



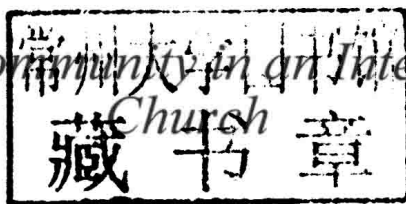
Seeking Community in
an Intercultural Church

The Diversity Paradox

.....
J. Jacob Jenkins
.....

The Diversity Paradox

Seeking Community in an Intercultural Church



J. Jacob Jenkins

LEXINGTON BOOKS

Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Plymouth, UK

Published by Lexington Books
A wholly owned subsidiary of Rowman & Littlefield
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowman.com

10 Thornbury Road, Plymouth PL6 7PP, United Kingdom


Copyright © 2014 by Lexington Books

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Available

ISBN 978-07391-8351-9 (cloth : alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-0-7391-8352-6 (electronic)

™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

The Diversity Paradox

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Gerald W. Driskill, whose support began long before this project, and whose guidance extends well beyond its pages. I would like to thank Dr. Eric M. Eisenberg for finding the perfect balance between creativity and constraint. I would like to thank my entire dissertation committee for their hand in bringing this study together: Dr. Mahuya Pal, Dr. Fred Steier, and Dr. Elizabeth Bird. I would like to thank too many of my friends, colleagues, and family members to mention for their social, professional, and personal support; you know who you are. I would like to thank Dr. Patrick J. Dillon for all the coffee break conversations, lunch break conversations, early morning conversations, mid-afternoon conversations, and general words of encouragement. I would like to thank each of Central Community Church's congregational members—you have been the personification of "community." I would like to thank the specific participants who took part in this study, especially those who went above and beyond what was asked of them: James Martin, Maryam Muhammad, Brad Barmore, Calvin Mason, Irv Lee, and Kent McAllister. Finally, I would like to thank Danny Schaffner Jr., one of the best men I have ever known.

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Defining Community

Table 3.1: Taxonomy of Contemporary Church Purpose

Table 3.2: Comparative Percentages of Race/Ethnicity

Table 4.1: Research Procedures and Participants

Table 6.1: Racial/Ethnic Composition of Band Members

List of Figures

- Figure 2.1. The model of community of practice
- Figure 2.2. The role of metaphor
- Figure 5.1. Clay effigy of Buddha embracing the world
- Figure 5.2. Community as “genuine,” “sincere,” and “authentic”
- Figure 5.3. Listening for genuine relationship
- Figure 5.4. The model of community of practice with study results
- Figure A. Seating arrangement by race/ethnicity

Part One

Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures	xiii
Part One	xv
1 Introduction	1
2 Relevant Literature	7
Part Two	31
3 Research Context	33
4 Research Methods	49
Part Three	63
5 Communicating Community	65
6 Disciplining Discourses	81
7 Traversing Tensions	91
8 Defy(ning) Diversity	101
9 Implementing Implications	113
10 Conclusion	123
Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Guide	129

Appendix B: Photography-Driven Interview Guide	131
Appendix C: World Café Discussion Questions	133
Appendix D: Sample Observation Notes	135
Appendix E: Sample Semi-Structured Interview	139
Appendix F: Sample Photography-Driven Interview	153
Appendix G: Sample World Café Results	177
References	179
Index	207
About the Author	211

Chapter One

Introduction

[We must] entertain each other in brotherly affection, we must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of other's necessities . . . we must delight in each other, make others' conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labour and suffer together, always having before our eyes . . . our Community as members of the same Body. (Winthrop, 1971, p. 42)

A sense of community continues to decline in the United States (Putnam, 1995). This trend is especially evident among younger generations, whether measured by civic participation (Salamon, 2002), political involvement (Aarts & Semetko, 2003), or religious affiliation (Uecker, Regnerus, & Vaaler, 2007). Membership in nearly every civic organization has diminished in recent years (Blanchard & Matthews, 2006; Cramer, 1999; Johnson, 1999; Parker, 1998; Scott & Godbey, 1994). Voter turnout for federal elections has dropped nearly 25 percent since 1960 (Putnam, 2000), and church attendance has been in steady descent since 1950 (Twenge, 2006).

