Religion and the Construction of Civic Identity

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Studies of religion's public roles typically concern the ways in which religious frameworks justify opinions and actions. This article draws from participant-observation research to show how people also use religion to define the boundaries of group identities and relationships. Importantly, people do this in situation-specific ways that we cannot predict from people's religious reasons for public actions. Evidence comes from two religiously-based organizations sponsored by the same local religious coalition, studied during 1998 to 2000 in a midsized U.S. city. One group is an alliance of lay people representing different churches, who organized volunteering and community development projects with a low-income minority neighborhood. The other is an alliance of clergy, representing different churches, that organized public events against racism. In each case, group members used religious terms to argue sharply over civic identity despite sharing the same religious reasons for their goals. Resolving the disputes required redefining or reemphasizing the boundaries of collective identity. The dynamics highlighted in my analyses provide new ways of understanding how people use religion to include or exclude others in civic relationships. Even more broadly, they reveal how religion can enhance or impede collaboration across social status and religious divides.

What do people use religion for in public? Many sociological works focus on the use of religion to rationalize opinions or actions. This focus characterizes the classic argument

that modern Americans have privatized religion and no longer use it to legitimate public action (Berger 1967; Luckmann 1967), as well as more recent findings that Americans continue to use religious reasons to justify political and civic engagement (e.g., Casanova 1994; Regnerus and Smith 1998). The same focus on rationales is common to scholars who say Americans use polarizing religious discourse to fight "culture wars" over social issues (Hunter 1991, 1994), and those who counter that religion rarely polarizes Americans' reasoning on most social issues (DiMaggio 2003; DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996). Even when they disagree on what kinds of rationales people draw from religious frameworks, scholars very frequently assume that religion's capacity to provide reasons is what makes religion sociologically interesting.

People, however, also use religion to define collective identities. Public groups, for instance, commonly use religious language to understand who they are, and how they relate to insiders and outsiders, apart from justifying opinions on specific issues or group goals. For ease of reference,

we can say that groups use religion to help "map" their place in the civic arena. Ethnographic research on two religiously-based civic organizations in a midsized U.S. city—the core of this article—shows that, in each case, group members agreed on religious reasons for their goals, yet used religious terms to argue over the maps of "people like us" and "people not like us" that ultimately oriented their group action. These religiously informed disputes were the largest conflicts in each group. Resolving the conflicts depended on redrawing identities and relationships on the "map," not revising religious reasons behind group goals. A focus on mapping, as this article reveals, expands our understanding of how people use religion in situation-specific ways to include or exclude others in civil society. The grounded observations reported also reveal subtle, sociological ways in which religion works as a source of conflict, as well as a source of cohesion, when groups try to bridge social inequalities and racial or religious divides.

WHAT PEOPLE DO WITH RELIGION IN CIVIC LIFE

Following Tocqueville ([1835] 1969), sociologists continue to investigate civic groups as arenas for active citizenship (see Jacobs 2003). Civic relationships are voluntary, public relationships, informal or formal, that people develop relatively free of direct coercion by the state, the family, or the imperatives of market exchange (Cohen and Arato 1992; Walzer 1992). They happen in volunteer groups, service clubs, community centers, and social movements, among other places.[1] Even when these relationships happen in small local groups, they are by definition public. Relationships we call "civic" are not necessarily virtuous, or apolitical, as common usage and some scholarly works have implied (Berger and Neuhaus 1977), but

they represent people's efforts to organize themselves and create collective wills freely.

In the United States, with its disestablished and officially voluntary religious institutions (Warner 1993), religious community-service and social-activist groups, as well as congregations, count as civic groups by sociological definition. They have been a part of the U.S. civic arena from the nation's beginnings (McCarthy 1999; Wuthnow and Hodgkinson 1990). Currently, almost half of Americans' association memberships are related to religious congregations, and half of Americans' volunteering takes place in a religious context (Putnam 2000). In response to hotly debated claims that U.S. civic engagement is declining,[2] numerous researchers are investigating relations between religion and civic life, both in the United States (e.g., Ammerman 2005; Chaves 2004; Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006; Farnsley et al. 2004; Wuthnow 2004) and elsewhere (Casanova 1994; Demerath 2001).

RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AND MOTIVE

Where exactly is religion in civic life? If it is not absent altogether, it may be present silently, in civic actors' private commitments. We often think of religion working as a deep motivator, and one authoritative review observes that, perhaps by default, studies often approach religion as a static aspect of the self, not a presentation of self, if it is a motive at all (Ammerman 2003). Increasingly, though, sociological studies of religion are following a larger cultural turn by taking religious *language* as the object of investigation (Neitz 2004; Wuthnow 1987). I follow this focus on communication and bracket the question of whether or not the people under study are "really" acting on religious commitments.

Rather than gauging private beliefs, recent works advocate for investigating religious vocabularies and forms of self-presentation that we can see and hear in everyday life, and seeing what actions accompany them (Ammerman

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[1] Civic relationships may arise in governmental or business settings too, when people are interacting largely free of administrative mandates or the logic of the marketplace. For example, government-employed social workers might act as community-builders or advocates with the people they serve, while on the job (Brown 1998).

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[2] For a variety of viewpoints on the putative civic decline and its consequences for U.S. public life, see Putnam (1995, 2000), Skocpol and Fiorina (1999), Edwards and Foley (1997), or Sampson and colleagues (2005).

2003; Wuthnow 1992, 1997). In this approach, the cultural forms are not add-ons to the religion "underneath," but rather they are inseparably *part* of religion in practice. These studies assume that knowing that a group considers itself Protestant, Christian, or interfaith, for instance, is not enough to tell us if, how, or where the group uses religious language. Dropping older assumptions that religion must be almost entirely private or absent outside of religious institutions, these studies also focus on religious communication beyond the congregation (Ammerman 2007; Nepstad 2004; Smith 1996).

Parallel to the large debates mentioned above, these recent studies often analyze people's use of religious language for legitimation or as vocabularies of motive. These studies show activists or volunteers using religious rationales to make their opinions sound compelling and their groups worth joining (Warren 2001; Williams 1995; Wuthnow 1991). They argue, for instance, that religious language can be effective in recruiting low-income churchgoers to risky community organizing campaigns (Hart 2001; see Snow and Benford 1988). Moreover, religious language can motivate volunteers to keep coming back for the hard work of building new homes from the ground up (Baggett 2000).

USING RELIGION TO DEFINE IDENTITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

People also can use religious language to construct civic identities and relationships—that is, define insiders and outsiders—as well as to legitimate action goals. Some Pentecostals, for instance, sharply distinguish sacred church life from the profane world of "the street." When they join social action projects, they see themselves not as activists pursuing social issues but religious emissaries relating to the "fallen" world of the street, "taking this city for Jesus." This imagined map of their civic identity and their relation to the social world strongly shapes their effectiveness as activists (McRoberts 2003; Wood 2002). Indeed, some evangelical Protestant pro-life activists identify their efforts in religious and political categories simultaneously, surprising some secular observers who expect clearer distinctions between the two. When they hold funerals for unborn children, these activists see themselves as both religious

mourners and political advocates, and thus they can appeal sincerely to multiple constituencies (Munson 2007). Clearly, using religious language to define civic identities and relationships has its own concrete consequences for a group and its effectiveness (Bender 2003; Warren 2001).

RELIGION AND CIVIC IDENTITY: A "MAPPING" APPROACH

Drawing from these prior approaches but extending them, I synthesize in the remainder of this article complementary insights from interactionism, cultural sociology, and the sociology of civic action to create the sensitizing concept of "mapping." Summarizing briefly, mapping occurs when groups work to define their civic identities and relationships to other groups in concrete settings. Groups may use religious imagery to do this work. The way a religious group does this mapping cannot always be predicted solely from knowing its members' religious denominations or its religious rationales for courses of action. To achieve this constructionist (Snow and McAdam 2000) understanding of civic identity and religion, participant-observation is the method of choice.

