ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, RELIGIOUS BELIEF, AND RESISTANCE: THE

EMERGING CHURCH

By

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INTRODUCTION: A PROBLEM AND AN OPPORTUNITY

In the Fall of 2006 I had the opportunity to spend a week with a group of people who were trying to rethink what religious training might look like in a relatively new kind of church called the Emerging Church. The group of 25 practitioners and thinkers that I was with was committed to avoiding an overly programmatic approach to ministerial training and education. They had all come from traditional church backgrounds and grew distasteful of rigidity of those traditions. It is not, I admit, an uncommon story in the history of religion. How many religious movements have been borne out of a dislike of traditions which failed to reflect the desires of a changing society? The history of the Christian church is littered with attempts of varying success to reform and reshape existing church models with the Reformation marking the most notable attempt in this direction. What marked this particular effort as unique, however, was that the group viewed the source of their frustration not with the particular traditions themselves, but from the way those traditions were maintained.

On the very first day of the meetings Mary pointed out that "there are two dangers. One is institutionalism and the other is success because that will push it toward institutionalism, and this will cause us to support things just to keep them going. All of the sudden you find yourself doing things that aren't tied to your vision at all." The group was very cognizant of how institutionalization limits opportunities for diversity in personal expression. They had all witnessed firsthand religious organizations that did things just because that was the way things had always been done. Mark pointed out that at his old church "I bet we didn't know why we were doing half of the things we did,

other than that we had just always done them that way." With these sentiments as a backdrop, the rest of the week was spent in an attempt to figure out how to structure opportunities for people to have access to knowledge and skill sets that would not become overly programmatic. The week ended, however, without resolution. Frequently, individuals in the group would engage me in one on one conversations about this dilemma, seeking my opinion as a sociologist interested in formal organizations. At the time, however, I could offer very little in the way of help. There simply was not much scholarship about organizations which wanted to avoid institutionalization. In the end, there was a call for more conversation but no agreement about how training opportunities could be widespread and available without being institutionalized.

The dilemma posed by this group raises interesting questions about institutionalization and organizations. Namely, is it possible to resist the forces compelling an organization toward institutionalization? What would that look like? How would such an organization operate? Would people take such an organization seriously? If an organization resisted institutionalization, what would hold it together? This dissertation is an attempt to answer these questions. Drawing on interview and ethnographic data from organizations within the Emerging Church I examine how organizational structures, processes and ideologies might avoid the danger of institutionalism that Mary pointed out above

CHAPTER I

TOWARD A THEORY OF RESISTANT ORGANIZATIONS

Because much religious activity is institutionalized and carried out through formal organizations (e.g., churches, religiously affiliated charities, religious presses, and broadcasters), students of religion may have something to learn from the experience of their colleagues in the organizations field. Because the world of religious organizations is so diverse and because many religious organizations pursue goals and employ structures quite unlike those the firms, service organizations, and public agencies on which most organizational research has focused, it is equally likely that organizational behaviorists have much to learn from students of organized religion. (DiMaggio 1998:7)

1.1 Introduction

Institutional theorists have done a good job of explaining homogeneity among organizations, arguing that isomorphism pushes organizations inexorably down the path toward institutionalization as they seek legitimacy. However, these theories have not been good for explaining the existence and behavior of organizations which deviate from the norm (Oliver 1991; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Rothschild-Whitt 1979; Scott 2001). Specifically, there has been no adequate explanation of organizations which deliberately avoid institutionalization while continuing to seek and obtain legitimacy. This dissertation is an attempt to remedy this hole in the literature by constructing the beginning of a theory of resistant organizations.

Zucker, in her review essay "Institutional Theories of Organizations," draws on Scott and Meyer and writes that "[o]rganizations that function in institutional environments must 'acquire types of personnel and …develop structural arrangements and production processes that conform to the specifications of that sector'" (Scott and Meyer 1983:141 in Zucker 1987:452). Reading the above quote from Zucker for the first

time over three years ago led me to wonder, must they? Must organizations in a highly institutionalized environment have particular kinds of personnel, structural arrangements and processes and procedures in order to succeed? DiMaggio and Powell (1983) add another key word which makes answering this question a little more complicated: if. According to DiMaggio and Powell and the new institutionalists who have taken up their call to focus on institutional arrangements in organizations, an organization must only conform if the organization desires to grow and/or persist over a long period of time, the two markers of organizational legitimacy for new institutionalists (Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Scott 2001). In other words, conformity is necessary for legitimacy. But is it? Is it possible for an organization to be perceived as legitimate without conforming to institutional norms? Can individual organizational actors implement collective strategies that resist conforming to dominant norms while still growing and persisting? In this dissertation, I take issue with institutional scholars such as Zucker, Scott and Meyer, and DiMaggio and Powell and suggest that organizations can resist institutionalization through the deliberate use of specific structures, organizational processes and ideologies which explicitly guard against the establishment and utilization of taken for granted patterns and routines. This dissertation will show that organizational resistance to institutionalization is possible. It is not easy, but it is possible. In the chapters and sections below, I explain the strategies and arrangements that some organizations employ in order to resist institutionalization while still working toward persistence and growth.

Organizations are subject to numerous, powerful forces in a modern, capitalist society many of which compel these organizations to become increasingly similar in practice and form. Sociohistorical forces identified by the earliest sociologists (i.e.

rationalization, bureaucracy, division of labor) all point to the critical need for an

organization's structural and cultural elements to become institutionalized or risk

instability and low chances of survival (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Powell and DiMaggio

1991; Selznick 1996). Jepperson and Meyer (1991:208) write that

> attempts to construct formal organization outside the modern polity (as with
> communes, the Hutterites, the Amish Mennonites, or various mafias) are
> notoriously unstable. Unrationalized 'organizational cultures,' similarly, do not
> persist or spread well.

Scholars across sub-fields have spent the better part of the past century documenting just

how organizations more or less successfully become institutionalized (DiMaggio and

Powell 1991; Hannan and Freeman 1977; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Parsons 1951; Perrow

1961; Scott 2001; Selznick 1948; Zucker 1977). These insights have been extended

across fields and have application beyond the world of organizations as social

psychological (Zelditch 2001), gender (Martin 2004), and social movements (Davis et al.

2005) theorists have demonstrated. However, this focus on organizations which are

becoming or are already institutionalized misses the point to some extent, or rather, it

leaves an incomplete picture.

Rothschild-Whitt writes that "it is in the conceptualization of alternative forms of

organization that organizational theory has been weakest" (1979:525). In the 25 years

since Rothschild-Whitt made this argument, much empirical and theoretical work has

been generated to remedy this problem, but the issue still persists (Clegg et al. 2006).

Focusing largely on how and why organizations behave similarly, institutional scholars

have developed theories and methodologies which highlight commonalities. However, it

is not currently, nor has it been historically the case, that all organizations seek to achieve

organizational goals through institutionalized pathways. In order to fill out the

organizational landscape with regard to survival and success, a theory of organizational

resistance is needed. To date, no systematic explanations have been advanced to account

for the overall success and failure of these organizations, why they arise, who forms

them, or what their impact is on their own institutional landscape or on society writ large

(Leach 2005; Oliver 1991). In this dissertation I utilize the principles of the extended

case method to re-examine and refine theories of institutions and organizations.

Specifically, I develop a theory of resistant organizations which explains those

organizations that intentionally avoid institutionalization without compromising cultural

acceptance.

1.2 Theoretical Background

1.2.1 Organizations

The organization is the "fundamental building block" of society which arises as

people pursue "activities too broad in scope to be accomplished by individuals" (Aldrich

and Marsden 1988:361). They are formal, coordinated efforts for achieving the goals of a

particular group. Organizational scholars distill organizations down to a few key

principles. They identify structures, processes, and organizational cultures as the

fundamental components of an organization (Handel 2003; Scott and Christensen 1995;

Scott and Meyer 1994; Shafritz and Ott 2001). Because these organizational components

are so universal, they are subject to the most intense institutional forces. Institutional

scholars have shown that organizations in a common field tend to face significant

pressures to institutionalize these organizational elements more than the others (Powell

and DiMaggio 1991). For this reason, they receive the bulk of attention in the literature regarding institutionalization and organizations.

It is easy to characterize religious organizations as among the most institutionalized organizations in our society. Many, if not most, religious services follow a set script that varies little from week to week or even from year to year. The same service is performed regardless of who shows up to "participate" in the worship. Similarly, identification with one religion or denomination is often indicative of a corresponding belief system. Even groups which vary on important theological matters still retain organizational structures (e.g., denominations and congregations) and practices (e.g., annual meetings, the calling of pastors), which are extremely similar.

Nevertheless, religious groups which explicitly attempt to avoid institutionalization do exist. Unfortunately, these groups have been largely overlooked in the study of contemporary religion (Demerath et al. 1998). More than a regrettable coincidence, this omission has resulted in a misleading conception of the religious environment. My dissertation will remedy this problem by applying institutional theories to religious organizations in order to develop a theory of organizational resistance. A theory of organizational resistance will provide an alternative way of conceptualizing the field of religious organizations, emphasizing practices which preserve and/or create diversity as opposed to seeking out those which maintain the status quo. Such a reconceptualization will not only provide a more complete view of the religious landscape, but will also have the effect of closely linking organizational structures with religious beliefs and practices.

1.2.2 Institutionalism: Old and New

The set of institutions or routines which collectively make up contemporary organizational structures and practices are difficult to resist/challenge. Max Weber (2002 [1930]) first noted this when he claimed that the move to a single, dominant set of organizational practices was inevitable. It was his belief that organizations would have to be as efficient as possible in order to survive and thrive in a modern society. He conceived of such a society as an "iron cage" which suppresses individuality in exchange for more general categories of consumption and production.

DiMaggio and Powell (1991) extend this analysis by pointing out that in our modern society the appearance of efficiency is at least as important as actual, technical efficiency in determining structure and practice. Their research is not a contradiction to Weber's, but rather an extension. They extend Weber's research by developing the concept of institutional isomorphism to show how the practice and structure of dominant organizations is imposed upon other organizations in the same field. It is this process of institutional isomorphism that DiMaggio and Powell and other institutionalists claim makes homogeneity among organizations so difficult to avoid/resist (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Orru, Biggart and Hamilton 1991; Scott 2001).

In the tradition of much sociological work in the last 20 years, which emphasizes both agency and structure (see Berger and Luckman 1967 [1966], Giddens 1984), institutional theory combines phenomenological, that is, socially constructed, aspects and structuralist or non-local, causal forces (Jepperson 1991). Any contribution to these literatures will necessarily build upon these advancements and continue in this tradition. This perspective is developed most fully in approaches which combine insights from the

more micro-focused old institutionalism and the macro-focused new institutionalism.

Old institutionalism, exemplified by Philip Selznick's (1949) research, is characterized by a focus on intraorganizational processes, especially those which compelled organizations to change. Much of the early institutional scholarship focused on heterogeneity within organizations (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Organizations, according to old institutionalists, were in a constant struggle to be more efficient and competitive within their organizational population. Scholars focused on technical aspects of organizations and their environments settling on efficiency as the characteristic with the most importance for organizational success. New institutionalism, beginning with Meyer and Rowan (1977), is not a radical departure from their predecessors though many of the differences are significant. First, new institutionalists are concerned with organizations embedded in institutional arrangements and the corresponding stability that comes from such embeddedness. Theorists claim that what is important is not efficiency but the appearance of efficiency in order to guarantee organizational survival over time. New institutionalists have traditionally not been concerned with organizations which fall outside dominant norms. In their view, these are just organizations which have not yet been institutionalized.

In the 15 years since Powell and DiMaggio (1991) called for a combination of old and new intuitionalism in their seminal work, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, scholars have heeded the call. Initial efforts included Singh et al. (1991), Orru et al. (1991), Galaskiewicz (1991, 1985), Fligstein (1991, 1985), and Tolbert (1988). More recently, Scott et al. (2000) and Haveman (2000) have made good endeavors to integrate the institutionalization literature. Zucker (1987) points out that while the old

and new institutionalism divide is useful as a conceptual tool, the reality is that organizations are susceptible to pressures to be both technically efficient and conform to institutional expectations. Some fields, like religion, are subject to high degrees of both (see section 1.5).

1.2.3 Isomorphism

Both old and new institutionalism have in common multiple concepts, including one which is crucial for this discussion, namely, theories of isomorphism. Isomorphism refers to the process whereby organizations adopt similar practices and structures over time resulting in a dominant organizational form both within and across fields. There are four causes of isomorphism. Old institutionalists recognized isomorphism as arising from competition. They reasoned that organizations would increasingly adopt the practices and structures which were the most efficient and have the greatest technical benefit. New institutionalists, on the other hand, recognize isomorphism as deriving from coercion due to regulatory agencies (e.g., governments), normative pressures associated with professionalization and mimicry of practices from other organizations in an attempt to reduce uncertainty. Rather than view these two sets of theories as competing, it is better to think of them as complementary. As Singh et al. (1991) demonstrated convincingly, organizations are subject to all four types of isomorphism simultaneously. Demerath et al. (1998) have shown that these forces apply to religious organizations as well.

The most important connection between the old and new institutionalists for this dissertation, however, concerns the outcome, rather than the process of isomorphism.

Both sets of theorists believe isomorphism to be unavoidable in the long term or during rapid growth leading to eventual institutionalization of organizational forms. Additionally, both processes are seen as largely inevitable for stability and persistence and have the end result of helping organizations achieve homogeneity, in structure and practice, with their environments (Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Orru et al. 1991). Orru et al. (1991:361) note that "[i]n different ways each [perspective] argues that environmental pressures shape organizations and, moreover, that organizations in the same environment will become structurally similar as they respond to like pressures."

Institutional theory posits isomorphism as a near totalizing force, a catalyst for Weber's famous "iron cage." The structural pressures of the outside world compelling organizations to conform are simply too great to be successfully resisted by an organization of any size or scale (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In setting out their initial hypotheses of isomorphic change, DiMaggio and Powell (1991) note that "[s]ome organizations respond to external pressures quickly; others change only after a long period of resistance" (74). Their hypotheses naturally reflect this assumption that all organizations eventually give in to isomorphic pressures even if they are initially resistant.

What is left unaddressed by this traditional model is an understanding of organizational forms which resist the forces of isomorphism. The traditional model depicts the forces of isomorphism as irresistible, requiring compliance in exchange for increased legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Oliver 1991). Orru et al. (1991:362) remark that "maverick organizations that fail to conform may risk survival as surely as an inefficient firm," explicitly linking theories of isomorphism and firm success to both old

and new institutionalism. This idea that conformity is necessary for survival is common to both old and new institutionalists. Oliver points out that "institutional theory is unable to explain the continuing reappearance of alternative [organizations] that attempt to make a virtue of their active departure from institutional beliefs and commonly held definitions of what constitutes effective action" (Oliver 1991:156). In this dissertation I shed some light on these organizations that view resisting institutionalization as an organizational goal to be embraced.

But the purpose of this research is not to suggest that institutional theories of organizational development are without merit. Rather, the evidence suggests quite the opposite as institutional pressures are in fact very prevalent and exceedingly difficult to resist. However, the research below does show that resistance to institutionalization is possible even in highly institutionalized fields through collective, conscious action. The result is not so much a challenge to existing institutional theory as a refinement forcing theorists to account for at least some of the organizational landscape as occupying a position which is neither institutionalized nor about to be institutionalized, but rather as resisting institutionalization.

1.3 Limitations of Current Theory

1.3.1 Introduction

There are two primary limitations to institutional theory that are being addressed in this dissertation. First, and most importantly, there is a tendency in the institutionalism literature to conflate theories of institutionalization and legitimacy. Below, I discuss how

this tendency has severely circumscribed our understanding of the organizational

landscape by conceptually disallowing the investigation of organizations which resist

institutionalization while seeking legitimacy. Second, and related, the focus on

homogeneity in an organizational field has dictated that researchers focus investigations

on an aggregate level of analysis, ignoring, largely, the role of agency in the construction,

maintenance and resistance of institutions and isomorphic pressures.

1.3.2 Conflation

One of the major reasons why institutional theorists are able to posit isomorphism

as an inevitable process for successful organizations is that they tend to conflate the

concepts of institutionalization and legitimacy or, more recently, to ignore their

interaction altogether. I discuss these concepts in depth below, but for now it is enough

to understand an institution as a set of taken for granted processes and legitimacy as a

status conferred on an organization when it is seen to be in accordance with dominant

norms and values. When these two concepts are conflated then evidence of one is

inevitably taken as evidence of the other. Legitimate organizations are assumed to be

institutionalized and institutionalized organizations are assumed to be legitimate. This is

summed up well by Singh et al. who write that "a central feature of some institutional

ideas is that structural isomorphism with rationalized myths in the institutional

environment increases the legitimacy of the organization" (Singh et al. 1991:413).

Essentially, Singh et al. are arguing that institutionalists have tended to make the claim

that an organization can be perceived as legitimate by others in the field (e.g., competing

organizations, consumers, regulatory agencies) if its structures and practices are similar

to other, similar organizations which are already perceived as legitimate. While this may appear at first glance to be true, scholars have repeatedly made compelling cases that this is, in fact, not always the case (Jepperson 1991; Meyer and Rowan 1991). Jepperson (1991) reminds us that the concepts of legitimacy and institutionalization are conceptually distinct. He claims that "[l]egitimacy may be an outcome of institutionalization or contribute to it, but there is no reason to think that one is necessary for the other" (Jepperson 1991:149). Organizations exist, for example, which are highly institutionalized without much legitimacy such as organized crime organizations (Jepperson 1991).

This conceptual flaw manifests itself directly in methodological practice. To the extent that institutional theorists deal with non-institutionalized processes they posit deinstitutionalization as the natural opposite of institutionalization (Oliver 1992). In other words, they assume institutionalization as an inevitable process which affects all organizations. This problem exists because institutional theorists typically start their analyses with organizations which are either already highly institutionalized or are attempting to move in that direction as quickly as possible. I contend here that a natural opposite of institutionalization is not deinstitutionalization but rather non-institutionalization and that these organizations are only visible when the concepts of institutionalization and legitimacy are kept separate.

Institutionalization refers to the process whereby a social object becomes so routine that the underlying logic rationalizing the existence of the object becomes taken for granted. Legitimacy is also a process, but this process is normative and refers to the extent to which a social object is in line with dominant norms and values.

Institutionalists beginning with Talcott Parsons (1960) have understood legitimacy to be crucial for achieving organizational goals. Legitimacy gives a social object "an acknowledged claim on societal resources" (Scott 1991:169). Scott goes on to note that the specific form or means that an organization uses to reach its goals matters as much as the goals themselves, though not in the same way (Scott 1991). This indicates that the way we think about institutionalization and legitimation is different as we understand an institution to be a set of processes or actions and legitimacy to be a status conferred on a social object by actors or organizations within a particular context. This is not to suggest that legitimacy and institutions are not closely related; indeed, they are. They frequently reside together both as a desired outcome and as a shared process, but the two do not necessarily go hand in hand. Keeping these two concepts distinct is of utmost importance.

Thus, for a full theory of organizational development, the normative or legitimating factors and the institutional factors must be treated as distinct variables while recognizing that they are, of course, part of the same process, each reinforcing the other. In the next sections, I reassert the independence of these two concepts by describing them separately while recognizing that the processes often occur simultaneously. By keeping these concepts distinct, I will be able to isolate and focus on organizational processes which aid in the resistance of institutionalization. While I will spend some time demonstrating how the organizations in this study move toward legitimacy, it will not be the focus of the study, instead serving as the backdrop to the investigation of resistance.

Institutionalization

An institution is an "organized, established, procedure" or routine whose rationale is taken for granted (Jepperson 1991:143). Jepperson (1991:151) draws on Goffman's (1961) concept of a total institution as an "entirely encompassing structure," and Berger and Luckman's (1967 [1966]) image of complete institutionalization as liturgy where every action is preprogrammed and unvarying, to formulate a concept of institutionalization which varies according to the "relative vulnerability to social intervention," degree of embeddedness within other institutions, and mode of taken-for-grantedness (Jepperson 1991:151). We can think of the organization (different from *an* organization) as an institution because it is a set of repeated patterns and practices the value of which is taken for granted. This definition, however, requires some further unpacking as several issues are embedded within the previous sentences.

First, it's important to note that an institution is a process or a set of actions. For example, marriage between a man and a woman in the U.S. is an institution. The routines surrounding marriage (ceremony, monogamy, nuclear households, division of household chores, etc.) are well established, and although individual permutations and beliefs about the way marriage *should* work may vary, no one marriage has the ability to change the institution of marriage. However, as we see currently with the debate over gay marriage, both in and outside the church, it is possible for a group of marriages to ultimately change the set of practices that make up the institution of marriage especially when affiliated with already legitimized social actors such as denominations. Thus, it is incorrect to think of any one marriage as institutionalized. Rather, we can think of a highly institutionalized marriage as being heavily made up of established routines and

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procedures (Jepperson 1991; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). In

organizational parlance, Powell and DiMaggio (1991:14) write that "organizational

forms, structural components, and rules, not specific organizations, are institutionalized."

Second, as the example of marriage illustrates, a social object can be more or less

institutionalized (Jepperson 1991). One of the things which characterizes new

institutionalism especially is the belief that "institutionalization is not simply present or

absent…institutionalization is defined here as a variable, with different degrees of

institutionalization altering the cultural persistence which can be expected" (Zucker

1977:726). To continue with our example, a marriage that is traditional in most respects

but where the mundane, everyday chores are continually negotiated as their need arises is

characterized by lower institutionalization than a marriage where the woman knows her

chores (laundry, mowing, etc.) and the man knows what his jobs are (cooking, cleaning,

etc.). Let me emphasize here that my selection of these individual chores with a specific

sex or gender is unimportant for this immediate discussion. In other words, the *type* of

chore that the man does is of no importance for institutionalization. Rather, it is the fact

that he and his wife know what his chores are without having to discuss it every time. In

fact, other research has shown that highly institutionalized elements are not only immune

from change due to criticism but also *manufacture* their own consent. Zelditch and

Walker (1987) and Thomas et al. (1987) have demonstrated that when a person confronts

highly institutionalized organizational elements he/she likely "will still behave *as if*

he/she supports" them even if the individual finds the specific element to be unfair or

unjust (Zucker 1987:454). The power, and thus the danger, of institutionalization for an

organization which places a high degree of importance on individual expression could not

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be more apparent.

Third, the concept of something being "taken for granted" deserves more explanation. It would be too simplistic, and incorrect for that matter, to suggest that we take our daily routines for granted. This view of institutionalism posits social actors as largely passive, incapable and unwilling to structure their own experience. New institutionalism takes as part of its foundation a theory of praxis which precludes this kind of analysis. Relying largely on Giddens' (1984) concept of structuration, the new institutionalists recognize the ability of individuals to shape their institutional environment. For something to be "taken for granted" means that the underlying logics (Friedland and Alford 1991:248), myths and ceremonies (Meyer and Rowan 1977), or patterns (Berger and Luckmann 1967 [1966]) provide some explanation or functional justification for the patterns themselves. Thus, it is not the actions which are taken for granted but the reasons underlying those actions. Jepperson is right to point out that this makes "taken for grantedness" a concept which is fundamentally distinct from individual comprehension when he writes that "persons may not well comprehend an institution, but they typically have ready access to some functional or historical account of why the practice exists"[1] (Jepperson 1991:147). A routine may be taken for granted regardless of whether an individual is aware or unaware of the pattern and regardless of whether the individual evaluates the routine as generally good or generally bad. The degree of institutionalization turns not on the number of people which take a pattern for granted, but the depth of taken for grantedness that each person experiences. One way in which

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[1] Jepperson provides the example of Catholic mass prior to Vatican II. While most parishioners were not trained in liturgy, they could mobilize some explanation of what they were doing at mass (i.e., worshipping God). Also, they knew that if they required further explanation there was someone available who could provide that information.

the actions and routines of religious organizations become taken for granted is by placing the source or authority for those actions outside the earthly domain and in the hands of a deity and/or a professional with special access to the divine. Inquiries into the nature or reasoning behind actions are often met with references to otherworldly forces, effectively ending most lines of questioning. Such a dynamic naturally makes questioning antithetical to institutionalization in these settings, and we will see below that questioning is a common strategy of organizational resistance for the organizations in this study.

Finally, to be institutionalized, a practice must be self-sustaining as opposed to being subject to constant and repeated evaluation (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Jepperson refers to the opposite of institutionalization as a state of social entropy or an "absence of reproductive processes" (Jepperson 1991:148) where individual action is required to sustain a pattern. This point is crucial for my dissertation as I seek to explain the existence of entropic organizations. For example, in China, the Falun Gong is a kind of entropic organization. Since they are officially persecuted by the Chinese government, they lack regular, self sustaining organization. Instead, each gathering, practice or demonstration of Falun Gong must be organized by individual action (Tong 2002). Conversely, in highly institutionalized religious organizations, such as the Methodists in the U.S., worship patterns are sustained regardless of individual intervention. There is no need to for First Methodist Church to publicize a Sunday morning worship service in order to get people to show up, and there is no need for any one individual to show up for the service to be held.

Legitimacy

Johnson et al. (2006) note that in the literature there has been some "conceptual slippage" between the definitions of legitimacy and institutionalization. They contend that this is not a problem since "both are seen as leading to stability in social action" (Johnson et al. 2006). In addition to the discipline specific concerns raised above, this is problematic on at least two accounts. First, the question of whether legitimacy and institutionalization both lead ultimately to stability is an empirical one that should not get passed off as theoretical conjecture. Second, even if both processes do lead to the same conclusion, that is no reason to equate the processes themselves as similar or render the processes meaningless. Eating too much candy and getting punched in the mouth can both result in lost teeth, but they are by no means the same process, and understanding which was the cause is important for guiding future action. Finally, there is no reason for us to allow this slippage. We have good, strong definitions of both of these concepts which helps to render them distinct and separate.

Organizational theories of legitimacy can be traced back to Max Weber who postulated that legitimate authority in modern societies is intimately connected to rationality through organizations (Weber 1981 [1946]). Much of the subsequent theorizing about legitimacy has built upon and expanded his initial conception while, generally, providing conceptual focus and utility to an otherwise broad concept. A review of these theories synthesized the various, more or less similar definitions and reported that legitimacy can be conceived of as a socially constructed, collective process whereby a social object is understood to be in accordance with dominant beliefs, values, and norms by other actors in the field (Johnson, Dowd and Ridgeway 2006). It is,

fundamentally, "a problem in the construction of social reality" (Johnson, Dowd and Ridgeway 2006). The utility of the above definition for application across levels of analysis should be clear as the authors rely on the social-psychological literature as well as the institutional-organizational literature to construct their definition. A concept of legitimacy as a process operating at multiple levels of analysis is of utmost importance for institutionalists who seek to combine micro (organizational) and macro (institutional) analyses.

1.3.3 Levels of Analysis

A closely related limitation of current institutional analysis is derived from the level of analysis of institutional scholarship. Organizational and institutional scholars have tended to focus their inquiries at the field level, examining why, for example, the field of non-profits (DiMaggio 1991) or community colleges (Clark 1960) have come to take their current form and shape. In order to answer these questions, the social actors which must be investigated are those at the same level of analysis. Thus, in his examination of the public arts scene, DiMaggio found that the major players were the state, professional groups, and basic mimicry of firms and practices perceived as efficient. These "new" theories of institutionalism were added to the existing theory which posited that practices and structures become adopted across a field due to technical efficiency. Studies in this area similarly focused on aggregate actors, that is multiple organizations comprising a field or sector. When examinations are focused on this particular level of analysis, one misses out on dissenting actions. Aggregations necessarily relegate any dissent to outlier status. Thus, if one goes looking, in the

aggregate, for similarity, one is likely to find it (DiMaggio and Powell 1991).

Institutional theorists have done far more than simply identify similarity, however.

Scholars such as Powell and DiMaggio (1991), Scott (2001), and Zucker (1977) have

developed advanced and complex explanations about exactly how and under what

circumstances aggregate similarity is achieved. Many of these build explicitly off of

Powell and DiMaggio's concept of institutional isomorphism discussed above. The

dominance of these theories and the "seek and ye shall find" nature of looking for

similarity among aggregated data has led to the overstatement that isomorphism

unavoidable. In recent years, however, there has been some indication that resistance to

isomorphism is indeed possible, if uninvestigated (Oliver 1991; Jepperson 1991). The

foundations of these contentions are found in the very heart of institutional theory.

Namely, institutional theory is built upon a phenomenological or social constructionist

approach to explaining organized social action. This perspective places a great amount of

privilege on human agency in creating and sustaining social institutions. In other words,

individuals are the architects of their own constraints. This perspective was first hinted at

by Weber (1981 [1946]) and developed more fully and explicitly by Peter Berger and

Thomas Luckman (1967 [1966]). More recently, institutional theorists and social

constructionists have found an ally in Anthony Giddens (1984) who posits a recursive

relationship between individuals and social institutions. Traditional institutional analysis

has focused, then, on the role of positions in implementing and sustaining field level

institutionalization and isomorphism. In an effort to be consistent with their own level of

analysis, these scholars have not analyzed the role of any particular individual (e.g., a

charismatic leader) or organization (e.g., a specific firm) or even of any particular office

(e.g., General Motor's CEO or the President of the U.S.), but rather on types of people, such as professionals, or types of firms, such as financial clearing houses, or kinds of offices, such as college presidents. And these, of course, are the proper places to look if one is interested in explaining why and how so many firms look and operate the same even in various industry sectors.

However, there does exist in the theory of institutionalism and isomorphism not only the ability to bring individual units of analysis into examination, but also a call to do so. DiMaggio (1991) and Powell (1991) have separately called for examining the way that innovation and resistance operate within heavily institutionalized fields by examining those practices which seemingly do not conform to the dominant standards and practices which have become institutionalized in a given field. Of course, they are not interested in explaining why or how these practices persist outside the mainstream. Rather, they operate from the stance that these practices will soon become institutionalized or die out. This does not negate the fact that even they recognize that the only way to truly understand these practices is to change the level of analysis from field level to firm or organizational level. However, these calls have largely gone unheeded in part, I argue, because of the seeming inevitability of institutionalization. Why bother examining practices and procedures which will only exist for a period of time before becoming subsumed to dominant industry norms and standards? Of course, in this dissertation, I argue against the inevitability of institutionalization. One of the keys to this examination, then, is that I specifically address particular actors within those aggregate categories who are not contributing to the project of isomorphism and institutionalization and indeed are consciously resisting these forces. As we have seen above, institutions are those which

are not tied to any specific social actor, but rather exist without the intervention of any

particular person (Jepperson 1991; Zucker 1977). Thus, in order to uncover acts of

resistance, it is necessary to understand how organizations do just the opposite, that is,

how organizational activities are intimately and structurally tied to individual actors. In

this analysis, then, there will be a larger focus on individual actors than in many, if not

all, investigations of institutions and organizations. Indeed, this necessity has even

dictated a somewhat unorthodox (for institutional studies at least) methodological choice

which I discuss in chapter 3.

1.4 Organizational Resistance

In the years following the initial publication of "The Iron Cage Revisited:

Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields,"

DiMaggio and Powell have separately recognized that they painted an overly simplistic

picture of conformity through isomorphism. Both have amended their earlier stance to

allow for the possibility and necessity of resistance as fields become overly structurated

and options for consumers become limited. They largely attribute resistance to existing

institutions as the source of innovation for both organizations and fields while

maintaining that any innovation which arises from such resistance would of course be

immediately subjected to isomorphic forces (DiMaggio 1991; Powell 1991). In other

words, there still exists a dichotomous view that the world consists of those social

practices which either are institutionalized or are not yet. While this conceptualization

adds a degree of sophistication it still does not open the door wide for the possibility of

an organization which attempts to resist institutionalization on all fronts as it seeks to

persist and grow. This highlights the dilemma with most explanations of organizational resistance to institutionalization. Namely, theorists focus on the response of organizations to one kind of pressure while keeping in tact their assumption that members of organizations desire for and work toward, or at least do not actively resist, having their organization institutionalized in other respects.

While the literature largely fails to deal with these kinds of entropic or resistant organizations that I propose to study here, some insights can be gained by examining the empirical and theoretical work done surrounding organizational resistance. Christine Oliver's 1991 article, "Strategic Responses to Institutional Processes" stands as the only major work within the field of new institutionalism that addresses resistance to a significant degree. In it, she recognizes 5 different responses organizations can make to institutional forces: acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance, and manipulation. She seeks to demonstrate that, contrary to most institutional scholarship, "conformity is neither inevitable nor invariably instrumental in securing longevity" (Oliver 1991:175). Most scholars have tended to focus on the strategy of acquiescence because it is thought to be the most popular response organizations make to their environment, though Scott (1995) makes the case that compromise is probably the most common way in which organizations react to their environments. Oliver's strategy of defiance, however, is the one most applicable for this dissertation.

A strategy of defiance involves organizations which respond actively to avoid institutionalization altogether. Scott notes that "defiant organizations not only resist institutional pressures to conform, but do so in a very public manner" (Scott 1995:29). This "public manner" can take the form of dismissing or ignoring institutional pressures,

challenging institutional pressures or attacking institutional pressures. Oliver points out that these organizations may "make a virtue of their insurrection," and are more likely to challenge existing rules when members feel they have a more efficient method of achieving organizational goals (Oliver 1991:156). It is important to note that "efficient" here is not limited to technical means. Oliver allows for a more culturally efficient organization as well. She gives the example of rights activists who hold current laws or practices in disdain because of ideological differences. In the field of religion, which is the location for this investigation, we will see that efficiency spans technical and cultural issues.

While Oliver's typology is useful, it is not without criticism. She astutely points out that "institutional theory is unable to explain the continuing reappearance of alternative [organizations] that attempt to make a virtue of their active departure from institutional beliefs and commonly held definitions of what constitutes effective action," but she does little to remedy this situation as she focuses much of her attention on organizations which are already highly institutionalized and simply resisting pressures to change even more (Oliver 1991:156). This comes from a fundamental flaw within Oliver's theory, namely that she largely fails to take into account the ability of the institutional environment to shape the realm of possible responses an organization can make (Scott 1995). Indeed, an organization which truly resists institutionalization is not one which seeks to create its own patterns, but one which seeks to make the patterns themselves subject to constant criticism and interrogation. I will revisit this particular point in depth throughout the dissertation as it stands at the heart of organizational resistance. I really cannot stress enough that resisting institutionalization fundamentally

means to make the taken-for-granted, visible. This particular feature is impossible to uncover when the starting point for resistance is organizations which are already highly institutionalized.

This problem, however, is not limited to Oliver's work and indeed continues despite her substantial, though incomplete, efforts to remedy the situation. In a review of recent, empirical work on alternatives to institutionalization, Scott gives examples of studies ranging from work on the tobacco industry (Miles 1982) to corporate response to EEO/AA legislation (Dobbin et al. 1993; Edelman 1992), to university budget and accounting systems (Covaleski and Dirsmith 1988). Each of these studies began with a highly institutionalized organization and examined how its members were able to resist external pressures on one dimension of isomorphism. There is no attention given to organizations which resist isomorphism as a whole.

The problems with the scant literature on organizational resistance are surprising given that examples of purposefully non-hierarchical organizations abound in the sociological literature in general and, to a much lesser extent, in the organizations literature. Scholars have focused attention on everything from utopian communities (Kanter 1968), Israeli kibbutzim (Ben-Rafael 1977), the Mondragon worker collective (Johnson and Whyte 1977) and feminist collectives both within and without the context of a social movement, new or otherwise (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Staggenborg 2001; Taylor and Whittier 1992). These groups are typically very similar to the one I propose to study here, but the literature has largely revolved around the effectiveness of decentralized organization for achieving group goals, as opposed to examining the effectiveness of this organizational structure for resisting institutionalization (Leach

2005). Though these groups do not necessarily fall under the designation of resistance, they would certainly be a good place to start. As I mentioned earlier, choosing one institutionalized model over another is not resistance. In other words, a feminist organization is not resistant simply because it opposes capitalism and uses a structure which is anti-hierarchical. Indeed as ample scholarship has shown, feminist organizations are just as institutionalized as capitalist organizations (Ferree and Martin 1995; Martin 1990; Riger 1994).

Building off of the insights illuminated above, we can expect several things from resistant organizations and their process of development. First, we can expect that the founders must be conscious of wanting to resist isomorphic forces (DiMaggio and Powell 1991:81). In highly technical environments, competitive isomorphism compels organizations to look like one another as the members seek to structure a more efficient organization or develop more efficient practices in order to be more competitive. Non-competitive organizations risk failure at the hands of more efficient organizations (Orru et al. 1991). DiMaggio and Powell (1991), in describing the three kinds of institutional isomorphism, also describe "an inexorable push towards homogenization" as organizations must retain the appearance of efficiency if not actual efficiency in the quest for survival (DiMaggio and Powell 1991:64). Both old and new institutionalists agree that if the members of the group are not aware of isomorphic processes, the organization will be subject to them anyway. Of course, many organizations explicitly seek out isomorphism as means to survival and success. However, there is a small subset of organizations which achieve success by *not* succumbing to isomorphic pressures. What we learned above tells us that these groups must be conscious of their struggle in order to

avoid institutionalization. In short, if an organization exists which is not institutionalized, it is not an accident.

A second, and related, expectation is that the innovators must make explicit attempts to *organize* themselves in a way which retains the potential for engaging in legitimating processes while avoiding isomorphism. When institutional pressures take over competitive forces, the intentions of the founders no longer matter (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). For example, no matter how upset the original developers of the corporate form might get, they would have no ability to influence the current utilization of that organizational form, because it has become institutionalized. As we saw with the example of marriage above, no one person has the ability to change an institution. Any changes to the corporation as an organizational form must be made by the appropriate level actors. Thus, the corporate form is only subject to pressure from other institutions. This means that in resistant organizations, the organization itself must have a form which resists institutionalization. Otherwise, it runs the risk of being subjected to coercive, mimetic and/or professional pressures.

Finally, in order to achieve legitimacy, to be seen as in accordance with dominant norms and values, the resistant organization must not disengage from society, which would be the easiest way to avoid isomorphic pressures. Disengagement would make it impossible to move through the stages of legitimacy. Explicit in the Johnson, Dowd and Ridgeway (2006) conception of legitimacy is that after achieving local legitimacy, an organization must be concerned with widespread acceptance. Religious cults are good examples of organizations which disengage from society in an effort to avoid institutionalization and are simultaneously not seen as legitimate groups. My

expectation, then, is that organizations which are able to move through the processes of legitimation without becoming institutionalized will be those who adopt an organizational form whose innovation is one of inclusivity rather than exclusivity. Instead of holding strongly to one belief or particular way of doing things, successfully resistant organizations will be those which allow for multiple ways of reaching organizational goals so that when no pattern is created.

1.5 The Field of Religion

1.5.1 The Religious Environment

Orru et al. (1991) reject a simple divide between technical and institutional spheres that separates old and new institutionalism for the economic organizations in East Asia, based on the reasoning that such organizations are subject to both competitive and cultural pressures. Similarly, I contend here that the religious environment in the U.S. must be considered as both a technical and cultural environment as well and as such is susceptible to both competitive and institutional isomorphism, though not, as we shall see, to the same degree. Institutional environments are those where the survival of the organization depends on following existing rules and regulations. In this environment the appearance of efficiency takes center stage. Into this domain neoinstitutionalists have tended to group non-profit, charitable and government agencies. The classic example here is DiMaggio's analysis of the rise of the non-profit arts field where he demonstrates that the solidification of the organizational form which characterizes the field has more to do with the surrounding environment than technical efficiency (DiMaggio 1991).

Technical environments are those where products are freely and openly exchanged. Efficient, productive organizations are rewarded in this environment. Scholars typically have placed all for-profit organizations into this realm. However, as demonstrated earlier, there is a call to abandon this dichotomy and realize that all environments contain elements of both technical and institutional pressures. Religion in contemporary U.S. society is a perfect example of these competing pressures. Rational choice theorists taking a market approach to religion (Iannaccone 1997; Stark 1997; Stark and Bainbridge 1996) have demonstrated that religion in the U.S. is, to some extent, a marketplace where organizations compete with one another for resources (i.e., money, people, time, power). At the same time, Wuthnow (1987, 1988) and others (Berger 1990 [1967], Berger and Luckman 1967 [1966]) have shown that environmental forces work to constrain choice and action while allowing for survival and persistence of some organizations. This combination makes the field of religion in the U.S. an ideal place to locate a study about the forces of institutionalization and the pressures of all four kinds of isomorphism: competitive, coercive, normative, mimetic. A prime example of both technical and institutional forces coming together is found in the role of the pastor who is subject to both technical-competitive pressures to be able to provide specific religious and secular services (e.g., budget balancing, pastoral care, overseeing building projects, etc.) and institutional pressures to deliver these services in a very specific way in accordance with both local tradition and professional training (Blizzard 1956; Brunette-Hill and Finke 1999; Monahan 1999; Towler and Coxon 1979).

A search of sociological abstracts reveals only one article dealing directly with institutionalism and religious organizations (McMullen 1994). A notable exception to

this general trend is the 1998 edited volume by Demerath et al., *Sacred Companies,*

which sought to bring neoinstitutional theory to bear directly on religious organizations

and to use the sociology of religion to enhance our understanding of organizational

theory. However, this work has garnered relatively little attention in the years following

its initial publication. This is not due to the fact that the institutionalism literature has no

bearing on religious organizations or vice versa. Indeed, DiMaggio states in the opening

chapter:

> Insofar as students of religion concern themselves with such formal organizations
> as congregations, denominations, and religiously affiliated schools and service
> agencies, it seems plausible that they may also benefit from applying insights and
> methods from the study of organizations in their research…Ultimately, however,
> students of religion will have to adapt organization theory's conceptual and
> methodological tools to the contours of their own field. And, if they do, focused
> attention to organizational aspects of religion may redound to the benefit of
> organization theory itself…" (1998:20-21)

I quote DiMaggio at length here to show that there is potential utility to be gained by

integrating these two literatures. DiMaggio is correct to point out that the two fields are

compatible, as the environment within which religious organizations typically operate is

both institutionalized and competitive.

1.5.2 Characteristics of Religious Organizations

Any examination of the sociology of religion literature suggests that there are,

indeed, many important insights to be gained by applying institutional theories to

religious organizations. Stout and Cormode (1998:68) note that

> [t]here are many examples of institutional isomorphism in American religious
> history. Polity, for example, was once central to a denomination's self-identity and
> separated one ecclesiastical tradition from another. Episcopalians,
> Congregationalists, and Presbyterians took their very names from their polities.

Yet the organizational revolution of the late 19th century penetrated these denominations so deeply that they have each come to shed hierarchical differences and resemble one homogenous type.

They go on to describe in detail examples of each kind of isomorphism at work in the field of religion.

Significantly there is also evidence of resistant organizations in the field of religion, though these, of course, have not been the subject of intense, systematic study in this area. Perhaps the most interesting modern corollary to my case within the field of religious organizations is the Falun Gong in China. The Falun Gong has garnered increasing attention across disciplines in recent years in wake of the Chinese government crack-down in 1999. Structurally, researchers have demonstrated an organizational structure which is decentralized and non-hierarchical with few, if any, rules and regulations and a constituency which claims that Falun Gong is neither a religion or a movement (Tong 2002; Ownby 2005). Tong (2002:637) writes

> According to Falun Gong sources, at the time of its suppression on 22 July 1999, it had no national organizational structure, address or authority arrangement. There were also no stated organizational goals, regulations or by-laws. It claims that its practitioners were free to join or leave at any time, not bound by a set of obligations and duties, and not listed in any Falun Gong rosters. Its congregations were sites where adherents gathered to practice meditation and spiritual cultivation.

All of these characteristics have the effect of keeping Falun Gong from becoming institutionalized as there is no opportunity to establish patterns which may become taken for granted. As I mentioned earlier the reliance on individual intervention for organizational activities to take place necessarily means that the organization is not institutionalized.

The most promising historical group which has managed to resist a high degree of

institutionalization is the Quakers. The Society of Friends has been around since the mid-1600s and currently has over 300,000 members who participate in a religious organization which avoids centralization, hierarchy and official positions of status (Leach 2005). However, Quakers have not traditionally been an evangelical group. Although some variation does exist, they do not typically proselytize or actively attempt to convert new members. The theories of legitimacy and institutionalization that I am using here assume a desire for growth as fundamental. This makes them a less than perfect corollary. While the Quakers may provide a compelling example of an organization with similar characteristics to that which I propose to study, the lack of a desire for rapid organizational growth and ideology dissemination makes them somewhat problematic.

Religious scholars concerned with organizations have identified the location of authority, organization of labor, system of governance, the role of professionals, and ideology as the most common dimensions of religious organizations and thus, the components subject to the most isomorphic pressures (Benson and Dorsett 1971; Demerath et al. 1998; Harris 1998; Sider and Unruh 2004). These components line up with structure, process and ideology definition of an organization described above. Any serious examination of institutionalization and legitimacy must necessarily begin with these components in mind. I discuss each of these in depth in chapters below.

1.6 Chapter Layout and Conclusion

1.6.1 Chapter Layout

In chapter 1 I have provided a distinct rationale for this project and argued that an

examination of organizations which resist institutionalization and seek and obtain legitimacy is a necessary component of organizational and institutional scholarship which is currently missing. In chapter 2 I describe the unique social and historical conditions which produced the religious environment and particular cases which are the focus of this study. I identify the important characteristics which impacted the eventual structure, processes and ideology of the organizations examined. In chapter 3 I provide an overview of the methods used for data collection and analysis and I argue that the extended case method is a useful methodological approach for studying organizations which fall outside of the mainstream and thus challenge current conceptions of organizational development. Heretofore, this method has been underutilized by institutional and organizational scholars. I also describe in detail the characteristics of the congregations included in this study.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 take up the structure, processes and ideology of the resistant religious organization. Specifically I argue that resistant organizations create a fluid organizational structure by adopting a shifting base of authority, a labor of the willing, and context specific governance. Additionally, organizational procedures are kept dynamic by employing a system of unregulated discretion which relies on trained professionals as little as possible. Finally, I examine the successes and failings of the holistic ideology created by the organizations in this study as they attempt to resist the institutionalization of an organizational culture.

Chapter 7 concludes by integrating the empirical findings of the dissertation into the beginning of a more general theory of organizational resistance. Specifically, I offer the metaphor of the gyroscope to describe the resistant organization as opposed to the

imagery of the iron cage offered by Weber and Powell and DiMaggio. Additionally, I discuss how resistant organizations are able to be successful not in spite of their avoidance of taken for granted routines and procedures, but because of them.

1.6.2 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that we can gain a better understanding of the organizational landscape by maintaining a distinction between institutionalization and legitimacy. In particular, this conceptual clarity makes the existence of organizations which are lowly institutionalized and highly legitimate a theoretical possibility. I have sketched a general outline of what processes and structures researchers of resistant organizations might expect to find based on the insights of both old and new institutional scholars. In the chapters below, I will use organizations which actively, consciously resist the supposedly inevitable movement toward institutionalization in order to delineate this concept of organizational resistance further. The findings will be applicable to the sociology of religion and organizational studies in particular as well as to the discipline of sociology in general by providing a general framework by which we can understand organizations and social objects which avoid institutionalization.

Weber (2002 [1930]) recognized the ability of religion to serve as a foundation or organizing framework for other institutions. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he details how the development of Protestantism, specifically Calvinism, had an elective affinity with capitalism by providing a general ethic or ethos which helped support and sustain the development of the economic system. He documents how bureaucratic, rational, religious structures with a focus on personal salvation helped fuel

the rise of capitalism. It would be foolish to suggest that in modern society so marked by religious pluralism and institutionalization, especially in the global West, that a shift in religious structure and belief systems could foretell or cause an economic shift on par with the development of modern capitalism. No, religion as an institution simply doesn't have the authority it once did. It is not inconceivable, however, that a new religious group, able to obtain legitimacy by assuming a different organizational form and belief system might contribute to ushering in a corresponding shift in other institutions, or at the very least be reflective of changes that have already or are currently occurring. Of course, the truth probably lies somewhere in between these two options. It will be the ultimate task of this dissertation to give some indication of how pervasive these organizations are, how they work, and what their ramification is across institutions.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND CONTEXT OF THE EMERGING CHURCH

2.1 Introduction

In their explanation of the rise of alternative organizations as opposed to rational

bureaucracies, Rothschild and Russell write that

> trends of this magnitude, however, often set into motion social forces that oppose
> them, countertrends that eddy against the main current. The movement against
> bureaucracy and toward greater autonomy and participation in the workplace is
> such a countertrend. (Rothschild and Russell 1986:308)

In this chapter I contend that a resistant organization is not resisting a particular kind of

organizational form (as alternative organizations are resisting rational bureaucracies) but

rather that it is resisting any one type of organizational form. Researchers tend to focus

on the rational bureaucracy as the dominant organizational form throughout modernity. I

contend, however, that we should not focus so much on the rational bureaucracy as on the

institutionalized organization. The dominant mode of organizing throughout modernity

has actually been any institutionalized model. Bureaucracies are the most prolific kind of

institutionalized organizations, but they are by no means the only ones. Their dominance

of the organizational field has spawned several reactionary movements which are largely

frustrated with the nature of bureaucracies as inherently alienating and slow to innovate

and thus seek to create something which is the antithesis of a bureaucracy. However,

some people are not reacting to the idea of bureaucracy as the dominant form but rather

to institutionalization as the dominant force. They are not opposed to organization in

general or even one organization in particular. They are opposed to any one way of

organizing. These people create organizations where they can avoid bureaucracy and democracy, hierarchies and co-ops, feminist organizations and capitalist organizations. It is not the choices that bother them but the act of choosing. Just as the proliferation of rational bureaucracies created demand for something diametrically opposed to them-alternative organizations-the dominance of institutionalized organizations has spawned the rise of its own counter movement-the resistant organization.

