leadership role in your local church (unless you are of a younger generation)

Voluntary Participation

Participating in this study is entirely voluntary. You are able to stop at any point, and there will be no negative consequences for ending participation early. You may choose not to answer certain questions. Because of the nature of the questions, there are no right or wrong answers.

Possible Risks of Participation

Participating in this study comes with a low level of risk. Responding to some questions, such as those regarding racism or those leaving the church, may trigger negative emotions. If you do experience any distressing emotions, let your interviewer know and you can take a brief break. We will also provide a free consultation for counseling for such persons, if they so desire.

Confidentiality of Records

We will seek to ensure your confidentiality. The data will be kept on a secure computer drive in the Pierson Institute at Southern Adventist University and will be accessible to qualified researchers who wish to access it. The information you share will help in guiding further research in this area, but your name and any identifying characteristics will not be disclosed.

Ultimately, the goal will be to publish a peer-reviewed article, present at church conferences, and share at professional meetings. Insights will also be used to publish a book for churches undergoing racial and cultural change.

Again, confidentiality is a priority unless reason is given to believe that you are in danger of immediate harm to yourself or others, or that an elderly person, child, or mentally disabled person is suffering abuse or neglect. Under these circumstances, I will have to report the information to the appropriate people in order to make sure everyone stays safe.

While we will endeavor to maintain confidentiality on our part, we cannot guarantee that the focus group members will do so. However, all attempts will be made to encourage them to keep any information that is disclosed in the group confidential.

Contact Persons

You may contact the principal investigator, Alan Parker, with any questions or concerns. You can contact him by calling (423-236-2683) or emailing (parker@southern.edu).

Southern Adventist Institutional Review Board has approved this study. You may inquire further about research participants' rights by contacting Cynthia Gettys, Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Southern Adventist University, Phone (423-236-2285), or E-mail, cgettys@southern.edu.

Participant's Name (printed): _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____