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# "You Is The Church": Identity and Identification in Church Leadership

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"YOU IS THE CHURCH": IDENTITY AND IDENTIFICATION

IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

By

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Structure and Agency in a Church Plant

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Abstract

Churches provide a structured medium for human spiritual experiences (Ammerman, 2005) and as such are structured around a set of organizationally unique purposes and beliefs. This research project focuses on the leadership teams of a start-up church organization founded in Denver, CO. Guided by Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984), Communicative Constitution of Organization through the Four Flows (McPhee & Zaug, 2000), and Organizational Identification (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998), the bi-directional relationship between leaders and the organization was qualitatively examined and analyzed. Specifically, membership negotiation is seen through the constructs of formal structure and identity. The negotiation process was evident in the team through the process of communicating and enacting a DNA metaphor. Membership negotiation is found to encompass the negotiation of individual and organizational identity, as well as organizational identification. The church leadership team, as it currently functions, demonstrates the complexity of identity construction and maintenance within a highly participative and belief driven organization. Through this research there are implications for concertive control and organizational identification negating some of the role tensions for organizational leaders. Overall, structure and agency within the Pearl Church organization is the result of communicative negotiation of importance, belonging, and purpose.

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"You is the Church": Identity and Identification in Church Leadership

Megan Gesler

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**Introduction/Rationale**

Churches as organizations provide a wealth of research opportunities to explore how these groups of people function. While churches are religious institutions, they are also nonprofit organizations that fit into the realm of civil society (Lewis, 2005) by the member-focused services they provide. Churches function similarly to typical nonprofits, but are unique social institutions that rely on voluntary participation, which demands organizational legitimacy. Organizational legitimacy refers to an organization's adherence to society-set expectations of normal behavior (Veil, 2012). A church or religious organization is a substantive entity within all societies (Bowker, 2002) and as a result there are a set of expectations held by the public about what a church should be or should not be. Obviously, these expectations are disregarded at times, as in the case of cults and extremist belief systems; however, in most cases individual churches and denominations wish to be regarded as functional and respected institutions of society. Organizational legitimacy is a concern for churches because it influences expectations of membership, including volunteer opportunities. There are expectations regarding the process of becoming and the practice of being a member of a church. Those expectations serve, in part, as a guiding structure for established and prospective members.

As with any nonprofit organization, churches exist without clear lines of ownership (Frumkin, 2005). The existence of multiple stakeholders within the organization makes it difficult to assess who is in control of the functioning of the church. There is not typically a single individual who establishes and communicates the church's identity. Formal structure is present within a church and necessarily establishes the lead pastor and a hierarchy of power that allows the church to function as an organization, however; the enactment of the more abstract concepts necessary for church function are less obvious. These processes happen as a component

of membership negotiation which facilitates the establishing of leaders who then establish and enact the church vision and mission. Thus understanding the connection of members to a church organization and furthermore to a leadership team is of particular interest. As a result, I seek to answer this research question: How do leaders negotiate the meanings of their membership through formal structure and identification?

This research will use Structuration Activity Theory to examine the leadership team of a relatively new church in Denver, CO. called The Pearl Church. The Pearl Church is self-categorized as a non-denominational Charismatic Church (Personal Interview). Using a series of theoretical concepts, I examine the connection of leaders to the Pearl Church. Foundationally, Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984), Communicative Constitution of Organizations, specifically the Four Flows (McPhee & Zaug, 2000), and Organizational Identity and Identification (Scott, Corman & Cheney, 1998) are used as lenses for examining the formal structure, organizational identification, and identity negotiation of leaders within the Pearl Church organization.

Based on the theoretical constructs, I will look at the interactive construction of the organization and its leadership team. Members of the leadership team are similar in some ways to volunteers, though they also differ in others. Members of a church leadership are different from most volunteers because they act simultaneously as clients, volunteers, and management. This is of particular interest when examining the communicative construction of the organization by the members as they enact various levels of involvement.

Within systems of churches, there are particular organizations referred to as church plants. Church plants are new churches that exist as their own entity, but are connected to an existing church. Basically, an established church will decide that they wish to start another

church, typically in different city, and will establish a new church. The new church will be connected to the original church and will receive support, including rules and resources, but will be expected to establish itself over time. There is an expectation that the church will grow enough over the course of several years to be able to survive on its own. This study seeks to examine a church organization that is a church plant.

Churches provide a unique area for study of member – organization interaction research. Specifically of interest is the inherent complexity of the interaction between individual and organizational identities and the discursive construction of church identity based on individual representation of that identity. Individual and organizational identities necessarily impact one another (Scott, Corman, and Cheney, 1998), particularly in a church organization where the same document (the Bible) that informs individuals of their best individual self also informs them of their best organizational self. The Bible provides a foundational reference point for individual identity and behavior. Additionally, that document informs of the best practices for the organization, typically informing the beliefs and values of the church. Church identity construction and enactment is believed to happen through individual action. The communication of the desired identity is necessarily discursive. Thus there is a complex interplay of church identity and individual identity. Through the process of this research, I seek to explore the complexities of membership negotiation and interactions, inclusive of identification and identity, within the material framework of organizational formal structure.

A church plant is the best option to examine the complexity of identity negotiation and interactions in churches for three reasons. First, a church plant is newly established as an organization and though there are outside influences informing the formal structure of the organization, the church plant is working to establish a system of structure to effectively fulfill

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organizational needs. Thus the structures of the church plant are not yet entrenched and will be more evident in the organization, as they are in the process of being established. Second, the relatively fluid nature of the church organization implies that individual leaders will have greater insight into the meaning making process of the organization and thus will be overtly involved in the negotiation process. Thirdly, leaders will be in the process of establishing both individual and organizational identity which allows a clearer perspective on church identity construction. Specifically, the Pearl Church will allow for an examination of the unique manner in which this social institution enacts its identity in fashions unique to the beliefs, values, and structures of their leadership.

The Pearl Church, identifying as a non-denominational charismatic church, is a uniquely positioned church that while having strong roots in the fundamental tradition of Christianity is also focused on the active working of God and the Holy Spirit. Though the church is not affiliated with any particular denomination, thus placing them in the category of an independent Protestant congregation (Chaves, 2011), there is a connection to a larger organization called MFI that provides the church with an association that is similar. Though the Pearl Church and their parent church do not specifically associate themselves with a particular movement, they display tenants of several Protestant movements, including Evangelical and Pentecostal beliefs (Edwards, 2002).

This research project extends to address the problem of a limited amount of communication research that examines churches as unique organizations within the category of non-profits. Therefore, in an attempt to advance communication knowledge, based in the structuration theory paradigm and addresses the church as an organization, the current project was conducted.

In order to contribute to the healthy functioning of the church researched and similarly structured and constituted organizations, I hope to develop a better understanding of the church as a communicatively constituted organization, instead of a collection of religious people. Specifically for the Pearl Church, I provide them with insight into their communication of membership negotiation, inclusive of identity and identification, to both established and prospective members.

This study contributes to theory by extending Structuration Activity theory into the realm of church organizations, including an extension into the process of identity structuring and enactment by individuals and the organization. In addition, an argument will be made that the theory of membership negotiation, from McPhee and Zaug's (2000) four flows, be extended beyond its current conceptualization in order to include an identity negotiation component.

**Chapter One**

**Literature Review**

For this research I explore how leaders of a beginning church understand and enact the meaning of their membership while creating and maintaining the church as an organization. In order to examine these processes, I must first address the theoretical foundation of the concepts that I use as lenses for understanding. Structuration theory guides my understanding of organizing because it provides a meta-theoretic foundation for addressing the manner in which organizing is impacted by both individuals as the organization, while still recognizing that the organization exists as its own entity. Specifically, churches function in a bi-directional relationship between the church as an entity and the members as those who comprise the church. Additionally, this paper will address the processes of formal structure and organizational identification as components of Membership Negotiation, one of the Four Flows (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Thus, I will discuss the foundational concept of Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984), the Communicative Constitution of Organization, inclusive of the Four Flows (McPhee & Zaug), and the Structuration Model of Identification (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998).

**Structuration Theory**

The church as an organization is being examined using the foundation of Structuration theory. Structuration theory was originally proposed by Giddens (1984) as a process by which to understand and describe the interaction between organizational structures and the individuals or "agents" who comprise the organization. Poole and McPhee (2005) synthesized the concepts of structuration with a specific eye toward its use in the area of communication. Structuration theory is a meta-theory and therefore an extremely broad perspective to analyze communication;

however, it is useful as a lens to describe the bidirectional relationship between organizational structures and organizational agents.

Structuration theory proposes a lens for understanding the tension between individuals and organizations. For example, organizations exist through the actions of the particular members that compose it, while at the same time it exists as something larger than the members. Without the individual members an organization would not be an organization, but conversely the organization is an entity beyond a group of individuals like people waiting for a bus stop (Castelfranchi, 1995). Structuration gives an explanation for this tension. Structures within an organization are constructed and maintained by members through the enactment (communication) of a system of rules and resources that agents can draw on in the process of interactions (Poole & McPhee, 2005). Structuration explains the relationship between structures and organizations as existing in a cyclical fashion; that is, agents communicatively establish and influence organizational structures which in turn enable and constrain the agents. Both their interactions with one another and the organizational structures constitute a duality of structure because it is both the means of constituting relationships as well as the outcome of the interactions (Poole & McPhee).

Structures are the rules and resources that are established through communicative interactions and serve as the framework within which organizing takes place. The knowledge sets that inform the structure can come from a number of places. For instance, agents of an organization may find similarly functioning organizations and use the rules set up by that organization as a foundation or a member might establish the rules based on their understanding of organizational needs. Regardless of where the structure comes from, it remains a communicative process of organizing. Members of the organization construct the rules and

resources that guide the behaviors of organizing. These structures are continually being enacted and reenacted by agents within the organization and exist to the exclusion of other organizational decisions (Poole & McPhee, 2005). Organizational structure is imperative to an organization's functioning as it maintains order within the organization. Establishment and maintenance of structure requires an agent.

Agency is defined as the human ability to continue or alter actions, or "the capacity to act otherwise" (Giddens, 1984, p. 14). Based on this definition, organizations which consist of people are constructed by people, who are referred to as agents. Thus agents have the option to engage in any number of behaviors and therefore are central to organization structure. Rules and resources are discursively produced by an agent. However, in order to be an agent, an individual must be a legitimate member of the organization, meaning they are required to possess organizational knowledge, be recognized by others within the organization, and have the ability to enact change within the organizational systems or maintain the system (McPhee & Iverson, 2009). In the process of creating structure, the agent establishes a structure for subsequent members, including themselves, both enabling and constraining future actions. However, because agents are imbued with the option to choose, the structure can be changed at any time. Though material and immaterial consequences can occur when the structure is changed, change is possible. Agents are imperative to the organizational system, as they are the component that produces and reproduces the system, making the process an active one.