In chapter 1 I drew on existing theories of institutionalization in order to discern where a resistant organization is likely to be found. In this chapter, I apply those insights to the field of religion and describe the catalysts that compel such an organization into existence before describing the general case study for this dissertation, the Emerging Church, in detail. I begin by discussing the development of the megachurch as the "trend of magnitude" in contemporary U.S. religious culture in section 2.2. Throughout this chapter and this dissertation I will discuss both mainline denominations[2] and the more conservative megachurches as comparison groups because they both represent dominant models in the religious landscape and are thus both being resisted by the Emerging Church. The mainline, liberal denominations have clearly succeeded on a cultural level as many of the values and ideologies supported by these denominations (e.g., individuality, democracy, tolerance, pluralism, freedom) have been adopted by wider American society (Demerath 1995). However, the more conservative megachurches have

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[2] By "mainline" denominations I follow the accepted use of the term laid out by Roof and McKinney (1987) in their book *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future*. They define mainline churches as "the dominant, culturally established faiths" (Roof and McKinney 1987:6-see chapter 3 of their volume for a more complete discussion). Also, see Steensland et al. (2000) who have conducted statistical analyses in an attempt to update the taxonomy of religious groups and have generated a specific list of mainline denominations.

succeeded at a much more immediate, grassroots level, attracting scores of members as the liberal, mainline denominations experience consistent decline. These churches which offer a relatively "strict" ideology engender much more commitment and thus dominate the field of religion in much more structural way (Demerath 1995). As we have seen in chapter 1, new organizations in this field can expect to face isomorphic pressures on both a cultural or institutional dimension and a technical dimension. Thus, the Emerging Church must effectively resist both of these institutionalized models. I will spend much of the time in this chapter discussing megachurches for two reasons. First, the story of the decline of liberal Protestantism has been covered extensively by sociology of religion scholars elsewhere (Demerath 1995; Finke and Stark 1992; Wuthnow 1988) while the story of the megachurch has received considerably less coverage making a detailed explanation necessary for a general audience. Additionally, I discuss the cultural rise and membership decline of liberal mainline denominations as it applies directly to the Emerging Church in chapter 6. Second, while many of my interviewees had extensive experience with mainline denominations, they repeatedly explained to me that they view the Emerging Church as a response to the failures of the megachurch movement. In the section that follows I examine the relevant countertrends spawned by the megachurch movement. In sections 2.4 and 2.5, I describe how these responses came together to form the Emerging Church.

Before moving on, however, I want to make two final points. First, this dissertation is not an examination of the Emerging Church. Indeed, such a thing as *the* Emerging Church hardly exists. Instead, the data for this dissertation is drawn from several congregations which consider themselves a part of the Emerging Church. The

point of this chapter, then, is to explore the common social and historical factors that compel the rise of Emerging Church congregations in general at this point in history. Second, this is not an attempt at comprehensiveness so much as accuracy. I do not make any claims to have identified every single event or social force which gives rise to the Emerging Church. Indeed, at this early stage such an attempt would likely have little, if any, merit or value. Instead, I endeavor to explain accurately those events that were brought to my attention in the course of the study through theoretically informed observations and interviews. Thus, this chapter is a combination and extension of my fieldwork and the relevant theories of the changing religious landscape in late 20th century U.S. society, but it is not a complete survey of every religious event of the last 30 years which might have impacted the development of Emerging Church in some way. So while the decline in confidence of religious and other institutions is discussed, the ordination of homosexual priests and pastors is left out. No doubt this latter topic plays into the formation of the Emerging Church to some extent, but assessing the particular role of this debate is beyond the scope of my data and would be pure conjecture. Similarly, I engage in discussions of issues that are identified as important by my respondents but perhaps do not match up well with existing theory. For example, in the discussions of the catalysts of the Emerging Church I discuss the role of the internet and popular postmodernism. Although the importance of these might be debated in academic circles, they are routinely cited by my respondents and other researchers of the Emerging Church as key forces in the development of the Emerging Church and my observations substantiate these claims. I have done my best to link these insights to existing research on the effects of the internet and postmodernity, but I make no claims at formal theory as

this is not a treatise on the effects of new communication technologies in a changing

culture. Instead, I investigate such phenomena from a practical level, discussing how

they are perceived by and impact people in the Emerging Church in general and my

respondents in particular.

2.2 Rise of the Megachurch

A megachurch is any Protestant congregation which attracts two thousand or

more church goers in a given week (Thumma 1996). Although the first modern

megachurches were founded in the 1950s it is during the past three decades that they

have truly flourished. There are now over 1,200 congregations which qualify as a

megachurch--more than double the number present in 2000 (Thumma et al. 2005). One

of the most notable characteristics of megachurches is that nearly all of them achieve

their massive growth under the same leader or senior pastor (Thumma et al. 2005).

Often, the churches or congregations are unknown apart from the charismatic leader, and

churchgoers frequently report attending a particular congregation because of the pastor.

The archetypal megachurch pastor steers clear of overly theological or controversial

issues, instead focusing on more positive and "practical" messages (Ellingson 2007).

Critics often point to the lack of credentials of these leaders and suggest that congregants

are following a charismatic leader rather than subscribing to a belief system. People who

attend these megachurches, however, reply that the church meets their spiritual needs and

leaves them with a positive outlook (Roof 1999). Espousing uncontroversial messages

filled with hope has made celebrities out of the most prominent evangelical pastors.

Leaders such as Rick Warren, Joel Osteen and T.D. Jakes have become common sights in

the popular media, are authors of books which routinely occupy spots on bestseller lists for extended periods of time, and are well known to many people outside of their own congregations. This celebrity status is seen as consonant with the stated goals of these organizations to discover and attract new believers.

Megachurches cater explicitly to the unchurched person who may not have any routine access to religious figures (though most members come from a church-going background) and provide worship experiences and programs which are applicable to daily life, void of an abundance of religious symbols and rituals and are largely passive in nature (Thumma 1996). Sanctuaries and worship experiences deemphasize religious language and symbols both in terms of ubiquity and prominence in order to be sensitive to "seekers" and others for whom traditional religious symbols are an impediment to engagement with God. Instead of focusing on symbols and rituals, congregants are encouraged to concentrate on the message being presented from the pulpit. The interactions between pastor and congregation typically take place in a large auditorium or on a television set as many congregations have services that are broadcast regionally or nationally. This largely passive interaction of transmitting information from the expert to the uneducated is at the heart of the megachurch worship experience (Twitchell 2004). In his study of the religious habits of the baby boomer generation, Wade Clark Roof locates the rise of this consumer model to the economic boom following WWII. The relative stability and economic success of the period freed people to internalize an identity based on consumption rather than the work and save ethic that characterized previous generations (Roof 1999). It is no accident, then, that a form of church would rise up to take advantage of the same cultural forces which compelled the growth of an ethos of

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consumerism in general (Schor and Holt 2000). Aldrich (1981) conceptualizes this approach to religion as an appeal to the "felt needs" of a community and, when coupled with shrewd marketing, can be used for a congregation to achieve rapid growth.

In this way the megachurch, despite being a modern phenomenon, has it roots in the 18th and 19th century American revivals. These movements utilized sophisticated marketing techniques taking advantage of the dominant communication technology of the time, newspapers, to promote large scale events that were a mixture of social event and religious ceremony to attract worshippers (Lambert 1994). These are not unlike the campaigns and strategies employed by modern megachurches who frequently broadcast their worship services, maintain sophisticated multimedia presences on the web, and tout the church as an all-encompassing community which functions as a social space as well as a religious space (Guinness 1993; Loveland and Wheeler 2003). These tent revivals attracted hundreds of people with the promise of good food and free entertainment in addition to religious teaching. Ultimately, however, these revivals left the structure and belief system of the church intact, merely providing a different venue and social context to do the same kinds of work that was already going on in established congregations (Finke and Stark 1992). Indeed, many revivals were sponsored by existing, local congregations. Similarly, megachurches leave unexamined and unchallenged the implicit assumptions which underlie evangelicalism. The marketing suggests a new way to practice religion, updated for a modern audience, but the religion that is being practiced is still relatively mainstream and traditional (Pritchard 1995). The service order might be non-traditional and the pastor might not have been trained in a seminary, but the message that one can only guarantee a place in the afterlife through adherence to relatively strict

Biblical principles regarding morality and a belief in Jesus Christ as the savior are not only unchanged, but completely unquestioned. In other words, the differences between megachurches and mainstream, traditional churches do not extend much beyond size and style.

Finally, no discussion of megachurches would be complete without noting their substantial influence in social and political realms in addition to their stature in religious spheres. Although the movement was initially characterized as being particular to the Sun Belt, current research indicates the spread of megachurches to every state with the most notable recent growth located in the Midwest and Northeast (Thumma 1996). Megachurch pastors typically eschew strong political stances, but their congregants are often united around a common value system which can be appealed to. Their sheer size then makes them highly influential in political battles. These are the evangelicals so largely credited with helping George W. Bush carry the closely contested Presidential elections of 2000 and 2004 (Denton 2005). Additionally, because these churches have come to occupy such a position of prominence in the modern religious landscape, other congregations have been compelled to take notice. The widespread use of Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Church model, which has been used by over 400,000 church leaders (Purpose Driven) and Bill Hybels' Willow Creek Association, which consists of over 11,000 member churches (Willow Creek), and hosts events which train people to the model of church development developed by Hybels at Willow Creek Community Church, is testament to the extent to which other churches are attempting to incorporate elements of these methods if not adopt them wholesale.

The Emerging Church developed out of this religious climate. Despite the

massive and growing popularity of such congregations, some people were left unsatisfied

by this manifestation of church. Although it offered an alternative to traditional worship

services, it did not offer an alternative way of doing church. The Emerging Church grew

out of a response to this kind of consumeristic, leader driven, "seeker-sensitive" approach

to church, and as we will see in the next section, these responses dramatically shaped the

structure, practice and ideology of the Emerging Church.

2.3 Responses to the Megachurch

2.3.1 Introduction

The megachurch is the ultimate triumph of modernity in organized religion. It is

not a drastically different manifestation of church or an alternative kind of religious

organization. For the most part, megachurches are simply bigger versions of the smaller

congregations most of their members attended when they were growing up. Thumma

(1996) makes the case that their non-denominational nature, alternative worship style,

and relatively flat leadership structure qualifies them as a new kind of religious

organization. I contend that these congregations are separated in degree rather than type

from their traditional counterparts. For example, their organizational structure may be

flatter, but they have not chosen to do away with hierarchy as the primary mode of

organizing employees at all, and I have already addressed how the cosmetic changes

serve to mask a very traditional theology. Perhaps the most important thing to realize is

that while Thumma's argument may have been true initially, the vast expansion of

influence of the megachurch within organized religion in the past 20 years has resulted in

the adoption of their strategies and techniques by other, small, congregations. This field level isomorphism is both institutional and technical in nature, and has resulted in a much more homogenized field where megachurches and traditional denominations look and act very much like one another. Although they initially began as a non-denominational movement, we can now find megachurches in every major denomination. In fact, megachurches within denominations is one of the fastest growing segments of organized Christianity (Thumma 1996). Additionally, megachurches have adopted features of traditional denominations through the implementation of satellite campuses and "franchised" congregations where sermons are piped in via satellite during the middle of the service.

Because of this pervasiveness and influence, megachurches invoke reactions from people who are dissatisfied with this hyper-rationalized and commodified version of church. I established in chapter 1 that in order to find a resistant organization one should look at those organizations which resist dominant structures, processes and ideologies. In the field of religion this means that we should focus on those organizations which explicitly attempt to offer an alternative to the institutionalized church as exemplified by the megachurch model. In the sections below, I discuss the three major responses to the institutional church, one structural, one processual and one ideological, that formed the foundation for the Emerging Church (Bader-Saye 2006).

2.3.2 Resisting Structure

While megachurches typically employ a flatter and more localized organizational structure than denominations, they do not question the logic of the rational bureaucracy.

Megachurches are thus increasingly beset with the same problems that any hierarchy faces regarding alienation, free riding, and innovation. The onset of these problems have left many people disillusioned with the megachurch and with bureaucracy in general. Thus, at precisely the same time that the megachurch begins to make giant strides in popularity we see the simultaneous rise of a grassroots religious movement focused on sharing authority, small size and consensus decision-making.

The modern house church movement in the U.S. began in the 1960s and 1970s as a reaction to the same forces which undergirded the rise of the megachurch. Responding to what they saw as the harmful presence of a consumeristic model in traditional churches, these small communities typically meet, as their name implies, in a member's home around a simple, often unplanned service and meal. Eschewing hierarchical leadership for Biblical reasons, they are often identified as descendents of the Anabaptists (e.g., Quakers, Mennonites). Sociologically, their focus on shared leadership, adherence to democratic or consensus principles and avoidance of bureaucracy marks them as an alternative organization (Rothschild-Whitt 1979). This kind of structure, while effective at countering bureaucratic tendencies, sacrifices the potential for growth and influence (Rothschild and Whitt 1986). In short, this kind of organization can never become fully legitimized in the current social context which is a status that some people craved (Johnson et al. 2006).

There are now over 30,000 house churches in the U.S. with 24 million attendees in a given week, according to George Barna (2005). One of the results of a religious climate characterized by the rapid growth of these two diametrically opposed ways of doing church—the megachurch and the house church—was that some people began to

question the value of adhering to any particular structure and we saw a rise in

"spirituality" as opposed to religion (Roof 1999). Rational bureaucracies had proven to

be stifling and alienating and alternative organizations had demonstrated an inability to

be relevant and affect large scale change despite large numbers. So rather than

attempting to come up with another organizational structure, some people decided that it

was the very reliance on an institutionalized structure itself which was the problem. Eric,

a member at Fellowship, sums up the sentiments of several of my respondents when he

remarked that

> We've all seen the failure of large scale organizations, but we're not ready to give
> up the advantages of a coordinated effort. Many of us really see this way of doing
> church as the way to move forward, not just as an alternative, but as a better, more
> authentic way of doing church and we want to promote that.

Eric's point is that for many, the Emerging Church, by its nature, is a critique of

institutional church, not simply a separate and equal model.

These people who resist the structure of the megachurch then, are not anti-

bureaucracy or anti-hierarchy per se, they are not proponents of alternative organizations

or cooperative models, and they are not anarchists, advocating no structure. Rather, they

are attempting to avoid any one of these designations by employing all or some of these

depending on the situation at hand. The result is a church which does not appear to be all

that different from the dominant megachurch model at first glance. Walk into any one of

these services and you are likely to encounter something very similar to what is going on

in most institutional churches. The difference lies in the experience over time (Bader-

Saye 2006). These congregations are in a constant state of flux, utilizing rituals and

elements from multiple sources depending on the task to be accomplished whether that

task is liturgical, ecclesiastical or organizational. If done successfully, the inevitable

result of this mode of organizing is relocation of authority from a single, easily identified source based on very specific credentials to an intentionally shifting basis of authority rooted in need, willingness and ability (see Chapter 4).

2.3.3 Resisting Process

Although megachurches are immensely popular, attracting hundreds of thousands of worshippers each year, many people have become disillusioned with them. There is a distinct group of former megachurch attendees who think that the megachurch is not engaged enough with modern culture and therefore is unappealing to large segments of the population (Drane 2006). In this section I discuss how the megachurch movement spawned a series of churches and services that were focused largely on making religion more appealing and relevant by being engaged with modern culture. In short, these people wanted to change the process of worship and how to "do" church.

In a lot of ways, making religion more appealing by changing the way worship is done is consonant with what megachurches were already doing, meeting the needs of people in order to attract them to the religion. Scott Bader-Saye, in his 2006 article in the *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* special issue devoted to the Emerging Church, designates these services as efforts of the "Evangelical Pragmatists" (Bader-Saye 2006:14). Certainly the candles, rock music and coffee shop feel of these "church within a church" worship experiences, while different, were not typically viewed as dangerous or sacrilegious in any way (Kimball 2003). In fact, many of these worship services were born out of an already established denominational congregation or megachurch who provided financial and spiritual covering as well as meeting space,

publicity and other resources. These alternative services prided themselves on meeting the unchurched "where they are at" culturally rather than preaching a message of lifestyle change (Tomlinson 2003). Whereas traditional, mainstream churches implicitly require members to either change the ways in which they engage the secular world or actively construct separate identities for sacred and secular spaces, these groups claimed to offer a religious space where this division was erased (Pagitt 2005). Operating on a "come as you are" ethos, these services offered an alternative to the pious character that pervades most mainstream religious services including megachurches.

However, while many people who went to these services agreed that while they might be better in some ways than the institutionalized church, they were still not being fulfilled (Bader-Saye-2006). These services quickly became just another manifestation of the same values embodied by the megachurches and other evangelical traditions; they were simply a vehicle for delivering an unaltered message. Bader-Saye continues the discussion of the link between the megachurch and "revivalism" when he writes that these services

> continue trends within American evangelicalism going back to the Great Awakenings. From the tent preaching of John Wesley and George Whitfield to the televangelists of the 21st century, evangelicals have long believed that the simple message of salvation was amenable to any medium. Assuming Christianity is constituted by a core of unchanging beliefs and values, these evangelicals imagine it can be re-packaged in new cultural forms without changing the content. When such Evangelical Pragmatists engage with postmodern culture, it becomes just another means of packaging the gospel for a new generation. (Bader-Saye 2006:13)

Their dissatisfaction with church did not disappear, and their concerns were still not being addressed adequately in these kinds of communities. Instead, many began to see them as harmful, simply disguising a system that is inherently problematic, making it more appealing without addressing the deep rooted inadequacies. Drane (2006:6-7)

writes that "there was no room for theological questioning or experimentation, and when the noise of praise bands had subsided many activists in this scene found themselves physically exhausted and spiritually under-nourished." This group of people would leave the institutionalized church and, in some cases, form their own congregations (Kimball 2003). It was partially because these efforts to challenge and question long held assumptions and structures were met with such resistance that the structural and ideological responses to the megachurch arose in the first place.

This early experience of focusing on changing the process of church left many, including my respondents, thinking that perhaps the particular method for doing church does not matter as much as the logic which underlies that process. Jessica, a congregant at Calvary, explained that her previous church experiences had led her to seek a new way of doing church.

> You know, I've been to a lot of different churches, Vineyard, charismatic, Methodist, Orthodox, all kinds. And really, at the end of the day, they're all basically the same. I come and do what I'm told, but there's no ability for me to actually change or shape anything. The church is the same with or without me. And when I would have an idea and try and change things, well don't even get me started on how hard that was. Every church just has the way they want it done. It's not like that here.

After witnessing the attempts of the megachurch to reform traditional church liturgy and then, in turn, the church within a church service to update that liturgy even more, some became convinced that the problem did not lie in the implementation of one liturgy as opposed to another, but rather in the selection of one liturgy above all others (Webber 2007; Pagitt 2005). This is a subtle but profound difference. If one thinks the problem lies not in the selection of an object or set of rituals but rather in the act of selecting itself, then this has vast implications for how an organization is structured with regard to

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decision-making and authority. Instead of relying on an institutionalized organizational form which produces and reproduces taken for granted power relationships, an effort must be made to have processes which intentionally avoid those routines and undermines concentrations of authority (see chapter 5).

2.3.4 Resisting Ideology

The final, and perhaps most deeply rooted, response to the megachurch is based on ideology. Despite the fact that Martin Luther's questions to the Roman Catholic church sparked the birth of Protestantism, mainline congregations have rarely been welcoming of any serious investigations by its members. In fact, the "seeker" in the "seeker-sensitive" identity that so many megachurches claim refers to someone searching for meaning in his/her own life, not someone seeking a theological or ideological conversation. The belief system has already been decided upon; it is up to the individual if he/she chooses to adhere to it. Additionally, the focus of these belief systems on individual morals and values as opposed to broader social concerns of justice and human rights further turned people away from such a system of belief (Ganiel 2006).

It is precisely this lack of discussion and conversation, the lack of potential for change, that turned many people off of mainline churches in the second half of the 1900s (Roof 1999). At the same time that many congregations grew exponentially by offering a ready-made theology, there arose counterparts who rejected this belief system in exchange for a "do-it-yourself" belief system. Indeed the number of people claiming to be "spiritual" but not "religious" rose dramatically during this time period (Barna 2005). The idea that one person might be qualified to provide theological answers for hundreds

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or thousands of people whom he/she has not met does not sit well with these people. In fact, as we will see in Chapter 6, the very idea of a theological answer is looked upon with sincere skepticism. Instead, it is seen as not only incumbent upon each person to discern these insights for him/herself, but also impossible that it could be done effectively any other way.

My respondents' claims support what Gibbs and Bolger (2005) discovered about the Emerging Church and theology, namely that churchgoers viewed any relationship to a higher power as shaped by an individual's unique history and experiences. Therefore, the idea that someone else might be able to provide these answers for any individual because of particular training or credential, is implausible. William, the pastor at Faith church, said

> What we like to think of our gatherings as is a time and place where we come together to corporately express our individual relationships with God. And that relationship is one that other people can help you with, and that's what we're all here to do, but ultimately it's between you and God.

This is not to suggest that these people shun community. In fact, doing the kind of work necessary to resist institutionalized ideologies requires the support of others. However, they are typically careful to avoid organizations where the underlying ideology is predefined and systematized. Brett, a congregant at Crossroads, put it this way:

> I've met all kinds of people who are associated with the Emerging Church in some way, and I love that diversity, how everyone is invited to the conversation even if we aren't always the best at making sure they come. I especially like that, as a whole, we don't shut down disagreements, at least not in my experience. I will say though that if you don't like it when people disagree with you, then you probably won't be real happy here.

An ideal resistant organization test case in the field of religion then would combine elements of each of these responses. Of course, these three responses are not

nearly as discreet as I have presented them here. They have been discussed

independently for theoretical purposes in order to highlight their specific dimension of

resistance. This allows us to get a better handle on the specific social forces which could

potentially give rise to a resistant organization. In the next section I will discuss how

these responses came together before describing the way in which they manifest

themselves in a particular organization, the Emerging Church. In the final section I will

describe the case in detail.

2.4 Catalysts

In this section I will highlight some of the main forces identified by my data, the

popular literature about the Emerging Church, and theories of religious change which

brought the three reactions discussed above together in an identifiable movement. Three

developments in particular, one technical, one philosophical, and one social served to

coalesce the responses to the megachurch. The development of the internet provided a

technology and forum which allowed people in the inherently marginalized Emerging

Church to come together without an overarching organization. Additionally, the

popularity of postmodern philosophy and criticism especially regarding authority and

consumerism, provided the framework through which traditional views and beliefs could

be reinterpreted. Finally, the general distrust in social institutions that developed in the

U.S. over the last part of the 20th century is a major factor in bringing the three responses

described above together to form the Emerging Church. I do not yet know if these are

necessary components for the formation of resistant organization-if a resistant

organization could be formed without corresponding technological, philosophical, and

social developments-and theory does not offer much help in this regard. I offer them here, then, because they are salient for the development of my case inasmuch as they served as catalysts without which the existence of the Emerging Church would be very much in jeopardy, at least in its current form. However important they may be, it would be a mistake to substitute correlation for causality and with that in mind, this section is intended to be more descriptive than prescriptive.

The rise of the Emerging Church corresponds with the rise of online communication in the 1990s and 2000s, and much of the activity of the Emerging Church occurs in cyberspace in the form of blogs and message boards. Indeed, the importance of the worldwide web for the development of the Emerging Church can hardly be overstated. Drane writes that

> [t]he Emerging Church would certainly not be what it now is, were it not for the worldwide web that has facilitated the organic growth of an international network of individuals and groups who are exchanging ideas about it on a daily basis. Indeed, *without ready access to this form of instant communication, the emerging church may not exist at all.* (Drane 2006:9 emphasis added)

My interviews substantiate this claim as even respondents who considered themselves only marginally interested in the broader Emerging Church phenomenon could provide a list of regularly accessed blogs and websites. My own experience at a conference of 25-30 Emerging Church leaders and practitioners drove home this point for me as three different attendees were webcasting the sessions on their own websites for anyone to access and no fewer than 14 of the attendees posted entries to their blog about the week (often during the sessions). This had the effect of bringing a larger number of voices into the conversation as attendees would frequently repeat questions posed by blog readers following the conference.

People responding to traditional church have also used the internet to affect the way they worshiped. Several websites offer some form of online worship either through relatively traditional means like videocasts and podcasts or through more creative methods such as emergingchurch.info's lava lamp prayer or embody's online labyrinths, or even social gatherings using avatars at tallskinnykiwi. These innovations, combined with the methods of information generation and dissemination are among some of the first attempts at establishing a religious community that spans geographical boundaries without utilizing traditional organizational structure. In other words, they are attempts to establish communities of experience rather than communities of doctrine. People are united by common, shared interactions, rather than adherence to specific religious dogma.

Equally as important as the technological innovations of the internet is a philosophy which allows a critique of institutionalized church while providing future spiritual direction through the recovery of ancient practices. The development of postmodern philosophy in the second half of the 20th century had a profound effect on the way many people thought about religion. Specifically, Lyotard's (1984) conception of postmodernity as signifying "incredulity toward the metanarrative" was especially influential along with the critiques of authorship, authority and consumer society provided by the French deconstructionists and literary theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, and Baudrillard among others. References to these authors and ideas were common in my interviews. For example, in his discussion of the authority of anyone to alter church liturgies, Fred noted that "we've all read enough Derrida and Foucault to be aware of the death of the author, and that inevitably plays into how we reinterpret these worship elements." However, these ideas were engaged with in a very particular way, not so

much as academic theory as social fact. I quote Bader-Saye at length below, because his

description of the relationship between the Emerging Church and postmodernism is

succinct and supported by both my observations and interviews.

> Overall, the emerging conversation tends to be more effective at engaging
> postmodernity in pragmatic ways than in reflecting on it theoretically. Emergents
> generally define the postmodern ethos in terms of a cluster of cultural transitions
> that have had most impact on younger generations – things like a return to mystery
> (with a renewed interest in spiritual practices and medieval mysticism), a hunger
> for spirituality (even if overlaid with 'new age' assumptions and do-it-yourself
> religion), new models of networked communities (via Internet, cell phones and
> increased mobility), a desire to find roots in tradition (in contrast to the modern
> suspicion of tradition), and a yearning to encounter God through image, ritual and
> sacrament (in contrast to highly word-centered and often iconoclastic modernist
> forms of Christianity). In other words, the demise, or decline, of modernity has in
> many ways opened a path to retrieve things premodern and to regain the integrity of
> a church long compromised by its partnership with power (if you detect a slight
> Anabaptist tone here you would not be completely mistaken). (Bader-Saye
> 2006:16)

Although many people likely gain their first exposure to these ideas in humanities

courses in college, there has also arisen an entire genre of book devoted to introducing

the reader to postmodern philosophy. My interviewees frequently mentioned that these

short "primers" (e.g., Stanley Grenz's *A Primer on Postmodernism*) are passed around

among friends or, as is more often the case, listed as recommended reading on personal

blogs. These texts highlight and pay particular attention to issues of identity, history and

culture, and they typically spend a good deal of time discussing subjectivity vs.

objectivity. Aside from these secular sources, there is also a rapidly expanding

subsection of religious writing on postmodernity and modern religion (e.g., James

Smith's *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism: Taking Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to

Church*). These texts take up the idea of the grand narrative as it relates to the most basic

grand narrative of all--religion--and grapple with how to maintain faith without resorting

to subjectivity. The struggle with absolute truths has proved to be the most fruitful area for discussion provoking both condemnations of postmodernity and defenders of the philosophy (Greer 2003).

These ideas are so integral to the coalescence of the three responses to the megachurch that my respondents frequently reported that their identity was inseparable from how they understood postmodern philosophy. After spending any amount of time in the Emerging Church it becomes clear that, as a collective, people in the Emerging Church are, as Harrold (2006:79) observes, "self-consciously postmodern." Over a dozen of the people I talked with made the identity statement "I am postmodern" or claimed that "We live in a postmodern world." Understanding this particular version of postmodern philosophy then is not simply a way to access a set of ivory tower ideas but rather is a way to understand themselves and the world around them better and the insights from theorists are often implemented in a way that transcends the traditional divide between theory and practice. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the their presence on the web would embrace non-linearity while eschewing traditional authority structures and structuring in widespread production as much as possible.

Around the same time that postmodern philosophy was being embraced, sociologists began to notice that people were increasingly distrustful of social institutions in all forms. In their seminal work *The Confidence Gap: Business, Labor and Government in the Public Mind*, Lipset and Schneider (1987) documented how confidence in social institutions in general declined after peaking in the early 1960s. "As it happened," they wrote, "the 1960s turned out to be a high-water mark in the history of the American public's attitudes toward their key social, political, and economic

structures" (Lipset and Schneider 1987:15). Although their analysis focuses on the

government, for-profit businesses and labor unions, they articulated a trend which is

identifiable in other social institutions as well. In religion, for example, the drop in

confidence was so noticeable as to be advanced as a reconceptualization of the

secularization thesis (Chaves 1994). Some rather important empirical findings have

come out in the course of arguing the applicability of using the confidence people express

in religious leaders as a measure or understanding of secularization. Namely, due in part

to the same forces that caused the decline in confidence for government and financial

institutions in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Watergate, savings and loan crisis), and in part

to their own, unique problems at the same time such as the televangelist scandals, people

are increasingly dissatisfied with their religious leaders. Two empirical studies in

particular confirm these assertions. Kleiman et al. (1996) examined data collected over a

22 year period and concluded that there has been "a dramatic drop in confidence in

religious leaders" (Kleiman et al. 1996:85). These findings remain across demographic

groups. Additionally, in comparisons of religious and other institutions, they find that

confidence in religious institutions had dropped most precipitously (Kleiman et al. 1996).

Hoffmann (1998) picks up on Kleiman et al.'s study and utilizes a more sophisticated

data set to explore effects both within and between cohorts. He finds that "there is an

overall trend from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s indicating declining confidence in

religious institutions" (Hoffmann 1998:338).

This decline in confidence was especially salient for younger cohorts such as

those that make up the bulk of the Emerging Church (Drane 2006). In his exploration of

the foundations of the Emerging Church, Lings remarks that the "fact that all institutions

are now regarded with considerable suspicion makes the past dominant model of Church as institution even less compelling than it once was" (Lings 2006:105). While the current dissatisfaction is probably not rooted in the televangelist and savings and loan incidents of the 1980s, the Catholic sex abuse scandals and corporate fraud cases of the late 1990s and 2000s have more than picked up the slack. The result is a twofold distaste for traditional religion and the corporate form. Tony, a 27 year old former youth minister and current blogger who writes about the Emerging Church regularly, grew increasingly uncomfortable with the church where he worked.

> The pastor was very upfront about calling himself the CEO of the church…and for a long time now we've been borrowing models and practices from the business world to try and become more successful, but I think its pretty apparent just from Enron, Worldcom, Arthur Anderson, etc., that a lot of the practices in the business world are incompatible with how the church should run, and we should not absorb that culture like we've been doing.

Tony went on to note that these frustrations ultimately led him to leave his job as a youth director and seek out non-traditional ways of doing church including both house and Emerging churches. Tony's narrative of disillusionment and turning away from institutional church and corporate governing structures is not uncommon. Harrold (2006) notes that such stories are a dominant characteristic of the popular press publications about the Emerging Church. Indeed, such "deconversion" experiences are often seen as a key feature of the late modern or postmodern religious experience (Barbour 1994).

These three simultaneous and mutually reinforcing phenomenon, one technological, one philosophical and one social, played important roles in bringing together the various strands of dissatisfaction that grew out of people's experiences with institutional church in the late 1900s. Again, there is a major limitation in this analysis. It is impossible to completely prove whether any or all of the forces identified here were

necessary in order to bring together the responses to institutionalized church as

exemplified by the megachurch movement. It is entirely possible that these people would

have found each other without the help of the internet or the common language provided

by postmodern philosophy. Similarly, it is quite possible that the true catalyst which

brought the various responses together is yet to be identified. However, there are good

reasons, both theoretical and empirical, to believe that these three forces are of particular

significance. At the very least, they are of utmost importance for my respondents and for

any understanding of the Emerging Church in general.

2.5 Description of the Emerging Church

2.5.1 Case Description

The three responses to institutionalized religion described above come together in

the formation of the Emerging Church. The Emerging church is a series of grassroots

groups connected via the web in a global network. It arose in the late 20th century as

both a response to and continuation of the "seeker" movement which produced so many

of the successful megachurches which currently abound. Although the Emerging church

is international in scope, its focus is primarily in the United States and UK as a collection

of congregations operating in the Evangelical Christian tradition (Carson 2005; Drane

2006). Emergents can be identified by their organizational structure, mode of worship

and their theological beliefs, each of which arises as a reaction to mainline evangelical

denominations and serve to reinforce one another (Gibbs and Bolger 2005).

The Emerging Church has its foundations with the publication of *The Emerging*

Church by Larson and Osborne in 1970. This text offers not only a spirit or ethos which

is still found in the Emerging Church today, but also many of the particular principles

that are found and discussed in the chapters below. For example, the use and defense of

the present participle "Emerging" as the designation for their understanding of church

remains the dominant way of referring to this particular group of Christians. It is

important because it emphasizes that they advocate neither a return to some idyllic

golden age of the church or any particular "right" conception of how church should be in

the future, but rather that "the Church is in a process, moving toward a fulfillment of its

calling" (Larson and Osborne 1970:11). Such an understanding inherently guards against

static statements or arrangements of church. In other words, their insistence on the

present participle is really a call to resist institutionalization and is at the very core of

their conception of church. Also, the juxtaposing of the Emerging Church in opposition

to the institutional church is firmly established in this text as Larson and Osborne's vision

is explicitly contrasted with their previous experiences in traditional churches. Finally, a

reliance on integration as opposed to differentiation is laid out by Larson and Osborne in

language which is common in both my interviews and the blogs and books about the

Emerging Church today: "Whereas the heady polarities of our day seek to divide us into

an either-or camp, the mark of the Emerging Church will be its emphasis on both-and"

(Larson and Osborne 1970:10). This last phrase in particular, "both-and," came up

throughout my time in the field as a way for my respondents to explain how they made

decisions. Their choices were frequently guided by an attempt to incorporate both

choices rather than choose one over another. Although it would not be until the 1990s

that the movement would take off, many of the founding ideas and concepts, such as the

emphasis on active participation over passive consumption, and equality and ability over

training and credentials, were present in the early 1970s[3].

The Emerging Church as it exists today is a loosely coupled organization with no distinct leader, vision, or mission. The general consensus on a goal is to create and sustain an open conversation about faith and spirituality, primarily in a Christian context, with all who desire to participate. Friendship is the primary principle upon which all interactions are based, associating them quite explicitly with the Quakers (Pagitt and Jones 2007). Boundaries, especially with regard to membership, are mediated with as little formal organization and bureaucracy as possible (Carson 2005). Authority arising from formal training is deemphasized and more importance is placed on lay leadership (Gibbs and Bolger 2005). Additionally, Emerging Church congregations actively seek to be engaged with the surrounding culture. Rather than avoiding popular culture or attempting to make secular society conform to religious ideals, people in the Emerging Church embrace technology and modernity (or postmodernity) (Drane 2006; Ganiel 2006). As Bader-Saye points out, this stands in direct opposition to the megachurches:

> Unlike the megachurch that seeks to centralise and Christianise cultural activity by building its own schools, gyms, bookstores and coffee shops on the church 'campus,' Emerging Christians tend to prefer bringing the church into the world. (Bader-Saye 2006:20)

This organizational structure is adopted in direct opposition to the institutional church as exemplified by the automatically bureaucratic, unabashedly market-driven megachurch movement (McLaren 2004). Concurrent with this organizational structure is a belief system which emphasizes ancient Christian tradition and practices, the need for an ecumenical, catholic Church, and a Christ centered reading of the Bible (Gibbs and

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[3] This text is not, however, the only or even the most widely read of what could be considered "foundational texts" (see appendix 1).

Bolger 2005; McLaren 2004). Drane (2006:8) notes that any particular Emerging Church congregation is

> either emerging from a positive relationship with the ancient tradition, or from a negative reaction against the historically more recent tradition of Protestant fundamentalism, which is not typically regressing to an independent congregational model, but in many cases affirms a spirituality that is entirely individualistic.

Finally, the Emerging church, while sustaining broad appeal, is most often characterized as being a home for the "dechurched" rather than the "unchurched." By this term, they mean that they want to provide a place for people who are interested in religion but not the traditional church because of bad prior experiences which I detail in the chapters below.

Worship services are perhaps where the differences between the Emerging Church and the institutional church are felt most. Drawing off of the failures of those who tried to simply change the way of doing worship as discussed above, while recognizing a need for a different mode of expression,

> the Emerging Church movement embraces worship that is multisensory, multi-layered and multi-media in contrast to the modernist emphasis on a word-centered, rational worship that contains the body in the pew so that the mind can do all the work…emerging worship reclaims all the accoutrements of piety – candles, icons, incense, kneeling and chanting – alongside the projection screens, electric guitars and televisions rolling looped images. The technological elements are intentionally subdued, made subservient to personal connection and spiritual reflection. (Bader-Saye 2006:19)

In the chapters below, I describe some of these worship practices in more detail. In general, however, the Emerging Church has become known for a "coffee shop" feel at worship services. This basically means that services are more casual than in traditional churches and people are welcome to engage in conversations or activities which are not planned ahead of time (e.g., dancing, painting, reading, etc.).

All of this talk of seeker-sensitive churches or megachurches should not lead one to conclude that these are the antithesis of Emerging Church. Although there are many significant differences, the two are by no means opposites. In fact, at the other end of the religious spectrum from the Emerging church resides fundamentalism. To the extent that Emerging Church can be said to have a religious enemy it is nearly always fundamentalists who decry Emerging Church as a relativistic, secular form of religious expression (Carson 2005). Indeed, the fundamentalist attack on Emerging Church is often so extreme as to place the former outside the bounds of the stringently ecumenical Emerging Church. Unlike most fundamentalists, the people in the Emerging Church typically embrace culture, eschew proclaiming the inerrancy of any text, and seek to become integrated into society. This is not to suggest that everyone in the Emerging Church is theologically or politically liberal. In fact, they would reject that division altogether. To truly reside at the other end of the religious spectrum from fundamentalists requires not embracing or creating a different category, but rejecting the categories themselves. As Bader-Saye (2006:17) notes, "in theological terms, Emerging Churches are seeking a third way beyond the liberal-conservative divide."

The Emerging Church can be further described in comparison to both dominant religious organizations and the alternative organizational forms which arose as a response. Based on the dimensions of differentiation for religious organizations discussed in Chapter 1, many Emerging Church congregations use a distinctly resistant organizational form. These differences, summarized in Table 2.1, are discussed here. Chapters 4-6 will analyze in detail how a resistant organization operates with respect to

each of these dimensions[4].

Table 2.1: Organizational Characteristics

	Dominant	Alternative	Resistant
Example	Megachurch, Denominations	House Church, Church within a Church	Emerging Church, Early Quakers
Structure	The dominant institutionalized structure is the rational bureaucracy characterized by a high division of labor, established rules and procedures, and official positions separated by a clear hierarchy.	The alternative organization is flat and consists of rotating leadership along with a consensus or democratic decision-making process.	Resistant organizations emphasize a shifting base of authority, intentionally uninstitutionalized decision-making procedures and labor organized according to ability and willingness.
Process	Rational bureaucracies employ full-time professionals with specialized training and credentials.	Alternative organizations utilize part-time and volunteer labor as well as full-time workers. Specialized training is valued on an as needed basis.	Professionals in resistant organizations are typically part-time or volunteer and experience is emphasized over training and credentials.
Ideology	Dominant organizations are usually secularized and have wide license to operate in most spheres of society and are typically restricted only by ideology. They typically retain full or high control over all organizational activities.	Alternative organizations are insular, seeking like-minded groups to partner with. While they retain full control over internal workings, they are willing to cede some power to outside organizations for external activities.	In resistant organizations members intentionally seek opportunities to cede control. In these organizations there is a recognition of the interconnectedness of all spheres of life and barriers to participation are removed as much as possible.
Figure 2.1: Organizational Characteristics			

Dominant Organizations

The qualities of the dominant organizational form have been covered extensively above, but it is worth spending a little time here reviewing the characteristics of the dominant mode of organizing in the field of religion as best exemplified by the megachurch structure. The rational bureaucracy is currently the only model in the field of religion which allows for rapid, widespread growth and legitimacy. This model is an institutionalized form of organization relying on specific routines and predictable patterns or scripts for carrying out everyday activities. In the megachurch, for example, there is very little question about who is responsible for a particular sector of the ministry or how he/she is supposed to go about running said ministry. This highly rationalized system has been adopted and imposed, sometimes wholesale, from the business world, frequently making large churches indistinguishable from large corporations (Thumma 1996). Indeed, many pastors openly admit to viewing themselves as the CEO of the church.

Alternative Organizations

Because of their focus on collective decision-making through democratic or consensual method, and their explicitly non-hierarchical stance promoting an egalitarian organizational structure with minimal division of labor, we can conceive of both house churches and churches within a church as examples of alternative organizations (Ferree and Martin 1995, Rothschild-Whitt 1979, Rothschild and Whitt 1986)[5]. These two cases

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[5] There are numerous other examples of alternative organizations in the literature. Most of these deal with feminist collectives or democratic organizations that arose in the 1970s though current examples are abundant. I have chosen here to discuss two cases which are

within the field of religion serve to highlight the problems that alternative organizations inevitably face. While house churches trade size for ideological control, churches within a church opt for growth potential over a self-determined belief system. And this has historically provided the range of opportunities for responses to a dominant paradigm. One is legitimized by the mainstream, while the other has the freedom to adhere to its members current desires. The concept of a resistant organization offers us a way out of this dichotomy.

Resistant organizations can achieve growth and legitimacy without sacrificing ideological foundations. The key is in how the organization is structured. As I discussed in Chapter 1, resistant organizations are not simply organizations whose founders and current members have different beliefs than the mainstream regarding authority and organizational procedure. They are organizations which are structured in a way that protects these beliefs from becoming co-opted and/or corrupted by dominant social forces. Of course, neither one of the two organizations above were explicitly set up to try and achieve legitimacy while avoiding dominant ideological patterns. In other words, they were never intended to be resistant organizations and we learned in Chapter 1 that while intent is not enough to ultimately sustain a resistant organization, its presence is crucial.

Resistant Organizations

The Quakers, however, offer a prime example of the power isomorphic forces can

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not only germane to the field of religion and my case in particular but also serve to highlight the difficulties faced by traditional alternative organizations. However, it is worth noting that there are other examples that could have been used.

have even on those organizations which do combine intent with structure and strategy. I will discuss the Quakers in depth here because they offer one of the most visible efforts at resisting institutionalization without compromising legitimate status. Furthermore, the ultimate failure of the Quakers to exist outside of official structures offers a compelling reason why a theory of resistant organizations is necessary. The insights from this theory should serve to aid a group like the Quakers in achieving long-term growth without institutionalizing.

The Quakers began in the mid-1640s amid political turmoil and civil war in England as an organization committed to the belief that God resides in everyone and all have equal religious authority. Thus, there is little religious dogma and no creeds to speak of. Organizationally, these beliefs were manifested in the unprogrammed, silent worship which consisted of no official structure, and consensus decision-making at meetings (Dandelion 1996). The early Quakers had no overarching religious organization and indeed resisted the idea (Moore 2000). The relative religious freedom opened up by the civil strife was drastically reversed upon the reestablishment of political stability in the late 1650s. In 1661 the Quaker Act officially outlawed the longstanding Quaker practice of refusing to take oaths as well as punishing any group of Quakers over the age of 16 who assembled in religious worship (Moore 2000). This legal action compelled the Quakers to seek refuge and protection behind sanctioned structures and laws as an official religious group (Moore 2000; Vann 1969). Although this formalization of organizational structure was not universally embraced, its implementation marks a turning point in Quaker history away from their founding ideals to more of a mainstream organizational structure. Although they were still not anything

akin to a denomination, there was substantial centralization of resources and public promotion of leadership in an attempt to garner publicity for their persecution.

The Quakers continued to fluctuate between degrees of structure and corresponding theological beliefs according to the social stability of the social context for the next 100 years. As persecution picked up, so did formal organization. At the same time, theological arguments were mobilized to justify their particular mode of organizing. It was not until the late 1700s, nearly 150 years after the first Quakers, that they finally adopted the formal designation as the Religious Society of Friends. The difficulties of corporate life without sufficient legal status simply proved too arduous. As the religious group grew along with the government of the nascent United States, substantial efforts were necessary in order to complete the most basic of tasks. For example, Quakers faced significant difficulties regarding the execution of wills. It was not possible, according to the government, to bequeath money or capital to an entity which did not legally exist (Vann 1969). Similar challenges were faced regarding marriages and births. The story of the Quakers highlights the difficulties in resisting isomorphic pressures. Although the Quakers had intent and some structures and strategies in place to avoid succumbing to dominant organizational models, forces well beyond their control compelled them to adopt elements of mainstream organizational structures in order to ensure survival. Once adopted, their reluctance to truly embrace an institutionalized religious model inhibited their ability to grow (Vann 1969). Indeed the number of Quakers (300,000 worldwide and 100,000 U.S.) has been fairly stable over the last century (Mead 1995; Spence 1960 [1957]).

2.6 Conclusion

The Emerging Church is, of course, not an ideal type resistant organization either. However, there is still much to be gained from an in-depth examination. While it is fairly easy to identify key characteristics based on description and comparison as I have done above, this ultimately tells us very little about how these values and ideals are achieved and what barriers stand in the way of success. I will examine each of these dimensions in more detail in the coming chapters as a way of not only providing a more in-depth description of an understudied phenomenon, but also as a way of refining the theoretical insights developed in Chapter 1.

In this chapter I have argued that the dominant mode of organization is not the rational bureaucracy, but rather is the institutionalized organization. The rational bureaucracy has come to dominate the field of institutionalized organizations in the last 200 years. In the field of religion, the megachurch in particular embodies most fully the principles of this kind of organizational structure. However, the Emerging Church has arisen as a movement of individual congregations explicitly resisting an institutionalized organizational form. This resistance takes three forms, resisting structures, processes and ideologies and is a response to both what the megachurch symbolizes and the lived experiences some people have with these kinds of churches.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Introduction

Organizational scholars have typically employed a fairly standardized methodological approach which is expressive in nature. These studies seek to explain some particular relationship or aspect of an organization in order to draw some conclusions about broader social phenomenon (e.g., gender and power relations, capital flow, information technology, management/labor relationships, etc.). In other words, organizations are used as a setting within which we draw sociological conclusions. Michael Burawoy notes that the new institutionalists, as exemplified by Meyer et al.

> have little to say…about the link between models and norms on the one side and concrete practices on the other…they leave ethnographers, who work from the ground upward, without theoretical tools to delve into the connections between micro practices and macro structures. (Burawoy 2000:3)

It is this link between the micro and the macro which plagues organizational studies in general. While the new institutionalists have made significant strides toward overcoming this divide[6], the field is still limited by an expressive, rather than an explicitly contextual-structural, methodological approach when it comes to organizational ethnographies.

Fortunately, Burawoy offers a solution as well as a critique. In this chapter, I argue that Burawoy's (1991, 1998) extended case method can be applied to organizational studies to help overcome the problems highlighted above. Additionally, I suggest a slight modification of this methodology which opens up new areas of inquiry

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[6] In particular I think of DiMaggio and Anheier's (1990) work about non-profits which links the current structure of non-profits to large scale social forces at work a century ago.

for the extended case method. Finally, I detail my technique for data analysis and provide a description of the individual congregations I visited and my time in the field.

3.2 Research Methodology

In this dissertation I used the principles of the extended case method (Burawoy 1991, 1998) to help guide my data collection and analysis. The extended case method decrees that an investigator enter the field with knowledge of existing theories and seek to replicate those theories through daily interaction. The extended case method is particularly good at uncovering and making sense of anomalous cases which are not explained by existing theory (Babbie 2001; Burawoy 1991, 1998). There is a need within the field of institutionalism for a method which explains anomalous situations as so much scholarship in the past 25 years has been conducted in the long shadow cast by DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) call for explaining why "there is such startling homogeneity of organizational forms and practices" (DiMaggio and Powell 1991:64). Such a perspective misses, however, those organizational forms and practices which explicitly resist homogenization. The extended case method is well suited to remedying this oversight.

Background of Method

The extended case method stands in stark opposition to more positivist research methods. In qualitative methodology this means that the principles which underlie the extended case method are disconsonant with what Burawoy (1998) calls a "reflexive" social science. Positive methodologies, qualitative or quantitative, seek to control for context. Burawoy draws on Katz (1983) to argue that these methods are aimed at

producing an objective research procedure or process by regulating the reactivity, reliability, replicability, and representativeness. Reactivity refers to the effect of the researcher on the research setting and should be minimized. Reliability is achieved through the use of a "consistent set of criteria for the selection of data" (Burawoy 1998:12). This should be done in a clear and coherent way, and one should be able to guarantee that the sample is indicative of the population so results will be both replicable and representative. Positive methodologies flourish, and to some extent create, research settings which are, or at least appear to be, homogenous. Just as the quintessential positive research method, surveys, restrict the range of possible answers and questions, the dominant qualitative method in this vein, grounded theory, compels researchers to continually look for similarities in the data. Burawoy writes that "it works best in a reified world that homogenizes all experience…Positive science realizes itself when we are powerless to resist wider systems" (Burawoy 1998:30). More accurately, and perhaps less bombastically, positive methods have a way of rendering potentially non-homogenous or resistant activities as irrelevant with the designation of outlier status. This is not to say that positive methods cannot be used to study resistance, but rather to argue that positive principles are inherently less concerned with those cases which do not fit the norm for the research question being posed. Even those primarily qualitative methods, which compel researchers to utilize the anomalous case, do so primarily as a way of understanding dominant behavior patterns. Thus, resistance can be studied effectively because it can be classified and typologized. Variation, however, presents an entirely different problem.

