Making Inclusive Communities: Congregations and the "Problem" of Race*

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This study suggests that the institutional capacity of communities and civic organizations to foster new and inclusive spaces for interaction across traditional cleavages involves both the initial impetus toward social inclusion and the strengths and limits of the cultural style that provides the rationale for inclusive practices. I ground this understanding in a study of how two churches, one liberal Lutheran and one fundamentalist Baptist, adapted to racial changes in their community. After a period of severe decline, both congregations developed a multi-cultural, multi-racial identity, attracting new members and eventually thriving. Theology did not drive this change; rather, in both cases the initial impetus came from implementing common institutional practices, specifically a similar strategy of locally-oriented church growth. Then, both congregations mined their religious traditions for metaphors of community that, when institutionalized broadly in both symbolic ways (rituals, sermons) and pragmatic ways (new decision-making routines, new programs) helped them achieve their transformation into racially inclusive public spaces. At this turning point, they defined the "problem" of race in a distinctive way, and developed a style of moral rhetoric that shaped the nature of their future public discourse on a variety of issues of social inclusion, as well as their capacity for issue-based activism.

Integration and the Making of Inclusive Spaces

How do racially inclusive public spaces–arenas of interaction and discourse—come about in local community organizations? Such organizations, especially voluntary ones, generally do not have inclusiveness thrust upon them by state-mandated affirmative action requirements; in fact, they are an important arena of civic life precisely because they are a public space not dominated by state control. What prompts such organizations to make racial inclusiveness a goal, and what is the nature or the shape of the resulting public space? What kinds of discourse and interaction take place? Does racial inclusion lead to inclusion along other lines of social division, for example, socioeconomic status or lifestyle? How is inclusiveness in discourse, symbolism, interaction, and positions of power within the organization related to the ability to mobilize for social change beyond the organization? Answering these questions requires understanding the institutional and cultural practices through which organizations come to their multi-racial or multi-cultural identity.

This is a comparative case study of how two congregations in Oak Park, Illinois, became racially inclusive public spaces, adopting a multiracial and multicultural identity.[1] The community's residential racial integration posed a problem of fundamental environmental transformation (Haveman 1992), and congregations within the community reacted in a variety of ways. Some ignored the changes and declined; some moved away. Some stayed and developed a regional focus, drawing members from all over Chicago's western suburbs; these remained socially quite homogeneous. Some congregations stayed and reinvented a new local

* I thank the editors of *Social Problems* and two anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful suggestions for revision; I also appreciate helpful comments on earlier drafts by Nancy Eiesland, Art Farnsley, Shoshanah Feher, Heather Haveman, Martin Marty, Harriet Morgan, Bonnie Nelsen, Ann Swidler, Henry Walker, and members of the Sociology Brownbag at Cornell. I am grateful to the members of City Baptist and Good Shepherd Lutheran for sharing their stories with me. This research was supported in part by the Congregations in Changing Communities Project, funded by the Lilly Endowment and directed by Nancy Ammerman. Direct correspondence to the author at the Department of Sociology, Cornell University, 323 Uris Hall, Ithaca, New York 14853. E-mail: peb4@cornell.edu.

1. "Inclusive public space" is an ambiguous term, and I am not attempting here to untangle all of the complex meanings of the word "inclusive," as some others do (cf. Williams 1995). Rather, I look at the social processes that lead organizations or communities to label "inclusion" a goal and to try to achieve inclusion as they define it.

identity in a way that was congruent with the changes, adopting a conscious strategy of racial inclusion. This paper does not attempt to predict which congregation adopted which strategy, a topic others have covered at some length (cf. Ammerman 1997b). Instead, I focus on Good Shepherd Lutheran and City Baptist[2] as exemplars of the congregations choosing to stay and adapt. These two cases shed light on the social processes that led to making racial inclusion a goal, and the cultural processes of framing and interpreting that new mission. I want to explain how they became inclusive public spaces, and examine the consequences of the particular organizational and cultural strategies they used to achieve this goal.

The culture wars thesis emphasizes that a liberal/conservative religious divide is a primary feature of American religion, informing a broad array of stands on social and political issues, particularly on "hot button" issues like race (Bellah et al. 1991; Glock 1993; Hunter 1991). But it proves unhelpful in understanding religious responses to the racial changes in Oak Park. Extensive fieldwork in Oak Park showed that liberal or conservative theology did not determine how congregations reacted to the racial changes. City Baptist is fundamentalist and Good Shepherd is a liberal congregation in a liberal denomination (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America [ELCA]), but despite real differences in theology and doctrine, both came to frame and interpret "race" in similar ways, and to deploy similar strategies in their attempts to adapt to racial integration. Theology and doctrine, at the heart of liberal/conservative differences, were decoupled from decisions around racial inclusion. Thus, some Oak Park congregations became integrated through deploying standard institutional practices for locally-based church growth, while others avoided integration by deploying other standard institutional practices–relocating to a new community or adopting a regional/translocal identity (cf. Ammerman 1997b; Wuthnow 1994b).

City Baptist and Good Shepherd Lutheran ended up with racially inclusive policies and practices because they deployed the same strategy for growth after a period of decline, a strategy drawn from a common institutional source, a literature on church growth that both pastors came to know through their seminary training. This strategy aimed to grow by planting strong local roots and forming a local identity. Then, each congregation created *ritual* inclusion through changes in the worship service, and *formal* inclusion through changes in leadership and decision-making processes. They engaged in "culture work," the intentional and strategic manipulation of explicit culture to achieve their new goal (cf. Swidler 1986). They mined their religious traditions for metaphors that framed their new multi-racial mission focus in legitimate religious terms, and made it seem like a natural extension of their previous identity (Hobsbawm 1983; see also Feher 1997). Both chose communal metaphors—"Community in Christ" at Good Shepherd and "The New Testament Church" at City Baptist—to express this identity.

There were consequences not only in their decision to embrace the community's new racial integration, but also in the particular strategies they used in forging their new multiracial identity. These consequences shaped the kind of public space each congregation became. As a result of their strong local orientation, these congregations became more "church-like" than "sect-like" on a church-sect continuum (Stark and Bainbridge 1985). They adopted a civic, engaged orientation, as opposed to having a separate, subcultural identity, or adopting a more activist or critical stance toward the community.

There were also consequences of the particular cultural strategies they used to forge their identity. Congregations with an explicit focus on "community" take social issues seri-

2. Following the lead of several recent studies, I identify the real name of the community, Oak Park, rather than reducing the complexity of the community's history to a few underlying dimensions or creating an "insider/outside" dynamic where some small group of fellow researchers knows the community's real name and the rest of the world is kept in the dark (cf. Ammerman 1997b; Demerath and Williams 1992; Warner 1988). In all cases individual identities are disguised, except for Jack Finney, the Lutheran pastor, who gave permission to be identified. "City Baptist" is a pseudonym used at the request of the church's leadership. The leaders of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (GSLC) gave permission to use the church's real name.

ously, as part of their commitment to institutionalize members' deeply held values. But they also place importance on providing members with experiences of closeness, fellowship, support, and caring (Becker et al. 1993, Becker 1997b, forthcoming; Roof 1993; Tipton 1992; Warner 1988). In choosing to place such a dominant emphasis on community, both congregations came to define the "problem" of race as interpersonal, social, and psychological. The problem of race became the problem of racism, and racism was understood primarily as a barrier to religious community. Political, economic, or structural understandings of race did not emerge in their public discourse.

