

FIVE TYPES OF MULTICULTURAL CHURCHES: A NEW PARADIGM EVALUATED AND DIFFERENTIATED

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Abstract

This article puts forth a comprehensive and reconciliation-based paradigm through which to view multicultural congregations as one of five models or types. It updates the historical categories of Sanchez, adds contemporary models, and then evaluates each through a ten-point grid of nomenclature, mode of growth, relationships, pluses, minuses, degree of difficulty, creator complex, redistribution, relocation, and reconciliation. The five models are 1) the asset sharing Multicultural Alliance, 2) the collaborative Multicultural Partnership, 3) the asymmetrical Mother-Daughter model, 4) the popular Blended approach, and 5) the Cultural Assimilation model. The result is a comprehensive five-model paradigm that includes an assessment of each model's potential for spiritual and intercultural reconciliation.

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This article assesses the strengths and weaknesses of different multicultural¹ church models. Daniel Sanchez offered some of the earliest depictions of

¹ Though the term *multiethnic* church is often used today, I will use the broader term *multicultural*, since *culture* is a more accurate way to describe people who share similar behaviors, ideas, fashion, literature, music, etc. [c.f. Paul Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976), 25]. Ethnicity is a type of culture often based on biological connections to a geographic area of origin, such as Sri Lankans (from the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka), Yemenis (from the Republic of Yemen),

such models,² but thirty-five years later, they beg to be updated. Despite the proliferation of books on the topic, no significant updating or additions to Sanchez's categories have been offered other than the Sider et. al. partnership model.³

In addition, there is a vibrant discussion today regarding how churches are addressing John Perkins' intercultural goals of redistribution, relocation, and reconciliation.⁴ Therefore, it can be helpful to assess how well different models of multicultural congregations are addressing each of Perkins' intercultural reconciliation goals.

The following five models of multicultural congregations suggest a new and contemporized paradigm. I will analyze each through a ten-point grid of nomenclature, mode of growth, relationships, pluses, minuses, degree of difficulty, creator complex, redistribution, relocation, and reconciliation.

STARTING WITH GOALS:

SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL RECONCILIATION

Sociologists have long known that people of a dominant culture will try, sometimes even subconsciously, to make people over from an emerging culture into their own image.⁵ C. Peter Wagner called this the "creator complex" and believed, "Deep in the heart of man, even in missionaries, lurks that 'creator complex' by which he delights in making other people over in his own image."⁶ When humans encounter different customs, the *creator complex* in us wants us to view their customs as abnormal and change them to be more in keeping with our traditions.

The *creator complex* arises because it seems easier and quicker to assimilate a culture and make it look like us, than to try to sift out any impurities that run counter to the message of Christ. In the words of missiologist

or Chinese (from the People's Republic of China). However, the term ethnicity is imprecise, because there may be dozens of different ethnic groups that hail from the same area of origin. Since ethnicity is so imprecise, *culture* will be utilized in this article.

² Daniel Sanchez, "Viable Models for Churches in Communities Experiencing Ethnic Transition." (paper, Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1976).

³ Ronald J. Sider, John M. Perkins, Wayne L. Gordon, and F. Albert Tizon, *Linking Arms, Linking Lives: How Urban-Suburban Partnerships Can Transform Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008).

⁴ John M. Perkins, *A Quiet Revolution: The Christian Response to Human Need, a Strategy for Today* (Pasadena, CA: Urban Family Publications, 1976), 220.

⁵ Robert Jenson, "White Privilege Shapes the U.S.," *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2002), 103–106.

⁶ C. Peter Wagner, *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 96.

Charles Kraft, though, every culture is “corrupt, but convertible.”⁷ To convert any culture thus entails sifting out elements that run counter to Christ’s Good News while retaining elements that affirm it. Eddie Gibbs calls this “sifting a culture,” drawing from the image of a colander or strainer that sifts out impurities in food.⁸

What then is the goal for our filtering of cultures? Let us return to Charles Kraft’s reminder, that every culture is “corrupt, but convertible.”⁹ Our purpose thus becomes to assist God in His quest to convert or transform a culture. Such transformation begins by reconnecting people to their loving heavenly Father. This has been called the ministry of reconciliation, which Paul described in 2 Corinthians 5:11, 17–18.