As a result of community's decline, 77 percent of baby boomers believe the United States is worse off because of "less involvement in community activities" (Putnam, 2000, p. 25). More than 80 percent of Americans think there should be a greater focus on community (Penn, 1999), and 72 percent report not knowing their neighbors well (Patterson & Kim, 1994). Seymour Bernard Sarason (1974), a Professor of Psychology at Yale University, refers to this reality as "the most destructive dynamic in the lives of people in our society" (p. 247). Meanwhile, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton went as far as to characterize our present need for community as "the sleeping sickness of the soul" (Quindlen, 1993, p. 17; see also Adelman & Frey, 1997; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985/2008; Jason, 1997; Meyrowitz, 1985).

Central Community Church¹—an intercultural congregation located in Tampa Bay’s urban corridor—has responded to America’s declining sense of kinship by promoting “community” as an organizational metaphor. In reference to Christian Scriptures that depict a culturally diverse body of believers (see Matthew 28:9; Acts 17:26-27; Revelation 7:9, New International Version), Central Community has striven to both “reflect and impact the specific realities of [its] surrounding community” (field notes, March 10, 2010). This is an especially significant ambition, since Central Community’s neighborhood reflects the projected racial/ethnic demographics of America by year 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

During my four-year ethnography within this organization, I logged over 200 observation hours, recorded more than 120 pages of field notes, and interviewed a representative sampling of 35 organizational leaders and members. Throughout this time, Central Community actively promoted the community metaphor via church literature, sermon topics, congregational events, and communal outreach efforts. Central Community’s website described the organization as “a multi-ethnic *community* . . . transforming the world through Jesus Christ” (Central Community, 2013a, par. 3, emphasis added). A majority of sermons addressed the need for organizational community and the lead pastor, Pastor Steve, commonly discussed the requisite of community among congregational members: “We are all growing in our faith, but we can only do that in community . . . We are made for fellowship, for intimacy. We are made for community” (field notes, January 29, 2012). Congregational members were also encouraged to join small groups (referred to as Community Groups), and to attend organizational events aimed at relationship building (monthly men’s breakfasts, women’s luncheons, etc.). Additional community building efforts included Fall Festival, a neighborhood event with food, carnival games, and children’s rides; Backpack Attack, a program that provided free school supplies to local teachers and students; We Cannot Wait, an initiative to feed, clothe, and shelter homeless citizens in Tampa Bay; Movie Night Out, a monthly film screening in one of several public parks; Angel Food Ministries, a service that offered discounted groceries to those in need; Central Community Tutoring, a free tutorial service offered to nearby elementary schools; and Central Community Academy, an effort to develop the artistic aptitude of children in the surrounding area.

An organizational emphasis on community, however, still does not answer the question of what community *is* or how it is constituted through the communicative processes and practices of an intercultural congregation. For that reason, this book explores particular ways in which the metaphor was co-constructed by Central Community’s racially/ethnically diverse leaders and members, as well as limitations and tensions that emerged from those efforts. The resulting study produced three powerful implications that organizational leaders and members helped to create: (a) member-generated con-

tent, (b) increased virtual interaction, and (c) the formation of a creative arts team. These implications hold promise for other intercultural organizations that hope to mitigate the limited understanding of diversity that surfaced in this study. These same implications highlight the value of collaborative research, and underscore the capacity for applied communication research to build healthier organizations.

In part one, I begin by surveying the three prevailing views of *community*: community as physical space, community as disembodied concept, and community as communicative process. I continue by positioning this study within relevant literature on *the social construction of race/ethnicity, the sensemaking process, organizational metaphor, metaphoric understanding, tension-centered approach, and dialectical theory*. In part two, I build upon four years of ethnographic fieldwork in order to outline the study's context and qualitative research methods: participant observations, semi-structured interviews, photography-driven interviews, and World Café.

In part three, I discuss (a) specific ways in which "community" was understood by the culturally diverse leaders and members of Central Community, (b) unintended consequences that emerged from the metaphor of community, and (c) ways in which dialectical tensions were managed in order to maintain this metaphor. I then introduce an original theoretical concept called *the diversity paradox*: an organizational emphasis placed upon one potential understanding of diversity which, in turn, deemphasizes alternative expressions of difference for certain minority members. In the case of Central Community, I found that the organization's focus on visual representations of race/ethnicity synchronously moved the focus away from an endless number of other possible understandings (e.g., age, gender, nationality, sexual-orientation, and so on); thus, the organization's approach to creating a diverse community actually served to narrow its conception. Next, I outline each of the aforementioned implications that organizational leaders and members helped to co-create. I conclude with potential directions for future research.