It helps to consider the civic realm as a shifting field whose relationships and identities are defined and redefined over time (Mische 2007), rather than a static "sector" of society, as policymakers often treat it. From an interactionist perspective, people must actively create civic identities and relationships by doing identity work. People use words and gestures collectively and individually to articulate who they are and are not, making themselves "social objects" in the civic arena, which they and others can then recognize and evaluate (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996:120; see Snow and Anderson 1987; Stone 1962). Social movement scholarship often points toward this everyday identity work, at least implicitly, arguing that a social movement needs to construct a collective identity since identity does not issue automatically from activists' grievances or personal characteristics (Polletta and Jasper 2001).

Through identity work, a group alights upon shared social representations (Farr and Moscovici 1984), which are images and categories that signify the group's qualities to itself and others. The representations may come from

religion. In analytic terms, I approach religions here as large, varied cultural repertoires of representations, such as "taking this city for Jesus," that exist beyond a particular group's interaction. Groups may use religious representations, along with any other representations, to symbolize group boundaries and define the group's relation to a larger world outside the group (Lamont and Molnar 2002). As Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock (1996) observe, boundary drawing is central to identity work.[3]

For ease of reference, I refer to drawing boundaries around a collective identity as "mapping," rather than simply identity work, because the map metaphor highlights two distinct dimensions of identity work—the simultaneous definition of a group *and* its relevant social surroundings. Melucci (1988) emphasizes this same, relational understanding with a notion of "collective identity" that encompasses a group's definition of its social field of action, not just its identity alone. In the examples highlighted earlier, Pentecostals and anti-abortion activists constructed their own group identities in relation to a wider field of people closer to or further from those identities. It is similar to when we locate ourselves on a map: *"You are here."* The map metaphor also captures an enduring feature of human cognition. People locate groups that are socially near or far from them in their own minds (Zerubavel 1991). Whether religious or secular, civic groups draw boundaries that identify members in relation to allies, adversaries, or other environing groups, alongside the work of defining issues to pursue (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994). Mapping is crucial to a group's definition of itself, not something extra that happens after identity is constructed (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003).

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[3] Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock (1996) and Lamont and Molnar (2002) all highlight the work of drawing "boundaries" around group identity. Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock are more concerned with emergent culture that groups innovate, while many perspectives in cultural sociology emphasize words or symbols that come from preexisting repertoires or vocabularies. Religions are such repertoires, while at the same time people may do a variety of things with religious terms in everyday life (see Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003).

Importantly, we should not equate a group's mapping with its members' religious beliefs or rationales, or assume that if the rationales are constant the mapping must be too. In this regard, Neitz (2004) points out that studies of religious groups often equate a group's identity with its religious beliefs, perhaps because a Protestant emphasis on identity-pervading belief has influenced U.S. sociological understandings of religion. Yet, civic groups, religious or otherwise, may identify themselves differently depending on the public setting in which they find themselves (Lichterman 1999; Mische 2007). This is not necessarily because members' beliefs change so easily but rather because different situations may key in different salient identities. Different mappings can preserve a sense of meaning or preserve face, depending on context (Stryker 1968; see also Goffman 1959, 1963). The situation keys the salient identity and the identity also shapes the definition of the situation in an unpredictable balance of influences (Stryker 2000; Turner et al. 1987). It is thus an empirical question as to which religious terms, if any, a group might draw from to create its map. In the cases reported below, some individuals switched maps over time. Some church volunteers pictured themselves and the neighborhood they served as a "parish" and a "Community of Shalom," even though their separate congregations had no religious jurisdiction over the neighborhood, nor were they Jewish.

As scholars, we need to listen to mapping as it happens in concrete settings if we want to develop sociological insight into how groups use religion and how this informs the creation of civic identities. This is especially true in a society that, while secularized in many ways (Chaves 1994), has unpredictable openings for religious expression (Ammerman 2007). Participant-observation research as an analytic strategy is especially useful in this regard, opening access to the words and imagery civic groups use to identify themselves and others, on their own time, and in everyday settings (Lichterman 1996; Walsh 2004). This is in contrast to inferring everyday communication from fixed categories of identity based on theological beliefs alone (see Bourdieu 1990; Cicourel 1981). For these reasons, I conducted participant-observation, listening to how members of my two cases mapped their identities and rela-

tionships. I paid close attention to how and when, if at all, members used religious terms to define civic identities and relationships, apart from using religious terms to legitimate goals or avow religious convictions.

THE GROUPS AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

PARK CLUSTER AND RELIGIOUS ANTI-RACISM COALITION

Park Cluster was an alliance of mostly lay people representing seven local, mainline Protestant churches belonging to Episcopalian, Presbyterian (U.S.A), United Methodist, Lutheran (ELCA), and United Church of Christ denominations, along with one Friends congregation and one Unitarian fellowship. The volunteer representatives were almost entirely white and either held or had retired from middle-class, white-collar occupations. Park Cluster carried out community-service projects with the low-income Park neighborhood, about half of whose roughly 6,000 residents were African American, while others were Cambodian, Laotian, or Spanish-speaking immigrants, along with a few Caucasians. Cluster members said their goal was not to proselytize, and neither I nor social workers who worked with them ever heard any members say they would like to do so. They carried out service activities, such as collecting food donations and tutoring kids. The Cluster also cosponsored collective goods, including a public health nurse and an "eviction prevention fund," in consultation with neighborhood leaders, social workers, and residents.

The Religious Anti-Racism Coalition (RARC), mostly made up of pastors, worked against racism in Lakeburg by putting on public events and sending representatives to city-sponsored hearings. RARC core participants represented Lutheran (ELCA), Episcopalian, American Baptist, Presbyterian (U.S.A.), Unitarian, Friends, Catholic, evangelical non-denominational, Lutheran (evangelical, Missouri synod), evangelical Reformed, and Vineyard congregations. An African American men's service group leader and a woman from a Native American performance troupe also attended regularly. Two Baha'i fellowship members occasionally attended. Except for the men's service group leader and the performance group

representative, the rest of the dozen core members were white. Late in 1997, Lakeburg clergy attended a presentation by a spokesperson from the Call to Renewal, a national, interdenominational alliance promoting a Christian-informed, social justice agenda (Call to Renewal 1995). The national group's invitation to Lakeburg clergy to form a local chapter did not specify a focus on race, but the local clergy immediately gravitated toward race issues, partly because a Ku Klux Klan group in a distant city had applied for a permit to march in Lakeburg. After a year of planning, the RARC put on a public, counter-Klan event.

Participants in each organization attended monthly meetings that ran loosely by consensus decision-making, with a facilitator who helped set an agenda. Each group had 10 to 12 core members with only one overlapping participant. The majority of core members in each group had lived in the Lakeburg area more than five years, most much longer, and had years of experience doing community service on behalf of their congregations.

Though they made decisions autonomously, both Park Cluster and the RARC had the sponsorship of the Urban Religious Coalition (URC), a 25-year-old community-service coalition of roughly 50 congregations in the midsized, Midwestern city of Lakeburg and nearby towns.[4] The URC hosted the Call to Renewal representative's visit and had envisioned volunteer, congregational "clusters" of social support as a response to the human fallout feared in the wake of the 1996 welfare policy reforms. Members of Park Cluster and the RARC had common opportunities to participate in URC-sponsored events and to sit on the URC executive board. The board funded groups such as these two and incubated some of the groups' project ideas; groups received advice from the board but did not need its approval for projects. Donald, executive director of the URC, also convened the RARC, and he controlled the group agenda more completely than did Park Cluster's rotating facilitators, but large decisions in either group needed the approval of attending members.