John Perkins suggests that today’s divided world needs churches that will foster both spiritual reconciliation *and* physical reconciliation. This would fulfill Jesus’ prayer that His children would be united as the Father and Son are united (John 17:20). To describe this goal, Perkins employed three Rs:¹⁰

- Redistribution (sharing money from wealthier cultures with struggling cultures),
- Relocation (relocating ministry to needy areas), and
- Reconciliation (physical and spiritual reconciliation, first between humans and their heavenly Father, and then between humans).

Among today’s emerging generations, I am seeing young people more attune to this need for reconciliation between people of different cultures. Today’s young people have been born into quite a divided world of politics, economics, and cultural clashes. Yet, across the nation, I have observed churches led by these young leaders that refuse to limit themselves to just spiritual reconciliation, but I also see maturity in Christ as advancing cultural reconciliation. I agree with Brenda Salter McNeil who sees the emergence of a reconciliation generation, who in addition to a spiritual reconciliation, sees “a host of people from various tribes, nations, and ethnicities who are Kingdom people called to do the work of racial reconciliation.”¹¹

To bring about both spiritual and cultural reconciliation, we need models that describe churches where people of differing cultures are not only reconnecting with their heavenly Father, but also who are reconnecting with one another. A multicultural church may provide the best locale. To understand a multicultural church, let us look at five models.

⁷ Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study of Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 113.

⁸ Eddie Gibbs, *I Believe in Church Growth* (Fuller Seminary Press, 1993), 120.

⁹ Kraft, 113.

¹⁰ Perkins, 220.

¹¹ Quoted by Kathleen Garces-Foley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide: The Multiethnic Church on a Mission* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 64.

FIVE MODELS OF MULTICULTURAL CHURCHES

To picture the variety of multicultural congregations, I have suggested the following five categories. In each category, I have codified examples from many authors, along with my own case study research to present a clearer picture of the multicultural options and the plusses and minuses of each approach.

The Multicultural Alliance Church

This church is an alliance of several culturally different sub-congregations. Daniel Sanchez describes it as one church “comprised of several congregations in which the autonomy of each congregation is preserved and the resources of the congregations are combined to present a strong evangelistic ministry.”¹² The different cultures thus form an alliance by joining together as one religious organization in which they equally:

- Share leadership duties (i.e. leadership boards are integrated)
- Share assets (it is only *one* nonprofit 501c3 organization)
- Offer separate worship expressions (to connect with more cultures)
- Offer blended worship expressions (to create unity).

Offering multiple worship options allows the Multicultural Alliance Church to reach out and connect with several different cultures simultaneously.¹³ A regular blending of traditions in a unity service creates unity amid this diversity.¹⁴ A weekly format of a multicultural alliance church with five sub-congregations could look like the following:

Saturday 6:00 PM (Sub-congregation 1) Emerging worship service appealing to people in their 20s and 30s (usually without children).

Sunday 9:00 AM (Sub-congregation 2) Traditional worship service appealing to Anglo members of the congregation.

¹² Sanchez.

¹³ Separate worship expressions, though, make the Multicultural Alliance Model more evangelistically effective, because it can reach non-churchgoers who have a strong connection to their culture (e.g. dissonant adapters, which is discussed later in the text). Attendees pick the cultural style through which they best connect with God. The variety of worship styles makes this type of church more evangelistic because non-churchgoers can find a style to which they are accustomed and can relate.

¹⁴ Multicultural congregations have rightly criticized if they *only* offer culturally separate worship silos. See Manual Ortiz, *One New People: Models for Developing a Multiethnic Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996). However, Ortiz is not criticizing the Multicultural Alliance Model, but rather uni-cultural models of church without blended unity events, of which I would disapprove for the same reasons as Ortiz.