According to Poole and McPhee (2005), agents have three levels of consciousness that inform their actions (episodes of interaction); discursive (can be explained), practical (unexplainable, we just know), and unconscious (we don't think about it, but it influences us). These three levels directly impact the way in which agents communicate and exercise their

agency. Closely connected to the levels of consciousness is an agent's ability to "reflexively monitor" (p. 176), which essentially is the ability to examine a situation and draw upon any and all of the resources available in order to choose the best course of action within a given situation or interaction. When agents are called upon to make a decision regarding their actions within an organization, they engage with a variety of knowledge sources. For example, when a church leader engages in the task of setting up the church stage, they use resources from previous interactions to guide them through the task. Those resources are functionally knowledge sources that inform the leader concerning the behaviors needed in order to complete the task. These resources are not necessarily exclusive to the organization that the agent is currently within. Specifically, the resources described by Poole and McPhee are within the agent and thus could be from anywhere. Reflexive monitoring allows the agent to better engage in the task because it means that changes can be made at any time during the process, according to what functions best. Thus agents are active participants in the process of structuring, because they establish and maintain the rules and resources of the organization.

Structuration theory is a meta-theoretical concept and therefore is useful as a lens with which to examine multiple facets of organizations. It explains the way that a church can exist simultaneously as people (agents) and as an organization that is continually produced and reproduced by agents. However, it is not specific enough to function as a theoretical framework for research. To that end, organizational communication scholars have articulated a set of theories regarding the communicative constitution of organizations (CCO). Within these, McPhee and Zaug (2000) have suggested that the enactment of an organization can be categorized into four communication flows that will inform the current research.

As stated, structuration theory provides a lens for examining the relationship between structure and agents. Furthermore, the theory gets at the concept of agent power or influence within the system (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). When an individual engages in an act of power, if or when that power is accepted by those who are influenced by that action, it is inducted into the system of power, meaning, and norms. In that moment, the communicative action becomes a structure. Obviously, the permanency of the structure is not certain, but the structure exists until it is changed. Organizations, for-profit and non-profit, have practical needs that encourage them to find people to best accomplish tasks in order to fill those needs. It is reasonable to believe that churches would also have roles and positions that would need to be filled. Furthermore, in an organization that is less structured or established, the members that fill leadership roles would likely be selected with consideration for their ability to enact and interpret the concepts and ideals set forth by the pastors and board members. Therefore those members would possibly be greatly influenced by the system and conversely have a great deal of influence on the system, at least more so than individuals who simply attend a service. Those systems of interactions are impacted by the communicative interactions of the leaders as they enact the organization, thus communicatively constituting the organization. Before detailing the four flows model, the manner in which a church, and more specifically the church studied in this project, should be examined through a CCO perspective needs articulation.

**Churches as Communicatively Constituted**

"All organizations have at least one manifest purpose and the activity of members and sub-groups is partly directed toward it" (McPhee & Zaug, 2000, p. 38). This purpose is defined by the need that evokes the purpose. Gesler (unpublished), in an examination of identity communication in a church plant, suggests that some churches exist based on a representation of

fulfilling individual and community needs. This suggests that the purpose of the church would be to fill needs. The manner in which those needs are filled is further informed by multiple resources, including the mission statement, the structure of the organization, and perhaps even the meaning attributed to the name of the church.

In as much as organizations are constituted by the discursive interactions that occur, the foundational beliefs of a church will constitute the church as an organization. As the lead pastors interact with their constituents and communicate the beliefs and values of the church, those interactions constitute the church. The Pearl Church fits into the category of spirit-filled evangelical churches (Edwards, 2000) and thus will likely invoke some representation of their purpose from the Bible. The interpretation of Biblical passages establishes a portion of the structure of the mission and purpose of the church as enacted by the leadership, as is described by the first of twelve core values stated by the Pearl Church: "We believe that the written Word of God is to remain preeminent in all aspects of life and ministry. It is the standard and conviction maker, atmosphere setter, and the core of what church and ministry is built upon" (The Pearl Church, 2012). As the author of eight books in the New Testament, Paul did a lot of writing to churches (1 Corinthians 1:2, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:2, Ephesians 1:1, New King James Version) concerning the purpose of the church and behaviors that members should engage in personally and as a group. The manifest purpose of a church could be defined by the church itself or more specifically the church leadership, perhaps the pastor and the board. This purpose is addressed within the mission statement or perhaps in a separate statement of purpose (i.e. Pearl Church website). The defined and interpreted (these can often be two very different understandings) purpose of a church is unique to each church organization. The church is

constituted partially, and uniquely, through the communicative interactions that are established foundationally on their purpose which is informed through beliefs derived from the Bible.

Churches establish themselves through discourse and through action. Discursively the most prevalent conceptualization of church purpose is communicated through the mission statement; however, according to the CCO perspective, the communication of the church purpose is enacted in the behaviors of the members as well as the activities engaged in by the church as a collective group of people. These activities can include the events sponsored by the church and the messages presented by individuals acting as representatives of the church in public settings. Specifically, the individuals who choose to become leadership by adopting and enacting the mission of the church are central to better understanding the church as an organization. This understanding is garnered both from the agent perspective to better understand why and how individuals enact the organization as well as the organizational level that articulates how the organization is structured to enact the mission through those agents. Specifically, the four flows model (McPhee and Zaug, 2000) provides a mechanism to narrow focus on the church leaders as enacting the mission of the church.

**The Four Flows**

As a CCO approach, the four flows model (McPhee & Iverson, 2009; McPhee & Zaug, 2000) provides a specific lens for exploring how organizations are enacted communicatively. The four flows are involved in the structuring of an organization, not just the initial structuring, but the continual structuring and enactment of the structure of the organization. The four flows are membership negotiation, organizational self-structuring, institutional positioning, and activity coordination. Membership negotiation emphasizes the processes of becoming and remaining a member of the organization. Organization self-structuring refers to processes, engaged in by the

organization, that involve the practical establishment of resources (McPhee & Iverson, 2009). This structuring involves the creating and implementation of systems that will guide further actions and communication behaviors. Institutional positioning is a lens to examine the organization, as a whole, in relation to other organizations and activity coordination is a way to look at how groups and processes happen in an organization. All communication that works to constitute an organization will fit into one or more of these flows (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). The scope of this research is focused on membership negotiation in order to address how individuals communicatively construct organizations and enact the meaning of their continued membership.

**Membership Negotiation.** As a flow in the constitution of organizations, membership negotiation brings together the ways in which members become and remain a part of the organization (Mcphee & Iverson, 2009). The concept engages the process of an individual's interaction with an organization in order to establish place within or in relation to that organization as well as the organization's structures of engaging people within the organizational system. The process of membership negotiation requires the individual to be knowledgeable about the organization, be recognized by others within the organization, and have access to information leading to action within the organization (McPhee &Iverson, 2009). The concept of membership negotiation functionally provides a means to discuss the induction and maintenance of being a member of an organization or organizational subgroup. It gets at the root of what it means for individuals, and organizations, to belong to that organization. In order to better develop the construct of membership negotiation for this research, I review membership negotiation in general, then focus on formal structure and organizational identification as constructs. Furthermore, I contend that identity and identification fit within membership

negotiation and conclude by narrowing the scope of membership negotiation and the identity/identification constructs for the purposes of this project.

Scott and Myers (2010) provide the most detailed articulation of membership negotiation to this point. They describe membership negotiation as "participation in formal and informal processes that induct them into the workgroup and organization" (p. 90). Practically, it is the process by which an individual becomes a part of an organization, in whatever form that might exist. One process is the interview process, where the organizational expectations are explained and the individual is given a tour of the facilities. Also much less formal processes where newer members are expected to do lower level work, such as making photo copies are activities where membership is enacted. The negotiation portion of the name comes from the concept that members, while being enabled and constrained by the rules and resources available to them as members, also maintain agency and therefore have the option and the ability to influence and to outright change organization rules and resources.

Membership negotiations are a function of member's relationship to an organization (Scott & Myers, 2010) and happen in specific instances or events. Therefore these actions or interactions are discussed as membership negotiations. Furthermore, there are seven sets of rules and resources which are referred to as "media" that impact membership negotiation. The seven media are role expectations, group norms, organizational norms, formal structure, socialization, organizational identification, and power relations. Based on the seven media, Scott and Myers provide eighteen propositions which highlight the role of each media within the process of communicative organizing. While all seven media, and subsequent eighteen propositions are present in membership negotiation, the thorough examination of all constructs is beyond the scope of this research. For this project I am interested in examining formal structure, as it

"provides clarification of roles and serves to situate members into the organizational system" (Scott & Myers, p.94), and identification, as the basis for members to enact their connection to the organization.

Additionally, the volunteer literature points toward formal structure and identification. Churches, functioning as non-profit organizations, are able to carry out their mission through the contributions, both financial and material, of volunteers. Though there are individuals who are employed to fill certain positions, most often the majority of the church workforce is composed of individuals volunteering within a designated structure. The constructs of formal structure and organizational identification function differently in a non-profit organization than they do in a for-profit organization and thus are impacted by the voluntary nature of membership participation (Kramer, 2011). Because individuals are not receiving monetary compensation for their enactment of organizational behaviors, there is something else that rewards them for those behaviors. While there are a number of explanations for engaging in volunteer work, Tidwell (2005) found that volunteers with high levels of organizational identification are more committed and satisfied with their experience. Thus the voluntary nature of church leadership participation will be impacted by and have an impact on the identification of members with the church. Concurrently, the Pearl Church is an evangelical church organization, which according to their website (thepearlchurch.org, 2012) believe that volunteering, referred to as serving, is an important component of being a Christian and the church. This emphasis on volunteering as an outcome of organizational values and beliefs impacts the amount of volunteering that members are likely to do as well as a stronger connection to the church organization.

I contend that formal structure and organizational identification are uniquely important to a church plant organization. Formal structure is an integral component of membership

negotiation because the formation of rules and resources define and construct the organization's framework for existence, especially in a beginning organization. Organizational identification, as a component of membership negotiation, is necessary to examine because it highlights the way in which the member is connected to the organization through a process of not only defining themselves, but also the organization. First formal structure is briefly discussed, followed by a discussion of organizational identification, inclusive of an overview of identity construction and negotiation.

*Formal structure.* Although formal structure can be considered as a broader category of analysis (McPhee, 1985), I focus on formal structure as it relates to membership negotiation (Scott & Myers, 2010). Formal structure is vital to the conceptualization of membership negotiation at two levels. First, structure is a central component of structuration theory. Structure provides a conceptual framework for examining how the organization has established the rules and resources that guide members. Second, formal structure within membership negotiation articulates the formal roles and relationships of organizational members. Scott and Myers' (2010) sixth proposition concerning membership negotiations states "[f]ormalized organizational structure serves as a medium for MNs across time and space" (p. 94). Structures provide a framework for agents to know what they can or cannot do within a given situation. Those systems allow for members to define themselves within the organization and to define the organization in relation to themselves. Specifically, within a church plant the leadership is creating as well as maintaining the formal structures that will continue into the future. Leadership in the church plant has the opportunity to enact formal structures that are not as sedimented over time as formal structure in older organizations.

