CHAPTER 3

Context

3.1 Introduction

Congregations are, in Paul's words, "earthen vessels"—human institutions shaped by a myriad of social influences. To describe them in this way does not detract from their religious character. Indeed, their human qualities make them effective in carrying out their mission in all sorts of conditions and circumstances. "The church is a chameleon," observes James Gustafson, as he points to its capacity to adapt to new surroundings, to find colors that fit into various environments.[1]

Because a congregation is an adapting organization, it is important to see it in relation to its social context: *the setting, local and global, in which a congregation finds itself and to which it responds*. This chapter advances a perspective for doing this which focuses on the context and then works "from the outside in" to the life of the congregation.[2] The perspective takes seriously the interrelations of the social and cultural setting and religious organizations; the structures and processes linking the congregation to its environment are regarded as crucially important in understanding the inner workings of the congregation. While the authors do not subscribe to a deterministic viewpoint, they do believe the environment both sets limits on and provides opportunities for a congregation.

In a very basic sense this chapter understands congregations as "open systems." This notion implies permeable boundaries, or flow between the environment and the congregation. H. Paul Douglass and Edmund deS. Brunner, pioneer sociological researchers, emphasized one dimension of the flow:

The quality and changes of this environment are almost inevitably communicated to the church. Differences in human fortunes suffered by the church's immediate constituencies and changes in these fortunes due to changes in the environment largely control the institutional destinies of each particular church. Where the environment is prosperous and progressive the church can scarcely fail to "succeed." Where it is miserable and deteriorating the church can scarcely avoid failure.[3]

Implicit here is a view of the congregation as constantly in a state of flux and adaptation. The sources of change are primarily environmental, forcing the religious institution to adjust to what is going on around it. Even if the environment is not fully determinative of what happens, an institution for its own survival must come to terms with a changing context.

But also, open system implies that the congregation *interacts* with its environment. While the power of the social context is quite persuasive, congregations do respond and can make choices affecting their destiny. The two-way, interactive process can be stated as follows:

A congregation—its theology and ethics, its worship, its style of operation, and what it does or does not do with reference to mission—is profoundly shaped by its social context.

A congregation, by virtue of its relationship to a religious or faith tradition, has the capacity, in a limited but crucial way, to transcend the determinative power of the social context so that it influences the context as it is being influenced by it.

These two propositions suggest the complexity of the interrelationships between congregations and their environments. The first proposition tells us simply that how a congregation expresses its faith—in beliefs, programs, organizations and behavior, is influenced by its social location—the people, politics, economic life, values, and class interests present in its setting. These are consequences of its character as an "earthen vessel." But the second proposition holds out a crucial freedom from determinism. Congregations participate in social and faith traditions that contain within them ideas and inspiration, beliefs and experience, on the basis of which the context may be challenged and at least partly transcended. The more leaders and members are helped to see and understand the power of the context on their congregation's life and their participa-

tion in it, the greater the possibility they have of cultivating a more responsible and effective expression of their faith commitments. Also, the more likely they will be to discover ways of influencing this context rather than simply being influenced by it. Open systems have the capacity for self-renewal based on feedback and insight, or at least some power to transform the world around them. An analysis of the context of the congregation will not prescribe to the congregation what it should be or do; but it can provide the congregation with information and insight about itself and its setting that open it to new possibilities for response.

To view congregations as open systems is to risk making a theological statement. To take the congregation's social context seriously is also a statement about the work of God in history and the church's mission in its world. One finds in scripture and in the witness of the Church over time the response of Christians to a God whose concern extends to the whole of life, in which human boundaries between people and nations and rich and poor are overcome, and in which God's intentions for all people are made known afresh in each generation. The local congregation is an agent of God's larger purposes, equipped for its mission both by its participation in God's larger design and by its human character. The authors of this chapter confess special excitement in congregations whose sense of God's vision takes them beyond concern for themselves, who provide social space where social distinctions are overcome, who can see beyond their own problems to the needs and struggles of their immediate neighbors and of suffering brothers and sisters half a world away. While these may be viewed by some as biases, the methods for looking at the congregation's social context presented in this chapter should be useful for those whose perspective may be quite different.[4]

Components of the Congregation's Context

To say that a congregation exists in relation to an environment is an encompassing generalization that begs for greater specificity. The environment, or that which is external to an institution, is *inclusive* as well as *multi-layered*. Let us examine each of these to see what is implied for congregational studies.

By inclusiveness is meant the open-ended character of a congregation's context—extending from the local neighborhood to the global community. A congregation is linked to networks and events on a national and international scale; as a religious and moral community it is called upon to respond to issues that arise from beyond the geographic locale in which it exists.

Examples abound: Wars in Southeast Asia contribute to an influx of immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, while poverty and political oppression in Central America and the Caribbean stimulate immigration from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba, and Haiti. Worldwide inflation and high interest rates place strain on family budgets which in turn affects giving to local churches. Changes in the national economy provide incentives for industry to relocate to growing areas of the United States or to other countries, making it difficult for local communities and metropolitan areas to maintain their economic viability.

Normally, however, the starting point for the contextual analysis of congregations is the *local community*. For here it is, in the immediate neighborhood or community, that most of the external influences on congregations find expression. In the abstract one can speak of broad cultural trends such as immigration, economic dislocation and changes in family patterns; in the concrete one thinks of the Cruz family down the street who have come here from Mexico to work in the packing plant, or of Mr. D'Amico, who is out of work because the electronics factory has relocated to Taiwan, or of Ruth Hansen's daughter Cheryl, who is living with her boyfriend in Syracuse. In the local community people move in and out, group life takes on a particular style, fads and fashions come and go. Widespread social and cultural changes come to bear on the congregation as an institution rooted in community life.

In the modern world, the local community is no longer a self-contained geographic entity. Often the physical boundaries of neighborhoods and communities are indeterminate, and for many urban dwellers especially, spatial proximity is not a perfect index of social participation. Social networks and patterns of institutional involvement extend beyond the immediate locale. Hence, while this chapter focuses primarily on the local community as the principal context for a congregation, it is important to keep in mind that the *linkages* to the outer world are important in understanding the community and the congregation. Even in the most remote geographical locales, "connections" outside play a big part in determining the pulse of social and religious life.

Multi-layered refers to the fact that the impact of the environment on a congregation, or any institution, occurs at various levels. Social conditioning is sometimes open and visible, sometimes more hidden and subterranean. The web of interrelationships is such that changes at one level can lead to numerous and unexpected consequences at another. The social fabric of any community is a complex web of rules, roles and

relationships; alterations in one or another of these can result in social ramifications elsewhere. Shifts in a community's demographic growth rate, changing patterns of social class, emerging new life styles and values—any of these can lead to far-reaching and sometimes unexpected implications for congregational life.

The pages that follow explore several "levels" at which the environment exerts a powerful impact on the congregation: the *"social worlds"* of community residents, the *demographic* character of the local community, and patterns of *socal interaction* within the community itself. The three are interrelated, and the contextual approach to congregational analysis moves freely among them. However, for analytic purposes, it is useful to look at them separately. The final section looks specifically at religion's role in the community.

3.2 Getting in Touch with the Community

Chapter 1 introduced Heritage United Methodist Church, whose leaders sense a need to take a fresh look at mission possibilities in their neighborhood. Some members feel it is time to press on with the church's involvements in elderly housing, while others are concerned about membership declines and feel the need for new programming in evangelism and church growth that will enhance the church's appeal to young families. Heritage Church has an opportunity to reacquaint itself with its neighborhood and to look at new possibilities for mission that community changes have brought about. It approaches the community with some fairly specific questions: What are the needs of our older neighbors? Who are the young families and what might Heritage do to reach out to them?

It is helpful to go a bit beyond the case and make some assumptions about the way the church's research needs might be approached. One constructive step would be for the church board to appoint a "special committee on community ministries" to conduct research on its behalf and to report back its findings within a reasonable period of time. For Heritage, a committee of eight to ten members who are broadly representative of the congregation would probably suffice. The board would do well to include both "experts" and "amateurs" in community studies and a mix of both persons who are advocates of particular program possibilities and others who are more neutral. It might ask Deborah Jones, the pastor, to assist the committee in its work and relieve her of other duties to free time for the special project.

3.2.1 Identifying the Church's Neighborhood

A crucial first step is to identify the neighborhood or community being studied. "Neighborhood" and "community" are defined in many ways—sometimes on the basis of spatial patterns, but often along lines of group interaction as well.

Usually the notion of a neighborhood is grounded in part in the subjective: the context in which an individual is related to a society or through which the individual experiences society—often at a particular period in one's life such as child, teenager, parent, grandparent, retiree. David Morris and Karl Hess put it this way:

When people then say "my neighborhood," it usually means they have found a place to live where they feel some human sense of belonging, some human sense of being *part* of a society, no matter how small, rather than just being *in* a society, no matter how large.[5]

The neighborhood is a crucial link connecting the individual to the larger society, generating a sense of belonging, and giving shape to individual and group life. More than just a geographic locale, a neighborhood or community is a normative system with its own rules, roles and relationships; a shared identity and consciousness; a distinctive social and status order; a common culture and way of life.

How does one "map" the social boundaries of a congregation's neighborhood or community? Many congregations find it helpful to begin with a map of the residences of member families. Using a detailed street map and a list of church members, place a pin on the map for each member household. Churches concerned wih evangelism might use a different color pin for members who have joined the church in the past two or three years. A completed membership map often yields surprises. Some churches discover they are more (or less) a "neighborhood church" than popularly perceived. Others find their membership "skips over" some residential neighborhoods. With increased mobility, historic links between congregations and specific neighborhoods have diminished. Where this is true the church will want to probe the reasons.[6]

Another exercise that is especially helpful for a committee as it begins its work is to provide a large blank street map and have group members mark places that have special meaning in their own lives and in the life of the community (e.g., "our first home" "the street my parents lived on," "the site of the old shoe factory," "the square where Kennedy had his big rally in 1960"). This exercise is a good reminder that the neighborhood has a history, that committee members bring past experiences to their community study, and that the neighborhood itself is a complex of varied meanings and experiences.

At some point Heritage committee will need to specify what it means by "the church's community." Some churches find it helpful to work with two definitions: the "immediate neighborhood" of several blocks surrounding the church building and for which the members feel some special responsibility, and a larger "parish area" from which the church draws members. Others, out of a sense of the congregation's larger social responsibility, may want to look at their own community alongside others in which they are considering new programming. In rural areas the larger "parish" may include several towns or counties.

3.2.2 Some Key Documents

There is an enormous amount of printed information produced by governmental and private groups that can help a church study committee explore its community or neighborhood. It is helpful to have these printed documents available early in the committee's work. A partial list might include the following:

> Annual reports of local officials
> Local histories
> Maps
> Land use plans
> Analyses of local voting patterns
> Reports of social service agencies
> Planning documents
> Local newspapers
> Chamber of Commerce publications
> Real estate brochures
> Welcome Wagon packets for new residents

Planning agencies are particularly good sources of basic documents and information on local communities and neighborhoods. There are few American communities that do not have at least one person asking questions about their future. The planning may center on economic development, recreation, land use, public health, school needs, transportation or a host of other issues. In some areas planning is a state function; in others it is done by county or local governments or by intergovernmental groups. Some planning agencies work hard to secure public participation in their work; others work behind closed doors.

Government agencies are not alone in developing plans for a community's future. Banks, utility companies, citizen action groups and nonprofit organizations may all share your interest in the community and welcome your requests for information and documentation. Heritage would want to give special attention to groups concerned with aging and needs of young families.

3.2.3 Take a Walk!

One of the most important parts of any community study is also the simplest. It involves setting aside the major portion of a day to walk through your neighborhood or community absorbing its sights, sounds, and aromas. The purpose of such an exercise is to expose you to things you may already know but that have become so familiar you no longer notice them. Who is on the streets at various times of the day or night? Why aren't those teenagers at school? How's business in Mr. Caporale's bakery? When did the O'Brien house get so run down? How is the new mall affecting Jim Smith's carpet business? Who in this town would wear that sexy dress in Mrs. Buttner's dress store window?

In the course of the walk be alert to your own reactions to what you see and hear, but also try to look at things from the perspective of other people and groups. Put yourself into the role of a newcomer to the community. How apparent are the basic services a person would need in locating in town? Where does one find a family doctor, an AA meeting, a laundry, a church, a pizza? How would an older or physically disabled person handle the curbs on the sidewalks? Where would a homeless person spend the night? How does a six-year-old get across a busy intersection on the way to school?

The walk can be modified to meet a particular situation, but avoid the temptation to spend too much time in a car. Get out and stretch your legs! A group can take the walk by assigning teams of two to three persons to cover the same geographic area, each with a different perspective in mind: that of a young family newly arrived in the community, an older person on a fixed income, a drifter, a person who has difficulty with English, a college student.

Save time at the end of your excursion for recording your impressions. A simple list of "What I Saw" and "New Questions Raised" will help organize your thoughts if you're on your own. A discussion of what group members observed is always an educational and enlightening experience.