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[4] All names of local groups and individuals are pseudonyms.

Notable for this study, the URC created some intergroup relations across the mainline–evangelical Protestant theological divide (Wuthnow 1988). Director Donald was a mainline Lutheran and the majority of the URC's congregations were mainline Protestant, but some evangelical Protestant congregations were affiliated with the URC and actively represented in the RARC. A much smaller, evangelical church network formed in Lakeburg during this study, and it carried out separate community service and evangelizing projects. Evan, the director of that network, was a core member of the RARC. Two years before this study began, members of a tiny fundamentalist church outside Lakeburg protested some mainline Protestant Lakeburg churches' welcoming stance toward lesbians and gay men, and Donald convened meetings of local mainline and evangelical Protestant clergy in hopes of producing a statement of tolerance for all people regardless of sexuality. The clergy came close but failed to reach a consensus. This turn of events symbolized to clergy a theological divide in Lakeburg's Protestant circles, which Donald would mention at public forums that the URC sponsored, but like religious conservatives and liberals in Ginsburg's (1989) study of a midwestern town's abortion debate, the clergy usually were cordial with one another.

METHODS

I observed and participated alongside Cluster members at their general monthly meetings, subcommittee meetings, and volunteer projects in the Park neighborhood for 18 months between 1998 and 2000. I observed and participated alongside 15 monthly RARC meetings during the same period, and I attended 10 special meetings held either to plan or evaluate the counter-Klan event. I introduced myself as a researcher to a general meeting of each group and sought permission to study them. All assented easily in each group, after which I offered to volunteer for routine tasks, such as taking meeting minutes or setting up a meeting hall, which required no special skills and were unlikely to implicate me in major group decisions. The balance of my participant-observation in each group weighed more heavily on the observation side (see Gold 1958). Following Thomas and Jardine's (1994) example, I participated in group discussions a

bit more than the least vocal member present. I neither initiated new projects nor blocked consensus.

My relations with group members bear further comment: I told group members, if they had not asked already, that I was a member of a local synagogue. Park Cluster's facilitators asked on occasion if I would like to get my congregation involved, and RARC mainline and evangelical Protestants alike wanted to know if I would like to get "the Jewish community" involved in the counter-Klan event. Observing that no single person spoke for the Jewish community, I offered to pass along names of potential contact people. Theological liberals and conservatives alike expressed happiness that I belonged to a congregation, no matter which, because that meant I was not the kind of antireligious secularist they expected a researcher to be. While members seemed to take congregational membership as an important commonality, in at least some ways they seemed to appreciate my different status. Several times, mainline Protestant group members asked about Jewish practices they wanted to understand better. One evangelical pastor in the RARC confided frustrations with mainline pastors that he was unlikely to express to the pastors directly, since the group recognized him as a bridge-building figure in Christian circles. One mainline Lutheran pastor said he was happy I had a religious affiliation because I might not be able to be a truly "objective" student of religious groups if I were simply a "pure secularist." Of course there are no completely neutral standpoints for an ethnographer studying religiously identified groups, and I cannot know what people may have declined to say in my presence. Still, these scenarios suggest that my "insider-outsider" identity (see Lamont 1992) as researcher, congregant, and Jew mitigated the risk that group members would perceive me as either an intimidating, antireligious professional or else someone who would have understood the groups too well to ask naïve questions about what they were doing. My relative distance from intra-Christian disagreements, and the low profile I sought to maintain, likely helped group members articulate to me opinions that may have been too risky for some Christian listeners.

I also maintained a file of all the brochures, handouts and flyers, internal group memos, and position statements produced by both groups,

and I analyzed these with categories appropriate for participant-observation data. These two cases are part of a larger study that includes interviews with all core members of the two groups, as well as other cases (Lichterman 2005). Apart from several brief supporting references below, the interview data and the other cases are unnecessary for the arguments made here. The two cases in this article include much unpublished participant-observation data and reanalyses of data that do not appear elsewhere. In both groups I took field jottings during meetings—seeing that others took notes too—and immediately afterward expanded them into complete field note sets (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). I coded notes using procedures well-established in Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss (1987) and then recoded notes to arrive at analytic categories that better fit patterns in the data.

My choice of these two cases for comparison follows the qualitative logic of "theoretical sampling," distinct from statistical sampling. The cases are conceptually comparable as religiously based, local civic groups, yet they can maximize variation on two factors related to religious language, the conceptual focus of this study (Glaser and Strauss 1967). First, Park Cluster was a largely lay group, while the RARC was mostly clergy. One may not expect mainline lay people to use much explicitly religious language at all (Ammerman 1997; Davie 1995), but as Weber and others might observe (Chaves 1994), clergy are professionals whose occupational and perhaps social status depends on using religious language, even if they do not have a monopoly on it. Claims made here about uses of religious language in civic life could become broader with support across the professional/nonprofessional dimension. Second, Park Cluster was almost entirely mainline Protestant, while the large majority of RARC members were a mix of mainline and evangelical Protestants. U.S. mainline Protestants have a reputation for avoiding strident religious talk as "impolite" and unnecessary for Christ-like action (Wuthnow and Evans 2002), in contrast with evangelicals. Thus, we might not expect Park Cluster to use much religious language, let alone to use it in arguments. Studies of mainline–evangelical tensions often focus on clashing language, especially clashing rationales, so the mixed mainline–evangelical RARC as a comparison

case could broaden and clarify the scope of claims about religious language. On both dimensions, Park Cluster was a case that should minimize the possibilities of religious language entering a religious group's dynamic, while the RARC should maximize those possibilities.[5]

USING RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE TO GIVE REASONS

To concretely distinguish the use of religion in reason-giving from the use of religion in mapping, I summarize first how religion worked as a rationale in each organization. Each group used religious language to articulate motives (Wuthnow 1991) for the action goals they framed collectively (Snow and Benford 1988). While both groups endured internal conflicts, members argued little if at all over religious reasons for their collective action goals.

LOOSE RELIGIOUS RATIONALES: PARK CLUSTER

Park Cluster members did not produce highly tailored religious rationales for their goals, but rather general, loose, and brief statements of religious conviction. They very rarely if ever expounded on religious teachings and beliefs at all at public meetings, let alone at events for a larger community audience. In 18 months of field notes on Cluster meetings, I counted only five instances in which Cluster members directly or indirectly affirmed their own religious convictions out loud or appealed to religious

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[5] With two cases, I do not claim to generalize about the many U.S. congregation-based alliances (Ammerman 2005), nor explain whether or not religion caused success or failure in either case. Lakeburg's relatively high average level of schooling, for instance, may have dampened religious conflicts, affecting this study's generalizeability, if higher education correlates with pluralism and cosmopolitanism (Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens 1994). The logic of theoretical sampling, though, does not require tightly controlled comparison groups (Glaser and Strauss 1967). It may have been more ideal to compare two organizations dedicated to exactly the same issues, but fighting racism may be one of relatively few endeavors that can bring mainline and evangelical Protestant representatives together in one group (Emerson and Smith 2000).

rationales for goals or worldviews. None of these five instances involved an elaborate religious rationale for action or a reference to sacred texts. Most were quick *references,* not impassioned, sustained, biblically-inspired discourse of the sort pictured in other studies of religion in community organizing or community service (Warren 2001; Wood 2002).