The extended case method is built, then, to deal especially with variation.

Researchers using reflexive methods do this by exploring and exploiting contextually specific elements. The method "takes context and situation as its points of departure" in order to discover the variation present in the local worlds of participants (Burawoy 1998:30). Burawoy posits three simultaneous "dialogues" that must take place in order for reflexive sociology to generate useful empirical information: between observer and participants, between local processes and extralocal forces, and between theory and itself (Burawoy 1998:5). These dialogues may be virtual, that is, constructed, or real and take place throughout the research process. They form the basis of the central tenets of reflexive social science and the extended case method: intervention, process, structuration and reconstruction.

Intervention refers simply to making a virtue out of the intervention of the researcher into the participant's life instead of trying to minimize an unavoidable impact of taking the participant out of his/her normal context. When an intervention occurs (e.g., in an interview or participant observation) an effort should be made to understand how the respondent understands the processes being interrogated during the intervention, to "prioritize the social situation over the individual" (Burawoy 1998:16). Burawoy takes pains to point out that reflexive science is not aimed at simply comprehending a situation or displaying the range of narrative present in a local context. Reflexive researchers are just as concerned with uncovering social processes and categories. This involves a reduction of these narratives by gathering multiple interpretations of the same case and transforming *situational knowledge into social processes"* (Burawoy 1998:15 emphasis in original). Stucturation refers simply to making an effort to understand and account for, rather than control, how the local environment shapes and is shaped by extralocal forces.

Reconstruction is dealt with more fully in the next section, and involves seeking out information which will confirm existing theory and thereby make the findings generalizable. Individual cases provide an interpretive challenge for existing theory which is refined and extended when it is unable to adequately explain the observed situation (Besecke 2001). This is no small task as the best reconstruction efforts are those which "leave core postulates intact, that do as well as the preexisting theory upon which they are built, and that absorb anomalies with parsimony, offering novel angles of vision" (Burawoy 1998:16). There is a recognition that meeting all of these criteria for reconstruction is rarely possible but that this goal should be at the heart of reflexive science as exemplified by the extended case method.

Throughout the collection, analysis and presentation of the data in this dissertation, I have endeavored to be as true to the principles of reflexive science and the extended case method as possible. In the course of gathering my data I was upfront and explicit about the nature of the research project. I designed the interview and observation guide to be just that, a guide. Thus, I make no claims to have understood the research setting apart from my own existence in it. The information gathered is highly contextual as I walked, both figuratively and literally, through daily routines and religious rituals with my respondents seeking their explanations on any artifact, structure or process that either appeared useful or important, and many that ultimately, were not. This contextual specificity is important for establishing the variation and intentionality necessary for constructing a theory of organizational resistance. It would be beyond the realm of realistic possibility to expect my respondents to be aware of the academic theories discussed in this dissertation, but that should not suggest that they are not savvy enough

to understand how to resist something as complex as institutionalization. Guided by the

principles above, I set out to reconstruct and confirm theories of isomorphism and

institutionalization. My inquiries were thus focused on the mundane, everyday events

that are not often the subject of much concentrated thought. In order to sustain existing

theory, my inquiries into organizational structures, processes and ideologies should have

resulted in a struggle to explain why the organization operated in particular ways,

reflecting a high degree of internalization and institutionalization. Instead, I received a

variety of narratives or "situational knowledges" that were mobilized quickly and fully.

These narratives are presented in the chapters below as a set of processes or strategies

which maintains and reflects the variation I found in the field, while extracting the

processes. Indeed the processes themselves are built on variation. Finally, I have made a

concentrated effort to integrate the narratives of my respondents with those in the popular

and academic literature regarding the relevant religious and social forces at work in the

history of the Emerging Church in order to comprehend how my respondents' efforts to

create a satisfactory religious experience both shape and are shaped by the current

religious landscape. These insights are explored in detail in chapter 2.

Generalizability

The extended case method helps bridge the gap in generalizability which plagued

the single case studies of so much old institutionalism. Burawoy writes that

the extended case method applies reflexive science to ethnography in order to extract the
general from the unique, to move from the 'micro' to the 'macro,' and to connect the
present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory.
(Burawoy 1998:5)

The process of building to the macro from the micro occurs by searching

> for theories that highlight some aspect of the situation under study as being
> anomalous and then proceeding to rebuild (rather than reject) that theory by
> reference to the wider forces at work, be they the state, the economy, or even the
> world system. (Burawoy 1991:6)

The study's generalizability lies in its refinement of theories that are already "out there."

The extended case method dictates that researchers enter the field with extensive

knowledge of existing theories which should be, but are not, able to explain the case at

hand. In this instance, existing institutional theory, old and new, fails to explain those

organizational forms which explicitly reject isomorphic forces while still seeking growth

and legitimacy. I gathered data about one of these organizations, the Emerging Church,

in a way which will help to rebuild the existing institutional theory so that it can

incorporate these anomalous organizational forms.

One of the major tenets of the extended case method that is particularly useful for

this study is that it makes a virtue out of traditionally problematic elements of qualitative

research. For example, disruptions to the research environment by the researcher are

viewed as opportunities to examine conventions which often only reveal themselves

when under stress (Burawoy 1998). This is particularly applicable to my study as I am

continually observing and asking questions about assumptions that are, in many

organizational settings, so ingrained as to be taken for granted, working on a

subconscious level. My interview questions are thus inherently disruptive as they request

respondents to examine and provide rationale for those elements which they may not

have considered.

As I note above the key is not that the macro is seen in or explains the micro or

that the micro is an expression of macro forces, but rather that every micro interaction is structured by macro forces. In my case, it is not that I turn to the Emerging Church and find evidence of consumerism or ecumenicalism, or secularization. Instead, I turn to the Emerging Church and its particular history in order to refine a particular theory, in this case neo-institutionalism, that should but does not account for the reality of the situation. This theory gets refined not simply through the explanation of the anomalous case, but through the explanation of that anomalous case as occurring in a particular way because of the macro-level forces which shape it. In the U.S. the Emerging Church is seen as a direct response to the failure of the megachurch movement which initially promised to make church more relevant and local, but instead resulted in the (re)creation of highly centralized, rigidly structured religious organizations which simply replaced the denominations with a more localized version of the same structure. This dissertation will uncover the processes which guide this movement by examining how the micro-level activities are guided and shaped by macro-level forces. Illuminating these processes and their connection with broad, societal forces will allow me to not only refine organizational theory but also to draw some conclusions about the very nature of resistance. In this way the information generated in this study will "extend" out beyond the field of religion or even organizational studies. However, this information cannot be generated without some modifications to the extended case method.

Modifications

The extended case method as it has been traditionally employed is not a perfect fit for this study, and I have thus had to make two minor modifications. First, most scholars

utilizing the extended case seek to integrate him/herself into a social situation as both participant and observer. Interviews are conducted but do not typically make up the bulk of the data generated. This project, which is concerned not with uncovering patterns but rather illuminating a general, conscious, resistance to patterns and routines, requires data from numerous sites and a heavy reliance on interviews in order to establish intentionality. The principles of the extended case method do not exclude interview data, but heavy reliance on interview data is not typical of such studies. In the course of this research, then, I have been careful to analyze my interview data according to the principles discussed above.

Rather than seek to construct theory as many traditional ethnographic approaches suggest (e.g., grounded theory), I sought to verify existing theories of institutionalization and legitimation as they are present in the literature. Thus, I did not look to develop conceptual categories applicable across different contexts and organizational settings, but instead used each interview or set of field notes to inform my next experience in the field. Each interaction was an opportunity to make the failings of existing theory more clear and the surrounding analysis more precise. Burawoy writes that "in pursuing theory reconstruction…the conjectures of yesterday's analysis are refuted by today's observations and then reconstructed in tomorrow's analysis" (Burawoy 1991:10-11). It is only when expectations based on existing theory and gathered data begin to match up with experiences in the field that the researcher has reached a point of saturation where the failings of existing theory are most clear and distinct and thus optimally positioned for improvement.

The interviews, therefore, matched this prescription for dealing with field

experiences. While there was a common set of questions, they were continually evolving as I sought to uncover different dimensions of the same, unexplained phenomenon rather than focusing solely on establishing consistency of experience. Interrogating the related issues of institutionalization and legitimation in this way gradually produced an outline of organizational resistance while at the same time illuminating the relevant socio-historical forces crucial to the development of such an organization. It is precisely these kind of data which allow us to theorize organizational resistance in an era characterized by institutional dominance.

Second, the data for this dissertation were gathered in multiple settings. Again, this does not explicitly violate any principle of the extended case method but rather the conventional employment. The nature of the Emerging Church as explicitly uninstitutionalized necessitates a multi-sited approach as there is no exemplary or flagship enterprise which could serve to stand in for the whole. One of the things that becomes very apparent through the course of this dissertation is that no one individual congregation contains within it all of the elements for successful, sustained, long-term resistance. There is no ideal-type. Rather, individual congregations are more adept at achieving legitimacy while resisting particular routines based on their own contexts. Examining these responses in several settings not only confirms the power and reach of institutionalized religious organizations as suggested by organizational theorists, but also, more importantly, demonstrates how organizational resistance is structured at both the local and field level an area traditional institutional theorists have left unexamined.

Limitations

Above, I discussed how the extended case method deals with issues of replicability and generalizability, the traditional limitations of qualitative research. In addition, Burawoy (1998) recognizes four key limitations of the extended case method that each have to do with power in the research process, focusing more on ethical issues rather than empirical concerns. The first two, domination and silencing, involve, among other things, the inevitable privileging of some voices and diminution of others as researchers attempt to weave together multiple narratives. Also, research which is concerned with uncovering how local environments are shaped by extralocal forces, has a tendency to make social objects and process appear more visible, permanent and natural than is the case in reality. In short, it objectifies those forces. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for this study, examining anomalies or differences "simultaneously threatens to *normalize* the empirical world we study, naturalizing what is, homogenizing difference, domesticating resistance" (Burawoy 1998b:16). This is of particular concern for this research, but it is a danger which is mitigated, I believe, through the discovery of strategies and description of activities which truly contribute to the project of organizational resistance. Whereas the act of making visible some subversive activities serves to incapacitate the project of resistance by commodifying the activities, true organizational resistance, as theorized in chapter 1, should inherently withstand attempts at incorporation. Increased visibility should not result in institutionalization of activities that are, by their nature, constantly changing.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

3.3.1 Data

The data for this dissertation consists of 52 in-depth interviews[7] and over 100 hours of fieldwork. The bulk of the fieldwork took place in one of 6 congregations, which I detail below, attending various functions and events including strategy meetings, worship services, and Bible studies. Additionally, in the Fall of 2006, I was invited to participate in an international conference explicitly focused on how to do training for Emerging Church practitioners and leaders. This week-long conference developed into a working group that I am still participating in.

Interview data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide (see appendix 3) that focused on processes surrounding organizational structure, congregational leadership, and religious procedures and routines. As discussed above, these interviews were guided thematically, but were flexible enough to both encourage new conversations to arise and to allow for examining emergent theories and ideas produced through the continual analysis of previous experiences in the field. The majority of these interviews were conducted during the summer and fall of 2006, and averaged just over one hour in length. They were conducted at a time and place convenient for the participant. I made a conscious effort to interview both people in formal leadership positions as well as congregants who were not currently in leadership positions in part for theoretical reasons. It is important to establish how widespread the resistance to routinization is in any organization which appears to be resistant so that we

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[7] See appendix 2 for list of interviewees.

might begin to assess the empirical importance of this characteristic which is of great theoretical significance. Additionally, the other academic treatments of the Emerging Church (and ALL of the non-academic literature) focuses on the practitioners, pastors, founders, authors or other leaders.

The data gathered through participant observation began formally in the spring of 2006. The bulk of this data was collected at one of the 6 congregations I visited and spent time with (see chart) with the rest occurring at the conference on training in the Emerging Church and the subsequent discussions. Also, my personal history with the Emerging Church, which sparked my interest in this project, stretches back to the mid-1990s. While there are no fieldnotes generated from these early episodes, I note them here because it is inevitable that these nascent experiences will find their way into this analysis in the form of preconceived ideas if nothing else. The field data were crucial for explaining how a resistant organization works and is structured. I paid particular attention to the procedures surrounding traditional religious routines in a Protestant setting (e.g., administration of the sacraments, pastoring, liturgy) as well as mainstream organizational routines (e.g., leadership, structure) when in the field. My focus in these observations was not so much on identifying the particular denominational strand present in each process, but rather on discovering how these easily routinized procedures were negotiated by a group of people who professed to avoid routines. These fieldnotes were first analyzed immediately following the time in the field with an eye toward comparing them back to the interviews, checking for both internal consistency and theoretical contradiction.

All fieldnotes and interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Atlas.Ti.

Initial coding occurred immediately after leaving the field and subsequent coding occurred as necessary throughout the writing process.

3.3.2 Sampling

One of the most difficult things for any observer of the Emerging Church to pin down is what, exactly, counts as an Emerging Church. Though it is frequently possible to "know it when you see it," defining an *a priori* sampling criterion is somewhat more difficult. Emerging Church members have adopted no global characteristics and have avoided issuing anything that might amount to guidelines or edicts. Indeed, I cannot imagine where such statement would even come from as there is no overarching organizing body which has that kind of power within the Emerging Church. Although some websites do maintain lists of Emerging Churches by region or city, they rarely claim to be comprehensive (in fact, quite the opposite), and there are often no criteria for being included other than to ask or to be identified by a visitor.

Indeed, the closest anyone has been able to come to defining the Emerging Church is Gibbs and Bolger's (2005) book which lists 9 characteristics of Emerging Churches[8]. In order to qualify for their study a congregation had to declare itself as emerging on its website. However, not even they pretend that all Emerging Churches have all 9 characteristics or that there is a certain minimum number that a congregation must meet in order to qualify. Defining the parameters of a resistant organization is an

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[8] Gibbs and Bolger claim that in general, "Emerging Churches, (1) identify with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, (3) live highly communal lives. Because of these activities, they (4) welcome the stranger, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9) take part in spiritual activities.

inherently difficult task. Normally, we can count on people within organizations to do a pretty decent job of alerting us to the fundamental characteristics of their organization by watching how they police their own borders, if not through vigilant monitoring then at least by declaring the minimum requirements for membership in some written form. One of the things which makes a resistant organization notable, however, is that the people in them consistently not only refuse to make these declarations or take action to prohibit free riders, but that they do just the opposite. They open the door for everyone and anyone to identify with the organization. Of course, this does not always happen. Indeed, diversity is a key point of concern within the Emerging Church. Although everyone is theoretically invited to participate in the conversation, history has shown that members, especially vocal members, are skewed toward those with traditional sources of power in our society. Thus, congregations and especially leaders are overwhelmingly white, male and well educated. This is a situation that has been identified as a problem within many congregations and a variety of efforts are being employed to rectify the situation-one of which is described in detail throughout this dissertation when I discuss the efforts to create a training program for Emerging Church leaders. Although most of these initiatives are still in their infancy, they have not been as successful as my respondents and the popular literature and websites would like.

This should not be taken as an indication that there is no there, there, however. Individual congregations and congregants profess to belong to the Emerging Church. The Emerging Church is characterized in a number of different ways which convey the desire on the part of the speaker to retain the status of the Emerging Church as an evolving organization. Thus, individual congregations often assert that they are a part of

the Emerging Church "movement" or "conversation." Indeed, during my time in the field, the topic which seemed most dominant in casual conversations about the Emerging Church regarded this status and whether it was still a conversation or if it had evolved into a movement and whether or not this change might be a problem. Conceiving of the Emerging Church in this way allowed participants to retain the constantly evolving, uninstitutionalized status that they desired as opposed to the rigid, static traditional churches most of them had come from.

The issue of sampling in this project then must be taken up on two levels. First, I needed some method for justifying the inclusion of any particular congregation. Second, I needed a way to identify particular respondents within these congregations. In chapter 1 I argued that the Emerging Church in general is a good place to look for resistant organizations due to the highly technical and institutional nature of the field of religion. However, it is not feasible or even possible to sample every Emerging Church in the U.S., in part due to the definitional problems identified above. However, I have also established the theoretical necessity of a multi-sited approach to data collection for this project. Thus, rather than trying to sample for representation, I have collected a purposeful sample. A purposeful sample requires two, mutually reinforcing assumptions (Creswell 1998). First, in contrast to the grounded theory method, the researcher must have an extensive understanding of the theory he/she wishes to explore. Second, the sample can be determined only after the researcher has made several visits to the research setting, when "the researcher will know who to sample for the purpose of the study" (Coyne 1997:624). Each of these assumptions is consonant with the general

requirements for the extended case method described above[9].

In line with these two principles, I chose particular congregations because of theoretical reasoning in the organizations and religion literature which suggests that particular characteristics are especially salient for religious organizations. In particular, congregational size, affiliation, and worship style are variables which help to determine the unique character of a religious organization (Chaves et al. 1999), while longevity and organizational size are important determinants of institutionalization (Powell and DiMaggio 1991)[10]. McAdam and Paulsen (1993) argue that in the absence of a control group or experimental set-up, careful theoretical reasoning can help to mitigate the danger of sampling on the control group. I do not have a dataset of failed resistance with which to compare my results in part because of the lack of scholarship in this particular area, and the importance of intention for resisting institutional pressures makes anything other than a longitudinal study subject to a degree of retrospective bias which would render the data and results potentially unusable. It is quite possible that some or all of the organizations in this study will eventually be included in a dataset of failed attempts at resistance. However, I do have solid theoretical reasons for examining the specific organizations that are in this study and thus good reason for suspecting that the activities described below contribute to the project of resistance and are not simply extraneous or

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[9] Burawoy (1998) advocates for sampling "theoretically," though he goes to great lengths to distinguish this method of sampling and the extended case method in general from grounded theory.

[10] Additionally, through my reading and experience with the Emerging Church I identified some variables of particular importance to people in the Emerging Church such as gender diversity of the leadership and urban or rural setting. I include these variables in the table for their substantive importance, but this should not be confused with the theoretical justification for sampling that I am providing here.

spurious. Additionally, I point out when their activities either deviate from what the theories would lead us to expect, counteract their intention to avoid institutionalization, or simply fail to produce a noticeable effect. Such an occurrence would not, however, mitigate the importance of this study and the theoretical insights produced. The information generated from this investigation will necessarily be a starting point from which a more powerful theory of organizational resistance can be derived through careful refinement and long-term study and observation.

Of the numerous purposeful sampling options available, I used chain referral or snowball sampling in order to identify potential congregations and congregants with the characteristics identified above. I chose this strategy in order to deal with the amorphous boundaries of the Emerging Church (Miles and Huberman 1994:28). My research leading up to the data collection led to me to identify a few geographic regions (often centered around a particular congregation) as the foundation for much of the Emerging Church in the U.S. I utilized snowball sampling in order to take advantage of the contacts I already had in two of these areas. These relationships acted primarily as sponsors into individual congregations, limiting the amount of time I needed to spend developing trust and rapport in order to get people to talk with me. This is crucial since it was already established that a single site ethnography would be inappropriate for the research question. Thus, snowball sampling proved to be a highly efficient strategy. Additionally, by starting my "snowballs" in multiple locations, I was able to get a diverse sample (Babbie 2001). Although my initial entree into a congregation was usually sponsored by an existing contact, I did not let that suffice as my only strategy for identifying potential participants.

Once I attended a congregation, I was particularly concerned with trying to increase the diversity of my sample by increasing the number and location of my snowballs (Babbie 2001). I decided that I would always talk with the people sitting on either side of me at the worship service. These people were rarely my only source in entree into the congregation, my only "snowball," but they did provide a nice form of triangulation to the relationships and contacts that I had already established in the church, which were usually with people in leadership positions. In this way I was able to ensure a variety of perspectives surrounding common events. I make no claims that this sample is representative. Achieving a representative sample was quickly dismissed as a possibility for these organizations which not only keep no formal lists of members or attendees on a given week, but indeed resist such accounting efforts. Additionally, there is certainly an element of bias introduced into this sample as is the case with any snowball sample. Although I have attempted to rectify this situation by starting multiple points of inquiry, there is always the presence of self-selection. Potential participants could have simply avoided me once my identity was known or even beforehand for reasons beyond my control (e.g., status as white, male, married, coupled, single). However, during the course of this research only 3 participants declined and/or failed to show up for an interview[11].

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[11] These three consisted of one woman and two men who all appeared to me to be in their late 20s or early 30s. The woman failed to show up to an appointment and failed to specify a reason. The two men simply declined interview invitations citing busy schedules. All three were at different congregations.

3.4 Congregations and Characteristics

I have already established that the Emerging Church is the appropriate organization in the field of religion to begin an examination of resistant organizations, but there is still some explaining which needs to be done regarding how I chose specific congregations to be included in this study. While the theories developed in Chapters 1 and 2 suggest that the field of religion in general and the Emerging Church in particular is a good place to look for resistant organizations, it is not the case that every congregation within the Emerging Church will qualify as a resistant organization for the purposes of this study. This should come as no surprise, of course. When attempting to construct or rebuild a theory it is not the outlier that is of most significance but rather, the cases closest to the ideal type. As with any nascent theory, it is important to understand the nature of the majority of the cases rather than extending focus to every iteration. It is not the case that outliers lack theoretical or pragmatic importance. Rather, they simply lie outside the scope of this particular project.

In chapter 1 I established that a resistant organization is one which resists institutionalization while seeking legitimacy. In order for a congregation to qualify for inclusion into this study then, certain criteria must be met in each of these two dimensions. First, and most simply, the congregation must be identified as an Emerging Church. This can happen in one of three ways listed here in order of importance: formal, written statement, as professed by the leader(s) and/or congregants, or by others within the Emerging Church. I have already established the importance of intentionality for a resistant organization in Chapter 1. This criterion for inclusion is aimed at meeting that requirement. Of course, formal statements from insider(s) carry more weight than

identification from outside, but these external recognitions were not be discarded. It is entirely conceivable that an organization resisting institutionalization avoids all labels or formal statements of affiliation.

The second criterion that must be met in order to qualify as a resistant organization for this study is that a congregation be actively resisting in at least two of the three areas where institutionalization occurs in religious organizations as identified in Chapter 1- structure, process, and ideology. It is important to note here what qualifies as "active" resistance. First, one should not confuse active resistance with successful resistance. For the purposes of developing a theory of resistant organizations, I am just as interested in processes and strategies that fail as I am in those which succeed. For example, it was commonly asserted by my respondents that personal relationships would be the mechanism wherein a dictatorial pastor or leader would be subdued and/or removed. As nice as this sounds, we, as sociologists, have good reason to believe that this strategy is flawed at best.

Although it is desirable, it is not necessary for an organization to be actively resisting in all three of these areas of institutionalization. Such a requirement would be akin to seeking an ideal type resistant organization and would systematically exclude variability which could yield potentially useful data. For example, the congregations affiliated with a denomination would inevitably fail to make the cut due to lack of structural resistance. However, these organizations provide important insights about the boundaries of resistant organizations while giving the beginnings of some insights about the relative importance of each sphere (i.e., resisting norms of leadership might be more important than resisting structure). By the same token, organizations that are only

nominally resistant, or those only resisting one of the three nodes of institutionalization, while of great importance to further research, are not included here. Reasoning out why a congregation would choose to resist one particular area at the expense of the other two is an interesting task, but one ultimately beyond the scope this project which is charged with explaining why resistant organizations arise and how they operate in general.

Finally, in order to qualify as a resistant organization, the congregation must be actively pursuing legitimacy as discussed in chapter 1, that is, they must show evidence of attempting to advance through the stages of legitimacy. Johnson et al. (2006) argue that the basis for all organizational legitimacy is for an organization's activities to be viewed as in concert with dominant values. However, they do not provide detailed descriptions of what activities might count as such evidence, leaving it to the scholars of individual subfields to make such determinations. For the purposes of this dissertation, then, I draw from the literature on organizational effects in religion and find that religious organizations can signal legitimacy in one of four primary ways which map more or less directly onto the sampling frame provided above: large or growing membership (Ammerman 1997; Carroll and Roozen 1990; Hougland and Wood 1979), persistence over time (Chou and Russell 2006; Becker 1998; Dougherty 2004), formal affiliation with existing legitimate organization (Ammerman 1997; Sales and Tobin 1995), utilization of legitimate practices especially in the form of worship style (Chaves 2004; Chou and Russell 2006; Stout and Cormode 1998). One might think of the denomination as an example of a fully legitimated religious organization as it satisfies the conditions of size, persistence, formal affiliation, and codified, accepted worship guidelines. My argument in this dissertation is certainly not that the congregations in the Emerging

Church will have achieved such legitimacy, but rather that they aim to, and that their route to late stage legitimacy is not proceeding through the use of dominant, institutionalized, norms which govern most organizational behavior and are a great aid in achieving full legitimacy (Johnson et al. 2006). Finally, I want to be clear in stating that Emerging Churches exist which do not meet any of these criteria, but they are not useful for this dissertation, and thus were not considered for inclusion. Although those data might be interesting for another study, it is beyond the scope of the current project as this is not a dissertation about the Emerging Church but rather a dissertation about organizational resistance. Emerging Churches, as a group, are simply the population I am guided to based on the theoretical reasoning above.

In the sections below, I discuss in detail the congregations that met the criteria above and were included in this study. I break up the congregations by components of legitimation because demonstrating a resistance toward institutionalization is more complex and requires a lengthier explanation than what is available in this chapter. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 take up institutionalization in more depth, but the project of legitimation is never far from our thoughts and is interwoven throughout the analysis.

Size

New institutionalism theorists have shown that large size subjects an organization to substantially more isomorphic pressures. Similarly, and related, large size is also a signifier of legitimacy. I spent time in two congregations that would be considered large[12]. Crossroads had around 500 worshippers per week during the time I spent with

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[12] A survey produced by Hartford Seminary in 2001 showed that half of all congregations

the congregation and Faith worshipped over 350 and moved to incorporate a second service shortly after my time with them in order to accommodate the growing crowds.

Crossroads is a community in a Southern metropolitan area operating out of its own downtown building which consists of a coffee shop, bookstore, art gallery, recording studio, community meeting center and a weekly farmer's market. It was founded by Tim, who was one of the early founders of the Emerging Church. While Tim is well-known as a pastor, the band leader, Jacob, might be even more famous in Emerging Church circles as a musician whose songs are sung in Emerging and non-Emerging congregations across the country. Although Crossroads does not claim a denominational affiliation, the community is closely aligned, both formally and informally, with Baptist traditions and institutions. For example, their relationship with a local Baptist university has resulted not only in attracting many students to the congregation but also in lectures and classroom experiences facilitated by Crossroads at the university. Additionally, the statement of common beliefs for Crossroads consists of many assertions common to the Baptist tradition such as the necessity of salvation from sin through Jesus Christ.

The paid staff at Crossroads consists of three pastors (Lead, Assistant, and Worship), and two administrative office staff whose primary function is to allocate time and space in the building, pay bills, maintain websites and answer phones. There is also a board of elders (men only) and group of deacons who make decisions regarding the day to day activity and direction of the congregation in addition to making decisions about finances. New elders are chosen by existing elders from the deacons on an as-needed basis. Anyone viewed by existing elders and deacons as demonstrating leadership ability

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in the U.S. have fewer than 100 congregants attend worship weekly.

may be chosen to be a deacon; there are no official criteria. During the course of this research, the biggest issue Crossroads was facing had to do with size. They were actively trying to figure out how to manage their growth and maintain a sense of community at the same time. The coffee shop and other venues are operated by volunteers. In addition to tithes, operating expenses are covered by the revenue generated from the coffee shop and other events (e.g., donation boxes at art openings, book sales at coffee shop).

Faith is another community founded by one of the early leaders in the Emerging Church, William. His early work focused on bringing together young pastors and church leaders who were concerned with "trying to figure out a different way of doing church" (Interview with William). Thus, Faith is largely William's vision of what church should be. This vision is also described in books authored and coauthored by William. Faith is incorporated as a co-op with a board of directors and voting members. Decisions are made by a majority vote of members who must be members of Faith for 6 months or more. Membership is open to everyone and requires involvement in the life of the community of Faith. Faith is housed in an old, downtown church building formerly used by a different congregation. Notably, one of the first things the members did upon occupying this building was to take out the wooden pews and replace them with several dozen sofas and loveseats that they procured from local thrift stores and donations. The sofas are organized in a circle where parishioners face one another, thus altering the traditional worship setting where all congregants face forward toward the altar. There is no altar in Faith, only a small swivel stool in the middle of the room where the speaker at the time sits or stands to address the congregation.

There is no denominational affiliation and the official stance of the community

embraces ecumenicalism. Additionally, Faith has no mission statement. Instead, they offer an extended definition of who they are (see table 3.2). This definition proclaims Faith as a place where all facets of life are embraced and explored in an effort to better serve God as a group of people who follow Jesus Christ and are committed to sharing life with one another. Interestingly, there is no description of exactly what it means to be a Christian or a follower of Jesus, leaving these sometimes contentious issues up for individual decision and discussion.

Table 3.2: Statements of Faith

Congregation	Mission Statement Characteristics							
	Mission Statement	Bible as Inerrant	Forgiveness of Sin	Service to Community	Jesus as the only way to Heaven	Engaged with Culture	Inclusion	Importance of Community
Crossroads	Yes		✓	✓				
Faith	None[13]			✓		✓	✓	✓
Calvary	Yes[14]		✓		✓			
Fellowship	Yes	✓	✓		✓			
Incarnate Word	None[15]							
Living Word	Yes			✓		✓	✓	✓

Figure 6.1: Statements of Faith

[13] Faith does not offer a formal mission statement or statement of beliefs. They do have an "About Us" document that I use for the rest of this chart. This should not be taken as merely a semantic difference, however, as the "About Us" document does not focus on beliefs.

[14] The mission statement at Calvary is comprised of the Nicene Creed and Mark 12:28-33 wherein Jesus claims that the greatest commandment is to love others as you love yourself. My interviewees told me that these passages were selected intentionally in order to avoid the often divisive conflict that surrounds the formulation of an original mission statement or statement of beliefs.

[15] Faith does not offer a formal mission statement or statement of beliefs. They do have an "About Us" document that I use for the rest of this chart. This should not be taken as merely a semantic difference, however, as the "About Us" document does not focus on beliefs.

Congregation	Mission Statement Characteristics					
	Love	Participation/Gifts	Sacraments	Crucifixion and Resurrection	Holism[16]	Return of Jesus
Crossroads	✓			✓		✓
Faith		✓			✓	
Calvary	✓		✓	✓		✓
Fellowship			✓	✓		✓
Incarnate Word						
Living Word		✓			✓	

Table 3.2 cont.: Statements of Faith

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[16] Holism is a common term in the Emerging Church and is frequently used to note the interconnectedness of all parts of life. It is a way of proclaiming that there is no division between sacred and secular realms.

Duration

The second dimension that organizational scholars have long pointed out as a primary variable important to institutionalization and legitimation is time. New organizations must deal with unique challenges specific to their nascent status (Stinchcombe 1965). Singh et al. (1986) explicitly link these challenges to difficulties in establishing legitimacy. As new organizations garner increasing signifiers of legitimate status, their survival rate increases. However, old organizations are subject to ever increasing amounts of isomorphism from forces located both external and internal to the organization resulting in organizational inertia. Therefore, I actively sought congregations which were either brand new or had been around for a relatively long time. Although this is not the same as longitudinal data and should not be treated as such, examining both of these kinds of congregations can shed some light on the unique challenges faced by both kinds as they seek to avoid routinization. In addition to Crossroads and Living Word, which have each been in existence for about a decade, I spent time with Calvary which existed for 15 years before dissolving during the process of this research. I was also fortunate enough to come across two newly created congregations, Fellowship Church and Incarnate Word (described in next section).

Calvary Church is the community in this study with the longest history, stretching back to a church-within-a-church ministry in the early 1990s. In the winter of 2007, Calvary held its last gathering and dissolved itself as an official organization. During those 15 years, Calvary underwent many changes, with worship numbers peaking at over 100 in the early 2000s. When I spent time with them, they were operating out of the

home of one of their members and had around 20-30 people attending worship on Sunday nights and two or three small groups which met on Friday nights Services typically included meals and lasted close to three hours[17]. Although a husband and wife team had been designated as official pastors for the community, neither one of them was ordained or had formal seminary training. There was no paid staff and duties and responsibilities were flexible. All offerings gathered went to support outreach and missions agreed upon by the congregation. Although Calvary was deeply embedded in a network of other Emerging Churches and some house churches through various personal connections, they were not exclusively connected to any single denomination or organization.

Fellowship had just celebrated its two year anniversary in the summer of 2006 when I visited them in order to augment my experiences with young Emerging Churches. Additionally, Fellowship allowed me to investigate the importance of geographical region. Each of the other congregations I spent time with were in traditional "hotbeds" for the Emerging Church while Fellowship is one of the few Emerging Churches located in the Bible Belt region. Led by an unordained former youth pastor and two other unpaid, but full-time, elders, Fellowship also operates a coffee and dessert shop as a ministry a few miles away from the strip center location of the church. There is one service each Sunday with approximately 150 worshippers, though again, this is just a rough estimate as everyone I talked to indicated that there is no weekly count taken. They raise all of their money through tithes, but denominational affiliation is maintained formally through the Southern Baptist church and informally in the same tradition as each

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[17] Despite the fact that they were meeting in a home, they cannot be considered a housechurch. As a community, they had operated out of a building previously, and they viewed this move to a house as only a temporary status.

of the three men on the leadership staff came out of that tradition. It is perhaps no coincidence then, that Fellowship has a very extensive and theologically conservative set of common beliefs espousing such beliefs as the inerrancy of the Bible and the fundamental sinfulness of all people (see chart 3.2).

Affiliation

For reasons outlined in chapter 2, denominational affiliation is relatively rare among Emerging Churches. However, denominations can provide financial and other resources that are often in short supply for new congregations. Additionally, as mentioned above, denominational affiliation can be a source of legitimacy for some people. Paradoxically, of course, it also provides the opposite function among many emerging churchgoers, putting these congregations in a precarious position. On the one hand, denominational affiliation provides undeniable benefits. On the other hand, such institutional affiliation can deter people who are dissatisfied with traditional churches.

There is nothing structural or ideological that prohibits an Emerging Church from retaining denominational affiliation. Although the bulk of the congregations claim no denominational affiliation, there are some that do operate within this traditional framework[18]. A theoretically interesting subquestion for this dissertation then emerges: How resistant can an organization be when it is embedded in a highly institutionalized framework? While most the people in most Emerging Churches can distance themselves and their congregations as far away as possible from isomorphic forces, this is a much

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[18] Many of these congregations are not even officially "non-denominational." Instead, the congregants refer to themselves as "post-denominational" in order to emphasize their identity as existing outside of the traditional denominational or institutional framework.

more difficult strategy to employ for the Emerging Church operating under the cover of a traditional denomination. I spent time with two congregations operating within mainline denominational structures.

Incarnate Word started as an offshoot of Resurrection, a highly successful suburban ministry led by a charismatic pastor. In an effort to attract and appeal to more singles and young adults, it was decided by the leadership staff at Resurrection that a separate worship service was necessary. This new ministry is located in the arts district of a major urban area and services are held on Wednesday nights in a space which serves as a community coffee shop and office space during the rest of the week. After a year-long process of meeting in people's homes once a month to "dream" about what Incarnate Word would look like, it was decided by the core team that traditional Sunday morning worship services would not be a good idea for two reasons. First, many of the initial members of the community, including the pastor, played in bands which would have gigs on Saturday nights, making Sunday morning worship attendance unlikely. Second, although Resurrection provided only minimal cover in terms of money and support, there was considerable effort made to ensure that people were not being taken away from the home or mother church. Having services on Wednesday night enabled people, theoretically, to attend both, though my interviews with congregants suggested that only rarely did Incarnate Word members attend Resurrection and Resurrection regulars virtually never set foot in Incarnate Word services.

Although Incarnate Word's budget must get approved by Resurrection's church council leadership board, they have never requested any changes or raised any serious objections according to the leadership at Incarnate Word. Incarnate Word's funding

comes from offerings, coffee sales, and grants from the denominational missions department as they are considered an official mission within the denomination. This independence of funding is not only an important source of pride for them but provides an amount of autonomy from Resurrection. As a way of further solidifying this independence, there are no common statements of faith or belief for the community.

The leadership structure at Incarnate Word consists of only one full-time, unordained staff member who is responsible for worship coordination and pastoral care as well as administration, running the coffee shop and setting up other events (e.g., community parties, art open houses). Additionally, there is a core team which makes decisions regarding the direction of the congregation. This volunteer group is open only to those who have been invited by the current core group members (see chapter 4 for further discussion). Although there is no official membership, there are typically around 50 people worshipping each week.

Living Word is similar in that it is also a congregation which operates under the cover of King's Cross, another, more traditional, suburban, church. In the summer of 1995, the church council at King's Cross held a retreat to determine the future of the congregation and invited a well known professor from a local seminary to come in and guide the discussion. The result was the identification of a particular urban neighborhood as an underserved mission field. Living Word was established with funds and resources from King's Cross and currently relies on offerings for 20% of their budget with assistance from King's Cross making up the other 80%. Also, Living Word's pastor is also currently the Sr. Youth Minister at King's Cross where he spends 20% of his time but earns 80% of his salary. In other words, Living Word is not self-sufficient and would

not be able to hold regular services in a building without help from King's Cross. Although most congregational activity, including worship services, is coordinated and run by volunteer teams, there is one other full-time staff member who coordinates worship teams, music groups, outreach, and handles administrative tasks. As the "flagship" model for the Emerging Church within this particular denomination, Living Word draws numerous visitors and a lot of attention, which commands an increasing amount of time from the staff[19].

Living Word is notable not only for its decade of existence but also for the many forms and locations the congregations has occupied over the years. Although currently they offer only one service on Sunday mornings, they have, at times, held two services in order to accommodate larger crowds. Attendance fluctuates between 75-100 on a given week, and despite this size, longevity and connection to a traditional, denominational church, the mission statement is decidedly vague. Similarly, the values which underlie the mission statement focus on generic statements of faith, rather than taking a more specific stance as King's Cross does (see chart 3.2). King's Cross proclaims to be a center of discipleship and mission for Jesus Christ in addition to a Purpose Driven Church. Although the statements of both congregations are congruent with the denomination's tenets, they demand decidedly different things of their adherents. Living Word members are under no compunction to evangelize or witness on behalf of Jesus Christ, only to love others as they have been loved. Not an easy task, for sure, but one requiring far less

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[19] When I first started working on this project, my friends and acquaintances familiar with the Emerging Church continually asked me if I was planning on visiting Living Word. Partially due to its high profile location and its longevity, it has generated a lot of interest among those people in traditional ministries. I sensed a feeling of "If Living Word can do it, then we can to," among people in the denomination when I discussed Living Word with them.

agreement on theological principles.

Worship Style

The worship styles of the congregations in this study are difficult to characterize and no individual congregation stands out because of a particularly distinctive liturgy or style. Although I leave most of this discussion for the chapters below (see chapters 5 and 6 especially), I want to highlight one point particularly germane to the project of legitimacy. Every congregation in this study utilized different worship styles including elements of traditional and mainstream liturgies which had the effect of connecting the congregation to a larger, already legitimated, faith tradition. As I argued in chapter 2, the worship service on a given week at any of the Emerging Churches in this study might not be all that different from mainstream worship services. However, from week to week the service is likely to change substantially. In table 3.3 I have noted the presence of worship elements that I observed. However, it is quite possible that I was not able to account for all the worship elements used.

Table 3.3-Worship Elements

Congregation	Worship Elements									
	Communion	Nontraditional Seating[20]	Band	Liturgy[21]	Open/Creative Worship[22]	Creeds	Sermon[23] (Traditional)	Sermon (Interactive)	Scripture Reading	Offering
Crossroads	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Faith	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Calvary	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fellowship			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Incarnate Word		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓
Living Word	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓

[20]"Traditional" seating is chairs or pews aligned in rows facing the front of the church. Among the nontraditional seating arrangements I observed were people sitting on couches and floors, sometimes laying down and frequently sitting in a circle. In order to best use their space, the seating at Crossroads is set up such that one half of the congregation cannot see the other half.

[21] I use this designation to note when a congregation uses a liturgy that is explicitly connected to another tradition. For example, Calvary, despite being a small congregation would sometimes use a Catholic mass liturgy for a period of time.

[22] Open or Creative Worship is common in many Emerging Churches and typically involves the use of stations that people are free to participate in at any time during the worship. These stations might include anything from painting and journaling to more traditional elements such as self-serve communion.

[23] Sermons were sometimes delivered in a very traditional style where one person talked and everyone else listened. At other times, however, it was much more interactive, like a conversation.

A picture which begins to emerge from the discussion above is that the congregations in this study maintain some traditionally institutionalized elements (titles, positions, service orders, etc.) which, among other functions, serve to provide a certain measure of legitimacy. In the chapters below, I discuss the strategies these congregations employ to mitigate against the institutionalization of these elements while still garnering their legitimizing effects.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUCTURE OF RESISTANCE

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Dimensions and Definitions of Authority

Religious and organizational scholars have long noted that there are three primary

areas of a religious organizational structure that are susceptible to strong institutional

pressures: the nature of authority, the organization of labor, and the system of governance

(Benson and Dorsett 1971, Jeavons 1998, Mao and Zech 2002, Sider and Unruh 2004,

Weber 1981 [1946]). Consistent with organizational analyses of other fields, these

efforts have largely focused on explaining one of two things, either the process of the

institutionalization of these elements (DiMaggio 1995) or the relationship between these

organizational practices and religious belief (Allen 1995). The former explanations

suffer from a lack of agency while the latter tend to assume a level of institutional control

which would be difficult to achieve. In both cases there is an implicit assumption that

institutionalization leads to organizational stability and control.

There are very few studies which attempt to bridge this gap between structure and

agency. Demerath et al.'s 1998 volume, *Sacred Companies*, makes an attempt in this

direction by applying neoinstitutional theory to religious organizations in a manner

similar to this dissertation. However, the focus is again on explaining how and why

religious organizations are so similar to other organizations in their field. In other words,

they are primarily concerned with the dominant organizations in the field. While this work is certainly valuable, I argue in this dissertation that it would be incorrect to assume that the only two kinds of organizations in a field are those currently operating with institutionalized structures and those which have not managed to become institutionalized yet. In this chapter, I describe the organizational structure of the resistant religious organization taking as my conceptual framework the areas other scholars have noted as common points of institutionalization in religious organizations. In what follows I will describe how the institutionalization of authority, labor and governance is resisted. Additionally, this chapter will begin to decouple predictability and control, suggesting that in the resistant organization, agency can be restored and control can best be obtained through a lack of predictability.

4.1.2 Dominant Model

The dominant religious organizational model is, not surprisingly, very similar to the dominant organizational model in other industries. It is impossible to discern whether technical efficiency or institutional forces are more responsible for this isomorphism. However, it is clear that both play a role in determining the structure of the religious organization. Work by Rodney Stark and Roger Finke (Finke and Stark 2005) has established that technical efficiency is a powerful force in religious economies. Similarly, neoinstitutional theorists examining the field of religion have been able to show that religious organizations are by no means immune from institutional pressures from groups such as professional associations and governmental regulatory agencies (Demerath et al. 1998).

Thus, the dominant organizational model in the field of religion is the same highly institutionalized rational bureaucracy model that dominates other fields (table 4.1). Authority in the rational bureaucracy is structured according to a clear hierarchy. The authority of any individual is determined by the office that person occupies. A clear but complex division of labor ensures that duties and responsibilities are kept clear and distinct from one another, minimizing any confusions about who is supposed to be in charge of accomplishing a specific task. Finally, the ideal type rational bureaucracy is governed according to a set of rules and procedures which are accessible to everyone in the organization. These components of an organizational structure are often thought to be necessary in order for an organization to achieve legitimacy. Beginning with Meyer and Rowan (1977), researchers concerned with organizational survival have shown that adherence to institutionalized organizational norms can aid in achieving legitimacy (Johnson et al. 2006). I argue that while abiding by standardized organizational practices might increase the likelihood of legitimacy, it is not necessary for advancing through the stages of legitimacy. The resistant organizations that I describe in this dissertation utilize an organizational structure which avoids institutionalization and yet still allows for the organization to exist as a legitimate entity.

4.1.3 Resistant Model

Below, I describe the components of the resistant organization using an example from the field of religion (table 4.1). Authority in the resistant organization is best described as shifting. Authority is allocated not on position within an organizational structure but rather on expertise and desire. Additionally, the labor force is organized

based on who is willing to work on a particular project or task. Finally, the governance

within a resistant organization is context specific, changing according to both the

decision being made and the people making the decision.

Table 4.1 Organizational Structure Chart

Organizational Structure	Institutionalized: Bureaucracy	Uninstitutionalized: Negotiated/Resistant
Nature of Authority	Hierarchical	Shifting
Organization of Labor	Complex Division of Labor	Labor of the Willing
Rules of Governance	Established Rules	Context Specific

Table 4.1: Elements of Organizational Structure

4.2 The Shifting Nature of Authority

4.2.1 Introduction

Authority within the resistant organization can best be characterized as shifting. This conception is situated in stark contrast to the dominant mode of authority which is static, based on a distinct hierarchy where powers are delineated and boundaries between positions are clearly drawn and enforced. A shifting authority structure, on the other hand, relies not only on position for authoritative power, but also a distinct subset of human resources including desire, expertise and time. Additionally, one should not confuse this with the rotating basis of authority present in so many alternative organizations. There is no predefined pattern or default structure to rely upon in the resistant organization. This is not to suggest that these organizations are immune to social psychological forces which aid in determining authority in any small group situation. What is important to keep in mind here is that the resistant organization not only eschews championing any one type of authority structure, but also that it has specific structures in place which help to ensure the utilization of multiple kinds of authority throughout the organization.

Below, I will first establish the importance of a shifting basis of authority for people in the Emerging Church. Next, I will discuss how authority works in these organizations by demonstrating how they encourage and support a shifting basis of authority while simultaneously resisting the concentration of power that traditionally occurs within particular leadership positions. Throughout those sections I will also

describe the three responses that occur when authority does become concentrated.

4.2.2 Authority in Organizations

Authority within an organization has long been held to be a key component in determining organizational form in both religious and secular organizations (Nelson 1993; Weber 1981 [1946], 2002 [1930]). Weber was one of the first theorists to realize the importance of authority. His concern was, of course, with explaining the origins and rise of the modern bureaucracy based in rational-legal authority as the dominant organizational type and subsequent scholars have done much to explain exactly how this homogeneity is maintained. The fact that most organizations of any size or scale organize around rational-legal leadership is not an accident. Institutional theorists following Weber's lead have developed theories of isomorphism to explain the significant social forces which encourage and compel new and/or growing organizations to adopt structures and practices similar to the rest of the field (Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Selznick 1996). In contemporary society this means that rational-legal authority is institutionalized in the form of the modern bureaucracy due to real or perceived efficiency.

By contrast the resistant organization does not rely on a rational-legal authority structure. Neither does it champion either of Weber's other ideal-types, charismatic or traditional. Rather, the resistant organization utilizes a shifting basis of authority in order to resist the routinization of authority. The organizations in this study are attempting to resist institutionalization, but within these organizations, just like any others, decisions must get made, enacted and followed through both for the survival and effectiveness of

the organization. So how do resistant organizations ensure that no form of authority consistently overrides the others? Beyond ideology, what mechanisms are in place which demand a multiplicity of leadership styles? How do resistant organizations guard against the isomorphic pressures of the fields in which they are embedded? In this section I present data which suggest that one of the key ways resistant organizations defy institutionalization is by granting authority based on a dynamic set of qualities (e.g. desire, time, ability) which guards against institutionalization. It is important to note here that for the most part, my respondents are very aware that authority works differently in their congregations than it does in both other churches they have attended as well as the dominant mode of authority in religious organizations. Not only were they aware of this difference, but it would be difficult to overstate its importance in their decisions to attend an Emerging Church. This kind of authority structure is important to them for two reasons. First, it means that there is a place for them to contribute to conversations and events that are important to them. Second, they see it as a mechanism for producing a more informed and honest dialogue where people are able to use their skills and knowledge to aid in the group's faith development and exploration. Establishing this level of intentionality is crucial to the overall argument of this dissertation. As I discussed in Chapter 1, intentionality is a necessary, but by no means sufficient, aspect of resistance.

The Appeal of Shifting Authority

My respondents reported that the ability to be involved in church events and discussions they felt most passionate about was not only a reason they were attracted to

the congregation in the first place, but also a fundamental reason they continue to attend an Emerging Church. The comments Diane, a 41 year old congregant at Faith, made when explaining why she left her old church and ultimately ended up helping to found Faith illustrate this point well.

> I felt the transition happening when we were at a church in Eden Prairie because the high school pastor for probably eight years and I worked on staff for six years in children's ministry recruiting hundreds of volunteers a year for 250 two and three year olds. It was a very huge mega-church. And basically what happened was between both the senior pastor and my supervising pastor and I got another pastor involved and we'd been there for years and I started to feel disgruntled because basically my relationship and my involvement there didn't count. And they believed this guy who was new and came in and basically they said if you can't work for him then you have to quit. Which really sucked, because I was really invested and I loved my job and I loved the people I worked with the most and when I saw how he was hurting other volunteers and they would come to me with lots of documentation and I think it was at that point that I really started to I don't know God just started really doing something. It was a really hard time.

This is her way of explaining that she did not really want to be a part of church like her old church where the authority of the pastor reigned supreme, but rather one which was structured in a way where her experience and voice would count just as much as anybody else's. That, she said, is what she likes about Faith (she also says she could not imagine going to church anywhere else). Throughout this section we will see multiple examples which confirm Diane's assertion that the ability to have a voice whose authority varies based on passion and knowledge rather than on organizational position is important.