Both churches were able to create and maintain an exception to two "divides" that structure much of American life—a black/white racial divide, and a liberal/conservative cultural divide. And yet neither congregation became a location for a truly wide-ranging discourse about race or other social divisions. Both congregations came to develop and institutionalize an overall style of moral engagement with social issues that Lichterman (1995a, b) and others have called *personalism*. Personalism has come to characterize a broad range of both religious and secular voluntary organizations, especially those associated with the white middle-class, and especially since the 1960s (Becker et al. 1993; Bellah et al. 1985; Lichterman 1995a, b; Wuthnow 1994a). Substantively, my analysis suggests two key factors that structure the institutional ability of local voluntary organizations to be players in the struggle for racial and gender equality, their ability to foster civic habits of tolerance and caring across traditional social divisions, and the limits on that ability. One is the set of standard institutional practices that such organizations use in defining their market orientation, which determines their degree of local engagement and strategy for recruiting members. The other is the cultural logic by which social issues are confronted, framed, interpreted, and acted upon within the organization (cf. Friedland and Alford 1991; Lichterman 1995a, b).

Racial Changes in Oak Park

I chose to study Oak Park in part because its recent history of racial, demographic, and political change had resulted in something of a rarity—a stable, racially-integrated middle-class community. Beginning in the fall of 1990, I began a community profile, reading the two weekly newspapers, and examining histories of the community in the public library and local historical society offices. I interviewed community leaders in politics, business, and the local press, and gathered census data. By the time I had completed fieldwork in the winter of 1993, I was able to put together a fairly detailed picture of the village and its history.

Oak Park is a Village, founded in 1833 and incorporated in 1902, which is now a suburb on the western edge of Chicago. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, it experienced a period of rapid racial transition. As African Americans began to move into the community, "white flight" began. But Oak Park is famous in some academic and policy circles for passing an integrated housing ordinance and achieving stable racial integration. By 1972, housing prices had leveled off, and white flight had all but stopped. Currently, this middle- to upper-middle-class community of 53,648 people is 18 percent black, 4 percent Hispanic, and 77 percent white, compared to being 98.8 percent white in 1970 (1970 and 1990 Census).

When Oak Park became an integrated community, that obviously meant the physical presence of African Americans as community residents, but it also has meant ongoing negotiation of racial matters. Since the early 1980s, African American leaders have been more vocal in demanding not only the right to live in the village but also to have fair treatment within its institutions; a local political party has been organized to this end. Particularly in the high school, accusations of unfair disciplinary practices directed towards African American youth have caused controversy. And there have been complaints that the police are more likely to stop and question black youths than white ones as they walk the sidewalks in the evening, or stand and talk in front of the movie theater. All in all, there is a consensus in the village that integration has worked, and that Oak Park is a success story. But there is also an awareness

that integration of the community's institutions is a slow process; how to manage this ongoing and deeper integration is still subject to public discussion in the village.[3]

Racial integration brought other changes to Oak Park. The village has obtained a reputation as a tolerant and progressive community, and it now has a vocal gay and lesbian population. It was common for those I interviewed to say that they had moved to Oak Park so their children could be raised in a progressive and integrated community. That, and the availability of affordable housing, increased the population of young, white professional families who were looking for an affordable, convenient place to live that reflected their own values.

The character of the village as a whole is very different now than it was 25 years ago. Then, it was a largely white, Republican community filled with small businessmen and managers and their families. Today in Oak Park, individuals vary rather widely in their own beliefs and attitudes towards social and political issues. There are both liberals and conservatives in the village. In national elections, about half vote Republican and half vote Democrat. The Unitarian and Episcopalian churches are filled with community residents, but so are the Assemblies of God, fundamentalist Baptist, and Plymouth Brethren congregations. Not all of the new residents are progressives, and some of the conservative people never left; this group currently feels alienated from the village government and its policies.

City Baptist and Good Shepherd

This article explores the effect of the racial changes in Oak Park on two congregations—City Baptist and Good Shepherd Lutheran. Over a six-month period in 1992, I conducted 35 formal, semi-structured interviews within the congregations. In addition to the pastor, I chose respondents who spanned a wide range of experience within each congregation, including long-time members and newcomers, those in lay leadership and those not in leadership, and four recent ex-members (two from each church). I interviewed men and women, ranging in age from 22 to 74 years. Most were white, but several were African American, middle-class managers or professionals. Interviews were taped and transcribed, except for two conducted by telephone and summarized in my fieldnotes.

I also engaged in participant-observation of worship services, education classes, and fellowship activities, for a total of 22 participant-observations, recorded in fieldnotes. Examples include Sunday morning worship at both churches, a young-adult Bible study group, a mothers' fellowship group, prayer groups, Sunday school classes, potlucks, and coffee hours. These activities allowed me to supplement my formal interviews with informal conversations with a much wider range of members and casual visitors, and to examine public settings of interaction and ritual display. While on site I would take brief notes on Sunday bulletins or class handouts when doing so would not be obtrusive. After each activity I would drive to a quiet place, such as a park or parking lot, and record verbal notes into a hand-held tape recorder; later that day I expanded these into longer, narrative accounts. My fieldnotes were supplemented by gathering as much documentary material as possible in each congregation, including annual reports, mission statements, notes from board meetings, and sermon transcripts.

This data-collection was part of two larger research projects. The first was a national multi-site study of congregations and social change that included these two congregations (see Ammerman 1997b). The second was a study of conflict and decision-making in 23 congregations in and around Oak Park. The latter study features over 230 interviews and some participant-observation in congregations in Oak Park and its two neighboring villages, River Forest and Forest Park (cf. Becker forthcoming). These larger studies provided the impetus, and the

3. This is revealed in the draft report of the community's new self-study, "Vision 2000: The Dynamic Culture of Oak Park," completed in the spring of 1997. A summary of both survey and focus group information is available from the village's development office.

resources, to construct the community profile and to gather other kinds of material, including a short telephone survey of each congregation in Oak Park, River Forest, and Forest Park. This project places these two congregations within the larger religious ecology of this tri-village area.

I began coding by identifying all portions of fieldnotes and interviews that contained passages of particular interest. All discussions of race, for example, were gathered together. So were all passages where members or leaders talked about their own views of their mission, identity, or trajectory. The themes that emerged from this coding organize the major portion of the discussion below. Good Shepherd's members and leaders understood themselves to be building a ministry and identity around the themes of "tolerance and diversity," while at City Baptist, the identity was centered around "multi-cultural ministry." The racial changes in Oak Park were framed, in these churches, as posing a particular kind of problem—a potential barrier to the creation of religious community. Race was not understood as a problem of social justice or political economy, but as a problem of interaction—how do we interact with each other across the potential barrier of race? Understanding why and how these themes became dominant, and their implications, is the focus of this analysis.

City Baptist

City Baptist is an independent fundamentalist church that, since 1930, has been in its present location on Austin Boulevard, the street that divides Oak Park from the city of Chicago. Membership and attendance peaked at about 1,100 people in the 1950s. Their identity centered around their Baptist heritage, overseas missions, and their status in the local community. Long-term members would talk with pride about the time when they had the largest Sunday School for miles around, and a picture of the Sunday School from this time period, with people packed in close rows filling the church lawn, is prominently displayed in the foyer.

Membership fell throughout the 1960s, in part because of the racial changes that began first in Austin, the Chicago neighborhood bordering Oak Park on the east, and then spread to Oak Park itself. But throughout the 1970s City Baptist was still a large congregation, having close to 600 members in 1978 (interview). It became important to use this kind of time-marker from members' interviews, because the clergy and other staff were all newcomers and attendance records were sparse to nonexistent. There are a few African Americans who have been members since the 1970s, but during that decade the congregation was over 85 percent white. One woman described the City Baptist of that time as, "a very sophisticated, moneyed church, that had many people who weren't well off but who gave liberally. . . . It was a very sophisticated kind of church when we came, very cliquish."