The Cluster's main brochure for potential members and congregations did invoke religious rationales. Typical of Cluster writings, however, these rationales were very general in nature. The brochure, for instance, explained that "as people of faith we believe we are called to act in solidarity with our neighbors as they work to rebuild and renew their neighborhood." The activities it felt called upon to carry out were named "service, community building and advocacy." Religious faith itself, unspecified, was a *reason* for Cluster members to be involved with the Park neighborhood as community builders and advocates, but the brochure did not articulate the Cluster's goals in very specific or tight-fitting religious terms. The group's first brochure included a single biblical quote, Isaiah (1:17): "Devote yourselves to justice, aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan; defend the cause of the widow."

One member implied to me that the group was actually avoiding issues of injustice, while another—who participated in writing the brochure—lamented to me privately that the group stretched too far toward justice issues, beyond direct-service volunteering. "Defending widows and orphans" covered the Cluster's volunteer and community-development projects in only the loosest, metaphorical way, and when the brochure-writing committee informed the Cluster that it was replacing the passage from Isaiah with a quote from Margaret Mead on the beneficent power of small groups, everyone assented without further comment. During my field work I never heard Cluster members argue over religious or secular rationales for different action goals, nor over the goals of service, community building, and advocacy. They agreed that different goals all had their place.

SPECIFIC RELIGIOUS RATIONALES: THE RARC

Compared to Park Cluster, RARC members articulated more specific religious rationales

for their actions, did so more frequently, and attached the religious rationales more closely to the issue they framed for the group. At an early RARC meeting, a subcommittee including an evangelical pastor, a Unitarian minister, and an administrator from a regional synod of the mainline Lutheran (ELCA) church needed just 20 minutes to draft a public proclamation to accompany the counter-Klan celebration they were planning: "We want to unite as people of religious faith united [sic] in believing that all people are created in the image of God." It was hard to believe this group could write the preamble so easily. Yet the Unitarian minister told me the group all agreed easily and whole-heartedly on the wording; her answer corroborated what I overheard from the group's table.

At another meeting, evangelical Reformed pastor Matthew distributed to RARC members a statement "on racial and ethnic unity and Christian Faith" that used scriptural references to state a more elaborate message:

> Genesis 1 speaks of a world that is marvelously varied. . . . God loves diversity. . . . The church by its actions and failures to act has too often participated in racial prejudice, discrimination, and hatred. We call each other . . . to prayerfully examine ways we participate in racial sin by where we live, invest our money, build and manage our schools . . . to confess such sin to God and one another and to turn from it. . . . The Apostle Paul declared: "For he (Jesus Christ) is our peace, who has made the two (Gentile and Jew) one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14–16).

Taken as an individual's message, the group appreciated the statement and there was no argument.

The pastor's statement suggests two different kinds of "racial sin," both of which animated RARC discussions. Members agreed it was important to work against the *personal* sin of racism. The Unitarian minister, the Lutheran synod administrator, the United Church of Christ minister, and the leader of an evangelical, community-service group all used the terms "sin"[6] or "confession" (sometimes both) to

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[6] Quotations not attributed to research literature are quotes from the people researched, recorded in participant-observation field notes, unless otherwise specified.

acknowledge their own racism. Mainline and evangelical Protestant members came to agree that a *social-structural* kind of racism existed and was sinful too. The director of the RARC instructed that "'structural racism' is power and prejudices of the dominant class, affecting institutions and disabl[ing] people who are not part of these." He intoned that "this group is feeling called by God to deal with structural racism" and he asked members to give examples of it. Mainline and evangelical Protestants alike gave examples with people in institutional settings; none were about purely interpersonal, private relationships. All of the 12 congregational representatives in the room, including five evangelical and six mainline Protestant congregations, affirmed a willingness to commit their congregations to "work on structural racism."

An alternative interpretation might hold that evangelicals went along with a focus on structural racism mainly as a strategic face-saving gesture. Emerson and Smith (2000) observed that white evangelical Christian theology highlights individual accountability for actions and sins, making "structural racism" seem like a needless or even dangerous abstraction. If evangelical pastors, who made up nearly half the core group, had preferred to side-step structural racism, they could have insisted that the imperative to confess personal racism was enough for now. Yet "structural racism" was already familiar to at least some evangelical members. At an earlier meeting, one had already brought up on his own that race and poverty seemed related and suggested that the RARC focus on "societal systems and structural issues" along with "the personal stuff." Pastor Matthew participated in a mayor's task force that was investigating the charge that police stopped minority drivers extraordinarily frequently. In short, it is plausible that the evangelicals in the RARC were not troubled by the social-structural language. Other research has also started finding evangelical churches that criticize racism in social-structural terms (Rehwaldt-Alexander 2004).

In different ways and to greatly varying degree, the RARC and Park Cluster used religion to legitimate notions of what is right or wrong to think and do. The Cluster used a few religious references loosely to legitimate a wide variety of projects, while the RARC used a

Christian discourse of sin specifically to legitimate work against interpersonal and institutional racism. In both of these cases, though, members agreed readily on their stated reasons for goals without any sustained conflict.

USING RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE TO DRAW THE MAP

Park Cluster and the RARC both understood themselves as caught in situations that made some aspect of members' social identities awkward or challenged. Members of each group imagined themselves as a "social object"—to both outside audiences and themselves (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996). Each used religious terms to map their place in relation to the surrounding audiences, constructing relative insiders and outsiders in their situations. This section shows that two maps emerged in each group and illustrates that using religion for mapping is analytically distinct from using religion in rationales for group plans.

IMAGINING INCLUSION ON THE MAP: PARK CLUSTER

It was not obvious to Park Cluster's church representatives who they could *be* in relation to a low-income, mostly minority neighborhood that, at the start, had little if any connection to Cluster churches. The Park neighborhood center's black nationalist director told Cluster members, and a local media outlet, that she was wary of white church volunteers. Members' comments suggest they *felt* a salient, white, and middle-class outsider identity, since many talked anxiously about how to be an acceptable presence in the neighborhood. Two members emphasized they did not want to be associated with volunteer do-gooders who would impose an outside community's standards on the neighborhood (see Daniels 1988). A leading member warned me after my first meeting that well-meaning "outsiders" came into the neighborhood with preformed ideas about how to help, insisting on planting trees for instance. Others criticized a draft of the Cluster's goal statement for sounding paternalistic with a reference to "doing what's good for the neighborhood." These were all instances of "policing" the Cluster's boundaries, as Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock (1996) would say, even before contact

with Park residents over the activity or statement in question. Later in the study, some Cluster members mounted a door-to-door survey to find out which issues mattered to Park residents because these members had learned not to assume they knew. When Cluster members found out that the neighborhood center director had violated city regulations by using grant money to buy a lock for the Cluster's food pantry, the Cluster did not broach the subject right away because most members did not think they were in a socially legitimate position to judge a local black leader.

At monthly meetings, Cluster members used religious terms along with secular ones to make themselves insiders on the map they imagined. On what became the dominant map, Cluster members defined their group as a respectful religious partner to a low-income neighborhood of diverse minority populations. Members drew boundaries around their civic identity, distancing it from paternalistic volunteers. They used religious terms such as "neighborhood church," "Community of Shalom," and "parish" repeatedly, in similar ways, especially when pondering how to be in the neighborhood. Such terms might help Cluster members associate their initially difficult, outsider social identity with some continuous, affirming meaning (Hewitt 1989) and give them someone else to be *besides* white outsiders. None of these terms received any elaboration as theological rationales. Rather, the terms were aids for mapping the Cluster, or as Somers (1994) or Ammerman (2003) would point out, they implied storylines—the solicitous church that serves a neighborhood, or the collectivity that prizes mutually respecting peace ("shalom")—that could make members' group identity meaningful.