And this experience is by no means unique to Faith. The pastor at Living Word expressed a very similar attitude when he told me that "Two things we always say around here are, every member is a minister. How can we help you live out your ministry?" The members at Living Word echoed this attitude. Several of them mentioned how important

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it was to them as newcomers that so many people were involved in church activities. Additionally, the ability of church members to organize congregational activities without having to go through a committee structure or bureaucracy was especially important to them. Megan told me about a regular "theology pub night" that a fellow Living Word member organized as a way for members to get together and discuss theology. This event was announced at church each week, but was not organized or maintained by the pastor or other church staff, and when the organizer decided to stop doing it, it ended. This is important because it demonstrates not only that the members have the ability and freedom to start something, but they also get to decide when, how and if it ends. Just because something was "successful," there was no attempt made by the pastor or "leadership" to incorporate it into official church structure and control it.

The Effectiveness of Shifting Authority

Second, there is a distinct feeling that ceding control and authority to multiple people is a more effective way of developing faith by engaging in productive dialogue. Organizational scholars have advanced an understanding of effective dialogue as a process which moves beyond exchanging and defending viewpoints and toward the creation of a new experience, idea or culture (Bohm et al. 1991). This conception of dialogue involves some combination of voicing one's initial thoughts or understandings, suspension of reaction, and development of shared understanding (Isaacs 1999; Schein 1993). These components do not have to occur in any order, and the process is rarely, if ever, linear making this theory particularly useful for understanding the value of dialogue in organizations which resist institutionalization. This conception of dialogue "is not

concerned with deliberately trying to alter or change behavior nor to get the participants to move toward a predetermined goal," instead emphasizing the sharing of thoughts in order to make the taken for granted visible, because "observed thought behaves differently from unobserved thought" (Bohm et al. 1991). In the congregations I visited, there was a high premium placed on being able to think for one's self rather than adopting somebody else's policies wholesale. Dispersing authority throughout the organization encourages conversation and dialogue by increasing the number of perspectives present in any discussion and fundamentally undermining the development of an ego centered viewpoint (Gergen 2001 et al.). Dialogue encourages individuals to locate their own perspective amid the various positions being voiced, but not in a way which is divisive or defensive (Schein 1993). William Isaacs (1999), a pioneer in organizational learning, has shown that the sharing of multiple perspectives can result in the creation of new association of thoughts that is inclusive of many different viewpoints. These interactions bring with them the inherent ability to disrupt taken for granted patterns of thought and action. Isaacs (2001:712) writes that

> dialogue instead focuses on transforming the quality of tacit thinking that underlies all interactions. It implies developing a capacity to interact in a way that 'suspends' the habitual processes of thought and meaning that typically control us.

In part, he argues, this is due to the location of the self in a larger narrative of ideas thus reducing the authority of any one voice, instead finding power in the combination of efforts.

Fred's comments are indicative of how some congregations actually make this a part of their worship structure, a time which is typically reserved for the pastor to espouse his/her thoughts on the issue at hand.

The thing that seems to switch up the most now is who's speaking and what the topic is. It's not *just* William (emphasis in original). Like this Sunday William will bring in someone who he thinks probably has more expertise in an area, which again is so different from the churches I've been to in the past where the Pastor is going to give his two cents on whatever the topic is, mental health or whatever, versus bringing in someone who has studied it for thirty years and getting their perspective on it. I prefer that because to me it lends a lot more credibility to what's going on. You're really allowing the experts to be the experts at what they do rather than pretending that the pastor can become the expert on every topic under the sun. Stem cell research. How many pastors do you see going crazy about stem cell research? And probably the only thing they know is what they read from Dobson. Don't get me started on him right now.

Fred's comments are interesting for several reasons. First, they reflect his partiality for a shifting basis of authority as a way of engaging new information with people in his congregation. It is important to him that dialogue be the central process for structuring this shifting of authority because it results in the voicing of multiple understandings in addition to the pastor. He expressed no desire to replace or eliminate the pastor's voice, but at the same time, he did not want it to be "just" William either. This is more than simply a panel discussion, however, as the dialogue between the speaker and the congregation is the central interaction.

Additionally, it is clear that in general Fred has a preference for consuming multiple perspectives rather than letting the pastor be the sole voice filtering and interpreting information. It does not particularly matter that knowledge is the criterion upon which people are selected. For Fred, it lends credibility, but he was the only one who mentioned this as a crucial factor. Others appreciated the different voices because of the perspective they brought to bear on the topic as someone with an abundance of experience, status in the community, or particular background. Mark, a seminary student, said,

I really appreciate hearing how other people deal with their struggles in life or in

faith, because it is often similar to what I'm going through or have been through and hearing them talk about it helps me to think about it in a different way. Especially when the women talk, because so often in the church in general it's just a very male perspective all the time.

What is important is that the criterion for selection is something which is open to the entire congregation. I discuss the role of credentials and professionalism in the Emerging Church in depth in chapter 5, but it is clear in this situation that credentials cannot be the sole basis of inclusion or else authority cannot be shifted very broadly.

Second, this act of bringing in an outside expert is such a common occurrence at Faith that Fred was right. William did ask several experts in the topic for the week, mental health, to aid in the discussion at the weekly worship service, and all but one of the speakers were people who attended the weekly discussion group and volunteered their services. I discuss the role of these discussion groups more later, but it is important to note that these groups are open to anyone. Indeed, the group even asked me if there was something I could contribute at the worship discussion. This is significant because it was my first time attending the meeting. This desire for and importance of a shifting base of authority is not only present theoretically, but practically as well. Furthermore, the discussion format of the weekly gathering which I analyze more fully below, encourages the kind of faith development that these people are seeking. As I point out above, effective dialogue results not in the advocacy of one position instead of another, but rather in a new understanding or experience which is unachievable apart from a group interaction.

While asking different experts to share an opinion on a topic is certainly a way of encouraging some dialogue, it is not without its difficulty. Although the pastor is not the one giving his/her opinion from the pulpit, he/she is often the one who selects the experts.

William's approach to selecting the speakers was not heavy handed or manipulative from what I could tell, but the potential for him to hand select people who will voice a particular perspective that he wants to advance certainly exists. The ability to frame an argument and legitimize a perspective carries a tremendous amount of power which could result in the institutionalization of the set of ideas held by the selector. This is not an insignificant problem, but it is one that can be dealt with to some extent. Later in this chapter, I discuss some of the ways organizations can deal with these issues by implementing particular structures which mitigate an abuse of power.

The most significant challenge, then, lies not in these structural issues for which they have mechanisms in place, but in the more informal interactions. For example, in the weekly congregational discussion during worship described by Fred above, William was able to steer and/or derail the conversation between congregants and speakers on more than one occasion simply by virtue of his title as pastor and the fact that he holds a microphone. Joe, a semi-retired paralegal, talked about this dynamic at length. "You know, William had a vision for this church at the beginning and in a lot of ways, he's still very much in control of the direction of the church just by virtue of the fact that he's here every day." Nobody I talked with, including William, expressed that they were comfortable with this set-up, and there is evidence to suggest that the community is engaged in several activities, many of which are illuminated in this dissertation, to counter the natural consolidation of power that comes with charismatic, founding pastors. The current situation, however, relies to a great extent on William's own personality to check his power. This is a situation that will become increasingly difficult to maintain as the congregation grows in size and influence. The difficulty Faith has as an organization,

and William himself has in minimizing his influence, illuminates the need for the

structural mechanisms discussed in this chapter to be implemented early in the life span

of an organization.

4.2.3 Encouraging and Supporting Shifting Authority

The congregations that are best able to encourage a shifting basis of authority are

those which incorporate this attitude into their organizational structure. One of the ways

in which I saw a congregation deal effectively with these same issues regarding authority

and power concentration was at Faith Church. Faith Church is located in an urban area in

the U.S. Mid-West and worships approximately 300 each Sunday. The pastor at Faith,

William, is a very charismatic leader whose personality can, by his own account,

sometimes dominate group gatherings. In fact, in many conversations I had about Faith

with outsiders it was often referred to as "William's Church" rather than Faith Church

and some people do attend just to see him. However, I did not observe instances of

William's personality trumping the desires of the congregation, though the two are

admittedly difficult to disentangle. For example, in an effort to retain parts of a

traditional worship which the congregation values for both spiritual and historical reasons

they made a decision to include communion as a regular part of the worship service. The

administration of communion is historically an extremely sacred and highly ritualized

portion of a Christian service where even minor differences in the routine or language can

be the result of significant theological and political battles. In nearly every

denomination, communion can only be properly administered by a trained professional

(i.e., clergy) with some denominations insisting that upon the utterance of the right words

in the right order by the right people the symbolic bread and wine cease to be bread and wine and instead become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. Regardless of particular beliefs about transubstantiation, it is held in many congregations that participating in communion is necessary for the forgiveness of sins and admittance to Heaven. In short, it is a pretty serious ceremony, and it is easy to see why it has traditionally fallen under the domain of the clergy. But ceding power to one person or group of people in this way is not something that Emerging Church goers are typically comfortable with. Fred, a longtime congregant of Faith Church, put it this way:

> Well, then why do you think you should be able to say [communion], because you went to a seminary? What gives someone the right to go to a seminary? Because they have enough money for it? Because they finished their undergraduate degree and got into a seminary to go get their MDiv.? I mean you start chipping away at that and a lot of people start to change [the way they think about communion].

In order to counter the power build up that almost inevitably surrounds the administration of communion, the people at Faith utilized a shifting authority structure in a couple of ways. First, they interpret the priesthood as being the priesthood of all believers. Although this concept is a foundational idea of Protestantism and can be traced back to Martin Luther's early writings, it is not often put into practice in a way which equalizes the clergy and the laity. However, my respondents pointed to this concept on several occasions as the rationale for why unordained congregants were performing activities traditionally associated only with pastors. In a practical sense, adhering to the priesthood of all believers means that anyone has the power to administer communion.

By disentangling power from external credentials the people at Faith effectively remove many of the common factors, such as socioeconomic status and level of education, that Fred identified as leading to an institutionalized leadership. Second, their

communion ceremony begins with a person explaining what they believe communion is. The power to define what this most sacred ritual means is not doled out according to training, but rather is distributed based on desire. Each week a different person shares what he/she feels communion means, an act which serves to strengthen relationships while simultaneously distributing power. Following this, the bread and wine are blessed by the entire congregation and then communion is administered from any one of several stations by anyone who wishes to serve. There are no common actions or ritual words. Each week there is a short explanation or introduction of the communion process, but even this is not codified. The result is mothers giving communion to their children and then turning around to receive communion from a stranger. At the precise juncture from which the priesthood has traditionally derived much of its authority, there is both an ideology and a structure in place to undermine a concentration of power in the hands of one person, position or group of people. This has the effect of ensuring that the authority to define the meaning of the collective act is shifted, to either the person in speaking that particular week or, more likely, to the individual congregant who must make sense of the constantly changing interpretations of a very common act.

4.2.4 Resisting Traditional Authority

Even though the organizations in this study hardly qualify as traditional organizations, they are still very much subject to the isomorphic pressures of their field. As discussed in chapter one, it is precisely this pressure to institutionalize that the people in these organizations are resisting. There are two distinct strategies employed in the congregations I studied which help them to resist the concentration of authority that

surrounds official positions in traditional organizations. First, there is a conscious attempt made to eliminate feedback loops between leadership staff and the rest of the congregation. This lack of knowledge means that leadership staff are structurally prohibited from controlling activities. This strategy is particularly common in larger organizations. The second strategy involves keeping the organization as flat as possible. Removing the structural barriers between the leadership staff and the congregants allows for personal relationships to act as an effective check on power concentration. This strategy is most effective in smaller organizations.

Eliminate Feedback Loops

A feedback loop is the process whereby organizational goals are continually reassessed in light of new information generated by organizational activities in order to maintain equilibrium and reduce complexity (Robinson 2007). These are normally used as mechanisms of control which ensure that knowledge is disseminated throughout an organization, particularly upward, as only the most senior officials typically have the power to both reassess organizational goals and surveil other employees. The most effective feedback loops are built into the official policies and procedures of the organization. In the congregations I visited, however, there was often an explicit attempt made to eliminate these loops structurally. The fact that these loops are eliminated from the structure of the organization is important. If individuals were simply avoiding or ignoring established feedback loops then these actions would be individual acts of disobedience rather than coordinated efforts of organizational resistance.

The major complication in the structural elimination of feedback loops is that

many Emerging Churches are still run by their founding pastors. At some point, a conscious decision must be made by the pastor and the congregation to pursue an organizational structure which effectively disempowers the pastor in particular spheres. The pastors that I spoke with endorsed such a structure on the grounds that the congregation would be worse off if they had to be informed of all or even most of what was going on at any given time. The pastor at Crossroads was very explicit about linking institutional control with knowledge. When I asked him if he knew about most of the things that go on at Crossroads he laughed and said

> No, I'm sure, in fact, that more goes on that I don't know about than I do know about. I have no need or desire to know most things. Stuff just works better that way. The problem with traditional churches is that they kill innovation by controlling everything.

At first glance, this is not dissimilar from one would find in a large bureaucracy. Those at the top of an organizational hierarchy rarely know everything that is going on in an organization. The difference, however, is in access. Control in organizations is not always exercised directly. Often, the threat of surveillance is enough to ensure that only particular kinds of activities occur (Foucault 1977; McKinlay and Starkey 1998; Reed 1996, 1999). Feedback loops which are not exercised thus still retain a certain measure of power to control and "kill innovation." In large, bureaucratic organizations, people in positions of power have structural access to feedback loops even if they are not being utilized. If someone should decide that he/she should be informed about activity in a particular area of the organization, the organizational resources exist to start such a process. In the congregations I visited, however, there was an attempt to eliminate the infrastructure necessary for a feedback loop to exist (e.g., chain of command, regular reporting schedule, standardized information format). This structure mitigates against

isomorphism by helping to ensure that individual decisions do not lead to the eventual adoption of standardized organizational practices.

The flow of information in the congregations in this study was almost always limited to specific projects. In other words, only those people involved with a particular undertaking would be in on the cycle of information. Exceptions were made for decisions and activities which affected the entire congregation (e.g., moving from one building to another, hiring a new pastor). Thus, not informing leadership staff of a particular project or action is not viewed as an act of insubordination or resistance. Typically, there is not even a standard channel or procedure for a group to inform the pastor or leadership staff of an activity. There is simply no committee or meeting which handles such items. This lack of structural mechanisms for keeping the pastor and leadership staff informed of all or at least most of the congregational activities stands in stark contrast to my respondents' experiences at other churches.

Many of my respondents reported that in their previous, more traditional church experiences, the congregational activities were organized from the top down, developed by the leadership staff. The only way to exercise any control or authority within the organization was to work oneself onto a committee, and even then, the pastor often had the final say. Jessica explained that she really likes Calvary precisely because of the ability to be involved according to her desires and skills. Her previous church experiences were similar to Calvary in this respect and she prefers the shifting authority structure.

> Yeah, it's really great because I mean…traditionally it is just this one guy like running the while thing or he's got his committee or whatever. I'm not happy being a pew sitter. And you know it's at so many large churches you have to earn your time. You have to go through all the special 101, 201, 301. All the classes. I

had been in the vineyard for 15 years and he was still trying to get me to go through all those again, and I was like I've been a Christian since I was four. I probably know more than you and could teach you under the table but you want me to take all these courses, and I just think that sucks.

There is, of course, always the significant issue of when and how church resources get dedicated to an event or program and I deal with these in more depth below. For now, however, it is important to recognize the importance of open participation for my respondents. The idea that Jessica expressed of a church led primarily by one "guy" was common among my participants. Several reported that a pastor at one of their previous churches was viewed as the CEO of the congregation, a designation which was off-putting to my respondents. In the first church Tony attended after college "the pastor was really upfront about telling me and everyone else that he saw himself as the CEO of the church, and the moment those words came out of his mouth I couldn't believe it." Accordingly, authority in these congregations increased as one moved up the organizational ladder, producing a paternalistic relationship between the church staff and the congregation which many of my respondents viewed as unhealthy.

Structurally isolating leadership staff from the knowledge and production of many of the organized events and activities of the congregation effectively allows for more congregational freedom. Congregants feel as though they have the latitude to engage in and produce activities that are important to them. Jeremy illustrates precisely how important this freedom is for his continued attendance at Incarnate Word. "I really felt like more of a valued source [than at my old church]…It was amazing because it was like they really accepted every gift. So it was just really cool. Now I've been here for over five years." During my time in the field I witnessed multiple events that were organized and run entirely by the congregants, often without the knowledge of the pastor or

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leadership staff. These activities included everything from weekly meals to discuss the sermon message to movie marathons at the church building.

Flatten the Organizational Structure

The second strategy I observed was the implementation of a flat organizational structure. Flat organizations consist of relatively few levels between regular employees or members and leadership staff. One of the key characteristics of such an organizational structure, as opposed to a "tall" bureaucracy is that many more people have access to upper management. In the organizations I investigated, this characteristic, combined with the elimination of feedback loops discussed earlier, turns the position of the pastor into a resource available for the community rather than a CEO or manager. As I will show below, my respondents indicated that they felt they had direct access to the church leadership without the fear of surveillance that normally is associated with such a relationship.

Initially touted as a way to bring the benefits of small scale bureaucracies to large organizations, researchers have long noted the use of the flat organizational structure as a means of accomplishing a variety of tasks from improving organizational communication to increasing organizational flexibility and innovation to improving equality (Carzo Jr. and Yanouzas 1969; Martin 1990; Travica 1998). Additionally, a flat organizational structure can be effectively employed as part of a system which checks the concentration of authority (Carzo Jr. and Yanouzas 1969; Worthy 1950). Giving a supervisor oversight over more than he/she can effectively manage can result in a structural decoupling of practical power from the manager. The impossibility of directly supervising everyone in

an organization means that individuals must make decisions on their own, with little oversight. The danger with such a situation, especially in large organizations, is that this structure leaves far too many openings for informal pockets of power concentration to form. However, my research indicates that it is possible for accountability to be achieved through personal relationships in religious organizations where there are minimal barriers between staff and congregants when a flat organizational structure is utilized along with other strategies to mitigate against the formation of unaccountable power cabals.

For their part, the congregants I interviewed recognized that this kind of organizational structure is a foundational element of their community which makes their current church experience unique from their past experiences. The ability to talk directly with the pastor was very important to my participants for a couple of reasons. Jessica remarked that the hierarchical structure and resulting inaccessibility of the leadership staff was one of her main frustrations at the mainline churches she had attended prior to coming to Calvary.

> You know it really goes hand in hand with a lot of problems that I had with the institutional church to be honest with you…Try to schedule time with the average Senior pastor of even a small church. Like this pastor in that small town Colorado church we went to where there were like 200 people who went to this church and you could not schedule time with him. Most pastors wouldn't even give you a call back.

She went on to praise how accessible Jeff, the pastor at Calvary is saying, "I can talk to him anytime, twenty four-seven. We talk all the time." This extreme accessibility, apart from acting to attract people like Jessica also works as a guard against both real and potential abuses of authority[24]. A few days after interviewing Jessica, I sat down with

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[24] An abuse of authority in a resistant organization inevitably looks different than an abuse of authority in a bureaucratic organization. Any action by a person in a position of

another member from Calvary, Cody, and asked him about the organizational structure at the church.

> You know that's one of the really great things about Calvary. I mean we have personal accountability groups, but we don't even need them. I see everybody all throughout the week. I see Jeff two or three times a week and we always discuss church stuff. Like with me moving and us looking for new space, that's something I need to talk with Jeff about next time I see him.

There are two things that are important about Cody's comments. First, the casual nature with which he says he needs to discuss the future of the church with the pastor indicates how truly accessible Jeff is. He is not only physically available, but also clearly open for discussing congregational issues. This echoes Jessica's comments above. Second, it is clear that this accessibility is only able to happen because of the well established personal relationship between Jeff and Jessica and Cody. Cody has been involved with Calvary for a number of years, but holds no official position with the church, and the same is true of Jessica. These relationships are able to check the potential abuse of authority by not allowing the opportunity for Justin to make a decision without congregational input. The flat organizational structure removes the need for Justin to seek outside opinions from the congregation, because he is going to be involved in discussions about congregational issues whether he seeks them or not. This is, of course, unlike more hierarchical organizations where the leaders might have to explicitly go out and seek opinions from those further down the organizational ladder. The strong personal relationships that develop in flatter organizations act to preempt, to some extent, the build-up of authority that might otherwise occur due to isomorphic forces.

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traditional organizational authority (e.g., pastor) which does not adequately take into account the voices, experiences and desires of the group is considered an abuse. The response of the group will determine what counts as "adequate."

Again, flat organizational structures are not without their problems. The kind of relationship that Cody and Jessica describe as having with Jeff can lead to the formation of a closed group with no formal way of addressing their power or authority. Each person that I interviewed both formally and informally at Calvary confirmed that this is not how the congregation is run and that Jeff is accessible to everyone, but this in an of itself certainly does not prove that anything structural is prohibiting power concentration from arising. The fact that a traditional authority structure has not been implemented might be simply due to a whim of Jeff's personality. While this is substantively important, it is not the theoretically significant insight here. The theoretical contribution to understanding how resistant organizations can avoid traditional authority structures comes when we understand the utilization of the flat organization in combination with elimination of feedback loops. In chapter 5, I discuss how changing the role of the pastor into a congregational resource as opposed to a manager is implemented in these organizations. No doubt there are other useful processes for avoiding static authority structures which have yet to be uncovered due to a lack of research, but for now it is important to note that the full utility of the strategies presented here is only realized when they are combined.

4.2.5 Dealing With Abuses of Authority

There are occasions when authority will be used by one individual in a way which a group or congregation disagrees with. In these cases, the accountability that is enforced by personal relationships in a flat organizational structure can also act as a quick remedy. In the Fall of 2006 I had the opportunity to attend an invite only conference which was

attended by 25-30 people in the Emerging Church who were attempting to construct a training program which would be consistent with their desire to avoid institutionalization while still managing to prepare people to be leaders in the Emerging Church. The conference was primarily organized by one individual in particular, Patti, with no other formal positions or committees. However, despite the relatively small size of the gathering and the lack of other recognized authority figures, her attempts to exert control over the proceedings were met with resistance, and ultimately the group ended up redefining the agenda for the conference. This was only possible because, as Patti put it, "I'm the only person here who knows everybody. Everyone who is here is here because of a personal relationship that they have with me." While it became clear during the second day of the week-long conference that some people were unhappy with the way the conference was going, it was substantially more difficult at first for me to identify the source of the dissatisfaction. My inquiries with various participants elicited answers ranging from the content of the sessions to the timing of events to the lack of downtime. Indeed, many of these comments contradicted one another with some participants bemoaning the lack of structure while others complained that the conference was too rigid. At night, when I would process my fieldnotes, however, a general consensus began to emerge that the problem was not with any content or outcome but rather with the process. Comments such about specific issues were bracketed with more general level concerns about the way decisions had been made. Rob, for example, explained his dissatisfaction this way.

> I don't really know what's going on. I wasn't involved in the planning process. The schedule doesn't make any sense to me. This group is so relational that we should have more unstructured down time…I don't know, I think we should have spent the entire first day as a group deciding what the rest of the week should look

like.

These sentiments were not uncommon. The participants consistently resisted the decision-making process which privileged Patti's voice and vision above all others. The decisions regarding the purpose and method of the conference had been Patti's by virtue of her position as conference organizer. Ultimately, her attempt to exert authority over the gathering was checked by the personal relationships which had been so instrumental in getting people to participate in the first place. People expressed their dissatisfaction with the proceedings to her through a series of one-on-one conversations, reporting frustration that they did not have the freedom to structure the gathering in a way they thought would be best. At least 11[25] people had private conversations with Patti to discuss the way things were going with the conference. Eventually, the structure of the remainder of the conference changed in a way which better reflected the desires of the group.

This outcome initially struck me as odd, however. Why would the individual relationships and access made possible by a flat organizational structure lead to a resistance to power when it could have just as easily gone the other way? As I pointed out above, backroom deals in organizations often serve to coalesce power rather than to resist the concentration of authority (Krackhardt 1990; Pfeffer 1981). Hamilton and Biggart (1985) have shown that organizational power is the struggle for control of organizational outcomes such as the use of resources and the garnering of prestige associated with titles and positions. In these situations, then, backroom politicking leads

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[25] This actually represents an even high percentage of the conference attendees as some people who had come in groups (most notably a group of 3 from the UK and a group of 4 from Germany) would informally nominate one person to find Patti.

to power concentration as people jockey to obtain an increasing amount of organizational resources from the person who has the ability to dole them out. What became clear to me after analyzing my fieldnotes is that the important difference was that the dissatisfied conference attendees were not making outcome based arguments so much as they were objecting to the decision-making process and lack of dialogue. It is important to note that while Patti is tangentially connected to many people in the Emerging Church, as evidenced by the 30 people at the conference, her occupation is within a traditional church governmental structure working as a consultant for church development. She has extensive experience personally and professionally with institutionalized churches, and her interest in the Emerging Church is recent, and at the behest of the organization for which she works. Thus, it may come as no surprise that she might not be as sensitive to process and dialogue as to outcomes.

The flat organizational structure which was a result of intentional planning, small size, or lack of resources, combined with preexisting relationships meant that everyone had access to Patti and were ultimately able to change the decision-making process for the rest of the conference. I do not mean to paint an overly rosy picture here, however. While these relationships were ultimately able to check the concentration of power, the process was not fast and relied on some attributes which might be unique to this group, namely that conference was comprised primarily of people who held leadership positions in their own congregations and thus might be less likely to take a back seat to other people. However, these data do suggest that when people are resisting an abuse of authority based on the process of organizational decision-making rather than the outcomes of these decisions, it is possible for relationships to result in a resistance to the

institutionalization of authority.

4.2.6 Conclusion

It is important to note that organizations utilize the various strategies discussed above in combination with one another. For example, Calvary employs several structural supports for encouraging and supporting a shifting base of authority while also relying heavily on a flat organizational structure to resist the institutionalization of authority. This simultaneous promotion of a decentralized model of authority along with conscious, structured resistance makes for an especially effective model of organizational resistance.

4.3 The Labor of the Willing

4.3.1 Introduction

In the rational-bureaucracies which dominate the field of religion, labor is organized according to a complex scheme with specific tasks and duties assigned to each person and/or position regardless of individual desire at a particular moment. In the congregations I visited, however, labor was organized according to personal inclination. As I laid out in Chapter 1, a resistant organization is not devoid of processes and structures. It is not anarchic or chaotic. Rather, the resistant organization utilizes structures, processes and ideologies that guard against the establishment of any one particular way of organizing to the exclusion of others. The people in resistant organizations seek to make visible the assumptions, sets of ideas and logics which guide

organizational activity so that no activity becomes taken for granted. Thus, it is possible to identify a set of principles which guide the organization of labor without simply advocating for an alternative organizational form. However, these principles should not be taken as a recipe or a distinct process. I observed the components of a willing labor force employed in various combinations and to varying extents in the course of my data collection.

Activities and events were not organized or put on by the church staff for the congregants, but rather the congregants organized events and gatherings for themselves. A labor force of the willing consists of three distinct components. First, activities are initiated by the congregants. Second, the activity is maintained without interference from the official church staff. Finally, in order to avoid institutionalization, the activity is allowed to end or dissolve when there is no longer sufficient interest from the organizer. In other words, relying on a labor force of the willing means that programs are not continued because "that's the way things have always been done."

4.3.2 Initiation

The first key component for organizing a willing labor force is that events and activities must initiated by the congregation rather than by the existing church staff. This bottom up, as opposed to top-down, approach has vast ramifications for how resources are developed and allocated and I discuss those in more detail in the next section. First, however, I want to spend some time explaining the importance of events and activities initiated by the congregation. Letting the congregation bear the responsibility for initiating and organizing events is in sharp contrast to the church traditions many of my

respondents come out of where the church staff create programs for the benefit of the congregation. Often these programs are developed with input from the congregation, but rarely is the congregation responsible for ensuring that an activity actually happens. Indeed, that is often precisely what the church staff exist to do. The congregations in this study operate in a much different way. Mark, a deacon at Crossroads, described how it works in his congregation.

> At our church the leaders aren't going to go "Well, we're going to put on the programs and bear all the responsibilities," but they'll go "Yes you really want to do that? You see that need? Then by all means man we'll support you.

In the next section I will describe exactly how the congregation supports these activities without initiating them. Suffice it to say for now, however, that the commitment to allowing activities to be initiated by the congregation runs throughout the organization. An interesting thing about Mark's comment is that he makes it sound as though the leadership at Crossroads could put on a program and bear all the responsibilities when in fact, this is just structurally not possible. There is not a leadership staff position in charge of any particular activity. If a leader decided to start something then he/she would be acting as a regular congregant and these activities would be in addition to whatever his/her other duties already entailed.

4.3.3 Maintenance

A key source of innovation for heavily institutionalized organizations has long been those practices which arise out of resistance to official procedures (Powell and DiMaggio 1991). These practices gradually become incorporated into the structure of the

organization with sufficient technical and human resources devoted to their maintenance. With these resources, of course, comes institutional control. My observations during the course of this research indicated that successful implementation of a willing labor force means to keep control of congregational activities in the hands of the individual congregants so that they cannot become incorporated into official church structure.

Existing organizational research would have us believe that this would come at the expense of resources as organizational actors are by and large reluctant to devote organizational resources to activities that fall beyond their control (Selznick 1948). One can reasonably expect that this effect would only be more exacerbated when the activity not only exists beyond the control of official organizational actors, but exists in such a space purposefully and indefinitely. However, I observed two strategies, a resource focused staff and the utilization of unplanned events, which ensured that organizational resources were continually available to support activities beyond the control of official organizational actors.

Resource Focused Staff

First, these congregations employ resource focused staff. Official staff positions are kept to a minimum and their job descriptions rarely place them in charge of a specific congregational activity or segment of the congregation. These congregations do not hire people to be youth ministers, family ministers, or Sunday school coordinators. Instead, the staff are focused on resource development. This involves creating and developing resources that people in the congregation can use, rather than programs that they can attend. A good example of this is Bob, the building manager at Crossroads. I got a tour

of Crossroads' building from Bob who explained to me that the building currently hosts two open mic nights each week (one poetry, one music), an art gallery, a professional music and film editing studio, a coffee shop, a book store, a weekly farmer's market as well as space for artists and classes all in addition to serving as office and gathering space for the congregation. Bob's job as he explains it is "to make sure that people have what they need when they get here." He does not do any planning of events. He does not target a specific audience. His job does not require any screening to ensure that there is agreement in ideology (more on this in chapter 6). He simply works to make sure that the space is being used, fees (if any) are collected[26], and that the resources continue to evolve to meet the needs of the community. As Bob puts it, "I'm basically just here to make sure the space gets used as much as possible." Scheduling is done a first come, first served basis, but Bob knows the general rotation of groups (e.g., open mic night for poetry is the first Tuesday of every month.) However, Bob told me that they make a conscious effort to be an available space for spontaneous or relatively spur of the moment events: "Of course, some resources are in more demand than others in terms of space and equipment, but we also recognize the importance of just having space available for walk-ins even if we know we could schedule it out and use it more." In one of my trips to the coffee shop to conduct an interview, I witnessed this exact thing happening. A man walked into the coffee shop and asked the barista what time the DJ was supposed to start. The barista indicated that she had no idea what he was talking about and that she was the

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[26] The farmer's market, for example, rents the space every week, a move which is necessary for tax purposes. In order to maintain their position as a non-profit organization they needed documentation that the farmer's market is a separate entity from Crossroads. This, of course, affects the amount of square footage that Crossroads can claim to have taxed at non-profit rates. The farmer's market then reimburses the congregation for the difference.

only one working that night. However, the congregant I was interviewing told them both

that the DJ was supposed to start at around 8:00. When I asked if there was a schedule of

events, my interviewee, Mark, said,

> Well, yeah, but we just set this up earlier today…That's one of the things I love
> about this place. Come up here and just listen to some poetry if you want or speak
> some or read your stuff. There's all kinds of random stuff. A few people the other
> night were upstairs watching a Battlestar Gallactica marathon, just hanging out
> together, and that's one of the good things that can happen here.

Changing the nature of church staff from people whose primary duty is to consume

resources to people who are charged with creating resources for others helps to encourage

a labor of the willing and ensure that programs are not sustained simply because

someone's job, position, or prestige relies on the delivery of the program. When church

staff are charged with providing programs and services for congregants there is much

incentive for such programs to become institutionalized as quickly as possible in order to

justify the staff person's existence and/or status. Decoupling staff and programming

effectively removes this incentive and instead places a high value on those people who

can make resources as open, flexible and available as possible.

All of this must happen within constraints, however. As the example with Bob

shows above, there is still some scheduling that must get done and some budgeting that

must occur. The goal is not to provide a completely blank slate to begin each and every

day, to abolish all planning, but rather to structure in disruptions to routine. No

organization can be devoid of routine, but organizations can employ specific strategies

aimed at making sure that the underlying reasons for engaging in an activity are always

present. As I argued in Chapter 1, resistant organizations do not resist routines and

patterns, but rather the taken for granted logic that supports an institutionalized routine.

Rearticulating the role of church staff to focus on providing resources rather than providing programs is a key component of such resistance.

The Unplanned Event

Finally, the unplanned event is a key way that these organizations are able to get widespread participation in congregational activities. It is important that we not confuse "unplanned" with another term such as unscheduled or unprogrammed. An unplanned event is a regularly scheduled activity where people arrive knowing basically what to expect. However, these events are not planned out regarding exactly who is to do or say what. A good example of a deliberately unplanned event in many Emerging Churches is the weekly worship. In these services it is not uncommon for tasks, both repetitive and creative, to be carried out by a person who was unaware of the role he/she would be playing when he/she walked through the door. A good example of this is from Incarnate Word which has what they call "creative worship" where supplies are provided for drawing or painting and people are encouraged to journal or be creative in some way during the service. For some people that means actually sharing something with the rest of the congregation. Of course, this corporate participation is made possible by the relatively small number of people in the congregation (25 on a given week). However, this same strategy of the unplanned event can be utilized in larger congregations as well. At Living Word a tremendous percentage of the congregation participates in any given service. In each of the six services I attended, there were between 15 and 20 people participating in the worship and 100 to 120 people were in the "audience." My observations about the large participation were confirmed in the interviews with

congregants. Megan pointed out that the lack of planning and indeed the lack of even the

potential for planning due to a very small and underpaid staff, meant that most people

come knowing that they need to participate in order for the service to happen.

> We need everybody to participate in order for this church to run and given that our
> paid staff is not paid to an extent to where they can be making everything happen
> and there's not this huge support system there so if the community doesn't do it
> then this church would not happen. Because it is such a small church and it's such
> a grassroots thing you do feel very compelled to participate and help actually make
> the service happen I think because it is like "If I don't do it nobody is going to do
> it" because it is such a small group. I mean I've met so many people who were like
> I went to Living Word three times and the fourth time I was serving communion.
> It's a lot different playing in the band. It's just a whole different level of
> engagement seeing what's going on behind the scenes not that there's a whole lot
> hidden, I mean it's kind of like Do it Yourself church but it definitely makes me
> feel much more connected and much more engaged in the whole process and
> connected to the people there.

The interesting thing to note about Megan's comments is how she connects the

way work is done to the kind of relationships that are formed. In her opinion, taking

advantage of the unplanned event to compel the utilization of willing labor is a good

thing because it promotes people feeling "engaged" and "connected." As we have seen

throughout this chapter and will continue to see in the sections below, it is the reliance on

personal relationships which underlies nearly every effort to resist institutionalization.

The only thing my respondents seemed to know for sure when they arrived was

that they had better be prepared to contribute in some way. My fieldnotes and informal

interactions confirm that these activities included but were not limited to routinized work

such as greeting people at the door, serving communion, and setting up the worship

space. On several occasions I witnessed people engaging in the creative work necessary

for the worship service on little or no prior notice. In addition to the creative worships at

Incarnate Word, one of the worship gatherings I attended at Calvary opened with the

pastor asking the group what they wanted to do that night. While this is not interesting as an isolated occurrence, nobody reacted in a surprised or shocked manner. In fact, people were ready with suggestions even though they had no prior warning, indicating that this sort of thing might not be so surprising.

The unplanned event compels people who might otherwise not have the time or inclination to be involved in the planning of an event to be a participant and offer his/her talents to the proceedings. The unpredictability created by this strategy makes it very difficult to institutionalize any official position (e.g., Greeter, Communion Server, etc.), and thus, the routines and procedures that develop along with these official positions in mainstream organizations are avoided while relationships are strengthened.

4.3.4 Dissolution

The final component necessary for organizations relying on the labor of the willing is that when enthusiasm for an activity dissipates, the activity must be allowed to end. On the one hand, there does not appear to be anything revolutionary about this strategy. Why would a congregation put on events for people who were not interested in attending them? However, organizational scholars have demonstrated time and time again that practices which do not actually aid in achieving organizational goals still manage to become institutionalized for a whole host of reasons ranging from tradition to professional training to the maintenance of organizational myth and ceremony (Powell and DiMaggio 1991, Meyer and Rowan 1977). There is no reason to suspect that religious organizations are immune to such pressures; indeed quite the opposite is true. The fact that the religious field is not strictly a technical environment where market

forces reign supreme opens the door for forces other than efficiency to determine

organizational activities. These institutional forces are often used to maintain the

existence of organizational programs and activities by the creation of an infrastructure of

organizational resources, support and expectation from both the staff and the participants.

Over time, a particular event can simply become "standard operating procedure,"

something that is done because it is what is always done rather than something which

meets the needs and desires of a particular group at a particular time. The organizational

structure supports these activities through the creation of job descriptions and paid staff

responsible for coordinating the activity.

With a willing labor structure, however, regular activities or gatherings are

allowed to end when the desires of the group change. There are little or no specific

resources devoted to the activity so its termination does not have widespread

ramifications.

At Living Word there was a theology pub in existence in the winter before my

fieldwork. When I arrived, the group had just recently stopped their weekly meetings at a

local bar to discuss church and theological issues. Despite its popularity (10-15 people

attended each week from a 150 person congregation), the group stopped meeting after the

leader decided he did not feel like continuing to organize the event.

> I really want everybody to have that sort of opportunity and right now is sort of a
> low point for that in the church and it's been kind of up and down with the
> opportunities like the theology pub, I'm really sad that that's not going on any
> more. But I understood the guy who was leading that did it for several years and
> then asked for someone to take over and nobody really stepped up to the plate and
> so that's not gonna happen.

When I asked Megan if she could be the one to step in and organize the gatherings

she said she could but that she did not feel like she had enough theological knowledge or time to make a weekly commitment to organizing the group. In these comments it is possible to see the trade-offs an organization must make when utilizing a willing labor structure as opposed to a divided labor structure. With the former, institutionalization is avoided, but there is no infrastructure in place to compel someone to organize activities for the good of the group. As Megan said, if nobody "step[s] up to the plate" then it is "not gonna happen," no matter how many people are interested in attending.

Fred describes a similar situation where an activity which could have otherwise been maintained came to an end because the organizer decided to step down. He identifies relationships as the mechanism which allows a willing labor structure to flourish.

> It's so fluid when you're so relational. When the relationships are the glue and you're dead set against institutionalizing or you at least try to minimize the institutionalizing, the person who is doing the meditation class on Tuesday morning gets tired of doing it, and it's done.

The example that he provides of the yoga class is based in a real-life situation at Faith. In the early 2000s, the pastor at Faith wrote a book wherein he described what a week would look like in their community, and one of the events was a meditation class. The book also included an invitation for people to come and check out the congregation and stay with one of the members if they wanted. When people showed up, of course, everything had changed. One visitor remarked that she had really just wanted to see a Christian meditation class, which, of course, no longer existed. In fact, as I look through the book now, there is very little of the specific programming that sill exists, but the underlying organizational logic is still very much in place.

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4.4 Context Specific Governance

4.4.1 Introduction

During my time in the field I witnessed numerous decisions being made, from the relatively small (e.g., what should worship look like this week) to the obviously large (e.g., how to allocate and spend money). My observations started me thinking that these congregations really avoid using a single, set procedure for making decisions, and this did not seem to be an accident. Gary, who sits on the board of Emergent Village, confirmed these thoughts. He pointed out that many traditional denominations have gone "from being a bunch of revolutionaries to being a bunch of resolutionaries" where they sit around and make decisions at large meetings once every year. This heavily institutionalized decision-making process, which relies on standard parliamentary procedure, is anathema to a group of people who are trying to avoid institutionalization by embracing the unpredictability inherent in a process driven by dialogue and widespread, rather than representative, participation.

Rather than relying on a set list of procedures, the congregations in this study employed a more context specific decision-making process. A context specific process is one which takes into account not only what is being decided, but also who is making the decision. Thus, the way a decision is made in a resistant organization is not determined a priori but rather on the spot, according to makeup of the participants and the specifics of the decision being made. My argument in this section is that these variables determine how a decision is made in these congregations. Certainly, these factors also influence the

outcome of any specific decision, but that is not the focus here. In this section I am concerned with the process of making decisions, and there are three ways in particular that congregations are able to allow context to influence the decision-making process.

4.4.2 Open Consensus

Open consensus means that decisions are made by a consensus involving anyone who shows up at a given discussion. Not surprisingly, this way of making context specific decisions is most effective in smaller group settings. The vast majority of meetings and gatherings at the congregations I visited were open to the entire congregation. People were actively encouraged to attend through both public announcements and individual, private conversations. The openness of these meetings was a frequent source of pride and strong point of identity with the people I interviewed and it was often described in opposition to the relatively closed process of church council meetings which dominate governance at so many mainline denominational churches they came from.

My experiences in the field confirmed the openness of these meetings, and it became clear that this open invitation was only able to be managed through a consensus process. Fellowship church has a closed decision-making process where the three pastors make all the major decisions for the group in part out of fear that if they were to have votes along with an open membership, then they could easily voted out office by anybody who just "shows up off the street." However, a consensus decision-making process takes care of this concern while maintaining a commitment to representation and participation. A consensus process allows for the voice of the expert to carry more weight than in a

simple, majority rules direct vote. Ianello (1992) argues that a true consensus process

privileges voices with experience and **e**xpertise by creating a more diverse environment

than traditional bureaucratic structures. Often these experts are designated as such

simply by their presence in the group or committee holding the meeting (Priem, Harrison,

and Muir 1995).

One of the key components that allows an open consensus decision-making

process to work is the absence of parliamentary procedure or some other formal set of

rules (Rothschild-Whitt 1979). Instead, discussions are held until everyone is satisfied

that their viewpoint has been heard and taken into account. It is important to note that a

process focused on consensus does not necessarily mean that everyone agrees with the

decision in the end (Thurston 1987). What utilization of this procedure does ensure,

however, is that people's voices are heard and everyone has the ability to influence the

final decision. It allows for the specific decision and makeup of the room to influence the

process, because particular decisions will attract different groups of people.

Chris, from Incarnate Word, indicated that this way of making decisions was not

uncommon at his church.

> Interviewer: So how do decisions get made?
> Chris: Well we pray about it and we talk about it. Like some people are talking
> about having worship outside one week and just do an outdoor thing, or who are we
> going to tithe to? Just we get different ideas from different people. Because we all
> value each other because we're all peers. We just discuss things in dialogue until
> we come to some conclusion.

I even had a chance to observe this process in action during one of the weekly gatherings

as the group decided how to spend their outreach resources for the month. The process of

consensus creation followed the same basic principles that Thurston (1987) identified in

her study of Women's Health Collectives. Namely, information was provided, opinions

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were sought, and dissent was resolved. After the call for proposals by the person leading worship, Eric stood up from the congregation and said he hoped that the congregation could commit to supporting an overseas missionary from a nearby congregation who also attended their own services (Incarnate Word gatherings are held on Wednesday nights making dual attendance not only possible but also a reality for many of the people I talked with). Eric's proposal launched a discussion of whether supporting an overseas missionary was the best thing for the low-income community where the church was located. After some conversation, a compromise was reached. The congregation agreed to support the missionary with funds and to devote time this month to a community organization which provided day care for children during the summer.

This process was subject to many of the traditional difficulties of a consensus decision-making process. It took a good amount of time, nearly twenty minutes of the hour long gathering, and the discussion privileged those which had more access to knowledge either in the form of advanced preparation or in the ability to formulate and mobilize arguments quickly. Eric appeared to have prepared arguments in advance to support his case, and a conversation with him afterward confirmed this. The group that was able to effectively argue for dividing time and monetary resources in order to devote time to the community were already volunteers at the community day care allowing them access to information others might not have had prior to the gathering. While this differential influence is a problem for the feminist organizations which traditionally employ consensus decision-making as an alternative to democracy or authoritarian practices, these are not issues for resistant organizations. Allowing for the differential influence based on knowledge and experience that accompanies consensus decision-

making helps to mitigate against the establishment of a routine system of governance.

4.4.3 Direct Democracy

For larger gatherings especially, direct democracy with a simple majority rule is used as a way to make sure everyone is able to contribute and have a say. Direct democracy is also used when decisions are likely to affect the entire organization (e.g., moving locations). The most important thing about the direct democracy vote, however, is when it happens. Context specific decisions often involve a lot of dialogue and an effort must be made to ensure that everyone's voice has been heard prior to the vote. In the past three years, the people at Calvary have had to make several major decisions as it has gone from being a large church with its own building in a downtown location to a small house church, to finally dissolving as an official entity during the course of this research. For each one of these important decisions direct democracy was employed. A corporate gathering would be announced and the attendees would discuss the issues before ultimately voting. When I asked the pastor who would call the vote, he said that decision would arise out of consensus and often there would be several meetings before a vote was taken, but they were committed to this method. Cody, a congregant at Calvary for over 7 years pointed out how common voting was for major decisions.

> And that was one of the things at Calvary was when the lease was up and we were broke, and that's when we had two months left on the lease and we were broke and that's when we became a house church. And you know it worked out. Somebody volunteered their house. And questions came up like should we even stay as a church. Should we even stay as an entity. We voted on it. Basically every decision we ever made we voted on. I can't remember there ever being a decision without one. There would be opinions exchanged and discussion and then a

vote…And then later, we had to leave that house and we had the whole conversation again, Do we stay as an entity? And we voted again, and decided to keep meeting together.

About a year after that move the congregation made the decision to stop meeting regularly and they voted to dissolve Calvary as a congregation. The decision to have the conversation and, ultimately the vote, about closing down came at the prompting of the pastor who had received some indication that people were only coming to Calvary to support him and his wife.

> I met with the remaining core people individually and they were suggesting was the possibility that the remaining community loved me and my wife enough to support us and they didn't have any other place to go. No other place with a strong community and lack of strong corporate mentality. And the more I thought about it I was like these are the same people that have been with us for a long time. This better not be about us. Because if this is about us, then I'm killing it. I'm killing it now. That's my pastoral responsibility. That's not church, that's just a group of people who like our company. We were on our way to Olsteen fame (sarcasm) What do they call that? Oh yeah, a cult. So one Sunday we [as a group] just said, "Okay, let's take the next two weeks off and just pray about this then come back together and decide if we want to continue this." Every time we've gone through one of these questioning seasons everyone has come back, one hundred percent, and said that we should stay. This time it was just the opposite. We voted and not one person had the heart to continue.

In this case, of course, the decision to have a vote about the future of the congregation was not prompted by some external force such as the funding problems or lack of meeting space that prompted the other discussions, and there was not a corporate discussion as had happened in the past. Instead the pastor called the vote out of "pastoral responsibility" and people were asked to pray. However, this process still yielded a vote in the end. The context of the decision as one derived from internal dissatisfaction rather than from external pressures caused a modification in the normal process for making major decisions, but in the end, the vote was still used as it had always been.

Additionally, although Jeff refers to his power to kill it, this power only exists if the church is indeed about him and his wife. This highlights one of the dangers of a resistant organization. One of the hallmarks of institutionalization is that the institutionalized position, process or idea exists apart from any one individual. The goal for a resistant organization, then, is to tie positions intimately to individuals. This means an individual can "kill" whatever his/her role is in an organization, something fundamentally impossible to do in an institutionalized organization. A pastor in a denominational church cannot dissolve the role of pastor because he/she is unhappy with the direction of the church. He/She might choose to leave, but there are typically processes and procedures in place to call and hire a new pastor. This becomes problematic when official positions such as "pastor" are intertwined with one individual. While many of the congregations I visited had taken explicit steps to guard against exactly this situation (see Chapter 5), Calvary had not. Several pastors had come and gone, but the congregation had never been without a designated pastor as it would be if Jeff and his wife decided to step down as pastors. When Jeff refers to his ability to "kill it," he is simultaneously highlighting the uninstitutionalized nature of the organization and the institutionalized turn it had taken in recent months. If the organization is truly resisting institutionalization, then he should be able to walk away from his position as pastor and the congregation should be okay. An organization which has institutionalized a particular logic of supporting a pastor by attending a church, however, would not be able to withstand such a departure.

4.4.4 Authoritarian Control

Finally, I did occasionally witness a pastor or other congregational leader make a decision on behalf of the group. This occurred rarely and only after much discussion yielding no consensus. While this may seem incongruent with the ideological values of these people as I have described them thus far, it is still not out of line with their organizational ideals. Part of living without an institutionalized method for decision-making means that the door is open for authority to be used in this way. That is part of the reason why checks on authority must be achieved in other ways as discussed above. At Faith there is a weekly meeting to shape the messages to be delivered during the ceremonies. At one of the meetings I attended the group was deciding which book of the Bible should be the focus of the next month's messages. They came to the consensus that the focus should be on a book from the Old Testament because the past few studies were from the New Testament. They were finally able to narrow it down to either the book of Joshua or Samuel. After everyone had given reasons in support of one or the other and no consensus could be reached, the pastor suggested that they should take a vote. My fieldnotes describe a process wherein the pastor ultimately wielded the authority of his position by controlling the process. The other interesting thing to note about the process is the tension between the group's values of democracy and equality and the pastor's ability to get what he wants because of his authority.