Membership negotiation from the member's point of view has a bidirectional relationship with the organization (Scott & Myers 2010). Members negotiate formal structures by maintaining existing structures or through establishing new structures. Conversely, the organization through formal structures, amongst other constructs, impacts the construction of organizational identity through the process of organizational identification by the individual member. Though there is an inherent complexity to be recognized, at a foundational level membership negotiation is similar to the concept of social learning (Bandura, 1971). The process of joining an organization has been suggested as a progression of learning to function within that organization. Induction into being an agent within an organization is not an isolated or individualized occurrence, but a social process. Individuals engage with others to gather the knowledge sets required for being a member. A portion of that process is enacted within the formal structure of the organization, but a portion is also enacted through informal interactions. Thus membership negotiation can be seen as a process of constructing meaning about and within the organization, partially by learning the formal and informal structures through social processes.

*Organizational identification.* This research seeks to address the duality of structure that is, the interaction between the structure of identity and the system of identification (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998). In order to clarify the ideas being presented, I will discuss the terms used throughout the paper, followed by a brief overview of the influential identity literature narrowing to focus on identity and identification construction. Throughout this paper, I contend that identity is a significant part of membership negotiation.

Researchers have conceptualized and labeled the constructs of identity in many different ways. In order to further clarify concepts, I define the terms *identity*, *organizational identity*,

*church identity*, *organizational identification,* and *individual identity* to discuss the specific areas of identity and identification. For the purpose of this research, identity is grounded in Kuhn's (2006) work. "Identity is the conception of the self reflexively and discursively understood by the self" (p. 1340). Although organizational identity has been defined by Cheney and Christiansen (2001) as the identity that is presented and maintained by the organization to external and internal stakeholders, the term was then used by Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998) to describe an individual's conceptualization of self in relation to an organization. "We develop an organizational identity when we perceive having joined an organization, various workgroup identities as we become members of project teams or departments, and so on." (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998, p.304). For the purpose of this research I adopt this interpretation of the phrase *organizational identity*. Thus, organizational identity is used to discuss individual identity formation based on a member's connection to the organization. When discussing the identity of the church organization as a whole, inclusive of the image the Pearl Church wishes to project to the public, the term *church identity* is used. *Organizational identification* describes the process by which individuals connect to the church and thus enact their identity based on that connection. Furthermore, *individual identity* is used to refer to the conceptualization that constitutes individual perception of the self, inclusive of their organizational identity, as well as other components (i.e. family connections, hobbies, etc.).

Identity is a structured perception of oneself. Additionally, identity can be connected to organizations because individuals are "Social beings embedded in organizational contexts." (Alvesson, Ashcraft, and Thomas, 2008, p. 6). The conception of the self occurs through the gathering of information from a variety of sources including social interactions within an organization that have an impact on how the individual sees and understands themselves.

Furthermore, identity is an "uncertain, precarious, and fluid kind of subjective reference point" (Alvesson, 2010, p.197). Identity is not a static construct, but adjusts and changes based on personal and social factors. Given that identity is a dynamic, reflexive and discursive process that is enacted (in part) in organizations, exploring identity as it relates to membership negotiation is important.

The concept of identity establishment was originally proposed by Burke and then further explained in the field of organizations by Cheney (1983). Cheney made the connection between identity and organizational communication by narrowing Burke's conceptualizations into three ways that organizations establish a communal identity and ensure organizational identification the common ground technique, identification through antithesis, and the assumed or transcendent we. These identification practices, alone or in conjunction with one another, are used in order to maximize the individual's attachment to the organization. The identification practices are also used to persuade members to engage in desired behaviors. This attachment, in turn, leads to higher satisfaction, less chance of leaving the organization, among other beneficial outcomes, according to Cheney.

The ideas presented by Cheney (1983) led to significant conceptual development and refinement of organizational identification. For this research, four concepts concerning organizational identification provide insight into membership negotiation in a church plant: organizational identity and identification are social constructs, competing identities must be reconciled for continued identification, organizational identification leads to concertive control, and organizational identification exists in duality with identity.

First, organizational identity and identification are social constructs. Who you are (identity) is necessarily tied to who and what you are associated with. To that end many scholars

have based their research in the theoretical construct of social identity theory. Social identity theory, according to Hogg (2001) is a function of categorization and comparison. Individuals enact their engagement with and attachment to an organization (identification) through recognizing themselves to be part of a group, to the exclusion of membership in other groups. Identity provides social categories and boundaries that individuals use to define where they belong (Scott, 2007). This categorization enables individuals to understand the places, both physically and metaphorically, they fit because, "identities situate the organization, group and person" (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton, 2000, p. 13). Additionally, organizational identity and individual's identification with the organization become more important when organizations have more ambiguous structure (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton). A church plant that is in the beginning of establishing their own structure will need individuals to engage in church and organizational identity construction as well as strong organizational identification because the dual processes of identity establishment and identification are continual and bidirectional in nature.

Second, individuals can have competing identities which impact the process of identification. Individuals utilizing identity resources from more than one source experience identity conflict or competition (Larson & Pepper, 2003). This is highly evident in organizations or individuals who have recently experienced some form of change. Knowledge bases and structures that were useful in the past might now be less useful or obsolete, having been replaced by new information and new or revised structures.

Identity competition works to enact a "negotiation of meaning through communication" (Larson & Pepper, 2003, p.533). It provides a lens through which to examine the discursive nature of identity and identification. For example, leaders will likely have previous church

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experience and therefore will have other identity resources to utilize. In addition, this lens will be helpful in examining conflicts between roles within the organization. Gesler's (unpublished) research on church identity construction in a church plant suggests that individuals engage in behaviors and fill roles that are incongruent with their personal identity because the organization needs that role filled. In this way, role relates to identity in acting as an anchor to determine what a person will or will not do, based on how they perceive themselves, individually or organizationally.

Though there is the possibility of competing identities, conversely the conflict can be minimalized through the presence of congruent values and beliefs. Alignment of organizational and individual values and beliefs can be beneficial in negotiating membership (Wilson & Janoski, 1995). Volunteering for an organization to do certain activities is largely dependent on an individual's values and beliefs. The values and beliefs of the individual can be shaped by the organization and the organization could be shaped by the individual. The presence of membership negotiation should be evident in an examination of the alignment of values and beliefs.

The alignment of values and beliefs can be established before the individual joins the organization. Individuals who have previous experience with an organization are more likely to highly identify with the organization (Stephens & Dailey, 2012). Essentially, prior exposure can lead to a priming effect that leads to stronger attachment. Prior exposure may come into play in the investigation of the Pearl Church, if individuals were involved with the church as members before becoming a leader. The amount of involvement may vary by individual, but construction of identity through the process of identification will likely be evident in leaders.

Organizational identity and organizational identification are imperative for a consistent enactment of organizational values. Without an understanding of who you are in an organization or an attachment to an organization, there is little internal incentive to engage with the tasks that constitute organizational membership. Thus having a high level of involvement would be indicative of accepted and internalized organization values and beliefs by the organizational members.

Third, internalized organizational values and beliefs that impact individual and organizational identity are indicative of concertive control. In this context, control is simply a medium through which a desired set of behaviors is produced and undesirable behaviors are avoided. Concertive control (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985) regulates individual's behavior by way of "positive incentives of security, identification, and common mission" (p. 184). Two facets of concertive control are semantically separated, but overlap and influence one another significantly. The first is a type of organizational control that shifts control from a manager to the workers when they monitor and control one another in order to accomplish work together (Barker, 1999). Barker further states, "Concertive control develops from the value based discourses of workers in highly participative organizations" (p. 39). The second is a "generative discipline" (Barker, 1999, p.44) through transformation of individual knowledge. "[T]he individual must know the knowledge… and the individual must accept the knowledge as being true and meaningful. The individual must identify with the organization's discursive knowledge formations." (p. 44). Essentially, the structures (specifically the rules) of the organization are internalized and thus no longer need to be externally controlled by peers or management; individuals monitor themselves.

Concertive control is manifested in the dual components of social, discursive establishment of expectations, and internal, accepted knowledge of values and beliefs. Concertive control results in minimal need for external or managerial control and allows for members to connect with the organization at a deeper level of attachment. Within the organizational world, this is the optimal type of control from the perspective of the top leadership, and is most likely to be evident in the leadership team in a highly participatory organization such as a church plant.

Fourth, relationships to and with an organization contain two components: identity and identification in an interactive system. Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998) further articulate the manner in which members of an organization function within this "duality of structure" (p.300). Duality of structure indicates that structures such as identity are both outcome and medium of social interaction. Members both identify themselves in relation to the organization (organizational identity as an outcome) and identify with the organization (organizational identification as the process). Organizational identity refers to individuals defining who they are by their association to an organization. For instance, saying "I am the Children's Pastor at the Pearl Church" is an example of drawing on organizational connection in establishing personal identity. Individuals identifying with the organization through the process of attachment to the organization are then engaging in the second component; organizational identification. Scott, Corman, and Cheney address the formation of identity through identification with an organization in the following manner: "The very structural forces that shape our identifications were (and continue to be) shaped by individual actions. The individual choice both constitutes and is constituted by the structural position and its attendant expectations" (p. 311). The formation of an individual's organizational identity is not a static happening, but a continual

process of interaction between identity and identification. This process, though difficult to determine is important to the manner in which members form and enact their identity and their identification with the organization within the procedures of church functioning, i.e. meetings, weekly gatherings, etc.

Organizational identity is furthermore used to describe an individual's perception of who they are in relation to a particular organization. Organizational identification is understood to be both the process and the product of attachment to an organization. That attachment to the organization can vary in intensity; some members will be more attached than others. Identification is a partially internal process, inclusive of personal decision making and communication of attachment. The communication of identification, whether verbal or through actions, is the outcome or sign that identification is present in an individual. When identification is strong, the individual may begin to view their fate as being tied to the organization's fate.

Identification with an organization consists of four components: identity, identification, activity, activity foci (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998). Identity and identification compose the attachment modality, or the medium that the identity and identification processes, respectively happen within. Identity and identification are the manner in which individuals attach themselves to an organization. Influencing and being influenced by the attachment modality are the components of activity and activity foci. This attachment modality is focused on the behaviors of the individual and the focus of those behaviors to accomplish a purpose. For this research, I am only interested in the attachment modality. Though the activity and focus of an individual is important to organizational identity, it primarily addresses components of organization self-structuring that is beyond the scope of this research. The portions of the model of interest here are identification and identity formation through the attachment modality.