At one meeting, for instance, when members puzzled over how to create respectful two-way communication with the neighborhood, member Betty associated the Cluster with "the concept of a neighborhood church." "Most people have a concept of it, even if they're not able to make it work," Betty said, and making it work would mean making a church into a kind of community center. No Cluster churches were located in the Park neighborhood, and no Park residents regularly attended Cluster churches. Being a "neighborhood church" identified the Cluster symbolically as a supportive, church-

sponsored institution for the neighborhood as a whole.

In a similar vein, one core member told me she attended a "Communities of Shalom" training, sponsored by the United Methodist Church, though she was an Episcopalian at the time. The training taught churches how to create non-proselytizing social support relationships with surrounding low-income, high-violence locales. "Community of Shalom" became another way that Cluster participants moved Park Cluster symbolically into the neighborhood. One Cluster member affirmed the Communities of Shalom idea as a good model for Park Cluster because it involved "faith communities organized in stressed neighborhoods, and the church is usually at the center, so the church becomes a center, as a [social support] source, in a more conscious way than faith communities usually are." Another Cluster member proposed a "Communities of Shalom" project at a brainstorming session held by the Urban Religious Coalition. The Park neighborhood social worker who attended monthly Cluster meetings suggested that a children's event organized by the Cluster at a city fair could link Park neighborhood children with "other Shalom Communities."

Cluster members used the term "parish" similarly, to understand their relationship to the neighborhood as a supportive, religious alliance. Strikingly, neither during my field study nor in documents available to me did Cluster members ever expound on the theological meaning of "parish" or its relation to group goals. Yet Cluster members used the term "parish" consistently to name the public health nurse they cosponsored along with an African American church's community-development corporation and Lutheran Home, a senior care facility. It might have signaled that the Cluster was promoting religious observance, revealing the rationale for its neighborhood presence. This possibility seemed only more likely when Cluster members agreed with Lutheran Home's decision to administer the nurse from the Home's "pastoral care" rather than "nursing" department. The nurse herself said she would offer Park residents a "healing worship service." Parish nursing is a new, still-evolving professional specialty that tries to unite physical healing and spiritual growth by way of a nurse who serves one congregation (Solari-Twadell and

McDermott 1999). This nurse would not serve any particular congregation, so what did it mean to Park Cluster members to sponsor a religiously-identified "parish nurse"?

Cluster members thought that sponsoring such a nurse would help identify them "in solidarity with our neighbors," as another way to map themselves inside the neighborhood circle with Park's black residents. Cluster members got the idea that Park's African Americans, the plurality of neighborhood residents, identified with religious wisdom, although they did not try verifying the assumption during this study. The black church's community-development corporation, which cosponsored the nurse, claimed that a "holistic" and "spiritual" nurse was culturally appropriate for African Americans such as those in the Park neighborhood. In a two-page prospectus, the development corporation said that such a nurse would be "culturally sensitive" and resonate with clients' "cultural strengths," using these two phrases a total of 12 times. The message was clear: a religiously-identified nurse was the right kind for Park neighbors. Park Cluster accepted this definition of appropriateness from a black organization it perceived as better positioned than white church volunteers to define what was appropriate for low-income African Americans.

In Cluster conversations, no one ever asked about the content of the parish nurse's worship service. *Every* conversation I heard the Cluster have about the nurse, or with the nurse directly, had to do with her relationship to the neighborhood—her "cultural appropriateness" or her willingness to get church volunteers acquainted with the neighborhood. Cluster members' praise for the nurse project always mentioned its potential to support a community, not its potential to spread the Gospel. Member Steve, for example, said in an affirming tone: "The typical nurse program would rely on referrals from clergy. There are none (no clergy referrals) here. . . . That shows this is a *community* program (emphasis his)." The neighborhood warmly received the nurse, who quickly became busy with consultation hours. Whether or not the Cluster accurately perceived Park neighbors' spiritual interests, or were trading on racial generalizations, it would be hard to argue either that the nurse's religious identity was irrelevant or that the nurse was primarily a means for the

Cluster to promote religious avowal as an end in itself.

Without secular comparison groups, these examples cannot tell whether or not religious commitments *caused* the Cluster to gravitate toward particular projects. We cannot use these examples to gauge the internal religious fervor of Cluster members who spoke of the parish or the Community of Shalom. The point, rather, is that Park Cluster did use religious language repeatedly as part of its work of mapping, apart from *justifying* the goals of providing public health services, housing assistance, and community development.

AN ALTERNATIVE MAP IN PARK CLUSTER

Several Cluster members maintained a different map of the Cluster's social relations with somewhat different notions of inclusion and exclusion. The most vocal was Ned. On Ned's imagined map, Park Cluster was a moral guardian, situated amid "respectable churchgoers" from outside the neighborhood and sometimes less "Godly" residents inside the neighborhood, and the relationship between Cluster and residents was one of moral tutelage. To give one illustration: at one meeting Ned urgently asked whether there were enough trash cans in the small neighborhood center that hosted the Cluster's meetings and housed nearly two dozen community services. He emphasized that the center's appearance mattered: "We're teaching—that's the way it looks; that's the way it should look. The center needs to be a haven of goodliness and Godliness." Ned said in an interview that he worried about what the center would look like to church volunteers from outside the neighborhood, as well as what its appearance taught Park residents. I learned that Ned raised the same issue every spring.

Ned did *not* say the Cluster or the center should teach anything religious in *particular* or advocate religiosity for center patrons, nor that religious beliefs compelled him to want a more tidy center. Rather, he was implying with his use of religious language that Cluster members could identify themselves with goodness and symbolize a moral model for the neighborhood center, which in turn would be an exemplar for neighborhood residents. One might imagine a map of concentric circles. Most other core Cluster members avoided or rejected Ned's

assumption that the Cluster was a moral exemplar. As one member told me after this meeting, Ned's approach was the wrong one because if the issue was not already on the center board's own agenda, "it looks like imposing this outside standard." Ned, in contrast, did not hesitate to apply his outside standard. Instead, he saw volunteers like himself as doing "good works" in the neighborhood, and he contrasted this widely-known religious term with the neighborhood center director's "political" agenda. Political acts were morally unsavory, far from Godliness, in this binary (Moon 2004). Ned, like other Cluster members, felt like an outsider in at least some ways, but on Ned's preferred map, the Cluster did not have to identify so closely with the neighborhood center and could instead judge it from the outside, or else inject an external standard into the heart of the neighborhood.

TWO CONTENDING MAPS: THE RARC

Though RARC members quickly agreed on a religious rationale for an anti-Klan public event, they spent a lot of time discussing what kind of response to the Klan was best. All members agreed they should identify the event as a public *religious* response, not just a public response that happened to be organized by religious people. They all told each other and stated in their public proclamation that religion offered their main reasons for opposing racism. It was a challenge, though, to represent the RARC to some imagined public, the definition of which was integral to the RARC's own identity (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003; Melucci 1988). Planning discussions revealed two different maps of the RARC's identity and its relation to Lakeburg, each informed by religious language from two broadly different Christian theological approaches. Each map charted a different response to the Klan with somewhat differently defined insiders and outsiders.

Evangelical Protestants imagined the RARC as a Christian-identified group bridging racial differences primarily in "the Church" or among "the body of Christ." The body of Christ had suffered racial divisions and needed healing. Evangelicals allowed that non-Christians in Lakeburg might participate in the counter-Klan event, watching Christians symbolically purify the Church of racism, standing at the margins symbolically and literally. A typical expression

of this map emerged at one meeting when Evan, the leader of an evangelical community-service network, switched the conversation from a question of what "faith communities" could do to what "the Church" could do about racism: "In faith communities, and in my perspective the Church, it's [the race problem is] the barriers that already exist in the Church." Evan said this was the problem with using "issues" such as race to unite people. He thought the RARC "should go back to addressing the character of the Church itself. . . . If we could get the walls to come down" and "experience a new kind of connectedness—that would solve some of these problems." On Evan's map, churches were the main actors of interest, Christians were the main audience, and stronger Christian faith, rather than anti-racist ideology, was the surest basis for uniting people against racism.