> William opens the gathering by explaining that it has been a long day and he is really tired, and he looks noticeably tired…After much discussion, we settle on Joshua or Samuel and we go around and vote and it comes down that Joshua won, but only by one vote. Nobody seemed comfortable with this so they decided to flip a coin to decide and Samuel wins the coin toss. Then, the solution was that the pastor holds a number behind his back and tells the woman sitting next to him to guess what the number is, either one or two, but he doesn't tell her what number stands for which book. She guesses 1 and he says no it was two and she get

disappointed, and then he said "No, just kidding it was 1." Then, William says "So, are you okay with doing Joshua," which is not the book that she wanted, she wanted Samuel. So really what it came down to in a very not so sly way was that the pastor was making a decision about which book to do. It is not that I got the impression that he was particularly invested in which book to do or not do, but rather that he wanted to make a decision and move on, even though the rest of the group seemed willing to continue talking about it until a decision was made.

There were several items on the agenda for discussion following this issue, and the group had been talking about which book to use for over an hour. The desire to move on at the end of a long day is understandable. In this situation, the pastor was the first and only person to call for a vote and push a decision even when the room was pretty evenly split. Although nobody else appeared to be in a particular hurry to end the discussion, nobody was willing to challenge the pastor's decision in any way, and certainly not in any of the common ways as described above. Nobody approached him personally and expressed dissatisfaction with the events of the evening, and there were not small, informal groups discussing what happened after the meeting indicating that these temporary, minor uses of authority are tolerated as an acceptable way of conducting business. Of course, nearly every person I interviewed indicated that such behavior would not be tolerated if it became the pastor's regular way of conducting himself. However, these isolated incidents are not met with resistance.

4.5 Conclusion

The resistant organization is structured in a way which both prevents and counteracts institutionalization in the most commonly institutionalized areas, authority, labor and governance. Utilizing an organizational strategy which involves a shifting

authority structure, a labor force of the willing and context specific governance is key for any organization which is committed to avoiding institutionalization while still pursuing legitimacy as described in chapter one. To be sure, there are organizations which do a better job of avoiding institutionalization without instituting any of the above ways of organizing, but these are also organizations which care very little about organizational legitimacy. Cults come readily to mind as an example of a religious organization which might avoid institutionalization while caring very little about aligning themselves with the dominant values of society, the very things which are necessary for legitimacy. Resistant organizations, on the other hand, institute strategies and structures which are still in accordance with dominant norms and values of society while simultaneously avoiding routinization and institutionalization. It is important to remember that the organizational characteristics described in this chapter do not exist in opposition to the bureaucratic organization, but rather to the institutionalized organization. People in the Emerging Church do not have a problem with bureaucracy as a form of organizing. In fact, many of the strategies above rely heavily on some form of bureaucracy. Rather, people in resistant organizations have a problem with any routinized, taken for granted, way of structuring an organization and its activities. Thus, the strategies identified above sometimes result in a particular meeting or decision which looks strikingly similar to those of dominant, institutionalized organizations. However, the key difference is understood when one looks at the result of these strategies over time. They are aimed at breaking up the reliance on any single pattern and revealing the underlying logic of the organization's structure.

CHAPTER V

ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Standard Operating Procedures

Institutional theories of organization provide a rich, complex view of organizations. In these theories, organizations are influenced by normative pressures, sometimes arising from external sources such as the state, other times arising from within the organization itself. Under some conditions, these pressures lead the organization to be guided by legitimated elements, <u>from standard operating procedures to professional certification</u> (Zucker 1987:443 emphasis added).

As Zucker points out, institutional explanations of organizations are inherently concerned with those processes which become institutionalized or taken for granted, and we can find these points of institutionalization by examining both the "standard operating procedures" and the role of the professional in any organizations. In this chapter, I first discuss how the development and maintenance of standard operating procedures is directly linked with the role of the professional in a given field. Second, I show how these procedures become institutionalized in religious organizations. Finally, I use my data to demonstrate how some people consciously resist the institutionalization of organizational procedures by developing a system of unregulated discretion involving professionals and non-professionals alike. First, however, it is necessary to get some definitions straight. In this opening section I will explain the role and importance of organizational procedures in the overall process of institutionalization for organizations

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in general and religious organizations in particular.

Zucker (1987:447) also notes that one of the key insights of institutional approaches to organizations is that "institutionalization increases stability, creating routines that enhance organizational performance except when more efficient alternatives are ignored." Two things about this quote are key for this chapter. First, it is important to understand that for institutional scholars stability is consonant with predictability (Powell and DiMaggio 1991). The people in this study are intent on constructing organizations which are unpredictable and unstable by resisting those processes which are likely to become institutionalized and predictable. Second, they are interested in resisting institutionalized processes precisely because of Zucker's other main point. They feel that avoiding institutionalization is a more "efficient" religious experience for them. Of course, they would never use the term efficient. Most people, at least in the U.S., do not want to think about their religious experience in the same way as they think about vehicle production or fast food. But all efficiency means here is reaching organizational goals, and it is clear the people in the Emerging Church have decided that the best way to reach the goal of an authentic, inclusive and meaningful religious experience is by creating an organization which is inherently unpredictable and unstable. As we will see in this chapter, one of the key ways they accomplish this goal is by resisting the institutionalization of organizational procedures.

Organizational processes have long been identified as a key hotpoint for institutionalization in organizations in general. Due to the increased role of symbolic processes, religious organizations are even more likely to become institutionalized around standard operating procedures (Benson and Dorsett 1971; Weber 1993, 1997).

Most organizations in the field of religion employ religious professionals to institute and maintain these organizational processes, and thus the study of religious organizational processes is, to a large extent, the study of religious professionals.

Professionals in all fields are those workers whose jobs require them to apply extensive, specialized, and credentialed educational training (Simon 1985). Organizations essentially trade external regulation for the promised likelihood of internal regulation that is developed during the professionalization process in order to reap the benefits of professionals' advanced training and extensive knowledge. Where predictability in the bureaucratic organizational structure is achieved through a complex division of labor, hierarchy of positions, and established rules and procedures, predictability of organizational processes is achieved through the use of credentialed professionals (Collins 1979; Evetts 2005)[27]. Additionally, professionals have long been associated with a set of characteristics such as the ability and authority to exercise personal discretion, freedom from oversight, a high degree of status, and an expectation that their chosen vocation is not only a job to be worked on a full-time, salaried basis, but also as part of a life-long commitment. As I discuss below, however, these characteristics have begun to shift over time as the organization of work has shifted from relying heavily on professionals to manage the output of goods and services in an industrialized economy, to a postindustrial economy in which the services provided by professionals are the dominant economic activity. In particular, I will address how

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[27] It is understood that not every ordained minister will qualify as a religious professional, especially for those congregations which exist outside of mainstream denominations. For example, many churches in the evangelical tradition ordain people who do not have extensive educational training, the ability to exercise personal discretion, or operate independently. They do not qualify as religious professionals for sociologists (Balmer 2000).

professional autonomy has undergone a tremendous change in the last 50 years, affecting organizations in all sectors including religion.

In addition to these usual characteristics, religious professionals also maintain a unique relationship with their congregations due to the distinctive nature of the religious call (Marty 1988). The religious professional is called by a congregation to serve them, but also to have authority over them. As I discuss in detail below, the dual nature of the calling affects the way organizational processes become institutionalized. Thus, the dominant profile of the religious professional is a person who has specialized training and credentials which enables him/her to pursue a lifelong, full-time career in ministry to whichever congregation he/she is called. These characteristics of the religious professional not only allow for procedures to become routinized, but in fact encourage such standardization due to both internal (personal) and external (congregational/denominational) regulations deriving from professionalization.

However, this institutionalization can be avoided while still garnering much of the benefits that a trained and committed clergy person provides. In the resistant organization, professionals are employed on a part-time or volunteer basis. Additionally, experience is emphasized much more than training and is even preferred over traditional education. Finally, vocation is viewed as calling to a particular project, cause or organization rather than as a calling by a group. The utilization of these strategies increases legitimacy by allowing the organization to make use of professionals in a variety of traditional or legitimate ways while ultimately contributing to the resistance of institutionalized organizational procedures. In section 2 of this chapter, I discuss these aspects of the deregulated professional in depth.

5.1.2 Professionals in the Organization

A focus on the institutionalization of professional careers serves to link the study of professional control to organizational theory. Employers of professionals must contend with institutional norms about professional careers when they tap into the labor market for professionals. Organizations under specific environmental pressures shape reactions to pre-existing, institutionalized professional norms. In addition to the usual response to institutional pressure (isomorphism-see Scott 1993), organizations may also attempt to shape professional norms, directly confront professional norms, or engage in avoidance of professional norms (Baum and Oliver 1991, Oliver 1991) (Leicht and Fennell 1997:216).

I quote Leicht and Fennell at length here because they illustrate the importance of the battle for control over professionals in an organization. Professionals are subject to institutional pressures (e.g. isomorphism) but also help to create institutional pressures (e.g., professionalization) (Scott 2001). The battleground for who gets to control the professional (the organization, the professional, or other professionals) is what connects the study of professionalism and organizational theory. The contention being that organizations are shaped to a large degree by the role that professionals play within the organization. Scott and Meyer (1983) confirm the importance of professionals and the processes created by professionals for an organization to signal legitimacy in highly institutionalized environments.

In industrialized fields professionals are used largely to support and manage the production of goods. They thus occupy a highly institutionalized position where their presence is taken for granted as necessary and good, but where their value is difficult to quantify. In this environment, then, professionals are regulated internally through a process of professionalization which comes to normalize their thoughts and behaviors to conform to certain professional standards.

Much of the professionalism research in this vein has built upon Foucault's

(1979) conception of governmentality which asserts that the dominant method of control in modern society is self regulation (Evetts 2003). Organizationally, this self-regulation results in the development of patterns and routines which conform to dominant industry standards as professionals seek to legitimate themselves and their organizations (Evetts 2003). The reliance on Foucault over the organizational commitment theories that proliferated in the 1950s, most notably in Whyte's (2002 [1956]) theory of the organization man, is important. The latter of these theories is primarily concerned with organizational commitment and conformity. Although the concept of commitment is an important one to explore in the context of the resistant organization, it is not the task of this particular study. This chapter, and indeed much of the literature regarding contemporary professionalization, draws on Foucault's governmentality because of its emphasis on a commitment to the profession over and above a commitment to a particular organization. This concept is especially useful for explaining why resistant organizations associate so many institutionalized processes with professionals rather than with any particular organizational form. As I will show later, a commitment to the profession as opposed to the organization is precisely what the people in this study view as a root cause of institutionalization. Indeed, many of the strategies described below are attempts aimed at recoupling processes with organizational context. In Foucauldian terms, then, this means to deprofessionalize the organization in order to avoid the implementation of taken for granted processes.

Leicht and Fennell (1997) claim that now, as we move more completely into a postindustrialized society, professionals are beginning to be managed by non-professionals.

> [T]he control of professional work is no longer necessarily vested in peers, or even in the administrative elite of the profession; hierarchical control over professional work is often vested in professional managers of the employing organization. (Leicht and Fennell 1997:217)

Freidson (1984) noted that professional control was shifting from an informal relationship marked by collegiality to a more formalized relationship where professionals were increasingly stratified according to hierarchical position within the organization where some professionals are practitioners and others are managers and supervisors. In other words, Friedson claims that practitioner-professionals are increasingly being managed by managing-professionals. This battle is really about the control of professional work as alluded to in the quote above. In medicine, for example, the primary norms have shifted from improving quality and access to dealing with cost and service containment along with the rise of managed care organizations (Alexander and D'Aunno 1990; Coulehan 2005; Leicht and Fennell 1997). Scott et al. (2000) argue that the changes in the medical field had the effect of eroding doctor's sovereignty as a consumer model replaced the older, professional model. Similar shifts to uniformity in order to generate revenue and comply with state regulations can be found among legal professionals, engineers and scientists (Leicht and Fennell 1997). In a postindustrial setting, the organization has a much stronger incentive to control the professions than in the industrialized setting due to the increased reliance on the products provided by the professional (services and knowledge) (Evetts 2003).

Professionals, of course, have a vested interest in maintaining control over themselves both individually and as a group as it is precisely this lack of external control

which undergirds the prestige and status they have typically enjoyed. However, Leicht and Fennell (1997) show that mimetic and coercive isomorphism to organizational norms and stability have taken over control from the normative isomorphism controlled by professional groups. Specifically, they claim that the pressure to generate revenue and accountability to both the state and the consumer has caused professional norms to be in flux. In this period of flux, professional groups have lost much of their isomorphic power.

Increasingly, professionals are becoming resigned to the idea of external oversight by bureaucrats and managers. In medicine, for example, physicians are more and more associated with managed care organizations, and even medical specialists are beginning to jump on the trend, trading in autonomy and prestige, traditional characteristics and benefits of being a professional, for a guaranteed income and the protection that comes from external oversight (Scott et al. 2000). It is unclear if professionals are engaging in some form of rational choice decision-making where school debts, desires for a larger income, and risk are weighed against the ability to be self-employed and act with discretion based on one's training, but the trend toward voluntary (i.e., not state sponsored) external oversight in medicine is as undeniable as the booming health care industry. This restructuring of the professional within the postindustrial organization is bound to have a profound impact on the way the professions are structured especially with regard to prestige and attractiveness to future professionals, but we still do not know the degree or extent of these effects (Leicht and Fennell 1997). Of paramount importance to this study is that Leicht and Fennell note that this shift in control has resulted in the routinization and standardization of standards and procedures even at the point of

professionalization. Credentialing and training organizations are adjusting their practices to meet industry oversight standards claiming that "practice guidelines have both shaped the content of professional decision-making and provided a vehicle through which accountability for professional practice can be explicitly measured" (Leicht and Fennell 1997:219-220). Hanlon echoes these claims saying that "accountability and performance indicators have now become a dominant aspect of professionalism" (Hanlon 1999:121). Evetts (2003:405) draws on Fournier (1999) and Miller and Rose (1990), in her explorations of "professionalism as the government of professional practice 'at a distance,'" and finds that external regulation and professionalism are becoming more and more intertwined.

Religious professionals are not immune from these battles over the control of professionals. In a field which has strong elements of both technical and institutional fields, such as religion, professionals rely on the development and implementation of routines and procedures in order to signal both to themselves and others that they are legitimate professionals and to confirm to their external regulators that they are doing their job efficiently and as decreed by dominant norms and standards. Satisfying internalized norms of professionalism surrounding control and discretion can be difficult in an environment with a substantial amount of external oversight. One of the ways clergy have traditionally maintained their normalized preference for independence, autonomy and discretion while simultaneously appeasing external auditors is by initiating and institutionalizing their own programs, projects or organizational procedures. In short, they put their "stamp" on the organization. In this way, they can satisfy their internalized professional norms because the project, once institutionalized, serves as a marker of their

independence and power. At the same time these institutionalized procedures and programs serve as durable and quantifiable examples of professional work for external oversight agencies. Satisfying external regulators often takes the form of attempting to quantify the inherently unquantifiable nature of professional work. In the field of religion for example, this leads to reporting attendance numbers, tithes, and hours as a way of measuring the professional enterprise.

To sum up, as professional activity has moved out of the institutionalized, taken for granted position enjoyed in highly industrial environments and into a more technical environment where the production of knowledge and services dominates, their products and labor have begun to be subject to an increasing amount of oversight and regulation. The result is that whereas once, goods were thought to be interchangeable, now professional products, indeed professionals themselves are interchangeable. Oversight from both regulatory agencies and expectations of the people being serviced by professionals has lead to the institutionalization of professional products. In the field of religion this means that there is now an implicit expectation that we can switch out pastors who do not meet our expectations like we change out car parts, indeed that one can even switch denominations or faith traditions if one is dissatisfied. Though this has, of course, always been technically true, there has been a distinct increase in these kinds of activities (Sherkat 2001). The importance of professionals for establishing and maintaining routines and organizational procedures, however, is as strong as ever even as they have moved from the initiator and developer of such routines to the mechanism and apparatus by which such routines are implemented. In the remainder of this section I discuss exactly how professionals themselves are regulated before moving on to consider

the role of the regulated professional in religious settings more fully.

5.1.3 The Regulation of the Professional

In an industrialized economy, professional regulation is left to the professionals themselves to develop through professionalization, a form of internal regulation. Functionalist scholars have demonstrated that in an industrial field which focuses on the production of goods, professionals occupy a highly institutional position. Parsons (1954) and other functionalists heralded professionals as a stabilizing force which develops standard organizational habits (MacDonald 1995; Parsons 1954). That is, their existence is justified not by their contribution to the bottom line or the quantifiable number of goods produced, but rather by the functions of stability and contribution to the common good. Professionals occupy highly institutionalized positions in an industrialized sector in part because their status as an unquestioned necessity is articulated by professional organizations with strong ties to the state. For example, Parsons pointed out that in industrial societies, professionals could be distinguished from the corporation by their "collectivity-orientation" as opposed to a "self-orientation" (in Johnson 1972:13). Regulation for professionals in this context is primarily imposed from within. This "collectivity orientation" is initially established during the process of professionalization (Aldridge and Evetts 2003; Leicht and Fennell 1997). Internal regulation promotes a collective response while the modern, postindustrial, external oversight produces a self-centered response as professionals attempt to secure their own positions before that of the group.

In a postindustrial society, characterized by the delivery of services rather than the

delivery of goods, professionals have increasingly lost a significant amount of the things

which were associated with their vocations as "professional" such as independence and

discretion (MacDonald 1995). Professionals, who have always been those who specialize

in the delivery of knowledge and services as opposed to goods, no longer have as much

autonomy or prestige in a society where the delivery of knowledge and services has

become the dominant mode of industry as it has become increasingly important to ensure

maximum returns on the activities of professionals (Friedson 1994).

While the dominant mode of industry may be shifting in postindustrial societies,

the Enlightenment values of rationality and efficiency which grew side by side with the

Industrial Revolution still underlie the logic of the economy. In other words, the

efficient, rational delivery of knowledge and services is the hallmark of the postindustrial

society while the industrial society was characterized by the efficient, rational delivery of

products and goods. Thus, in the postindustrial society it becomes increasingly necessary

to maximize the efficiency of knowledge workers and service providers. This is

increasingly done through external regulation, primarily in the form of managerial

oversight. Chicago school theorists, spurred on by the shifting structure of the economy

and the relatively recent translation of Weber's works in the middle of the last century,

turned their focus toward the role of professionals in a postindustrial society and argued

that professionals were subject to ever increasing regulation from external sources. Mills

(1956) wrote that the professions themselves had been "sucked into administrative

machines, where knowledge is standardized and routinized into the administrative

apparatus and professionals become mere managers" (Mills 1956:112). The increasing

importance placed upon knowledge and services meant that there was a need to ensure

that professionals were being utilized as efficiently as possible. Now, official oversight agencies working on behalf of the state or the corporation exist. Doctors are no longer beholden simply to the standards of the AMA, but also, to a greater extent than ever before, to managed care organizations.

What is interesting to note here is that in both cases, the institutional nature of the positions that professionals occupied in industrialized economies and the highly rational positions they occupy in a postindustrial system, regulation is one of the key hallmarks of being a professional. Either way, the result is the creation of a group of people committed to doing things in a particular way. The result is the institutionalization of organizational procedures that conform to the norms of either internal (professionalization) or external (oversight) regulation. Indeed, recent research has shown that modern professionals get squeezed from both ends (Friedson 1994; 2001). On the one hand the process of professionalization is as totalizing a force as it has ever been, while on the other, the pressures exerted by external agencies are increasingly greater. The point here is not that these two might come into conflict with one another (say, in a doctor's desire to heal and an HMO's desire for profit), but rather to point out that the hallmark of the professional, autonomy and discretion, is in sharp decline and has been for some time.

Religious professionals are no different in this respect. As I indicated in chapter 2, religion exists in a field which is both highly technical and highly institutional (Monahan 1999). The shift in focus from corporate religious expression to individual spirituality in organized religion has brought with it greater oversight for clergy members. In addition to the internal norms and habits that are developed during the

course of their training, clergy, especially in mainline denominations, are increasingly

reporting feeling that they are simply there to serve their congregants with the

understanding that if those service expectations are not met efficiently then there will be

repercussions (Marty 1988). These pressures lead invariably to the creation of

standardized routines and procedures in order to conform to these expectations.

This institutionalization of organizational procedures is precisely what the

Emerging Churches in this study work to avoid. In what follows I describe how these

churches manage to attract and keep the specialized knowledge and skills provided by

professionals while simultaneously avoiding the routinization of organizational

procedures that is an unavoidable characteristic of professionals in mainstream or

dominant organizations. First, though, it is important to spend some time reviewing the

status of the clergy as a profession in the sociological sense.

5.1.4 Religious Professionals

There has been much discussion in the sociological literature about whether

clergy members rate as "professionals" by sociological standards[28] These debates were

particularly rampant in the middle of the last century when sociologists examining

professions were concerned largely with classifying and characterizing the professions.

Some scholars such as Dunstan (1967), Struzzo (1970), Paul (1968), and Glasse (1968)

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[28] This is partially due to the fact that sociologists do not agree on what precisely makes
up a profession, but as I discuss above, most people, including me, follow some version
of the definition by Louis Brandeis, and a later, similar version by Parsons, which defines
a profession as "an occupation for which the necessary preliminary training is intellectual
in character, involving knowledge and to some extent learning, as distinguished from mere
skill; which is pursued largely for others, and not merely for one's own self; and in which
the financial return is not the accepted measure of success" (in Marty 1988).

found that the clergy met the necessary criteria for professionals while others, Wilson (1965), Towler (1970), Towler and Coxon (1979), Gannon (1971), argued that they fell well short of the definition of a professional (Bryman 1985). Jarvis (1975) stakes out a clear middle ground in this debate claiming that the clergy constitute a semi-profession. These conflicts were never fully resolved as the research about the professions moved away from classification and toward an investigation of the dynamics of social control within organizations as discussed above.

While the academic debate about the designation of clergy as professionals might not have yielded a clear-cut answer, it indicates something far more important about the field as a whole. The specific nature of the discussions shows that the clergy are difficult to pin down precisely because they occupy a position which is constantly in flux as they try to manage the demands of an occupation which at once highly institutionalized and highly technical. Benedetto, writing about clergy members' own sense of occupational meaning, remarks that in the literature about the clergy and occupations there is a long history of role conflict based upon "the mystery of divinity and the efficiency of the manager" (Benedetto 2006:2). What Benedetto is pointing out here is the tension between the institutional and technical roles of the religious professional. This position is supported most by the studies by Blizzard (1956, 1959), later updated by Brunette-Hill and Finke (1999) and Marty (1988) who each wrote extensively about this role strain among clergy members.

Christopherson (1994) argues that one way the modern clergy help to resolve this tension (of working in a technical and institutional field) is by constructing a frame of calling. He claims that the call "takes on a renewed significance because it can provide a

kind of moral compass to guide the 'called' through the changing landscape of modern society. It provides a means of dealing with the ambiguity of modern life" and can be "a source of identity, of authority and purpose independent of the technical, competence-based standards of competing professions" (Christopherson 1994:222). This claim is most interesting when coupled with Christopherson's other key insight that "the 'genuineness' of the call" has gradually become institutionalized by seminaries and individual denominations as a necessary requirement for both admittance into training and acceptance to official positions within the church (Christopherson 1994:221). The institutionalization of this frame of calling ensures that the field of religion will always be somewhat immune from demands for oversight by non-professionals. Even as churches increasingly place a premium on rapid growth and quantifiable results, the role of the clergy remains somewhat unthreatened from outside influences or external oversight (Larson 1977). The "call" serves to mask a lack of technical credentials that would otherwise be demanded of anyone running an organization of the importance and size of a typical congregation.

Thus, the degree of institutionalization of the religious call is important. In other fields where the call has not been as strong, technical demands have been able to overrun the institutional desires of the professionals. While a sense of call does exist in other fields, it is a central feature of the identity of the religious professional (Christopherson 1994). Religious professionals have also not been subject to the degree of pressure for efficiency that other professionals have had to endure, especially lately. This strong sense of calling has a profound effect on the organizations which employ these professionals. Clergy fill unique roles where they must lead the very people who have

the ability to control their future. It is through reference to the call that the religious

professional is able to attain some measure of freedom and authority within a

congregation. Ideally, the assurance of call means that the religious professional will act

in a selfless manner, serving the community rather than attempting to gain personal

power and prestige. Pastors are thus free to set agendas and goals and implement

procedures and organizational processes, but only within these highly institutionalized

boundaries that are established and maintained in the process of professionalization.

Scholars have long noted the ability of the seminary to provide crucial

professionalization and training that prepares clergy to defend the unique institutional

nature of their profession against intrusions from pressures to be more technically

focused (Blanchard 1981; Carroll 1981; Hammond and Mitchell 1965)[29]. The official

training that occurs in the seminary helps the future pastor to conduct him/herself in such

a way that is consistent with the expectations of both the employer (i.e., congregation)

and the professional group (Carroll 1971). While congregations place ever increasing

bureaucratic and organizational demands on the pastor, the pastor's training reflects a

strong commitment to the institutional nature of the position. In seminaries much more

time and energy is devoted to non-quantifiable activities (sermon preparation, counseling,

performance of rituals and ceremonies, etc.) than to technical skills (budgets, long-term

financial planning, building construction and maintenance, etc.) (Marty 1988).

This conflict of interests has resulted most notably in the shifting of the residence

of the theologian. Where once congregational pastors were expected to be theologians,

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[29] Ironically, as Hammond and Mitchell (1965) note, seminaries are often used as a place
to incorporate people who do lack either technical or professional abilities. Thus, it can
be argued that the institutionalization of future clergy members is being conducted, at
least in part, by people who were not properly institutionalized.

those duties and positions have migrated to the university as denominational

administrative tasks claim more and more of the pastor's time and energy (Marty 1988).

The client-like relationship between a minister and his/her congregation means that less

and less emphasis is placed on activities which do not directly benefit the congregation

(Jarvis 1976). While seminary curricula have changed to reflect this demand, they have

not capitulated wholly to the demands of the congregation (Fichter 1961; Marty 1988).

Fichter (1961) writes about the process of professionalization that "as the period of

preparation becomes more expensive, elaborate and lengthy, the commitment to the

profession takes a stronger hold on the individual" (Fichter 1961:185). It should come as

no surprise then, that to become a religious professional in the mainline denominations

requires years of study and apprenticeship signifying a relatively strong commitment to

the profession.

Fichter is writing specifically about religious professionals who are further

conditioned against defection by the nature of the credential as lifelong. Once a person is

ordained, it is for life regardless of whether the person takes up a new vocation.

Ordination comes from God and thus once conferred, supercedes personal actions with

the exception of extreme ethical violations. The ordination thus serves a similar roll as

the call in legitimating the "pastor." While the call serves to legitimate individual pastors

and guard them against charges of inadequacy, the ordination serves to legitimate the

existence of the position and title of pastor. Where one is subjective and informal, the

other is objective and formal.

This commitment to the pastoral profession manifests itself in a number of ways,

most visibly with issues of power. Training to be a minister still reflects the notion that

the power to determine the goals of a congregation and, to an even greater extent, the power to determine the method for reaching those goals lays with a trained and credentialed professional as long as he/she remains in the employ of the congregation. It is important to note here that it is not the individual priest who has these powers, but rather the organizational position of the priest which has the power. As I have discussed above, the process of professionalization for clergy results in professionals with a strong commitment to upholding the dominant professional norms. Indeed Martin Marty (Marty 1988:88) goes so far as to quote J. Roge who claims that the priest is "the most institutionalized man of our time" because of his/her commitment to the profession that is developed primarily in his/her official training.

5.2 Unregulated Discretion

5.2.1 Introduction

As we learned above, professionalism is, essentially, certification in exchange for trust. Discretion after testing. We wait until a person has much invested in maintaining the status quo before we allow him or her to exercise discretion in developing organizational procedures and processes. Certainly, professionals have more freedom than other workers, but they are only allowed this freedom when the range of likely outcomes has been circumscribed through the process of professionalization. Indeed, this ability to allow for agency while also pointing out how individual decisions both create and support existing structures is a strength of institutional theory. Barley and Tolbert point out that

> [I]nstitutional theorists acknowledge that cultural constraints do not completely determine human action (DiMaggio 1988, 1991; Oliver 1991; Strang 1994). Rather, institutions set bounds on rationality by restricting the opportunities and alternatives we perceive and, thereby, increase the probability of certain types of behavior. (Barley and Tolbert 1997:94)

This traditional form of professionalism is characterized by regulation. As I discussed above, this regulation can be either internal, as a result of professionalization, or external in the form of oversight. Both of these forms are present in the field of religion, and, at least for my respondents, this kind of professionalism creates churches which are unappealing. Melinda makes the explicit connection between the professional pastor and a stifling, predictable environment when she describes why she and some of her friends left a traditional church to join a Living Word. "Mount Olive was just very traditional. Very structured. You'd have your liturgical worship-word, sacrament, offering-and it would all be run by a pastor. I mean it's just very structured…too structured, too controlling." There is a recognition that doing church in this kind of institutionalized way is not only undesirable from a personal preference standpoint, but that it could also limit a person's relationship with God.

In contrast to this version of professionalism which requires proof before trust, resistant organizations utilize a system of unregulated discretion where trust comes prior to credentials in an effort to reverse the restrictions on "the opportunities and alternatives we perceive." The congregations I visited employed three very distinct strategies to keep organizational processes from becoming institutionalized. First, they utilize an inverted labor structure where positions which typically have the greatest prestige and corresponding income are employed only on a part time or volunteer basis and positions

which typically require the least amount of specialized training are employed full time. Second, experience is emphasized over credentialed training or education. Finally, the nature of the religious call is changed to emphasize a calling to a group or cause rather than a calling by a group or organization. The result of these three strategies is the creation of organizational procedures which are able to take advantage of the specialized training and vocational dedication professionals provide while avoiding the routinization of such processes. As I discussed above in the introduction, avoiding the institutionalization of organizational processes is important for groups of people who have determined that the form of religious expression they favor is one which is inherently unpredictable. Before moving on to discuss the individual strategies in depth, then, it is important to establish the intentionality of my respondents in avoiding the institutionalization of organizational processes especially as they are initiated and sustained by religious professionals.

5.2.2 Establishing Importance

It is important to keep in mind that the Emerging Churches in this study are not resisting the use of professionals or even of the processes professionals tend to use. Indeed, they see professionals as valuable for both the legitimacy that they lend the organization and the specialized knowledge and skills they offer. Instead, they want to resist two very particular things that normally occur with professionals. First, while they actively seek professionals for their organization, they want to avoid giving those professionals too many opportunities to institute the technical training they receive in seminary. Second, they also want to avoid the creation of institutionalized processes that

might occur while the clergyperson occupies his/her position. It will be the task of this chapter to explain how these organizations create environments which decrease the opportunities for religious professionals to both use and create institutionalized organizational procedures. For example, pastors might learn in a seminary class on pastoral counseling that they should open and/or close a hospital visit with prayer. While the congregations in this study would not have a problem with this particular institutionalized practice, they would be resistant to having this practice become *the* way that hospital visits are always conducted.

Diane explains the incompatibility of this routinization with her faith when she describes her previous, more mainstream, church experiences. She feels she was really limited by the professionals who ran the churches she attended.

> I could look back on it and go I think the people who are in ministry are really trying to follow God the way that they believe God wants them to go and based on how they were trained so I don't have any ill feeling toward that, but I think there's an innate unhealth about it because I think that when you're shown a way, I think people start to look the same and talk the same and act the same and ah, you can't realize it when you're in it but when you're out of it you're like wow, I was really conforming. I wasn't having fresh thoughts, and even the curriculum for the children's ministry we just picked the best that was out there to buy. We didn't have the opportunity to think about what else is there. There was no dreaming. It was so corporate. It just didn't feel authentic even though we were trying to do what was right.

Diane explicitly identifies the source of her feelings of inauthenticity as deriving from the "corporate" or institutionalized environment created by a pastoral staff that had undergone an extensive process of professionalization, but is just as quick to point out that she does not think pastors are bad people or even necessarily bad for congregations. If it were possible to retain the professional without limiting creativity and individualism, then Diane would be all for it. It is this search that ultimately lead Diane to the Emerging

Church.

George validates Diane's feelings and suggests that traditionally trained

professionals can create conflict in a resistant organization when he discusses the pastor

at Living Word.

> Ronald's been great for us in a lot of ways, and there's no way we could afford to
> pay someone else full-time, but I wonder sometimes if he really gets how we're
> trying to do things here. In some ways it's nice to have direction and you have to
> grow, but at the same time, it has to be done in the right way. He doesn't always
> have to be 'the guy.'

Living Word had a history of relatively open decision-making with meetings being

organized as needed by congregants and open to anyone. However, they faced some

structural restraints due to their official ties with a denominational church which both

founded and continues to finance their operations. This relationship required certain

budget formats, and leadership structure and qualifications. However, with the

appointment of Ronald, an ordained minister in the denomination, as pastor earlier in the

year I conducted my research, they began to move away from a resistant governance

structure and toward a more traditional, centralized arrangement where the pastor has far

more power to institute procedures and programs based on his training. Ronald

increasingly served as a gatekeeper, creating a cadre of people who were "leadership

oriented" to help him direct the congregation. He indicated that there was a Biblical basis

for this kind of decision-making structure as directly opposed to democracy.

> We don't do voting. Somebody asked that. They said "When are going to vote for
> [the leadership team] because otherwise this isn't representative?" Well there were
> like no votes in the Bible, okay. Come on. Do you want to be Biblical or do you
> want to be democratic? This isn't a civics class…Like we're having a big meeting
> at the end of the summer and I'm hand picking the people to go to that-some of our
> more leadership oriented people. In the past they've done the gatherings where
> anyone can come, and I just said, let's put that aside for a while.

These new policies were not met with overt resistance during the time I was there, but there were signs of dissatisfaction that I noticed. Individual comments during interviews and conversations and the formation of a group thinking about leaving to start their own church were directly tied to Ronald's method of pastoring. The lack of self-sufficiency, however makes it difficult to formally resist the pastor's efforts and maintain the status quo as the congregation could not afford to call a full-time pastor on its own. Two-thirds of Ronald's salary is covered by the mother church for Living Word, where he also works part time as a minister. Thus, Ronald is immune, to some extent from resistance within the congregation since they do not pay most of his salary or have the ability to replace him, and there is nothing compelling him to employ context specific governing techniques. However, these structural barriers should not negate the point that the congregants consistently and consciously linked the role of the professional pastor with their dissatisfaction with congregational changes.

As I discuss in Chapter 1, intentionality is of paramount importance for any group that wishes to resist institutionalization. The greatest evidence that a congregation can provide of their collective distaste for institutionalized organizational procedures is in the way they conduct corporate worship. Liturgy selection and worship construction are often the domain of the religious professional. Thus, a rejection of a formula for worship is, to some extent, a rejection of the institutionalization of pastoral authority. To this end, the congregations in this study are off to a good start. My fieldnotes and interviews were littered with comments and exchanges like this one between myself and a longtime member of Fellowship:

> Interviewer: Yesterday, before worship, someone made an announcement and said we were going to do something different. What part was different?

Aaron: [laughter] They always say that we're going to do something different. We hear it all the time. "We're going to do something different" and we're like "Okay. Whatever." Every week there is something different going on. We don't have the same weeks. I mean if you were even there for the first hour before we have church we have bible study we always hear Okay, we're going to do something different today. And it's like since I've been going there nothing has been the same. They completely broke the mode about walking into church and sit down and prep your bibles and have worshipful hymns and we all sit back down and then the guy talks up here and then we pray and then we go out to eat at Denny's. I mean this whole routine that everyone is used to, we don't do it that way at all.

A husband and wife from Calvary echoed these sentiments, arguing that the routinization of worship at traditional churches was a major drawback to their previous church experiences.

Interviewer: What appeals to you about this church?

Jessica: You've got to come up for yourself what is going to work for your own congregation, because they're all different.

Wade: Yeah, it's really formulaic at most traditional churches.

Jessica: We've been in a lot of different places and one message does not fit everyone. What's that book that everyone is using now?

Wade: The Purpose Driven Life.

Jessica: Yeah, the whole nation is into the purpose driven everything. And what was the one before that? The prayer of Jabez. I was like oh my gosh can anybody go to the bible and find their own stinkin answers and can anybody pray and ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten them? Or do we all just suck up the leftovers of other people. Why do we do that? We can find God for ourselves it's just laziness. It's fast food nation. You know.

The people I interviewed consistently linked the lack of routinization with organizational processes as a key reason why they were attracted to the Emerging Church. Even if they did not understand that this would be a crucial aspect when they began attending, they are clearly able to identify its importance to their ability to have a unique religious experience. One should not get the impression from the above quotes, however, that

activities in these congregations approach chaos. In fact, quite the opposite is true.

Pastor Ricky does a good job of explaining the role of worship liturgies in an Emerging

Church.

> Interviewer: When people show up on Sunday nights do they know what to expect?
>
> Ricky: Our intent is that we start with a blank slate every week. Something that I've explored is whether we could take the form of the Catholic mass because they have the same worship order every week sort of built in the elements sort of rotate through but the structure is the same so that's one of the things that I've wanted to do since we started was to take a season and do that because there's a different thing that you learn and experience in that approach to worship.

This last quote by Pastor Ricky exemplifies the unique approach of people in the

Emerging Church. Just as I showed in Chapter 4 that they are not anti-hierarchy and

bureaucracy, I want to make it clear that they are not anti-liturgy either. In fact, the

services I attended employed lots of liturgy. As Pastor Ricky's quote points out, they are

not resisting any particular liturgy, but rather the idea of being liturgical or locked in to a

specific form of worship to the exclusion of all others. If one of the points of chapter 4

was to show that the Emerging Churches do not want to be beholden to any one

organizational structure, bureaucratic or otherwise, then one of the objectives of this

chapter is to establish that these congregations similarly do not want to be wedded to any

one set of organizational procedures, traditional or contemporary.

5.2.3 Inverted Labor

In the last chapter we learned that the structure of labor in the resistant

organization is different than in dominant organizations with respect to who is

responsible for particular tasks and duties. In this section, I discuss how labor, especially

with respect to professionals, is further differentiated in the resistant organization. Rather than talking about responsibilities, however, this section will focus primarily on the reward structure. In traditional organizations professionals reside at or near the top of the scale for both pay and prestige. My data indicate that the opposite is true for the congregations I visited. For those congregations that could afford to pay staff, the workers who were full-time were usually the ones with the fewest qualifications, credentials or training, and the pastoral staff often received only part-time pay or none at all even when the congregation could afford to support him/her. This decoupling of monetary reward from professional qualifications impacts the development of organizational procedures in two primary ways. First, the fact that workers with lower prestige are full-time staff means that they are around more, and thus often have a more intimate understanding of the congregation than the religious professionals. This knowledge helps to equalize the inherent power differential between regular staff and religious professionals and thus the clergy and the congregation often accord them power in the decision-making process that they would not normally enjoy. Second, because their positions are constructed in a fundamentally different way, the clergy are unable to rely on the practices developed in the course of their professionalization. They simply do not have the time to spend instituting and maintaining processes which might conform to the dominant industry standard but which might ultimately be inefficient for their congregation.

Prestige and Knowledge

Contrary to the dominant organizational model, the Emerging Church

congregations I observed employed workers with little or no professional credentials on a full-time basis. This, especially when combined with the part-time employment of the clergy, shifts the basis of power away from those with the most credentials and training and toward those with the most experience and local knowledge. Ultimately what this means for the organization is that they are better able to avoid the institutionalization of organizational processes, because they rely less on people who have been trained to do things in a particular way.

A perfect example of this is at Living Word where George is the worship director and only full-time staff. He is not only the sole full-time staff member, he is also the only member of staff who has been with the church for its entirety. The congregation is on its third part-time pastor in its 10 year existence and there is another part-time staff member, but George, who had no religious credentials or experience prior to starting to work for Living Word, is the person people are referred to when they have questions about the church. In my interviews with congregants and staff, I was referred to him for everything ranging from the history of the congregation to the way decisions are made about budgets and membership to the planning of worship and service events. However, George has no contract and wrote his own job description which was "never formally notated," and "was so long ago that nobody really remembers it." For his part, George is very careful to avoid speaking about matters which he deems to be out of his expertise. Although he has done some pastoral care duties such as visiting people in the hospital when the pastor(s) are out of town, he says that pastoral care and long-term planning and scope issues are really not his gifts. Whenever I asked him about the future of the congregation or anything that bordered on issues broader than Living Word such as the theology of the

Emerging Church or the denomination's stance on homosexuality, he was quick to refer

me back to one of the religious professionals that served the congregation (in addition to

the pastor, there was always at least one seminary student doing an internship at Living

Word). For example, when I asked him about the Emerging Church in general he said,

> This is something you need to talk with the pastors about…My gift really lies in
> including everyone and getting the best out of people or getting them to do the best
> they can at their thing is what I've really come to see as my gift. As far as
> discussing, you know, global trends and demographics in worship Brian is really
> better at it. I am so ingrained in my neighborhood and my whole thing that for me
> to try and understand how these people are doing it or how those people are doing it
> is kind of challenging for the size of my brain.

In addition to providing a glimpse into how George sees himself in the organization, the

above quote also supports the claim that the Emerging Churches I studied have no

interest in doing away with religious professionals. Just as these congregations had no

intention of doing away with bureaucracy completely, they expressed no interest in

completely divesting themselves of educated, trained and credentialed religious

professionals. They seem to understand that people who have been intensely trained for

very specific tasks provide important services to a congregation. In this case, for

example, it frees George up to focus on local issues and provides a buffer between

himself and people like me so that he never has to go on the record discussing a topic he

might be uncomfortable with. While this particular example is somewhat limited, it

illustrates how this particular division of labor serves to utilize the skills of the religious

professional without institutionalizing religious processes.

George's primary duty is to prepare worship each week, and the worship at Living

Word is unlike that at any other congregation in this denomination. The services mix

elements developed by George and various current and former congregants with

traditional liturgical elements. The point here is not that Living Word has an odd style of worship, but rather that it has a style of worship which is intimately tied to one person. We are reminded by Zucker that institutionalized organizational procedures are those which "are not tied to particular actors or situations" (Zucker 1987:444). An institutionalized worship service, then, is one which would be done in exactly or at least approximately, the same way even after the worship director was replaced for one reason or another. In fact, the institutionalization of the worship service is a significant goal of many Christian churches who seek to develop a liturgy which both unites the various congregations and separates or signifies difference with other denominations. The worship service at Living Word, conversely, is intimately tied to George and his particular knowledge of the community on both a day to day and a historical basis. Thus, from one week to another the services at Living Word may look similar, and on any given week they may be like those at more traditional congregations. But as soon as George leaves, there is absolutely no way to keep the services from changing as there is nobody with his combination of knowledge and skills. There is no place or institution which would or could offer a credential certifying someone to conduct worship services in the George style. This is precisely the service that seminaries provide for most traditional, mainline congregations who use ordained clergy to perform services and other organizational procedures. Of course, congregations like Living Word attract a fair amount of attention, drawing numerous gawkers each week who are only there to see how things are done.

> You know, so many people come to us and say 'Can we sit down with your leadership team and our leadership team and talk about how we can do this in our church?' We're just like 'We don't have a manual. We made this up, and we're still making it up. And the things we screwed up on before we're still trying to fix.'

> We get a seminary class every semester and it takes a lot of convincing to get them to understand that what we do is not a formula to be copied. I mean, there are certain principles you might find useful, but even those reinforce the point that you can't copy this. Like we always tell people to be more contextual and listen to their own communities more.

It is important to remember that congregations like Living Word do not avoid institutionalized processes just for the sake of resisting, but because they take the stance that such processes impede the congregation from reaching its goal of an authentic expression of faith.

Part-Time Professionals

Three of the congregations included in this study, Living Word, Crossroads, and Faith, had enough funds to employ one or more people on a full-time basis[30]. In every case, however, the pastor is only paid for part-time work. Furthermore, the pastors at both Crossroads and Faith were actively seeking to reduce even their part-time pay down to a volunteer basis.

William, the pastor at Faith, told me that he was

> …really trying to find a number of ways to supplement his income in order to get to a point that the people here don't have to spend their resources supporting me unless they want to. I want to get to a point to where I don't need the financial support from this congregation. I think it will really free up me and them. Like, I would never consciously change or censor what I say and do, but at the same time, I've got three kids at home that need to eat so I'm sure that plays into my decision-making in ways that I'm not even aware of.

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[30] The other congregations also employed religious professionals on a part-time basis, but it was not their choice. Budget constraints arising from smaller size meant that they could not afford to support someone full-time. However, it is worth noting that even in these smaller settings, the benefits of having a part-time religious professional remained. These congregations were able to take advantage of the skills and expertise of such a person and yet still manage to retain a significant amount of flexibility in organizational procedure.

Tim, the founding pastor of Crossroads, has a similar intention.

> We keep moving further and further away from me drawing any salary from Crossroads. My intention never was for this to be a paying gig. That's why I do all the other projects, the books and speaking and stuff. Not getting a paycheck allows me to say and do what I feel is best and for the congregation to accept or reject that on its own merits.

As founding pastors, neither of these men had ever been fully supported by their congregations. In the beginning, they simply did not generate enough revenue, and now that the money is there, the desire for these professionals to be full-time is lacking for both the congregation and the pastors.

A system of part-time professionals has profound effects on the way the organization is run. Not only is it the case that the clergy do not have the time to implement many of the procedures that they learned in their training, but they are also prohibited from using many of these traditional processes out of sheer ineffectiveness. Much of their training is just not applicable to an organization where the pastor is not the only or even the primary person in charge[31].

A good example of this is with the issue of attendance. The congregations I observed did not count the number of people who showed up to a particular event, even weekly worship. More importantly, there would be no group or person to report these numbers to if they did keep track of them. Congregational planning thus proceeds

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[31] At this point I think it is important to stress that none of the strategies I observed and discuss here are necessary or sufficient (see Chapter 7 for more discussion on this) for effectively resisting institutionalization. For example, many part-time workers and volunteers in churches effectively create their own domains or fiefdoms where authority and procedures are institutionalized. However, there are theoretical reasons, discussed above, and empirical evidence, presented here, to believe that when used in combination with each other, these strategies are important components to the project of organizational resistance.

according to a different set of criteria rather than simply trying to attract or accommodate growth, the two congregational planning phenomena for which pastors traditionally receive the most professionalization and, not coincidentally, experience the most oversight (Marty 1988). As Christopherson found in his study of traditional pastoral careers, "when clergy talk about what they want to accomplish, what it is that they are called to do, they inevitably talk about change and growth" (Christopherson 1994:28). This is isomorphism at its finest as it is unclear where the impetus for congregational growth training comes from. Did the congregations demand such training? Is it really something inherent to most pastors as Christopherson's respondents suggest? Or is it a function of seminaries attempting to train influential and powerful clergy? Regardless of the source, the institutionalization of accounting and planning procedures for managing congregation growth are impossible to deny, and nearly every guidebook or training proceeds according to quantifiable, technical specifications. In the congregations I visited, however, this is not how decisions were made. The part-time nature of the professional meant that planning had to proceed according to a set of criteria which was ultimately out of the professional's hands and beyond his/her formal training. This is not to suggest that the pastor's opinions were not valued; indeed, people accorded a great amount of respect to religious professionals for their knowledge and dedication. However, there was no compelling reason to listen to the pastor's suggestions apart from the merits of the argument. It was not necessary or even possible for the congregation to allow the pastor to make decisions about congregational growth just because he/she was in charge and had received specialized training.

For example, during my time at Faith, they were experiencing a lot of growth and

the Sunday gathering had become extremely crowded to the point that it was standing room only. People were routinely arriving 45-60 minutes early, and were even saving seats for one another. The people I talked with were dissatisfied with this set-up, not because it was difficult for them to find parking in the residential neighborhood where the church was located or because of the stiflingly hot temperatures in a building with no air conditioning and people sitting closely together. Instead, there was concern that such a set-up was not consonant with their values of being a community which is welcoming to outsiders. Indeed, there was some disappointment expressed that when resources such as seating got scarce, people started to hoard by saving seats and arriving early. People were disappointed because this is contrary to the way they want to be as a congregation. The only immediate solution, which involved moving to two services, however, meant violating their value of community to some extent. In a semi-annual meeting open to all members, it was recognized that the current situation was not fostering community either, but rather the formation of cliques. Other alternatives were considered, such as refusing to accommodate growth at the current location in order to encourage the formation of another congregation somewhere in the city or building a larger gathering space. One group even advocated eliminating the weekly gatherings altogether on the grounds that they were just one very small part of their lives as a community and that this small part consumed a disproportionate amount of the congregation's resources. In the end the leadership team proposed to the congregation that if services felt too full for 5 consecutive weeks, then they would move to two, back to back, gatherings on Sunday evenings in an effort to restore an atmosphere that was both more open to outsiders and re-establish their commitment to community. No criteria were provided for how "full"

status would be established. This decision was put up to a vote and agreed upon by the community.

This particular example illustrates several key components about having a pastor who is part-time. In this case the decision-making process for how to plan the future of the congregation was not made to encourage or accommodate growth. Instead, the congregation was allowed to focus on reaching a solution that kept their values and beliefs at the center of their focus. This is possible, in part, because their religious professional, William, is only a part-time worker. William even alluded to this when he discussed his role in the process.