Within the attachment modality (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998), identity has multiple components. These components include personal, occupational, group (within the organization), and organizational. All these components influence member identification; however for the purpose of this research I reference individual identity as a collective whole because the identity components besides organizational whilst influential are not exclusive to the organization and thus are less important to the discussion of membership negotiation within the Pearl Church. These individual and organizational identities, or perceived understanding of those identities, through an understanding of role expectations, formal structure, personal beliefs and values, among other components, provide the individual with a structure from which to base an appropriate and necessary attachment or connection to the organization. Within a church plant leadership team, there should be clear instances of identity construction in relation to the organization, as the organization is being communicatively organized and the roles and positions within the organization are being created and enacted. Organizational identification is to be seen to the extent that the leadership team is invested in the success of the organization. The duality of structure additionally will be seen in the bi-directional relationship of the construction of rules and resources that help an individual to enact the optimal amount of attachment to the organization. Given the premise that there are multiple sources of organizational identity, it is then reasonable to discuss identity tension or competition.

Recognizing that members are using systems to construct their identity and display their identification while simultaneously producing and reproducing those systems, I seek to examine how that process manifests within the church organization.

Overall, structuration theory leads to a conceptualization of organizations being constituted through the four flows of communication. Within the four flows, membership

negotiation allows for an understanding of the way that members of an organization negotiate their membership while simultaneously enacting the organization. Within the realm of membership negotiation, there are two imperative constructs to be investigated: formal structure and organizational identification. Formal structure functions as the medium within which individuals enact their membership. Organizational identification includes the balancing structure of organizational identity through the duality of structure, which provides a modality for member connection to the organization inclusive of competing identities, aligned values and beliefs, and concertive control. Thus, to understand membership negotiation for leaders in a church plant, formal structure and organizational identification provide a lens for understanding how the leadership of a newly forming organization discursively enact the organization and their identities.

In light of these lenses the following question is proposed:

How do leaders negotiate the meanings of their membership through formal structure and identification?

The flow of Membership Negotiation can be understood through examining communicative structuring of leadership and organizational processes. For Membership Negotiation it is necessary to explore the process of becoming a leader and the process of maintaining that status within the organization. In order to find this construct within a church organization, a qualitative research approach is applied using the previously discussed theoretical foundation.

**Chapter Two**

**Methods**

**Organizational Site**

For this study I examined those individuals who are recognized as being on the leadership team at the Pearl Church located in Denver, CO. Although all members negotiate the meaning of their membership (McPhee & Iverson, 2009), for this project I am limiting the scope of membership explored to leaders for three reasons. First, church membership can be incredibly broad including those individuals who have taken certain classes, those who consistently give money to the church, or attend services. Second, leaders and pastors are building and enacting their membership in the organization more consistently. Their membership status is not as contested as a broader set of members and their identification should be more clearly present or absent. Third, because the church is still in the process of establishing itself, focusing on leadership and pastors of the church will highlight the interactive process of membership negotiation based on the power and influence that those particular individuals have on the organization, especially as. The leadership of a church, inclusive of the pastors, is typically set in charge of establishing the structure of the organization, the rules and resources that the rest of the members exist within, and the interpretation of the purpose of the organization.

**Church Numbers and Locations.** The Pearl Church is what is known as a "set-up church", meaning that they do not yet have a building or a permanent location. Not having a building necessitates that everything that the church needs in order to hold a Sunday morning service must be stored somewhere, transported to a hotel conference room, and set-up before the service. This means that everything from art supplies for the children's ministry to microphones and lights for the platform in the service must be stored and transported to a predetermined

location every Sunday. This set-up process has been happening for the three years of the church's existence. Though all the leaders are eager to find and establish themselves in a permanent space, a space meeting the needs and constraints of the church has not been found.

In order to have a space to conduct the services and activities of a church, the Pearl Church rents a hotel conference room for Sunday mornings, rents warehouse space, and encourages members to open their homes for small gatherings. Most Sunday services are held in a hotel conference room on the south side of the Denver metropolitan area. The church has a contract with this particular hotel and consistently meets in the same location, except on the occasion the space is unavailable. During the times when that particular hotel space is unavailable, the service moves to another hotel for one weekly meeting. The warehouse space is located across the street from the hotel where the Sunday services are held and functions as storage space for temperature sensitive equipment, as well as the location for smaller church gatherings. For example the warehouse is used for the youth services, worship practices, women's and men's ministry gatherings and occasionally leadership meetings. Small group gatherings, such as Bible studies, are held at member's homes. Thus the Pearl Church exists as an organization in three different locations, which has an impact on their formal structure as a church.

The Pearl Church congregation numbers between 300-400 people at a Sunday service, with the registered members totaling approximately 200. Youth services, held on Friday nights, number approximately 25-45 young people, ranging from the ages of 13 – 19. Given that the average congregation in America is approximately 75 members (Chavez, 2011), the Pearl Church is a large church; however, the Pearl Church's base church membership is around 6,000

and thus the leadership team often gives the impression that they feel the need to attain those types of numbers.

**Church influences.** Though the Pearl Church functions as an independent organization, there are two organizations that heavily influence the church and the leadership teams: City Bible Church (CBC) and Minister's Fellowship International (MFI). These two organizations are intertwined in that CBC is a member of MFI, as well as the church out of which MFI was founded. The connections to each organization varies, but the Pearl Church structure is impacted by the organizational and personal connections to each.

As a church plant, the Pearl Church was established as a church by City Bible Church, located in Portland, OR. City Bible Church has provided and continues to provide support, both financial and material, to the Pearl Church. The board of Elders which oversees the Pearl Church consists of the lead pastor of the Pearl Church and three members of City Bible Church's staff. The majority of the Pearl Church's highly influential leaders and all of the founding members of leadership have an association with CBC, either serving on leadership teams or being a member of the church staff.

The Pearl Church is greatly influenced by its association with a larger church organization that is known as Minister's Fellowship International (MFI). The MFI headquarters are located in Portland, OR. The organization was founded by the pastor who also founded CBC. MFI is an organization that was founded in order to provide pastors with the relationship and resources of a denominational cover, without the constraints of joining a denomination. MFI has set forth 15 specific doctrinal beliefs, three philosophy statements, and 14 statements of distinctness that churches as members agree with and accept as sound teaching. These three rhetorical constructs inform the belief system that has been accepted by the pastors of the Pearl

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Church and subsequently informs a large component of the church and individual belief set of leaders within the Pearl Church.

The Pearl Church is greatly influenced by their connections with both CBC and MFI, because as both organizations provide rules and resources that the church uses as an organization, inclusive of resources, both material and immaterial, used by the lead pastors and the leaders who were formerly involved in CBC. Since, MFI continues to function as a governing agency for the Pearl Church, the beliefs and values of MFI have been and continue to be the beliefs and values adopted by the Pearl Church. Thus the church identity, as well as individual leader's organizational identity will be influenced by continued connections to CBC and MFI.

**Pastors and leadership.** Established in conjunction with City Bible Church (CBC) in Portland, OR in the fall of 2009, the Pearl Church was founded by a team of 17 people from the Portland area. Those 17 people comprised the original leadership team; however, over the last three years the structure of the leadership teams has changed in order to be functional for a larger congregation. Currently there are three tiers of leadership in place to ensure the functioning of the church. Within the organization, the three levels of leadership are the vision team, the ministry team (sometime referred to as team leads), and the core team. The vision team consists of three couples, totaling six members. The job of the vision team is to determine the direction of the church, to manage finances, and deal with issues that arise within the church. Ministry team leaders are in charge of handling the practical functioning of the church. They conduct small group meetings, they lead set-up teams, they run various ministries within the church, and a whole variety of other behind-the-scenes activities. The ministry team includes 16 members, including four members of the vision team, who serve on both teams. The last tier is the core

team who are involved with carrying out the practical needs of the church vision. If an individual volunteers in one of the ministries on a consistent basis, they are considered to be on the core team. Due to the variation in the number of people at that level of commitment, the core team varies in size. Each leader knows who is on their team and how many members they have available when help is needed. A conservative estimate would be at least 60 people. From the leadership teams only four have official titles and are on the payroll of the church: the two lead pastors and the two youth pastors, who also function as associate pastors.

**Data Gathering**

Data was gathered using participant observation, individual interviews, and a group interview. Observations included four Sunday services, four Youth services, two Journey (membership) classes, two conversations with individuals about the church, and a women's ministry planning meeting. Observations were recorded using field notes with scratch notes during the observation and head notes when immediate note taking was not an option (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). After notes were fully written, they were examined for relevant information and coded for meaning. Specifically, I engaged with the organization and the individuals as a, "observer as participant" (Lindlof & Taylor, p. 149). To that extent, my role in the meetings and gatherings was as an observer, not directly as a participant. I was involved in some activities, including volunteering to help with preparation for the youth service and tear down from the Sunday morning meeting; however my primary role remained researcher and examination of the organization from a more detached stand-point than a total participant. Observations consisted of approximately 29 hours of observation and involvement with the members of the leadership team, resulting in 35 pages of field notes. In addition to attending services, classes, and meetings, I volunteered to assist leaders with the activities they were engaged in and was then able to

gather a better understanding of how they engage in their tasks. For example, I helped one of the leaders pack up the sound equipment following a Sunday service and was able to observe the interactions of leaders engaging with one another and with their responsibilities. These participant observations allowed for me to examine the rhetoric of the leaders to congregants as well as their enactment of organizational identity within the context of church services and events.

Interviews were set up in a semi-structured format (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), inclusive of a pre-determined set of questions. The question set included direct and indirect questions that relate to the concepts that this study is grounded upon (see Appendix A). The group interview was designed in a similar style to a focus group interview, which provides a way to engage participants in discussion about the constructs being examined (Kvale & Brinkmann). This group interview was conducted with leaders who, while having been involved with the team for varying amounts of time, were at the same level of leadership within the Pearl Church. In this way, there was minimal pressure for individuals to answer in specific ways. Additionally, the focus of the questions was on an individual's response to the church, not necessarily about the church as a whole. Audio-recording was used to gather information from the individual interviews and the group interview recordings were then transcribed for analysis.