The evangelical RARC members wanted the counter-Klan event to include worship— Christian worship. The pastor of an evangelical Vineyard Christian Fellowship said, "What attracts me [to this event] is the opportunity to worship with people." He said he felt more comfortable being among Christian worshippers like himself than in a group that defined itself as people with "cultural differences" coming together, because cultural difference may offer no immediate affinity the way Christian identity would with someone of any race. Other evangelical RARC members agreed that shared faith was the sturdiest basis for public relationships. Evan had proposed an idea for an "ecumenical choir" that symbolically would unite (Christian) Lakeburgers. When another member suggested that the RARC's anti-racist event "build on" the ecumenical choir idea, Evan objected: "We want this to be an event that brings people together. We want this—on a Sunday—to not be issue oriented. I'd be open to that [race issue] on a Saturday, but . . . it's a celebration of Jesus." The most meaningful public relationships, on Evan's map, were Christian relationships, and a shared "celebration of Jesus" would bring together the people he imagined—Christians—of any race.

The rest of the RARC, mostly mainline Protestants, identified the RARC on their map as "people of faith" (in God) speaking to Lakeburg citizens—not only Christians, nor even necessarily religious people—urging them to overcome racism. RARC director Donald, a

member of a mainline (ELCA) Lutheran church, said that he "would be excited by how faith communities would call on God [to oppose racism]. . . . In faith communities we could support each other in this, as well as calling on the spirit of God to move among us." On Donald's map, the RARC was representative of "faith communities" empowering themselves with the spirit of God to fight racism in Lakeburg, not Christians healing divisions in the "body of Christ" with a celebration of Jesus. The nonevangelicals imagined that the force of religious faith could lead to interracial relationships, just as the evangelicals did. For the nonevangelicals, though, this was an *interfaith* force, one that takes form when diverse religious people express faith in concert.

The nonevangelical members of the RARC wanted the counter-Klan event to include worship, just as the evangelicals did, but they imagined an interfaith worship event. Nonevangelical members affirmed the vision of Dawn, the leader of the Native American performance troupe, who said, "If you have your pastors, and your Buddhist . . . and a Jewish rabbi, and a Methodist, all stand in a circle and each say a prayer in their own language—to the Creator, to Christ . . . we would all be in prayer together with mutual respect." In response to the evangelical objections she expected, Dawn insisted that an interfaith gathering is "not generic—rather it makes people get back in touch with what they really believe. The whole thing leads back to people's own faith traditions."

The difference in mappings became increasingly obvious as planning for the counter-Klan event proceeded. As the following excerpts from one typical conversation illustrate, evangelicals tended to raise boundaries on their map between Christians inside the circle of full participants and others they imagined outside the circle. In contrast, nonevangelicals tended to picture Christians and non-Christians closer together, with fuzzy lines between them, and emphasized a boundary against racism but not against particular religions.

> DT (mainline Lutheran): I don't want to go down the Christian-only road. There has been non-Christian involvement in this from the start.
>
> Pastor Matthew (evangelical, Reformed): How about the Satanic cult? Are they going to be welcome [at the event]?
>
> DT: Satanic cults are proponents of evil, and the struggle against racism is about goodness, so by

definition they are not going to be about goodness and anti-racism. . . . This event will show our love.

> Cheryl (Catholic): It's the best response to celebrate all of our diversity . . . all that is good.
>
> Pastor Matthew: There may be pressure—that when the Muslim prays, "I'll pray to whom he is praying" because it's the polite thing to do. Or when the Buddhist or Hindu . . .
>
> Bob (evangelical, Vineyard Christian Fellowship): My heart is to get the body of Christ together—Protestants, evangelicals, Roman Catholics—there's no love lost there, that's big enough. When I think of involving all the others, I get lower in the chair . . . [7]

The counter-Klan event, titled "All in the Image of God," featured a long program that included the mayor's welcome, a gospel music performance, a reading from St. Augustine, and a multicultural dance act. Evangelical Pastor Matthew had said months before, "I can do interfaith, the food kind of thing—the sky is the limit. But if I'm going to be called to worship not in the scripture, I can't do it." Evangelicals cautioned that the dance act—which one pastor said resembled a traditional tribute to a Central American sun deity—dangerously smudged boundaries between "religion" and "culture" that evangelicals needed to sharpen, but which Donald and other mainliners were happy to keep fuzzy. Once again, members worked from different maps.

Unlike in Park Cluster, different maps roughly lined up with different theologies inside Christianity. The evangelicals' greater concern with clearly drawn boundaries around religious truth is integral to evangelical Protestantism (Smith 1998). Yet as the mainline Lutheran pastor said, there had been non-Christian participants in the RARC from the start, and no one had argued over that. No one had ever said that some religious rationales for opposing racism were unacceptable. No one claimed to have felt compelled to worship the sun deity. The issue was whether or not the RARC and its events should be *known* as having an interfaith identity.

Both Park Cluster and the RARC straddled members' differing maps, but in neither case could one reduce these differences easily to stated religious rationales for collective goals.

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[7] Block-indented passages are excerpted directly from participant-observation field notes unless otherwise specified.

Both the RARC and the Cluster had set out to involve themselves in community life explicitly *as* religious groups, in conjunction with the Urban Religious Coalition, so it is reasonable to think that religious identity was salient (Stryker 2000) for members of both groups as they were doing their community work. In each case, tensions over how the community might perceive the group finally boiled over.

CONFLICTS OVER THE MAP

In both the RARC and Park Cluster, the biggest conflicts erupted over how to define, shrink, or lengthen the social distance between groups on their maps. The RARC's conflict involved more specifically or articulately theological understandings of maps than did Park Cluster's conflict. These conflicts were mostly not, however, the disputes over religious rationales said to provoke "culture wars," nor were they disputes over how to frame issues (Benford 1993). They were more akin to the conflicts over collective identity that researchers have observed inside some congregations (Becker 1999) and social movement organizations (Gamson 1995; Lichterman 1995). Park Cluster resolved its conflict by ratifying the dominant map, drawn with the religious tag "social ministry." The RARC's resolution depended on members' agreement with a bifurcated, sometimes Christian-only, sometimes interfaith map that also gave a bigger presence to an anti-racist identity.

INSTALLING A DOMINANT MAP: PARK CLUSTER

Before this study began, a consultant from a statewide council of churches had talked to Cluster members about potential religious responses to the 1996 welfare reforms. The consultant helped Cluster members develop a "social ministries grid," a set of questions designed to help church volunteers think about their roles. The idea of social ministry, derived from the social gospel of early-twentieth-century mainline Protestantism, is that Christians should work toward bringing about God's kingdom on Earth by challenging unjust social structures. Social ministry can easily be a religious rationale for getting involved in social reform.

Yet the social ministries grid did not suggest particular projects that could challenge injustice or promote compassionate service. Instead, Cluster members developed questions to ask themselves about how they *presented themselves:* Were they "partners" with the neighborhood, or was the relationship one of "givers and receivers"? Did the Cluster's agenda-setters include representatives of the community? In 18 months of meetings, Cluster members never elaborated on the theology of social ministry, unlike Warren's (2001) affordable housing advocates, for instance, who drew explicitly on the Bible in hopes of arriving at a "theology of housing." They used the tag of "social ministry" instead to help map identities and relationships, and that is how it functioned during a moment of crisis.