- Sunday 10:30 AM (Sub-congregation 3) Contemporary worship service appealing to Anglos in their 40s and 50s, held in one auditorium of the facility.
- Sunday 10:30 AM (Sub-congregation 4) Asian American worship service, held in another auditorium of the church facility.
- Sunday 12:30 PM (Sub-congregation 5) Latino/Latina worship service with a meal beforehand.
- Sunday 6:00 PM (Entire church) Unity service where all cultures are invited, celebrated, and who share rotating duties.¹⁵

Reconciliation occurs at a high degree because separate cultures work together as equal partners to run the church, while allowing each culture to celebrate its traditions. Such working together to run a church creates more unity than just sitting next to each other in worship (because the Hebrew word for “worship” implies God-directed, not neighbor-directed reconciliation).¹⁶

¹⁵ A weekly Sunday evening unity service has helped St. Thomas’ Anglican Church in Sheffield, England become England’s largest Anglican church, with almost a dozen culturally distinct worship gatherings on Sunday morning. Bob Whitesel, “From Gathered to Scattered: A Dispersed Missional Structure Results in England’s Largest Anglican Congregation” in *The Gospel after Christendom: New Voices, New Cultures, New Expressions*, Ryan Bolger (ed.), (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012).

¹⁶ The Hebrew word for “worship” means to come close to God’s majesty and adore Him. The Hebrew word for worship carries the idea of reverence, respect, and praise that results from a close encounter with a king, see Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament Based upon the Lexicon of William Gesenius* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1974), 1005. Thus, worship should not be about fellowship (the New Testament Christians had meals for that), but rather worship was to be about personal communing with God. This reminds us that worship should be about connecting with God and not about creating friendships among people (we have time before and after “worship” for getting to know one another in “fellowship” halls and in common areas). Making worship into a fellowship among humans robs its place as the supernatural intersection between humans with their heavenly Father. We shall discuss the Multicultural Blended Model shortly, but I have noticed in most blended models I have attended, that supernatural connection is not the focus or their aim, but rather unity is the objective. While the later goal (unity) is needed, it should not be attained at the expense of worship, which is primarily intended as an environment in which to connect with God.

Thus, the Multicultural Alliance Church has *three* distinctive features:

- Several culturally distinct worship expressions (to create evangelistic effectiveness),
- Regular unity worship expressions (to create cross-cultural understanding and awareness),
- One organization comprised of an alliance of sub-congregations (to foster collaboration, conciliation, resource sharing... and reconciliation).

FIGURE 4.1

Strengths/Weaknesses of the Multicultural Alliance Church

<i>Name</i>	<i>The Multicultural Alliance Church</i> (also called peer-to-peer congregations, the networked church, and multi-congregational model)
<i>Mode of growth</i>	Internal planting: starting new sub-congregations that are part (i.e. internal) of the existing organization.
<i>Relationships</i>	Relationships are mostly equal as cultures learn, lead, and share on an equal basis.
<i>Pluses</i>	+ Cultures work together leading a church. + Evangelism is greater because of multiple cultural entry points. + Sharing of assets and resources. + If one culture is waning (an Anglo culture for instance) the emerging culture can more easily take the baton of leadership.
<i>Minuses</i>	- Unity events must be regularly employed to offset any silo effect (i.e. separateness or polarization). - Conflict resolution skills are needed. - Leaders must foster multicultural teamwork. - Sunday 10:30 AM may still be a segregated hour.
<i>Degree of difficulty</i>	High. It requires different cultures to work together in close proximity, through multicultural committees.
<i>Creator complex</i>	Low. Working close together creates cross-cultural understandings. In addition, waning cultures see themselves not only as handing the baton to the emerging cultures, but also of leaving a legacy.
<i>R1 = Redistribution</i>	High. Since all assets are shared equally, those of less-wealthy cultures have full access to the assets of wealthier cultures.
<i>R2 = Relocation</i>	High. Can have multiple locations under the umbrella of one central organization. Locations in wealthier areas can support locations in lower economic areas.
<i>R3 = Reconciliation</i>	Mid to high. Co-sharing leadership and assets forces cooperation, understanding, and conciliation.