Interviews were conducted with 14 people, including two couples, five individuals, and a group interview with five of the leaders primarily involved in the youth ministry. Of those 14 people, four were from the vision team, seven were team leads, and three were on the core leader team. These interviews produced 11 hours of audio recordings, which were then transcribed into 153 pages of typed transcript.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis involved the use of a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006), sensitizing constructs from relevant literature (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), and metaphor analysis (Tracy, 2013). The grounded theory approach (Charmaz) was engaged during analysis in order to allow for the church leaders to define the structures and enactments of their identity and organization using their own words and conceptualizations. Analysis of the data began while transcribing the data. While listening to the interviews, I began to note patterns of consistency within the data that I then marked down as categories (Charmaz). Upon completion of transcription, the transcripts were analyzed using the categories noted during the transcription process.  The transcripts were then coded and sorted as quotes that highlighted instances of formal structure and identification according to the theoretical works set forth in the literature review (Barker, 1999; Larson & Pepper, 2003; McPhee & Iverson, 2009; Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998; Scott & Myers, 2010; Tidwell, 2005) Specifically, the constructs of organizational identity and identification, as described through the DNA metaphor were examined in light of the work of Scott, Corman, and Cheney to understand the construction of meaning for leaders. These theoretical concepts used were continually referenced as sensitizing constructs (Lindlof & Taylor) for understanding the researched phenomenon of membership negotiation, as formal structure and identification.

Metaphor Analysis (Tracy, 2013) was also used during the analysis process. The DNA metaphor that came through in the process is categorized as being a live metaphor due to its prominence throughout and the manner in which it was found to elicit other metaphors and references. Furthermore, the metaphor is an ideographic metaphor as the metaphor came through the interviewees' conceptualization of their membership, not at the suggestion of the researcher.

Interpreting the metaphor was done by cross checking the concepts that were being referenced through the use of the metaphor and translating those concepts into terms established in the literature review. Those concepts include individual and organizational identity, along with structure and organizational identification.

Using a combination of categories from emergent codes, including codes gathered the metaphor analysis, I then connected those to larger constructs, principles, and theoretical constructs within the communication field of research. Using their own language and conceptualizations to infer theoretical concepts was necessary based on the participants' limited knowledge of those concepts and allows for a richness within the data which gets at the core of the leaders construction of the church identity and their organizational identity.

**Researcher Subjectivity**

Throughout engaging in the research process, I managed my own subjectivity by recognizing the subjective nature of qualitative research, grounding all my work in established theoretical knowledge, and utilizing the oversight of my committee members, primarily my advisor. During the data gathering and analysis process I embraced the understanding that the research was going to be influenced by my own perceptions of the organization site and my theoretical understandings. However, based on that understanding I spent as much time as possible focusing on the theories and the concepts set forth in the literature review. Using those constructs as my lens for viewing the data collected served as a foundation to anchor my conceptualizations to an understanding of the phenomenon through the perspective of the established literature. Furthermore, the data and analysis of the data was submitted to my advisor and committee members in order to be sure that the conclusions I drew were not unreasonably biased in any way.

## Chapter Three

## Results

The leaders of the Pearl Church enact membership negotiation in large part through a metaphor of physical DNA to describe and enact, in some way, all of the theoretical constructs examined in this paper. This DNA metaphor is used to reference the reasoning for their personal and organizational choices, including the selection of leaders, organizational identity and identification, and the structure that informs their belief system. In this results section, the DNA metaphor is briefly analyzed before the meaning of membership is presented through discussion of formal structure and then organizational identification, including identity.

Membership negotiation is the communicative process by which an individual becomes and remains a member of an organization. For the leaders of the Pearl Church membership is negotiated through the perceived presence of church DNA in their life, both individual and organizational identity enacted through the church's formal structures.

> DNA is who we are, it's what we're made up of… like my DNA is from my Mom and Dad and spiritually there's a spiritual DNA. That and information, where you're raised in a house of God type of thing, where there's things that are passed down into you that become so normal to you that it almost becomes your DNA, like your spiritual DNA or your leadership DNA (Audrey, Personal Interview).

The DNA metaphor was found to be the primary method by which leaders communicated the reasoning for the church and their individual actions, their connection to the organization, and the guidelines for knowing who is included and excluded as a leader. Though DNA is a bodily metaphor, church DNA is best understood as a set of beliefs and ideas that are translated into actions that are seen by others and inductively reasoned, by others, to be DNA based upon an

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individual's church heritage and behaviors. DNA, for the Pearl Church, is an indicator of heritage and a determinant of behavior in the same way that literal DNA does those things within an organism.

> DNA is in every part of the body and it always comes back to the same body, the same person, so you test the finger, you know who it is… it's the same in the church, everything that you do contains a DNA (Greg, Personal Interview).

For the leaders of the Pearl Church DNA is present everywhere and acts as an indicator of the compatibility of an individual with the church.

From a practical standpoint DNA is a double hermeneutic for the organization (McPhee & Iverson, 2009). A double hermeneutic refers to a principle that is understood as its own concept, but that understanding is used to further explain the principle. In a recursive fashion, DNA determines behavior and that behavior in turn indicates the presence and type of DNA found in the individual. There are two principles in this example: an understanding of DNA and DNA behavior both of which influence and inform one another. Established leaders and the prospective leaders have an understanding of what the DNA is in the prospective leader; however the established leaders expect to see behavior that indicates and further explains the DNA of the prospective leader.

While the DNA metaphor is used to communicate individual interaction with the church, it also is used to describe the rules and resources used by the church and its members. Formal structure in the church was found through discussion of the practical components of the leadership team set-up and the DNA metaphor as a representation of the values and beliefs of the church.

**Formal structure**

      Formal Structure is hierarchical with three levels of leadership that are connected to and communicated by the lead pastors, but enacted by different activities and coordination. Participation in the different levels of leadership is attached to a specific set of responsibilities that informs individuals of their place within the church. Additionally, the leaders negotiate membership with each other to reinforce the formal structure that exists despite the lack of a building. The structure of the hierarchy informs members of their place in the organization. Through the process of taking the membership class, volunteering, and then being asked to be on a higher level of leadership, the Pearl Church communicates the expectations of leadership members through classes, meetings, and time spent with other leaders.

      **Membership precedes leadership.** The process of becoming a member begins with attending a Journey Class, which is a four hour class over the course of four weeks that provides individuals with a history of the church and an overview of the basic theological and doctrinal beliefs of the church. Once the class has been completed, an individual fills out a form that gives the church information about them, and is given the choice to become a formal member of the church. Once an individual has chosen to be a member they are then encouraged to find a ministry in which to serve. The choice to serve and the act of consistently serving in a ministry places the person in the lowest of three levels of leadership, the Core Team.

      **Levels of Leadership.** Within the Pearl Church, three levels of leadership are formally enacted by the church organization. The levels or tiers of structured leadership are called the Vision Team, the Ministry Team Leads, and the Core Team.

Table 1: Levels of Leadership

| Vision Team | Highest level of responsibility and power. These individuals formulate and maintain the DNA, while also overseeing the functioning, both practical and spiritual, of the church body, including plans for the future. |
|---|---|
| Ministry Team Leads | Middle level of responsibility and power. The individuals on this team have the DNA and are mandated to oversee teams of individuals from the Core Team. They are picked by the Vision Team based on DNA and skills that fulfill church needs. |
| Core Team | Lowest level of responsibility and power. Members of the Core Team are individuals who volunteer on a consistent basis within the varying ministries in the church. These members have agreed to the tenants of the DNA, but might not yet have the complete DNA and thus still need more of it before moving on in leadership. |

The key difference between the three levels is a function of two different factors:

investment in the organization and knowledge of organizational structure. For example, members

of the Vision Team are the most involved in the construction of the organization, especially the

lead and youth pastors whose lives are inextricably linked to the church. "Communication in a

church is hard work because every aspect of your life is wrapped into one moment and if one

thing messes up, it messes with everything" (Greg, Field Notes). For the pastors, the church is

their job, their passion, their livelihood, and their social circle. Additionally, because the pastors

are responsible for the church vision and the subsequent functioning, they have the most

knowledge about the church organization. This knowledge is based on previous experiences and

outside sources that have been sought out, primarily for problem solving purposes, and the

structures or knowledge sets that have been designed by the pastors because it is their church.

The Vision Team is comprised of the individuals tasked with being in charge of the

church. The pastor cannot reasonably keep the church organizationally and spiritually

functioning all on his own. As a result he brought in leaders who are able and willing to handle

the responsibility of running the church. These people include those individuals who figure out

where the church is going and how it is going to get there. One of the lead pastors explained the

role of the Vision Team, "We're the ones that direct the vision of the house, control the finances, deal with any doctrinal issues, theological issues. It's the team that casts the vision" (Greg, Personal Interview) thus meaning that not only does the Vision Team have the church DNA, but they also determine and uphold the DNA of the church. The majority of the people who are involved in this level of leadership are the individuals who make up the church's four member staff. Thus their lives are inextricably tied to the church and its functioning. It is believed and expected that these leaders have an intimate and invested knowledge of the DNA. The Vision Team teaches and communicates the organizational identity to the rest of the church.

The Ministry Team Lead (MTL) members are also highly involved in the church. Their function is primarily to ensure the continued function of the church by leading volunteers in tasks that carry out the church's mission, both in a practical and spiritual sense. On a practical level, they are in charge of set-up and tear-down teams, children's programs, controlling sound and lighting, and managing the teams of individuals who volunteer to complete these tasks. From a spiritual standpoint, these leaders are the ones who share beliefs in Bible studies, pick songs for worship times during services, meet with people to counsel them concerning life situations, and select course materials for the children and youth ministries. The practical and spiritual components of the MTL responsibilities are certainly monitored by and receive input from the Vision Team, but the ministry heads are enacting the vision and leading others to do the same. From the lead pastor's perspective, these are people who have the DNA. In order for the church to function optimally these leaders need to be solid in their shared values with the church and then need to be able to teach it to those who are volunteering. One of the lead pastors stated, "the Ministry Leads that are… leading different things, they needed another level to really know our hearts and so we wanna feed them, that means equip them, that means also teach[ing] them"

(Greg, Personal Interview). The MTLs get more time with the lead pastors where they come to better understand the vision of the church and also what their role is within the church.

The lowest level of leadership in the church is referenced as the Core Team. The Core Team is made up of individuals who volunteer on a regular basis. They volunteer to serve the church and its members. Similar to the MTLs, the Core Team members are highly involved in church function from a practical standpoint, but they are not nearly as involved in the spiritual component. These are the individuals who play instruments on a Sunday, they volunteer in the children's ministry (teaching lessons, playing games, caring for babies, etc.), they help with the set-up and tear-down of the stage, and a variety of other functional components of the church. One of the lead pastors described it in this way, "they have to have an ongoing kind of training and DNA work", (Greg, Personal Interview). Within the context of the Core Team, they are the individuals who have begun to establish themselves within the church, but have not been around long enough, have not expressed a desire to be a Team Lead, have not spent time enough being highly involved with the church leaders, or any combination of those three.