3.2.4 Exploring "Social Worlds"

To understand a community it is essential to explore the "social worlds" represented in it. By social worlds is meant the perceptions of reality that inform people's daily lives. To speak of a social world is, in a most fundamental way, to acknowledge the human need for meaning and order in personal experience, for making sense out of life. More than this, it is to acknowledge that reality is "socially constructed"—that the social context is crucially important for how individuals create

and sustain their symbolic worlds. While some people are aware of how they shape their own worlds, most simply take them for granted. Nevertheless, all human beings, consciously or unconsciously, strive for an integrated and meaningful outlook.

In recent times the study of social worlds has become both more important and more complex. Scholars cite two key reasons: First, traditional ways of viewing the world and attributing meaning to social events and behavior have lost much of their influence. As a result of this increased "pluralization" of social worlds, people discover alternative and competing ways of viewing the world and the need to choose among them. Second, in a process called "privatization," the attribution of meanings has become highly individualistic. Meanings are no longer universally shared throughout the society as a whole, but individuals fashion for themselves systems of meaning that are personally satisfying and fulfilling. Often they reflect the class position of social groups. Sociologist Peter Berger argues that the new situation of religion in the modern world forces upon individuals a "heretical impera-tive"—the need to make choices among alternative interpretations and select out those elements of a religious tradition that are illuminating for a particular life-situation.[7]

Congregations are directly affected by the processes of pluralization and privatization. As the world has become more fragmented, the "private" and "public" spheres have become more separated from one another. Separation has also meant functional dif-ferentiation, to the point that private life is increasingly treasured for its nonpublic character. Boundaries between the two are carefully drawn, with the private realm often held up as a refuge and retreat. The consequences for religion are far-reaching and signifi-cant: *church life becomes to a considerable extent captive to the private realm.* With family, friendships and hobbies, church participation becomes part of a world removed from the public. The situation is somewhat paradoxical: as communications technology brings communities closer to events in other parts of the world and in other neighborhoods, increasingly people look to religion to help them secure "private" space removed from that wider world. An increasingly privatized religious world bears a host of implications—for religious belief and psychology, understandings of community mission, and institutional patterns and styles. The case of High Ridge Presbyterian Church, discussed in chapter 1, can be viewed as a struggle between two social worlds present in a single congregation; on the issue of allowing champagne in a congregational setting some members reflect the social worlds of their affluent suburban California community while others hold to fundamentally different perceptions of what is appro-priate behavior in the church.

Methods for studying the social psychology of community life are not as well-developed as demo-graphic and interactional analysis, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Getting "inside" the worlds in which people live and grasping their meanings is difficult. One does get clues from surveys and records, cultural styles, and examinations of community tensions and conflicts. For understanding social worlds and meaning systems, however, careful observation and ethnographic inquiry are essential. The perceptive observer who "takes a walk" in the community will learn a great deal about the way people live and their values simply from observing family and housing styles, "status symbols" such as automobiles and boats, evidence of consumption patterns, specialty shops, types of organizations and hobbies, newspapers and magazines read, the uses of weekend and other "private" time.

The best way to get "inside" the social worlds of neighborhood residents is, of course, to engage in conversation with them. People love to talk, even with strangers.[8] Many churches have used the simple technique of having all members of their study group "interview" a friend or neighbor. Heritage Church might want to have each committee member interview two people: one an elderly resident and the other a young newcomer. The interview focuses on a few broad questions that move from the very general to the fairly personal. Here are some examples that can be modified to meet specific group objectives.

—What are the things that attract people to live here in this neighborhood? Were those the things that attracted you?

—As you think about the time you have lived in this neighborhood, what are the most important changes you've seen? What has caused these changes? Have there been major events or happenings that are especially important—for example, a strike or disas-ter—that have affected the ways people look at the neighborhood?

—Who are the people that seem to care a lot about what happens in this community, who really want to make it a better place to live?

—How would you describe your neighbors? What kind of people are they? What do you think are the most important things in the lives of people who live here in the neighborhood? Are those the most important things in your life?

—Are there people who don't seem to fit in very well with others who live in the neighborhood? What's different about these people? How do others react to them?

—What do you think keeps people going when times get tough?

—Can you think of times in your own life when you've undergone an important change in the way you looked at the world? When you've had a really clear sense of what counted in your life?

It's important in any conversation to be alert to what the other person is saying—and trying to say. The interviewer should be prepared to share his or her own views where appropriate, but the main purpose is to listen and to learn. Taking notes is fine and will be helpful in summarizing your interview. If taking notes disrupts the flow of the conversation it is better to try to reconstruct the session on paper as soon as possible.

3.2.5 Analysis and Interpretation

There have been a number of attempts to identify the dominant social worlds or meaning systems at large in American communities. One that is especially intriguing is suggested by sociologist Robert Wuthnow and grows out of his research on the *content* of persons' meaning systems in California's Bay Area.[9] Wuthnow suggests four major meaning systems and some of their attributes:

1. The *theistic* is closest to that traditionally associated with major American religious traditions. People look to God as the agent who governs life and the source of purpose and direction for individuals. Bringing one's life into conformity with God's will is the key to personal meaning and happiness. God is the creator of the universe and is active in history. The Bible is God's law and humanity's guide to appropriate living.

2. *Individualism* places the emphasis on human beings as being in control of their own destiny. Success or failure is in the hands of individuals, who set their own course in life and are free to choose their futures. Individualism has deep roots in America and is associated with traditional values of hard work, willpower, determination, thrift, honesty, and the avoidance of such vices as laziness, drunkenness, and deceit. Special emphasis is given to personal willpower as the key to happiness and good fortune.

3. *Social science* is a third meaning system and is similar to individualism in its emphasis on human beings' roles in history. Its emphasis, however, is on the key roles of social forces rather than individuals. Family background, social status, and class, the society a person lives in and its cultural, economic, and political systems combine to shape a persons' position in life. Less control is in the hands of individuals; rather, one is socialized into patterns of thinking and acting. A person's sense of happiness and success varies according to the opportunities the society has provided and not simply to his or her energy and hard work.

4. *Mysticism* is somewhat different. It is suspicious of the ability of the other three meaning systems to understand the meaning of life and account for the forces that govern it. It places special reliance on experience, particularly ecstatic experience, as the source of knowledge about life. The stress is on intuition and feelings. At the same time, Wuthnow stresses that the mystic also has a philosophy of life that places one's own most intense experiences at the center; "In such experiences he can alter time and space. He can experience God. He can escape the social and cultural forces that impinge upon him. He can create reality itself."

Wuthnow's classification of meaning systems is helpful for organizing observations from both formal and casual conversations conducted within the community.[10] While Wuthnow used his classifications to formulate a formal survey questionnaire, they can also be used in a more informal manner to help organize data from neighborhood interviews. Following a series of interviews, the study group can use its interview notes to identify specific comments that reflect the four meaning systems and record the comments for group discussion. The following examples are suggested by interview items used in Wuthnow's California survey instrument:

THEISTIC

I definitely believe in God.
God has been a strong influence in my life.
People suffer because they don't obey God.
God created the first man and woman.
There is life after death, with rewards and punishments.

INDIVIDUALISTIC

People usually bring suffering on themselves.
The poor simply aren't willing to work hard.
If one works hard enough, a person can do anything he or she wants to do.
If someone does not succeed, it's his or her own fault.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

I believe forgotten childhood experiences have an influence on me.

Suffering is caused by social arrangements that make people greedy for riches and power.
Man evolved from lower animals.
Beliefs are influenced by income.

MYSTICAL

I have had the feeling that I was in close contact with something holy or sacred and it has had a lasting impact on my life.
It is good to live in a fantasy world every now and then.
New insights about myself have had a strong influence on my life.
I have experienced a feeling of harmony with the universe, and it has had a lasting influence on my life.

When the interview comments have been organized the group should discuss what members have found. The group will want to focus on questions like these: What have our interviews told us about the ways our neighbors view the neighborhood and the world? Are there differences between older and younger people we have visited with? To what extent are they similar to or different from the message of the gospel and the way our own members view the world? How can we relate to those who view the world differently than our members do?

Another approach to analyzing social worlds focuses on an individual's *breadth of perspective.* Here the concern is less with content of meanings systems than with frames of reference—whether a person is oriented mainly to the immediate environment or the larger social world. In many studies throughout America two major character types have been identfied:

Locals are very much oriented to neighborhood and community. They favor voluntary organizations in which stable, communal relationships are possible; they are deeply immersed in friendships and social networks. They tend to personalize interpretations of social reality and to hold firmly to traditional beliefs and moral values.

Cosmopolitans are more oriented to the larger world. They tend to prefer professional memberships and specialized voluntary organizations; their contacts and "significant others" extend beyond the immediate community. In life-style and ideology they are more tolerant of diversity and more open to social change.

This distinction is useful for congregations studying their communities and has been applied to congrega-

tions.[11] Research suggests that locals are "belongers" and tend to be deeply involved in church and synagogue activities. Locals emphasize norms of participation, sociality, and traditional modes of commitment; they are defenders of conventional beliefs and practices. Cosmopolitans, in contrast, are less concerned about community (and congregational) norms, but tend to place a great deal of emphasis on the ethical and meaning aspects of religion; their belief systems are less particularistic and more organized around personal religious quests. The two types differ religiously in fundamental ways—in beliefs, practices, and styles of institutional commitment.

In virtually every community or congregation it is possible to identify the two character types. Some clues can be obtained from exploring the following:
—What types of organizations and groups do people join and take part in? Increasingly, people wear their organizational memberships and commitments on their chests. A preponderance of T-shirts proclaiming membership in Max's Gym or loyalty to Annie's Bar & Grill suggests more localistic ties than those arguing for an end to nuclear testing or to the killing of baby whales.
—What is the breadth of people's concerns? What is talked about in the barber shop: the shot Al Maguire's kid made at last night's basketball game and the new waitress at the donut shop or the prospects for peace in the Middle East and enthusiasm for the "Live from Lincoln Center" broadcast on public television?
—How strong are social attachments—to the immediate neighborhood and to the larger world? How is the turnout at community events? Do people *go* home or *come* home for the holidays?

Answers to these questions can help provide a "cognitive mapping" of the community and yield valuable information as to frames of reference and significant others. Such information is valuable not only for what it tells you about individuals, but also because it defines the character of the symbolic worlds in which religious meanings take on significance and are acted upon. A study committee will want to reflect on two key questions as it considers the relationship between social worlds and congregational life: 1. What can be said about the social worlds of members of the congregation? How are they similar to those of other community residents and how are they different? 2. To what extent does religion inform persons' social worlds? Do people carry their understandings from their religious and faith commitments or is their understanding of the world carried to their congregation membership from their class position and "secular" involvements?

3.3 Demographic Data in Congregational Analysis

In recent years technological advances have made demographic data available for a range of purposes and applications that could not have been envisioned at the time of the first federal census in 1790. Today, corporations from American Airlines to Xerox will use census data in shaping marketing strategies. Burger King, McDonald's and Wendy's will pore over census data in determining potential sites for new fast-food franchises. Political organizations will run the data through their computers seeking voters and contributors. The federal government will use census data in apportioning revenue sharing funds.

Churches have also become major users of census data. Rare is the denomination which locates a new church without a careful examination of the demographic composition of the proposed site. Some mission agencies target resources toward communities with high need for their services and at least one group conducts careful analyses of respondents to its direct-mail advertising. Census data is also used by congregations. Long-range planning committees, committees planning church extension projects, task groups considering service projects such as day care centers, elderly housing and other types of outreach, and church boards considering stewardship goals or salaries for staff frequently rely on census data in their work.

For analyzing the demographic and social characteristics of the congregation's immediate environment, the census is a key resource. This is especially true for a church like Heritage Methodist, which is looking fairly specifically at needs of particular groups in its neighborhood. Before turning specifically to Heritage a reminder about some key census concepts will be helpful.

Taking the Census: In 1980 the census was undertaken by mail in most of the country. Every census questionnaire contained seven questions about each household member plus twelve questions about housing. About one-fifth of all households received a longer questionnaire with an additional 40 population and housing items. The "short form" took an average of 15 minutes to complete, the "long form" 45 minutes. The questions themselves are the product of a lengthy process involving governmental officials and various interest groups. Some areas such as housing conditions receive considerable attention, while others, including religious affiliation and participation, are not included at all.

In recent years, the Bureau of the Census (which has responsibility for conducting the census) has given special attention to including groups which have traditionally been "undercounted." Their efforts included personal visits in isolated areas and diverse special efforts in minority communities. While the figure of 226,545,805 persons will stand as the "official" count of the U.S. population on April 1, 1980, virtually no one will argue it is complete. Some persons were missed, and members of minority groups, Southerners, persons in the country illegally, and men are disproportionately represented among those not counted. The 1980 Census, while not perfect, is estimated to include 99.4 percent of the "real" population. Users of census data will want to be aware, however, that some people are "missed" by the census itself.

Census Geography: One of the greatest values of the federal census—in comparison, for example, with national opinion polls—is its geographic comprehensiveness. To understand census geography requires a brief outline of its key concepts.