The church then experienced two separate conflicts that caused further and more rapid decline. The first centered around some changes to the physical plant proposed by a group of lay leaders in 1981 that would have communicated some distance from the Austin neighborhood—putting a garden on the Austin Boulevard side of the building, and closing off the street on the east to make a cul-de-sac with access only from the Oak Park side. In 1992, I was told that the plan was rejected by the majority of the members as connoting a racist attitude and communicating a desire to "put up the barriers" against the increasingly black and poor residents of the Austin neighborhood. Those who had favored the plan subsequently left the church, and I was unable to locate them for their side of the story and to ask whether they had intended to communicate a message of racism or exclusivity. Whatever the original intent of the proposal, the conflict over it took a toll, and at the end of 1981 membership was around 400 adults. The second conflict followed, but was apparently unrelated to the racial changes. It revolved around the pastor and a small group of his followers who, many told me, formed a cult, focusing on personal holiness and becoming more and more rigid. In 1984, after over a

year of intense struggle, the congregation dismissed the pastor. There were only 80 people left at City Baptist at the end of this much more bitter conflict.

Everyone I talked to who was familiar with the congregation's history told me that the late 1970s and early 1980s were a painful time, but a useful one that once and for all defined the congregation's stance toward race and their surrounding neighborhood. The decline to under 100 members and the calling of a new pastor were recognized retrospectively as a turning point that signaled a change of direction for the congregation (cf. Abbott 1997). One member, a younger white man who grew up attending this church, put it this way:

> I don't think that the people who left were necessarily anti-black, but they were very status-quo, with their little group of friends. I really believe that the Lord wanted to cause an upheaval. We were on a very important street there, as far as racial things are concerned. The black people did not feel comfortable. . . . But it was after this group left and we were down to nothing, that black people started coming in spontaneously. . . . These were people who began to sense that they could go to City, and that they would be accepted. And it has progressed.

The church began a three-year interim period, during which they forged a more consensual and participatory decision-making style, and began work on a plan to attract members from the whole neighborhood. The board of deacons and various committees began to do many of the things that the pastor and a small group of elders had previously done, and there were more congregation-wide votes on important policy and budget matters. During this period the congregation began to attract more African American members. In 1987 they hired a new pastor with training in multicultural ministry, and gave him a mandate to attract the diverse residents of Oak Park and Austin. This man, Pastor Smith, was head pastor from 1987 to late 1992, and it was his job to build on the work that had already begun by providing a "vision" for multicultural ministry and by helping the congregation with the practical aspects of attracting new members.

Confronted with racial change, conflict, and decline, the first step in the decision-process for City Baptist was choosing to stay open and stay where they were, instead of closing their doors or moving to another community. The ideas about growth that the lay leaders and new pastor employed were taken, Pastor Smith told me, directly from a body of church-growth literature that emphasizes the importance of being firmly rooted in the local community (see Wuthnow 1994b for a review).

The City Baptist of 1994 is a very different place than it was in 1984, when 80 members, mostly white, were struggling to overcome a debilitating and confidence-draining period of conflict. The most noticeable difference is in the size and the composition of the membership. The church has about 250 members, and an average Sunday attendance ranging from 170 to 200. Roughly 60 percent of the adults are white and 40 percent are African American. In addition to racial differences, there are also class differences. When I asked Pastor Smith in our first interview to tell me about the membership, he identified distinct groups in the congregation, each with what he termed different cultures: yuppies or younger white professionals; college students; suburban blacks; urban blacks; and "older saints" who are mostly white. My fieldwork bore out his assessment of the variation in the membership. This diversity reflects their neighborhood on the border between Oak Park, a racially diverse community dominated by professionals, and Austin, a poorer and virtually all-black Chicago neighborhood. Central to their current identity is their reputation for having a successful multicultural ministry that spans the highly symbolic boundary of Austin Boulevard.

Multicultural Ministry. One can imagine a church in which multicultural ministry is an end in and of itself, something undertaken out of political or religious conviction for its own sake, and part of a commitment to reaching out and incorporating previously excluded segments of the larger community. In many liberal churches, where this kind of social transformation is interwoven with theology, this kind of commitment would be called a form of "social justice" ministry. At City Baptist, multicultural ministry was not articulated in social

justice terms and was not a goal in and of itself; rather, it was understood as a means to an end, a way to execute the strategy of growing and thriving, through putting down roots in the immediate neighborhood. Multicultural ministry was necessary because of, and developed as a response to, neighborhood history and demographics.

It was Pastor Smith who developed an explicit rationale for multicultural ministry, one that linked the current mission to important elements of the congregation's cultural heritage. This rationale began to appear in the sermons, the mission statement, the statement of purpose, the new constitution, and the policy manual. He did most of the initial culture work, drawing upon the congregation's tradition in order to place their new mission in a sensible context, framing this new mission focus as a logical extension of the church's history (cf. Hobsbawm 1983). He did so with the congregation's support, having been called with a mandate to do precisely this work of providing a new rationale for mission in their changed context.

He began emphasizing that which the members of this diverse congregation did in fact have in common, specifically choosing two aspects of the congregation's cultural archive that were common to most members' experience. The first was, broadly speaking, American Protestant fundamentalism; that included an evangelical style of worship, and belief in such fundamentalist Protestant doctrines as salvation through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The dominant metaphor was "the New Testament Church," supplemented by other elements of fundamentalist discourse, theology, and worship style.

Being "the New Testament Church" is primarily a metaphor of community, based upon a common religious identity. In an interview, the pastor told me that, "It's okay to be different, as long as you're not different from the Lord." This phrase is something of a motto, appearing often in sermons and echoed back to me unprompted by many of the members during interviews. Multicultural ministry in this congregation, while springing from explicit church-growth literature, was reinterpreted as a means to the primary end of being the New Testament Church. The pastor and most of the members explicitly rejected an overtly ideological or political understanding of the local church as a basis for multicultural ministry. Although the pastor acknowledged that there is a certain set of stands on social and political issues associated with being a fundamentalist church in most cases, he sidestepped the whole liberal/conservative issue. When I asked him about it, he told me that:

> [t]he ministry here is not trying to be traditional in its values and it's not trying necessarily to be progressive in its values . . . [we're] trying to be honest exegetically to the Bible and relevant to the community. . . . *The church is not about social justice or social action.* [emphasis added]

Members echoed this sentiment. When I asked the head of the elder board about the congregation's stand on social issues, he told me that social action was not what the congregation was really all about. He said: ". . . the statement of purpose, you really can't get too much away from that, as far as what a church should be doing. Worship, Edification, and Evangelism. Those three things." He went on to say that, in a diverse urban setting, multicultural ministry is simply a means for carrying out those three Biblical mandates. As the pastor noted in a sermon on multicultural ministry:

> . . . that brings me to a very important principle here at City Baptist. And that is the lifting of Jesus Christ as our goal. The lifting up of Jesus Christ is our goal. We are not showcasing the fact that we're multi-ethnic. We just happen to be multi-ethnic. . . . But our goal is to exalt, lift up Jesus Christ. I realize also that there are groups that center upon the reconciliation of groups. That's what's important to them. But really, is that what the church is for? No. (Sermon August 30, 1992)

Members of City Baptist draw upon the elements of their tradition to express not only the fact of their multicultural ministry, but also to embed it in a context of meaning that interprets or frames it in a certain way. They reject the politicization of race as a social issue, and they reject the idea that political and social conservatism must go hand in hand with a theological conservatism. There is a religious "orthodoxy" here, but not the kind of broad cultural ortho-

doxy that Hunter (1991) identifies. A common phrase in interviews was "we're trying to be the New Testament church," showing that the pastor's metaphor, deployed in sermons, prayers, and personal conversations with lay leaders, has become a wide-spread way of thinking about their mission and identity.

This metaphor is supported by other forms of fundamentalist discourse, especially the habit of proof-texting, or finding specific Biblical quotes to support a position (cf. Ammerman 1987). A passage in James[4] that declares favoritism based on wealth to be a sin is a text mentioned by many members in interviews. One man, an elder and leader of an adult Bible Study class, told me that the Bible contains all kinds of examples of what it means to be a New Testament church in a diverse social setting:

> You might as well close your doors if you're going to close them on certain people and accept others. Like in James where it says "You can sit over here in the corner and he can sit over there in the nice chair because [he has] money." . . .

