

Intimate Diversity: The Presentation of Multiculturalism and Multiracialism in a High-Boundary Religious Movement

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Researchers studying the small yet significant number (8–10 percent) of U.S. multiracial/ethnic congregations have argued that formal organizational commitment, the development of inclusive worship styles, and the formation of small racially/ethnically mixed groups appear to be significant factors in constructing and maintaining congregational diversity. Drawing from four years of field studies in a racially and ethnically diverse congregation of the International Churches of Christ (ICOC), I address a process about which we know relatively little: the construction and maintenance of multiracial/ethnic networks in high-boundary religious movements. I demonstrate how this type of group is particularly able to present a valuable and rising commodity in our U.S. religious economy, what I have named intimate diversity—the enactment and/or narration of close and caring relationships among a racially and ethnically diverse membership. My comparative analysis here of the ICOC, the People’s Temple, and contemporary U.S. Bahá’í communities suggests that membership in such groups offers members greater exposure and involvement with people from different backgrounds, but the terms of involvement in the organization seriously limit and define the manner in which individuals can experience diversity. Furthermore, group commitment to present a face of intimate diversity and strict mechanisms of social control hinder the abilities of the leadership and members to clearly recognize contradictions in group racial/ethnic ideologies and practice.

Most Christian congregations in the United States are composed of individuals from similar racial and ethnic backgrounds, yet a significant number (8–10 percent) maintain a multiracial and/or multiethnic membership.¹ Current research offers some insight into the construction and maintenance of these diverse religious communities. For example, theological and formal organizational commitment to membership diversity appear to be significant factors (Foster and Brelsford 1996; Ammerman et al. 1997; Becker 1998; Emerson, Yancey, and Chai 2000). Researchers have also found that the development of group rituals, beliefs, and practices that embrace various cultural worship styles can attract members from different backgrounds and help maintain racial and ethnic diversity (Ammerman et al. 1997; Becker 1998). In her analysis of two multiracial Christian congregations, Becker (1998:468) calls attention to the intentional formation of “small groups, with members and leaders recruited across racial lines so that people could get to know one another informally.” Drawing from data gathered in the Multiracial Congregations Project, Emerson hypothesizes that such efforts to build “cross-race networks among” members helps congregations maintain multiple racial groups (Emerson 2000). This article, based on four years of field studies in a racially and ethnically diverse congregation of the International Churches of Christ (ICOC), uses an in-depth ethnographic approach that enables me to address a process that we know very little about: the construction and maintenance of such cross-race social networks in high-boundary² religious organizations. A comparative analysis here of social processes in the ICOC, the People’s Temple of the 1970s, and contemporary U.S. Bahá’í assemblies offers a model for understanding racial and ethnic diversity in high-boundary primary groups formally committed to integration.

ICOC’s dedication to an integrated religious community should first be viewed within the context of U.S. evangelicalism (Smith et al. 1998). Except for their lack of self-identification as evangelicals (members identified as part of a “nondenominational Bible church”), members

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reflected many beliefs and practices used to distinguish evangelicals: the Bible as inerrant authority; salvation as tied to a personal relationship with Jesus; the Bible as a practical guidebook for day-to-day living; a rhetorical commitment to proselytizing; and an attachment to the idea of “engaged orthodoxy,” meaning bringing one’s faith to social problems through some type of radical activity (Ammerman 1987; Smith et al. 1998; Emerson and Smith 2000). U.S. evangelical Christians, who are primarily white, have recently been engaged in public efforts to confront their racist past and end congregational separatism and racism (Emerson and Smith 2000:63).

The ICOC is a sect of the mainline Churches of Christ: basing its teachings loosely on conservative mainline theology and doctrine while integrating radical and controversial new beliefs and group structures. Members marked 1979 as the year that Kip McKean, a disillusioned member of the mainline Churches of Christ, founded the then Boston Church of Christ. In the early 1980s, McKean instituted a radical structural feature, a system of carefully monitored, hierarchical, and therapeutic relationships that promoted intimate and frequent interaction among members, creating distinct and high boundaries between those inside the group and those outside, thereby encapsulating members in a tightly woven “social cocoon” (Greil and Rudy 1984). This ICOC structure has been greatly criticized by anti-cult organizations, university officials (the ICOC has been banned from several campuses), and ex-members (Barnett 1989; Giambalvo and Rosedale 1996). Members and leaders, however, related this radical group structure to their exceptional ability to sustain congregational diversity and growth: an increasingly multiracial/ethnic church, from 300 members in the early 1980s to ICOC estimates of approximately 125,000 in 2001.³

The ICOC resembles other racially and ethnically diverse religious movements such as the People’s Temple and contemporary U.S. Bahá’ís, groups that erect high boundaries and promote their religious communities as exceptionally able to actualize contemporary ideals of multiracialism and multiculturalism.⁴ A general precept of the Bahá’í faith is a commitment to fighting racial, ethnic, and nationalist prejudices. This tenet has taken on an exclusionist tone for many U.S. Bahá’ís, wherein some local assemblies members believe their religious movement is more able than other groups to foster close interracial relationships and fight in-group racism (McMullen 2000; Cole 2002). The People’s Temple (1955–1978) charismatic leader, Jim Jones, presented his community as a safe haven where people from all races and ethnicities would be loved by him and each other in remarkable ways (Hall 1979; Lindholm 1990; Maaga 1998). Although there is clearly much variation in level of social control and historical context, in each of these multiracial/ethnic religious movements a picture of individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds embedded in an intimate community was in the forefront of discourse.

The creation of strong cross-racial and ethnic social networks in a religious organization clearly influences group ability to sustain diversity as members rely less on outside social networks and become more dependent on, comfortable with, and committed to in-group relationships (Emerson 2000). In the ICOC, mandatory close and frequent social interaction forced members to develop such strong cross-racial and ethnic networks. In addition, members drew from this picture of tight-knit diverse networks as they repeatedly performed (Goffman 1959) *intimate diversity scenes*, the enactment and/or narration of close and caring relationships among a racially and ethnically diverse membership. Their presentations as prejudice-free Christians engaged in family-like therapeutic relationships with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds were of great value to members and the institution; they legitimated an individual’s commitment to pervasive social ideals of racial and ethnic diversity, attracted new members, and created and maintained a cohesive community bonded by an image of the group as extraordinarily diverse.