The Multicultural Partnership Church

This congregation, usually in a more affluent position, collaborates with a church in a financially struggling culture to help the latter. This often occurs when a church in a growing suburb partners to help one or more struggling urban congregations. Al Tizon and Ron Sider in their helpful book, *Linking Arms, Linking Lives: How Urban-Suburban Partnerships Can Transform Communities*, share many success stories regarding how wealthier churches are redistributing their wealth through a financial partnership with urban congregations.¹⁷

FIGURE 4.2
Strengths/Weaknesses of the Multicultural Alliance Church

Name	<i>The Multicultural Partnership Church</i>
Mode of growth	Supporting struggling churches helps economically-challenged churches become more effective.
Relationships	Relationships are primarily from sponsor to stipendiary (i.e. beneficiary). Some relationships are vague and are of varying degrees.
Pluses	+ Easy to undertake, for the benefactor does not need to become too engaged in the recipient's organizational or congregational life. + Can quickly support less wealthy congregations.
Minuses	- Low cross-cultural interaction. - Stipendiary (i.e. beneficiary) can feel they are just receiving cast-offs or the surplus from the wealthier church.
Degree of difficulty	Moderate to low. It requires only moderate cross-cultural contact.
Creator complex	High. Influence flows from the wealthier church to the needy one. Wealth may be seen as a sign of holiness or supernatural favor (rather than a confluence of societal factors).
R1 = Redistribution	Moderate. Wealth is being shared but at the discretion of the wealthier church.
R2 = Relocation	Low. The sponsoring church is not moving physically, usually only moving its money or at best sending its people temporarily (e.g. short-term mission trips and work teams).
R3 = Reconciliation	Low to moderate. Usually only a small group of volunteers or the leadership from the sponsoring church will interact with the less affluent congregation. The potential for the creator complex to come into play may mean that reconciliation is further thwarted, because the relationship seems like that of a patron to peon.

¹⁷ Sider et al.

The Multicultural Mother-Daughter Church

This may be the most prevalent model in North America. In this case, a mother church launches (or plants) a daughter congregation that is intended to become self-sufficient. The daughter is usually a different culture than the mother church. For example, an Anglo¹⁸ mother church might launch a Hispanic church, a hip-hop church, an African-American church, etc. These daughter congregations are “external” church plants, because the intention is for them to eventually become independent or “external” to the mother church’s organizational structure.¹⁹ Though popular today, there are many downsides to this option.

First, since one church perceives herself as the “parent,” the influence is asymmetrical, because influence usually flows primarily from the mother church down to the offspring, rather than the other way around. Many times, daughter churches feel they are relegated to second-class status and have little influence upon the mother church.²⁰

Secondly, once the offspring is independent (usually one to five years) and a crisis erupts in the offspring, the mother church will often not feel an obligation to rush to its aid. One young planter told me, “They were so glad to see us start. (And they) told everyone about us. But, we have huge money issues now since we bought this building, and they won’t come to our aid. They told us we wanted to be on our own, and now we are.” Regrettably, many once idealistic church planters have echoed to me the same feelings of abandonment because they lack official ties to the mother congregation. Granted, official ties to the mother church limit the freedom of the daughter congregation. On the other hand, official ties may increase conciliation, longevity, and reconciliation.

¹⁸ The mother church could also be a Multicultural Blended Church (see the discussion that follows in the text).

¹⁹ External church planting should thus be distinguished from “internal” church planting, where in the latter, the planted church remains part of the sponsoring church. Thus, it remains “internal” to the organization that helped launch it. The strategic importance of internal planting has largely been overlooked by church planting proponents, but those within the multiple-site or multi-campus strategy have proposed external plants, which essentially are more technically internal plants.

²⁰ This type of mother-daughter relationship between two cultures usually devolves into a colonial relationship. For a helpful analysis of how such relationships create a paternal culture that is narcissistic and steered by hubris, see Morris Berman’s *Why America Failed: The Roots of Imperial Decline* (Hoboken, NY: Wiley, 2011).