Although the primary focus of this study was a faith-based organization, I believe its results and analysis apply to a variety of organizational settings, both religious and secular, as leaders across America seek community within increasingly diversified milieu. This belief is, in fact, what first drew me to the study of community, and what compelled me to work alongside Central Community Church. As a result, the following chapters offer an especially unique case study for contemporary organizational scholars by collating the three interrelated factors of community, race/ethnicity, and religion.

The study of community is important because we each share an inherent need for relationship, acceptance, and belonging (Jason, 1997; see also Adelman & Frey, 1997; Peck, 1987). It should be of no surprise, then, that a sense of community has shown to positively influence quality of life and life ex-

pectancy (Davidson & Cotter, 1989; Graff et. al, 2007), as well as mental and physical health (Luks, 1992; Minkler, Wallerstein, & Wilson, 2008). Thus, by gaining insight into how this concept is cultivated and sustained among the members of Central Community, perhaps we can help to stem the declining sense of community felt across America today.

Meanwhile, issues of racial/ethnic discrepancy continue to plague our world (Attewell, Kasinitz, & Dunn, 2010; Allen, 2007; Hirsch & Levert, 2009; Imtoul, Kameniar, & Bradley, 2009; Lund, 2010; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008; Peterek-Bonner, 2009). This reality is especially evident within the United States, whether measured by income inequality (Glazer, 2005), health disparities (Dillon, Roscoe, & Jenkins, 2012), education levels (Closson, 2010), or incarceration rates (Ward, Farrell, & Rousseau, 2009). Despite the persistence of racial/ethnic inequality, organizational communication scholars have rarely addressed issues of difference, prompting Cox and Nkomo (1990) to characterize minorities as the “invisible men and women” of organizational research. Consequently, I believe it is essential for contemporary organizational scholars to explore intercultural contexts. By revealing the specific ways that diverse members manage tensions and limitations within an intercultural organization, it is my hope that this study will improve the way society communicates with(in) other racially/ethnically diverse populations as well.

Finally, religious and faith-based organizations have an ability to address many of the social problems facing our present culture, namely those of racial/ethnic inequality and a declining sense of community (Putnam, 2000; Saguaro Seminar, 2009; see also Dixon & Armfield, 2013; Driskill, 2007; Driskill & Camp, 2006; Driskill & Gribas, 2012). Indeed, religion remains one of the most powerful institutions in our world (see Cnaan, Brody, Handy, Yancey, & Schneider, 2002; Emerson, 2008). In spite of this reality, organizational communication scholars have not routinely studied religious settings, focusing instead upon for-profit and professional contexts (Ashcraft, 2011). Such a fundamental oversight neglects religion’s existing influence and positive potential, as exemplified by community building organizations like the Nehemiah Network (2013). Founded in 1998, the Nehemiah Network is a “relational network of pastors and Christian marketplace leaders uniting the churches in Central Arkansas to live and serve as the body of Christ in our community” (par. 2). Comprised of more than 100 culturally diverse church traditions, the Nehemiah Network has netted nearly two million dollars worth of labor and materials for over 200 community development projects. The Nehemiah Network has also donated one million dollars to other nonprofit organizations throughout the Midwest, and is now emulated in more than fifty cities and three foreign countries (see also Driskill, Meyer, & Mirivel, 2012). In light of religion’s capacity for promoting social change—as exemplified by the Nehemiah Network—my aim with this book

is to help intercultural congregations like Central Community foster an increased sense of community, while simultaneously stemming racial/ethnic inequality in our world writ large.

NOTES

1. The organizational name is a pseudonym, as are all names used in this study.



Chapter Two

Relevant Literature

In order to fully understand the way community was co-constructed by Central Community Church's racially/ethnically diverse leaders and members, the present chapter begins by surveying three commonly held views of *community*: community as physical space, community as disembodied concept, and community as communicative process. I then position the book within relevant literature on *the social construction of race, the sensemaking process, organizational metaphor, metaphoric understanding, tension-centered approach, and dialectical theory*. Throughout this time, I work to bring the study into dialogue with contemporary scholarship by delineating the way it augments existing theory, while filling gaps in current communication literature. By filling these gaps in literature, the present book offers understanding to organizational communication scholars as to how the community metaphor is constituted within an intercultural congregation. In doing so, this book also offers practical understanding to leaders and practitioners who hope to build a healthy sense of community within their own intercultural organization.

COMMUNITY

The human desire for community is a universal longing. As bestselling author M. Scott Peck (1987) writes, "There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community" (p. 233). Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1972), the renowned Harvard business professor, further describes community as a state "in which humankind's deepest yearnings, noblest dreams, and highest aspirations come to fulfillment, where all physical, social, and spiri-