In addition to selective use of fundamentalist discourse, the pastor and the lay leaders also called upon the Baptist missionary tradition to forge a link between City Baptist's historical mission and its current multicultural ministry. In interviews, members would point out that, having sent missionaries to Africa for years, it would be racist to not welcome into the church the blacks who live next door. Again, this was an idea first developed by the pastor in sermons, and quickly adopted by the leadership as another way to understand the current ministry as a logical outgrowth of the congregation's previous tradition. City Baptist's theology and tradition provided ways for the pastor and, ultimately, the members, to articulate multicultural ministry as a means to other kinds of ends, ends that are already well-established mission priorities in this church's history—evangelization, building up of members in faith, being the New Testament church.

The particular metaphor chosen, and the rationale for multicultural ministry that was developed, led to a certain way of framing race as an issue. If culture works to "solve problems," both how race was understood as a "problem," and the appropriate solution of that problem were determined by the cultural frame surrounding multiethnic ministry in this congregation (see Swidler 1986). Race is interpreted by the people at City Baptist as posing a practical problem of interaction. How is it possible to have smooth interaction, a loving and caring community, in the face of a membership with such dramatic internal divisions and differences?

The first step in solving this practical problem—of overcoming racial barriers to interaction that might hinder development as "the New Testament Church"—was to change the most important weekly ritual. At City Baptist, a great deal of attention has been paid to the worship service as a forum for symbolic representation of the congregation as a community. For example, from 1987 to 1992, the head pastor and assistant pastor were white, but a conscious effort was made every week to have African Americans present in the altar area in front of the congregation, leading some aspect of the worship service. Often this participation was in the form of an opening or benedictory prayer, or a Bible reading. Visiting pastors or doctoral students from Africa who were attending nearby Moody Bible Institute were often asked to lead prayers and do readings or to give a guest sermon, reinforcing the link between the congregation's missionary past and multicultural present.

Music is another element of the service that was reworked with the express goal of including all the various subgroups in the congregation. Each Sunday service includes traditional Baptist hymns played on the organ, contemporary praise choruses led by a man who plays an electronic keyboard, and gospel songs performed by a mostly-black choir. The church

4. "For if a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, 'Have a seat here, please,' while you say to the poor man, 'Stand there,' or, 'Sit at my feet,' have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" (James 2:2–4, RSV). This is part of a larger passage (James 2:1–9) on the sin of partiality.

also has special music, in the form of visiting jazz and blues-style Christian groups. Listening to each other's music is not about politics, I was repeatedly told, it is about being a community together. Adapting the music to reflect the congregation's diversity was a challenging process of negotiation and compromise; members are still proud of achieving a multicultural music style.

The sermons are a primary forum for working out what it means to focus on community, to focus on interaction. In the same sermon on multicultural ministry quoted above, the minister went on to say:

> The church is to lift up Jesus Christ. How can we do that? Practically, how does that work? In *our* ministry context? How do we lift up Christ in a very practical way? Well of course, when we come, we gather together, we center upon Christ, we don't center upon our differences. There's nothing wrong with being different. . . . And doing things differently is not wrong, it's just simply different. . . . I began to preach early when I came here that it's all right to be different, as long as you're not different from the Lord. What I was saying is that the focal point of our experience, and our multiethnic ministry, *must be* Jesus Christ! *We're not carrying on some sort of social experiment here.* (emphasis added)

The sermon went on to make the point that "lifting up Jesus Christ" involves more than just praying for each other; it must go farther than that. To be in genuine community with people who are different means:

> Not only that you pray for them, but that you love them. Each one. Not only that you love, but that you honor. And not only that you honor, but that you also submit, and not only are you to submit, but you are to prefer one another.[5] Now if you take that literally, and you practice that in your life, it's going to have a great effect on you. For instance, if I say that I indeed want to practice the word of God and submit to my brothers and sisters in Christ what I'm going to do is do what *they* want to do, not what I want to do. If I prefer them, I'm going to want to sing what *they* want to sing, not what I want to sing. I'm going to be interested in what they do and how they live. And I will want *them* to do what interests *them*, not what I demand for myself. . . . (emphasis in original)

These excerpts illustrate in a summary way how the issue of race is framed, understood, and talked about in this congregation. Race is not a political issue; racism may be evil but social action can be carried out through another forum. For this church, race is an issue because it affects their internal life, and might jeopardize their defined mission to be the New Testament church, the church in which there is "neither Jew nor Greek . . . male nor female" (Galatians 3:28), where social divisions do not determine how to treat one another. Through sermons, as well as in other forums, the pastor provides both an interpretive rationale for multicultural ministry and an opportunity for members to laugh good-naturedly at their own discomfort and find ways of moving beyond it before it becomes the basis for prolonged and painful conflict.

This understanding was reflected in common forms of congregational discourse echoed back to me in the comments of respondents, and in organizational structures and administrative routines. This church has a series of small fellowship groups that are age-based and racially integrated. When they began their mentoring program for lay leaders, they made sure that the men and women leading it were both black and white, and they recruited black and white participants in equal numbers. When Pastor Smith left, the search committee for the new pastor was balanced in terms of race, gender, and age.[6] On all dimensions, City Baptist is more integrated than any of the other 22 congregations in which I did fieldwork.

The cultural strategies that were applied to interpreting racial divisions at City Baptist came to be applied to other issues of social inclusion, as well. Public rhetoric about abortion

5. This is a reference to Ephesians 5:21, 'Be subject to another out of reverence to Christ,' and to the following verses where the love of Christ for the church is offered as a model for human caring relationships.

6. This committee called an African American man as the new pastor.

and homosexuality was more tempered than typical fundamentalist Protestant discourse on these issues. Although there is broad-based agreement that these things are wrong, the approach to them is pragmatic and partial, not ideological and totalizing. Members, when asked about the congregation's views of homosexuality, would uniformly tell me that homosexuals are sinners, but so is everyone else, and the important thing is to be loving and nonjudgmental. When I asked about the congregation's stand on abortion, the pastor told me that abortion is wrong, but probably there are some women in the congregation who have had them, it was very painful, and why talk about it, really? If you want to protest abortion, do so, but, Pastor Smith went on to tell me, "the job of the local church is not to man the barricades." He does not preach anti-abortion sermons or try to mobilize people for clinic protests, or allow others to mobilize for that kind of action in his congregation, although individual members do volunteer for the local Crisis Pregnancy Center.

Pastor Smith told me that City Baptist leaves that kind of activism—manning the barricades—to the other fundamentalist Baptist church in town. The other Baptist church stayed in Oak Park through the racial changes, but developed a translocal identity, drawing its members from suburbs for several miles around. Its pastor characterized it as "98 percent white and all Republican." It now shows a much tighter integration between theology and social and political ideology, and is much more activist in the community. It does fit Hunter's (1991) profile of a generally "orthodox" cultural orientation. It is known as the voice of fundamentalism in the village, and sends representatives to village meetings when they discuss whether to allow Christmas carols in school pageants or extend health benefits to the same-sex partners of village employees. But for Pastor Smith and the members of City Baptist, a more politicized atmosphere makes it hard for the local church to be a place where sinners feel welcome enough to come in and be reconciled. At City Baptist manning the barricades is rejected as incompatible with the demands of building up the New Testament Church as a religious community.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

In the 1960s, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church was an all-white congregation, a neighborhood church on a pleasant street corner in south Oak Park. Its identity was rooted strongly in its German and Lutheran heritage. It is difficult to get any accurate information about that time period; there is a curious institutional forgetting. When members were asked about history, all reported that the relevant history is what has happened to them in the 1980s, which they call their rebirth experience, or their resurrection story.