Some of the units of census geography are quite simple. For example, each U. S. household is located in a single state and county or county equivalent (parishes in Louisiana, independent cities in Virginia). Counties are further subdivided into minor civil divisions (MCDs) or census county divisions (CCDs). MCDs are political or administrative subdivisions (commonly townships) in 30 states; they usually have some legal standing. CCDs are statistical areas defined in the 20 states where minor civil divisions are not legally defined, are not well known, or have frequent boundary changes. CCDs are especially common in the Western states.

Census tracts are another type of geographic unit used for census purposes. Tracts are found in urbanized areas known as metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs). They are small, relatively permanent areas averaging 4,000 persons each and are intended to be socially homogeneous (that is, they contain people of similar backgrounds and economic status). They respect natural and human boundaries such as rivers and major highways. Unlike states, counties, MCDs, and CCDs, tracts have little intuitive meaning for people. They require special maps that identify their boundaries.

Incorporated and census-designated places are still another important type of area designation. These are concentrations of people that have legally prescribed boundaries or have a definite residential nucleus but lack legal standing. Unlike the other units, places need not conform to county or state lines and are subject to redefinition over time as population patterns change.[12]

Insert 3–1 illustrates key points in census geography using the state of Iowa as an example. Figure A shows Iowa's counties and metropolitan areas. Counties in the

state's seven metropolitan statistical areas are shaded. MSAs can cross state lines.

Figure B is an enlarged view of Linn and Jones counties. Linn County, which includes Cedar Rapids city is classified as metropolitan. Jones county, located to its east, is classified as nonmetropolitan. Figure B shows the county subdivisions (minor civil divisions) for Linn County and both minor civil divisions and places for Jones county. Places have been omitted from Linn county in this illustration.

Figure C looks in greater detail at the four minor civil divisions (in this case townships) that comprise the southwest quadrant of Jones county. Three of the four townships contain places with independent legal standing as Iowa cities (shown in capital letters). One city, Onslow, overlaps two townships (Madison and Wyoming). Figure C is quite typical of census geography patterns in nonmetropolitan areas, although there are regional variations.

Figure D is an enlargement of Cedar Rapids city and illustrates census geography for SMSA counties. For census purposes Cedar Rapids is both a minor civil division and a place. The enlargement shows the city divided into segments of varying size and shape. These are the city's census tracts. They average about 4,000 persons and are socially homogeneous. They can be thought of as small neighborhoods.

Figure E enlarges five census tracts in the southwestern portion of Cedar Rapids. It shows the tract numbers and key boundaries of the tracts. This might be thought of as typical of an urban parish area such as that served by Heritage Methodist church.

3.3.1 Using Census Data: An Example

When the Census Bureau completes its work on a decennial census it releases several sets of tables covering various American communities and neighborhoods. These tables are released first in computer tape form as "Standard Tape Files" and later as printed reports similar to this excerpt from the Cedar Rapids Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area report.[13]

The previous section used the state of Iowa to illustrate census geography. It moved from the state to the county to the county subdivision level and in Linn County (which is classified as metropolitan for census purposes) to the tract level, and identified tracts 10, 11, 23, 24, and 30.01 as the "neighborhood" served by Heritage United Methodist Church. This section introduces the kinds of information available from the Bureau of the Census, covers some key census terms, and suggests, by example, some ways demographic data can inform church mission planning. Persons needing more detailed information on the census itself or sources of demographic data can turn to the sources listed later in this chapter.

The first three tables look at three changes in this five-tract area between 1970 and 1980. Table 1 looks at population and household change. The neighborhood is growing, but slowly; its 14 percent increase is just a bit higher than the nation's 11 percent growth.[14]

Table 1 also shows change in households. A household, for census purposes, is a person or collection of persons sharing a living unit. In this neighborhood the number of households rose 42 percent in the ten years. Family households (two or more related persons sharing a living unit) grew by 24 percent while the number of nonfamily households (persons living alone or unrelated persons living together) nearly tripled. The number of persons in group quarters (institutional living arrangements such as nursing homes, military barracks, prisons, extended care hospital facilities, etc.) declined. The "typical" household declined from 3.5 to 2.9 persons in the 10 years.

Table 2 turns to racial and ethnic changes. Comparing racial-ethnic data over time can be risky because the Census Bureau has asked these items different ways and of different samples of the population. Between 1970 and 1980 these changes affect totals for the white, Asian and Pacific Islander and Hispanic populations. The 1980 data is much more reliable than data from earlier censuses. While the number of minority group persons has risen in percentage terms, this community remains virtually all white.

Table 3 looks at change in the various age groups within the community. While the total population rose by just over 14 percent, there is great variation in growth of specific groups. The number of young people has declined quite sharply; at the same time other groups are growing. The number of persons in their twenties and thirties has grown significantly, as has the number of older residents. The table gives Heritage Church the useful information that the number of persons age 75 and older (and thus likely to be prime candidates for elderly housing) has risen from 764 in 1970 to 1,046 in 1980 (up 36.9 percent); in addition, the number of persons age 65 to 74 has grown from 949 to 1,360 (up 43.3 percent).

The two population pyramids give further insight into the age structure of the population and recent changes in it. The pyramids are pictorial representations of the community, dividing it by age and sex. In 1970 the pyramid looked like a pyramid; wide at the bottom, it narrows as it moves toward the top. By 1980 the shape is somewhat different. It is narrower at the bottom (reflecting the decline in the number of children and youth), widens toward the middle to reflect the

Insert 3-1

IOWA

Figure A

LINN COUNTY   JONES COUNTY

Figure B

☐ CENTER JUNCTION	☐ ONSLOW
Madison	Wyoming
	☐ WYOMING
	OXFORD JUNCTION ☐
Hale	Oxford

Figure C

CEDAR RAPIDS CITY

Figure D

11

10

23

24

30.01

Figure E
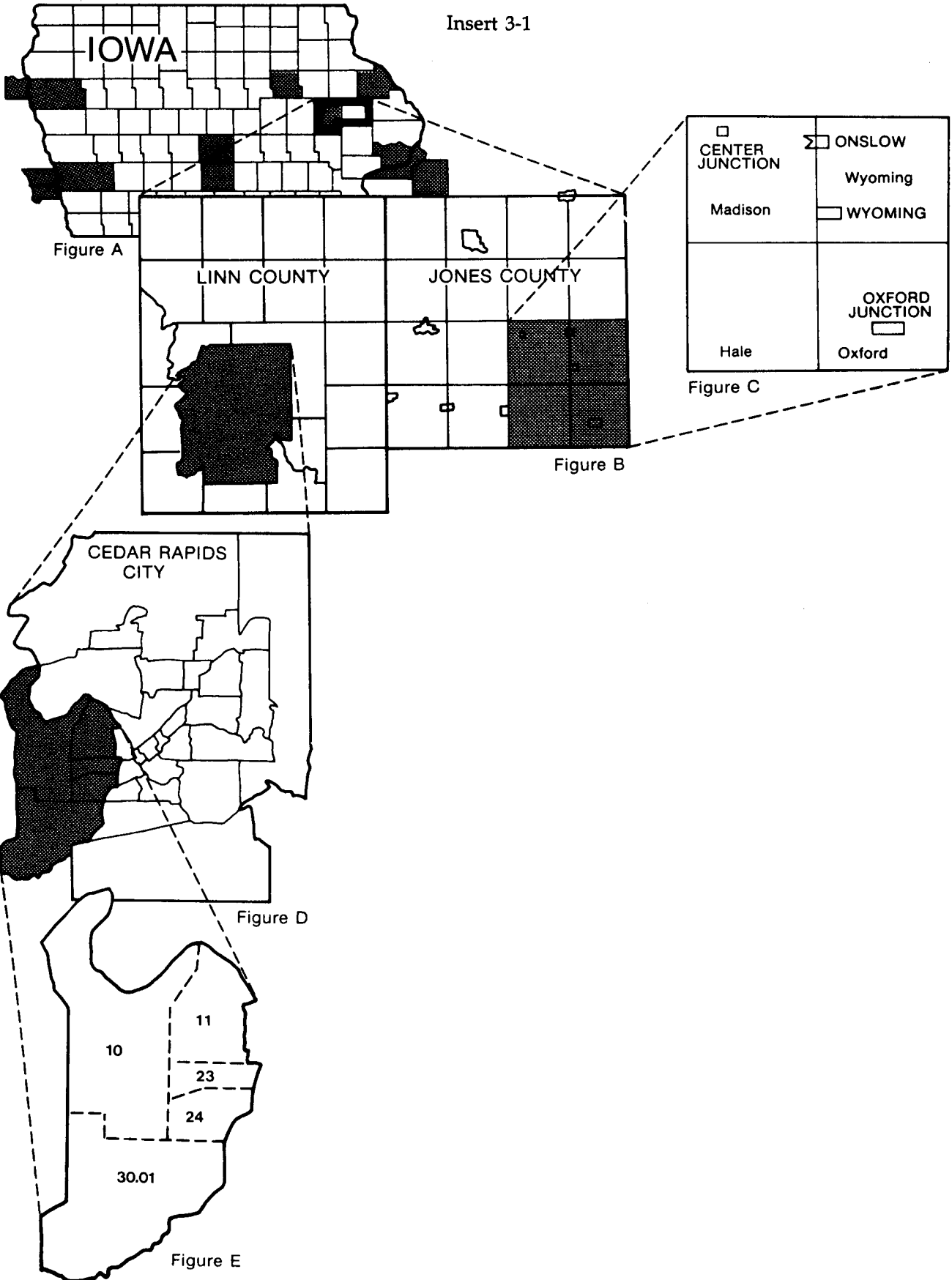
General Characteristics of Persons: 1980—Con.

Census Tracts

Cedar Rapids city, Linn County—Con.