The process of becoming a leader begins in the Journey Class through the communication of the tenants of the church identity with the teaching of the formal structure and the core beliefs, inclusive of a discussion that highlights the leadership teams within the church. The goal for the Pearl Church leaders is that they all enact leadership in a similar fashion. In order to facilitate that, "you want to have that same heart and mind and that same spirit all working together" (Yvonne, Personal Interview). Thus the values and the beliefs are taught in classes and the practical processes are taught through mentoring types of relationships. The Journey class presents four sessions: Introduction to the Pearl Church, Life in Christ, Life in the Local Church, and Life with Kingdom Vision. Three of these sessions are focused on expected characteristics

of members of the Pearl Church and one session talks about the foundational beliefs of the organization concerning what it means to be a church or what a church ought to be. Furthermore, the church is primarily described in relation to the people who compose the church, thus the people on the Core Team are primarily expected to come to an understanding of their organizational identity, as a major component of their individual identity and then enact that identity as a constant representation of the church.

Overall, the leadership levels of Vision Team, MTL, and Core Team provide a variety of formal structure positions. They each fit into a hierarchy starting with the lead pastor and serve to divide the tasks of the Pearl Church. Each represents a different set of activities. A leader on the Vision Team explained a portion of the hierarchy like this, "number one it's God's church and then it's [the lead pastor's] church, but he's the senior pastor and he has his way of doing things" (Allison, Personal Interview). In this way the leaders defer to the lead pastor and communicate that their place in the organization is under him providing support and serving the overall ministry of the church.

**Formal structure negotiates expected behaviors.** Additionally, the formal structure of hierarchy in leadership communicates not only place in relation to the pastoral staff, but also in relation to fellow leaders. The Core Team members defer and answer to the MTLs and the Vision Team, while the MTLs defer and answer to the Vision Team. Furthermore, the Vision Team members, who are not pastors defer and answer to the pastors. Finally, the pastors answer to a board of Elders in Portland on serious issues, but in practice are the final word for church functioning and identity. The hierarchy develops a mechanism for interrelating and negotiating membership through different activities and levels of responsibility.

Beyond setting up a hierarchy, the formal structure relates to membership negotiation by offering a system to communicate beliefs and values. Specifically within the church, these are based on a specific process involving theology and doctrine. The Pearl Church has an established, theologically based, set of doctrinal beliefs that are condensed into 12 core values. When an individual becomes involved in the leadership of the Pearl Church it is expected that they believe and agree with those 12 values, which are made available and briefly discussed during the Journey Class. Leaders are expected to agree to the point of being willing to engage in the process of enacting those values in whatever form that might take. Whether it is teaching Biblical principles to a small group, setting up the stage for Sunday, building relationships with new members, or being expressive in worship, the role of the leader is to express the beliefs and values held by the church.

These expectations concerning the role of leader within the Pearl Church are found through the communication of the hierarchy of the organization, the acceptance of the responsibility to express the beliefs and values, and adjusting behaviors in order to better fit the organization. Enacting clear roles within the organization enacts negotiation by highlighting the formal structures of leadership. Exemplifying and communicating clear role expectations reenacts the structures that establish and maintain the process of becoming and remaining a member of the leadership teams.

Membership negotiation is enacted through the individual leader's acceptance and enactment of their place within the organization. Given the level of leadership that a person is involved in, there are sets of expectations that guide the leader. For a member of the Core Team, the expectation is that they volunteer to benefit the church and do what is asked of them by the MTLs. MTLs are given more responsibility in that they are in charge of supervising areas of

ministry. The Vision Team is expected to have the answers and be able to provide guidance for all in the congregation, inclusive of other leaders. All levels of leadership are expected to provide a visible example of their organizational identity, at whatever level that might be. The MTLs and the Vision Team are prominently visible figures within church services (Field Notes), thus members and attendants are aware, to a certain extent, what is involved in being a leader and what leaders' place is within the organization. Being a leader means serving the pastors, the vision, and the people of the Pearl Church and it means higher levels of involvement with the pastors, the vision, and the people.

**DNA and formal structure.** When describing the DNA metaphor in relation to the structure that it enacts, the lead pastor provided an explanation of it as the rules and resources that guide the church and him as the pastor. He defined DNA as a church's "combination of theology, doctrine, philosophy, and application" (Personal Interview). Furthermore, he explained that the four can be characterized as,

> Doctrine takes a piece of theology and frames it in, so theology is a framework, doctrine is a frame. So you have your framework, you have your frame and then you have your philosophy which is the way we really view it as we move towards application (Greg, Personal Interview).

Theology is the overall understanding; doctrine addresses a specific aspect of life based on the theology. Philosophy is an experientially based belief about how doctrine and theological positions should be enacted during application. An example of this would be the Pearl Church's focus on worship. Because one of the lead pastors has been heavily involved in worship, including song writing and performance, for many years, it has become a large part of the church identity. A belief in the importance of worship is based on a perception of its ability to impact

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people, which is in turn based on personal and corporate experiences of the lead pastors and their leadership teams. These four components of DNA are discussed by the same lead pastor as not being seen, "DNA is that intangible thing that creates a people to make decisions to move a church forward, uh where it's not something you talk about every day, it's in everything you do." (Personal Interview). In this way the DNA is the core values and beliefs that have been internalized by the leadership team. DNA provides a means for communicating the values and beliefs of the church as rules and resources for leaders to enact. Although DNA does not indicate that each of the three levels of leadership exist, it does direct the leaders on *how* to enact their duties. The duties and activities are the means through which the leaders negotiate their membership.

In as much as leaders interpret, define, and negotiate the meaning of their membership through the DNA metaphor, when DNA is used to explain the belief set that the organization, and subsequently the leadership team, holds to be true, it references the structure of the church as well. For each of the ministries of the church, as well as the activities that are engaged in during services and meetings, there is a set of core values that provides the reasoning behind what the church does. The vision team, with the help of the church plant team, defined and set forth 12 core values of the church, which are defined as being, "the sustaining and motivating components of our church and vision" (thepearlchurch.org). These 12 core values are based on the theology, doctrine, philosophy, and application of the church's vision, which is the church's identity, described as being their DNA. Thus in order to enact the structure of the Pearl Church, the leaders engage with varying levels of structuring for each of the separate ministries utilizing, but also drawing meaning from those core values.

Within formal structure overall, the three levels of leadership including Core Team, MTLs, and the Vision team, provide a medium for members to enact and negotiate the meaning of their membership. By engaging in the different levels of leadership activities members have a means to enact that membership. Expectations of leadership behaviors are communicated based on leadership level. Additionally, by enacting that membership they are creating the outcome of the Pearl Church as well. Although the formal structure is not mandated by the twelve core values, the values inform church identity and the certain behavioral expectations of leaders. The formal structure is an outcome of the lead pastor's understanding of how to best accommodate church's practical needs while accomplishing their spiritual goals. DNA functions as a means for communicating leader's place within the overall structure of the church and directing how each of the leaders should enact their formal structure positions.

Formal structure in the Pearl Church is being built not just for now, but also for the future. The purpose of the church and the vision for why things are being crafted in the way that they are is being communicated by the lead pastors to their leadership teams. In colloquial terms one of the leaders from the Core Team explained how formal structures of procedure are being established through the work that is being done now.

Even though we're not a huge church, everybody is there with a purpose, [the] Pearl knows why it exists. It has no question about the impact that we're gonna have on the city and stuff, so being a part of that takes on a whole new meaning. It isn't I have to do video announcements cause it has to get done, I mean it has get done for the next month or whatever, but what does that mean in terms of where the church is going to be next year and like the year after that. How are we gonna grow that and how does moving this little muscle of consistency in video announcements, what impact is that gonna have later in

terms of the creative team context? You can put that in any context and when it's filtered

through the vision of why we exist, it becomes powerful (Group Interview).

Formal structure is being enacted through building a media team that is structured in a particular

fashion with an eye towards constructing the practical aspect of video announcements along with

constructing the structure of church identity. In this fashion, the lead pastors communicate that

"we are building not for next year, but for the next thirty years" (Field Notes). The formal

structure being enacted is anticipated to exist for the long term and the leaders are

communicatively constituting the church to reach that goal.

Ammerman (2005) when discussing congregations and the purpose of religious

gatherings describes it in this way, "Those who gather in local religious communities do so

largely because an important spiritual dimension of human experience finds expression there" (p.

20). Leaders are currently focused on being the people who provide the space for this expression

of the human experience. Since this is the primary purpose of the Pearl Church, then to be a

leader is enacted through serving the church and through heading up teams that enable the

church and the leaders to carry out the mission and vision of the church. This enactment happens

within the formal structures established by the lead pastors and further solidified by incumbent

leaders. The DNA metaphor is used in a broad fashion and thus covers not only the structure that

informs church identity, but also organizational identity through the process of organizational

identification.

**Identification**

Through this research, it was found, as proposed, that identity plays a significant role in

the process of membership negotiation for the leaders. Within the Pearl Church leadership team

community there is a strong organizational identification, which is communicated through the

DNA metaphor. The Pearl Church leadership team members negotiate the meaning of their membership using the DNA metaphor to express their connection to the church, which is then seen in the communication of individual and organizational identity. Specifically, for identity the social construction of identity is clear in the multiple meanings of DNA as a metaphor and the notion of transferring DNA. Next, the competing identities of organizational identity is articulated and resolved through communicated transcendence that negates tensions. Evidence of concertive control is evaluated as the dual communication of work group pressure to equally engage in tasks and as the process of internalizing beliefs. Additionally the identity and identification interaction is presented as it encompasses the identity negotiation process for leaders.

**Socially constructing identity through DNA**. Due to the voluntary nature of the church organization, a high level of commitment and attachment by leaders to the church is necessary in order for the organization to retain volunteers and to function successfully as a church, inclusive of relatively rapid growth. Through the use of the DNA metaphor, the members of the Pearl Church leadership team are able to almost seamlessly negotiate the meaning of their membership within the organization.

DNA is an indication of expected behaviors, "it's in our DNA to be a church of grace and to always be duplicating ourselves as leaders into other people. It's in our DNA to never be too busy for people" (Group Interview), but those behaviors then highlight the DNA, "there is no check box of what makes a good leader, if you read your Bible five times a day and you pray and blah, blah, blah, but it's truly about character and DNA, so you know what are your core values" (Isabel, Personal Interview), which further explains and indicates the presence of a certain set of behaviors. DNA functions as a particular type of organizational identity that is used by the Pearl

Church relies equally on heritage and behavior; however the concept of heritage is negotiable when becoming a leader, because the tenants of DNA can be learned by those who are willing to be taught.

*DNA as a metaphor.* Though all the leaders have different conceptualizations of the DNA metaphor and what it means to them, there are similarities throughout the interviews. These differences in conceptualizations of what the term DNA means is likely due to the continually expansive nature of what the metaphor represents. In as much as the DNA metaphor is used to reference the core beliefs of the church, it is also used when describing the behaviors that indicate the presence of DNA, as individual and organizational identity. Additionally, as a metaphor DNA is used to reference something that people have individually and organizationally, as well as something the church possesses. Thus these differences in conceptualization are indicative of individualized understanding of an overall concept.