Some facts can be established. Between 1964 and 1980 the baptized membership fell from 900 to 205. By 1981, there were fewer than forty people attending regularly. Several long-term members who joined in the 1960s report that the decline was caused by the racial upheavals in Oak Park. Some members left when their activist pastor became an advocate for civil rights, and particularly for integration in Oak Park. More left when the integrated housing ordinance passed. Not only did members begin attending churches further west, in "whiter suburbs," but some sold their houses and moved as part of the "white flight."

Members tell their "resurrection" story as beginning with a vote in November, 1981. The vote was 22 to 15, in favor of staying open and staying put. The man who was the pastor at that time urged them to close down. After a struggle, the congregation convinced the denomination that they were serious about wanting to stay and try to grow again. The pastor left, and in 1984 the denomination designated the church a "mission redevelopment congregation" and sent Jack Finney to be the new pastor and the chief evangelist.

Looking around, Finney saw that the largest group of village residents were between 25 and 35, and most had children. These were the kind of people who, nationally, were returning to churches and synagogues in droves. Many of them had moved to Oak Park because of its progressive reputation; others wanted good schools and houses that were close to their jobs in

Chicago and other western suburbs and, especially after the white flight, were more affordable than some other suburbs nearby. Finney saw reason for optimism, if the church reached out to these people with a message that was relevant to the local situation and that expressed their own values. In recruiting members, Finney said, "our goal was to reflect Oak Park, in terms of diversity and age."

The strategy Finney chose was to reinvigorate the congregation as a *local* church, to grow by putting down roots in the local community. Like Pastor Smith at City Baptist, Finney knew the church-growth literature and was seen as a specialist capable of turning the congregation around. However, Good Shepherd defined "local" as a slightly larger geographic unit than had City Baptist—the whole village, not the immediate neighborhood. And Finney targeted a specific demographic segment—young, professional families. Also, Finney was able to frame his message of tolerance and diversity as springing from a theology that included social justice as a positive religious good. Finney was not only a church-growth expert, but he was an evangelist, passionate about creating a new Good Shepherd where the Lutheran understanding of social justice provided the basis for a genuinely inclusive religious community. (For more details see Finney 1989.)

By 1994, Good Shepherd had just under 400 baptized members, with about 185 present on a typical Sunday. Most were white, although I observed five to six African American adults and nine to ten children, and one or two Hispanic families. The pastor reported 15 adult African American members. This is not as integrated as City Baptist, but it is more integrated than many congregations are. Predominantly white congregations generally have fewer than 10 percent nonwhite members. The dominant group at Good Shepherd, both in terms of numbers and in leadership, is young, professional families with children. The Lutheran background of the church is still emphasized, mostly in sermons, in which the pastor constantly uses phrases such as, "our theology tells us" or "Lutherans believe that." In addition, this church exemplifies many of the trends in "baby boomer" religiosity that Roof (1993) has identified. The Good Shepherd of today maintains a strong emphasis on fellowship, with many small groups to foster it. Spirituality is important, and the growth of individual faith is the focus of much activity. The worship services seek to meet a variety of individual needs and preferences, leading to eclecticism in liturgy and music (cf. Carroll and Roof 1993).

What is exceptional about Good Shepherd is its emphasis on tolerance and diversity. The church has acquired a local reputation as a church where all are welcome, and one where the effects of the changes of 25 years ago have been largely ameliorated. It is a success story, and other congregations borrow from it, especially ideas for new programs and ministries and evangelism strategies. If multicultural ministry was the specific execution of a new growth strategy at City Baptist, the parallel at Good Shepherd can be summed up in the focus that elevates "tolerance and diversity" to the central mission of this church. Tolerance and the positive valuing of diversity were the main values of the professional families that Jack Finney was courting; "reflecting Oak Park" did not just mean targeting a demographic group but also institutionalizing their values as core ones in this congregation. Tolerance and diversity are also core values in the liberal Lutheran tradition.

Tolerance and Diversity. Like City Baptist, Good Shepherd called a pastor who was to be the primary evangelist and the primary interpreter and adapter of their tradition. He immediately named their story a "resurrection tale," something that emphasized continuity with their past while incorporating the idea of transformation. He began an aggressive program of local evangelism. The target of this evangelism was a population that was not nearly so diverse as that of the immediate neighborhood around City Baptist. Oak Park as a whole may have over 20 percent African American and other ethnic minority residents, but many of them are clustered in condominiums and apartments along one or two major streets in the village. The area surrounding Good Shepherd has fewer African Americans, and those who are present are similar to the white residents in class, occupation, and education.

Jack Finney (1989) told me that he realized that the church would attract young families only if it was a place where they could live and institutionalize their own values. The new people, who make up the majority of Good Shepherd now, share, for the most part, a mainline church background. Currently 61 percent of the congregation report themselves as being life-long Lutherans. Over half (57%) of the remaining 39 percent come from other mainline church backgrounds. Most also share a broad orientation to social and political issues that could be called progressive or liberal (cf. Hunter 1991; Wuthnow 1988). When Finney spoke of giving people a change to institutionalize their values, he was speaking primarily about this broad progressive orientation. This orientation provided a rationale for making sense of the racial changes in the village, and to form a new congregational identity that would be more able to thrive given the effect of those changes.

If tolerance and diversity became the core elements of the new mission focus, the same pastor who had encouraged the congregation to think of their story as a resurrection tale also realized the need to provide a religious rationale in the form of a metaphor for their new mission focus. Tolerance and diversity are also secular values; what was the particular reason to make them central to this religious organization? Finney drew upon and reintegrated two elements of Lutheran heritage to provide a religious understanding of tolerance and diversity. He married a commitment to social justice with the Lutheran emphasis on communalism. "Christian community" or "Community in Christ" is one of the ideals invoked most often in sermons, and has become the dominant metaphor for the congregation's post-resurrection identity and mission. In the context of Oak Park, a commitment to social justice was interpreted as requiring the building of a racially and culturally inclusive Community in Christ.

Like Pastor Smith, Finney used the sermon as the primary forum through which to interpret what it means to be a Community in Christ in their particular local context. One sermon (September 13, 1992) concluded with a prayer that begins, "Weaver God . . . thank you for weaving us together into a church, a nation, and a community with a thread of love." My fieldnotes from another sermon give just one example of how community as a metaphor was intimately related to the congregation's theological history and daily activities in its public discourse:

> Lutherans believe that the communion materials are really the body and blood of Christ, that there is a real presence here, not just an historical symbol. Having friends and being friends, sharing the real joys and pain, helping the poor and reaching out to help the community, that is real. Christ becomes real in these activities, as in the bread and wine, as in prayer. When we are in touch with the real, we are in touch with the Holy One. (August 9, 1992)

Achieving genuine community is the living out of Christ's mandate, enabled by Christ's sacrifice. It is neither easy nor natural, but requires commitment and spiritual healing.

Formal symbolic elements of the congregation's culture provide the most direct statement of the values of tolerance and diversity. The most obvious example is the letterhead slogan, also displayed on 10-foot banners that hang on the front of the church during good weather: "Embracing the diversity of God's creation and celebrating our oneness in Christ." Another is the formal mission statement, which places race in the first paragraph along with a bundle of other issues on which the congregation wants to make its stand known, such as sexism, homophobia, and pervasive poverty:

> GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH, a diverse congregation, welcomes in the spirit of Christ all men, women, and children without regard to race, nationality, marital status, family composition, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status, inviting all to participate fully in the life and ministry of our parish. We encounter Christ in each person and therefore treat one another with trust, love, care, and respect.

In fact, race receives little separate attention as an issue in this congregation. In sermons, racism is often condemned, along with homophobia and sexism, because it is a "prison" that

limits human potential and gets in the way of a living experience of intimacy and community (sermon December 13, 1993). Such prejudices are condemned because they harm individuals' self-worth, keeping people from being the whole persons God wants everyone to be; prejudices provide harmful stereotypes that people must be careful not to believe or reproduce (sermons November 1, 1992, and August 2, 1992).