	Tract 0009*	Tract 0010*	Tract 0011	Tract 0012	Tract 0013	Tract 0014	Tract 0015*	Tract 0016*	Tract 0017	Tract 0018	Tract 0019	Tract 0020
AGE												
Total persons	7 633	11 620	6 406	3 725	4 216	3 731	2 383	5 819	7 563	3 922	2 362	1 727
Under 5 years	560	953	540	296	281	245	109	331	646	270	150	26
5 to 9 years	643	1 057	511	241	208	228	133	383	553	211	120	6
10 to 14 years	806	1 169	481	272	191	224	169	492	630	208	92	14
15 to 19 years	762	1 196	529	327	372	263	187	509	753	277	197	514
20 to 24 years	614	930	563	396	701	283	211	267	766	446	487	575
25 to 34 years	1 372	2 278	1 506	548	721	649	370	776	1 429	765	445	132
35 to 44 years	1 158	1 637	750	333	301	403	275	763	762	294	141	45
45 to 54 years	985	1 061	538	360	291	393	282	743	604	305	147	56
55 to 64 years	520	705	494	421	434	481	260	812	563	343	146	93
65 to 74 years	159	337	234	323	395	372	220	476	453	371	191	103
75 years and over	54	297	260	208	321	190	167	267	384	432	246	163
3 and 4 years	215	392	215	105	96	94	40	138	243	98	54	5
16 years and over	5 450	8 170	4 751	2 846	3 507	2 982	1 940	4 500	5 570	3 175	1 981	1 675
18 years and over	5 109	7 675	4 533	2 715	3 430	2 864	1 855	4 254	5 248	3 083	1 939	1 654
21 years and over	4 756	7 052	4 271	2 528	2 986	2 725	1 742	4 045	4 803	2 886	1 677	937
60 years and over	397	930	703	736	932	806	498	1 113	1 079	982	510	320
62 years and over	330	802	615	649	842	704	456	968	978	913	482	302
Median	28.3	27.4	28.5	29.9	29.0	34.5	35.5	36.8	27.7	31.6	27.4	21.4
Female	3 857	6 015	3 265	1 938	2 443	1 951	1 244	3 012	3 968	2 120	1 255	941
Under 5 years	292	478	250	142	138	96	49	167	311	125	69	14
5 to 9 years	320	556	244	110	100	105	52	172	280	94	61	4
10 to 14 years	386	580	232	128	99	120	77	256	319	102	44	10
15 to 19 years	396	604	267	169	253	129	103	244	366	133	106	277
20 to 24 years	329	508	295	209	454	149	95	122	418	253	229	303
25 to 34 years	705	1 172	746	270	362	332	179	412	709	373	203	56
35 to 44 years	578	829	370	168	167	203	154	405	397	154	65	22
45 to 54 years	491	519	270	193	168	212	148	388	315	168	72	29
55 to 64 years	243	339	246	235	241	258	146	423	304	180	92	45
65 to 74 years	80	201	145	177	248	217	133	253	271	228	129	60
75 years and over	37	229	200	137	213	130	108	170	270	310	185	121
3 and 4 years	115	183	99	51	44	35	19	76	114	34	21	4
16 years and over	2 779	4 263	2 479	1 527	2 093	1 608	1 051	2 355	2 977	1 769	1 071	910
18 years and over	2 587	4 021	2 370	1 462	2 060	1 548	1 001	2 243	2 829	1 728	1 050	902
21 years and over	2 408	3 688	2 242	1 358	1 722	1 479	943	2 149	2 599	1 616	915	511
60 years and over	211	567	449	427	585	475	307	620	674	645	358	207
62 years and over	182	507	401	376	532	419	283	546	617	606	345	196
Median	28.1	27.6	29.0	32.1	28.9	37.1	39.1	37.9	28.7	34.3	30.1	21.5
HOUSEHOLD TYPE AND RELATIONSHIP												
Total persons	7 633	11 620	6 406	3 725	4 216	3 731	2 383	5 819	7 563	3 922	2 362	1 727
In households	7 633	11 413	6 245	3 725	3 797	3 731	2 383	5 819	7 525	3 795	2 183	556
Householder	2 567	3 748	2 257	1 462	1 762	1 548	1 016	2 127	2 803	1 829	1 244	376
Family householder	2 096	3 009	1 716	997	1 016	1 064	659	1 760	1 927	938	387	72
Nonfamily householder	471	739	541	465	746	484	357	367	876	891	857	304
Living alone	349	560	387	394	620	390	304	321	695	769	727	269
Spouse	1 903	2 689	1 518	779	834	944	574	1 605	1 490	742	252	47
Other relatives	2 970	4 673	2 237	1 327	1 002	1 104	706	1 996	2 808	1 034	470	70
Nonrelatives	193	303	233	157	199	135	87	91	424	190	217	63
Inmate of institution	–	197	161	–	10	–	–	–	19	117	116	265
Other, in group quarters	–	10	–	–	409	–	–	–	19	10	63	906
Persons per household	2.97	3.05	2.77	2.55	2.15	2.41	2.35	2.74	2.68	2.07	1.75	1.48
Persons per family	3.32	3.45	3.19	3.11	2.81	2.92	2.94	3.05	3.23	2.89	2.87	2.63
Persons 65 years and over	213	634	494	531	716	562	387	743	837	803	437	266
In households	213	454	336	531	662	562	387	743	837	732	365	125
Householder	127	325	216	378	457	389	268	475	588	547	313	99
Nonfamily householder	39	177	89	175	223	178	131	175	289	339	239	80
Living alone	39	173	86	171	212	171	128	165	274	327	234	78
Spouse	58	83	84	115	169	143	95	213	174	144	33	12
Other relatives	28	44	32	32	27	24	20	50	60	32	14	3
Nonrelatives	–	2	4	6	9	6	4	5	15	9	5	11
Inmate of institution	–	178	158	–	10	–	–	–	–	70	72	141
Other, in group quarters	–	2	–	–	44	–	–	–	–	1	–	–
FAMILY TYPE BY PRESENCE OF OWN CHILDREN												
Families	2 096	3 009	1 716	997	1 016	1 064	659	1 760	1 927	938	387	72
With own children under 18 years	1 265	1 947	977	459	417	448	274	799	1 035	417	197	28
Number of own children under 18 years	2 442	3 806	1 804	916	742	818	508	1 522	2 089	779	339	39
Married-couple families	1 903	2 689	1 518	779	834	944	574	1 605	1 490	742	252	47
With own children under 18 years	1 121	1 712	842	354	323	383	236	721	774	297	103	12
Number of own children under 18 years	2 200	3 388	1 583	720	587	712	440	1 387	1 588	585	194	18
Female householder, no husband present	150	263	151	172	149	98	66	128	367	162	110	22
With own children under 18 years	119	205	106	89	82	52	32	66	237	109	80	16
Number of own children under 18 years	206	372	178	165	138	86	58	115	469	177	120	21
MARITAL STATUS												
Male, 15 years and over	2 765	4 040	2 335	1 358	1 430	1 404	906	2 196	2 644	1 434	919	768
Single	704	1 051	580	371	426	345	247	470	851	471	454	561
Now married, except separated	1 916	2 729	1 542	806	847	957	581	1 622	1 523	765	275	96
Separated	19	33	30	23	14	21	10	7	35	18	24	12
Widowed	14	44	34	40	45	27	27	48	55	55	32	31
Divorced	112	183	149	118	98	54	41	49	200	125	134	68
Female, 15 years and over	2 859	4 401	2 539	1 558	2 106	1 630	1 046	2 417	3 050	1 799	1 081	913
Single	638	959	556	319	817	323	242	416	809	505	419	619
Now married, except separated	1 914	2 739	1 544	807	853	952	585	1 622	1 526	769	272	93
Separated	20	46	25	30	21	14	9	16	72	17	28	13
Widowed	105	359	249	227	240	212	149	233	337	327	220	130
Divorced	182	298	165	175	175	129	81	130	306	181	142	58

sizable number of "baby boom" residents, and begins narrowing for the over-35 age groups.

What do table 3 and the two population pyramids tell the comittee about Heritage's neighborhood? First, that in important respects it resembles the population of the U.S. during the 1970s. The number of young adults and elderly grew while the youngest population declined. Second, it makes possible some educated guesses about the near future. In all likelihood the community's age structure will change by 1990. The large number of persons in their prime childbearing years will probably contribute to an "echo effect" as baby boomers begin their own families; by 1990 this community's population profile will probably again broaden at the base. The number of older persons will also grow, although probably no faster than in the past decade. The reason for this is the relatively small number of persons in the 45 to 54 age group. Third, as persons in the 25 to 34 age group age, their incomes will tend to rise as they enter their peak wage-earning years. This could strengthen the neighborhood's economic base.[15]

Tables 4 through 7 view socioeconomic changes between 1970 and 1980. Table 4 shows a rise in the number of college graduates from 8.5 percent of all adults to 14.1 percent. Table 5 deals with labor force participation in three categories: those employed outside the home, those unemployed, and those neither employed nor looking for work. Most notable is the increasing proportion of the employed labor force who are women. In 1970 women represented 36 percent of workers; by 1980 they were 44 percent. The number of women working outside the home grew by 78 percent in the decade.

Tables 6 and 7 examine family income; they include only *family* households and not persons living alone or in "unorthodox" living arrangements. Median family income rose from $11,263 in 1969 (income is reported for the year prior to the census) to $24,414 in 1979, an increase of 117 percent or slightly above the rate of inflation.[16] Much of the increase can no doubt be attributed to a rising number of two-income families.

Table 8 is particularly important as it shows the diversity of household types broken down by major racial-ethnic groups. Looking first at the bottom of the table, 2,235 (21 percent) of the households are classified as "nonfamilies." These include the 1,744 households of one person (from table 8) and 491 households of two or more unrelated individuals. "Family" households are of two types: those containing a married couple and those with related individuals but no spouse present. The neighborhood contains 4,215 married couple households with children; such households represent 40 percent of the total and are the predominant household type. Another 3,089 households contain

married couples without children; they account for 30 percent of the total. Overall, 70 percent of the households contain married couples. The "no spouse present" households are of two types: those headed by men and those headed by women. They are again subdivided into those with and without children present. The table gives the information that 487 of the neighborhoods's households are female-headed single parent households. While the number of minority households is small, the table provides the interesting finding that the vast majority are married couples with children.

Table 9 provides a detailed breakdown of racial groups. Race, for census purposes, is based on self-classification. The census questionnaire listed the groups reported in the table. Spanish origin persons, shown in table 1, can be of any race. Ancestry is also based on self-classification. Persons were asked to write in their ancestry; no response categories were given. Table 10 reports persons who gave a "single ancestry" response (e.g., "Polish," "Irish," etc.); persons of mixed background ("German-English," "Scottish-Irish," etc.) are listed under "multiple ancestry." Nearly half of the residents of this neighborhood reported multiple ancestries. The largest single ancestry group are German (16 percent), English (6 percent) and Irish (5 percent). The vast majority of the community's residents are native Iowans; only one percent were born outside the United States.

Tables 11 through 13 deal with employment patterns. Table 11 examines the industry in which employed persons work. The largest numbers are in manufacturing (32 percent), retail trade (17 percent) and education (7 percent). Table 12 shifts to the kind of work people do. Here there are significant numbers in blue-collar occupations and lower-level white-collar jobs. Table 13 reveals that 69 percent of all families include two or more workers.

The census includes a great deal of information on housing units, some of which is summarized in Tables 14 and 15. The first shows that over three-quarters of the neighborhoods housing units are owner occupied and that these units have a median monthly mortgage of $303. The 21 percent of the units that are rented have a median rent of $309. Only three percent of all housing units were vacant at the time of the census. Table 15 describes different types of neighborhood housing and adds the information that homeowners estimate the value of their homes to be $47,981.

Tables 16 through 18 all deal with population mobility and are helpful to congregations considering membership development programs. The first looks at how long owner and renter-occupied housing units have been occupied by their present residents. It suggests

considerable turnover. Overall, 24 percent of the neighborhood's units had been occupied for one year or less, with most of the turnover occurring in rental units. Nearly 65 percent of renters had been in their present unit for less than one year! Table 17 looks at where current residents lived five years earlier. Just over half lived in the same housing unit, 29 percent lived elsewhere in Linn County, and another 9 percent lived somewhere else in Iowa. A scattering of current residents were in another state, mainly in the Middle West. Table 18 takes a third look at mobility, this time at the type of community in which people resided five years ago. Most (74 percent) were in the central city of a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (this figure includes those who lived in Cedar Rapids in 1975). Six percent were in a suburb of Cedar Rapids, 11 percent were in another metropolitan area, and 9 percent were in a nonmetropolitan community.

The final tables in the example all deal with poverty. The poverty threshold varies by household type and size of family. For a family of four with two related children under age 18 it was $7,356 in 1979. For an unrelated individual over 65 it was $3,479. Table 19 looks at poverty status of individuals. There were 957 individuals in households whose income was less than 75 percent of the poverty level, whose income is far below that needed to reach the poverty threshold. Approximately the same number had incomes close to the poverty level—just above or just below. Most residents are far above the poverty threshold; 86 percent had incomes two times that of poverty. Table 20 looks at poverty status for racial-ethnic groups. A majority of the Spanish-origin families in the neighborhood are living at below-poverty levels. Table 21 looks at poverty for children and the elderly, and Table 22 at poverty status of families: all families and those headed by women. Most of the neighborhood's elderly residents have incomes above the poverty level. Note that nearly one female-headed family in five is below poverty.

3.3.2 Interpretation

Typically, analysis of a congregation's demographic setting raises questions that merit further research, and that is the case of our statistical tour of south Cedar Rapids. Nonetheless, it has revealed a number of things that would be suggestive to Heritage's community goals committee.

First, what are some of the more salient findings? The community's residents are mainly middle class and living in married-couple households. The neighborhood is growing slowly and is fairly mobile, with residential turnover being especially high in rental

units. In some respects the neighborhood is homogeneous; virtually all residents are white, native-born, and of moderate income; in other respects it is heterogeneous; the neighborhood contains a mixture of age and occupational groups, newcomers and long-term residents, persons in single-family homes and apartments. Comparison of data from the 1970 and 1980 censuses suggests the community is changing; there has been a sizable increase in the number of nonfamily households, both the elderly and baby boom populations are growing and the number of young children will probably also grow in the eighties. Income levels are rising—due in large part to an increase in the number of working women.

The data suggests implications for Heritage's concern for *evangelism and church growth*. It would probably want to look to an evangelism strategy that emphasizes special attention to specific groups who require rather different approaches.

First, the number of persons in their twenties and thirties has been growing very rapidly. This group includes young married couples and singles and will fuel the anticipated rise in the number of young children in the community. The church is wise to look carefully at church-school programs, especially for very young children, and at programs for singles, recognizing that each appeals to a different segment of the baby boom generation. A significant portion of this generation remains at the periphery of congregational life, and programs that build bridges to its members will require considerable sensitivity.

Second, the number of older residents is also rising. Heritage will want to look carefully at this population and at recent migration patterns. Are these persons relocating from other Cedar Rapids neighborhoods and maintaining congregational ties elsewhere or are they true "newcomers." Membership recruitment and social service efforts, such as low-cost housing programs, might be combined in approaching this population.

Third, there has been a rise in the number of nonfamily households (up 196 percent) and a rapid turnover in rental housing (65 percent occupied in 1979-1980. Over 2,500 of the neighborhood's housing units were occupied in the single year prior to the census. This suggests a need for active programs to identify and welcome new community residents. The shape of such programs depends on the willingness of members and staff to visit new residents and families and on available media (local newspapers, radio, and television).

The data also suggests possibilities for *community service and action ministries*. While the data suggests a fairly "comfortable" suburban neighborhood inside the central city, it also points to possible areas of concern.