My comparison here suggests that high-boundary groups overtly concerned with presenting *intimate diversity* can offer members a powerful venue for the development of close and caring relationships with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as community settings for a presentation of self as prejudice-free. However, it appears that such groups manifest serious contradictions. First, a sacred picture of group diversity is partially sustained through strict institutional rule; while the ICOC, People’s Temple, and U.S. Bahá’í communities fall

on a continuum of social control, common to each is a clear organizational taboo against any serious criticism of rudimentary church structure and policy. So, while this type of religious community, through social and ideological encapsulation, is exceptionally able to produce and present tightly bound diverse primary groups, leaders monitor group discourse and are frequently unwilling to address member criticisms that may point to in-group segregation, racism, and more complex racial and ethnic social dynamics. Second, the high-boundary, in-group focus of these organizations seriously precludes attention to broader societal structures that sustain racist practice on a larger scale. Therefore, intimate diversity in this type of group can provide members with a greater exposure to people of other races and backgrounds than they may have known elsewhere, yet the terms of involvement in the organization seriously limit and define the manner in which individuals experience this diversity.

METHODS

My analysis reflects processes in the ICOC movement as a whole but, more specifically, that of my primary field site, the City Church of Christ (CCOC),⁵ an approximately 300-member congregation in a New England city. Approximately 50 percent of the congregation were working professionals and women outnumbered men (approximately three to two). My visual estimates of the racial and ethnic makeup of the congregation were 55 percent white, 25 percent African American, 17 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent Asian and Native American.⁶

I attended more than 60 local and regional group events and numerous in-home family group gatherings. During one year, I spent at least one day every other week attending a one-on-one, sometimes two-on-one, Bible study series in a member's home. I interviewed formally and informally more than 50 CCOC members. To obtain a more balanced qualitative picture, I formally interviewed nine ex-members of the movement and attended an ex-member support group.⁷ I routinely monitored member and ex-member websites and analyzed at least 30 ex-member testimonies from websites and ex-member and anti-cult literature. I also analyzed 12 texts published by Discipleship Publications International (DPI), the movement's publishing house. I viewed six Kingdom News Network (KNN) productions, ICOC's video/film company, and obtained several printed newsletters. I transcribed and analyzed 15 audio-taped sermons and testimonies from leaders across the country. I carefully and repeatedly reviewed each data source for common themes, which informed coding categories that I then used to analyze data systematically (Glaser and Strauss 1967).⁸

THE DISCIPLING STRUCTURE

Discipling, the core group relational structure that members and leaders credited as responsible for their sacred diversity, referred to several actions and relationships. When you joined the movement, you were baptized and became a disciple. Leaders and members professed that true Christians were only those who practiced a correct version of discipling, which they understood as only actuated within the ICOC movement. Disciples were required to make new converts; thus the verb "to disciple" entailed proselytizing. Discipling also had a more rudimentary meaning. The building blocks of the discipling structure were mandatory, formal assignments of elder "prayer partners" (disciplers). Discipling partners were of the same sex and came from similar life situations. Disciplers gave daily advice regarding relationship and life issues; such acts of counseling and advising were called discipling. Thus discipling relationships were composed of both the disciplined and a discipler. Disciples were also broken into discipleship groups (usually three to four people) that were then further organized into discipleship family groups (in CCOC approximately 11 members) of like individuals (e.g., members with children, singles, and young married adults). Married couples were also assigned formal "marriage disciplers," husband and wife teams who routinely counseled and intervened in marriages.

Discipling supported hierarchies of position and knowledge, constantly reinforcing a church “family” with clearly defined distinctions between parental leaders and child-like followers (new converts were named “baby Christians”). Each congregation was led by a married couple and had several paid ministerial leadership positions (such as in the Family Ministry and Singles Ministry), as well as nonpaid ministerial leadership positions (such as in the Teen and Youth Ministries). These leaders were also disciplined by “older Christians” (meaning number of years as an ICOC disciple).⁹ Leaders and members frequently talked about how all disciples should ultimately “submit” to their disciplers’ prescriptions.

ICOC founder, Kip McKean, and other church leaders explicitly called for members to be in “daily contact” (physical or phone) with formal discipling partners. Members were also held accountable (by their discipler and group leaders) to interacting frequently and intimately with their discipling groups, discipling family groups (weekly Bible studies, prayer groups, and dinners), and to attending group worship services on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Discipling family groups changed composition several times during my field work, multiplying the number of intimate familial relationships members established within the congregation. One white man stated, “we switch around so much [in family groups] that you get to know everybody.” Discipling then created tightly bound networks that threw members into frequent contact with disciples from different backgrounds who intimately and routinely intervened in all aspects of an individual’s life.

These intimate racially and ethnically diverse discipling networks provided members with social resources such as childcare, teen counseling, tutoring, employment opportunities, domestic help, and other kinds of assistance in day-to-day living. For example, several young college-age female students (African American, white, and Latina) lived in married couples’ homes, forming interracial household compositions where students babysat and helped with domestic chores. The frequency of members’ interactions, the intimacy mandated in discipling relationships, and the social resources produced from close discipling networks meant that people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds were consistently and routinely in each others’ lives: counseling, listening, communicating, and sharing resources with one another. Participation in discipling family networks provided members with authenticity, motivation, and relational scripts for individual and group performances of intimate diversity scenes.

Ironically, the intimacy demanded by discipling was the very same quality that sometimes segregated members from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds. For example, the assignment of discipling partners and the configuration of discipling groups was at the discretion of leaders, who often talked about “matching like individuals” in an attempt to provide the disciplined with a discipler who could most easily identify with and offer advice on particular life issues. Often, this matching of members was based on race and ethnicity. One ex-member spoke of being a white member in a predominately African-American congregation where all of his discipling partners “except one were European American.” One Asian-American member talked of initially being “assigned” to a racially based (African-American) family group clique. Although interracial/ethnic discipling partners were frequently assigned, the tendency for individuals to want to be with others who are like themselves, a major social-psychological tenet, clearly drove some ICOC leader assignments of disciplers. As a participant observer (and potential convert), leaders “matched” me with a Bible study partner and major research informant from a similar class, life-course position, race, and gender. The level of intimacy required in discipling relationships sometimes demanded segregation based on cultural difference. A most salient example of this was the local ICOC Spanish Ministry, which held separate services and constructed their own discipling family groups. Although English-speaking CCOC African-American and white leaders and members spoke of attempting to disciple Spanish-speaking members, they presented such therapeutic interventions as extremely difficult. Cole (2000:116) notes that language and cultural difference also led to in-group segregation and conflict between Iranian and American Bahá’ís in one L.A. assembly. So while mandated racial and ethnic integration in tight-knit groups is clearly able to

produce intimate diversity, the intimacy required in such social relationships can foster in-group segregation.