This provides for a rather interesting paradox. Unlike City Baptist, "race" is formally understood and framed as a social issue in Good Shepherd. That is, the "problem" of race is a social and political problem, not only a problem of interaction. And, tolerance and diversity are goods at GSLC that are valued in and of themselves because they combat racism, sexism, and other prejudices. Sermons, conversations with members, the mission statement, and the letterhead slogan reflect this understanding. The same stance is taken on other issues conceived of in the same way, for example, in the passing of a formal statement of openness to lesbians and gay men. The pastor and others, in interviews, linked these practices specifically to an awareness of the need to combat prejudice, and to a progressive cultural orientation.

Yet, there are definite limits on the ways in which these stands on social issues can be realized and acted upon. These limits are also a facet of how race and other issues are thought about and talked about—how they are framed—in this congregation. The discourse surrounding race, particularly in the sermons, marks out only the emotional and psychological effects of racism and their subsequent impact on the members' ability to live well together as a community. Although racism is acknowledged as a social issue, the part of racism that is singled out for attention in this congregation is the way racism affects their ability to achieve "Community in Christ." So, although there is a formal acknowledgment of racism as a social issue that is absent in City Baptist, in practice race is also dealt with in Good Shepherd primarily as a problem of *interaction*.

As such, what is valued at Good Shepherd is not activism beyond its own four walls. What is valued is taking a stand and living up to the implications of their beliefs in their own community. Symbolic and ritual enactments of the community are explicitly designed to be inclusive. African Americans, particularly children, play prominent roles up-front in the worship service, and are represented there disproportionately to their percentage of congregational membership. There is a *de facto* inclusive language policy. The examples used in sermons, and the language in sermons and liturgy and music, are inclusive of women and men, whites and blacks, and homosexual and heterosexual persons.

If the goal is to build a genuine Christian community that is not damaged by prejudices typically found in our society, then changed hearts and minds is what Pastor Finney considers the best evidence of success. And the stories that people told me about their own experiences as the congregation implemented its new mission reflect this awareness. Just one example is the story related to me when I asked an older woman, a long-term member, a question about how she had reacted to all the changes in Oak Park and to Good Shepherd's emphasis on diversity. She said:

> Oh, it's an education. And it's wonderful to think that people like us, who probably were [pause] racist, learned to love people of any color, of any nationality, of any persuasion, because you get to know them.

I was interviewing her with her husband, and at this point he said that he did not think that he had been racist. His wife went on to say:

> Well, we were raised in a white neighborhood, and if you saw a black person, it was a big deal. And you would stare, and you would whisper and gawk. You wouldn't hate them or run them off or anything, but it was unusual . . . [her husband nods agreement]. Whereas now, my little grandson said something to me that made me realize I had grown up. One day during the summer when he visited us, he said, "Grandma, can two people of two different colors get married?" And I said "sure, lots of times they do. I don't know any, but sure they do." And I looked up in the church, and there were Susan and Don Porter [an interracial couple, she is white and he is black] sitting two rows up

from us. And I realized that I never even thought of Don *as* anything. I mean, he was Don. But then I realized that I had grown up. I don't want to see people that way anymore.

While outreach is valued and supported, there are real limits to the kind of issue-based activism supported by the congregation. They engage in compassionate outreach, supporting the neighborhood homeless shelter and food pantry, and contributing to a tutoring program for students in Austin, but they reject any attempt to single out a certain group on the basis of perceived political interests. Radical feminism or peace and justice issues are not particularly welcome here; having a small group specifically for lesbians and gays was rejected. Not all the lesbian and gay members are "out" to the congregation, and some of those who are reported that what they like most about the church is having a place where they are not singled out for their sexual orientation and can interact with persons of all ages and orientations, just as the woman quoted above valued a church where Don was "just Don" and not first of all an African American.

Congregations as (Inclusive) Public Spaces

Being Liberal is Not Enough

What do we learn from these two congregations about how community organizations become racially inclusive public spaces? First, it has become apparent that a liberal or progressive cultural orientation, in Hunter's (1991) sense of that term, is not enough to understand *local* reactions to social diversity. Glock (1993) argues that liberal denominations have accommodated or become more inclusive of racial, sexual, and gender differences over the twentieth century, while conservative ones have not. But the telephone survey and interviews in other congregations in and around Oak Park show that liberal congregations did not fare better than conservative ones in reflecting the racial integration of the suburb within their own membership; in fact, liberal Protestant congregations were less likely to be integrated than Catholic or fundamentalist Protestant ones.

Of course, being in a liberal tradition did mean that Jack Finney had a somewhat easier time with his culture work. His goals of "tolerance and diversity" had an immediate resonance with a progressive Protestant emphasis on social justice and the denomination's activism on racial inclusion in the 1960s and beyond. City Baptist had no such immediately obvious cultural repertoire to draw upon. Pastor Smith told me that, until the 1990s, Baptist and other fundamentalist Protestant seminaries did not have formal programs to train pastors in multicultural ministry. After his success at City Baptist he was asked to consult with leaders of two seminaries on how to develop such a program for the first time. Both pastors felt that developing an explicitly *religious* rationale for their new mission focus was necessary to maintain legitimacy. Paster Finney told me that having a readily available rationale for engaging social divisions made it easier to provide a sense of continuity in Good Shepherd. Yet ultimately what made Good Shepherd Lutheran become a multi-racial "Community in Christ" was not that which it had in common with other liberal congregations in the area, but rather that which it shared with the fundamentalist Baptist church on the other side of the village. It was the communal logic, not a progressive/liberal one, that enabled internal integration.

This analysis joins other recent critiques of the culture wars thesis (Becker 1997a; Wedam 1997; Williams 1997). No one disputes that liberal/conservative ideological differences are real, but when are they operative? A growing body of work suggests that liberal/conservative differences are more salient for elites, particularly knowledge workers and activists, than they are for local community organizations or grass-roots members across issue areas. The key to understanding when liberal/conservative differences are operative—when they affect the

framing and interpretation of social issues, when they influence social action—may be levels of analysis. In local voluntary organizations, survival concerns and a commitment to ongoing interaction in a face-to-face community may temper the effects of ideology on social action (cf. Ginsburg 1989).

Unlike congregations which need to provide a religious rationale for a "community" focus, other local organizations may not have to work so hard to make community a legitimate goal, acceptable on its own terms. Barthel (1997) points out that metaphors of community are particularly powerful and appropriate ways for organizations to reconceptualize their mission, providing for what she calls "robust action," or action that inspires but "leaves a number of options open" (4). The communal logic that these two congregations came to embrace involved both an ethic of care and a concept of the individual as a moral agent freely embracing (not bound by) a tradition (cf. Bell 1993). This is a good fit with the religious orientation of the "baby boomer" professionals who comprise the dominant group in Oak Park, but it also characterizes boomers' orientation towards a wide range of community institutions and voluntary organizations (Bell 1993; Lichterman 1995a; Roof 1993).

Being Local is Not Enough

The impetus to make "community" a goal, and to conceive of that community as multiracial, came from the decision to plant local roots. In both of these congregations, localism was part of a standardized set of institutionalized practices, designed to achieve growth. Both pastors emphasized the development of a local identity and used locally-oriented church-growth strategies that were developed by experts with which the pastors became familiar in seminary.[7] These strategies included leafleting and mailings to the surrounding blocks, advertisements in the local paper, and pastoral visits to families in the immediate neighborhood. Good Shepherd raised its local profile through holding worship services outdoors in the summer, and both congregations hosted various "open house" events directed at local nonmembers. Both pastors targeted young families with children, the modal group in the population, and developed programs oriented to this demographic group; both emphasized that the church should reflect the neighborhood, both in demographics and in values. City Baptist, for example, not only became multicultural, but it became less hierarchical than it was before, involving many more people in its decision-making, in response to the preferences of the subgroup of managers and professionals providing the new lay leadership.