1980 CENSUS REPORT

NAME: Number
SE CEDAR RAPIDS   778021

1970-1980 COMMUNITY TRENDS

1. Population and Household Change

	1970	1980	# Change 1970-80	% Change 1970-80
Population	26684	30505	3821	14.3
Households	7398	10532	3134	42.4
Families	6623	8242	1619	24.4
Non-families	775	2290	1515	195.5
In Group Quarters	527	377	-150	-28.5
Average Household Size	3.5	2.9	-0.7	-19.1

2. Racial-Ethnic Change

	1970 Total	1970 Pct.	1980 Total	1980 Pct.	% Change 1970-80
White	26573	99.6	30065	98.6	13.1
Black	52	0.2	218	0.7	319.2
Asian and Pacif/Isl	10	0.0	142	0.5	1320.0
Other	51	0.2	80	0.3	56.9
Hispanic	109	0.4	180	0.6	65.1

3. Age Change

	1970 Total	1970 Pct.	1980 Total	1980 Pct.	% Change 1970-80
Years					
0-4	2823	10.6	2335	7.7	-17.3
5-9	3345	12.5	2540	8.3	-24.1
10-14	3065	11.5	2702	8.9	-11.8
15-19	2275	8.5	2856	9.4	25.5
20-24	1765	6.6	2550	8.4	44.5
25-34	3991	15.0	5970	19.6	49.6
35-44	3264	12.2	3732	12.2	14.3
45-54	2816	10.5	2934	9.6	4.2
55-64	1637	6.1	2480	8.1	51.5
65-74	949	3.6	1360	4.5	43.3
75+	764	2.9	1046	3.4	36.9
Median Age	25.2		28.7		13.9
Average Age	28.2		31.4		11.3

1970 Data Based on Geographic Adjustments by National Planning Data Corp.

1970 POPULATION PYRAMID

	Pct.	Number
Total		26694
Females	50.9	13582
Males	49.1	13112

```
----Females---                                              -----Males----

Percent                                                     Percent
  of                                                          of
Total    Number                                             Total    Number


 1.9      515                    ✿||                         0.9       249
                                 ✿||
                                 ✿||
                                 ✿||
 2.1      549                  ✿✿75✿                         1.5       400
                               ✿  ||✿
                               ✿  ||✿
 3.1      823                ✿✿✿✿65✿✿✿                       3.0       814
                             ✿    ||   ✿
                             ✿    ||   ✿
 5.2     1375              ✿✿✿✿✿✿55✿✿✿✿✿                     5.4      1441
                          ✿      ||      ✿
                          ✿      ||      ✿
 6.1     1615            ✿✿✿✿✿✿✿45✿✿✿✿✿✿✿                    6.2      1649
                          ✿      ||      ✿
                          ✿      ||      ✿
 7.8     2069          ✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿35✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿                   7.2      1922
                         ✿       ||       ✿
                         ✿       ||       ✿
 3.8     1013          ✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿25✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿                   2.8       752
                         ✿       ||         ✿
 4.2     1109         ✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿20✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿                  4.4      1166
                        ✿        ||           ✿
 5.6     1500      ✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿15✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿             5.9      1565
                        ✿        ||              ✿
 6.1     1639     ✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿10✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿           6.4      1706
                        ✿        ||                ✿
 5.2     1375    ✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿05✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿          5.4      1448
                       ✿         ||                 ✿
                 ✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿00✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿✿

           |-|-|-|-|-|-|-|-|-|-|-|-||-|-|-|-|-|-|-|-|-|-|-|-|
         10+  9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 00 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+
             <--- Female                Male --->
                        PERCENT
```

1980 POPULATION PYRAMID

	Pct.	Number
Total		30505
Females	51.5	15702
Males	48.5	14803

----Females---			-----Males----	
Percent of Total	Number		Percent of Total	Number
2.5	762		0.9	284
2.6	779		1.9	581
4.1	1244		4.1	1236
4.8	1475		4.8	1459
6.2	1878		6.1	1854
9.9	3030		9.6	2940
4.3	1305		4.1	1245
4.8	1465		4.6	1391
4.4	1348		4.4	1354
4.2	1274		4.2	1266
3.7	1142		3.9	1193

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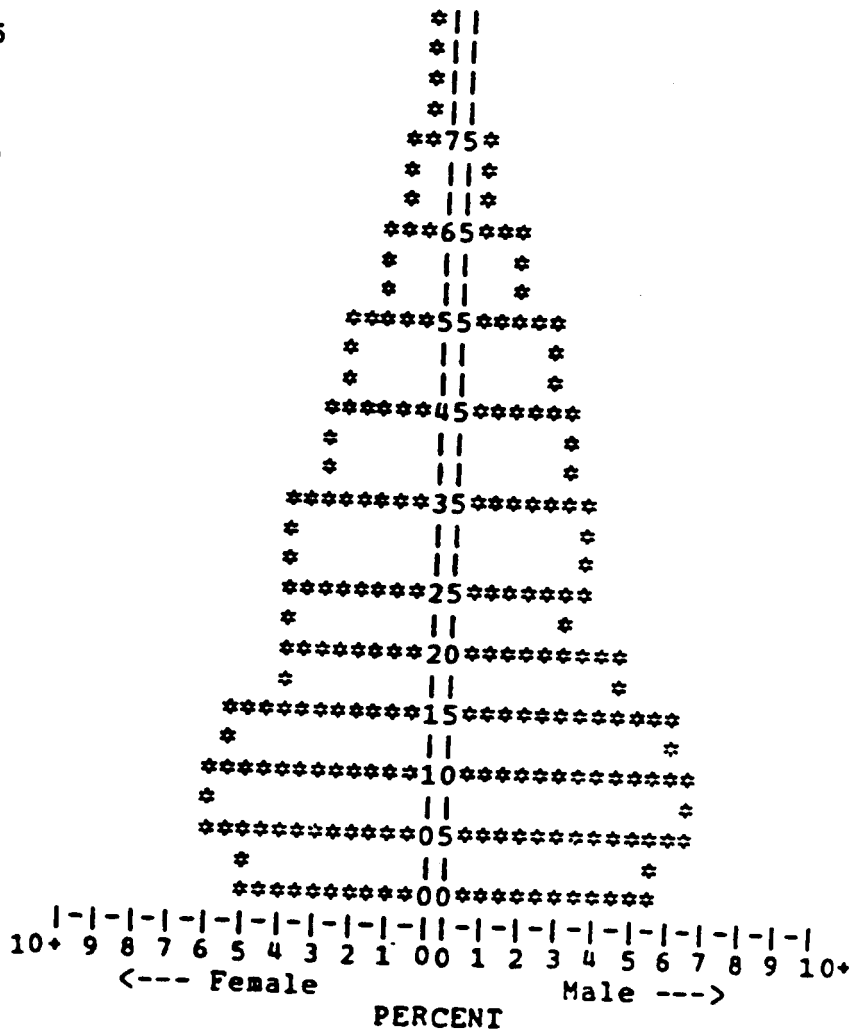
4. Education Change (Persons Age 25 and Older)

			------1970-----		------1980-----		% Change
			Total	Pct.	Total	Pct.	1970-80
Elementary:	0-8	Yrs.	1933	14.5	1397	8.0	-27.7
High School:	1-3	Yrs.	2107	15.8	1801	10.3	-14.5
	4	Yrs.	6516	48.8	8615	49.4	32.2
College:	1-3	Yrs.	1664	12.5	3177	18.2	90.9
	4+	Yrs.	1134	8.5	2456	14.1	116.6
Median Years Completed			12.4		12.6		1.9
Average Years Completed			11.6		12.2		5.3

5. Employment Status Change (Persons 16 and Older)

	------1970-----		------1980-----		% Change
	Total	Pct.	Total	Pct.	1970-80
Civilian Labor Force					
Employed					
Total	10733	100.0	15802	100.0	47.2
Male	6829	63.6	8839	55.9	29.4
Female	3904	36.4	6963	44.1	78.4
Unemployed					
Total	288	100.0	668	100.0	131.9
Male	114	39.6	367	54.9	221.9
Female	174	60.4	301	45.1	73.0
Not in Labor Force					
Total	5889	100.0	5805	100.0	-1.4
Male	1127	19.1	1377	23.7	22.2
Female	4762	80.9	4428	76.3	-7.0

6. Family Income Change

	------1969-----		------1979-----		% Change
	Total	Pct.	Total	Pct.	1969-79
Less than $ 5,000	579	8.7	235	2.9	-59.4
$ 5,000 to $ 9,999	1787	27.0	411	5.0	-77.0
$10,000 to $14,999	3014	45.5	739	9.0	-75.5
$15,000 to $24,999	1113	16.8	2923	35.5	162.6
$25,000 to $49,999	114	1.7	3631	44.1	3085.1
$50,000 and Over	16	0.2	289	3.5	1706.2
$50,000 to $74,999	----	----	233	2.8	----
$75,000 and Over	----	----	56	0.7	----

7. Income Change Summary

	1969	1979	$ Change 1969-79	% Change 1969-79
Median Family Income	11263	24414	13151	116.8
Average Family Income	12179	25597	13419	110.2

8. Household Type

Family Households:	Total	Pct.	White	Black	Asian Pac/Isl	Spanish Origin
Married Couple:						
With Own Children	4215	40.3	4034	57	21	24
Without Own Children	3089	29.5	3044	11	0	7
No Spouse Present:						
Male Householder:						
With Own Children	123	1.2	110	8	0	0
Without Own Children	94	0.9	79	0	0	0
Female Householder:						
With Own Children	487	4.7	472	0	0	0
Without Own Children	220	2.1	220	0	0	0
Non-family Household	2235	21.4	2108	19	0	0

9. Race

	Number	Pct.		Number	Pct.
White	30065	98.6	Korean	25	0.1
Black	218	0.7	Asian Indian	49	0.2
American Indian	11	0.0	Vietnamese	22	0.1
Eskimo	0	0.0	Hawaiian	5	0.0
Aleut	0	0.0	Guamanian	0	0.0
Japanese	12	0.0	Samoan	0	0.0
Chinese	14	0.0	Other Races	69	0.2
Filipino	15	0.0			

10. Ancestry

	Number	Pct.		Number	Pct.
Dutch	331	1.1	Polish	65	0.2
English	1919	6.3	Portuguese	6	0.0
French	159	0.5	Russian	18	0.1
German	4785	15.6	Scottish	86	0.3
Greek	19	0.1	Swedish	252	0.8
Hungarian	50	0.2	Ukranian	0	0.0
Irish	1489	4.9	Other Ancestry	2417	7.9
Italian	236	0.8	Multiple Ancestry	15081	49.3
Norwegian	524	1.7	Not Specified	3160	10.3

11. Industry (Employed Persons Age 16 and Older)

	Number	Pct.		Number	Pct.
Agric./Mining	100	0.6	Business/Repair	532	3.4
Construction	830	5.2	Recreation	543	3.4
Manufacturing	5018	31.7	Health Services	842	5.3
Transportation	678	4.3	Education	1143	7.2
Public Utilities	587	3.7	Other Professional	485	3.1
Wholesale Trade	837	5.3	Public Admin.	580	3.7
Retail Trade	2646	16.7	Armed Forces	14	0.1
Finance/Insurance	981	6.2			

12. Occupation (Employed Persons Age 16 and Older)

	Number	Pct.		Number	Pct.
Executive/Manager	1482	9.4	Other Services	1462	9.3
Professional	1529	9.7	Farming/Forest	56	0.4
Technical	522	3.3	Craft Worker	2219	14.0
Sales	1771	11.2	Machine Operator	1825	11.5
Clerical	3148	19.9	Transportation	705	4.5
Private Household	37	0.2	Laborers	846	5.4
Protective Service	201	1.3			

13. Workers per Family

	Number	Pct.
No Workers	458	5.6
1 Worker	2109	25.6
2 or More Workers	5661	68.8

14. Housing Units

	Number	Pct.	Median Monthly Mortgage/Rent
Owner Occupied	8229	75.9	303
Renter Occupied	2303	21.2	309
Vacant	306	2.8	

15. Housing Units at Address

	Number	Pct.		Number	Pct.
1	8742	80.7	10 or more	816	7.5
2 to 9	866	8.0	Mobile Home/Trailer	414	3.8

Median Value of Owner Occupied Non-Condominium Units: 47961

16. Length of Occupancy (Housing Units)

	Total	Pct.	Owner	Pct.	Renter	Pct.
1 Year or Less	2541	24.1	1069	12.9	1472	64.7
2- 5 Years	3074	29.1	2463	29.7	611	26.9
6-10 Years	1468	13.9	1349	16.3	119	5.2
11-20 Years	2261	21.4	2221	26.8	40	1.8
21-30 Years	848	8.0	827	10.0	21	0.9
More Than 30 Years	368	3.5	357	4.3	11	0.5

17. Residence in 1975 (Persons Age 5 and Older)

	Number	Pct.		Number	Pct.
Same House	14546	51.6	Different State:		
Different House:			Northeast	154	0.5
Same County	8140	28.9	North Central	1749	6.2
Diff. County:			South	431	1.5
Same State	2649	9.4	West	437	1.5
			Abroad	105	0.4

18. Metropolitan Area Residence in 1975 (Persons Age 5 and Older)

	Number	Pct.
In Metro Area in 1980:		
Same Metro Area as in 1975:		
Central City	20951	74.3
Suburb	1735	6.2
Diff. Metro Area Than in 1975	3126	11.1
Not in Metro Area in 1975	2399	8.5