> I recognized that the crowding was going to be an issue just because I was having a more difficult time getting around to talk to my friends each Sunday, but I didn't know when or if it was going to be dealt with. I guess I would have tried to do something eventually, but I just didn't have time to worry about it right then with everything else going on, and in the end, they really didn't even need me, which is fine.

People are willing to participate heavily in the decision-making process at Faith, because they understand that William is not a pastor in the traditional sense. Furthermore, while they perceive William to be fair and generous and all those good things, they also understand that those attributes do not guide this process. They realize that the reason the process is open to being shaped by the congregation is not because William happens to be a nontraditional pastor, but because William is prohibited from being a traditional pastor. William indicates that if he had had more time, he would have probably done something himself about the growth issue, and his pastoral training suggests that his decision-making process would likely have placed the attraction and retention of new members in the forefront. Instead, the congregation arrived at a decision which privileged their values of community and openness. The final decision may or may not have been the

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same in both cases, but that hardly matters for resistance to institutionalized processes. And this is really the crux of the matter for this dissertation. Neoinstitutional theories of isomorphism suggest that it is not enough for individual will to be in concert with organizational goals. Instead, if an organization wants to resist conformity, there must be structures in place which both compel and aid resistance (Powell and DiMaggio 1991). If these structures do not exist, then isomorphic pressures will eventually overtake an organization as it grows in size or persists over time regardless of how charismatic any one individual happens to be. Just as in the theoretical example above about hospital visits, the goal here is not to silence William's voice as a professional. Indeed, they value his input as someone who has spent a lot of time thinking through important congregational issues. However, the congregants do want to ensure that William's voice is not the only or even the primary voice in the conversation about how the congregation should proceed.

5.2.4 Experience over Credentials

Traditionally, formal training is used to signal the ability of a person to handle a particular set of tasks. In religious environments the designation of ordination serves to signal to people that a person has been trained sufficiently to handle the variety of jobs and duties that are routinely performed by pastors. The credential serves to institutionalize the person's qualifications and remove any questioning about his/her abilities. In fact, ability ceases to be the determining factor in both hiring and firing processes. Instead, congregations and pastors talk about "fit" or "call" as all are assumed to have the basic skills due to the credential conferred through the process of ordination

(Chang 2004). However, in the Emerging Church, these credentials are not the sole or even the prime way that people are evaluated for particular positions, or to do certain work. Instead of credentialed training, value is placed on personal experiences. In the sections below, I will discuss the importance of personal experiences in congregational settings. In order to further drive home the importance of personal experiences over credentialed training, I will also discuss what happened when an international group of people involved in the Emerging Church got together to figure out what a program to train future church leaders should look like.

Many of the congregations in this study recognize some form of elders and/or deacons within the congregation. The importance of experience over formal training is seen most acutely with these people, who are the recognized leaders of their congregations. Jimmy, a pastor at Crossroads explained the roles of deacons and elders to me this way:

> Interviewer: How does the deacon and elder system work at Crossroads?
>
> Jimmy: It's not like I'm really the pastor of the church or that Tim and I are the pastors. There are pastors that we have who are not necessarily paid, but they are just as much pastors as I am. And it's not like they have to be a deacon first before they become an elder, but I mean obviously a part of their DNA is that they do serve but I think that the elders are really the pastors of the church. And it's very similar with the deacons. They are the people who are already pastoring the church and they should be recognized formally as such and brought into the conversations that are regularly unfolding between the elders as pastors.
>
> Interviewer: And how does one become a deacon or an elder?
>
> Jimmy: Well they are the ones who are already doing God's work in the community. We don't have a set of criteria or special course you can take. It's basically when someone is already serving and it is brought to our attention by another deacon or elder or congregation member. Again, it's really a way we recognize people who are currently pastoring the community through their actions. You know the old saying, "Faith without action is useless." Well this community really tries to live that out and place a high premium on actions.

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This idea that the leaders of the church earn such a designation based on their experiences

and actions rather than on official training was echoed repeatedly during my time in the

field. While Jimmy referenced James 2:17 (Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by

action, is dead), several others mentioned Luke 6:44, (You will know a tree by its fruit)

as their ideological justification for privileging experiences and actions over credentials.

There is also a practical reason for placing "a high premium on actions." As Jimmy's

quote above illustrates, there is no disputing a person's "fit" for a congregation after a

person has repeatedly demonstrated through actions that he/she is committed to the

community. Additionally, because of the nature of these congregations as intentionally

residing outside of the mainstream, there is a fear that professionals who go through a

traditional credentialing process will not be able to be effective in such an Emerging

Church setting. Francis, the founder of Incarnate Word in San Antonio, identifies the

struggles ordained pastors have in Emerging Churches when she describes the difference

between her role at Incarnate Word and the pastor's role at Resurrection, Incarnate

Word's parent church.

> It's pastor driven so we're a little different because we're lay led…And not being
> ordained, I don't have it drilled into me that I have to be the [voice of authority or
> provide all the direction] because I notice that with Joel [the pastor of Kingdom's
> Cross]. He makes a lot of the decisions for Resurrection.

Francis goes on to emphasize that at Incarnate Word they utilize a team of elders to make

decisions, and that none of the elders are ordained despite the fact that every week several

ordained pastors attend the service[32]. As she indicates in the quote above, she believes

that this not only makes Incarnate Word unique within her denomination, but also better

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[32] This phenomenon is not uncommon at the churches I visited. Faith, for example,
routinely had half a dozen or more pastors attending weekly gatherings.

for their community. Francis's statements are backed up by other members of the

congregation who enjoy seeing decisions made as a group and responsibilities for even

common organizational procedures shared as a group.

There is, of course, a danger here that they are simply replacing the

institutionalized pastor driven process with the institutionalization of a cooperative

process, but that should not negate the point that the people in Incarnate Word are

working to find ways to privilege experience over credentials.

> They've asked me to organize the worship service this week just so that we as
> elders are sharing the responsibilities. You know overall it kinda looks the same
> but it there is always a different you know twist to it just because you know
> different people do it at certain times and so it you know you can bring your
> creativity into it. We have a really cool creative group so it's neat to see gifts being
> used in that way. We change things around so people don't really know what to
> expect. We really value each other's gifts a lot. Like if we see that there's
> someone new to the community and we see that they really have the gift of prayer
> then we'll be like wow, yeah let's see how we can encourage that.

In Francis's quote we see the advantage of distributing responsibilities among people

who have demonstrated a commitment to the community. Rather than creating a pattern

that only takes advantage of a few people's skills, gifts or talents, Incarnate Word is able

to utilize a lot more creativity in the worship service. It was not clear in my limited

amount of time with the congregation how people signal or announce that they have a gift

in a particular area. I can say, however, that desire is apparently important enough to

trump skill as worship elements are not always conducted or performed by the most

talented person in the congregation. In other words, the best singer did not sing all the

solos. Importantly, there is no commitment to a particular liturgy or way of doing

worship that is so often a part of pastoral training. As I will discuss in more detail in the

next chapter, the difference goes far beyond simply doing things differently for the sake

of being different. Whereas the justification for traditional liturgies is theological, the

reasons provided by my respondents when I asked them why they do worship without

liturgies is much more practical. "It just seems to work for us" (Bill) was a common

refrain.

    Ned, a seminary student doing an internship at Living Word, explained a similar

dynamic to me regarding the professional training that he was undertaking and the

decidedly nontraditional environment of his internship.

> I asked to come here because I came to seminary as a real skeptic. I'm still not
> certain that this is the best place for me, but honestly, I didn't know what else to do.
> Being [at Living Word] is really a compromise. I like a lot of the different
> liturgical traditions but at school I'm only being trained in one. Living Word helps
> me to think about it in a different way.

Francis similarly linked an inflexible liturgy to professional training:

> I really like the creative worship services [of Incarnate Word] but I miss the high
> liturgy at my old church. But I feel like there's room for both here where there
> certainly was not at my old church. The pastor at my old church would never do
> worship like this.

    It is important to note that as much as my respondents valued personal

experiences, they did not think traditional pastoral education was completely without

merit. The tension between the benefits of ordination which they see largely as residing

in increased knowledge, and the drawbacks of professionalization, which they see as

routinization and institutionalization, are juxtaposed poignantly by Eric. Eric is a

seminary student and volunteer at Faith. I quote him at length below, because it is

important to understand how he deals with the strain of negotiating these two worlds of

traditional seminary and an Emerging Church, which are at once contradictory and

complementary.

And the other thing that I realized was most people who go to seminary who are in an MDiv. program especially in a pretty established not seminary but denomination is that they just want to be a pastor. But there's this kind of separation from lay and pastor. Once you decide you want to be a pastor you have to jump through all these hoops, go to seminary, do your contextual pastoral education, spend some time in a hospital as a chaplain, all these kind of things that you jump though, and I realized I was getting into that mindset even though I don't have to do any of that. Me even going to seminary isn't a required thing for me to be ordained within our church, but I wanted to do it. I wanted to learn a little bit. I could be a pastor at a church right now. I can serve in a way to help further community instead of being like well once I'm done then I can do it the "right" way. That's part of it too that I've realized that this is a part of my education just doing these things in the church. So that's what part of what my role is here. And it became an honorary volunteer pastor position at our church, because we do stress the priesthood of all believers a great deal. So we don't want to stress that kind of divide that well we're pastors and you're not.

Eric clearly believes that there is a lot to be gained by going to seminary or else he would not be devoting his money and time to pursuing a degree when his particular version of Christianity does not require it for ordination or to serve as a pastor. Yet he is conflicted by the "hoops" that he must go through to get his degree. In this context, Eric is using the term "hoop" to refer to training that does not directly affect the congregation he wishes to serve. Again, we see the distinction between credentials and experiences. Eric notes the ability of seminary to provide an education which is useful, but he is conflicted by having to participate in activities which get him closer to the credential by signaling his ability to conform to the "right" way of performing pastoral duties, without providing opportunities to serve his community. Additionally, he bristles at the idea that, if he follows the traditional seminary path, then he will have to wait until he has been trained correctly before he can begin serving as a pastor. In order to begin to rectify this contradiction, he began serving at Faith for one of his practicum credits.

In the Fall of 2006 I had the opportunity to spend some time with an international group of about 25 people involved with the Emerging Church as they tried to figure out

how to prepare people for leadership roles in the Emerging Churches. The issue that prompted such a meeting was a concern that the only way people were trained for leadership roles was through informal apprenticeships. Training in this way invariably favors those people who have already established connections with existing leaders or who are willing to be assertive enough to create those connections. Although it is possible for current leadership to seek out potential apprentices, this possibility was dismissed as unrealistic given the time and responsibility constraints that leaders already have. The concern then, is that the way training is currently constituted systematically excludes a large majority of people and concentrates power in the hands of a select group of people who were typically white and typically men. Such a situation is undesirable for a group of people who value the uniqueness of individuals and diversity in religious expression. The conference then, was an attempt to discern how other voices could be brought into the conversation in a meaningful way.

At first glance, this might not appear to be a difficult task. Diversity programs have existed for years within other organizations and any of these initiatives, from quotas to affirmative action, could simply be adopted. However, because these people are against institutionalization in all its various forms, solutions could not be as simple as creating a seminary or other training organization which placed a high premium on diversity. From the outset, there was widespread agreement that, as Damian, a pastor from Europe said that they didn't

> want to create an inflexible, top down, entity where we say a person must do these things, x, y, and z, and then they are officially trained. We need to create something which will be relevant for each individual person in their community.

This general ethos pervaded all the discussions throughout the week. Much of the

time during the week was spent trying to figure out how to structure opportunities for relationship formation in a way which would not become programmatic. As I pointed out in the preface, on the very first day Mary pointed noted that

> [t]here are two dangers. One is institutionalism and the other is success because that will push us toward institutionalism, and this will cause us to support things just to keep them going. All of the sudden you find yourself doing things that aren't tied to your vision at all.

This group is very cognizant of the dangers institutionalization presents to the Emerging Church in general and their group in particular as the endeavor they were discussing, training, is often one of the first steps toward institutionalization (Scott 1991). This was not something they took lightly as many of them were ready to call off the whole idea if they felt that there was not a way to be successful without going further down the path toward institutionalization. Ultimately the conference ended with a unanimous call for further conversation. However, it was decided that these continuing conversations should take place in more informal settings, eschewing the power of collective action for the flexibility of individual relationships thereby making any concentration of power exceedingly more difficult.

In the months that followed a program gradually began to emerge out of these relationships which emphasized the different resources people could provide in their own local contexts with someone acting as a networker who would coordinate these experiences for people who were interested in gaining a particular set of skills. Thus, someone interested in community might find herself being connected with people from Germany and someone interested in inner-city ministry might be put into contact with a pastor in London. These relationships then would determine the nature of the training experience. In this way, the system is much more open, flexible and able to create unique

experiences tailored to individual situations than traditional training methods while avoiding the institutionalization they dislike.

The development of this training program is important not because of its effectiveness. In fact, it is still way to early to determine whether this will prove to be a good way to take advantage of advanced skills and knowledge while developing future leaders for Emerging Churches. What is important about this is not the end result, but rather the process. The knowledge and skills gained from real-world experience formed the core of the development process and the product. While the conference goers agreed that theoretical or academic training could be useful, there was widespread agreement that such training could only complement experiential learning. Privileging experiential knowledge in this way meant that particular ways of doing things could not become institutionalized as each person's experiences were different. The importance of this cannot be overstated for this group. Patti, the conference organizer, addressed this point on the first day when she said that she hoped the new thing would "have value instead of values" indicating that she wanted it to be pragmatic, not dogmatic. The metaphors that the group used to describe the program they were trying to create reflected this attitude as well as it was variously described as a "stream," a "trail," a "journey," and "multiple paths." Mary captured this on the first day when she mentioned in a small group that "Training in the Emerging Church is going to be different. I think it's really going to be a winding journey, so I'm going to sketch out a few different roads or paths." These metaphors were nearly always followed up with a quick qualifying statement or phrase to indicate that "the goal is not to create a 'trail' which leads to some destination, but rather to get people onto a 'trail' and let them figure out when to get off or stop" (Erica).

Again, the emphasis is on the creation of inherently unpredictable experiences rather than offering highly predictable programs and courses of study. This conference illustrates the importance of experiences over credential both in the way the conference was organized, with privilege given to local knowledge and personal histories, and in the product created, a system intended to increase access to these experiential learning as a way of training future leaders.

5.2.5 Called To, Not Called By

At first glance the difference between someone claiming to be called to work with a group or on a particular project as opposed to a person being called by a group or organization might seem semantic, but the differences are real and significant. In the denominational church model which my respondents come out of, religious professionals are called by a congregation to serve as pastor or in some other capacity. After a period of discernment, the pastor determines whether or not to accept the call. But the call by a congregation sets up a client-service provider relationship from the beginning where the clergy is seen to exist to serve the needs of the congregation, an odd position for a professional who has ostensibly been trained to serve God. Of course, seminaries must straddle this awkward line as well. How much pastoral preparation is devoted to serving God and how much is devoted to serving congregational needs? Obviously, the two are not necessarily discordant, but they sometimes come into conflict with one another. Should we use congregational funds to feed starving children or to build another, larger sanctuary or family life center? This tension is only further increased by the fact that the religious professional can be fired by the very people he/she is expected to lead. The

tendency toward job preservation alone often tips the balance in favor of serving the congregation (Chang 2004).

The expectation that the pastor will serve the congregation leads rather quickly to the institutionalization of particular routines and processes that are reinforced by professional training. Fred explains the difficulty he had, as someone trying to avoid institutionalization, navigating these tensions in traditional settings.

> Fred: I was at the church 2 miles from here for seven years, the church I grew up in, and every year I would say-I was the young adult pastor-and every year I would say "Why are we doing a mother-daughter banquet? Why? Explain to me why we're doing the mother-daughter banquet, like how does that extend our mission, the mission of our church, which was pursuing Jesus' dream to the world, how is that pursuing Jesus' dream for the world having a mother-daughter banquet?" Well, the women on the women's board would be so sad if we canceled that. So, when the pastors would exert power and do something like canceling a mother-daughter banquet [because I convinced them to] that has been going on for 20 years, people wouldn't like that.
>
> Interviewer: It seems like you are saying that the other side of institutionalization is that the people in the congregation are expecting it.
>
> Fred: Yeah, of course. I mean they're expecting a mother-daughter banquet. And in fact a lot of the reason that they've hired clergy persons is just to make sure stuff like that happens. So, they are playing their role in the routinization of charisma by saying "We expect you to serve us."

As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, theories of institutionalization do not deny agency. It is clear from Fred's comments that the pressure to serve his congregation in a particular way came not only from the professionally trained clergy, but also from his congregants. Fred explained to me that he was not necessarily in favor of terminating the mother-daughter banquet. Rather, he just wanted to make sure that everyone knew exactly why the event was being done. In other words, he wanted to deinstitutionalize it. Fred brought this perspective to his job, in part, he argues because

he did not have the full training of ordination. In the end, it became clear to him that the reason for the annual banquet had nothing to do with the stated mission of the organization. Instead, organizational resources were devoted to the banquet because both the event, and the way of determining the value of events in general, had become institutionalized into a congregational service model. Decisions were not made based on how/if they contributed to the organizational goals. Instead, organizational processes were conducted by service providers for the benefit of their clients.

However, when the emphasis is placed on a calling to a project or a group, then these tensions are alleviated and the potential for the creation of institutionalized processes is lessened significantly. In the Emerging Church congregations in this study, people were not invited to a project or a congregation based on the skills or services they could provide. Instead, people came to work on projects or with people that they felt passionate about. This reevaluation of the religious call is particularly powerful when combined with the change in employment structure as described above and the organization of work discussed in chapter 4. There is not a need for people to prove themselves prior to being allowed to follow God's calling. Mark's understanding of call is evident when he discusses why he attends Crossroads:

> You know I believe God's put me here and sometimes I wonder, but I go. Even though sometimes I don't think we've done a very good job of actually living out what we say, the fact that we really try and have belief backed by action is important to me. The fact that there's a desire there means a lot. There's a passion there for something different than just a religious system. Instead we want to create a place where people are valued for who they are and allowed to participate because they want to. Instead of evaluating them based on what they've done or can offer us. That keeps my hopes up.

Understanding call in this way means that there is not as much pressure on the

religious professional to serve the congregation. Of course, congregations still have the ability to hire and fire pastors, and thus exert some control over them. However, a number of things mitigate this power. First, the part-time and voluntary nature of employment serves to dampen congregational oversight. As the old saying goes, "You can't fire a volunteer." Second, as I alluded to earlier, religious professionals occupy numerous roles outside of formal organizational positions. For reasons which are beyond the scope of this project, Emerging Churches count a rather large number of current and former pastors among their members, and many of these people play active roles within the congregation. The congregation as a group simply has little, if any, way of compelling these people to engage in any action which they are not interested in. In the next chapter, I discuss the ideology of the Emerging Church which also guards against power concentration with religious professionals.

5.3 Conclusion

The role of the professional in religious organizations is complicated by both congregational demands and professional desires. In mainstream, traditional religious organizations, professionals are responsible for instituting and maintaining organizational procedures as a way of ensuring stability and predictability. In resistant organizations such as the Emerging Church congregations in this study, however, religious professionals are utilized in a much different way in order to avoid institutionalization while still garnering the benefits that come with educated and trained personnel. An inverted labor structure, privileging experience over credentials and reinterpreting the religious call are three primary strategies that are utilized in order to avoid the

routinization that normally accompanies professionals.

CHAPTER VI

BELIEF AND RESISTANCE

6.1 Organizational Ideologies

6.1.1 Introduction

> *Any definition of institution that limits usage to social structures, hierarchies, and bureaucracies is incomplete and misleading…Culture, values, symbols and ideas must be added for they are the springs on which institutions rest.* (Stout and Cormode 1998:64)

Just as organizational structures and processes are key dimensions of institutionalization, so too is an organization's ideology (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Trice and Beyer 1984; Zucker 1977). These articulated sets of ideas as expressed in the form of rituals, statements, symbols and other cultural elements typically reflect the interests of major powerholders in an organization by delimiting which beliefs are legitimate, thus serving to limit any individual's development of his/her own ideas (Alvesson 1991; Weiss and Miller 1987**)**. The key to understanding how ideologies are institutionalized in an organization is to examine ideological articulations, the "springs on which institutions rest." In this chapter, I first examine how the articulation of an organizational ideology serves to institutionalize the set of ideas people have about a particular organization. Next, I focus on how ideologies become articulated and institutionalized in religious organizations in particular creating an atomized world view among members. Finally, I show how resistance to the institutionalization of ideas involves actively working to

ensure that rituals, symbols and other forms of organizational culture which are used to

transmit ideology do not become taken for granted. The result of this resistance is a

holistic approach to role of the organization in society. Before we move any further

however, we need have a common understanding about some key terms.

6.1.2 Tensions and Definitions

The scholarship on organizational ideologies is characterized by three key

tensions. The first of these tensions deals with what an organizational ideology is, a

relatively straightforward definitional dispute between functionalists who think the

definition of an organizational ideology should focus on how they operate and conflict

theorists who insist that we cannot think about ideology apart from power relationships.

Second, scholars are divided over the function of an organizational ideology. Are

ideologies used to justify existing actions and activities or do these sets of beliefs actually

determine and drive organizational activities? The final tension regards the effectiveness

and importance of articulating an organizational ideology for determining organizational

outcomes. This debate is largely centered around whether or not the content of an

ideology matters or if it is simply the presence of an articulated ideology that counts.

Below, I will show that there is merit to each of these positions and that, in keeping with

the phenomenological underpinnings of neoinstitutionalism which frames this

dissertation, our understanding of institutions and organizations in general and religious

organizations in particular is enhanced by highlighting the inherently discursive nature of

organizational ideology. As I take up each of the three tensions in turn, I argue that

organizational ideologies are social constructions both developed and maintained by

social actors with their own interests and agendas. They thus serve to simultaneously enable and constrain organizational activity. In the course of this explanation I will make clear how these ideologies become institutionalized, and I will allude to the ways in which they might be resisted as the existing theories do offer clues. I will save the deeper analysis of resistance, however, for the later sections of this chapter where I will draw from my own data to test support for the theoretically derived model.

At the most basic level, an organizational ideology is a "set of ideas" (Brunson 1982:38). In perhaps the most widely used definition of organizational ideologies, Beyer goes a step further and describes ideologies as "relatively coherent sets of beliefs that bind some people together and that explain their worlds in terms of cause-and-effect relations" (Beyer 1981:166). Beyer's definition has the utility of adding a component of functionality. Ideologies, he explains, "bind some people together." Subsequent definitions of ideology by organizational scholars have nearly all stressed this functional aspect (for discussion, see Weiss and Miller 1987). This is not surprising given the functionalist domination in organizational studies, and indeed much of the discipline at large, during the middle parts of the last century when organizational scholarship was also very popular. These theorists have often had a difficult time agreeing on exactly the "terms of cause-and-effect relations" are however. It is unclear from either the theoretical developments or the empirical data whether ideology precedes action or vise versa. Thus, the purely functional definitions of the role of ideology in organizations, while generally useful, are of somewhat limited utility when attempting to explain how ideologies get utilized, under what circumstances and by whom.

Limiting an understanding and examination of ideology to the purely functional

negates the strongest insights of traditional understandings of ideology which link ideas explicitly to the creation and maintenance of power. Although there is some debate about the causal relationship between action and ideology formation, there is very little doubt that an institutionalized organizational ideology, whether used as the foundation for organizational action or to justify group activities already in existence, serves the interests of those in power at the expense of people and groups who occupy marginalized positions in the organization (Youn and Loscocco 1991; Weiss and Miller 1987). In traditional, for-profit firms, the organization's ideology is determined not by wage workers, but by upper management in an attempt to legitimize the existence of the organization and its practices to both consumers and workers (Fairhurst et al. 1997; O'Gorman and Doran 1999). One need not be a strict Marxist to understand that the groups which occupy structurally powerful positions in an organization are able to influence the communication and articulation of ideas.

Thus, the most fruitful discussions of organizational ideology have come out of attempts to integrate an understanding of power with functionalist definitions (Beyer et. al. 1988; Weiss and Miller 1987, 1988). In the field of organizational studies, this takes us back to the phenomenological approach developed by Berger and Luckman (1966) and Berger (1990 [1967]) which forms the basis for so much of neoinstitutional understandings of organizations. Abravanel (1983) makes the first attempt in this direction when he draws on Berger and Luckman to advance his definition of ideology as "a set of fundamental ideas and operative consequences linked together into a dominant belief system often producing contradictions, but serving to define and maintain the organization" (Abravanel 1983:274). However, as Weiss and Miller (1987) point out,

this definition lacks some teeth in part because of the way Abravanel slightly misquotes Berger and Luckman leading him to discount organizational actors (see Weiss and Miller 1987 for full discussion). Abravanel writes that an organizational ideology serves to "define and maintain the organization" precisely because the set of ideas that it articulates is "attached to a concrete power interest." In other words, the articulation of an organizational ideology is inherently linked with power, privileging some voices and silencing others. Although Abravanel managed to introduce the concept of power into the understanding of ideology, his definition offers an understanding of ideology as existing "out there" apart from any particular group, as though disembodied sets of ideas are competing for supremacy rather than distinct and identifiable organizational groups.

What is needed to restore the role of agency to the concept of ideology as advocated by Berger and Luckman is a concept which links organizational structures and activities with the sets of beliefs which create and justify such actions. Alvesson (1991) offers a definition of organizational ideology that explicitly links power interests with the control of organizational actions through the concept of legitimacy.

> Ideology could then be defined as a relatively coherent set of assumptions, beliefs and values about a demarcated part of social reality, being illuminated in a selective and legitimizing way, restricting autonomous and critical reflection and sometimes favouring sectional interests (Alvesson 1991:209).

Alvesson's definition highlights the nature of ideologies as systems of ideas which are created and sustained by individual action at the same time that they limit the range of realistic possibilities that a person might perceive as legitimate. In other words, the articulation of an organizational ideology is inherently linked with power, privileging some voices and silencing others (Weiss and Miller 1987). This is what makes organizational ideology an especially important component of institutionalization. It

inherently limits options and circumscribes possibilities. In traditional organizations this

is viewed as a good thing. Promoting a coherent ideology allows for consumers to be

able to readily identify a particular identity with a company, and firms work hard to

institutionalize an articulated ideology (e.g., Disneyland is the "Happiest Place on

Earth"). Similarly, organizational ideologies work internally, at least to some extent, to

help govern an organization that has grown to a point beyond which no single individual

can exert a tremendous amount of control (Meyer and Rowan 1977; Powell and

DiMaggio 1991). For complex organizations to be successful, people must work toward

the same organizational goals with as little oversight as possible (Cohen et al. 1972;

Shafritz and Ott 2001). Institutionalizing an organizational ideology serves to ensure that

the range of possible thoughts an employee might have about the organization will serve

the overall organizational goal (Bart 1996). Innovation is relegated to particular positions

and/or departments and even this activity is subject to a surprising amount of regulation

(Wolfe 1994). In this way, the institutionalization of an organizational ideology helps to

establish the boundaries of acceptable conduct within an organization by limiting the

amount of "autonomous and critical reflection" required of anyone when he/she thinks

about the organization. In other words, the institutionalization of an organizational

ideology removes the need for individual action to sustain coordinated, productive,

organizational activity (Jepperson 1991)[33]. This understanding of organizational

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[33] I do not mean to paint an overly deterministic picture here. Certainly, there is much
organizational activity which does not support the overall goals of the organization.
People act all the time in ways that are not in the organization's best interests. I do not
mean to suggest that ideologies govern all of an organization's activity. If this were the
case then we could do away with the previous chapters of this dissertation (at least).
Rather, organizational ideologies are only one component that contributes to the overall
project of institutionalization within an organization.

ideology highlights the discursive nature of meaning creation. It is not simply the case that ideologies constrain individuals or that any person or group of people has complete control over the cultural decisions they make (Swidler 1986). Below, I will explore how this works in greater detail as I explain how ideologies function in organizational environments and what the effect of an institutionalized ideology is on organizational outcomes.

6.1.3 Ideologies in Organizations

There is much debate in the literature about how ideologies function in organizations. Some scholars have argued that ideologies determine action, that belief structures activity (Wright and Rawls 2005). Others take the opposite stance, arguing that ideologies arise after the fact and are used to justify and legitimate extant organizational pursuits (Stout and Cormode 1998). As we will see below, there is no reason, despite how the academic debates have proceeded up to this point, that one must choose one or the other of these positions. The most accurate understanding of the function of ideologies in organizations comes from understanding articulated ideologies as simultaneously justifying the existence of a group or activity by confirming its importance and uniqueness while also creating those rituals and other organizational activities which reflect dominant beliefs about the organization.

Organizational scholars working in a strictly Weberian tradition have tended to privilege the role of religious belief in determining the form of ideological articulation (Wuthnow 1992). In other words, belief determines or at least highly influences action. This perspective finds a home in organizational studies focusing on organizational culture

especially in highly institutional sectors such as non-profit industries and the field of

religious studies (Dillon 2003). And indeed, this line of reasoning is highly intuitive in

fields like religion where belief is largely viewed as a personal, individual phenomenon

(Wright and Rawls 2005). The idea that ceremonies, rituals, authority and other

organizational elements might be rooted in a particular set of beliefs makes sense and

dominates popular conceptions of institutional organizational elements. Corporate

mission statements are generally viewed as an articulation of a coherent sense of purpose

that drives organizational activity (Bart 1996; Desmidt and Heene 2006; Whitbred 2005).

Few people, especially those who occupy the structurally powerful positions that

determine the content of these ideological statements, would say that they are used

simply to legitimate activities perceived to be more successful or competitive in the

marketplace. Just as certainly, one would be hard pressed to find religious authorities

subscribing to the notion that differences in theological interpretation serve primarily to

justify and maintain the existence of separate groups on the basis of relatively minor

permutations in religious practice.

This, however, is the claim that sociologists have begun making with increasing

frequency recently (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). In their analysis of organizational

decision-making, March and Olsen (1980) famously determined that organizational

activity often occurs prior to rationale generation. Rationale generation, in this case,

serves to legitimate the activities that are already taking place and justify them as in

concert with organizational goals. Youn and Loscocco (1991) show that this is a primary

way that ideologies get institutionalized and reinforced. In the process of post hoc

rationale generation, it is the structural powerholders who are in positions to advance

their particular sets of beliefs. In the field of religion, this perspective has been taken up largely by scholars working with a Durkheimian understanding of religion. They claim, of course, that the primary function of religion is to bring people together. Scholars beginning with Durkheim and Mills have shown that institutionalized, organized religion works by justifying a community as a valuable and unique social group through the celebration of the community. In other words, religious organizations that persist and are viewed as legitimate are not created out of common beliefs, but rather out of common actions. The organization's ideology is developed as a justification for these common and specific actions. This combination of specific rituals justified by a particular ideology serves as a powerful force for institutionalizing and legitimating the community (Stout and Cormode 1998).

Wright and Rawls argue that "belief, without mastery of the details of practice, is not sufficient to enable persons to perform acceptably, in a public and individual way, in a religious service" (Wright and Rawls 2005:191). Rawls and Wright found that even if a person has the "correct" beliefs, they will not be allowed to take part in corporate worship unless they also have learned the "correct" way to articulate these beliefs. Examining the highly social and regulated expression of religious beliefs in several Assembly of God churches leads them to conclude that "religious process…must be carefully orchestrated in empirically recognizable ways to create and sustain belief" (2005:187). In other words, belief is not a personal, private decision, but instead is fundamentally a social action which contributes to the project of group cohesion.

This perspective, of course, is disappointing to those who might think that individual agency is an important aspect of collective behavior in general and of religious

behavior especially. While ideology certainly functions as a mechanism for group

solidarity, it is also just as clear that sets of beliefs do, at times, drive organizational

activity. Stout and Cormode apply this perspective to religious organizations and argue

that

> [j]ust as it would be misleading to emphasize governing structure at the expense of
> ideas, so also would it be misleading to think of religious institutions as pure idea.
> Religion, no mater how congregational and informal, has been for most Americans
> wedded to specific structural forms. (Stout and Cormode 1998:64)

They go on to give the example of the Catholic confession as an institutionalized

organizational activity which is both driven by a particular ideology, the need for

salvation, and supports a distinct and cohesive group identity, as Catholic. Jay Demerath

and Rhys Williams support this conclusion that cultural factors are not always the

instigators of change but that sometimes structural changes precipitate ideological

changes (Demerath and William 1992). The importance of understanding that ideology

functions discursively in organizations, to both create and justify actions and structure, is

not simply to strive for synthesis. Rather, understanding organizational ideology in this

way provides key insights into the nature of how sets of ideas become institutionalized.

Simons and Ingram (1997) examined Israeli kibbutzim-communal agricultural

settlements-in order to see how they dealt with pressures to conform with the increasingly

powerful capitalist system that organizes so much of the economic activity in Israel.

They examined the utilization of hired labor, a distinctly capitalist practice opposed by

the kibbutzim ideology, and found a direct link between organizational outcomes and

institutional conformity. The ideology of kibbutzim is a powerful force keeping the

kibbutz from adopting profit-maximizing strategies such as the use of hired labor, but

they were not able to resist capitalist pressures in the face of overwhelming opportunity

or dire need. Furthermore, they found that once the kibbutzim ideology had been disregarded or changed, it was difficult if not impossible to go back. Once the use of non-kibbutz practices had been justified through an ideological rearticulation, there was no need to go back to the way things were. The ideology still served to coalesce the group and mark it as distinctive while also providing the basis for successful organizational activity. The authors write that "if organizational practices adopted for material reasons or as a result of coercion do eventually affect an organization's ideology, then the processes we identify here contribute not only to the dynamics of organizational form but also to the dynamics of ideology" (Simons and Ingram 1997:808). It is in these sometimes small and seemingly subtle decisions and transitions, such as the hiring of seasonal labor to help with the harvest during a particularly bountiful year, that isomorphism creeps in and new practices and ideologies become institutionalized (Powell and DiMaggio 1991).

However, this does not quite explain how ideologies become institutionalized. How did the members of the kibbutzim decide to allow outside practices in in the first place? Granted, they faced structural deficiencies at different times, but kibbutzim have been around since the late 1800s-for well over half a century during the time period Simons and Ingram were studying-and had faced and weathered numerous difficulties over the years. I argue that we can further understand how ideology serves to justify and create new practices by utilizing Friedland and Alford's (1991) concept of institutional logics. Institutional logics are the ideas that support a given institution. For religion, they argue, the dominant institutional logic is a drive toward transcendent truth (Friedland and Alford 1991). All organizational activity is justified ostensibly as a effort

toward the discovery or communication of transcendent truth. Stout and Cormode (1998) explain that institutional logics are the foundation upon which organizational cultures are built.

> They become the master rules lying behind all interaction within that institutional order. Without a logic of transcendent truth the Christian religion falls apart, just as the logic of accumulation and commodification regulates commerce within capitalism. Individuals acting within the domains of religion or capitalism inhale these logics with as little thought as taking a breath. (Stout and Cormode 1998:71)

These institutional logics are supported by sets of ideas, or ideologies, as articulated by individual organizations.

Thus, at the most macro level, Christian churches look more or less the same in terms of ideology as all are seeking to discover transcendent truth, just as businesses look more or less the same as rational bureaucracies seeking efficiency in reaching organizational goals. As I have discussed extensively above, organizational and religious scholars have done much work in both of these areas to explain how these similarities arise and are maintained by the actions of individuals and groups. Institutional logics are enacted and supported at the organizational level by the articulation of sets of ideas or ideologies which are used to justify the activities of the organization (Friedland and Alford 1991). Thus, an individual capitalist firm might justify its existence as an attempt to bring a particular product to a consumer better or faster or cheaper[34]. Taken individually, these articulated ideologies promote the distinctiveness of these individual firms. Collectively, however, they contribute to the dominant institutional logic of capitalism to accumulate and commodify human activity. Any organizational ideology which challenges or questions this logic will not be perceived as legitimate and will thus

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[34] see (Swales and Rogers) 1995 for a review of 100 organizational mission statements.

face significant challenges as they attempt to grow and/or persist. Furthermore, these organizations will be subject to intense pressures to reform their articulation and/or activities to conform with dominant norms (Smith et al. 2001). I have discussed this concept of isomorphism above, but I want to make it clear here that these pressures extend to the cultural elements of an organization as well as the structural aspects.

This same dynamic is present in the field of religion as well. While the articulated ideologies of individual congregations might differ significantly from one another, they all contribute to the overall project of seeking transcendental truth. As Stout and Cormode (1998) note, this dominant logic is so institutionalized as to be consumed by social actors with as little thought as possible. Friedland and Alford claim that "[d]ominant institutional logics are imported in such a way as to become invisible assumption" (1991:240). These invisible assumptions that support dominant ideologies in religious organizations inherently limit the range of religious expression by constraining perceived options.

As I will show below, resistant organizations do not attempt to challenge these logics (the congregations in this study still seek transcendental truth), but rather the institutionalization of the logic. Resistant organizations seek to reinject thought and purposiveness into supporting the institutional logic so that the project does not become taken for granted. Any challenge of this type must take as its starting place the presence and content of articulated organizational ideologies as they are the mechanisms which render the dominant institutional logics invisible. In traditional churches, congregants can turn their brains off about the larger project of seeking transcendental truth if they have a ritual supported by a rationale that someone in power has told them contributes to

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the larger project. For example, in institutionalized religious organizations, congregants are not forced or especially encouraged to question whether, how, or in what ways communion contributes to the quest for transcendental truth. They do not have to think about it because they have a mediating institution, the organizational ideology, that confirms not only the importance of the ritual by reference to authoritative sources, but also the importance of performing the ritual in just this particular way which serves in turn to legitimate and justify the group's existence as a distinct group with distinct practices and beliefs.

6.1.4 Articulated Ideologies

The final tension that characterizes the research on organizational ideology concerns the effectiveness of articulated ideologies for impacting organizational outcomes. These debates surround the effectiveness of both the content and the presence of articulated ideologies with some researchers focusing on the specifics of an articulated ideology (Ledford et al. 1995; Smith et al. 2001) while others turn their attention to investigating whether the presence of a an articulated ideology matters at all (O'Gorman and Doran 1999). I advocate resolving these tensions by shifting the focus of these discussions away from how the content and presence of an articulated ideology affects the technical outcomes of an organization and toward an examination of how they affect an organizational culture.

Articulated ideologies are the mechanisms by which sets of ideas become institutionalized in an organization. An articulated ideology refers to those organizational elements which are not primarily technical in nature. Rituals, myths, and ceremonies all

fall into this category (Feldner 2006; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Rothenbuhler 1998, 2006; Zucker 1977). Alvesson explains that "[i]deologies are often expressed in symbolic forms, and symbols must often be understood against the background of ideology" (Alvesson 1991:215). Alvesson's point is that symbols and ideology cannot be understood apart from one another as symbolic organizational elements are the way that ideologies are articulated and transmitted. The maintenance and construction of organizational symbols has also been touted throughout the last 50 years (Anat and Worline 2001; Dandridge et al. 1980; Turner 1992). Researchers have demonstrated the importance of organizational narratives (Cohen 1969), myths and sagas (Clark 1972), stories (Mitroff and Kilmann 1975), and ceremonies (Bolman and Deal 2003). Symbolic consciousness on an organizational level helps participants to make sense of outside influences and activities as well as internal events while holding together the relatively flat, loosely coupled organizations that are required to in order to span vast distances in time and space (Bolman and Deal 2003). Large organizations operating in a globalized society increasingly rely on these articulated ideologies to exert control and maintain some degree of uniformity and predictability across the organization.

Abravanel (1983) writes that "in order to survive, [organizations] must have a solid ideological base" (285). This has long been taken as truth in organizational studies, and management books extol the virtues of codifying the ideological base in the form of mission statements as a firm or organization grows beyond what can reasonably be influenced by any one individual (O'Gorman and Doran 1999). Explicating an organization's ideology is seen as easing the path to survival in part by increasing organizational legitimacy among both employees and consumers (Smith et al. 2001;

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Fairhurst et al. 1997). The most common and easily identifiable form of an articulated ideology is the organizational mission statement. The growing scholarship on organizational mission statements has been able to show the crucial role that they play in ensuring the survival of an organization. Feldner writes that

> …mission statements legitimate the existence of the organization and justify its operation (Connell and Galasinski 1998). Because a mission statement is tied closely to an organization's culture, the mission statement gives meaning to the organization itself. (Feldner 2006:71)

Codifying an organizational ideology in the form of a mission statement is an attempt to institutionalize a set of ideas about an organization.

On the one hand, the *content* of the mission statement attempts to delineate a range of thoughts one can have about an organization. A successfully institutionalized mission statement is thought to serve as a kind of internal regulator defining the boundaries of appropriate thought and action for both organizational members and non-members. The empirical evidence suggests that this is more of a myth than a reality (O'Gorman and Doran 1999; Piercy and Morgan 1994). The specific content of mission statements has not been shown to correlate consistently with organizational success (Ledford et al. 1995; Smith et al. 2001). Unsurprisingly, as one examines workers situated further and further away from the seats of power in an organization who determined the content of the mission statement, one finds that fewer and fewer people are able to correctly identify individual components (Desmidt and Heene 2006). The justification for the adoption of these statements is typically that they provide a clear and coherent direction to a diverse organization, serving as a constant reminder of what the ultimate organizational goals are for everyone from the hourly worker to the CEO. Research has shown, however, that this is just not the case. Hourly wage workers simply

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do not know or identify with the content of the mission statement in the same way as organizational professionals do or in the way that organizational founders would like them to (O'Gorman and Doran 1999; Whitbred 2005). In most organizations the actual content of the statement becomes akin to the individual motions in a particular ritual. The individual components do not matter as much as their performance and existence (Desmidt and Heene 2006).

Thus, the *presence* of a mission statement does stand as an important indicator of legitimacy (O'Gorman and Doran 1999). It signals that the organization is a viable entity with a distinct purpose apart from any of the particular organizational goals. In this way, mission statements are an important signifier of institutional isomorphism (O'Gorman and Doran 1999). As businesses grow from small to medium sized, they start to adopt these mission statements as a way for the founders to try to maintain control over a growing organization. Regardless of the technical effectiveness of mission statements to accomplish this task, they are increasingly being adopted (Brown and Yoshioka 2003). Although the mission statement does not actually improve efficiency, it does serve another, more institutional purpose. It signals to other organizations and potential customers that a particular firm is a legitimate entity with a distinct purpose. The particulars do not matter so much for this purpose as much as the presence of the mission statement. Corporate mission statements have become institutionalized over the last 25 years as a primary way of signaling legitimacy (O'Gorman and Doran 1999).

Interestingly, and more important for the present study, is that while the management literature examining the outcomes of the adoption of mission statements largely concludes that there is little if any correlation between technical success and

mission statement adoption, there is strong evidence from scholars who examine organizational culture that the presence of a mission statement can serve to coalesce the culture of an organization (Fairhurst et al. 1997). These articulations serve as primary mechanisms for institutionalizing organizational ideology. I advocate resolving the arguments about content and presence of articulated ideologies by shifting focus from technical outcomes (e.g., profits, efficiency, etc.) toward cultural outcomes. In line with early neoinstitutionalists such as Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Zucker (1977), I argue that we can best understand how articulated ideologies such as mission statements affect an organization by examining organizational cultures. These theorists argue that articulated ideologies, whether in the form of myths, ceremonies, or formal statements impact an organization's culture by effectively decoupling organizational culture from any one individual. Zucker writes that "social knowledge once institutionalized exists as a fact, as part of objective reality, and can be transmitted directly on that basis. For highly institutionalized acts, it is sufficient for one person simply to tell another how things are done" (Zucker 1977:726). The institutionalization of this "social knowledge" or organizational culture is made possible through the articulation of ideologies whether in the form of myths or stories which rationalize and justify the organization's existence and purpose, ceremonies which reaffirm the uniqueness of the organization or formal statements which codify the organization's purpose. Thus, the impact of articulating an ideology through a myth, ceremony, or formal statement is felt not on the technical outcomes of the organization, at least not in the short term, but rather in the establishment of an institutionalized organizational culture which is necessary for persistence (Zucker 1977). This understanding of how ideology works in organizations opens up a different

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way of understanding the impact of both the content and presence of these articulations. In short, rather than seeing them as largely unnecessary and superfluous as the theorists discussed in this section argue, we can begin to see their contribution to the transmission of organizational culture. In the remainder of this chapter I will explore how this dynamic works to increase our understanding of the role of articulated ideologies in religious organizations.

6.1.5 Conclusion

Organizational ideologies are properly understood as sets of ideas which work discursively to simultaneously enable and constrain organizational activity. They serve a number of functions from transmitting organizational culture to signaling legitimacy both internally to employees and members and externally to other organizations, potential members, and customers. Understanding how organizational ideologies work in general is especially important as I turn my attention in the next section to the field of religion specifically where ideological articulations play such a crucial role. The tensions regarding power, function, and effectiveness of organizational ideologies are each present in religious organizations and the particular understandings I suggest in the pages above will serve to help shape an understanding of the role of ideology in these organizations. Additionally, the conceptualization of organizational ideology I argue for in the above sections gives some clues to how an organization might resist the institutionalization of these ideologies. Namely, the research on organizational ideologies suggests that any ideological articulations must be implemented or performed in a way which disrupts expectations, which makes it impossible for "one person to simply tell another how

things are done" (Zucker 1977:726).

6.2 Ideology in Religious Organizations

6.2.1 Introduction

Like politics, economics, and the family, American religion had to institutionalize itself if it was to survive in the New World. There were no external regulatory agencies like the aristocracies, standing armies, and crown-directed churches that prevailed in Europe. This meant that religion had to govern itself through a new set of impersonal rules and hierarchies, and that it had to legitimate those rules with reference to overarching cultures of meaning expressed in sacred symbols, rituals, and codified teachings. (Stout and Cormode 1998:63).

The tensions discussed above with regard to organizational ideology in general are also present in the sociology of religion. As Stout and Cormode remark above, the story of religion in the United States has largely been a story of institutionalization. In this section, I will discuss the ideological climate of contemporary U.S. religion in order to make clear the organizational ideology that dominates the field. In the course of the discussion, I will show the emergence of two primary dimensions of religious ideology, secularization and integration before moving on to discuss ideology in dominant religious organizations.

Academic treatments of the institutionalization of religious ideology have a long history beginning with Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber 2002 [1930]). While the basics of Weber's argument are well known enough to need no repetition here, there are a couple of concepts which spring from the Weberian tradition that can help us to understand how ideology operates in a religious organization. Below,

I discuss Peter Berger's concept of secularization and Robert Wuthnow's decline of denominationalism as a way of providing the necessary context for understanding ideology in contemporary religious organizations. What becomes increasingly apparent in the discussion is that ideology in religious organizations operates along two primary dimensions, a dimension of secularization which concerns spheres of influence and levels of control, and an integrative dimension determining the barriers to participation in or with a religious organization (Benson and Dorsett 1971; Demerath 1998; Jepperson 1991). Keeping in line with the more general discussion of organizational ideologies above, this section will highlight how ideologies in religious organizations both determine the boundaries of religious activity and define appropriate religious activities. Additionally, the specific discussion here will combine with the insights above to advance our understanding of how the institutionalization of ideologies in religious organizations might be resisted.

Secularization

Peter Berger (1967) explained that the hyper-rationalization of society manifests itself in a process called secularization. He defines secularization as simply "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbol" (1967:107-108). Berger, like many others, was concerned with secularization because of the perceived decline of religious activity in the U.S. When religion operated as a totalizing entity the concept of an appropriate sphere of influence did not, could not exist. When everything was religious, there was nothing that religion did not have authority over. When that changed however, religious organizations were

increasingly forced to choose where to exercise influence and control. Implicit in this understanding of secularization as the dividing up of the social world is the notion of legitimacy. An appropriate sphere of influence must be legitimated not only by the organization's members, but also by outsiders "who have some power over the organization's resources" (Benson and Dorsett 1971:140). The existence of spheres of influence necessitates the conference of legitimacy from outsiders. A highly secularized organization, then, is one which is involved in work it initiates but cannot completely control (Benson and Dorsett 1971).

Secularization thus changes the nature of religious ideology. Religion, no longer controlled and/or disseminated by the state, ceases to be the all encompassing force that it once was. The rise of secularization posits a social life, for the first time in centuries, as legitimately occurring outside the confines of religious belief and structure. Perhaps more importantly, secularization allows for a private life as occurring without religious interpretation (Lambert 1999). The result of this is, as Berger argues, a rise in individualization in religion. In other words, religion moves largely from the realm of the public, to the private. Berger writes that "the world-building potency of religion is thus restricted to the construction of subworlds, of fragmented universes of meaning, the plausibility structure of which may in some cases be no larger than the nuclear family" (243). It is precisely this individuation and fragmentation that leads to an increasing bureaucratic structure among traditional religious organizations. Because secularization signals the death of state coerced religious adherence and allows for freedom of religious choice, religious organizations are forced to compete with one another and market their product (Finke and Stark 1992).

This process, which begins with the rise of the nation-state following the decline of the Holy Roman Empire gains much momentum, obviously, from the Reformation. It is easier to see the empirical result of this, however, in modern U.S. society which is much more secularized and rationalized than 16th century Europe. Today we see churches advertising on T.V. and billboards across the nation, something unthinkable just a generation ago. Perhaps more telling than the presence of the adverts is that they are working. Megachurches have sprung up seemingly overnight which target young families through strategic marketing techniques and a smart combination of low barriers to participation and a relatively strict ideology. The fight for institutionalization which caused the relatively rapid buildup of distinct and entrenched rituals and other ideological articulations, opened the door for other organizations to take advantage of the dissatisfaction people had with the glacial pace of change in most traditional denominations (see chapter 2).