At the most emotional meeting held during my field research, members were devising a new, more formal organizational structure. Several interrelated, contentious issues had come to a head. First, the parish nurse had just started working in the neighborhood. Several members complained sarcastically that they did not know who was doing what with whom in the neighborhood. Who would even pay the nurse? Second, a new African American, Afrocentric neighborhood center director, Charmaine, had assumed her position recently, and Cluster members blamed themselves for at least part of the chill in relations with her. One said, "When we bring Charmaine in here . . . there needs to be healing." Ned, whom earlier complained that Cluster members ought to ask "drug dealers" up the street to "do something for their community," offered a *mea culpa:* "I admit I've been the major bad guy . . . and I'll make a studious effort to avoid that in the future."

In the middle of this discussion, Betty said, "The social ministry grid was very helpful." She read aloud from a piece of paper with a grid of questions about relationship-building that members had received by e-mail before the meeting. Then she summarized, "Those of you doing hands-on work—with kids, the after-school program . . . in the perception of people you're working with, we are not givers and receivers, but partners. We become not givers of the community but partners of the community— that we be perceived not as directors but partners." The repetition suggested that the point mattered greatly to her. No one disagreed. Betty

did not use "social ministry" to legitimate particular projects, and she implied that the social ministry grid could apply to direct-service volunteering, community development, and social advocacy. She used the phrase to map egalitarian relationships, different from the relationships on Ned's map of moral guardianship. A few more monthly meetings made clear that this tense meeting had been a watershed. Betty's vision of the Cluster's relations became the dominant one. Cluster members now regularly scrutinized their relation to different entities in the Park neighborhood.

Ned and the two quieter members who supported him were losing the battle over the map. Ned complained at several meetings that the group worried too much about how to relate to whom. Benevolent paternalism continued to inform his preferred map, one on which social workers and Park Cluster members were functionally equivalent. He told me, for example, that social workers ought to go door-knocking in the Park neighborhood, encouraging parents to wake up and get their kids ready for school. This was his model for Cluster members, too. The Cluster, as Ned saw it, was less and less about "good works" and more about complicated, tedious work. Ned felt diminished by the group, even though members said they valued his contribution, and he threatened to quit altogether.

Ned's theological stance was not discernibly different from that of other members. Like most Cluster members, he and his wife attended a mainline Protestant church that hosted a variety of charitable, nonproselytizing outreach activities. He helped write the Cluster brochure's statement of purpose. Apart from the switch from the prophet Isaiah to Margaret Mead, the Cluster never considered a change in the statement of purpose, so it is unlikely that Ned's theological rationales for Cluster work differed much from those of other members. Private interviews gave no indication of significant differences either, as other members also talked about being compassionate or doing "God's work." In group interactions, though, their maps were different.

REDRAWING BOUNDARIES IN THE RARC

In the RARC, in contrast, members recognized some explicit theological differences while agreeing on religious rationales for goals. Shortly after the counter-Klan event, the RARC endured its single biggest conflict during this study. The conflict concerned whether the RARC should be an interfaith (Christian and non-Christian) rather than an ecumenical Christian group. The compromise that ended this tense standoff depended at least partly on redrawing the group's map.

At one meeting, director Donald compiled a list of sensitive activities that members would agree *not* to carry out together if the RARC was interfaith. The list included worshipping in common, developing new congregations, holding religious classes, and writing new theological credos on racism. Members all agreed they would not attempt activities on that list if the RARC were to be officially an interfaith group. *After* the group arrived at this agreement, all but one of the evangelical representatives said their congregations still could not participate in an interfaith RARC that had already ruled out the theologically sensitive projects. In turn, three mainline Protestant pastors said their congregations could not participate in an RARC that would be ecumenical Christian-only. One of the three asked what it must feel like to non-Christians in the room, such as the two Baha'is, to hear this conversation. At that point, pastor Matthew asked the group to consider writing a statement against partial-birth abortion, justifying the request with a platform plank from the "Cry for Renewal." The group had quickly settled into a focus on race months earlier, but Matthew's sudden proposal was now calling the group's *de facto* purpose into question. Others responded:

> *Unitarian minister (cautiously):* It's not about race.
> *Matthew:* Race is what the group has *become*—
> *Evan, leader of the evangelical community-service group:* That's right, it's not about race. Are we going to become so consumed with race that we don't [take up] the other positions [on the platform]?
> *Matthew started reading aloud from the "Cry for Renewal":* We believe that every human life is a gift from God and we are called to protect, nurture, and sustain life wherever it is threatened—whether by abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, poverty—
> *Donald (cutting in loudly):* As chair, I want to raise the issue of commitment to find common ground.

The meeting adjourned with a festering ambiguity about the RARC's religious identity, and a new uncertainty about its most basic goals.

At the next month's meeting, the Unitarian pastor facilitator suggested a change in the RARC's identity. She proposed the group create "space" for interfaith initiatives and Christian-only initiatives, because "sometimes we need the Jesus language." Using a mapping metaphor, she was redrawing boundaries with religious tags: Jesus language spoken in one space, a language of "faith" in the other. Now, Matthew boldly offered to ratify the new boundaries:

> If we could do what we said at the outset we were going to do—racism for instance, or one of the other issues—if we can keep that the issue, and this is a big change in opinion from previous meetings, then [the proposal is ok]. We're not here to promote our faith perspective, we're here to [work against] racism. Now for me that means speaking from the teachings of Jesus. For some other people it may mean something else. As long as we can keep the focus on the topic of racism, I can see my way clear.

Four other evangelical members assented readily to Matthew's new picture of the group, though the other regularly attending evangelical said he would not be able to stay in the group.

Given Matthew's long tenure in Lakeburg and the prominence of his congregation, it was not surprising that other evangelicals in the RARC followed his initiative. But how did he change his mind? A URC leader confided to me that one of the mainline Protestant pastors had sat down with Matthew in private, discussed biblical passages, and convinced him that fighting racism ought to be compelling on its own. Yet Matthew's statement about his "big change" implies that theological rationales for antiracism, while important, were not enough without the new map. Matthew was saying the RARC needed to agree to make its focus on race more distinct and make its religious identity complex and situation-specific. Matthew would still identify his moral source publicly as "the teachings of Jesus," alongside others who might identify differently. The issue was not that associating with non-Christians might threaten Matthew's own core Christian rationales. When I asked Matthew before the counter-Klan celebration how he felt about attending an event where Hare Krishnas or cult members might be present, he said without hesitation, "Oh, being at the same event—that's fine, fine, I rub shoulders with them. We're in the world together." Rather, Matthew had to be able to accept the RARC's status as a "social object," its reputation.

Keith, an evangelical associate pastor, needed the same change to continue working with the RARC. When Keith named his congregation among those that could not work in an interfaith group, he justified the decision with a quick, embarrassed recitation of his church's mission statement: "To build the unity of the Church and see the Word of Jesus Christ proclaimed." Yet, Keith was not literally advocating that the RARC promote the Word of Jesus Christ any more than Matthew was. Rather, Keith used his church's statement of motives to map boundaries against an interfaith identity. When another pastor asked why Keith had come this far, only to say no to an officially interfaith identity, Keith said, "We have not had these questions about interfaith basis in the foreground before. Now they are." When pushed on the issue, he needed to draw firmer boundaries between Christians and people known to be non-Christians. A group *publicly known* to be interfaith would smudge those boundaries. A deft, complex redefinition of the group's status as a social object enabled the RARC to hold together.