19. Poverty Status of Persons

	Number	Pct.
Income in 1979:		
Below 75 Percent of Poverty Level	957	3.2
Between 75 and 124 Percent	924	3.1
Between 125 and 149 Percent	603	2.0
Between 150 and 199 Percent	1788	5.9
200 Percent of Poverty Level and Above	25905	85.8

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      Below  75 %        |**
  75 %  -  124 %         |**
 125 %  -  149 %         |*
 150 %  -  199 %         |***
 200 %  or Greater       |********************************************
                         |----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
                         0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90  100
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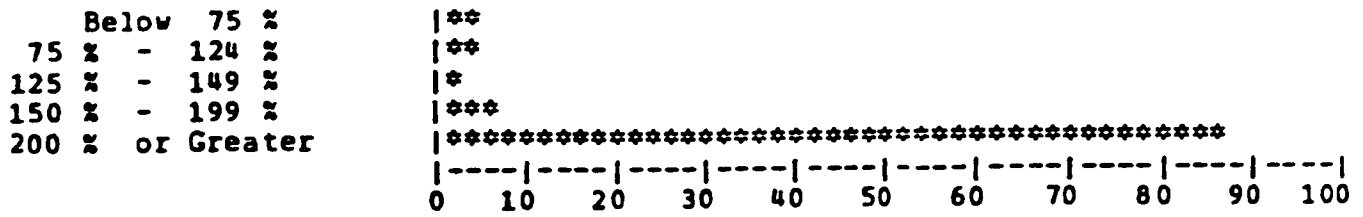
20. Poverty Status of Racial-Ethnic Groups

	Total	Pct.	White	Black	Asian Pac/Isl	Spanish Origin
Above Poverty Level	28786	95.4	25865	183	0	52
Below Poverty Level	1391	4.6	1280	17	0	108

21. Poverty Status of Children and Persons Age 65 and Older

| | ------Children in Families----- | | | | ----Elderly---- | |
| | Under 5 Yrs. | | 5-17 Yrs. | | 65+ Yrs. | |
	Number	Pct.	Number	Pct.	Number	Pct.
Above Poverty Level	2276	98.0	6703	93.4	1821	93.8
Below Poverty Level	46	2.0	477	6.6	121	6.2

22. Poverty Status of Families

| | All Families | | Families with Female Head | |
	Number	Pct.	Number	Pct.
Above Poverty Level	7940	96.5	583	82.5
Below Poverty Level:				
With Children:				
Under 6 Yrs. and 6-17 Yrs.	42	0.5	19	2.7
Under 6 Yrs. Only	34	0.4	23	3.3
6-17 Yrs. Only	174	2.1	82	11.6
Without Children	38	0.5	0	0.0

The census counted about 1,400 individuals who were below the poverty level in 1979—4.6 percent of the total population. In addition, many individuals and families have incomes only slightly above poverty status. Poverty strikes Hispanics and single parent families headed by women more than other groups (16.5 percent of all female householder families are below poverty). Heritage might begin to explore the services and assistance available to poor residents, perhaps in coalition with churches in other Cedar Rapids neighborhoods.

The fact that over two-thirds of all neighborhood families contain two or more workers and the increase in the number of women working outside the home suggests a possible need for day care and other types of service for children of working parents. This will be especially important if the number of births increases in the 1980s.

There is evidence of need for attention to the elderly. This population is growing rapidly and will probably continue to grow in the 1980s and 1990s. Census data alone cannot tell the committee the extent of the need for elderly housing, but it is certainly an area needing attention.

3.3.3 *Using Census Data in Congregations*

A small amount of advance planning can take much of the difficulty out of working with demographic data. Experience with churches of different denominations has found the following steps to be particularly helpful:

—Give careful advance thought to the boundaries of the community or neighborhood served by the congregation. The mapping exercises discussed in an earlier session are helpful.

—Some churches find that their "neighborhood" or "parish area" is in two parts: the immediate neighborhood in which the church building is located and a wider area (sometimes covering several townships or counties) from which many members commute. Some churches may therefore find it helpful to divide their community analysis into two parts. Heritage, for example, might want to look at its neighborhood alongside the entire city.

—Many church leaders are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with working with statistical data; others find such work exciting. It is helpful to identify in advance those members who make use of such data in their work and who can help interpret community data. Examples include community or educational planners, market analysts, public officials, bankers, antipoverty workers.

—Assign or delegate someone to familiarize him- or herself with the key concepts and terms used in the presentation of census data. Most suppliers of census data publish study guides and other materials to assist census users.

—Experiment with creative ways of displaying the data itself. Oftentimes a chart or graph can convey information more dramatically than a statistical table.

—Encourage users of the data to "translate" the numbers into terms and experiences with which they are personally familiar. In a discussion of mobility patterns, for example, urge people to think what they went through during a relocation from one community to another. When talking about changes in household patterns, help people visualize the factors associated with such changes.

—One useful way to work with census data is to prepare three sheets of paper (or newsprint for a large group) labelled "Surprises," "Important Findings for Our Church," and "Areas Needing More Exploration." By listing findings on each sheet as it works through the statistics the committee will have the beginnings of a summary.

—Be wary of projecting past trends into the future. While trend data provides clues to the future shape of a community's population (for example, a growing young adult population may be followed by increases in the number of births), one decade's trend often presages the next decade's countertrend!

3.3.4 *A Note on Sources of Demographic Data:*

The Bureau of the Census, through the Government Printing Office, makes available hundreds of printed reports containing tables from a decennial census. These reports are often available in public libraries or through a network of State Data Centers and affiliates. Most of the State Data Centers are located within state government agencies. The Bureau of the Census (Washington, D.C. 20233) can refer churches to a local source. The Bureau is also the primary resource for information on the census itself. Local, county, regional and state planning offices are valuable sources of data and information on population changes and trends.

A number of public agencies and private companies also make census and other demographic data available to church groups, often in a form that makes the data more accessible to persons without demographic backgrounds. These groups are not listed here because they and their products are continually changing. Several denominations have active programs to make demographic data to churches, usually at low cost, many working through Census Access for Planning in the Church (CAPC), based at Concordia College (River Forest, IL 60305).

Because the census itself is conducted only at

ten-year intervals there are difficulties in obtaining up-to-date population data late in the decade. The Census Bureau and states do conduct occasional "special censuses," and several government agencies and private firms prepare population and income estimates for incorporated places. State Data Centers and local planning groups are good sources of information on these updates.

3.4 Social Interaction

Having examined how demographic trends set conditions for a congregation, it is appropriate now to explore the social fabric of the community and the way the congregation fits within it. The questions are varied and complex, as are the methods for answering them. What are the major groups? Who interacts with whom? Who wields power and influence? What are the sources of unity and of division? Where does the congregation fit into this mosaic of structures and processes? To answer questions such as these requires more than "factual" and "objective" information alone; a more sensitive and searching investigation of the qualitative character of the social context is needed. Put simply, community and congregational analysis requires a healthy "sociological imagination" and a grasp of the interconnectedness of social life.

For the individual or study group concerned to know more about a neighborhood or community, there are various ways of gathering information. Particularly important is information gained from *key informants:* community leaders, pastors, school principals, realtors, business people. *More specific* sources of community data are usually available as well: town histories, church records, business and commercial surveys, information collected by "grass-roots" organizations. And of course there is no substitute for the *direct observation* of individuals and groups in the public arena. Attendance at meetings of a community's board of selectmen or city council; neighborhood planning boards; football games, parades and concerts; church suppers and bazaars; political rallies, wakes, bar mitzvahs and cocktail parties becomes crucial for adding human flesh to statistical bones.

Practically speaking, a church study committee is likely to rely on a variety of methods and will attempt to put together a composite portrait of a community using the information available. Three aspects especially important for congregational analysis are: *social groups, community involvement,* and *power and influence.* Let us examine each of these, keeping Heritage United Methodist Church and its neighborhood in mind.

3.4.1 Social Groups

Every neighborhood or community of any size consists of numerous and varied social groups. There are *social classes,* whose members possess roughly equivalent amounts of "the good things of life"— wealth, power and prestige. A person's social class undergirds and affects his or her life-situation in almost limitless ways: personal identity and self-esteem, life-style, mental and physical health, aspirations, values, and beliefs, to name but a few. There are *racial and ethnic groups,* whose members share common origins and a distinctive subculture. Demographic data provides clues to the presence of class and racial and ethnic groups. In most communities there are also *purposeful groups,* whose members share common interests or concerns, which sets them apart from others. Voluntary organizations are the prime examples: churches and synagogues, the PTA, Boy Scouts, political parties, League of Women Voters, NAACP, single-parents' associations, hospice support. In every community there is a wide range of such organizations.

The character of community group life is important to congregations for a number of reasons:

—Congregations tend to remain divided along racial and ethnic, social class, and lifestyle lines. Thus people speak of "black," "white," "high status," and "working class" churches. In socially homogeneous communities this is frequently a reflection of the composition of the community itself; in others it reflects the varying group composition *within* the community. Congregations minister to specialized segments of the community. In either case, group identities give shape to the life of the congregation in its worship style, leadership patterns, definitions of mission, religious beliefs, and ethical norms.

—Congregations in which there is a great deal of overlap in group memberships may serve as especially strong "plausibility structures" for traditional religious interpretations. However, they also affect the congregation's ability to integrate new members or to modifying programs to meet changing circumstances and needs. In the words of one old-timer, "We've been here over two hundred years and we've proved ourselves. If you want us to take you seriously, you'll have to do the same."

—Conflict within congregations is often a reflection of group divisions in the larger community. This is especially true for congregations located in communities of rapid social, ethnic, and economic change or where sharp political divisions pervade community life.

—Members' group involvements help to shape the public identity of the congregation. They "locate" the congregation in the mind of the larger community.

Thus a New England political leader was advised when she moved to a new community, "To be anybody in this town you have to vote Republican and join the Congregational church!"

—The group involvements of members provide important natural linkages between the congregation and community life. These ties are often the source of new members and form the basis for developing alliances around shared concerns.

Since the time of de Tocqueville, visitors from other nations have been struck by Americans' love for organizations. Americans continue to be "joiners." In 1983, the National Opinion Research Corporation surveyed a cross section of 1,599 Americans and asked about the groups or organizations to which they belong. Over 73 percent listed at least one group.[17] The following were most often mentioned:

Group	% Belonging
Church-affiliated groups	38
Sports groups	21
Nationality groups	17
Professional or academic societies	16
Labor unions	14
School service groups	14
Youth groups	11
Service clubs	10
Literary, art, discussion or study groups	10
Hobby or garden clubs	10
Fraternal groups	9
Veterans' groups	7
Political clubs	5
School fraternities or sororities	5
Farm organizations	4

A relatively simple exercise for identifying community group patterns is to use the above list as a guide to specific groups represented in the community. The study committee can use a sheet of newsprint for each broad category. For each group represented in the community, note the approximate number of members involved and those with which the congregation has a formal or official relationship. The example looks at service clubs and groups and political groups.

The study of community groups depends in large part on the particular issues facing the congregation. Persons in Heritage Church with evangelism concerns might want to focus on the group involvements of newcomers to their area. One approach would be to bring together persons who have joined the church in recent years to identify the groups or organizations to which they belong. Patterns of new member group involvements are often helpful in identifying friendship networks that represent potential sources of additional

Community Groups

SERVICE CLUBS AND GROUPS

	Number Involved	Ties
Lions Club	10	Two trustees active
Chamber of Commerce	4	None
Elks	3	Marginally important
Kiwanis	9	Pastor on board
Rotary	25	Use grounds for annual picnic
Jaycees	1	Ought to develop a relationship
Cedar Rapids Nutrition Service	5	Active as volunteers
West Side Hospice	2	In the church budget
West Side Housing, Inc.	5	Founded by churches; former pastor active
FISH	10	Meets in parish house
Alcoholics Anonymous	?	Meets in parish house

POLITICAL GROUPS

	Number Involved	Ties
Democratic Town Committee	3	Chaired by church member
Republican Town Committee	4	Two deacons are members
League of Women Voters	15	Close ties through chair of social action committee
Citizens for Housing Justice	1	Supported in budget; church has slot on board
Christians for Peace Action Now	20	Pastor a leader; has been source of six new members
National Organization for Women	8	Meets in parish hall
United Black Voters	0	Becoming important; should have ties
Elders for Action	20	Ladies guild is a contributor

new church members. Those concerned with housing might use a list of key community groups with which the church has strong relationships and which might

represent "allies" in the effort to construct new housing for the elderly.

Analyzing the key groups and organizations present within the local community can be a helpful way of identifying the affiliative and friendship patterns of existing members. Perhaps more important, it can also identify segments of the local community with which the congregation has few ties. It is one simple, but effective way of "mapping" the church's relationship to its community.

3.4.2 Community Involvement

The social life of a community is differentiated along many lines: *vertically* as in the case of social class and racial and ethnic group status, and *horizontally* as in the case of voluntary organizations. Another example of horizontal differences important in all communities is the *degree of involvement in local community institutions*. In a highly mobile society where almost one-fifth of the population moves annually, attachments to the local community are highly variable. So tenuous and weak are such bonds that some neighborhoods can be referred to as "communities of limited liability"—that is, settings in which people are cautious about investing too much of their commitment.[18] If people will soon be moving out of the community, typically they begin disengaging themselves from voluntary activities.