Hierarchical group power structures and intimate diverse networks are found in the People's Temple and contemporary U.S. Bahá'í communities as well. McMullen (2000:15) notes that in many local Bahá'í communities "initial exposure and subsequent conscious adoption . . . of a Bahá'í identity and world view involves being embedded in a network of personal relationships," and, like ICOC discipling family groups, these small Bahá'í networks meet frequently in members' homes.¹⁰ Although local assemblies operate under a seemingly democratic ideal, many Bahá'ís believe that they are ultimately obligated to submit to the authority of global administrative church bodies and officials (McMullen 2000; Cole 2000, 2002). In the People's Temple, with only approximately 5,000 members at its height, members lived together as "family" and power was firmly centralized. Jim Jones, the charismatic leader and father figure, held absolute power, followed by a smaller informal "leadership circle" (Richardson 1980; Mills 1979; Lindholm 1990; Maaga 1998).¹¹

The ICOC, as was true with the People's Temple and contemporary U.S. Bahá'í communities, presented racial and ethnic integration as a core group goal and accomplishment. In these high-boundary groups, such multiculturalism/racism was framed through exclusivity: racism was portrayed as a social evil, a sin rampant outside the group, while in-group intimate diversity emerged as sacred, salvific, and powerful.

ORGANIZATIONAL PORTRAITS OF INTIMATE DIVERSITY

The International Churches of Christ

ICOC leaders consistently stressed the exclusive nature of diversity in their church. Gordon Ferguson, a long-time white leader and church author, writes: "I've never before experienced relationships like these [discipling relationships among diverse members], nor have I seen them. Politics has not produced them; education has not; sports has not; and the arts have not. Divisions in our society are as dramatic as ever. Only Jesus in the heart of disciples, who share his love for God and for the lost, can cultivate such love for one another" (1997:85). McKean describes his movement as unique: "in the L.A. Church, we have 17% Asian, 18% Black, 41% Caucasian, 23% Latin and 1% Native American . . . Most denominational congregations are predominantly one skin color or one nationality or one economic group . . . Other 'churches' often only pay lip service to the multiracial, international communion of believers" (1992). McKean, who is white, also stresses diversity in the ICOC hierarchy, claiming that church leadership essentially reflects the ethnic makeup of geographic regions (1994). ICOC members frequently heard about and witnessed high-level interracial/ethnic discipling relationships, fueling the image of their church community as uniquely driven by intimate diversity from top to bottom.¹²

The ICOC's worship style contributed to its image of exceptional group diversity through "ritual inclusion," welcoming diversity in music, language, and ritual practice (Becker 1998:452). As Ammerman et al. (1997:55–56) remind us, "worship is an event that is meant to express the unifying vision of the congregation"; through ritual, language, music, and worship style congregations send "signals" about "who they are and what is important to them." ICOC regional services and events maintained an eclectic and seemingly multicultural megachurch worship style. For example, attending one ICOC large regional event one would likely hear a combination of mainstream Protestant hymns, Christian rock and gospel music, view slide shows, wide-screen video/film presentations, observe creative/modern dance, and comedic and dramatic theatrical performances. Weekly Sunday services were also mixed in worship and ritual practice and members from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, drawing from particular cultural worship and performance styles, offered testimonies, musical performances, and prayers.

The web was a powerful tool for organizational presentation of intimate diversity. Promoted on ICOC's website were group efforts to form interracial/ethnic nuclear families through HOPE worldwide, the group's "benevolent wing," which included an adoption agency. The HOPE Website (www.hopeww.org) adoption page highlighted what appeared to be ICOC families (including an interracial couple) waiting to adopt children. Inside the group, I found members and leaders constantly talking about HOPE's placement of baby girls from China in CCOC families. Several members told me of HOPE funding their overseas adoptions. The highest figure, \$9,000, was suggested to me by one white woman adopting a two year old from China. Descriptions of HOPE on the web and during interviews and formal testimonies fueled ICOC's image of intimate diversity through interracial/ethnic nuclear family formation.

In addition to an eclectic worship style and formal descriptions of members as forming close interracial/ethnic nuclear and church families, ICOC formal group "discourse repertoires" provided an ideological "frame," an interpretive schematic that leaders and members constructed and drew from to endow relationships within the community with moral superiority and a sacred ability to counter segregation (Goffman 1974; Gamson 1992; Snow and Benford 1992). Discourses of multiculturalism, multiracialism, colorblindness, individualism, and relationality combined to present the discipling network as a powerful and virtuous relational body able to cure individuals of racism and achieve a kind of institutional racial harmony that outside organizations had failed to produce. Multiculturalism and multiracialism are imprecise and historically fluid concepts, too easily recognized by many as the mere presence of individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds coming together in a single group. As a result, these concepts often manifest in simplistic organizational and individual approaches to complex social problems and racial/ethnic dynamics (Hollinger 1995). Nevertheless, these concepts are powerful and persistent ideals in U.S. mainstream discourse, used with frequency alongside concepts like diversity and inclusiveness to legitimate organizations and groups.

ICOC leaders' use of multiculturalism and multiracialism in support of group intimate diversity manifested two contradictory ideas: (1) the welcoming of individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and (2) the erasure of racial and ethnic differences. ICOC leaders' repetitive and constant use of these concepts reflected 20th-century liberal idealists' descriptions of U.S. culture as a "melting pot," suggesting that the act of mixing unlike individuals together in the ICOC resulted in some sort of social glory and equality that erased all difference and produced intimate relationships. In promoting a melting-pot image, leaders added other vague and historically imprecise, yet powerful, concepts. For example, leaders often used "colorblind" to describe the movement, and one KNN movie production dramatized the marriage of a blind, blonde white female disciple to an African-American male disciple; the choice of a blind white woman enhancing the portrait of true colorblind ICOC intimacy. Yet, while espousing a commitment to colorblindness, leaders also praised cultural and racial differences. For example, one leader boldly and emphatically argued to a group of disciples during a social function, "we are multicultural, we do not try to take people's culture away! We welcome all races and cultures." To ease the inherent and obvious tensions found in the concomitant promotion of multiculturalism, multiracialism, and colorblindness, ICOC leaders framed discipling relationships as capable of sustaining diversity and fighting against racism and ethnocentrism through utilization of a sacred brand of therapy. In this vein, leaders presented discipling relationships as sovereign clinical psychoanalytic treatment, as able to ensure that as disciples became "blind" to race difference they would genuinely accept the issues and concerns of all church "brothers and sisters."