Integration

As a response to the loss of these members, traditional denominations were stuck trying to recast their ideologies so as to allow room for some change without giving up the activities which made them distinctive. The result was a gradual liberalizing of both structure and ideology to the point that denominations, which had previously been very similar to each other in structure while retaining some important ideological differences, were increasingly similar to all other mainstream organizations in terms of structure and to one another in terms of ideology (Demerath 1995; Wuthnow 1987, 1988, 1994). As Demerath puts it, "the Liberal Churches so diluted their doctrines as to hasten the very

processes of decline that had become so threatening…churches that compromise may become so compromised as to lose both their membership and their identity, albeit in reverse order" (Demerath 1995:458). In short, established religious organizations became more integrative by lowering the ideological barriers to participation in an effort to attract and retain members (Benson and Dorsett 1971). Integration here "refers to the rejection of a segmented or exclusive position relative to other churches or organizations" (Benson and Dorsett 1971:140). The result of the liberalizing of religious ideology, Wuthnow argues, was precisely this abdication of claims on exclusivity.

In documenting the restructuring of religion in the U.S. after WWII, Robert Wuthnow (1988, 1989) points out the declining significance of the denomination as a way to characterize and identify people who hold distinct religious beliefs and practices. By the middle of the 20th century, denominations had come to dominate Christian religious life in the U.S. These denominations were marked by very little real, and very much perceived, difference which was accompanied by a rapidly expanding local and national bureaucracy. As the social situations of the various denominations grew ever more similar, the battles over ritualistic and ideological boundaries increased in intensity as a way of differentiating and maintaining separate identities. However, not even the enforcement of these boundaries was enough to combat the increased secularization and rationalization of society and the corresponding increase in individualization identified by Berger. As religion grew increasingly into a private affair, people found much more permeability in the concept of the denomination. Demerath (1995) notes that this decline is paradoxical as the values touted by liberal, Protestant churches (e.g., individualism, democracy, tolerance, etc.) have become generally accepted in U.S. culture. In other

words, liberal churches have won the culture war while losing the membership battle.

Indeed, Wuthnow goes so far as to point out that "the leading theories of religious evolution all stress the importance of greater self-awareness with respect to symbolism-or to culture we might say-as a feature of modern religion" (1988:298). Wuthnow goes on to make the point that many of these "new religious movements are also replete with evidence of the self-conscious application and manipulation of symbols," because they evolve from small groups who are inherently aware of their own power to shape ritual, myth and symbol and the corresponding structure of the organization (1988:299). The designation that Wuthnow applies to this realization of the power of symbols is "symbolic consciousness." Although Wuthnow recognizes the power of symbolic consciousness, he also understands that the symbols are not chosen freely, but rather they are selected from a constrained set which may be more or less constrained than other institutional sets. Stout and Cormode illustrate this point neatly when they argue that

> [p]eople do not choose freely from an infinite variety of cultural options. The 'symbolic universe' in which they exist constrains them. In this universe, there is a limited range of options. An Irish Catholic immigrant in turn-of-the-century New York could conceive of only so many ways to express piety-and the ones that do not emanate from Roman Catholic culture, she deemed inappropriate, if not blasphemous. (Stout and Cormode 1998:65)

The rise of individualization and secularization described above manifests itself in organizational structure largely through these symbols and articulated ideologies (Mao and Zech 2002).

6.2.2 Dominant Model in Religion

As we have seen, organizational ideology for religious organizations consists of

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integration and secularization. Mainline denominations, which have high integration and

high secularization have institutionalized ideologies which both create and reflect this

situation. Mainline denominations, of course, owe their institutionalization in large part

to their existence over a long period of time. Many of the megachurches which currently

dominate the field of religion are institutionalized not because of their existence over

time, but because of their rapid growth and large size. Megachurches typically have high

barriers to participation and retain a high degree of control over organizational activities

(Ellingson 2007). In other words, they have low integration and low secularization, and

an institutionalized set of beliefs to create and justify this system. The institutionalized

nature of the ideologies which support these mainstream versions of church has a

profound effect on how religious activity and belief is structured. Below, I describe these

dominant ideologies and explore the mechanisms which create and support them so that

the project of institutionalizing an ideology in a religious organization might be made

more clear.

The dominant ideology in contemporary religious organizations promotes a

fragmented understanding of the world where society is broken up into distinct and

separate spheres. This ideology can best be characterized as atomistic, based on the logic

of binary opposites that plays such a large role in Western thought and gets transmitted

through the creeds, rituals and other belief statements. These articulations limit both

integration and secularization by emphasizing differences rather than similarities

(Ellingson 2007; Roof 1999).

Most religious organizations work hard to institutionalize a set of beliefs that

affirms the value of the group by emphasizing the uniqueness of a particular set of beliefs

and practices as distinct from other, seemingly similar religious groups and from organizations not in the field (Wuthnow 1988). This way of thinking has become so institutionalized that it characterizes the ideologies of both churches and sects (Iannaccone 1988). As Wuthnow and others have pointed out repeatedly over the last few decades, this distinctiveness has become increasingly difficult to maintain for traditional churches in a social climate where people retain fewer ties to organized religion based on their own religious upbringing (Smith and Sikkink 2003). The literature on religious switching has demonstrated consistently that while switching is not something people take lightly, it is not nearly as unthinkable as it once was and large, life-changing events can prompt a person to switch denominations or affiliations (Roof 1989). Switching is easier in part because many religious organizations, especially traditional denominations, have become more liberal, and thus less distinctive, in an effort to attract more members (Sherkat 2001; Sherkat and Ellison 1999). This bent toward liberalism coincided with a decline in membership for these organizations at both the congregational and denominational level (Kelley 1972; Kelly 1990; Turner 1985). The churches that remained strong and/or grew to a position of dominance in the field were those that were more conservative or, as Iannaconne puts it, more "strict" (Iannaconne 1994).

Conservative church ideologies claim exclusive truth in understanding the world which results in a distinct separation of society into religious and non religious spheres for adherents, akin to Durkheim's sacred and profane distinction (Ammerman 1987; Demmitt 1992; Sherkat and Ellison 1997). So much of modern, mainstream Christianity is built upon dividing the world into dualisms. It has been profitable both literally and

metaphorically for religious leaders to cultivate an "us" and "them" way of viewing the world. Sinners and saints, believers and non-believers, saved and condemned, Christians and non-Christians, good and evil, etc. This organizational logic of binary opposition is often seen as one of the defining characteristics of modern, Western thought (Derrida 1997; Goody 1977; Levi-Strauss 2000).

As I have shown above, dominant ideologies get transmitted and developed in organizations through the use of ideological articulations which affect an organization's culture. This is no different for religious organizations which have arguably a greater need and thus more opportunities to engage in the institutionalization of ideology through the acknowledgment of creeds, rituals, and other statements of faith. Integration, as discussed above, can best be understood by examining the barriers to participation in an organization (Benson and Dorsett 1971). The presence of a creed or statement of faith, apart from any specific content, inherently limits the diversity in an organization. Demerath (1995:460) makes the point that the articulated presence of a "galvanizing ethos" is every bit as important as the content, especially early on in the life of a religious organization. The more that is required of people, especially in a religious context, the less likely they are to join a group (Iannaconne 1994). This inherently limits diversity and increases homogenization on a structural level which leads to institutionalization. Gallagher (2005) has shown that articulated ideologies are crucial for religious organizations which wish to retain a distinctive identity. Similarly, Iannaconne (1994), validates their importance for strong churches.

Apart from the existence of these articulations of ideology, the content further serves to create and validate an atomistic world view. Levels of secularization are

determined by the extent to which a religious organization initiates and sustains activities which it cannot control (Benson and Dorsett 1971). It is the content of the creed or statement of faith which is of paramount importance here. If the articulation promotes exclusive claims of truth, then that decreases the likelihood of the organization engaging in activities with people/groups who disagree with the claims of exclusivity. In other words, it limits organizational activities to only those which it can fully control or to those which involve other, similar groups. This leads to the institutionalization of a "right" set of beliefs. This does not have to take the form of identifying and castigating a rival organization. Instead, language can be used which promotes the primacy of one particular understanding of religion. In other words, exclusive claims of truth and practice are made, and if there is only one right way, then all others must be wrong. The promotion and development of an exclusive claim to truth furthers the project of institutionalization by limiting the range of beliefs and actions that are perceived as legitimate.

Of course, as Iannaconne and others point out, a church can be too strict (Demerath 1995; Iannaccone 1994; Tamney and Johnson 1998; Stark and Iannaconne 1997). In order to attract and retain members a church must be open enough to allow for people to utilize the freedom and individuality our society values while being strict enough to eliminate free riders (Demerath 1995). Finding this equilibrium has long been the hallmark to success, marked by membership and commitment, in the field of religion (Stark and Iannaconne 1997). In other words, the trick is to offer an appropriate amount of freedom within the most constraint allowable.

An atomistic ideology is particularly well suited for this task as it allows religious

organizations to affect individual practices not by encouraging or discouraging particular actions, but by defining the context within which those actions should occur. They attempt to circumscribe not the range of behaviors that one can imagine for oneself, but rather the places in which these behaviors can occur. Thus, killing another human being is justified in the context of state sponsored capital punishment and the pursuit of justice, but not in the context of anger and retaliation. Essentially, an institutionalized atomistic ideology maintains a high barrier to participation and provides justifiable reasons for initiating and engaging only in those activities over which it can exert a high degree of control. In this way, the institutionalization of an atomistic ideology leads to the creation of a parallel sphere for activities to occur. Christian businesses and associations are established as a way of conducting transactions while engaging the profane world as little as possible. Indeed, there is an entire system built around making sure that people know they are at a "Christian" business ranging from the rather subtle, such as a religious symbol like a dove or ichthus in one's logo, to the more explicit, such as the publication of a Christian business directory or a Christian Chamber of Commerce. The rapid expansion of faith-based home and private schooling in the second half of the 20th century is another example of a parallel social institution which both helps to create and institutionalize the exclusionist ideology which serves to justify its existence. These results reach their culmination with the largest congregations. For an ideology to become institutionalized, it has to eliminate the possibility of the existence of competing, legitimate sets of ideas. It comes as no surprise then, that the dominant institutionalized ideology in the field of religion would result in organizational activities which structure out the possibility of competing ideas by limiting their exposure.

Drawing on the insights developed above with regard to ideology in organizations in general and religious organizations in particular, we can begin to form a general sketch of the role of organizational ideology in a resistant organization. In the next section I will offer a model of ideology which sits in direct opposition to the institutionalized model described above.

6.2.3 Ideology and the Resistant Organization

In the previous section I described the set of beliefs which has become institutionalized in mainstream religious organizations undergoing rapid growth. In this section I will draw on the insights developed above in order to explore how an organization might be able to resist institutionalizing a set of beliefs. Although there is not much research about organizations which intentionally avoid institutionalization, there are some individual concepts which can be utilized within the parameters discussed thus far regarding organizational ideology. Specifically, I suggest that religious organizations experiencing rapid growth might make invisible or taken for granted ideologies more perceptible by maintaining low barriers to participation and intentionally seeking opportunities to cede control of organizational activities[35]. As we have seen, resistant organizations are those which attempt to avoid institutionalization. Resisting the institutionalization of an organizational ideology means to ensure that a set of ideas does

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[35]This might sound a lot like what the denominations did in their attempt to attract members in the second part of the 20th century, and of course, they remain as institutionalized as ever. However, it is important to keep in mind that there is no reason to think that the strategies which work to resist and avoid institutionalization will be the same strategies which work to undo or deinstitutionalize an organization. Indeed, while there is little academic literature on resistance, there is fair amount of literature about deinstitutionalization (see Oliver 1992).

not become taken for granted as the primary organizing logic. This, of course, is more

difficult in practice than in theory.

Typically, one of the benefits of taking a neoinstitutional approach to

organizational studies is that one gets to bring a sense of agency back into organizational

analysis. Classical organizational theory almost completely neglects the analysis of

social actors, believing individual action to be determined by the same drive for

efficiency that characterized the firms in which they worked (Perrow 2000).

Interorganizational dynamics were not completely ignored, but instead were relegated to

human resource studies as scholars took the view that any variation in individual

decision-making would be either too minimal to matter much in a large organization or

would eventually succumb to isomorphic pressures (DiMaggio and Powell 1991).

Neoinstitutional theorists righted the ship by effectively arguing for organizational

culture as a fundamental component of organizational analysis claiming that the myths,

rituals and ideologies present in every organization were just as unique and real in their

consequences as any other structural component. However, despite a strong body of

literature which takes up the analysis of organizational cultures, there is still a tendency

for describing the relationship between structure and ideology as largely beyond the

control of individual actors. This is due primarily to the existence of that common

concept that classical and contemporary organizational theorists share—isomorphism.

Classical theorists take the stance that the drive for efficiency eventually determines and

structures all meaningful organizational activity while contemporary theorists offer a

more nuanced view of isomorphism which stresses legitimacy and survival as well as

technical efficiency. In terms of organizational ideology, this means that the articulated

beliefs and rituals of an organization will eventually conform to whatever form is

necessary to increase technical efficiency or ensure survival depending on whether one

takes the position that firms strive for legitimacy or efficiency. Regardless of which

position one privileges in this debate, the outcome is that organizational ideologies

conform to dominant models in the field. A more accurate assessment of the situation, as

I have been arguing for in this chapter simultaneously restores agency by understanding

the relationship between culture and structure as discursive in nature and allows for an

alternative to institutionalized models by rendering "invisible" logics and ideologies

present and accounted for.

> Too often, Wright and Rawls argue,

> essential social processes, such as religion, family, and the law, tend to be treated as
> formal institutions driven by a structure of rules or beliefs, rather than as sites in
> which practices have to be enacted in detailed and recognizable ways in order for
> what we think of as institutions to have a continued existence. The focus on beliefs
> has thus masked the importance of practice to essential social forms, such as
> religion, obscuring the relationship between these social forms and the societies in
> which they are found. (Wright and Rawls 2005:189-190)

Examining organizational ideology in this way, they argue, leads to the systematic

undervaluing of agency in the construction and maintenance of an organization's

ideology. When people engage in specific, identifiable, repeated organizational

procedures and routines this serves to simultaneously reinforce, create and refine the

organization's ideology. When people engage in practices in a "detailed and

recognizable" way, then institutions are both created and perpetuated. In other words, the

link between macro-level organizational belief structures and individual actions is one

which should not be overlooked. This is especially true in fields where ideology is the

primary product or focus of the organization such as in the field of religion. For the

organizational scholar, participation in rituals indicates at the very least, tacit acceptance and at most, strict adherence to a set of ideas.

At first glance, it may appear that the easiest way to avoid the institutionalization of an organizational ideology is simply to avoid any ideological statements whatsoever. No creeds, no rituals, no statements of faith. However, this is undesirable for several reasons. First, as we have seen above, avoidance is not the same as resistance. When there is no articulated ideology, the dominant ideology, or the set of ideas held by people or organizations in positions of power, will become institutionalized as an organization faces the pressures of growth and persistence (Weiss and Miller 1987).

Second, organizational scholars have repeatedly demonstrated the value of being able to justify the existence of the organization. Even for-profit organizations, embedded in highly technical fields where profit is often the sole or primary motivating factor, find that articulating an organizational ideology is useful for creating a cohesive organizational culture (Whitbred 2005). In non-technical or institutional fields, an articulated ideology becomes even more important as the appeal to profit is non-existent or dampened (Brown and Yoshioka 2003; Demerath 1995). This brings us to the second reason that ideological articulations are important, especially for religious organizations.

If actions followed personal beliefs then people would not come together as a religious community or if they did, it would be to affirm individuality instead of the value of the community as unique and distinctive entity, because individual beliefs are inherently ambiguous especially when they concern something as complex as metaphysics (Wright and Rawles 2005). If religious rituals were based on personal beliefs then we would have no coherent rituals which affirm the value of the community

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as a distinct and important group (Demerath 1995). Such a situation makes for a nonexistent corporate religious experience. Rituals and creeds serve to link people to a particular tradition and are an important hallmark of religious expression. Certainly exterminating their use would not be in concert with the goals of resistant organizations to avoid the narrowing of religious expression that comes with institutionalization.

Apart from these functional concerns, there is good theoretical reason why one would not advocate the abandonment of articulated ideologies in resistant organizations. Organizations involve coordinated group activity, and as such it is the task of this chapter to determine whether or not an organization can coordinate group activity and articulate ideologies without institutionalizing any particular ideology. With that in mind, then, effective resistance does not mean partaking in only those rituals whose ideological underpinning are in accordance with one's own belief. That would not involve coordinated group activity. Instead, resistance to the institutionalization of a particular ideology means that each individual continually assess the reasons why the group is engaging in a particular ritual. As Wright and Rawls **(**2005**)** point out, this attempt to privilege the direct relationship between the laity and the divine was at the heart of the Protestant Reformation and is the reason why Protestant denominations and congregations rely less on rituals than the Catholic community. However, it would be incorrect to suggest that the goal or the result of the Reformation was to eliminate or avoid institutionalization. While Protestant groups deemphasize ritual relative to their Catholic brethren, there are still "detailed and recognizable" activities that occur and serve the same social purposes as rituals in the Catholic church (Wright and Rawls 2005:189).

In order to resist the institutionalization of ideologies while still allowing for cultural elements necessary for a religious organization to exist, an organization must figure out a way to make the presence of articulated ideologies constantly visible and ensure that the content remains contested. In short, organizations must create permanent versions of what Swidler refers to as "unsettled lives" (Swidler 1986). Swidler makes the distinction between "settled" and "unsettled" lives when developing a theory of how culture impacts actions.

> In settled lives, culture is intimately integrated with action; it is here that we are most tempted to see values as organizing and anchoring patterns of action; and here it is most difficult to disentangle what is uniquely 'cultural,' since culture and structural circumstance seem to reinforce each other. (Swidler 1986:278).

Unsettled lives, in contrast, are those times when ideology is being actively created and ideologies are actively competing against one another for dominance.

> The distinction is less between settled and unsettled lives, however, than between culture's role in sustaining existing strategies of action and its role in constructing new ones. This contrast is not, of course, absolute. Even when they lead settled lives, people do active cultural work to maintain or refine their cultural capacities. Conversely, even the most fanatical ideological movement, which seeks to remake completely the cultural capacities of its members, will inevitably draw on many tacit assumptions from the existing culture. There are, nonetheless, more and less settled lives. (Swidler 1986:278).

In "settled" times, ideology is rendered invisible so as to be intimately intertwined actions. The action and the reasons for engaging in the action are not distinguishable from one another. In most Protestant, Christian churches, for example, we can think of rituals ranging from communion to baptism to the recitation of the Apostle's creed as actions which are institutionalized to the point that the underlying logic is inseparable from the action. Indeed, this is the very definition of institutionalization. In "unsettled" lives, by contrast, people are constantly wrestling with the ramifications of different

ideologies for their own actions. Swidler makes the point that we always try to resolve
the tension unsettled lives by creating institutions or patterns of actions which allow us to
act without always having to consider the logic underlying all of our decisions. Unsettled
lives are inherently difficult to sustain because of the crisis they involve. However, as we
see above, the only way to resist the institutionalization of organizational ideologies is to
make sure that no set of ideas becomes taken for granted as the correct or only legitimate
set of ideas. In other words, organizations can resist institutionalization by creating
unsettled lives. This means that the logic underlying any ideological articulation must be
continually examined so that it does not become taken for granted. Successfully resistant
organizations will manage to do this with regard to both of the key dimensions of
ideology in religious organizations discussed above—integration and secularization.

Specifically, organizations can avoid the institutionalization of ideologies by
limiting the barriers to participation that, as I discussed above, are inherently tied to the
presence of articulated ideologies. Wuthnow argues that one of the key features for
religious groups which wish to avoid mainstream ideologies is that they foster a high
degree of "symbolic consciousness" (Wuthnow 1998). Above, I discussed the important
role that symbolic elements play in the institutionalization of ideologies. Typically, the
symbolic components of a religious organization are so institutionalized that the only
group in the organization which does not take them for granted is the newcomers who are
still learning them (e.g., children in confirmation classes, converts). This group often has
a high degree of symbolic consciousness and the religious organization appears to be
very constructed (Roof 1999). In short, they have a high degree of symbolic
consciousness. Groups outside the organization are also hyper-aware of the underlying

ideologies especially in contrast to their own. Because these rituals are built upon powerful and complex ideological structures, they often serve as a barrier to participation both for new members and for working with outside organizations. It is only by fostering a high degree of symbolic consciousness that resistant organizations can hope to remove the barriers to participation that come with articulated ideologies.

Additionally, organizations can resist the institutionalization of an ideology by intentionally seeking and creating opportunities to engage in activities where they will be required to cede control to groups who are not affiliated with the organization. Mainstream religious organizations are marked, in part, by their reluctance to engage in activities which they cannot control. As I discussed above, this is directly linked to the dominant organizational ideology in the field of religion. An ideology which promotes exclusivity both creates and is created by an environment where control is necessary. Benson and Dorsett (1971) note that dividing society up into spheres of legitimate and illegitimate activity is a key component in the institutionalization of ideology through the designation of "proper" activities. The write that "[w]ithin its sphere of legitimate activity the organization has some measure of authority to define proper activity by itself and by others" (Benson and Dorsett 1971:140). In order to avoid the institutionalization of an ideology that occurs whenever organizational activity is both determined by a set of ideas and simultaneously serves to reinforce those ideas, an organization must find ways to ensure that activities are not always guided by people from within the organization. In other words, a resistant organization will seek out occasions to hand over control of organizational activities to people outside the organization. This limits the institutionalization of ideologies in part by ensuring that the organization is continually

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infused with people who have a high degree of symbolic consciousness regarding the organization simply because of their structural position as outsiders. Additionally, ceding control helps to ensure that the content of ideological articulations is as inclusive as possible, inviting in different beliefs rather than promoting exclusive claims to truth. If the members of an organization desire to work with other organizations it is in their best interests to be as open to them as possible.

Theoretically, resisting the institutionalization of an organizational ideology is possible. However, it is up to the empirical data to tell us whether the theory is correct or if it needs refining. In the sections below, I examine each of the components of resistance discussed above with respect to the Emerging Church. Doing so will provide some initial evidence about the accuracy of the insights above while also illuminating what resistance to the institutionalization of ideas looks like in an organization.

6.3 Ideology in the Emerging Church

6.3.1 Introduction

In their attempts to avoid the institutionalization of a dominant set of beliefs, the congregations I visited created an ideology that can best be characterized as holistic. When I asked Zach to elaborate on the mindset that appeals to him about his church, he said,

> Well there's two things for me. One is the ability and the invitation for all people to participate in a real and meaningful way on a daily basis. The second is the integration of life that there isn't sort of like these Christian things we do and these non-Christian things we do. Life is all wrapped up in everything. It's a very organic holistic approach.

Zach's comments speak to both dimensions of ideology in religious organizations. It is important to him that there is a high degree of participation and that the world is not divided up into the separate spheres that characterize dominant ideology. Instead, he is drawn to an understanding of faith and society as tightly integrated.

In this section, I explore this ideology and its effectiveness for creating and sustaining resistance to the institutionalization of a dominant organizational ideology. Specifically, I will show how people in the Emerging Church attempt to construct and preserve the unsettled lives necessary for ensuring that no set of ideas becomes taken for granted. In the course of this exploration, I will examine how the concepts identified as important to resisting the institutionalization of ideology above (e.g., unsettled lives, symbolic consciousness) are employed in a resistant organization. Finally, as we see above, organizations often adopt dominant ideologies because of the legitimacy they signal, helping to attract resources. I will thus examine the role that these legitimating ideologies play in the Emerging Church as well.

6.3.2 Unsettled Lives

Unsettled lives are important in the effort to make sure that ideas do not become taken for granted. They have the ability to render ideology as separate from action.

> In such periods, ideologies-explicit, articulated, highly organized meaning systems (both political and religious)-establish new styles or strategies of action. When people are learning new ways of organizing individual and collective action, practicing unfamiliar habits until they become familiar, then doctrine, symbol, and ritual directly shape action (Swidler 1986:278).

Of course, as I argue above, and as Swidler also notes, actions also shape and refine

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ideologies in these times. What does an "unsettled life" look like in a religious organization? The congregants I interviewed recognized questioning as a key component to creating and sustaining unsettled lives. The creation of unsettled lives in a religious organization relies on shaking up the conventional or taken for granted assumptions which lie at the heart of so much traditional religious expression. Questioning the foundational beliefs of one's religion is thus a key strategy for resisting institutionalization. As we will see below, if questioning is done relentlessly, it can support an ideological structure built on conversation rather than indoctrination.

Questioning

One of the first things that is apparent when talking with people in the Emerging Church is that questioning is not only an important reason they attend an Emerging Church congregation, but also a key difference between the Emerging Church and their experiences in mainstream churches. When I asked David why he feels like he finally found a spiritual home after years of trying out different churches he said locates the presence of questioning as an important factor.

> For me I've found a community of people who seem to be asking some of the same questions or at least who spark my interest, and I guess God sent me on a path to re-imagining my faith. Maybe I was already questioning some of what that was like and what the church was like and I just found a welcoming group of people who were excited about asking those questions and dialoguing and discussing. It was not what I was used to but something that I love and something that's helping me to grow a lot. The questioning is definitely more apparent than at my old churches. There was the format that we have is sermon and then discussion which is different that anything I had ever experienced because there is an actual tangible thing, like we're all sitting here and we're actually going to talk about these things and listen to each other and really think about this together.

Diane expresses a similar sentiment when I asked her why she keeps coming back to

Faith after years of church switching.

> I wonder if it has something to do with the freedom to keep creating. We try to question everything. Not to just develop a pattern and then follow that pattern. Like I don't think any Emerging Church wants to be a model…A lot of the bigger like the Megachurches they work with models and ways to follow and ways to be like so and so…I don't think any Emerging Church has a desire to do that.

When we look at these two quotes side by side, we can gain some key insights about questioning in the Emerging Church. First, it marks this religious experience as distinctive from any other these people have had. They feel that none of the other stops along the way have allowed or encouraged questioning to the degree that their current congregations do. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, questioning long held assumptions or ideas is translated directly into action for these respondents. David reports that it becomes a "tangible thing" in the organization while Diane notes that it lies at the heart of how the organization operates. Finally, we can see that the questioning is an important part of the community and the way they interact. My observations confirm that the dominant mode of communication, whether in formal settings or informal interactions followed this model of inquiry where the goal did not seem to be to find an answer and settle the conversation, but rather to keep "re-imagining" how things could be.

This is not to suggest that this is an easy balance to maintain. Emerging Church organizations, congregations and people find themselves under nearly constant pressure to decide on a set of beliefs. As the theories of isomorphism would suggest, it is the most visible of these groups that receives the most attention. In this case, Emergent Village must constantly attempt to defend itself from cries of heresy (read: illegitimacy) from more established congregations. Gary, a member of the board of directors for Emergent,

noted that a lot of his conversations about Emergent with outsiders are spent simply
trying to communicate an unfamiliar way of doing church.

> When people say "Well, what about your statement of beliefs, what about your
> doctrinal statement?" I'll say "You have to like shift your paradigm of what you
> understand to be of an organization of churches and Christians. If your neighbor
> invited you over for a dinner party and they invited everybody on the block, would
> you walk in and go, 'wait, before I sit down and eat dinner with you people, what's
> your view of the atonement?' No, you wouldn't do that because it's a dinner party,
> it's a fundamentally different kind of social gathering than a denominational
> meeting that meets in Louisville in the summer where they're running the Robert
> Rules of order and people are passing resolutions. And that's what we're after, a
> fundamentally different kind of social interaction for Christians, one built on
> friendships and relationships and difference rather than on orthodoxy.

What Gary is pointing out in this quote is that common agreement is not only
unnecessary for mutual, respectful interaction in the Emerging Church but that they are
making an explicit attempt to remove the categories of agreement and disagreement
altogether in favor of sustained conversation through the questioning of taken for granted
assumptions. Of course, they are not always successful at this, but it is important that
they are making an effort in this direction. As I alluded to above, the ability of people in
the Emerging Church to explain this new paradigm to outsiders is important. Challenges
to produce a statement of beliefs are really challenges to the organization's legitimacy, a
questioning of the grounds upon which they are able to operate and exist. In the first
sections of this chapter, I discussed the important role that articulated ideologies play in
signaling and creating legitimacy. Refusal or inability to produce an articulated ideology
can threaten an organization's legitimacy.

In the field of religion, however, organizations are able to appeal to a highly
symbolic text to justify and legitimize organizational activities. The Emerging Churches
I examined, while generally eschewing statements of faith and other ideological

articulations which would signal their legitimacy, justified their refusal to articulate an

ideology through Biblical references. I think it is important to recognize that the benefits

gained by seeking legitimacy through reference to a contested document are primarily

internal. Biblical interpretation being as contentious as it is, it is unlikely that referring to

scripture will satisfy members of other religious groups, and indeed, it has not. Just as

the Emerging Church cries foul at exclusionary interpretations of scripture, so to do those

religious groups condemn the Emerging Church for perceived misuse of the Bible.

Regardless, justifying a focus on questioning by referring to the Bible is an important

source of legitimacy for people within the organization. In the discussion about

articulated ideologies above, we learned that the benefits of many ideological

articulations are primarily internal, so it is important that when resistance limits

articulated ideologies, something else is there to make up for that lost legitimacy. My

respondents consistently referred to the existence of questioning in the Bible for

justification when I would ask them to tell me where they get this focus on questioning

and dialogue. Joe, for example, finds the justification for questioning in one of the

central acts of Christianity, the crucifixion of Jesus.

> Interviewer: So in your opinion it's better to ask a question than not even if the ensuing discussion is dangerous or scary?

> Joe: Right. If you look at God's word, if you look at the Bible it's littered with questions that people ask. Even when Jesus died he said, "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?"

Perhaps the strongest use of the Bible as a justification for questioning were those

respondents who connected questioning as it appears in the Bible with the creation of an

anti-institutional faith. Gary did this very effectively in our conversation about the

Emerging Church beyond the congregation he attends.

> I read a blog of a friend of mine the other day and he was so proud that his denomination had written a letter urging President Bush to step in and help create the defense of marriage act. And I just thought "Who cares? Of course his denomination did that…When an organization of Christians becomes so predictable that without even asking you know exactly what their stand will be on this issue, then it's no longer in any way reflective of the Gospel, which is an ultimately unpredictable commodity.

Gary derives the justification for living an unsettled life directly from his reading of the scriptures. He sees the Bible as "an ultimately unpredictable commodity," and thus makes no attempt to seek out agreement or commonality. Many of my respondents echoed this sentiment, reporting that instead of trying to create a single system of beliefs so that actions and ideologies could be tightly integrated, a "settled life," they preferred a system built on diversity and difference as displayed in their reading of the Bible. Diane remarks that

> …it's Biblical. In Psalms they're talking with God and questioning God. I think in some ways the evangelical church has abandoned the fellowship of all believers where you have equal access. Instead you're looking to one person to tell you what the Bible says. We want people more engaged and more willing to say, you think about it you know. You read. You read. Have faith, you pray, you engage with it. And then we'll keep going down this road. It's not that there's one answer for all.

This quote by Diane emphasizes that the outcome of this questioning in her experience is a congregation that is more engaged and empowered. There was strong evidence from my respondents that they were required to examine their faith and come up with their own answers at Emerging Churches in ways that they never were able or forced to do at their other churches.

Of course, these statements are fraught with difficulty as it is impossible to discern to what extent Emerging Churches attract these people or if they actually create them. Nevertheless it is the case that my respondents felt that legitimate questioning was intimately linked with good practices as well. Like Diane above, Kenny remarked that he

has been forced to question his own beliefs because of the dialogue that has taken place at

his church and that this is a big difference from the church he grew up in.

> I'm certain that if my family had been around for the kingdom of God discussion
> we had a few weeks ago I would have gotten an earful from my mother. One of the
> guys who was speaking was Matt Colombo a religion professor a secular religion
> professor and he was talking about the Kingdom of God and gave a quick overview
> about how he thinks it exists. I don't know for sure, but I think he said that most or
> all people are going to be in heaven…And again, at Faith you need to learn how to
> think for yourself and does what the person is saying line up with what I think?
> You find yourself doing a whole lot more confrontation than being spoon fed.

Creating and supporting organizations filled with individuals thinking and questioning for

themselves has widespread implications not only for the day to day operations in

individual organizations, but also on the barriers to participation in the Emerging Church

in general. Instead of attracting and creating people who support the dominant ideology

of the institution, they are able to focus on attracting people who will contribute to the

conversation. This inherently mitigates against the institutionalization of any one set of

beliefs. Gary indicates that this lack of institutionalization that is harmful for so many

other religious organizations leads to a diversity in belief that is actually at the heart of

the Emerging Church.

> We are able to maintain this gradual equilibrium right now in the Emerging Church
> where we have Texas Baptists who don't let women preach and stereotypical New
> England, Episcopalian, lesbian, priests in the same organization getting along just
> fine because we're not asking them to agree with one another. And I think that's
> why there is interest in the media and among sociologists and theologians and
> others probably because we're all so acutely aware of how those very tensions are
> tearing asunder the Episcopalians, Southern Baptist Convention, the United
> Methodist, the PC USA. I mean, no one else has been able to maintain this
> equilibrium, everyone else is being thrown apart. But for us, we create and thrive
> on those tensions, we are not trying to resolve them the way that the denominations
> are.

And this coexistence does not occur simply on an aggregate level. The congregations I

visited reflected this ideological diversity even within the same congregation where

interactions between people with wildly different beliefs occurred on a daily basis.

Indeed, even though I asked every single interviewee if there were any theological

absolutes or positions which most people in the congregation would agree with, there was

never any agreement within a congregation beyond the occasional confirmation of a

belief in Jesus Christ. Even the most general statements such as this one by Reggie,

"We're kind of like okay we believe in Jesus and believe that he's the Messiah, but

everything else around those theological concepts are kind of up for grabs," are not even

entirely true as I encountered numerous people who would take issue with the Messiah

part and the use of "the" as opposed to "a."

Of course, we should not make the mistake of thinking that mainstream religious

organizations are filled with people who all think, act and believe the same. That is

simply not the case. However, in most congregations these differences and tensions, if

acknowledged, are tolerated and, if possible, resolved whereas my congregants gave no

indication of any attempts to distill disagreement or tension even over theological issues

(Starcke and Dyck 1996). Harry, who had gown up in a variety of mainline

denominational churches pointed to this as the key difference between his current church

and his past church experiences.

> Interviewer: Are there people then here who have different viewpoints on
> theological issues?
>
> Harry: Oh yeah, I mean it's disturbing sometimes to get into conversations with
> them. I mean this is my brother I go to church with him and I can't believe that he
> believes that. And that's a big challenge for me, because I usually was around a lot
> of people who either I could agree with what they agreed with or we all acted like
> we agreed or something, but that's just not the way the church is normally. But not
> here. Here you have to engage those differences and talk about them.

At first glance, one might make the claim that these organizations have simply

institutionalized an ideology that privileges openness, tolerance and liberal theology,

creating an alternative to mainstream churches without combating institutionalization at

all. However, I found that the focus on conversation and questioning extended even to

the importance of questioning itself. Although this may sound like so much navel gazing,

it is fairly effective as a strategy. My respondents repeatedly expressed frustration and

conflict with the conversational approach to ideology, questioning why the individual

church or movement could not or would not simply decide what it believed. Megan, a

longtime member of Living Word expressed this frustration in our interview.

> While being at Living Word you end up talking about Living Word which I'm done
> with us talking about Living Word in the service. I'm done up with us talking
> about ourselves… and there was also the time when Living Word was redefining
> what it was *again* you know and so and there was a lot of talk about what is this
> church doing for us or what can church be, and I know it's useful, I just get so tired
> of it.

Justin, who has attended several Emerging Churches over the years, echoes this sentiment

saying,

> You know, one of the weird things about these congregations is that we do do a lot
> of things in the community, outside the congregation, but we also spend so much
> time talking about ourselves as a congregation with each other. It seems like we're
> continually reassessing. But I guess we wouldn't exist without those conversations.

Justin sees this ongoing conversation about the congregation as getting in the way of

doing more work in the community, but also recognizes the importance of corporate

questioning.

Creating and sustaining an "unsettled life" is hard work, but the dividends in

terms of resistance to institutionalized ideologies are undeniable. It should be clear,

however, that the presence of questioning as a strategy to avoid institutionalized

ideologies does not rely on just individual commitment. As I discussed in chapters 4 and

5, there is no person or organizational position with the authority and/or ability to effectively promote and institutionalize an ideology. In addition to the structural lack of these positions of power, there is now a long enough history within many of the individual congregations and in the Emerging Church in general of inviting in as many different people as possible that it would be nearly impossible to find a core set of beliefs that would unite all or most of them. In this way, the diversity of belief created and sustained through a commitment to questioning and dialogue helps the Emerging Church guard against settling into a pattern of belief and action where beliefs are taken for granted.

Conversation

In the previous section, I argued that ideological articulations serve many purposes in an organization and should not be abandoned even in those organizations where people are trying to resist the institutionalization of ideas. How does an organization then manage to tolerate the presence of articulated ideologies while guarding against the institutionalization of ideas? The congregations in this study relied heavily on non-durable ideological articulations. They utilized a conversational approach to ideas, emphasizing that no set of ideas is static, including those that lie at the very foundation of their faith. I will discuss these more below in terms of creating unsettled lives, but here I want to focus on the mechanisms for dealing with the presence of articulated ideologies rather than the content.

As we have seen above, resistance does not mean that an organization stops utilizing creeds or performing rituals. Rather, resisting the institutionalization of an

organizational ideology means being intentional about discussing why a creed will be

read/spoken as a group, in this setting and what that means. This is easy enough to do in

conversations, which is one of the reasons why Emerging Churches tend to be smaller

and committed to this form of interaction. As Julie and Paul note, this emphasis on

conversation infuses even the way the sanctuary is arranged. They note that before the

congregation does something in worship, "[w]e're going to talk about it. The way we

even sit, where we all face each other in a big circle, is like a physical manifestation of

how we want to be involved in each other's lives." The arrangement they are describing

is a large circle with no singular focal point. A band sits off to the side of the seating, and

although the speakers are generally situated in the middle of the circle, this is not a strict

practice. Additionally, there are two screens used for projecting images, movies, lyrics

and other visual media that are located opposite of one another outside the circle. A

conversational approach encourages the exchange of ideas rather than simply the

communication of a set of ideas. Furthermore, it is difficult to produce a durable artifact

from a conversation as conversations are inherently dynamic and difficult to pin down.

Resisting the institutionalization of articulated ideologies is decidedly more

difficult to accomplish with communications that produce artifacts and thus carry an

implicit sense of legitimacy. Of the congregations I visited, only 3 had traditional

mission statements or statements of faith (see chart 6.1). People in the congregations that

do not have statements of faith cite institutionalization as a prime motivating factor

behind their decision to go without a written document. William notes that this is a

common issue for him.

> People ask me all the time what our statement of faith is, and I tell them we don't
> have one, and I mean that. We don't have one. We have hundreds. The only thing

that a statement of faith does is serve to mark the boundaries of who can be in your group. And also, it's very arrogant to think that you have the accurate understanding of God, because really, the only thing that knows God is God. So at Faith we recognize that we all have individual statements of faith and that the Porch is where we get together and talk about these with each other and encourage each other to live more authentically in pursuit of our beliefs.

William makes the explicit link between a statement of faith and an inflexible, exclusive claim to truth while arguing that it is impossible to have a diverse and open community of believers if one has a strong doctrinal statement. To put this in academic terms, the barriers to participation are necessarily high when one has a durable statement of faith and this not only discourages participation, but, as we have seen, promotes institutionalization.

Many people in the Emerging Church seem to understand this. In the Fall of 2006 I attended a gathering designed to allow pastors from mainstream denominations to meet leaders in the Emerging Church so that the former might gain a better understanding of the latter. Toward the beginning of the meeting a pastor asked the inevitable question, "What is the Emerging Church?" The inquisitor had, knowingly or otherwise, presented the proverbial apple to the group gathered. There is great power to be gained and exerted by defining a group and its boundaries. Such a definition is inherently an advancement of an ideology or set of ideas, and this gathering had just been offered that power, if even on a relatively small scale. There was an uncomfortable silence in the room, until a long time pastor of an Emerging Church answered "Not to be rude, but that's the question we can't ask. If we spend longer than one minute discussing it, then we're done as a movement." Several other people indicated their agreement stating that the Emerging Church is built on differences rather than similarities. Jeremy, a missionary from Europe said "You ask 'What's off the table?' when it comes to what counts as the Emerging

Church and I would say 'The Table.' Because to use the table metaphor assumes that we are trying to create an Emerging Church orthodoxy, and I'm not really interested in doing that." Jeremy went on to say that the "Emerging Church is not about being something it's about always changing." His point is that asking what the emerging church "is" is sort of a strange question. Jeremy believes that it is really dangerous to say what it is because as soon as you do that, the group becomes static rather than dynamic. It moves from becoming, to being, a situation which is not conducive to avoiding routines, patterns of behavior and institutionalized ideologies. In short, it ceases to be conversational.

But it is not necessary that this discussion extend only to written or spoken statements. The same logic is successfully applied to rituals and ceremonies as well. The communion ritual at Faith that I described in Chapter 5 is a good example of how this conversational emphasis can be translated to rituals. Although communion is a pretty durable ritual which can be reenacted with ease for most longtime church goers, it would be nearly impossible to replicate a week of communion at Faith because of the way that individuals connect their own understanding of communion with the actual practice on a given week. In this way, rituals and ceremonies, which rely on routine and tradition for their power, can resist institutionalization even while being utilized for their other benefits such as group cohesion and religious expression.

The data above echo the insights discussed earlier in this chapter that the result of articulating an organizational ideology is to restrict conversation and circumscribe the range of potential beliefs or thoughts a person might have about an organization. However, my data also suggest a refinement of the idea that ideological articulations lead to the institutionalization of ideas. It suggests that some articulations count more than

others in the institutionalization project. Namely, those articulations which produce a

durable artifact which can be referred to and/or reenacted contribute far more toward the

institutionalization of a set of ideas and that ideological articulations, if structured in

carefully thought out ways can serve as an important component of an organization

without advancing the institutionalization of a particular ideology. This section has been

devoted to arguing that some organizations are able to utilize articulated ideologies in

ways that are both beneficial and resistant. However, just because something can happen

does not mean that it necessarily will. I have argued throughout this dissertation that the

powers of isomorphism are such that resistance must be built into the structure. It cannot

be something which is simply up to the whims of any one individual or group. In the

next section, then, I explore how the conversational approach described above is

compelled by a variety of strategies.

6.3.3 Integration

The potential contribution of organizational symbolism-studies for the examination of ideologies and social arrangements which counteract the questioning of social affairs, is in large part associated with the symbols' qualities in relation to what is taken for granted and the un- or preconscious. Symbols thus provide a gateway to the discovery of the ideological and social domination of meanings and sense-making. The critical study of symbols and the manipulation of symbols might contribute to a broader illumination of the social processes reproducing social order-or its change through the acts of a dominating elite - thus decreasing its 'automatic' nature and making it more available for conscious reflection and questioning (Alvesson 1991:221).

One of the ways we can understand the creation of unsettled lives in religious

organizations is by examining the level of integration of the organization. Highly

integrated organizations have relatively few barriers to participation and reject "a

segmented or exclusive position relative to other churches or organizations" (Benson and Dorsett 1971:140). Formal statements of membership such as baptism or confirmation are either not recognized or unnecessary for full membership. Additionally, the barriers between religious organizations are diminished and ecumenicalism is preferred. As I argued above, the introduction of new and ideologically diverse perspectives is necessary for the creation of unsettled lives in religious organizations. In this section, I discuss how the Emerging Church attempts to integrate and cultivate diverse perspectives into the church. Specifically, I argue that they lower the barriers to participation by fostering a high degree of symbolic consciousness. In the end, I find that my empirical evidence generally supports the theory that symbolic consciousness can result in unsettled lives but that there are significant obstacles which make implementation difficult.

Any analytical approach to the Emerging Church will recognize almost instantly the incredible amounts of power its group members feel they have to shape their own religious experience. Rather than viewing the breakdown of ritually defined boundaries that accompanied the decline of denominationalism described above as a loss, the people in the Emerging Church take the opportunity to establish new rituals, symbols and myths both in place of and based on the old cultural elements. The group members are cognizant of the power of symbols and in their ability to be manipulated, and to this end, they have constructed organizations where this ability is seemingly present and available to everyone. Tony, an active member of several Emerging Church communities throughout his life, relayed to me the process he and his wife went through when they decided to have an infant dedication rather than a traditional baptism for their new son.

Interviewer: How did you come to the infant dedication decision?

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Tony: Well after we found out that we were pregnant we started talking about a lot of different things and baptism came up and what do we want to do about baptism, because we are in a tradition now that neither of us originally started out in. If we were in a Lutheran church infant baptism would make total sense because it would make sense to our families mostly and the tradition that we're in, but now we're in a Baptist tradition that doesn't baptize babies, that's very strong on Believer's Baptism, Adult Baptism, so it caused us to think a lot about what we think baptism really means to us and about salvation and what we think it is and what role baptism plays in that. I think in the end the conclusion that we came to was not that this is the right answer, but that for us salvation was a lot more about God acting toward us than us doing something to gain access to heaven.

Tony stresses that he and his wife do not claim to have discovered some eternal, exclusive truth regarding salvation and baptism. What is important to him and his wife is that they felt they had the ability to decide for themselves how their child would enter their community of faith. There were no ritualistic requirements for official membership. Instead, they were free to decide what kind of ritual would be best for them based on their particular faith context. What is particularly illuminating about the quote above is that it highlights how this process is shaped and structured by a concern for legitimacy. As I have maintained throughout this dissertation, resisting institutionalization is not difficult if an organization does not wish to be seen as legitimate by the majority of people and organizations in society. Resistance without legitimacy has never been terribly difficult. We find scores of examples in the field of religion alone of various cults and spiritual movements which reject institutionalization only to remain marginalized. Wuthnow himself associated high levels of symbolic consciousness with groups that operate outside the mainstream (Wuthnow 1988). However, the quest for legitimacy and resistance entails finding a balance between innovation and adherence to dominant norms. Although Tony and his wife were not guided by formal requirements regarding their son's initiation ritual, they were very much guided by a desire for their son's entrance

into Christian community to be perceived as legitimate by outsiders as well as themselves. Without this constraint they would have been free to develop whatever kind of ceremony they wanted.

But symbolic consciousness does not lead to so much "sheilaism" (Bellah et al. 1985). Rituals are not reimagined and reconstructed in a vacuum. In part because the rituals still occur in a community, the choices available to people are highly constrained by previous experiences with organized religion and a desire for legitimacy within those bounds. Stout and Cormode (1998) point out that when the historian or ethnographer describes the development of a new religious form which privileges individuality, even these are located in social structures if they are to retain any sense of community or ability to function as social endeavors.

> Thus, when Robert Orsi (1985) describes an Italian-American 'religion of the streets,' he narrates the development-the legitimation-of a new cultural institution. But the *festa* he analyzes so well did not signal an opening of unlimited religious choices where personal religion was freed from institutional ties. It merely added one more cultural option to the circumscribed list already available. Cultural institutions are the routinized and binding symbols that individuals use to make sense of their worlds. To live in unstructured worlds of completely open cultural choices would be to live in a world of paralyzing freedom (Stout and Cormode 1998:65).

In the footnotes for the above passage, Stout and Cormode reference Swidler's (1986) toolkit concept, arguing that people's cultural choices are constrained by the limited number of tools-and limited number of legitimate ways to use those tools-available in their "tool kit." Agency is exercised in the selecting of the tools, and determining how to negotiate the trade-off between innovation and legitimacy. In other words, when one decides to engage in a religious ritual he/she can choose to do it in a way which is highly legitimate and conforms to cultural expectations by sticking to the routine prescribed by

religious teachers and legitimated with an articulated ideology. Alternatively, one could choose to reject this system and instead engage in the ritual in a different way. However, for others to recognize it, it must not deviate too far from the norm as every degree one moves away from what is expected is another degree of legitimacy lost. Recognizing this tension serves to highlight what is truly important about Tony's decision. The significance of the baptism is not the end product, but rather the process. As Tony points out, the process of constructing a ritual for his son caused him and his wife to examine their beliefs about some of the most foundational concepts in Christianity including salvation. This shows how a high level of symbolic consciousness resists institutionalization while still pursuing a legitimate religious expression.

As I discussed above, when people continue to engage in a routine without thinking about it, when it becomes taken for granted, it becomes institutionalized. This is true just as much for the physical parts of our routines, as I have discussed in the chapters above, as for the ideology that is used to support and justify these routines. As I discussed in chapter 1, an organizational element becomes institutionalized when its *underlying logic* becomes taken for granted (Jepperson 1991). In terms of the organizational ideology of religious organizations as expressed through rituals and creeds or statements of faith, institutionalization means that people get into the habit of performing a ritual or saying a creed without stopping to think about what it means for them to be saying a creed in unison, or this particular creed at this particular time, or a whole host of other, similar issues. Organizations which foster a high degree of symbolic consciousness put their members in positions to examine and question the logic which guides the construction and implementation of symbolic elements such as rituals and

statements of faith.

But as we have seen, resistance cannot be achieved just by *allowing* something, like a reimagining of baptism to occur. Instead, resisting institutionalization means that organizational members must be *compelled* to question, recreate, and reexamine taken for granted ideas. And this is where most of the congregations I visited fell short. While they were certainly tolerant of different expressions, and paid lip service to the creation of new rituals and ceremonies, even encouraging people to think about their long held convictions, they often did not take the step of requiring this behavior. If someone wanted to put it on cruise control and engage in a ritual without thinking about the set of ideas that the ritual was built upon, it was frequently possible. Neoinstitutional theories of isomorphism stress that if an institutionalized option is readily available, it will eventually become dominant as an organization grows and persists. In order to compel resistance, an organization must remove alternative options. While this level of resistance was not the norm in my observations, some groups did a better job of it than others. In addition to the communion ceremony at Faith described in chapter 5 above, Emergent Village has managed to compel resistance through fostering symbolic consciousness as well.