The leadership team provided conceptualizations of what they meant when discussing church DNA, similarities existed within the answers falling into two categories: DNA describing church identity and DNA describing organizational identity. Both conceptualizations simultaneously indicate identification through the use of Cheney's (1983) transcendent we. Three church identity examples are as follows, "DNA is who we are; it's what we're made up of. (Audrey, Personal Interview), "it's how they do church" (Jared, Personal Interview), and "DNA is how we do things… or the value that we put on certain things." (Rachel, Personal Interview). The individual's organizational identity is highlighted as such, "DNA basically is the building blocks of the type of leader we would want." (Yvonne, Personal Interview), "DNA would be, 'How would my pastor want me to respond?'" (Isabel, Personal Interview), and "[DNA means] we [leader and the lead pastors] feel the same way about a lot of key issues… It's our [leader and

her spouse] core belief system… we [leader and the lead pastors] believe a lot of the same things about the local church." (Allison, Personal Interview). These conceptualizations of DNA highlight the manner in which it is used to conceptualize both church and organizational identity. The use of a transcendent we by most leaders indicates a high level of organizational identification within the use of the DNA metaphor. The church as an organization holds a certain belief set (church identity) that the individuals who make up the organization believe as foundational to their understanding of what it means to be a leader in the church (organizational identity), which is inextricably tied to their understanding of their individual identity and thus they re-enact the identity of the church and their own organizational and individual identity concurrently.

The concept of DNA engages church identity as well as organizational and individual identity. When discussed by the leaders, the things that were mentioned are often personalized beliefs that translate into organizational behaviors. Several of the leaders mentioned that they are individually called to serve the local church, often in whatever capacity is necessary, which then translates into them volunteering at the Pearl Church and strongly identifying with the organization. Here the idea of transcendence or comparison (Larson & Pepper, 2003) in order to address competing identities needs mention, because the church to individual transfer of beliefs is one that sets the individual's connection primarily to God and to "advancing His Kingdom" (Field Notes). This connection to the Divine is the most powerful tool that the church has in order to retain current leaders, gain new leaders and keep all leaders engaged in the process of belief and value enactment because the belief is attached to the leader's understanding of their own humanity. This connection to the Divine and to the church has been internalized by those who are on the Vision Team and the Ministry Lead Teams. This understanding of what it means

to be human has a profound impact on the leader's perception of their real (who I am) and idealized (who I ought to be) self. That perception forms certain components of identity.

Organizational identity here also convolutes with individual identity, because individuals believe that who they are in relation to the church is foundation to their overall individual identity. A Ministry Team Leader stated it this way,

> We [she and her spouse] just have such a heart and a passion, obviously for the Lord and then the church is such a big part of that, like the people that make up the church are the reason that I feel like, people in general are the reason that I feel like I'm even on this planet. (Rachel, Personal Interview).

Church is not something they attend or are involved in, but church is at the forefront of their expression of their humanity, to them it is a large component of the essence of their purpose for existing. When addressing the young people during a service the youth pastor stated, "You are the church, now. Church is not a building, but a movement. You is the church" (Field Notes). While this statement is used primarily to address the notion that the beliefs and values being communicated in services should be lived out on a daily basis, it also communicates the interconnectedness of individual identity, who I am as a person, and organizational identity, who I am to and within this organized group of people called the Pearl Church. Additionally, it assumes and communicates high organizational identification through the use of the transcendent 'we' which expresses the interrelatedness of individual and church fate.

DNA, as a descriptor of organizational identity, within the Pearl Church can be defined as the combination of an individual's beliefs and values, based on their church heritage and also as the impetus for their behavior; however it is not imperative that an individual have the correct heritage coming into the Pearl Church because the organizational belief set can be taught to those

who are willing to learn it. In this way, it does not really matter what church, if any, that you might have attended before if you are willing to learn the core values and beliefs, you can have them. The church DNA, inclusive of all the benefits and responsibilities, can be transferred from those have it to those who don't. This process of transferring DNA is begun with teaching of beliefs and values in the Journey Class which is required for church membership. All members of the leadership teams have taken this class. "That class really sets the foundation for how our church got here and what we believe" (Shane, Personal Interview). Through this class the leaders are informed of what the church believes, where the church has come from, and what the vision is for the coming years. Essentially, it communicates, in a classroom setting, the tenants of the church identity inclusive of the core values.

In conclusion, since DNA is a metaphor it functions as a communicative structure which leaders use to construct the meaning of their membership in a manner that builds individual identity as consistent with organizational goals. The metaphor offers a communicative understanding of place within and connection to the church and fellow leaders. The perceived presence of DNA initiates an individual into the system of leadership by using the metaphor leaders negotiate their place prior to and during leadership involvement.

***Transferring the DNA.*** Natural DNA transfers through the process of genetic recombination. Church DNA is also transferable; however, it happens through the process of learning, accepting, and enacting (communicating) the values and beliefs of the Pearl Church. Since DNA is recognized through both church heritage and experience in addition to behaviors that indicate the presence of church values and beliefs. Individuals who have compatible church heritage still experienced the DNA transfer, but that process happened at a previous church.

When asked how they came to know the beliefs and values of the Pearl Church one leader responded,

> My church in Montana was under that umbrella of MFI, so even from when I first started going to church and became a Christian [9 years ago] that same kind of DNA and belief system that's what I walked into (Rachel, Personal Interview).

Leaders discussed their ideas of the process of transferring DNA when asked and while there were many conceptualizations of the transfer, the primary response was that it is transferred through time, teaching, and relationship.

> As people hear what you say, they watch what you do and you are actually willing to spend time with them... some people they'll go, 'wow I want that for my life' and they'll stick with you. We've seen that happen (Audrey, Personal Interview).

Through those three items, the DNA of the church is transferred. The overall feeling presented was that individuals who did not have the desired church heritage could be brought into the family and could have the DNA, but that there was a process involved that would primarily take time.

The Pearl Church leadership team believes that their DNA can be transferred, as was briefly described concerning the Core Team. The current Vision Team and Ministry Team Leads are described by the lead pastor as having the DNA, but those individuals were taught the belief system through their previous involvement in CBC or a church with similar DNA. For a member of the Vision Team it was expressed like this, "The DNA, the Spirit of leadership at CBC is definitely in me and that guides me… [the lead pastors] they trust as us as leaders, they've worked with us." (Audrey, Personal Interview). Another Vision Team leader said, "it's our DNA, it's our core belief system that really has drawn us into their inner circle. We believe a lot

of the same things regarding the local church" (Allison, Personal Interview). It is this similarity of beliefs that highlights organizational identification and paves the way for belonging and inclusion in the leadership team, which further encourages identification and further establishes organizational identity and place.

Understanding of the church identity and a strong sense of identification are extremely important for the leaders of the Pearl Church; however the expectation of identity knowledge and identification is present only for those who have committed themselves to involvement with the church. DNA transfer or establishment begins with an understanding of the church identity. Thus leaders, volunteers, and members are all there because they want to be and have some sense of attachment or desire for attachment to the organization itself or to the people who are involved.

The church identity was described through the DNA metaphor by one of the leaders that has known the pastors and worked with them for over ten years.

One of the things that we're known for is we're known to be a presence-driven church, we're known for worship and in worship services there's a reason why we do things the way that we do it and it's to help people enter into the presence of God… we're a Holy Spirit church. It's in our DNA to produce leadership, it's in our DNA to be a ministry team that's in unity and to maintain unity and value that, it's in our DNA to be a church that gives… we decided early on, we're going to be a church that it's in our make-up to be a church that gives and so we gave…We're a church that is under covering, we have leadership above us where we have eldership that we can turn to for counsel, we're not without having a lot of pastoral input and leadership input, even into [the lead pastors], into our team. We're, it's in our DNA to unify with other churches and to pour into other churches and be, into resource a church… I'm talking about the local church. It's in our

DNA and whether that looks like worship music or it's resource and leadership materials

or having a retreat for different pastors all over the place, like MFI where you're

networking people together or maybe resource in the church looks like a conference and

we're going to have workshops for youth pastors. There's no end to it, it's in our DNA to

do all of those things, it's in our DNA to be a church of grace and to always be

duplicating ourselves as leaders into other people. It's in our DNA to never be too busy

for people... it's in our DNA to be a vibrant church, that's something that we talked

about. We wanna be a church that's so full of life and that's life giving and by leaders

that means that we have to watch our speech and our actions when we're talking to, we

have to be mindful of the place and setting and what we're saying and to filter those

things and I like to think that we have the DNA of a church providing a safe place for

people we wanna protect people, we wanna see them grow and we will do whatever we

humanly can to set a person up for success in the church and otherwise (Group

Interview).

The overall conceptualization of DNA, at least for this leader indicates the vast expanse of items

included in the DNA metaphor including the numerous behaviors that DNA produces. DNA is

used to explain church identity, but with the presence of an understanding that those church

identity structures have application through the work of agents. Then the church identity is

explained using the collective we, indicating a great deal of organizational identification. While

other members had their own answers for the question asked, they also agreed with her

description of DNA, inclusive of church identity. Additionally, the use of the DNA metaphor

here addresses the double hermeneutic of DNA being both the process and the product of

understanding the values and beliefs of the church. As a leader with high identification, the only

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path for the church to achieve its goals is for the leaders to enact the organizational goals properly.

Church identity is found in their 12 core values document, highlighted and available online for individuals to explore. Those 12 core values are listed and explained with a short paragraph of description describing the church's specific beliefs on the function and purpose of a topic such as "Leadership" or "Community". The identity is also established in the Vision Statement, "Our vision: To build a vibrant life-giving church in the Denver metro area, where all people can experience God's grace, rally in community, and champion the cause of Christ together" (Field Notes). Both the core values and the vision statement were composed in order to highlight the kind of church that the leaders of the Pearl Church are working to create. Leaders must negotiate the meaning of their membership, in the church and furthermore on the leadership team, through the acceptance of those values as their own organizational identity.

Continuing to utilize the DNA metaphor as an explanation of organizational identity, leaders provide prospective leaders with an understanding of what it means to be a leader. The process of acting and reacting the meaning of leadership occurs in DNA transfer and creates identity structure. DNA transfer is a socially constructed component of organizational identity and identification. Through the process of knowledge transfer, leaders communicate the importance of involvement in the church, as well as place within the church.

Individuals become and remain members of an organization through membership negotiation (McPhee & Iverson, 2009). For the leadership team members is foundationally established in the existence of DNA, as the process of identification with the church seen through the organizational identity construction by way of involvement in the enactment of leadership behaviors. For members who have not been involved in a similarly structured church, the process

of DNA transfer is necessary to the construction of organizational identity and that transfer process happens as a social construction. The social construction of identity through the use of the DNA metaphor, inclusive of the DNA transfer process enacts membership negotiation as it is the way that the leaders of the Pearl Church manage the meaning of their membership.