Leaders' serious and constant employment of rhetoric from our pervasive culture of the therapeutic added a powerful dimension to the group's intimate diversity discourse repertoire (Rieff 1966; Nolan 1998). ICOC leaders rhetorically endowed the discipling structure with the ability to encourage both expressive and utilitarian free-will individualism, ideals driving therapeutic culture and historically grounded in U.S. evangelicalism and white conservative Protestantism (Bellah et al. 1985; Emerson and Smith 2000). Leaders described discipling as fulfilling

free-will individualism by encouraging and enabling members (who under a Christian rubric have the “free will” to choose and motivate individual salvation) to engage in personal efforts to better themselves (in both economic and relational matters). ICOC leaders consistently argued that discipling encouraged and created therapeutic spaces where disciples could routinely and productively indulge in expressive individualism, a core tenet of psychoanalytic and self-help frames that stresses expressivity. In such a therapeutic milieu, individuals are encouraged to express their needs, emotions, concerns, and issues to a group of individuals who, operating under an ethic of relationality, are responsible for listening and taking into consideration others’ feelings, ideas, concerns, and needs as legitimate (Johnson 1988:68). The roots of such expressiveness can be found in utopian religious communities of the 19th century (such as the Oneida Community) where mutual criticism and public confession were prescribed for individual betterment (Kanter 1972:106). Relationality, expressive individualism, and therapeutic practice came together in the 1960s and 1970s in the human potential movement and encounter groups, and more recently in the widespread self-help group movement. ICOC leaders and members described discipling as a combination of these therapeutic ideals and practices and drew heavily from the encounter-group style that aimed to break down “interpersonal barriers through uninhibited communication . . . and self-fulfillment through total self disclosure” (Lasch-Quinn 2001:72). ICOC members offered descriptions of their family and discipling groups as environments where diverse disciples were encouraged to be “honest” about their feelings on race issues and listen with an “open heart” to others’ experiences and concerns. Such therapeutic dynamics, fueled by relationality, were presented by ICOC leaders and members as remarkably able to actualize multiculturalism and multiracialism.

ICOC’s formal discursive repertoire, in stressing therapeutic practices guided by relationality, served as an organizational cover that occluded inherent ethnic bias. As history has shown, when a social group claims erasure of difference, the processes of deletion almost always involve the acculturation of individuals to that specific group’s preestablished ideology and world view. For example, 19th-century melting-pot imagery in the United States represented people from different cultures adopting white middle-class Protestant institutional beliefs and practices. The discipling structure was grounded in U.S. therapeutic culture, a predominately middle-class phenomenon (Bellah et al. 1985; McGuire 1988) guided by a utilitarian free-will individualism and clearly fixed in conservative Protestant ideology.

In the ICOC, discipling’s attachment to free-will utilitarian individualism often resulted in failure to account for how disciples’ life experiences in a racialized society may have contributed to member ability to attain educational, career, and/or economic goals. As found in the belief system of many white conservative evangelical Christians, the discipling structure promoted “anti-structuralism,” or an “inability to perceive or unwillingness to accept social structural influences” at work in individuals’ lives (Emerson and Smith 2000:76). This anti-structuralism was supported in the frequent depiction of the ICOC community as colorblind. As Ruth Frankenberg (1993:14) argues, discourses “of essential ‘sameness’ popularly referred to as ‘color-blindness,’” are a “move toward ‘color evasiveness’ and ‘power evasiveness.’” Such color and power “evasiveness” suggests “that we are all the same under the skin; that, culturally, we are converging; that materially we have the same chances in U.S. society; and that—the sting in the tail—any failure to achieve is therefore the fault of the people of color themselves.” It is no surprise that during one late-night CCOC Bible study a young African-American woman asked God to forgive her for being “jealous” of the “nice homes and clothes” that other church sisters had, and for the strength to achieve the same level of middle-class lifestyle. Although disciplers expected and counseled all members to gain economic security, the organizational structure also limited individual efforts to succeed by placing high demands on members. The ICOC had a substantial organizational investment in members’ financial health; disciples were expected to donate anywhere from 15–30 percent of yearly earnings to the church, regardless of their economic position or life circumstances. Thus leaders encouraged members to pursue higher education and lucrative careers,

yet held all members accountable to demanding disciplining schedules and hefty church financial commitments.

The People's Temple

The People's Temple is an extreme example of high-boundary construction and social encapsulation: members lived communally under Jones's charismatic vision of apostolic socialism, gave most everything they owned to the community, and for the 900 members who followed the movement to Jonestown, Guyana, ultimately died together. But like the ICOC, People's Temple members and Jones presented their church "family" to others as exclusively able to produce intimate diversity. Member Anne Moore, in 1973, writes to her family, "this is how I know the church [People's Temple] is good. No one else could bring black and white as close together" (Moore 1986:94). Jim Jones understood the potential of interracial adoption in promoting a group image of intimate diversity as well. He encouraged members "to adopt interracial children to help break down racial barriers and encourage a collective awareness" (Lindholm 1990:144). Jones and his wife called themselves the "rainbow family"—in addition to their biological son, they adopted two children from Korea and an African-American child (Hall 1987:47–48).

Intimate diversity inside the People's Temple was presented by members and leadership as a sacred therapeutic endeavor and compared frequently to a racist and classist outside society. According to one ex-member, "Jim Jones kept many of his black people frightened with frequent reminders of black oppression. He told us that he had a divine revelation that 'all black people in America are going to be put into concentration camps or be hung—except for those who stay with me. I will protect you'" (Mills 1979:100). Jim Jones's vision of apostolic socialism existed alongside a contemporary commitment to a therapeutic ethos and expressive individualism. Members were encouraged by leaders to fully participate in group counseling sessions; these therapeutic attempts presented intimate diversity as fostered through relationality. Temple member Anne Moore writes, "this church offers a place where you'll never be lonely and the counseling group stays up till 5 in the morning . . . People are really giving. So we have here a real apostolic community, just the way Jesus was saying with black and white and old and young" (Moore 1986:83). Ironically, Jones's picture of racial equality and family-like closeness and caring among diverse Temple members was experienced through a racialized church power structure: Jones, a white man (although claimed to be of some "Cherokee" descent), and his cadre of white leaders held power, while the more rank-and-file members of the Temple were primarily black (Weightman 1983:82).