FIGURE 4.3

Strengths/Weaknesses of the Multicultural Mother-Daughter Church

<i>Name</i>	<i>Multicultural Mother-Daughter Church</i> (also called planted churches, church plants, mother and child churches, and offspring churches)
<i>Mode of growth</i>	External planting: launching autonomous churches that are intended to be attractive to other cultures.
<i>Relationships</i>	Relationships are stronger from mother to offspring. Offspring has little influence upon the mother. Mother church has waning responsibility to help offspring.
<i>Pluses</i>	+ Easy to launch churches of different cultures because the offspring does not have to reconcile with the status quo culture in the mother church. + Increases the number of churches in a community. + Increases the number of churches that a denomination can count as part of the denomination.
<i>Minuses</i>	- External plants (daughter congregations) may be less likely to survive than internal plants (i.e. the alliance model). ²¹ - Change proponents who keep a church innovative, often leave the mother church for the offspring. ²² - Churches learn the coping mechanism of separating when they have differences. - Low multicultural interaction after the offspring leaves. - Mentoring of planted leaders diminishes as plant becomes autonomous.
<i>Degree of difficulty</i>	Moderate to high. Requires different cultures to work closely together for an initial period but not long term. Difficulty level is lopsided, for difficulty is much lower for the mother church and much higher for the daughter church.
<i>Creator complex</i>	High. The mother church feels self-satisfied because she has planted many churches. In reality, she has distanced herself from the cultural differences that bring a mosaic of cultural richness to the mother. Also, offspring may initially feel euphoric by their newfound independence but eventually often sense they have been cast aside and/or segregated.

²¹ Survivability ratios between internal plants and external plants can be inferred by comparing Ed Stetzer's research, which says that 68% of church plants (external) survive ("Improving the Health and Survivability of New Churches," p. 2 retrieved from <http://www.leadnet.org/churchplanting>), to Warren Bird and Kristen Walter's research that 90% of the new campuses (internal plants) in a multi-site church survive ("Multisite is Multiplying: Survey Identifies Leading Practices and Confirms New Developments in the Movement's Expansion," p. 3 retrieved from <http://www.leadnet.org/resources>).

²² For examples of how creative change proponents are necessary for church survival and how they often get pushed out by the status quo in a congregation (and how to prevent this) see Bob Whitesel, *Staying Power: Why People Leave The Church Over Change and What You Can Do About It* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002).

FIGURE 4.3 (continued)

Strengths/Weaknesses of the Multicultural Mother-Daughter Church

R1 = <i>Redistribution</i>	Moderate. Money primarily flows at the mother church's discretion from mother to child, with little co-generated decisions on spending and asset utilization.
R2 = <i>Relocation</i>	Moderate. Only part of the congregation (i.e. the external daughter) relocates. The mother church creates segregation through a seemingly noble tactic of planting.
R3 = <i>Reconciliation</i>	Low to moderate. The relationship is based upon a benefactor (mother) allocating at her discretion to a beneficiary (offspring).

The Multicultural Blended Church

The Multicultural Blended Church may be the second most common type of multicultural church. Most of its worship celebrations blend or mix several different cultural styles of music and liturgy. For example, a seventeenth century hymn may be followed by African music, followed by Hispanic or Asian songs and sermon illustrations from Native American stories. The idea is to celebrate varied cultures in one worship service.

While worshiping in a blended format can create a degree of cross-cultural sensitivity, it may also be weaker in its outreach potential, because it is less relevant to people who strongly identify with their cultural traditions.²³ People from emerging cultures usually adapt to the dominant culture in one of three ways.

1. *Consonant adapters* are people from an emerging culture who adapt almost entirely to the dominant culture. Over time, they will mirror the dominant culture in behavior, ideas, and products. Thus, they will usually be drawn to a church that reflects the dominant culture.
2. *Selective adapters* adjust to some parts of a dominant culture but reject other aspects. They want to preserve their cultural heritage but will compromise in most areas to preserve harmony.²⁴ They can be drawn to the Blended Model because it still celebrates their culture, to a degree.
3. *Dissonant adapters* fight to preserve their culture in the face of a dominant culture's influence.²⁵ Dissonant adapters may find the blended

²³ Nothing is wrong with blending services, for they create appreciation, understanding, and solidarity across cultural divides. For this very reason, the Multicultural Alliance Model suggests regular unity services that are blended.

²⁴ Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut in *Immigrant American: A Portrait* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1996). They suggest that organizations comprised of selective adapters will be a more harmonious organization.

²⁵ Ruben G. Rumbaut, "Acculturation, Discrimination, and Ethnic Identity Among Children of Immigrants," in *Discovering Successful Pathways in Children's Development: Mixed*

format of the Blended Church as too inauthentic and disingenuous to their strongly held cultural traditions.