The immediate result of this local orientation was that both congregations became very "church-like" on a church-sect continuum (Stark and Bainbridge 1985). They embraced and affirmed local community values, eschewing a more sect-like "rejection of the world" and strategy of separation. They contribute money and volunteer labor to local charitable efforts, practicing "Golden Rule" Christianity (Ammerman 1997a); that is, they have a routinized preference for direct, face-to-face, humanitarian outreach rather than abstract, issue-oriented engagement with the public realm. Like many churches their size, they have a civic mission orientation; they are not political activists, but neither are they withdrawn and uninvolved in community affairs (Roozen et al. 1984; Wuthnow 1994b). They tend to prize internal cohesion more highly, as a religious value, than doctrinal purity; religion here is more about the practical lived experience in the local congregation than about doctrine or theology. And that

7. And a large literature it is; a quick search of a seminary library database revealed 234 entries under "church growth." While some of these are historical or sociological studies, a substantial number are "how to" guides for congregations that seek more members. Schaller (1983), an independent consultant, was one of the first and most influential of the church-growth experts, whose market-based approach included recommending strategies differentiated according to the congregation's size and location (demographics, population density). Wuthnow (1994b) reviews this literature and the effect it has had on the field of American religion, concluding that it is a significant source of organizational isomorphism across denominations and faith traditions (cf. DiMaggio and Powell 1991).

religious community is seen as affirming the local (residential) community, not as being apart from or critical of it.

In contrast, many of the churches that reacted to the racial changes by adopting a regional identity are now much more "sect-like" in their orientation, with more emphasis on strict doctrinal adherence and a sense of being either apart from or critical of the dominant values of Oak Park. Some simply disengage from the local community. Long-time members of the Missouri Synod Lutheran church to the west of Good Shepherd told me that their congregation turned inward with the influx new members who come from all over the Western suburbs. These newcomers emphasize fundamentalist doctrine and education programs for members over community outreach or civic engagement. Other regional churches are more politically activist, like the other Baptist church in town that mounted an organized protest to the proposal to extend health benefits to same-sex partners of village employees.

Adopting a regional strategy would have relieved City Baptist and Good Shepherd of the necessity to integrate across racial lines or to develop a major emphasis on tolerance, instead allowing each one to minimize theological and ethnic diversity. They would have been free to either ignore Oak Park or to criticize it. They could have remained homogeneous in race and socioeconomic status by drawing members from a wider pool of potential members, and buffering themselves from changes in any one community.

For community organizations, market orientation has serious consequences for mission more broadly conceived, and for the kind of public space the organization becomes. Religious organizations are not immune to these market realities (Wuthnow 1994b). A translocal orientation leads to niche-specialization, often attracting members who are looking for stricter ideological requirements. They eschew what they see as the "compromises" made by local churches which, facing a smaller local pool of potential members, are often more pragmatic and flexible. Regardless of strictness, it may be that nonlocal strategies and large size make for socially homogenous congregations that are not bound to or engaged in communities of residence (Eiesland 1998). While there are some notable exceptions, the great majority of "megachurches" are populated by white, well-educated baby boomers; the exceptions tend to be all-black or all-Hispanic congregations, not integrated congregations (Thumma 1996:503).

The foregoing suggests that a local strategy may force a community organization to adapt to whatever diversity exists in its area. But a local strategy will not lead to inclusiveness unless the context itself is racially or economically integrated. Local strategies lead congregations to be church-like, reflecting the dominant values as well as the demographics of their community. Local strategies lead community organizations more generally to a civic orientation that is majoritarian and affirming, not critical of the status quo. If the community is segregated, locally-oriented organizations will be, too.

This suggests that within local communities formal policies, like the integrated housing ordinance in Oak Park, can in fact lead to the integration of a community's voluntary institutions. This is not because policies force institutions to become inclusive, or because they persuade people that inclusion is a good idea. The integrated housing ordinance did not make everyone in Oak Park more racially tolerant, or convince all the local churches to make racial integration an immediate goal. What the housing ordinance did was to provide a context in which some of the regular institutional practices through which churches routinely attract local members resulted in inclusivity.

It has been said that "Sunday morning at 11 o'clock is the most segregated hour in America." But that is not because churches are exceptionally conservative; it is because they draw in more people than any other single voluntary organization (Watt 1991). Weeknights at 7 o'clock would be equally segregated if as many people went to Rotary club meetings, community chorus rehearsals, and PTA meetings as attend religious congregations in a given week. Local organizations, committed to reflecting their local communities, are generally no more integrated than those communities themselves, and as Massey and Denton (1993) show, local communities in the United States are overwhelmingly segregated along racial and socioeco-

nomic lines. Massey and Denton are no doubt right in pointing to residential segregation as a structure upon which other forms of exclusion are built. That is why formal policies to encourage residential integration are so crucial. If regionally-oriented organizations tend toward social homogeneity, then locally-oriented organizations may be our only hope for creating diverse and inclusive spaces for interaction. Yet that interaction will not come about unless residential communities themselves become more integrated.

Timing Matters

In understanding how and why Good Shepherd and City Baptist charted the course that they did, it is important to explore the timing. Both congregations waited several years after the community had achieved stable residential integration before they seriously considered their own integration. Their decision was pragmatic and reactive, not ideological and proactive, and it came only when the organizations' survival was threatened. The key turning point for these congregations was the choice of a local strategy for growth coupled with a communal metaphor to guide the rebuilding. Although there may be many methods which can elucidate such turning points, cultural analysis may be particularly suited to the examination of turning points for organizations and social movements under certain circumstances (cf. Abbott 1997; Tarrow 1992). That is, organizational trajectories may be identified through quantitative methods, but the meaning and interpretation of such changes—essential to motivating action—is best revealed through cultural analysis.

My analysis suggests that the cultural innovation that takes place at turning points proceeds in two stages. First, there is a process of interpreting and applying the religious tradition by mining it for the elements that solve the particular problem, as experienced and defined in a given historical and institutional context (Hart 1996; cf. Swidler 1986). Both pastors succeeded in making their new mission focus seem not only legitimate but natural. They were the primary sources of culture work in each congregation, using the worship service as a location for symbolic display of multiracial community, and the sermon as a key source for developing an explicit rationale that made the new identity seem like a natural continuation of the old. This supports Hart's (1996) insight that religious traditions are best understood not as monoliths, but as cultural archives that are mined as needed, where individual elements can be selected or ignored, built upon, reinterpreted, or forgotten in specific institutional and historical contexts (cf. Feher 1997; Griswold 1992; Hobsbawm 1983).

This would suggest that religious ideas (such as beliefs, ideologies, and doctrines) have influence only as they are selected, interpreted, and applied in a given context. Once these two pastors developed a rationale for multicultural ministry that invoked metaphors of community and linked them to a local identity, the metaphors had a formative influence on how a host of other issues of social inclusion were interpreted and acted upon within each congregation. Kniss (1996) notes that the religious ideas that are invoked during periods of conflict can have this kind of influence on a group's future trajectory; for these congregations, a "resurrection experience" seems to have been a similar kind of turning point. This is the second stage of cultural innovation, when a logic or style of reasoning developed explicitly to meet the exigencies of a particular crisis becomes institutionalized and has an implicit shaping influence on future decisions.

This analysis also suggests some ways of refining our understanding of cultural innovation more generally. I have used the term "culture work" to refer to the processes by which individuals and groups interpret and deploy parts of their cultural repertoires in changing environments. It signifies agency as historically situated persons reflexively adapt to change. But it does not imply a completely strategic or instrumental view of how cultural innovation takes place; culture work is shaped by the available repertoire and by previously institutionalized schema, and is characterized by unintended as well as intended consequences. The strategic manipulation of explicit cultural symbols, beliefs, metaphors, or ideas during a turning

point institutionalizes new definitions of mission and identity that soon become implicit, and shape future possibilities for discursive framing and social action (cf. Ellingson 1995; Williams 1996).