DISCUSSION

When translating religious commitments into civic action, people must do the work of identifying themselves and the insiders and outsiders in their field, both to themselves and their audience. Just as with nonreligious actors, religious actors' civic identities are situational to some extent and we cannot reduce these identities to actors' belief systems or rationales for goals. Whether theologically articulate or not, civic groups may use religious language to address the practical problems of creating collective identities and working together.

This study adds to the growing investigation of where and how people express religious language in ordinary, everyday public settings in the United States (e.g., Ammerman 2007; Bender 2003; Patillo-McCoy 1998). The mapping perspective is not a replacement for large-scale, sociohistorical accounts, such as the religious privatization or culture wars theses, nor

secularization theories in general (e.g., Chaves 1994), but rather it helps us ask new questions and sensitizes us (Blumer 1986) to new findings at the level of everyday life. On one hand, research on groups' mapping efforts may enlarge our empirical grasp of the particular ways that religious privatization, deprivatization, or conflict play out in everyday group settings. On the other hand, one may investigate what people do with religious language in everyday life apart from one's stance on privatization or "culture wars" as *general* overviews of American religion. One may also investigate what people do with religious language separately from asking questions about religion's causal role in a group's achievements. Locating religious language more precisely, and hearing what people do with it, can help us ask more comprehensive questions later about religion's causal roles or its power as a cultural structure (Alexander 2003; Lichterman and Potts forthcoming).

The question of why people turn to religious language at all to map public identities requires more case comparisons, but the evidence here offers important clues. The two cases suggest that using religious language for mapping may depend partly on which identities are salient inside the group in question, as well as beyond it. The salience *to Cluster members* of awkward racial and economic differences between them and Park residents may have made the Cluster's religious sponsorship a safer or more compelling source of mapping terms than it would have been otherwise. Religious terms may have offered Cluster members a meaningful story about who Park Cluster could be in the neighborhood, regardless of any putative religiosity among Park *residents*. We need comparison cases to test this notion. Conversely, in the RARC, it is plausible that disputes over salient religious differences made a shared nonreligious identity of anti-racism, alongside a sometimes-interfaith religious identity, a stronger basis for collaboration amid differences. Both the RARC and Park Cluster "policed" boundaries, even apart from outsiders' immediate responses.

Combining insights from cultural and interactionist approaches (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003) yields new insights on public religion. A cultural focus bids us follow religious language—conceived as coming from repertoires that exist beyond any single situation—while

bracketing questions of inner religiosity on methodological principle and taking uses of religious language as socially significant in themselves. An interactionist focus bids us ask how people "wear" religious identity in different ways, amid different groups in public. The "mapping" approach helps us understand how people can use religious terms to define ingroups and out-groups, and establish relations between them, without making assumptions about actors' deep religious motives. Important previous studies have asked people how they identify themselves in relation to a field of religious beliefs or denominations (e.g., Regnerus and Smith 1998; Sikkink 1998; Smith 1998). The focus on mapping helps us understand how people create religious identity amid a variety of public identities, religious or not. There is nothing *intrinsic* to religious groups that makes them more in need of mapping than are other civic entities. Their mapping may be more or less fraught depending on the situation.

The mapping perspective helps integrate ethnographic observations on religious identity into ongoing research on group process more generally. For instance, the RARC's experiences support the notion that a shared, superordinate identity can smooth intergroup relations by reducing the salience of original group boundaries (Gaertner et al. 1999). The RARC melded an amalgam superordinate identity—sometimes Christian, sometimes "people of faith," always focused against racism—that mainliners and evangelicals could work under without completely effacing their own group identities. There are different strategies for creating a superordinate identity. Future research might explore whether or not evangelicals prefer "recategorization" strategies that allow original group boundaries to endure under a larger shared aegis (Brewer and Schneider 1990), and liberal Protestants prefer "personalization" strategies (Brewer and Miller 1984) that soften original boundaries, as when the RARC pastor asked the few non-Christians what it *felt* like to hear a conversation that might result in their exclusion from the group. More ethnographic studies of mapping can specify the contextual, social, and cultural factors in cohesion across group lines.

The concepts and findings presented here suggest other new research agendas. First, for U.S. cases, a focus on mapping might over-

come the impasse in the culture wars debate. Proponents of the culture wars thesis hold that conflicts between religious conservatives and religious liberals or secularists play out largely at the level of discourse produced by interest groups. Opponents of the thesis have looked to surveys of individual Americans' opinions, found relatively little polarization beyond the signal topic of abortion, and concluded that culture wars do not exist. Focusing on conflicting styles of mapping, apart from conflicting theological rationales, may increase our understanding of how, if ever, and in which settings different kinds of religious conflict develop.

The mapping notion may sensitize us to important dimensions of interreligious conflict beyond U.S. or Christian cases too. For instance, ethnographic researchers are starting to ask how Muslims in western Europe "perform" Muslim identity in multireligious or secular contexts, taking the performance as analytically separate from, albeit related to, Muslim *belief* (Amiraux and Jonker 2006:17). Amiraux (2006:32) illustrates, for example, how a Muslim woman activist argued with other devout Muslims who said her failure to wear a headscarf gave the French public a "bad image of Muslim women." She honored the theology of her challengers and wanted to help Muslims become better practitioners of their religion, yet also said "I am a Muslim, but people do not need to know what I do as a Muslim." It was not that she had a different religious rationale for Muslim community activism, but she had a different map of how to project a Muslim identity. In her study of middle-class Pakistani youth in Islamic organizations, Blom (2007) finds that everyone, regardless of their particular sect, reasoned that joining the organizations was part of "getting closer to Islam" and attaining self-betterment, yet joiners learned different maps of how to be a Muslim in relation to the wider world. Some said each must find the right religious "path" and contrasted these privatized commitments with governmental enforcement of religion. Others similarly disfavored governmentally enforced religion but assumed that their universities should be inside the circle of religious authority, and on that basis they opposed music instruction on campus. The point is not that theological rationales don't matter, nor that theological differences inside Islam don't matter.

These very brief applications simply suggest that studying mapping can enlarge our grasp of religious differences and conflict, far beyond the United States.

Second, we need more studies of when and how religion helps groups unite across social cleavages for civic ends. If much of the recent decline in U.S. civic engagement has resulted from the declining participation of socially subordinate groups (Wuthnow 2002), there may now be fewer potential participants to perform the "bridging" ties between socially unlike people that civic engagement scholars promote (Putnam 2000), ties such as those Park Cluster cultivated. Future comparative research on religious and secular civic alliances can show when religiously informed definitions of insiders and outsiders help, or hinder, majority–minority alliances.

Third, welfare policy reforms in North America and Western Europe have invited religious organizations to provide more social support, making it newly important to understand what people do with religion in public (Bane, Coffin, and Thiemann 2000; Uppsala Institute 2003). Typologies of "faith-based" social-service organizations are proliferating (Sider and Unruh 2004), and researchers are comparing how religious and secular social-service organizations run programs and present themselves to clientele (Ebaugh et al. 2003; Wuthnow 2004). Yet there is more to do. If religion has distinctive influences on social service delivery, is it because of religion's influence as a rationale for goals, or as an aid to including or excluding people, or both? What conditions make an explicit religious identity desirable or irritating to social service agencies, community organizations, and service populations? Policymakers have implied that faith-based social service is not only more effective and cheaper than the work of state agencies, but it will also empower Americans as charitable, responsible partners in a new social contract (DiIulio 2001). Initial findings (Chaves 2004) cast doubt on the notion that church-based social service is an efficient or easily available alternative to government agencies. To assess domestic policy's broader assumptions about the civic uses of religion, we need more studies of how public religious actors map themselves into the wider world.

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