Not surprisingly, the Multicultural Blended Church usually attracts those who are selective adapters. Two problems arise.

Problem 1: *Those who prefer blending usually become a culture themselves.* Over time, blending creates a new culture of people who prefer “blending.” People who prefer to blend several cultures are usually people who are more educated, wealthier, more well traveled, and more integrated.²⁶ Thus, the blended church appeals not so much to multiple cultures, but to a “culturally blended culture” that emerges.²⁷

Problem 2: *Blended churches are not as effective at reaching people who highly value and identify with their culture.*²⁸ For example, if a person is a dissonant adapter and highly values his Guatemalan heritage, he may not attend a worship service where his heritage is just one sandwiched in among many. One associate pastor of a church told me, “I’m proud that I am Guatemalan. I don’t want to go to a church where Anglos lump all Hispanic people together in one service. I want to celebrate our Guatemalan culture.” Thus, a church that offers only blended options often fails to connect with people who strongly identify with their cultural traditions.²⁹

Methods in the Study of Childhood and Family Life, Thomas S. Weisner ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study of Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 113.

²⁶ Ken David, “Multicultural Church Planting Models,” *Journal of Ministry and Theology* (Clarks Summit, PA, 2003), 118. They also can be people who want their children to speak a common language (usually English).

²⁷ Thus, the blended church may actually not be very multicultural, for many are largely one culture of people who like cultural variety.

²⁸ To only offer blended options (as the Multicultural Blended Church does) disconnects it from people who simply just prefer their cultural style. I am not talking about people who believe their culture is superior to another, for this, I would argue, is immoral. Instead, I am only suggesting that churches appeal to more cultures if they offer worship for individual cultures along with unity worship that celebrates the uniqueness and equality among all cultures.

²⁹ To understand the cultural adaption phenomena, it is helpful to remember the three ways people adapt to other cultures: *consonant adaption*, *selective adaption*, and *dissonant adaption*. Ruben G. Rumbaut, “Acculturation, Discrimination, and Ethnic Identity Among Children of Immigrants,” in *Discovering Successful Pathways in Children’s Development: Mixed Methods in the Study of Childhood and Family Life*, Thomas S. Weisner ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 8. See also Eddie Gibbs, *I Believe in Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 92 and Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study of Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 113.

Still, blended celebrations are needed. They are ideal venues for creating unity and conciliation as people grow in their appreciation for other cultural differences. Therefore, they should be part of our strategies. However, the best place for them may be as “blended unity services” in a Multicultural Alliance Church model.³⁰

FIGURE 4.4

Strengths/Weaknesses of the Multicultural Blended Church

<i>Name</i>	<i>Multicultural Blended Churches</i> (also called world-beat churches, international churches, intercultural churches, and umbrella churches)
<i>Mode of growth</i>	Blending cultures into a new intermingled culture. Appeals mostly to an upwardly mobile educated populace.
<i>Relationships</i>	Relationships are numerous but often reduplicated, and cultures less represented have less influence.
<i>Pluses</i>	+ Foretaste of what heaven will look like (Rev. 7:9). + Attractive to educated, middle/upper-class and widely traveled people. + Creates multi-faceted cultural celebrations.
<i>Minuses</i>	- Attractive to selective adapters, i.e. people with less cultural identification. - Attractive to educated, middle/upper class and widely traveled people - Blend may have too many unfamiliar cultural elements to communicate well to dissonant adapters, i.e. people with a high degree of cultural identification.
<i>Degree of difficulty</i>	Moderate to low. Moderate because it requires cross-cultural compromise in blended ministry. Low because selective adapters are more likely to appreciate blended elements from different cultures.
<i>Creator complex</i>	Moderate to high. Those who embrace a “blended culture” may view others who prefer their own culture as less mature.
<i>R1 = Redistribution</i>	Low. Redistribution takes place primarily amid the middle and upper-middle class blended community.
<i>R2 = Relocation</i>	Low. A facility accessible to many different cultures is required in order to attain the goal of blending people. Though facilities could be located in urban areas, my observations have been that they are usually located in the middle and upper-middle class areas.
<i>R3 = Reconciliation</i>	Moderate. Participants are reconciling, to a degree, through their creation of a new blended culture.