The most important ideological element for Emergent Village is the presence and content of a statement of beliefs. As there are no official gatherings and thus no rituals or ceremonies to corporately engage in, it is only through the statement of beliefs that they find any justification for existence. The exact nature of this articulated ideology, then, is crucial. Emergent Village is self-described as a "friendship" of people involved in the Emerging Church who began gathering informally in the late 1990s before forming a

formal organization in 2001 "as a means of as a means of inviting more people into the conversation" (Emergent Village). The "conversation" they are referring to is one among a diverse group of people regarding their disenchantment with the Crossroads structure of the modern religious experience. From the beginning, the intent of Emergent Village was not to establish a set of "right" practices or even to condemn others as wrong but rather to establish relationships among people who were concerned about the state of organized religion. While this might seem revolutionary enough in a religious atmosphere characterized by both increasing fanaticism among a very vocal and visible subset of the population and a decreasing interest in organized religion among the young, the importance of Emergent Village extends beyond the ideological intent of its founders. Institutional theorists have established that if ideology is the only thing separating a new organization from others in the field, isomorphism will set in rather rapidly with any kind of organizational growth (Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Scott 2001).

Quite the opposite has happened in Emergent Village, however. Despite becoming the most visible and largest formally organized group within the Emerging Church, they have thus far managed to resist outside pressure to promote a set doctrine or even take a public stance on many issues at all. They know that to do so would inevitably end up shaping much of the rest of the movement shutting down conversation rather than continuing dialogue. However, they have faced increasing pressure recently to explain where the organization in particular and movement in general stands on issues ranging from abortion to homosexuality. Would they adopt a liberal stance calling for tolerance, or take a more conservative approach in line with other mainstream religious groups? Would they simply release a vacuous statement attempting to claim some

middle ground? Alternatively, they could have simply done nothing, but they were

already seeing how this leads to the articulation of an organizational ideology by the

people with the biggest public profiles. Even if individual members had no intent of

setting policy or agenda for Emergent, the ideas and stances they expressed in the press

as a member of Emergent Village were inevitably being used to characterized the entire

organization. This is one form of isomorphism as described by Powell and DiMaggio

(1991). According to the theories above, any of these options would have inhibited their

chances at resisting institutionalization. So, relying on the theologian LeRon Shults,

Emergent chose a "third path" and released an Anti-Statement of Faith explaining why

they decline to lay out their beliefs in bullet point (see appendix 4). As Dr. Shults (2006)

points out, there is real danger in providing a statement of beliefs for an organization that

seeks to be inclusive and dynamic rather than cohesive and static.

> Whether it appears in the by-laws of a congregation or in the catalog of an
> educational institution, a 'statement of faith' tends to stop conversation. Such
> statements can also easily become tools for manipulating or excluding people from
> the community. Too often they create an environment in which real conversation is
> avoided out of fear that critical reflection on one or more of the sacred propositions
> will lead to excommunication from the community. Emergent seeks to provide a
> milieu in which others are welcomed to join in the pursuit of life "in" the One who
> is true (1 John 5:20). Giving into the pressure to petrify the conversation in a
> "statement" would make Emergent easier to control; its critics could dissect it and
> then place it in a theological museum alongside other dead conceptual specimens
> the curators find opprobrious. But living, moving things do not belong in
> museums. Whatever else Emergent may be, it is a movement committed to
> encouraging the lively pursuit of God and to inviting others into a delightfully
> terrifying conversation along the way. (Shults 2006, see appendix 4 for full
> statement)

The Anti-Statement of Faith aided the project of resistance by erasing even the possibility

of an institutionalized ideology which could be pointed to or adopted without question.

There is no taken for granted justification for the organization's existence and thus no

barriers to participation in order for more people to join. One need not agree with all or even most of the other members on key theological issues. The Anti-Statement of Faith fosters a high degree of symbolic consciousness among members of the organization by making it clear that stances on key issues must be justified only by the person holding a particular position. There can be no hiding behind the institution.

Of course, this system is not perfect, and it would be a gross overstatement to suggest that with this singular move Emergent Village has managed to resist all forms of institutionalized organizational ideology. Indeed as the organization grows and becomes ever more influential, the most visible members attract increasing amounts of attention, and their particular viewpoints can sometimes overshadow the organization's official anti-statement stance. However, the contribution of the Anti-Statement to the project of resistance is not minimal and provides support for the theoretical conjectures derived in the first half of this chapter. Lowering barriers to participation fosters a high degree of symbolic consciousness which compels people to examine the sets of ideas which support articulated ideologies in the form of statements or rituals.

6.3.4 Secularization

Assessing the Emerging Church with regard to the other dimension of ideology in religious organizations is a much more difficult task. In constructing the ideal type of resistant religious organization above, I reasoned that successfully resistant organizations would intentionally cede control over organizational activities as a strategy for avoiding the institutionalization of ideology. My experiences in the field do not counter this claim, but they do not provide much direct support, either. I found no evidence, from the

interviews or my observations, that the congregations and groups I visited regularly

engaged in activities over which they had no or little control. Of course, ideal types are,

by their definition, never found in real world observations, but I was nevertheless startled

by the complete lack of evidence for secularization. It is not the case, however, that the

congregations in this study were insular. They exhibited none of the hallmarks of more

conservative organizations which seek to encompass all facets of a person's life within

the bounds of the church. Instead, they actively advocated for erasing the boundaries

between the sacred and the secular. Reggie put it to me this way,

> One of the things I really like about this church is that there is not some great divide
> between here and the rest of life. I mean I never understood churches that wanted
> me to be one thing all week, a successful person making enough money to tithe
> well with a stable relationship and 2.3 kids, and then on Sunday listen to messages
> about grace and forgiveness and how blessed the poor are. Well my life isn't like
> that and they understand that here. Church doesn't just happen on Sundays. It goes
> even to what we call Sunday nights. We call it the Gathering because we think that
> worship is something you do, or should do, all the time and that church happens
> wherever we might happen to get together.

Sentiments like those by Reggie were not uncommon. However, this desire to erase the

boundaries between church and "the rest of life" was expressed much more often in word

than in deed. Below, I will explain this tension in more detail and offer a tentative

explanation for why the evidence does not match the theory.

Most of the congregations I visited were not able to support themselves at the

level they would have liked. This is due, primarily, to the kinds of people they attract.

While the Emerging Church certainly cannot be written off as a generational

phenomenon, there are significant numbers of young (18-35 year olds) people who attend

these congregations. I estimate, based on asking other people in the congregation, my

own observations, and quick, informal polls, that 75% of the people in the congregations

I visited were in this age range. Churches have long struggled with this demographic, in part because they do not typically have the resources to tithe well even if they were so inclined (Forbes and Zampelli 1997**)**. In order to make ends meet, many congregations operate businesses. Incarnate Word ran a coffee shop and vintage clothing store, Crossroads owned a coffee shop, bookstore, and studio space. Fellowship had a coffee shop and ice cream parlor. While the success of these ventures varied greatly, the intent was always the same, to make some money while providing a place for the larger community to get together with people from the church without actually going to church. Make no mistake, these are clearly evangelical efforts. Pete, from Fellowship, explained the coffee shop to me this way: "It's a covert evangelism operation and a covert love ministry." He explains it as covert because there is nothing overtly religious about the space. It is, however, staffed by volunteers from the church and owned by the lead pastor. They are not confrontational or in your face efforts at conversion. Instead, they are evangelical efforts based on relationships first with the idea being that if someone has a real relationship with another person then they are much more likely to be open to an invitation to go to church or talk about God. This is not unlike the ministry and coffee shop at Incarnate Word. My conversation with Francis about the space which houses both the worship services and the coffee shop included several of the sentiments expressed by Pete.

> Interviewer: So this coffee shop is owned and run by the church?
>
> Francis: Yeah. It was a part of the initial conception of the mission of the congregation. We had to figure out a way to be self-sustaining and we also wanted a place to engage the community around us here.
>
> Interviewer: But there is nothing indicating that it is part of the church except a flyer on the counter along with a bunch of others for concerts and other events.

Francis: Well we didn't really want it to be about the service. We don't decorate with crosses and stuff because that's just not our style. If it was, if that's the way I would want a coffee shop to be that I was going to hang out in, then that's how I would decorate, but it's not, so we don't use much of that stuff. And it's not really, you know, about being all Bible Banging up in someone's face. We really feel like the relationships come first. Then, if they seem interested, we'll push the church thing a little harder.

Indeed, most places I visited in the course of this research were devoid of Christian iconography and my casual conversations and observations while hanging out at these places confirmed that it is not uncommon for a customer to have no idea that the place they are in is connected to a church (even, on at least two occasions when it was, physically, connected to a church). And indeed, I did not witness one single incident of witnessing, solicited or otherwise, in all my time in the field.

However, these forays into the larger community and for-profit world are differences in degree rather than in kind from more heavy handed efforts at evangelizing. Although there is nothing overtly religious or evangelical about most of these spaces currently, there is certainly nothing to keep them from becoming that way. A simple shift in the mindset of the person in charge of the building could result in a wholesale and irreversible ideological shift. While that is not currently the intent of any of the people I talked with, it would not take much to get there. In other words, there is nothing compelling the organization to resist the dominant logic of evangelism. At first glance, they may appear to have established an effective buffer between themselves and the dominant ideology by associating these efforts with a capitalist enterprise. They know that heavy handed evangelizing efforts would drive business away, business that they need for technical purposes (profit) as much as for institutional purposes (attracting new members). However, the church retains full control over these enterprises and is thus

able to make changes in order to reflect changes in the religious community. The theories of isomorphism discussed above suggest that without proper structural mechanisms in place, these changes will shape the business as either more and more like other for-profit organizations or more and more like other religious organizations. So with only the good intentions of the people running these operations keeping them from being either wholly businesses, or wholly evangelical, it is only matter of time before they become one or the other.

It is important to understand that these endeavors to expand into domains that might expose the organization even a little bit, while certainly not uncommon, are also not pervasive. Most of the churches I visited spent much of their time taking care of their own members and communities by providing services and programs traditionally associated with churches (e.g., ESL classes, job training, outreach, food pantries, street clean-up, shelters, etc.). For the most part, these do not fall under the realm of secularization as there is no contact with outside agencies or groups with the occasional exception of a regulatory agency, and in any case, allowing these efforts to be guided to some extent by outside groups does little if anything to challenge the establishment of an organizational ideology. The activities were always initiated by the organization, and if the ideological costs ever got too high they could simply shut it down. The ideal type resistant organization, on the other hand, would be looking for opportunities to create and be involved with activities which they had much invested and very little control over. For example, instead of starting a church run coffee shop, no matter how secular in intent and nature, an ideal type resistant organization would support a coffee shop run by someone outside the community.

The people I talked with and the groups I observed frequently reported to me that they wanted to dissolve the barriers between the religious world and the secular world, that there should be no such division. However, this is simply not reflected in their practices. We learn from the efforts which do exist that attempts to resist dominant ideologies surrounding secularization are difficult due to the abdication of power they require. We also see from the lack of attempts in this area that even some of the most sophisticated resistant organizations struggle when it comes to resisting dominant ideologies. People who seem to have an advanced understanding of what is necessary to avoid the routinization of structures, processes, and even rituals find it much more difficult to apply this same understanding to their activities in the community. While the theory suggests that the intention to create and be involved in activities which are neither wholly separate from other social institutions nor wholly integrated is the necessary first step, it is also clear that it is not enough. Intention must be coupled with structure in order to ensure that isomorphism does not take over, and those structures were simply not present in the groups I examined.

The data presented here indicate that while the people and organizations in this study generally desired to resist institutionalized ideologies by adopting the principles of a holistic worldview, they also were not generally successful in compelling resistance. Too often, resistance was left up to individual desires. However, there is still much to be gained from the above examination including the importance of conversation and questioning as effective strategies for maintaining a dynamic set of ideas by utilizing non-durable or irreproducible means of articulating ideologies. Additionally, we find that it is possible to resist forces pressuring unsettled lives to resolve tension and

institutionalize for stability and that this is an effective means of creating the right conditions for ensuring that ideas do not become taken for granted.

6.4 Conclusion

Ideas play a crucial role in organizations. They serve to legitimate actions and justify the existence of the group as a distinct entity. Their very presence helps to determine the barriers to participation in the organization and their content acts to regulate the boundaries of the organization. Most importantly, however, organizational ideologies serve as a powerful point of institutionalization for organizations. Mainstream organizations can use this and craft their ideological articulations in a way that signals the legitimacy of the group. Resistant organizations, on the other hand, must actively combat the institutionalization of ideas through the utilization of sophisticated strategies aimed at making the ideas and power interests that accompany them visible and apparent so they do not become taken for granted. The Emerging Church organizations in this study make some successful efforts toward this end by fostering symbolic consciousness and unsettled lives to advance a holistic worldview. However, they often fall short of compelling resistance, instead settling for voluntary actions which ultimately stand little chance against isomorphic forces.

CHAPTER VII

CONCEPTUALIZING RESISTANCE

7.1 Introduction

The specific discussions above each produced important findings in their own right and contribute to studies of organizational structures, processes, and ideologies respectively. There is also much to be gained by examining how these three organizational components interact in a resistant organization. Indeed, it would be inaccurate to suggest that these elements operate completely independently of one another. In this concluding chapter I summarize and build off of the insights developed above in order to present a more general account of organizations which resist institutionalization. In the course of this argument I will synthesize the findings above, further differentiate the resistant organization from other organizational types, and articulate how the distinctive project of resistance these organizations are engaged in actually leads toward legitimacy by both creating and catering to a niche market. I close by offering a discussion of both the limitations of the current study and the implications of this dissertation for future research.

7.2 Contributions

7.2.1 Institutionalization and the Resistant Organization

So how do we put all of this together? In the chapters above, I have shown the results of an investigation into the organizational components one would expect to be under the greatest isomorphic pressures and have demonstrated how the organizations in this study are actively resisting institutionalization in these areas with general, though not universal, success. Beyond questions of effectiveness, however, how can we understand these efforts in aggregate? Organizational theorists beginning with Weber (2002 [1930]) and following up most recently with DiMaggio and Powell (1983) have argued that we can think of the institutionalized organizations which dominate our society as "iron cages" where the drive toward rationality and efficiency restricts and limits individual actions. What then, is the appropriate metaphor for the resistant organization? Jepperson (1991) posits that the opposite of the institutionalized organization is the socially entropic or disorderly organization. By "socially entropic" he means that they lack a social system which sustains, reproduces and orders them. Instead, reproduction is left up to individual choice. While this distinction might be appealing at first, it does not do justice to the complexity and intentionality behind the resistant organization. As I have endeavored to show above, there is nothing particularly chaotic about the resistant organization. Instead, resistant organizations are guided by very specific principles and a desire to avoid institutionalization. For this reason, I propose that a more apt conceptualization of the resistant organization is that of a gyroscope [36].

A gyroscope is a spinning wheel or disk, called a rotor, which maintains

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[36] The metaphor of the gyroscope has been used before in sociology, but nearly all uses follow Riesman's (2001 [1950]) conception from *The Lonely Crowd* of the gyroscope as an internal moral mechanism.

orientation even as its axes spin freely in different directions. Gyroscopes are used primarily in navigation for maintaining a constant position of the traveling object relative to changing environmental conditions. Thus, they are utilized in missile guidance, shuttle navigation, and the ever-handy compass. The gyroscope fundamentally relies on movement to be effective; inertia causes the most distinctive feature of the gyroscope, the precession or movement of the wheel around a freely moving axis, to give into other prevailing external forces, usually gravity. The mechanical laws of the gyroscope have been well explained since its discovery/invention in 1817 by Johann Bohnenberger, and there is nothing chaotic or unpredictable about the device. It is not, in short, an entropic device.

Resistant organizations endeavor to operate in much the same way, using movement to maintain orientation in spite of external forces compelling them toward inertia and institutionalization. The axes of structure, process and ideology are compelled to spin freely and in multiple directions in order to sustain an organizational form, one that resists institutionalization.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of resistant organizations is their ability to utilize movement in order to create stability, much like a gyroscope. A simple scanning of the strategies identified in the chapters above underscores this basic feature of resistant organizations. Authority is shifting, processes are unregulated, and ideologies are based on conversation and unsettled lives. Each of these adjectives emphasizes movement and the specific reason for employing each strategy is to enable the organization to resist the inertia that results from institutionalization. The gyroscope is not a perpetual motion machine, as it requires energy to keep rotating. The organizations in this study derive the

energy they need to continue the project of resistance from these strategies, which emphasize agency within the organization.

This conceptualization of the resistant organization as a gyroscope highlights two findings in particular which should be clear from the chapters above with regard to stability and movement. First, the concept of the gyroscope requires movement between two diametrically opposed forces in order to be effective. In the field of religion, the diametrically opposing forces are often those of individuality and the collective (Sherkat and Ellison 1999). Indeed, many of the strategies delineated in chapters 4-6 are focused on navigating and maintaining precisely this tension. These strategies allow the organizations in this study to avoid a simple adherence to the dominant value of individuality as expressed by mainline denominations and megachurches or its opposite, communality (the focus for many other religious groups including the Quakers). Both routes lead to a high degree of institutionalization.

The organizations in this study made an active effort to incorporate both individuality and communality into their organizational structures, processes and ideologies. I came across this dialectical tension time and time again in my field work, and at first, I did not really understand how to understand what I was seeing and hearing. There seemed, at first glance, to be competing truths. On the one hand, I would have a participant tell me that they loved the community and later another person from the same congregation would tell me that they really valued the focus on Christian spirituality that is missing in so many modern Christian churches. For example, Jessica remarked that she really appreciated "the opportunity to rediscover some of the ancient contemplative and spiritual practices that a lot of denominations have abandoned." Later, when her

husband, Wade, remarked that "community" was the single biggest reason he kept

attending Calvary, she was quick to back that up. When I pushed her to reconcile this

tension between individuality and community, she was adamant that "they both need to

be emphasized in order for them be effective for me." When I asked Joe why he is

happiest at his current church after a lifetime spent in different denominations and

congregations, he said

> Really it's just the fact that I learn something new and I grow personally each week. That and the fact that I can be in community with the other people every week. There's just a concentrated effort here to take both of those things and put them together. That combination didn't really happen at the other places I've been. Usually we'd get one or the other.

Rather than attempt to reconcile these two diametrically opposed forces, I realize

now that this tension is precisely wherein lies the emancipatory or resistant potential of

these organizations. Not only is there no effort made to resolve these tensions, but they

are, in fact, deliberately created. Wade remarked that one of the strengths of the

congregation he attends is the ability of the community to help each other through life

crises. He directly links this ability to dynamics of the congregations saying that

> we continue to have crises in our life and if you're in an environment and community that isn't afraid of that and even creates it to some extent then you're more equipped to handle them. Like we always say, God can handle your anger or confusion. You don't have to understand everything.

Of course, this is not the only tension that exists and is consciously maintained, but it is

certainly one of the most prominent. I offer it here as an example of the utility of the

gyroscope as a metaphor for the resistant organization. According to basic physics,

opposing forces create horizontal movement that allow gyroscopes to maintain balance.

This is precisely the same dynamic that I encountered in the field. The presence and

cultivation of difference through the distinct strategies identified above allowed the organizations in this study to be relatively stable, avoiding the imbalance that is the institutionalization of one organizational form over another.

Second, just as the gyroscope derives its stability from movement, there is a push in resistant organizations to avoid inertia. The strategies and principles delineated in the chapters above are all directed toward providing an impetus toward fostering individual action. It is this impulse toward action that keeps the resistant organization from being able to be pigeonholed as simply another type of alternative organization. The resistant organization, while highly stable and guided by specific strategies, avoids the very stasis that alternative organizations, as conceived in the academic literature, seek out. While at first glance it might appear that any alternative to the dominant organizational form would qualify as a resistant organization, this is not the case. A quick look around the organizational landscape reveals a long history of co-ops and collectives in diverse organizational fields which contradict nearly all the qualities indicative of the rational bureaucracy identified by Weber (Rothschild and Russell 1986). However, a deeper analysis reveals that the underlying logic has not shifted as collectives and co-ops are full-fledged institutions in their own right (Ferguson 1991). Although they differ from the rational bureaucracy, it is a difference in degree not in kind (though this does not make the differences insignificant). Both types of organizations are still concerned with being predictable and efficient, but whereas one design places these two as the primary goals, the other allows for a variety of competing concerns (worker happiness, equality, etc.) to exist along with efficiency (Jackall and Levin 1984). Co-ops and collectives do not attempt to do away with efficiency and rationality, but rather, to regulate these forces

so they are not advanced at the expense of other commonly held values (Martin 1990).

These alternative organizations make explicit normative arguments about the efficacy and

utility of one organizational form over another and attempt to institutionalize the set of

structures, processes, and ideologies they think are best. The resistant organization

makes no such claims. In fact, it resists making exactly these claims. Where both

alternative organizations and dominant organizations strive for inertia by becoming so

institutionalized that their composition and existence are no longer questioned, the

resistant organization relies on constant movement and reevaluation of its constituent

parts. There is no more telling sign of this difference, perhaps, than in the very name.

Alternative organizations are conceived as a direct alternative, not to dominant

organizations in general, but to the current dominant organizational form, the rational

bureaucracy. Should the feminist collective organizational form rise to prominence, the

term "alternative organization" would cease to have any significance. The resistant

organization, by contrast, can never be rendered obsolete in this way. It resists

institutionalization regardless of which particular institutionalized organizational form is

exerting the pressure. The data above clearly show that the people in the organizations in

this study self-consciously avoid the utilization of a specific structure, set of processes or

ideology.

Thinking about the gyroscope again, we return to the concept of orientation. The

gyroscope is remarkable not because of its ability to remain in a relatively stable and

fixed position, but because of its ability to maintain its orientation relative to the

surrounding environment. This is precisely the same phenomenon I both theorized and

observed with regard to resistant organizations. They are not fixed commodities, and as

we have seen, make no such endeavors. A fixed object has no ability to maintain an

orientation relative to its environment. It can only maintain an orientation relative to

itself. The difficulty of effecting organizational change in fixed "iron cage"

bureaucracies is well noted by nearly every major organizational scholar from Max

Weber and Talcott Parsons to Peter Selznick and Walter Powell and Paul DiMaggio.

Organizational mortality, in institutionalized organizations, has consistently been linked

to changing environmental conditions (Powell and DiMaggio 1991). Even large firms,

thought to be more stable and able to absorb such threats more easily, are not immune.

The rate of firm collapse, takeover, and merger has increased exponentially as the world

has moved from the relatively insular environments which characterized much of the 20th

century to an increasingly globalized world (Haveman 1992). This has been well-noted

also in the management literature with a substantial amount of intellectual energy devoted

to the development of concepts and strategies to maintain the benefits of internal focus

while allowing the organization to change in response to altering environmental

conditions (Burke 2002). The concept of loose coupling as developed by Karl Weick

(1976) represents perhaps the best known attempt in this direction. It would be a mistake

to think of this orientation to self which makes firms particularly susceptible to changing

environmental conditions as simply a detriment, however. It is precisely this same

orientation which allows institutionalized organizations, whether bureaucracies,

collectives, or coops, to maintain the focus and direction needed to accomplish complex

and repetitive tasks. The organizations in this study, by contrast, seek to maintain a

constant orientation to its environment through resistance. As environmental forces

attempt to compel the resistant organization toward institutionalization, the resistant

organization is able to use the strategies identified above to maintain its relative, and desired, existence outside of or beyond the stable organizational form.

Furthermore, what makes the resistant organizational form an especially compelling alternative in fields where diversity of individual expression is desired, is that this ability to maintain orientation relative to the environment is *also* the desired orientation to itself. As I noted above, the self-referential orientation of institutionalized organizations allows complex activities to be sustained over great distances and periods of time regardless of changing environmental conditions. This typically comes at the expense of an ability to change rapidly with the surrounding environment. One might expect the reverse to be true in resistant organizations, that maintaining an orientation with the external environment would come at the expense of realizing organizational goals. However this is not the case for resistant organizations located in fields where maintaining a broad range of individual expression might be regarded as a virtue. Take the Emerging Church organizations in this study, for example. Their particular objective of preserving and creating diverse opportunities for religious expression is enabled by the resistant orientation they maintain relative to their environment. Without this external orientation, they would not be able to achieve their most basic organizational goals.

7.2.2 Legitimation and the Resistant Organization

The data presented in this dissertation indicate that resistant organizations are able to achieve legitimacy at least in part by taking advantage of a unique market niche. The niche as a theoretical concept is borrowed from biology and ecology and means more than simply a static environmental arrangement. In a review of the quantitative uses of

niche theory, Popielarz and Neal explain that "the niche of a species is the set of environmental states in which it thrives…The sociological analog typically is the organizational form" (Popielarz and Neal 2007:68). Thus, a niche fundamentally implies a web of relations and activities with consumers as well as with other organizations and regulatory agencies. In this way, it is highly compatible with institutional explanations of organizational activity. Blau et al. (1998) and Simons and Ingram (1997, 2004) both find support for the argument that ideologies counter to mainstream or dominant ideologies can be successful in garnering material returns if those ideologies target and attract a unique and particular niche market. In terms of niche theory, a resistant organization is likely to be a specialist, occupying a relatively small and unique position within their environment with correspondingly little or no overlap with other organizations (Popielarz and Neal 2007). The most recent and fully developed of these theories combines various strands of population ecology into a relatively coherent theory (Dobrev et al. 2001, 2002, 2003) that emphasizes a constructionist approach. However, nearly all of the concepts of niche formation approach the topic from a macro level, and, following Hannan and Freeman's (1977) initial articulations of the niche, deny the role of agency and corresponding ability of organizations to respond quickly to changing environmental conditions. In this section I argue that the concept of an organizational niche explains how resistant organizations achieve legitimacy, and offer an explication of how resistant organizations develop and maintain particular niches that adds to and refines current scholarship on niche formation and development.

Classical and contemporary organizational theory, working from an approach that views ideology as justifying actions, not causing them, suggests that the drive for

material incentives will always trump ideology and ideology will change to accommodate and justify the material outcomes (Simons and Ingram 1997). However, the situation is much different when a particular ideological set-up allows an organization to capture and create a distinct portion of the environment's resources. Ideology does not have to simply justify procuring organizational resources as long as the resource gains made by adhering to a particular ideological configuration are unique and unreachable any other way. If a particular ideology allows an organization to capture an otherwise unreachable segment of the market then that organization will be able to maintain a unique ideological component in spite of institutional pressures compelling them to conform. Simons and Ingram, in their examination of Israeli kibbutzim, write that

> [t]he trade-off between material gain and other values is likely to be more relevant when there are differences of ideology between the organization and its environment. If all other organizations shared the focal organization's ideology, alternatives for organizing would be less salient and less feasible. If the environment is dominated by a different ideology, however, incentives will favor organizational practices that are consistent with that ideology, and these alternatives for organizing will be salient to the nonconforming organization. The cost in material wealth of an ideology is relative to the next cheapest ideological alternative. (Simons and Ingram 1997:791)

Emerging Churches face a situation akin to what Simons and Ingram describe above. Settling on an institutionalized ideology would theoretically pay immediate dividends in terms of an increase in access to resources, especially in the form of organizational members. The isomorphic pressures to conform and articulate an identifiable ideology, then, are very strong. Existing research makes it clear that it is easier to move through the stages of legitimacy if people can readily identify the value of the social object in question (Johnson et al. 2006). Refusing to offer an articulated, consistent ideology, then makes it more difficult for the Emerging Church to gain legitimacy and increases the

pressures to conform to dominant norms. Simons and Ingram point out above that

isomorphic forces are greatest when the gains to be had from conforming are the largest,

an assertion which is largely supported by conventional institutional theory. These

findings assert that any ideological activity which does not directly support and facilitate

the maximum attainment of organizational resources will eventually be altered through

isomorphic forces. However, my data suggests that resistance and legitimacy can coexist

when organizations gain acceptance not in spite of an ideological position, but because of

this position.

In order to gain legitimacy, the project of resistance must be the thing which

allows the organization to attract resources, and the members of the organization must be

cognizant of this fact. This is true in the case of the Emerging Church organizations in

this study. Instead of resisting dominant structure simply for ideological gain, they are

able to resist dominant structures because of their ideological stance which allows them

to gain resources that the dominant organizations are not able to obtain very well. This

last point is very important. Dobrev et al. (2002) have noted that some organizations can

use an untapped market niche as a gateway into a larger market. They studied the

automobile industry and noted that

> the Japanese manufacturers showed that they could build a sizeable presence after
> entering the market with small low-cost cars, a part of the market in which major
> American producers were not very competitive. According to a niche
> interpretation, one would say that the Japanese firms benefited from initial niche
> positions with little overlap from existing firms, allowing them to gain strength
> before attempting more direct competition. (Dobrev et al. 2002:233)

Much niche theory is approached in this same way, relying on the same implicit

assumption which underlies institutional theory, namely that every organization desires to

be fully institutionalized. However, we know that this is not the case. Thus, while the

Japanese auto makers might at first glance appear to be doing the same thing as the Emerging Church, namely, taking advantage of a market inefficiency, there is a key difference. Dobrev et al. state that the production of "small low-cost cars" is a an area where American producers "were not very competitive." However, there is nothing which suggests that they were structurally prohibited from being competitive in this area. Alternatively, the Emerging Church shows that resistant organizations can survive and thrive by capitalizing on those market segments which their would be competitors cannot capture very effectively due to structural barriers. It is clear from the accounts that my participants provide of their churchgoing history that mainstream churches and religious organizations are able to attract some of the people who eventually end up going to Emerging Churches, suggesting that it would be oversimplifying to say that these organizations cannot compete at all for these resources. Rather, the more accurate picture would seem to be that institutionalized religious organizations do not compete very well for these resources and that they are limited by their structure, processes and ideologies from ever being able to attract and retain members who have a distaste for institutionalized organization at a high or efficient rate. This leaves a group of people who are predisposed to accept the Emerging Church as a legitimate organization and advance and diffuse the innovation into other settings.

As I have shown, the organizations in this study have deliberately few formal boundary maintenance mechanisms. Formal membership is not even possible in many of the congregations in this study and traditional Christian gatekeeping rituals such as baptism, confirmation and communion are practiced irregularly and with an eye toward avoiding the institutionalization of a particular set of beliefs. This is a fundamental

concern as researchers have shown that as denominations and religious organizations become more liberal, they typically lose, rather than gain members (Demerath 1995; Iannaconne 1994; Tamney and Johnson 1998). Furthermore, liberal churches typically suffer from other symptoms such as free riders in their attempt to be as open as possible. However, I argue that this is not due to the liberal nature of the church structure, but rather the attempt to incorporate liberal church within an inherently conservative and institutionalized organizational model. When the model is changed, liberal churches can survive and prosper precisely because they have the structural elements to go along with their ideological components in order to create a niche market and attract a segment of the population that mainstream churches inherently cannot reach very effectively, namely, people tired of the institutional church. We can think of these people the dechurched in contrast to the unchurched. The term "dechurched" refers to people who have extensive experience with organized religion and have decided not to continue this relationship because of dissatisfaction with their previous experiences (Hammond 2001). This is in stark contrast to the "unchurched," a term which refers to people who have typically not had much if any experience with organized religion. The informal indications from accounts of the Emerging Church by practitioners and thinkers suggests that the Emerging Church is particularly good at reaching the dechurched, and my data back this up.

Thus, resisting the institutionalization of organizational ideologies functions to ensure the survival and success of the organization by appealing to a built in constituency. Resistance to institutionalized ideology does not serve only ideological ends. Creating permanently unsettled lives does more than simply increase the potential

options for religious expression. It serves an important strategic purpose as well. Just as the elements discussed in chapters four and five contribute to organizational success by ensuring that the structural elements remain uniquely within the control of the organization, the way resistant organizations deal with ideology contributes to organizational success by creating an environment where the questioning of individual and corporate belief systems is viewed as fundamental component of the identity of the organization.

These findings conflict somewhat with standard niche theory suggesting a refinement to take account of the niches created and occupied by resistant organizations. Popielarz and Neal note that among the most fundamental components of niche theory is the assertion that "the process of change disrupts the organization's routines, power structure, and internal and external networks, which should raise the likelihood of organizational mortality" (Popielarz and Neal 2007:72). Of course, I find just the opposite outcome, that the process of change to organizational routines, power structures and internal and external networks can actually lead to a decrease of mortality for alternative organizations especially when the alternative would mean competing for resources with bigger, more established organizations in the same field. Emerging Churches are able survive precisely because of these disruptions, because their organizational form as a resistant organization creates these disruptions. Without the disruptions, and the subsequent institutionalization that would occur, Emerging Churches would not be able to compete effectively for the dechurched people who currently attend Emerging Churches. Instead, they would be forced to compete for the same resources as mainline denominations and megachurches with an organizational structure ill-suited for

such a task. In this case then, stability would lead to decline, not survival as Hannan and

Freeman (1984) and Dobrev et al. (2003) would have us believe. It is not so much that I

disagree with Dobrev et al., who find that changes and shifts of niches inhibit

organizational persistence. Rather, the evidence from this study suggests that this is not

the case with all organizations, particularly with organizations which resist

institutionalization. Organizations which seek and find legitimacy based on this

resistance are able to survive and thrive precisely because of these disruptions, not in

spite of them.

7.3 Limitations

This research has not been without its limitations. In particular, I wish to

highlight four which should give shape to future studies of resistant organizations and

will structure my own research in the future. First, it is important to understand that

while the conclusions made here are based on substantial data, they were still drawn from

observations of organizations in one field. While there is good reason to suspect that

resistant organizations exist in other fields, this has not, to this point, been confirmed

empirically. It is quite possible that when the results from future studies in other fields

are compared with the conclusions made here that some of the results of the current study

will not be applicable across fields. While this potential lack of generalizability is a

shortcoming of this dissertation it also provides promising directions for future research.

In other words, it is an issue which is remediable.

Second, longitudinal data would provide a more complete picture of the processes

of resistance and legitimation in resistant organizations. While this dissertation was

conducted with relatively nascent organizations, and thus provides a good baseline of data for follow-up studies, it leaves many questions unanswered especially regarding the linearity of resistance and legitimacy. However, this is a problem which plagues organizational studies in general. While we know much about the various components of institutionalization and legitimation, little is understood about the pathways various organizations take through these processes.

Third, as this study was focused on explicating the processes and strategies of the resistant organization as an identifiable entity, no effort has been made to account for the scope of such organizations even within the field of religion where this study is situated. It would be useful to apply quantitative measures, now that the basic criteria have been identified, to determine what percentage of the organizational landscape consists of organizations resisting institutionalization.

Finally, these data, while rich in scope, do not do a very good job of helping to disentangle the necessary and sufficient strategies for resisting institutionalization. Although we have good theoretical reasons for believing that the structural, processural and ideological strategies identified above are all important, it is not possible to discern which combination is necessary and/or sufficient for resistance to be successful. Ultimately, the answer this question is probably too context specific to be worth exploring too much, but it remains for future research to answer this definitively.

7.4 Implications

The research presented here opens up a new avenue of exploration for organizational theorists. While the identification of the resistant organization is a unique

contribution to the field of organizational studies and the insights generated in the course

of this study advance our understanding of religious organizations in particular, these

findings do not suggest that a wholesale shift in organizational theory is in order. Indeed,

one of the particular strengths of this study has been the application of existing concepts

developed by institutional and organizational scholars to a new phenomenon. This not

only helps to substantiate the current findings, but makes future comparisons between

resistant organizations and institutionalized organizations much easier. As the principles

of the extended case method dictate, this study has resulted in a refinement of existing

organizational theory rather than a complete reinvention or reinterpretation of

institutional and organizational theory.

7.5 Conclusion

Returning to the scenario posed in the preface of this dissertation, we are in a

much better position to offer help and guidance to people like the group Mary and Mark

are a part of. This dissertation has offered a general conceptual framework for how

institutionalization might be resisted in the most important and vulnerable organizational

components while still working toward widespread legitimacy. Specifically, I have

shown that an organization which truly resists institutionalization is not one which seeks

to create its own patterns, but one which seeks to make the patterns themselves subject to

constant criticism and interrogation. Demerath, writing specifically about the field of

religion notes that,"[l]ike all efficient collectivities, churches require a modicum of

unquestioning loyalty, unswerving commitment, and unstinting support" (Demerath

1995:460). We have seen, however, that the Emerging Church desires to erase every

"modicum of unquestioning loyalty, unswerving commitment and unstinting support." I

have also shown that the organizations in this study do not object to loyalty, commitment

and support, but rather the modifiers of "unquestioning," "unswerving," and "unstinting"

that Demerath sees as playing such a fundamental role in most religious organizations.

We know now that the there are strategies an organization can pursue in the areas of

authority, labor, governance, professionalism, and ideology which can result in success

through the creation of a niche market because of their resistance to forces compelling

conformity. The result is precisely what Mary and Mark's group was working for,

without understanding how to get there, namely an increase in the range of opportunities

for personal religious expression and discovery within the same organization. They were

right to be concerned about the constraining powers of institutionalization, and this

dissertation has offered the beginnings of a theory for how those forces might be

effectively countered.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Popular Emerging Church Books

Book List

Carson, D. A. 2005. *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Kimball, Dan. 2004. *Emerging Worship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

McLaren, Brian. 2001. *A New Kind of Christian.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

—. 2004. *A Generous Orthodoxy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Tomlinson, Dave. 2003. *The Post-Evangelical.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Webber, Robert. 1999. *Ancient-Future Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

Jamieson, Alan. 2002. *A Churchless Faith*. London: SPCK.

Gibbs, Eddie, and Ryan K. Bolger. 2005. *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Kimball, Dan. 2003. *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Pagitt, William. 2005. *Church Re-Imagined: The Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Webber, Robert (Ed.). 2007. *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Jones, Tony. 2001. *Postmodern Youth Ministry*. El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties.

Simson, Wolfgang. 2001. *Houses that Changed the World: The Return of House Churches*. Waynesboro, GA: Authentic.

Myers, Joseph. 2003. *The Search to Belong: Rethinking Intimacy, Community and Small Groups*. El Cajon, CA: Emergent YS.

Frost, Michael and Alan Hirsch. 2003. *The Shaping of Things to Come*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.

Appendix 2: Interviewee List

Pseudonym	Participant Position	Home Church	Gender	Age
Cody	Congregant	Calvary	M	40
Jeff	Pastor	Calvary	M	31
Jeff	Pastor (follow up)	Calvary	M	31
Jessica	Congregant	Calvary	F	40
Melissa	Congregant	Calvary	F	26
Sally	Pastor	Calvary	F	30
Wade	Congregant	Calvary	M	41
Bob	Building Director	Crossroads	M	27
Brad	Former Congregant	Crossroads	M	29
Brett	Congregant	Crossroads	M	27
Chad	Congregant	Crossroads	M	26
Fred	Congregant	Crossroads	M	38
Greg	Congregant	Crossroads	M	29
Harmony	Congregant	Crossroads	F	27
Jimmy	Pastor	Crossroads	M	36
Mark	Deacon	Crossroads	M	38
Tim	Pastor	Crossroads	M	39
Abby	Congregant	Faith	F	22
Diane	Congregant	Faith	F	41
Eric	Community Coordinator/Seminary Student	Faith	M	30
Ethan	Congregant	Faith	M	19
Joe	Congregant	Faith	M	52
Kenny	Congregant	Faith	M	32
Reggie	Congregant	Faith	M	29
Rose	Congregant	Faith	F	19
William	Pastor	Faith	M	40
Aaron	Congregant	Fellowship	M	32

Interviewee List

Pseudonym	Participant Position	Home Church	Gender	Age
Eric	Congregant	Fellowship	M	22
Noah	Pastor	Fellowship	M	26
Pete	Pastor	Fellowship	M	29
Ryan	Congregant	Fellowship	M	45
Amanda	Congregant	Incarnate Word	F	25
Chris	Congregant	Incarnate Word	M	26
Clark	Congregant	Incarnate Word	M	40
Francis	Pastor	Incarnate Word	F	31
Jeremy	Worship Team Member	Incarnate Word	M	31
Ricky	Pastor	Incarnate Word	M	34
George	Music Minister	Living Word	M	32
Megan	Congregant	Living Word	F	28
Melinda	Congregant	Living Word	F	26
Ned	Intern	Living Word	M	24
Ricky	Congregant	Living Word	M	29
Ronald	Pastor	Living Word	M	39
Damian	Pastor	Conference Participant	M	34
Erica	Intern	Conference Participant	F	20
Hanley	Congregant	Conference Participant	M	29
Langston	Congregant	Conference Participant	M	24
Mary	Congregant	Conference Participant	F	30
Parker	Unaffiliated	Conference Participant	M	53
Patti	Conference Coordinator	Conference Participant	F	48
Rob	Pastor	Conference Participant	M	26
Vance	Pastor	Conference Participant	M	42
Gary	Board Member for Emergent	N/A	M	38
Tony	Congregant/Seminary Student/Blogger	House Church	M	27

Interviewee List

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Emerging Church Interview Guide

[First, I need to administer the informed consent form and answer any questions. During this process I need to emphasize that A. The interviewee may stop the interview at anytime and B. The interviewee may refuse to answer any question. Also, I need to restate that this interview is confidential and that no information from it will be accompanied by the interviewee's name or other identifying information.]

****
[I will begin by letting the participant know how I obtained his/her name and who referred him/her to me. Okay, I would like to start by gathering some general information about your background and your family.
****
Where were you born and raised?

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Are you currently married or cohabitating?
Does your partner attend church with you? If not, does s/he attend church someplace else? If yes, did ya'll make the decision to attend an Emerging congregation together?

Do you have any kids?
Do you take them to church with you?

How many places have lived in your life?

Is your family currently active in the church?

How would you characterize yourself politically?

Did you go to college?
        If so, where?

What do you do for a living? How long have you had that position? Have you ever worked in any other fields? If so, which ones?

****
Briefly, I'd like to now ask you about how you use your free time.
****
How many hours per week do you spend online?

What websites do you visit most frequently?

Do you visit internet sites related to Emerging Church?
        If Yes, Which sites do you visit? How often?

Do you maintain any websites or blogs?

Do you belong to any online discussion groups or subscribe to any listserves?

What are your hobbies?

How often do you spend time with people from your congregation outside of church?

In the past year, have you purchased any books or movies that are theological in nature?   If yes: which ones and why?

****
Alright, Thank you. I'd like to ask you now about your history with the church.
****
What church tradition, if any, did you grow up in?
        If yes: What made you decide to start attending an Emergent church?

Tell me a little about your church experiences growing up, did your family attend church regularly? Did you?

Were you a part of a youth group?
        If yes: Tell me about your youth group. How old were you when you were participating?
What kinds of things did your youth group do?

Did you enjoy these early church experiences?

After you left home did you continue to attend church regularly? Did you participate in congregational activities outside of church?

If you hadn't started attending an Emergent church, would you be worshipping at a different congregation?
        If yes, which one?
        Why did you choose Emergent over the [insert church name here].

How often do you attend church currently? Days per week? Hours per visit?
What activities do you participate in when you are there?

Have you had a "conversion" experience?
        If yes: Can you tell me about it?

There is much discussion within the Emergent community about whether or not Emergent is ready to be a "movement." Are you aware of these discussions? What are your thoughts?

****
Good, thanks. Now I'd like to discuss the Emergent Church in general and your congregation in particular. (This section is only for people who self-identify as part of Emergent or as belonging to or attending an Emergent Church.)
****

Why do you attend an Emerging Church?

What does it mean to be Emergent?

What makes your church an Emerging Church?

How would I know if a congregation was Emergent if nobody told me?

How did you come to attend an Emerging Church? [Or, for those who were apart of congregations that "emerged," Why did your congregation decide to become Emergent, and why do you still attend?]

How do decisions get made in your congregation?

How is this congregation different or not different from other churches you've attended in the past?

How does being a member of an Emergent congregation affect your life outside of worship services?

Tell me about your worship services? Who plans them? Who gets to speak or lead the service?

Who are the leaders in your congregation?

Who are the leaders of Emergent?

Finally, do you know of anyone else that would be interested in speaking with me about Emergent?

****
Questions for leaders or people in traditional leadership positions.
****
How do your administrative tasks differ from those of people in similar positions in other religious organizations with which you are familiar?

What organizations or groups do you interact with in your job (i.e, local, state, federal government)?

Do these organizations ever cause conflict within your congregation?

How does your congregation make decisions?

What is your role in your congregation?

Where were you trained?

How did you come to this position?

What does it mean to be a part of Emergent?

In your opinion, what is the worst thing that is likely to happen to Emergent?

Where do you see Emergent in the next 15 years?

Which group of people does your congregation typically attract?

Do you think this is consistent with other Emerging churches?

How do you go about targeting and attracting those people?

Have you noticed that they have anything in common in terms of demographics or life histories?

What other groups or organizations, if any, past or present to you look to for inspiration?

Tell me about how you came to know about those groups and why you use them as models.

How have you had to adapt or change those models to work in your congregation?

Are there other organizations or groups, religious or otherwise, that you want to avoid becoming? If so, why?

****
Finally, there are a set of questions that I'll want to ask the opponents of and commentators on Emergent. During these interviews, I'll draw on the above questions as is necessary, but due to the diverse nature of this group it is impossible to identify them ahead of time.
****

What does it mean to be Emergent?

What about Emergent do you find problematic?

What are the good things about Emergent?

Why, in your opinion, has Emergent become so popular with a portion of the population?

 Do you see Emergent as taking members away from already established congregations?

 Is there anything about Emergent that you or your congregation has adopted?

How has Emergent influenced Christianity both in the U.S. and around the world?

Appendix 4: Anti-Statement of Faith[37]

Doctrinal Statement(?)

From Tony Jones, National Coordinator, Emergent-U.S.

Yes, we have been inundated with requests for our statement of faith in Emergent, but some of us had an inclination that to formulate something would take us down a road that we don't want to trod. So, imagine our joy when a leading theologian joined our ranks and said that such a statement would be disastrous. That's what happened when we started talking to LeRon Shults, late of Bethel Seminary and now heading off to a university post in Norway. LeRon is the author of many books, all of which you should read, and now the author a piece to guide us regarding statements of faith and doctrine. Read on...

From LeRon Shults:

The coordinators of Emergent have often been asked (usually by their critics) to proffer a doctrinal statement that lays out clearly what they believe. I am merely a participant in the conversation who delights in the ongoing reformation that occurs as we bring the Gospel into engagement with culture in ever new ways. But I have been asked to respond to this ongoing demand for clarity and closure. I believe there are several reasons why Emergent should not have a "statement of faith" to which its members are asked (or required) to subscribe. Such a move would be unnecessary, inappropriate and disastrous.

Why is such a move unnecessary? Jesus did not have a "statement of faith." He called others into faithful relation to God through life in the Spirit. As with the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, he was not concerned primarily with whether individuals gave cognitive assent to abstract propositions but with calling persons into trustworthy community through embodied and concrete acts of faithfulness. The writers of the New Testament were not obsessed with finding a final set of propositions the assent to which marks off true believers. Paul, Luke and John all talked much more about the mission to which we should commit ourselves than they did about the propositions to which we should assent. The very idea of a "statement of faith" is mired in modernist assumptions and driven by modernist anxieties – and this brings us to the next point.

Such a move would be inappropriate. Various communities throughout church history have often developed new creeds and confessions in order to express the Gospel in their cultural context, but the early modern use of linguistic formulations as "statements" that allegedly capture the truth about God with certainty for all cultures and contexts is deeply problematic for at least two reasons. First, such an approach presupposes a (Platonic or Cartesian) representationalist view of language, which has been undermined in late modernity by a variety of disciplines across the social and physical sciences (e.g., sociolinguistics and paleo-biology). Why would Emergent want to force the new wine of the Spirit's powerful transformation of communities into old modernist wineskins? Second, and more importantly from a theological perspective, this fixation with propositions can easily lead to the attempt to use the

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finite tool of language on an absolute Presence that transcends and embraces all finite reality. Languages are culturally constructed symbol systems that enable humans to communicate by designating one finite reality in distinction from another. The truly infinite God of Christian faith is beyond all our linguistic grasping, as all the great theologians from Irenaeus to Calvin have insisted, and so the struggle to capture God in our finite propositional structures is nothing short of linguistic idolatry.

Why would it be disastrous? Emergent aims to facilitate a conversation among persons committed to living out faithfully the call to participate in the reconciling mission of the biblical God. Whether it appears in the by-laws of a congregation or in the catalog of an educational institution, a "statement of faith" tends to stop conversation. Such statements can also easily become tools for manipulating or excluding people from the community. Too often they create an environment in which real conversation is avoided out of fear that critical reflection on one or more of the sacred propositions will lead to excommunication from the community. Emergent seeks to provide a milieu in which others are welcomed to join in the pursuit of life "in" the One who is true (1 John 5:20). Giving into the pressure to petrify the conversation in a "statement" would make Emergent easier to control; its critics could dissect it and then place it in a theological museum alongside other dead conceptual specimens the curators find opprobrious. But living, moving things do not belong in museums. Whatever else Emergent may be, it is a movement committed to encouraging the lively pursuit of God and to inviting others into a delightfully terrifying conversation along the way.

This does not mean, as some critics will assume, that Emergent does not care about belief or that there is no role at all for propositions. Any good conversation includes propositions, but they should serve the process of inquiry rather than shut it down. Emergent is dynamic rather than static, which means that its ongoing intentionality is (and may it ever be) shaped less by an anxiety about finalizing statements than it is by an eager attention to the dynamism of the Spirit's disturbing and comforting presence, which is always reforming us by calling us into an ever-intensifying participation in the Son's welcoming of others into the faithful embrace of God.

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