Contemporary U.S. Bahá'í Community

U.S Bahá'ís, although less extreme in community boundary-making than the People's Temple, have also erected boundaries that distinguish their "new-world-order" as "humanity's only salvation," from an "old world order" that breeds "racism" (McMullen 2000:112–13). Like the ICOC, the Bahá'í official website presented a multiracial/ethnic community. The group has a long history of presenting intimate diversity through interracial/ethnic family units. Abdu'l-Bahá, an early 20th-century Bahá'í leader, was part of the first interracial U.S. Bahá'í marriage and "frequently spoke about the positive influence interracial couples would have on the elimination of racism in the United States" (McMullen 2000:153).

Like the ICOC and the People's Temple, a combination of therapeutic methods and ideology in the service of intimate diversity is maintained in Bahá'í communities. For example, McMullen (2000:166–68) describes weekly race discussion groups in Atlanta where mostly men (dominated by African Americans with a few whites in attendance) would gather in members' homes till late in the evening. The goal of these meetings, according to the facilitator, was "to create a 'safe discussion' for both races to be 'honest but loving.'" Those involved in these

Bahá'í weekly meetings “expressed their joy at being able to be open, honest, and yet unified.” Like the ICOC, a rhetorical balancing of similarity and difference in race, culture, and ethnicity takes place as Bahá'í communities work to foster “unity in diversity.” Organizational bias and an emphasis on individualism is evident in Bahá'í communities as well. The Bahá'í faith, while encouraging some critique of our racialized society, stresses individualism through the individual as “seeker”; members are embedded in a journey of self-improvement in community, where the individual, not church structure or policy, is blamed for mistakes and lack of progress (McMullen 2000:166).

In the ICOC, the People's Temple, and contemporary U.S. Bahá'í communities, members and leaders constructed clear boundaries that separated a sacred intimate diversity within from a chaotic, racist society outside; members “huddled” together under sacred canopies (Berger 1967) securely woven with persuasive ideological threads of multiculturalism, multiracialism, colorblindness, expressive individualism, and therapeutic relationality.

PERFORMANCES OF PREJUDICE-FREE SELVES

Relying heavily on therapeutic language, ICOC leaders presented the discipling structure as a well-oiled psychoanalytic machine that sustained diversity and fostered racial equality. ICOC leaders talked about discipling as powerful and virtuous because it ensured the practice of the assorted cultural values implied in their discourse repertoire—a predictable and enforced relationality, individualism, colorblindness, multiracialism, and multiculturalism that led members to develop uncommonly intimate relationships. Formal presentations of the discipling community as living up to these ideals resonated with members cultural “tool kits”; the “symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views” that they understood as significant for actions aimed at ending racism and ethnocentrism (Swidler 1986:273). Thus formal descriptions of such a quixotic therapeutic community were used as backdrop, setting, and script in members' presentation of self as free from prejudice.

Amaya, a Latino American member (Jones 1996:57), contributed a testimony of personal healing to the DPI text, *Glory in the Church*. While a student at Brown University he claims to have prided himself on being a well-rounded and open person. However, he states, “as I look back I see what a sheltered, prejudiced and classist attitude I had. I made a point to speak both English and Spanish without an accent . . . I was an elitist snob.” Amaya credits his relationships with ICOC disciples as saving him from his “classist” attitude and allowing him to truly live prejudice-free: “I praise God for his kingdom because it broke down so many walls of prejudice . . . I am part of an interracial marriage . . . Kelly is white and I am Latino. Our closest relationships during the last twelve years as disciples have varied widely in class and race, and we are so much the better for it.”

During one Women's Day regional event, speaking to a crowd of approximately 1,000 members and guests, a college-educated African-American woman framed her salvation story based on her previous investment in an African-American social movement: “I was extremely afrocentric . . . wore my hair in dreds, dressed in African style, only associated with African American people . . .” After giving birth to a son and subsequently marrying his father (a nationally famous lead singer in a rock band), she “went to church service [ICOC] with somebody in the band.” The “problem with the church,” she told the crowd, “was that a white man preached.” She recalled telling the band member who had brought her to the ICOC service, “real nice, but you need a black preacher.” Church leaders then suggested that she attend the nearest ICOC church with an African-American lead evangelist. She said she went to this church and then told her ICOC friends: “nice but you need to get rid of all the white people.” Ultimately, membership in the ICOC, she related, helped her to get rid of “all that prejudice,” and learn to “love everyone, black or white.” She ended her testimony proclaiming: “God has such a sense of humor that my best friend now is the perkiest white woman ever!”

Although I rarely asked members during formal and informal interviews about the racial and ethnic composition of their movement, descriptions of CCOC experience frequently returned to the prejudice-free myth contexture suggested above: descriptions of life before the CCOC in a racist and segregated world, and life after as practicing true multiculturalism and multiracialism in a sacred CCOC family free of racism and ethnocentrism. These member interview stories were more like brief monologues in a play than full narrative accounts with a plot, characters, and ending (Alexander and Smith 1993:156)—they were concise performances of experiencing intimate race-free and colorblind relationships, succinct accountings of becoming not guilty of prejudice.¹³ The more members performed these abbreviated scenarios, the more they came to believe and find meaning in presentations of self as prejudice-free; and the more ICOC's organizational portrait of intimate diversity was legitimated and secured.

One college-educated white woman who had been a member of the CCOC for eight months painted a clear picture of a diseased and sinful prejudiced person premembership and an accepting, relational, prejudice-free person post-CCOC conversion. During one family group social event, standing in a small corner of a member's kitchen, she lowered her voice, struggling for the right words to describe what she found most powerful about her relationships in the church. She leaned in close to me and stated in a very solemn and tearful voice, "I used to be the kind of person who was prejudiced against people who were different from me . . . people who were . . . not as . . . well, intellectual, or having the same kind of schooling. I thought they couldn't be as deep or understanding." After experiencing "intense" discipling relationships with "all different kinds" of people, she said she realized that "some of those same people are the deepest, most spiritual Christians I know. We are all the same. God doesn't discriminate in that way." She emphasized that before she became a disciple, she "would never have even associated with those kinds of people." That was the third time she had privately described those feelings and revelations to me: repeated performances of transformation into a prejudice-free self kept her self-identification, and that of her community, as free from racism, ethnocentrism, and classism alive.

