



The Diversity Paradox: Seeking Community in an Intercultural Church

J. Jacob Jenkins

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In recent years, a sense of community has declined throughout the United States. This trend is especially evident among younger generations, whether measured by civic participation, political involvement, or religious affiliation. Central Community Church—an intercultural congregation located in Tampa Bay’s urban corridor—has responded to this trend by promoting “community” as an organizational metaphor. *The Diversity Paradox: Seeking Community in an Intercultural Church* explores the ways in which that 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. After surveying the three prevailing views of community: community as physical space, community as disembodied concept, and community as communicative process, Jenkins builds upon four years of ethnographic fieldwork in order to fully understand this community. He concludes by introducing an original theoretical concept called the “diversity paradox”: an emphasis placed upon one potential understanding of diversity which, paradoxically, limits opportunities for alternative expressions of difference.

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