Personalism and the Building of Inclusive Communities

Through crisis, at a particular turning point, both congregations began their movement toward becoming inclusive public spaces. But what were the consequences of the particular route they took to their present identity? How did their choices and strategies shape the kind of public space they ended up becoming?

These two congregations both applied a similar interpretive framework to the racial changes in Oak Park. Racial change posed a "problem" for building religious community. But this problem was not a structural problem, an economic problem, or a political problem. It was instead an emotional, psychological, and social interactional problem. The "problem" of race was a problem of racism, ignorance, intolerance, unfamiliarity. The implied solution to this kind of problem is personal; "changed hearts and minds" were called for, but not only that. The congregation had to become a discursive space where people could talk about, even laugh about, their discomfort. It had to become a symbolic arena of inclusion, and the liturgy, music, and lay participation in the worship service were changed to reflect this.

But neither congregation stopped at symbolism. Both paid attention to including African American members in positions of leadership and administration, and encouraged cross-racial fellowship. There were more big fellowship activities, and lay leaders worked hard to generate broad attendance. There were more small groups, with members and leaders recruited across racial lines so that people could get to know one another informally.

Academics tend to lament the parochialism that results when voluntary organizations adopt a strictly local orientation and a focus on community. Religious leaders make the same lament about the parochialism of congregations. But a local, civic orientation and a focus on community led these two churches to integrate across not only racial lines, but across other social divisions such as gender, social class, and lifestyle. This is a genuine accomplishment not to be dismissed—a public space that is both multicultural and where there is real integration of membership and the organizational power structure.

Yet both congregations are also *limited* public spaces, in two senses. The first limit is discursive. Political discourse, understood as discourse that takes for granted that there are different subgroups with opposing interests, is defined as "hurtful" here, and those who engage in it are actively sanctioned. Pastor Smith, even though pastor of a fundamentalist Baptist church, decided not to use his pulpit to speak out against abortion. At Good Shepherd, a special worship service featuring songs written by a member about his painful experiences as a gay man in a straight society was well-attended and warmly received. But when the same man suggested that the congregation form a small group explicitly for gays and lesbians, the pastor refused to consider it. The pastor told me it was like being told, "you're not doing enough." He also worried that such a group would be a location for political discourse that might prove divisive to the community. A suggestion by some feminists that the congregation explore nonpatriarchal alternatives to traditional god images was greeted with some hostility, according to both the feminists and the pastor, because it implied that feminists are a distinct group with distinct interests, at odds with the rest of the community.

A focus on community led both of these congregations to favor a kind of majoritarian discourse, and this has implications for any organization that adopts a local focus and a metaphor of "community" to define their identity (cf. Barthel 1997; Eliasoph 1996). In both organizations, a strong moral stand can only be taken on issues where there is consensus. Even the Baptist pastor is loathe to raise "divisive" issues from the pulpit, despite the fact that Baptist tradition generally promotes a strong pastorate. And there is a systematic silence about political divisions. The public discourse is adamant that there is only *one* group, one community;

subgroups are not allowed to define themselves publicly as distinct groups with interests or an agenda that might be different than the majority's.

These two churches are also limited in their capacity to mobilize their members for social action in the community. This limit is at the circumference of consensus. On issues where there is agreement, like race, City Baptist is willing to "go public"; for example, after the Los Angeles riots they participated in a local unity march that spanned Oak Park and the Austin neighborhood of Chicago. But on abortion, where there is less consensus, the leadership was unwilling to sponsor *officially* the local crisis pregnancy center, although individual members volunteer there. They would never send a pastor-led contingent to picket at Planned Parenthood. Good Shepherd is known throughout the community for being open to lesbian and gay members, but it was not a voice in the fight to secure health benefits for same-sex partners of village employees. City Baptist also avoided that particular controversy.

The moral authority to act in these congregations—whether to speak strongly or to lobby the village government or to engage in other forms of protest—is experiential authority, rooted in the experiences and values of the congregation's own members. It is not the authority of a sacred text or a transhistorical tradition. This means that the pastor cannot invoke some authority external to the congregation to move it in a direction it does not already want to go. The pastor can find the appropriate metaphor for the congregation's own goals, to express the vision as the lay leaders at City Baptist put it. But the pastor cannot offer a completely new vision, or suggest that members' own values and experiences are not a valid basis for moral action.

The understanding of race and racism adopted in a key turning point in each congregation's history resulted in an overall moral style that Lichterman (1995a, b) and others have called personalism, in which morally informed discourse and action arises from and is expressive of members' own life experiences (cf. Becker et al. 1993; Bellah et al. 1985). Understanding personalism is important not only for scholars of religion, but for anyone who wants to understand the capacity of voluntary or other community organizations to embrace the goals of tolerance, diversity, and multiculturalism. Tipton's (1982) work suggests that, since the 1960s, personalism has become one of the legitimate and widely institutionalized styles of moral reasoning in the U.S., particularly among the white middle class (cf. Bellah et al. 1985). Lichterman's (1995b) work suggests that this kind of communal logic is institutionalized in new social movements like the environmental groups he studied, and Wuthnow (1994a) finds it to be characteristic of the rapidly expanding "small groups" movement.

Bellah et al. (1985) suggest that the emergence of this new moral style may be leading to a more general change in the institutional repertoire for thinking about community and civic life (cf. Bell 1993). For example, thirty years ago Coser (1956) wrote about "issue-based" groups as being fundamentally different than groups that focus on caring, fellowship, and social interaction. But personalism has a cultural logic—of action, of discourse, of ways of doing things—that combines an engagement with social issues with an emphasis on caring, connection, and expressing members' deeply felt values. Personalism links "where you live" to social action; it is not pro-active or radical, but reactive in integrating and synthesizing previous life-experiences and bringing them to bear on a current social issue. It is geared toward consensus.

Local communities, however, are more than arenas for work, play, and family life. They are also political arenas. There is often a need for social action on issues where there is no consensus, and interest-based political pressure can be necessary in some cases to get minority voices heard. Some congregations in Oak Park *were* more politically active, but none of them had this kind of communal rhetoric or personalistic moral style. Some pastors did speak out publicly on race and other social issues, at community forums and in letters to the editor. But generally these were not pastors of integrated congregations drawing on the "experience" of integration, but pastors of nonintegrated congregations drawing on Scripture or theology.

What happened at Good Shepherd and City Baptist suggests that if the goal is to achieve stable, integrated community organizations—churches, schools, Rotary clubs—then personalism can work. But for stable, integrated communities, both personalist and other kinds of public spaces are needed. For example, during my fieldwork the local newspapers carried several stories about allegations of unfair disciplinary practices in the local high school, directed toward African American youth. This kind of issue cannot be talked about without bringing up the kind of "hurtful" things that personalism generally avoids. And it cannot be dealt with honestly unless there is some way to be critical about experiences that lead some adults to see black youths as more trouble-prone than white ones. How does a community become critical of "experience" if experience is the only source of moral authority?

What personalism makes possible is the existence of venues where political and social divisions are not reified, where boundaries are crossed, where people get to know one another holistically—where Don is "just Don." This provides a safe space for healing and for social integration, which is important for a healthy civic and community life in a pluralist society. Good Shepherd has become a real haven for previously-excluded groups. City Baptist is integrated in membership and leadership, a feat that has eluded most of the community's more liberal and activist churches. Some hearts and minds were changed. On the other hand, some who disagreed simply left. Personalism, here, bracketed off the hard issues of structural inequality and group-based interests that must be confronted head-on if our society is to achieve political, not just residential or social, integration.

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