A 25-year-old African-American college-educated male member described his childhood as exclusively grounded in an African-American social network. He recalled attempts to blend in with whites at work and in school for "professional reasons," but described his pre-CCOC life as mostly segregated. He talked about racism as rampant in outside society, recalling his anger for being pulled over "all the time" by police for "no reason at all but the color of my skin." In true evangelical racial reconciliation fashion, he talked about his close discipling relationships (both as a discipler and being disciplined) with CCOC white men as helping him to get rid of the prejudice and anger he felt against whites. He recounted his close relationship with a 30-year-old white male member (who had served as his discipler): "He's somebody that I'd never be friends with just because we're so different . . . if it weren't for church, just ya know bringing us to the same physical place and I've actually gotten to know him pretty well and he's a great guy. I mean we go play basketball and hang out together." In addition, he talked about how he had counseled and become "close friends" with a 30-year-old white male disciple who was about to marry an African-American woman in the church.

Members' conversion stories, delivered in this prejudice-free myth contexture, were concise performances of intimate diversity. The African-American woman above who claims to have gotten rid of prejudice does not just describe herself as attending an integrated church but as "loving" members regardless of race and as developing a "best" friendship with a white woman. Similarly, Amaya does not just eschew his "elitist snob" attitude by worshiping with people from different backgrounds, he describes the formation of intimate interracial/ethnic relationships, including marriage, as breaking down "walls of prejudice." The 25-year-old African-American male member described his ICOC conversion to a prejudice-free self as taking place through the development of a close friendship with his white male discipler. These church members conveyed an extreme depth of intimacy in their relationships with disciples from different racial and/or ethnic backgrounds.

Monitoring Performances: “Spiritual Profanity”

Most religious communities exhibit some level of social control through monitoring and steering group discourse; however, discourse control in high-boundary groups takes on a particular quality. Leaders often forbid serious critique and encourage informal and formal negative sanctions against members who challenge core group principles and/or leaders’ actions.

The absence of performances representing group racial conflict, segregation, or critique of the ICOC was as conspicuous as the presence of performances of intimate diversity and prejudice-free selves. In my observations and interactions with members, I never heard white leaders challenged for their promotion of essentialistic gender stereotypes such as machismo, and a tendency for African-American males to abandon their family, cultural diseases that they argued ICOC membership would cure. Only one African-American woman, during a private interview, expressed that she was “uncomfortable with the word colorblind.” Furthermore, ex-member recollections of ICOC experience suggested that disciplers and group leaders silenced performances if they included descriptions that presented the ICOC movement or structure as perpetuating racism or ethnocentrism. These silenced stories were clearly “destructive information” (Goffman 1959:141), recollections of relational dynamics that, if voiced, would undermine ICOC’s discursive production of intimate diversity. Ex-member testimonies and depictions of the discipling structure as putting a swift end to any criticism shed light on the controlled and monitored nature of member performances.

During our formal interview, Steve, a college-educated white male ex-member in his late 20s, communicated that he had been drawn to ICOC’s presentation of intimate diversity. He represented himself as committed to fighting racism during his time in the movement.

After I read Malcolm X’s autobiography, I read Cornell West and a few other things, all these like racially filled books . . . Jeremy (white) was a sector leader, a guy I was really close to . . . he said to this woman, “hey black dog how are you doing?” Cause she had a black dog on her hat. I said “you know Jeremy, where I lived if you ever said that you would have had your legs broken, broken your neck, taken you out” . . . I got very close in his face. His face is here [he demonstrates] and my face is here. I put my fingers into his chest and it was like very forceful I said—NEVER DO THAT AGAIN. IT WAS RACIST.

Steve was quickly rebuked by leaders for accusing a leader of racism. Still, he later confronted an African-American leader with what he (Steve) perceived as ICOC structural and personal racism.

He was a black leader . . . I was saying, you know George, “we talk a lot about race. You really are the leader of the black people in our movement, people really look to you. We talk a lot about giving up school and taking more menial jobs. That’s a big thing. Very few people have careers or good job . . . So you are saying, give up school, make sure that you got to all these bible talk meetings and put the Kingdom first, not miss any services and at the same time people are not getting ahead educationally” . . . later that night I saw him and he said, “brother, why don’t you take your books and all your education and why don’t you just leave. We don’t need you in the movement.”

Steve’s confrontations with leaders grew more contentious and he was soon after formally asked to leave the movement.

Leaders frequently referred to in-group uncensored criticism and ex-member narratives as “spiritual profanity,” and warned members of its dangerous powers. Spiritual profanity was particularly threatening to ICOC discursive productions of intimate diversity as it was readily accessible to any member with Internet access on ex-member websites such as REVEAL.org. For example, ex-member Joseph Owade posted an open letter to an ICOC evangelist in the Nairobi Christian Church discrediting ICOC diversity: “Unity by conformity is not unity at all because true unity must be based on free will and diversity. Unity by conformity is fake because it is not possible among thinking beings.” A large part of the discursive maintenance of intimate diversity then

was to keep spiritual profanity, like Owade's web posting and Steve's criticism of leaders, at a minimum inside group boundaries.

The hierarchical nature of the ICOC discipling structure and the high boundaries built around the group were particularly adept at monitoring members' stories and inhibiting serious criticism or modification of the discipling structure from the bottom up. Labeling deviant discourse as "spiritual profanity" was a powerful mechanism of social control and group commitment. Such negative labeling of in-group dissension is common in high-boundary groups, where disciplinary sanctions such as public denunciation and shunning serve as successful mechanisms of commitment (Kanter 1972; Hall 1979). Those who persisted in uncensored critiques of the movement, like Steve, were expelled from the community and "marked."

Similar taboos against and swift action for uncensored member critiques and challenges to core institutional tenets have been documented in other high-boundary groups invested in the production of intimate diversity. Jim Jones tolerated little criticism of his interracial church family; traitors and defectors were "demonized" (Maaga 1998:29). U.S. Bahá'í leaders have developed informal sanctions against threatening web-based critiques (Cole 1998:246) by labeling more liberal Bahá'ís as "covenant-breakers" who are "considered spiritually diseased and who must be shunned completely," and advising that it is "unwise to even read something they have written, lest one become 'infected'" (Cole 2002:204).

A strong group portrait of intimate diversity was a precious commodity in the ICOC. Those who participated in performances of intimate diversity appeared to find great meaning in presentations of self as prejudice-free and in the close and intimate relationships they represented in their performances. However, such performances were heavily monitored and contradictory images of in-group exclusivity, racism, and ethnocentrism were dealt swift and powerful sanctions, as only a tightly bound primary group can do.