An important question to be explored in a community study is the extent of involvement in and commitment to the community itself. Partly this is a matter of length of residence. The longer a person has been in a community the greater the chances he or she will have become anchored in its social life. But also, of course, depth of involvement and attachment are crucial. For many, churches are a natural setting for becoming involved and establishing social contacts. Ties within the congregation serve to bind the individual to the community, its values, and way of life.

In Cedar Rapids, where 24 percent of the neighborhood's housing units had been occupied for one year or less, length of residence is becoming important for congregations. The community is aging, but it is also becoming more diverse with an influx of newcomers. For congregations this raises several key questions:

— Who are the "new" people moving into the community and how is Heritage Church related to them?

— How is the increased diversity along class, race, and ethnic lines reflected in housing patterns? Is there greater housing segregation and if so, how does this affect Heritage's own sense of its "parish?"

— Where do various groups interact—in the neighborhood, in the workplace, in political organizations, in congregations? The "turf" on which groups meet is important in shaping intragroup and intergroup relations and images.

— To what extent is the congregation controlled by "old-timers?"

— Are there differences in religious beliefs and styles of institutional commitment between newcomers and old-timers?

3.4.3 Power and Influence

Like other voluntary organizations, congregations are organized to meet goals. Frequently those goals include attempts to exert influence in the community. This places the congregation into the arena of community power relationships. To "get things done," to bring about change, requires realistic and responsible action in the social and political arena.

To understand how a congregation fits into this larger picture one must look at community power structures. Exactly how power and influence operate in local communities is a matter of some scholarly debate. There are two prevailing models of community power offering quite different scenarios: the "power elite" versus the "pluralist" perspectives.

According to the *power elite model*, power is highly centralized in the political and corporate sectors. The elitist conception of power is that the basic decisions in a community are made by a handful of leaders who occupy high-level positions (e.g., high-status professionals, administrators, and major government officials). Decisions are made at the top and carried out at lower levels. For example, Floyd Hunter found in Atlanta in the 1950s that a relatively small number of decision-makers controlled public policy in the city.[19] The power elite consisted mainly of businessmen, who formed committees to discuss and formulate policies. Their decisions were channeled through a fluid structure of institutional and associational groupings to a lower echelon that executed their decisions.

The major alternative is the *pluralist model*. Pluralists argue that in most communities there are many interest groups competing for influence at any given time. Each group influences all others to some degree; yet each acts independently. At times groups have common interests, but usually they conflict and moderate each other's efforts in exercising power. This perspective emphasizes the role of voluntary organizations in mobilizing influence around specific concerns. For example, Robert Dahl in a study of New Haven, Connecticut, concluded that influence is highly diffused: the economic elite had interest mainly in urban

redevelopment, ethnic groups had distinct but limited interests, and few of the social elite were involved in bringing pressure to bear on local government. Community power was held by a majority coalition, and groups making up this coalition shifted periodically, combining and recombining into new controlling constituencies.

Which perspective is correct? Both are, or may be. Communities vary in power structures: some are more closed and oligarchical; others are more open and flexible. Some communities are dominated by a single industry (e.g., a factory town or college community), others are very diverse economically and institutionally. Also, communities change over time in their power structures as a result of leadership changes, emerging new coalitions, and changing issues and concerns. By their nature, power relations are fragile and volatile, vulnerable to forces of conflict and competition. Power abhors a social vacuum, and whenever there is opportunity for leadership to move in on new realms of influence one can expect shifts in the power structure.

Building on social scientific studies of power and influence, George D. Younger has developed four helpful approaches to examining community power structures. He calls these *reputational, decisional, structural,* and *communications* methods. The choice of method depends in part on the study committee's own assumptions about the exercise of community power and influence and the particular problem or issue it is examining.[20]

Power Worksheets

REPUTATIONAL METHOD

What It Is: A method to find out who people in the community *say* has the power.

1. *How to Do It:* Ask a lot of people who they think the leaders and influential people are.
Sample questions:
   Who really runs things here in town?
   Who is really in charge around here?
   Who really has the power?

2. Keep track of the answers you get to your questions. Those who are mentioned the most times or in the most different places are the ones this method will identify for you.
Example:
   Mayor—mentioned 21 times
   Head of bank—mentioned 13 times
   School superintendent—mentioned 10 times

   Department store owner—mentioned 9 times
   Factory owner—mentioned 7 times
   Heritage Church's pastor—mentioned 4 times

3. If you are able to talk to these people themselves, you can carry your study one step further by asking them who they think the leaders and influential people are, or to whom they turn most often for help.
Sample Questions:
   Who is in charge around here?
   Who do you turn to when you want help on a community project?
   Who really has the power?

COMMUNICATIONS METHOD

What It Is: A method to find out *who communicates with whom* and how messages *get through* to a specified target.

1. *How to Do It:* Choose a given target to whom you want messages, letters or statements of support to get through to.
Example:
   One school board member who could tip a vote in favor of your project is wavering in how she will vote. You want her to support your project.

2. Put out the word to a number of people who you know have some connection with the school board member and who favor your position.
Example:
   Talk with other school board members who are on your side of the issue, groups in the community (including church groups) who are friends or coworkers of the board member. Ask each to speak with her about voting for your proposal and to report back to you with the results of their initiative.

3. Check on what happens as a result of your work and who, specifically, is most effective in obtaining contact with the school board member.
Example:
   Either from those who were asked to report back or the school board member herself (or someone close to her who would have this information) discover who was most effective in getting through to the member with information.

STRUCTURAL METHOD

What It Is: A method to find out *who* in the community is *connected with what organizations,* and how those organizations are *related to each other.*

1. *How to Do It:* Look up information on who in your community is connected with the most influential organizations or those which most affect the issues you are working on.

Possible Resources:
   Who's Who in America
   City directory
   Federal Reserve lists of bank stockholders
   Chamber of Commerce membership lists
   Labor unions
   Lists of public officials
   Lists of political campaign contributors
   Newspaper clipping files

2. List for every organization the persons who are in the most important positions—officials and board members.

3. Trace people who are on more than one board or who work with more than one institution. These are people who hold the structure together.

Example:
   One man, who is a bank president, also sits on the board of a local corporation, heads the United Way organization, is a vestryman at an important church and serves on the mayor's urban redevelopment advisory commission.

DECISIONAL METHOD

What It Is: A method to find out who has the power by checking who actually is *involved in making decisions* on a given issue or situation.

1. *How to Do It:*   Pick out an issue that concerns your group which has already been decided (or one you have started to work on and are prepared to keep track of).

Example:
   A church committee wants a traffic light on a busy corner.

2. Trace through with those who worked on the issue (or keep track while you are working on it) all the groups and persons they had to see, wrote letters to, or attended hearings before in order to get action.

Example:
   For a traffic light saw traffic commissioner, who referred us to assistant commissioner, who took us to a traffic engineer. Then we contacted our city councilor and the local newspaper and radio station. After a demonstration at the corner with neighborhood parents we had a response from the traffic

commissioner, the mayor's office and the councilor. This finally got action.

3. Analyze the results of your contact with each person or agency involved in decision making and identify who was most responsible for getting action or blocking it.

Example:
   Analyzing the above case you might conclude that the political officeholders (the mayor, traffic commissioner and councilor), reinforced by media pressure, had more to say about getting the traffic light than the technical group (assistant traffic commissioner, traffic engineer).

Practically speaking, the various methods are likely to be used in combination in a given community. One method may be more useful in one setting than another, or certain methods may lend themselves better to some decision-making issues than other. What is crucial is not the method chosen but what it reveals about the community and its power structure. Alternative methods can help check on the validity and generalizability of your observations.

1. What is the relationship between the congregation and the community power structure? Are community "influentials" present in the congregation? If so, how does their representation affect decision-making in the congregation regarding community issues? In communities with elitist power structures, influence generally flows from the top down and the congregation may be one of the arenas through which it flows; this pattern was documented in Liston Pope's classic studies of "mill churches" in southern textile manufacturing communities.[21] In this circumstance, a church or synagogue often finds itself constrained by dominant ideological interests and limited in its independence. In more pluralist settings, congregations often function more as voluntary associations in the pursuit of one cause or another. Often the expectations in pluralist communities are that congregations will be active in a range of social activities and action-oriented programming.

2. What constitutes a "religious" concern within the community? The boundaries or limits of appropriate "religious" concern vary in different communities and among congregations in the same community. Many factors affect the way concerns are defined: the community's religious heritage, community norms, the social composition of the congregations, the ability of pastors and lay leaders to focus issues and set priorities. In some places, usually those with diverse constituencies, the definition of "what is religious" is up for grabs, and congregations are free to engage themselves in the

full range of community concerns and issues. In others, churches and synagogues have a more clearly defined role.

3. In what ways do congregations exercise power and influence? Churches and synagogues vary in how they respond to the challenges. In a heterogeneous, mobile community the chances are greater that congregations will become centers for discussion and action; community norms of openness and responsiveness to issue-oriented concerns will enter the congregation. In more homogeneous settings, where "grass-roots" causes are fewer, churches are more likely to avoid such "intrusions."

4. What is the pastor's role in the community? Is he or she part of the structures of power and influence? In some settings clergy roles are defined quite specifically, in others less so. Community traditions, the congregation's history and prestige, pastoral tenure and personality all shape the pastor's community role. Often in racial minority or working-class communities the pastor is a major bridge between the congregation and community. This role is frequently critical in defining intergroup relationships and setting the terms on which groups can cooperate. In almost every setting the pastor is a potential power figure and is able to "connect" with diverse agencies, constituencies and interests. Self-critical awareness of existing networks and their opportunities and limitations, is essential to a pastor's

understanding of his or her influence in the community.

3.5 The Church in the Context

To this point the chapter has looked at the social context with relatively little attention to religion's role in it. There are a number of ways to obtain information on a community's religious "climate" and the activities of churches and synagogues. Many are quite simple.

—Assign committee members to attend worship at each of the community's churches and synagogues, giving special attention to what is said about the congregation's role and program in the community. Be alert to the way you are received as an "outsider."

—Visit the local library and check for books and articles that trace the religious history of your community.

—Take a careful look at church buildings and grounds at various times of the day. What intended and unintended messages do the church facilities communicate to the public?

—Convene local pastors for an informal discussion of the neighborhood and the church's role in it.

—Gather a small group of community leaders (town planner, welfare worker, city council representa-

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RELIGIOUS SURVEY CARD   No information because: Not at home ☐   Refused ☐   Type of home: Single ☐   Duplex ☐
                                                                                     Multiple unit ☐   Town house ☐

Address: .... Name: ....

1. How many persons live at this address? ____   *(Inquire about family composition, e.g., "Is that a husband, wife and two children?" Make checks in parentheses in column 1 for each. Put an X in front of designation for person being interviewed.)*
2. Could you give me the approximate ages? *(Record in column 2, oldest child at top.)*
3. Is anyone in the home a member of a church, parish, or synagogue anywhere? ...... Where? ..... What denomination? *Record name of church and denomination in column 3. If not local, write denomination and city. If non-member, put dash.*
4. *If membership is out of town, or if persons are not members, ask:* Do you attend a local church? ... Which? ... Do the children attend Sunday School? ... Where? *(Write specific name of church in column 4.)*
5. During the last full twelve months did you attend church more than half the Sundays? More than five times? At least once? How about (the other church members in the home)? *(Record in column 5 making check mark for each person.)*
6. *If not member or attender, ask for denominational preference or background, record in column 6.*

FAMILY COMPOS'N	2. AGE	3. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP What church? Where? Denom.	4. CHURCH ATTENDED Specific church?	5. FREQ. ATTENDANCE None / 1-5 / 6-25 / 26-52				6. DENOM. PREFERENCE OR BACKGROUND
Husband ( )								
Wife ( )								
Other adult( )								
			SUNDAY SCH. ATTENDED					
Child ( )								
Child ( )								
Child ( )								
Child ( )								
Child ( )								

7. About how long have you lived at this address? _____   How long in this general area?_____
8. Where did you live before? *State* _____   *City or town:* _____
9. If a new Protestant church were to be started, welcoming people of many denominations, would you be interested in participating? *Very interested* ☐ *Interested* ☐ *Maybe, don't know* ☐ *Not interested* ☐

tive) for an evening's discussion of the community's problems and future and ways the congregation can help shape it.

—Examine the local news media for stories about congregations and their ministries. What is treated as "religious news"?

—Collect a few months' church advertisements from local newspapers. What are congregations attempting to communicate about their ministry and program? Do the advertisements themselves change or does the same advertisement appear each week?

These are rather informal methods for looking at religion's relationship to community life. There are more formal methods as well.

3.5.1 The Religious Census

Since the U.S. Census does not obtain information on religious affiliation or preference, data on religious background and practice is not readily available. There are a number of ways to fill this void. One is the religious census.