³⁰ In other words, a church made up of multiple and equal sub-congregations; see above.

The Cultural Assimilation Church

This is actually not a multicultural church. In this church, a dominant culture tries to make over other cultures into its image. One researcher described it this way, “The dominant culture ‘opens their doors for the ethnics to come to their churches and worship God in *their* way with predictable lack of success.’”³¹

Some churches in North America embrace the assimilation model today in hairstyles, clothing styles, music, etc. They believe that newcomers will mature quicker in their faith if they adopt the congregation’s pre-existing traditions. These churches can give the impression that their culture is superior to other cultures (and they may actually believe it). For example, assimilationists insinuate that non-Anglos should become whiter. However, theo-

FIGURE 4.5
Strengths/Weaknesses of the Cultural Assimilation Church

Name	The Cultural Assimilation Church (also called assimilationist church and colonialist church)
Mode of growth	This church grows as it makes more people over in the traditional image of the congregation.
Relationships	Relationships are very high between people who have assimilated, but almost non-existent between congregants and outside cultures.
Pluses	+ The church is united in culture; cultural differences do not need to be addressed. + The church only needs to have one type of worship style, language, etc.
Minuses	- The church creates an often old-fashioned culture, which may become a barrier to contemporary non-churchgoers. - Authoritarian leadership can arise, because forcing cultural adoption is seen as the preferred mode of discipleship. - Relationships with family, friends, and non-churchgoers are damaged as a congregant assimilates to a new culture and disparages other cultures.
Degree of difficulty	High. It requires willing participants to cast off their existing culture and accept a new culture in its place.
Creator complex	High. The church equates holy living with a specific culture. This domineering culture wants to make over other cultures in the image of itself.
R1 = Redistribution	Low. People who refuse to assimilate are at worst castigated and at best ignored.
R2 = Relocation	Low. The same reasons as above.
R3 = Reconciliation	Low. The same reasons as above.

³¹ C. Peter Wagner, *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1979), 162.

logians cry foul, with one stating, “The New Testament precedents strongly asserted that the gospel was not intended to make Gentiles more Jewish, and Jewish more Gentile, but rather that each culture was to maintain its integrity in the body of Christ.”³²

Mixing the Four Types to Create Healthy Multicultural Hybrid Churches

In practice, most churches are hybrids of the four principal multicultural types (ignoring the assimilation model, for obvious reasons). For example, Times Square Church in New York City is well known for its culturally diverse congregation. It uses a blended format for its Sunday worship services.³³ Times Square Church also holds separate hip-hop worship services on Friday nights.³⁴ This latter action would be an example of the church behaving like an “alliance model,” because it is reaching out to two cultures at different times (blended culture on Sundays and hip hop culture on Fridays). Though Times Square Church is famous for its blended Sunday services, it actually behaves at times like an alliance church when it offers culturally diverse celebrations at different times. Thus, a hybrid model of the above four types may also be the best choice. A final quote by John V. Taylor, statesman, Africanist, and Bishop of Winchester might be helpful:

We do not want the westernization of the universal Church. On the other hand we don't want the ecumenical cooks to throw all the cultural traditions on which they can lay their hands into one bowl and stir them to a hash of indeterminate colour.³⁵

Use these models as discussion starters. As a result, the church can better participate in the personal and spiritual reconciliation a divided world so craves.

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³² Ibid, 147.

³³ It is possible that the draw of multiple cultures in Times Square Church is because New York in itself draws multiple cultures, and the church is a microcosm of that.

³⁴ Personal conversation, Bianca Tavera, former member of Times Square Church and IWU student, Feb. 10, 2012.

³⁵ John V. Taylor, “Cultural Ecumenism,” *Church Missionary Society Newsletter* (Nov. 1974): 3; see also John V. Taylor, “The Theological Basis of Interfaith Dialogue,” in *Faith Meets Faith*, Gerald M. Anderson and Thomas F. Stansky, ed., *Mission Trends*, no. 5 (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1981), 93ff.