CONCLUSIONS

Intimate Diversity as a Commodity in the Religious Marketplace

Member descriptions of attraction to the ICOC validate that a strong image of intimate diversity is a valuable commodity in today's religious marketplace (Berger 1967; Finke and Stark 1988). U.S. society's growing acceptance of the idea of racial and ethnic integration and equality (Omi and Winant 1986) and the ubiquity of concepts such as multiculturalism and multiracialism have led many individuals and organizations to pursue social relationships and cultural discourses that help present self and group as innocent of racism and prejudice (Frankenberg 1993). Emerson and Smith (2000:135) found some evangelicals were "clearly bothered by racially separate congregations, and frustrated that their congregations were not integrated." As demonstrated here, high-boundary groups are particularly able to present an alluring congregational diversity.

The value of intimate diversity in such high-boundary groups should be understood in historical context. The Bahá'í faith has a long U.S. history (since the early 20th century) of promoting racial and ethnic diversity and "unity" in an intimate religious community. Those attracted to the People's Temple were pursuing what would then have been a more radical vision of social justice and racial equality. The People's Temple drew "a middle-class base of ex-political radicals and activists, as well as a cadre of white fundamentalist believers," but "was most successful at proselytizing impoverished and culturally oppressed blacks, who were impressed by the fact that the Temple was an encompassing, interracial community where people worked and lived together in harmony" (Lindholm 1990:138). As the ICOC took shape in the 1980s and 1990s, ideals of multiculturalism, multiracialism, and diversity became more and more of an expectation.

Despite qualitative and historical differences, the flavor of intimate diversity that drew converts to the People's Temple, the U.S. Bahá'í faith, and the ICOC is similar. A white People's

Temple member remembers her first impression of the group: “I looked at those precious children, in their bold synchro-harmony of black-white-black-white-black-white, and felt suddenly I was in a world anew, where . . . love would again be possible” (Kahalas 1998:53). A white People’s Temple ex-member recalls: “The sight of these black and white children smiling and holding hands was strangely satisfying. I had never before witnessed the warmth and love I was seeing in this totally integrated group . . . This made a strong impression on me” (Mills 1979:117). McMullen (2000:22) concludes from interviews in a contemporary Atlanta assembly that converts were “pulled” to the group by its “diversity.” One member recalls a Bahá’í Youth Conference film that attracted him to the faith in the late 1960s: “it showed all these young people . . . blacks and whites, and American Indians and Hispanics and Orientals. And they were enjoying being with each other, and there were no conflicts between the various groups. It really looked like heaven.” An ICOC African-American ex-member’s description of what attracted her is particularly representative of the power of a projected portrait of intimate diversity: “Unlike some of the black Baptist churches I had sporadically attended during my life, this religious group encouraged multiculturalism. Blacks, Latinos, Chinese, East Indians, Native Americans, Japanese, whites, and others gathered together under the same roof for one sole purpose—to worship God.” She recalls asking a disciple, “You actually know all of these people?” To which the disciple responded, “Yeah . . . we take care of one another” (Giambalvo and Rosedale 1996:147). Furthermore, ICOC leaders and members seemed to understand that intimate diversity was a powerful conversion tool. Long-time white leader Gordon Ferguson states: “Our assemblies make a powerful statement about race relationships . . . When non-members attend and see the hugs and warm greetings between races, it makes quite a powerful impression” (Ferguson 1997:33). Race, life experience, and social economic status of individuals drawn to such groups may influence personal motive and perception, but the group portrait they are drawn to, an intensely intimate racially and ethnically diverse church community, is the same.

Intimate diversity is likely to be particularly appealing to a growing U.S. population of bi-racial/ethnic individuals and interracial/ethnic couples and families. For example, such individuals may come to believe that ICOC’s therapeutic discipling networks would provide them with tangible emotional supports—a built-in bi-racial, interracial, and interethnic support group. One African-American woman told me: “Jim is white and I’m black. My discipler, her father is white and her mother is black . . . She [the discipler] was helpful for us . . . want our kids to be very comfortable with who they are going to be in a society that does have issues [with bi-racial children] . . . So they [the discipling couple] were very encouraging and helpful and said if we are doing it God’s way [as CCOC members] things will turn out right.” She talked about her church as free from prejudice, a place where multiracialism was accepted and encouraged in a most sacred institution, marriage, and where her future bi-racial children would be welcomed and loved. Millions of individuals in society today, whose background cannot be named by using one racial or ethnic designation, might find great meaning in such a depiction of a diverse, intimate, and therapeutic religious community.

Effects of Personal Influence Strategy in High-Boundary Religious Groups

The exclusive and tightly bound nature of ICOC’s diversity touches upon a larger and more complex sociological debate: the long-term effects of religious segregation and integration for society at large. Integration of religious communities in the United States may lead to reconciliation among racial groups who are faced with a history of slavery, white supremacy, and oppression. However, many minority groups value ethnically-based religious communities as social spheres where they can preserve culture. On the other hand, segregated Christian communities contribute to our racialized society by reinforcing old and creating new racial identities based on disparate forms of worship, social identity, and religious organization. These separate identities and in-group homogeneity heighten group isolation, thereby reducing “the opportunity for the

formation of macro bonds—bonds between groups—that serve to integrate a society” (Emerson and Smith 2000:154–55). Intimate relationships in religious communities among people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds have the potential then to counteract racialization by expanding individual members’ social networks. However, racial and ethnic integration in a tightly bound, high-boundary group like the ICOC directly inhibits this benefit, as members’ interactions with outside social networks are limited and concentration on in-group relationships demands extensive time and effort. The members I spent time with were rarely involved in outside volunteer groups that did not support their proselytizing efforts or children’s activities. Cole (1998:239) argues that Bahá’í organizational restrictions against membership in political parties and activities leads to Bahá’ís generally having “fewer institutional affiliations outside their religion than is common among Americans.”

In many ways, the discipling structure is a magnified version of what Christian Smith et al. (1998:187) name “personal influence strategy”: a “limited” evangelical social change strategy maintaining “that the only true effective way to change the world is one-individual-at-a-time through the influence of personal relationships.” Emerson and Smith (2000) demonstrate that evangelicals’ public efforts fall short of confronting social injustice and structural racism, a major tenet of racial reconciliation ideology. In the process, they argue, many white evangelicals actually perpetuate our racialized society. Many late 20th-century volunteer organizations driven by therapeutic culture are clearly attached to an ideal of social change through personalism: concentration on improving individuals and individual relationships within group boundaries as the moral basis for addressing social ills (Bellah et al. 1985; Wuthnow 1994; Becker 1998). ICOC’s discipling structure is a mandatory and even more confining version of such a social change strategy, where the only truly effective way to change the world is by becoming an ICOC disciple. Such emphasis and magnification of relationships in-group as the cure for individual and social ills can also be found in the People’s Temple and U.S. Bahá’í communities. Personalism enacted through therapeutic practice and ethos can create a healing and safe environment able to address issues of racial and ethnic equality in-group, yet they tend to severely limit institutions and individuals from serious engagement with larger issues of social justice and racialization (Emerson and Smith 2000; Lasch-Quinn 2001).