Religious censuses were quite popular in the 1950s, especially in growing neighborhoods and in connection with new church development efforts. Usually conducted ecumenically under the auspices of a council of churches or local clergy group, most censuses relied on volunteers going house-to-house within the neighborhood.

The procedures for a religious census are quite simple. Interviewers are assigned specific streets or buildings and carry cards asking for the name and age of household members and their church membership and Sunday school participation patterns. See the sample survey card on page 74. When all of the interviews are completed, a summary is compiled for participating congregations and the cards of those with a specific denominational preference are shared with the appropriate congregation.

In recent years, religious censuses have fallen out of favor. Many feel the results are not worth the considerable volunteer effort involved. For a "religious profile," however, the religious census remains a valuable tool.

3.5.2 Religion's "Public Presence"

A fairly structured approach to assessing the participation of religious groups in public life was utilized by a team of researchers studying the Hartford, Connecticut metropolitan area. Using volunteer interviewers, the researchers conducted hour-long interviews with a cross section of the region's leaders.[22]

The selection of leaders was made in several stages.

First, twenty religious and secular leaders were each asked to identify five persons in several sectors of public life who they felt were broadly knowledgeable about life in Greater Hartford. The sectors were business and corporate affairs, education, politics, the media, social service and voluntary agencies, minority group concerns, and the professions. To the original list were added the names of persons not listed but holding comparable positions in the community and persons listed by a local television station as part of the Federal Communications Commission's "ascertainment process." From the final list fifty individuals were chosen to be interviewed with attention to gender, racial-ethnic background, and city-suburban background. Interviews were completed with forty-four of the fifty persons selected.

3.5.2.1 Interviewer Guidelines

The researchers were concerned with leadership perceptions of community life and the religious community's role in it. Interviewers worked with a pretested interview instrument. Interviewers were given these guidelines:

— In making the appointment to conduct the interview, explain that the study is being conducted to explore the views of community leaders about community life in Greater Hartford and the religious community's role in public life. Give an idea of the areas to be covered, and explain that you need about one hour to complete the interview.

— Keep the interview itself as informal as possible. The interview guide should be just that—*a guide.* This means that you should know the questions you want to ask before you begin the interview, and you should know them well enough so you can skip around a bit to follow the flow of the discussion. Study the interview guide beforehand!

— Above all, remember that your task is to draw out the feelings, perceptions, and observations of the person being interviewed. You are not there to defend the church or to argue your own beliefs. You are there *to listen and to learn*—although you may find that occasionally sharing a bit of yourself will keep the discussion moving.

— Probe for details and specifics. Give the person time to make his or her points and pursue a particular line of thought, but if the discussion wanders too far, bring it back to the point or move on. Not everyone will be able or willing to answer every question. That is OK.

— The anonymity of the interviewee should be guaranteed and honored. In no case should you use the name of the person in discussing the interview with others unless you have explicit permission to do so.

Sample Outline of Topics for Community Leader Interviews

1. American Jewish support for Israel, clergy support of the civil rights and disarmament movements, Catholic prolife efforts, and the Moral Majority bring to mind different images of religious groups' attempts to influence public policy. What are your impressions and feelings about these attempts to influence public policy, their methods, effectiveness, legality, and theological integrity?
2. What would you describe as the major issues facing this community?
3. What is your sense of the impact religious leaders and groups now have on public issues in *local community*? Are there persons or groups that have special impact?
4. Is there an issue or concern in which you have taken an active interest or role? Were there religious groups that have made their voices heard on this issue? If a religious group, church, synagogue, or clergyperson wanted to affect the outcome of decisions regarding this issue, what would be the most effective way for them to proceed?
5. People sometimes speak of churches and synagogues as assets to a community. Can you think of specific ways such organizations make contributions to the life of this community? Are there particular congregations or religious groups that seem to be doing an especially good job in this community? Are there religious leaders whose views and opinions are especially valued by persons in positions of secular leadership in the community?
6. Have there been occasions when you personally have found the input of a religious group or leader important for your own reflection/decision on an issue facing you?
7. Will you tell me something about your own religious beliefs and views?
8. Do you presently attend a church or synagogue? If yes, how would you assess the importance of your congregation or pastor in helping you deal with choices and decisions around public issues and concerns? If no, under what kind of circumstances could you envision yourself becoming involved in a church or synagogue?

3.5.2.2 Analysis

For the study from which this instrument was taken, the researchers taped and transcribed all of the interviews, which were then examined for their content. Each substantive comment was placed on a three-by-five-inch card, similar comments were grouped, and a detailed written report was prepared summarizing the major findings from the study.[22]

Less elaborate procedures for analysis will be adequate for most congregations assessing religion's role in their community. One method is to prepare several sheets of newsprint covering themes such as the following:

— What Is Special About Our Community?
— What Special Problems Does Our Community Face?
— In What Ways Do Congregations Represent Assets to Our Community?
— How Can Our Congregation Be a More Effective Public Presence in Our Community?

3.5.3 Possibilities for Community Mission

One of the main reasons congregations seek to understand their social context is to assess possibilities for community-oriented programming. This is true of Heritage United Methodist Church. Some members see the need for increased efforts in housing for the elderly, while others would have the church begin new work in evangelism and church growth.

The study of a congregation's social context will not, of course, tell a church what it must do. It can document and clarify community needs and suggest strategic options for meeting them, but church leaders must still make choices and set priorities among them.

One simple technique for obtaining a sense of members' community mission priorities is suggested by the "Community Mission Questionnaire" developed by the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries.[23] This simple instrument is designed to elicit responses to a wide variety of local mission possibilities. It can be used in a number of ways. If a congregation is devoting an evening or part of a planning retreat to outreach ministries, it is possible to have each group member complete the questionnaire just before a break. During the break volunteers can tabulate responses and record them on a large sheet of newsprint. When the group reconvenes it has a springboard for a discussion of community mission possibilities.

Tabulating the results is quite simple. Using a sheet of lined paper, list the question numbers from one to 32 on the left of the sheet. At the top, list the five response

Mission Opportunity Questionnaire

This brief questionnaire is designed to elicit response to the data in our census report. It lists a number of projects and activities in which local churches are engaged and that may be possibilities for our church. Check the response that comes closest to your reaction to each possibility. There is room for you to note your own additional suggestions. You do not have to sign your name.

	Not Needed in Our Community	Not Appropriate For Our Church	Low Priority At This Time	Only Moderate Priority At This Time	High Priority/ Needs Immediate Attention
1. Set a goal for membership growth	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Improve our church's outreach to young adults	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Develop more effective outreach to members of minority groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Review our church's ministry to families and family members	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Look for ways we can minister to persons in nontraditional families	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Broaden our church's appeal to educational and income groups not now represented in our congregation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Examine ways our church can address problems of unemployment in our community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Consider more effective programs for the elderly and persons living alone	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Review our congregation's stewardship potential in light of community income data	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Review church staff salaries in light of community income data	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Develop new ministries to single persons in our community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Consider ways our church can reach out to persons who are divorced and separated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Broaden our church's appeal to ethnic groups not now represented in the congregation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Do a better job of introducing newcomers in the community to the life and program of our church	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Develop new ministries to military personnel living in our community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Strengthen our ministry to and with college students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Not Needed in Our Community	Not Appropriate For Our Church	Low Priority At This Time	Only Moderate Priority At This Time	High Priority/ Needs Immediate Attention
17. Do a better job meeting the needs of persons in local nursing homes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Consider new ministries with persons living in institutions such as prisons and mental hospitals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Improve our church's ministry to persons with disabilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Look at our church building with a view to making it accessible to persons with physical handicaps	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. Find new ways to attract young people and families to our church school or church education program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. Look for ways to appeal to young people who might be attracted to our church's youth groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Explore the possibility of a vacation church school for neighborhood children	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Explore the feasibility of a volunteer program to teach English to persons whose primary language is other than English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Convene a meeting of churches and other groups to look at problems in our community and ways we could address them together	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. Invite community leaders to meet with our church board to look at ways our church can work to address community concerns	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. Develop a "partnership" relationship with another UCC church or a group of churches facing pressing community needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. Consider the possibility of a church-sponsored day care center for children of working parents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. Examine the feasibility of our church sponsoring a housing project for the elderly or low income families	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. Other _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

options ("Not Needed in Our Community," "Not Appropriate for Our Church," etc.) across the page. Draw vertical lines to separate the response options. Using "hash-marks," transfer the responses from the questionnaire onto the tally sheets and total the results. Transfer the results onto a clean sheet of paper and you have a quick and helpful summary of member views.

And what about Heritage United Methodist Church? What should the community goals committee report back to the church board? Should Heritage institute a new evangelism program to attract young families into its membership or should it move ahead with the construction of housing for the elderly? Should it try to undertake both projects? This chapter cannot answer these questions. Analysis of the congregation's social context can bring members to increased awareness of their community setting; it can bring the church into closer contact with its neighbors; it can inform and influence decision making. But it cannot, and should not, tell a church what it must do. That remains, happily, a problem in the hands of the gathered community of God's people.

NOTES

1. *Treasure in Earthen Vessels* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1961), p. 112.
2. For an example of this approach, see Jackson W. Carroll, William McKinney, and Wade Clark Roof, "From the Outside In and the Inside Out," in Carl S. Dudley, ed., *Building Effective Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983).
3. *The Protestant Church As a Social Institution* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1935), p. 237.
4. The question of perspective is an important one. For more on the position represented here see David A. Roozen, William McKinney, and Jackson W. Carroll, *Varieties of Religious Presence* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1984); and Parker J. Palmer, *The Gathering of Strangers* (New York: Crossroad, 1981). For a more explicitly liberationist perspective see Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S. J., *Social Analysis* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984). The orientation of advocates of the "church growth movement" is somewhat different from the one outlined here; for an introduction see Peter J. Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Glendale, Cal.: Regal Books, 1976). It also differs from the position outlined in Lyle Schaller's recent writings; see "A Consultant's Perspective" in Carl S. Dudley, ed., *Building Effective Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983).
5. David Morris and Karl Hess, *Neighborhood Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 1.
6. Some congregations find it difficult to think of their community in geographic terms. These include congregations gathered around the special needs of racial or ethnic groups, those whose members have left urban neighborhoods to relocate in suburban communities and congregations that serve highly specialized constituencies (handicapped persons, "liberals" in "conservative" communities—and vice versa). We recognize that some of the methods and exercises presented in this chapter may have less applicability for these specialized constituency congregations. At the same time, we view even congregations whose members are not drawn from the immediate community as having a responsibility for the neighborhood in which they are present.
7. *The Heretical Imperative* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979).
8. This point cannot be overstated. In 1984, as part of the Congregational Studies Institute, two teams of skeptical church executives and seminary faculty were set loose on the West Side of Manhattan and in the affluent New York suburb of Scarsdale to explore the social worlds of those very different communities. They returned from the two communities, which share a reputation as being cold and suspicious of strangers, amazed at the willingness of people on the street to talk freely and openly about their communities and their personal lives.
9. *The Consciousness Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 3-5.
10. In analyzing this survey data, Wuthnow found three additional meaning system groupings. Traditionals are those who combine theistic and individualistic meaning systems, moderns blend social scientific and mystical modes, and transitionals combine elements of both the traditional and the modern. Overall, 15 percent of his sample were classified as theistic, 8 percent as individualistic, 14 percent as social scientific, 13 percent as mystic, 4 percent as traditional, 12 percent as modern, and 25 percent as transitional.
11. See Wade Clark Roof, *Community and Commitment* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1983).
12. Some census data is available for smaller units known as blocks and block groups (in urban areas) and enumeration districts (in nonurban areas). Most churches will find the above groupings adequate for church planning purposes.
13. These reports contain more detail than some people need or want. In the discussion that follows we will look at Heritage Church's neighborhood using a report prepared by the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries with church users in mind. This profile report includes detailed data from the 1980 Census and selected supplementary data from 1970 to help congregations look at local-level population changes. The report is in three sections covering trends between 1970 and 1980, detailed characteristics for 1980, and individuals and groups with special needs.
14. While the church is fictitious, the neighborhood is real and all data referred to in this section is taken from the 1980 and 1970 censuses.
15. As discussed in the following chapter, it is often helpful to compare community population pyramids with a similar breakdown of a church's own membership by age and sex.
16. If one makes the assumption that the income of Heritage's families parallels that of its neighborhood, a traditional tithe would total $2,441, a far higher level of giving than found in most United Methodist churches—or churches of other denominations!
17. James A. Davis, *General Social Surveys, 1972-1983: Cumulative Codebook* (Chicago: National Opinion Research Corporation, 1983).
18. See Morris Janowitz, *The Community Press in an Urban Setting* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952).
19. *Community Power Structure* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1953).
20. "Worksheets on Researching Power" (East Orange, N.J.: American Baptist Churches of New Jersey, mimeo, n.d.).
21. *Millhands and Preachers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942).
22. For a full discussion see William McKinney, David A. Roozen and Jackson W. Carroll, *Religion's Public Presence* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1982).
23. William McKinney, *Handbook: Census Data for Community Mission* (New York: United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, 1983), pp. 28-29.

For Further Reading on Context _____

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