Inability to Face Contradictions

Perhaps most limiting is the extreme inability of high-boundary groups like the ICOC, groups heavily invested in presenting a sacred brand of intimate diversity, to recognize, acknowledge, and address contradictions and tensions in group racial/ethnic ideology and practice. Criticism from within is silenced and challenges from outside the group are kept at a distance as leaders monitor and censor group discourse. In addition, the organizational agenda of maintaining and constructing a picture of extraordinary intimate diversity takes on a life of its own, consumed by a need to sustain an image of the group as faultless. Thus, in-group racial conflict is largely explained by leaders and members drawing from a discourse of individualism. In the ICOC, members who failed at sustaining intimate and fulfilling relationships with people from different backgrounds were talked about as having “closed hearts,” and not putting enough effort into listening with an “open heart” to fellow disciples. Discipling, in discourse, always maintained its sacred therapeutic power. A similar tendency to blame the individual can be detected in this African-American Bahá’í woman’s statement: “the Faith is perfect, but we [Bahá’ís] are not,” and a male Bahá’í community leader who says, “there ain’t no racism in the Bahá’í Faith, but there is racism in individual Bahá’ís . . . So my faith is more in the institutions than in the individuals” (McMullen 2000:166).

Intimate diversity in a high-boundary group is clearly an attractive picture: people from different backgrounds hugging, counseling, marrying, having children, and loving one another in extraordinary, family-like ways. The danger is that the therapeutic concepts and practices used

to sustain such an image are particularly adept at serving as a shield, cloaking social control and contradictions within the group, and limiting organizational and individual ability to confront and address the complexity of historical and contemporary racial and ethnic social dynamics.

NOTES

1. Approximately 8–10 percent of U.S. Christian congregations are multiracial and/or multiethnic, meaning that no one racial or ethnic group composes more than 80 percent of the congregation (Chaves 1998; Emerson and Smith 2000).
2. I use the descriptive term *high boundary* to represent a group with high levels of social and ideological encapsulation (Greil and Rudy 1984), groups where, as Kanter (1972:52) suggests, members “have a clear sense of their own boundaries” and construct a “strong distinction between the inside and the outside.”
3. Available membership statistics are provided solely by the church, which is heavily invested in presenting itself as a successful evangelist. Most numbers published by the ICOC organization are based on “Sunday attendance,” which would include members and guests. In a group newsletter entitled, *Jubilee 2000: Even Greater Things*, page 2 lists Sunday attendance as 197,956 overall from 403 churches in major cities across the globe. Ex-members and critics claim that membership numbers are significantly lower than the movement’s published statistics and that the drop-out rate is well over 50 percent.
4. The Unification Church would be another example of such a group that maintains high boundaries and promotes racial integration through intimacy, especially through its encouragement of interracial marriage.
5. The ICOC movement is divided into a handful of geographic “World Sectors.” Each world sector is broken into smaller geographic sectors. These smaller geographic sectors were broken down into regions, and then into local congregations. Local ICOC congregations adopt city names—such as the San Francisco Church of Christ or the New York City Church of Christ.
6. I understand categories of race and ethnicity as fluid, both overlapping and distinct (Montagu 1964; Waters 1990). Formal interviews with members suggested that self-identification with racial, cultural, and ethnic distinctions were more complex. Members sometimes identified with several racial, ethnic, and cultural categories. When known, I used ICOC members’ self-identification. For example, one member that I count as Native American frequently dressed in Native-American clothing and wore antique Native-American jewelry and was referred to by members as Native American. Another member I count as African American was bi-racial (African-American mother, white father) because she self-identified as both “bi-racial” and “black.” Most counted as Hispanic or Latino self-identified as such or were members who I perceived (through their participation in the “Spanish Ministry”) to have come from Spanish-speaking backgrounds. The racial and ethnic makeup of the congregation shifted slightly over four years; toward the end of my field work there appeared to be an increase in African-American membership (estimated 30–35 percent of total congregation) and a decrease in white membership to 45–50 percent of the congregation.
7. Ex-member interviews were drawn primarily from ex-members in the same ICOC geographic sector and local region as the CCOC congregation.
8. My use of qualitative ethnographic methods was as much a necessity in studying ICOC group processes and dynamics as my preferred methodology. Leaders welcomed my interest in attending services, events, and Bible studies and encouraged me to meet privately with members for interviews, but were reticent when I wanted to collect numbers. When I attempted a congregational survey to measure income, education, racial/ethnic self-identification, and household composition, the lead evangelist at the time denied my request, suggesting that he didn’t want to invade members’ privacy.
9. My observations in the CCOC suggest that power dynamics in discipling relationships among long-time members and leaders were somewhat ambiguous, more readily contested and fluid. The group’s founders and long-time leaders, Kip and Eleana McKean, spoke frequently of “submitting” to discipling by other ICOC leadership couples; in fact, the McKean resigned from the full-time ministry recently. In Kip McKean’s resignation letter of Wednesday, November 6, 2002 (www.icoc.org), he notes that his leadership in recent years has suffered due to his “arrogance,” and “not listening to the counsel of my brothers, seeking discipling for my life, ministry and family.”
10. As in the ICOC, exact U.S. Bahá’í membership numbers are difficult to obtain; the National Spiritual Assembly claimed “130,000 Baha’is in the late 1990s,” but “insiders give a figure closer to 60,000 for adults in good standing” (Cole 1998:237).
11. The community was run on a daily basis by Jones’s administrative “angels,” a tight-knit group of approximately 10–15 white women who were very close to Jones and served as his confidants (Richardson 1980; Mills 1979; Lindholm 1990:148).
12. In the sector where I conducted fieldwork, most lead evangelists were white, although several very influential and powerful missionary leaders were African American and Hispanic. African-American leaders often held authority over white leaders and long-time members (through discipling relationships).
13. Cultural context, race, socioeconomic status, and life experience led ICOC members to interpret, value, and describe group diversity and personal salvation toward a prejudice-free self in distinct ways.

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EX-MEMBER WEBSITES

<http://www.reveal.org>
<http://rightcyberup.org>

ICOC WEBSITES

<http://www.hopeww.org>
<http://www.icoc.org>