**Competing identities.** Competing identities (Larson & Pepper, 2003) happen as a result of the dynamic nature of organizations. Situations, positions, and needs change thus an individual's interactions with an organization are often required to change with the organization. Competing identities produce identity conflict which when unresolved can hinder identification (Larson & Pepper).  Although, all the leaders currently working with the Pearl Church were associated with different church organizations three years ago and thus would likely have experienced significant organizational identity change in the relatively recent past, few instances of competing identities were found. However, several minor instances were mentioned and the process of their resolution is important for understanding identification and the strengthening of organizational identity. In the data three kinds of identity competition occurred that resulted in three kinds of resolution: submission, silencing, and overcoming. Submission is seen in situations where the leader is asked to do something differently than they have previously known to do it and they are required to change their behavior for the benefit of the church. Silencing is seen where individuals believe that there are components of their identity will not be viewed as acceptable, so those parts of themselves are not displayed. Overcoming is when the church needs require that the leader do something that they have not done before and fears or misgivings must be overcome in order to fulfill that need.

*Submission.* None of the leaders interviewed for this project were new to church. All leaders have been previously involved, to various degrees, with churches, meaning that their

previous knowledge sets act to both enhance their ability to be leaders, but can also lead to conflict. Specifically, there are two couples that are MTL who were youth pastors on staff at different churches previous to coming to the Pearl Church. Three other leaders were on staff at the base church in Portland. While those leaders who were on staff in Portland are able to translate the majority of their knowledge to the Pearl Church there are practical considerations that do not translate. For those individuals who were pastors at churches and are now Ministry Team Leads there are multiple considerations that provide fodder for conflict. As discussed  by one of the leaders who was a youth pastor,

> At my church before, I had the authority to just make decisions… and then coming into this role, [the youth pastor in charge of music] likes me to do the youth schedule and then send it her first, she just likes to look over it so she can see what's going on before I send it to everybody… to me it felt like she was just micro managing because I'm so used to being able to just go and do it. That was a huge adjustment for me and it was offensive to me in the sense that it's like 'I know what I'm doing, I've done this before, I've been doing this for five years', but they don't know that and I have no idea what they're thinking. So it took a lot of having to sit down and get to know people and just talk and now I totally know where they're coming from and it doesn't offend me at all. They just wanna be in the loop and I get that (Jared, Personal Interview).

The presence of previous experience might not come out in the area of core beliefs, but it does happen when encountering the experiential knowledge of previous similar tasks. Resolution of these types of conflicts between leaders, which then must be internally come to terms with by leaders, happens through logic and comparison. It also comes about through the communicative process of negotiation where both parties explain their way of thinking. However, in these

situations the leaders who are on the Vision Team and have titles are the ones who make the final decision of what happens and the other leaders must choose to resolve the conflict through organizational exit or submission.

*Silencing.* Resolution of competing individual and organizational identities can also be addressed through the process of silencing. Only one leader mentioned that there were times when she felt constrained as an individual by her involvement as a leader. This individual stated it like this:

> Now I have to question how are people going to perceive that without losing who you are and I think we've stayed pretty true, it's just that some parts of our life have become a little bit more silent or a little bit more, I don't know, just a little bit more covert (Allison, Personal Interview).

The silencing of an identity component is in response to the power of the organizational structure over the agent, but is still the agent's choice. This is indicative of a thought process that there is something more valuable to be gained from enacting the church leader portion of an individual's identity, as opposed to enacting a personal identity. This also happens when leaders are asked to engage with projects or tasks that they do not see as being them. Leaders being involved in ministry that they do not feel called to happens as a function of the church being in need and the leaders being called to the higher purpose of the Pearl Church continuing stay viable as a church. One of the leaders now primarily involved in worship spoke of her experiences during the first two years of the church,

> They needed help in kid's ministry and I'm like 'Oh dear God, this is so not my thing.' I didn't love it and definitely I have may other giftings than with kids, but yet I still have a

mentality, if this is what the church needs right now I don't care what it is, I will do it

(Group Interview).

Being willing to change one's expression of their identity construction is indicative of both commitment to the organization and trustworthiness, which are fundamental components of the assimilation process. Membership negotiation is influenced by the knowledge that there are belief and behavior expectations that must be satisfied in order for membership to begin or continue. Thus in order to remain a part of the organization there are identity adjustments that must be made.

*Overcoming.* Within the category of overcoming, leaders are asked to do something beyond what they thought they could do. An example of overcoming is described by one of the Core Team leaders on the media team,

The Easter video last year, I had never done a video that long and edit a video that long, but (the Pastor) knew that I could do it and when it was done, it was done and I was exhausted, but I didn't know that I could do that before (Group Interview).

The need of the church informed the leader of the necessity of adjust the understanding of their own capacity for work and reinforced their conceptualization of themselves as being willing to adjust their understanding of personal identity in relation to the organization. Another example is one of the head leaders of the women's ministry who said,

I'd be the one running it, administratively anyway. That was where I was like oh boy, that like you said that tension or that kind of 'you obviously think that I'm going to be able to do this, but it's intimidating because I haven't done it before', so in that unknown. I know I'm capable of being organized and following through and doing things but it's also that intimidation of wanting to do it the best that I possibly can, and it being a

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success and feeling like you're more responsible than you've been before for something

like that (Rachel, Personal Interview).

In this way, the components of an identity like organization skills and follow through are then

expanded in order to accomplish the task at hand, which then allows for an adjustment of the

leaders conceptualization of themselves as an individual.

Competing identities are present in the leaders of Pearl Church due to the organizational

changes that all have gone through in the last three years while becoming a part of the new

organization. The pre-existing knowledge sets gathered from involvement with other comparable

organizations has provided the leaders with a solid foundation of knowledge; however, there are

times when those knowledge sets conflict with the church expectations and needs. When that

conflict happens the leaders are forced to find resolution. Leaders at the Pearl Church were found

to bring about resolution to these through submission, silencing, or overcoming. Though identity

conflicts due to competing knowledge sets about a particular church activity are relatively minor

in comparison to other conflicts, it demonstrates that identity competition can happen on multiple

levels.

**Concertive Control.** Concertive control (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985) is the process by

which individuals illicit desired organizational behaviors from one another, whether through

discussion of shared beliefs and values or through the process of internalized organizational

beliefs. Concertive control comes into play at the Pearl Church when a fellow leader engages in

behavior or attitude that functions contrary to the belief system of the church and another leader

is able to talk to them and steer them back towards the expected behaviors. There is not a perfect

connection with concertive control because at the end of the day there is someone who is in

charge of the leaders and what they do. However, due to the voluntary nature of involvement

with the Pearl Church the power and authority exercised over volunteers is of a different type. The combination of types of control creates a hybrid control. Though not specifically discussed, concertive control is evidenced in the way that individuals talk about how they learned to do their specific tasks within the organization.

The expectation that all of the leaders on the team are equally involved and committed brings about a component of concertive control that is external. The Pearl Church is set up in such a way that they have created a church culture which functions to allow, and to a certain extent encourage, concertive control. The Pearl Church certainly counts as a participative organization in that the leaders and the volunteers are also members of the church and without their contributions the church would cease to exist. Therefore, involvement in any level of leadership role is necessarily participatory. Within the Pearl Church, concertive control does not come about exclusively in the traditional conceptualization of members monitoring one another's behavior to ensure equal participation and contribution, but also occurs because these individuals genuinely care about one another in addition to the functioning of the church. Thus when someone stops engaging in behaviors they were previously committed to it incites a conversation where the fact that you agreed to engage in these behaviors and now you are not doing those requires explanation.

*Expectations as concertive control.* The interactions of concertive control come about, for the most part, through establishing responsibilities and expectations, which the leaders then respond to by being consistent and following through. When a situation where someone does not fulfill their responsibility occurs, members of the leadership team talk to the person neglecting their task and figure out how to fix the problem. One of the three leaders in charge of Sunday morning service explained it like this,

Obviously if [another leader] and I didn't show up one morning, [the lead pastor] would be like "What the, what the crap?", but that's because we've been committed for so long. It's not like this if you don't show up then you're in trouble, but they do expect us to show up because that's the norm (Jared, Personal Interview).

External, peer concertive control happens when leaders do not perform expected behaviors or tasks. The Pearl Church is reliant on volunteers in order to function as a church. Those volunteers are responsible for numerous tasks, in whatever ministry, and those tasks are necessary for church success. Commitment to the organization is practically seen in the amount of voluntary work done, accepting responsibility for tasks and then fulfilling those responsibilities. Therefore, concertive control, in the sense of policing peers, is partly seen in the Pearl Church leadership team through the communicated expectation of leaders taking responsibility for fulfilling tasks and then following through on those tasks.

*DNA transfer as concertive control.* Concertive control is explained by one leader in terms of happening during what they call teaching moments, which works to transfer DNA to people. An instance of this was described in the following way,

[Expressions of] what they [a leader or prospective leader] think about church or what they think about leadership or what they think about the way that a pastor should handle something actually comes to the surface, I think you get those in relaxed settings and I honestly think that sometimes, the other best place is in intense situations where pressure's being added. All of a sudden, something comes to the surface, I think that those are teachable moments. I think that you can be like 'Hey, wow, not exactly the greatest attitude. That's actually not what we think. Can you just go cool off for a moment?' You can deal with it in those situations (Allison, Personal Interview).

This example is used by a Vision Team member discussing a scenario involving someone who was in the process of becoming a leader. The process of concertive control comes about through leading by example and explaining the expected processes of enacting the values and beliefs of the church. Another leader explained a scenario of enacting control in this way,

> [The church's] culture is set off of what you're doing and the people you hang out with and sharing like-minded beliefs and so to me it all comes back to relationship. People I know that I have influence over and who have influence over me talk all day long and it's not like a competition to sway thoughts and beliefs, but you tend to listen to the people you know well and have a relationship with and things you know they just kinda make a little more sense (Jared, Personal Interview).

Though it is not as clearly stated here, the point being made is that those individuals who are on the team have influence over one another to change ideas and opinions. Consequently, because the majority of the people who are on the leadership team are fully committed to the success of the church as defined by the Vision Team, with contributions by the other teams, the external concertive control works in favor of the organization.

Instances of external, peer control (Barker, 1999) are relatively infrequent due to the strong presence of internalized beliefs. Internal, as opposed to external, concertive control is used to  refer to a mechanism by which the behaviors desired by the organization, as well as the reasoning behind the behaviors, are internalized by the members. With this type of control, there is little to no monitoring necessary, because the individual has found personal reasons to engage in certain behaviors and avoid others. Within the Pearl Church, the organizational belief system tightly matches the belief system for individuals involved in the movement, thus to believe in those things for the organization means that you believe them for your own life. These belief

systems are the same, because the belief system is all based on the same document, the Bible and in order to be a member or a leader then you must agree to the belief that the entire Bible, as interpreted by theologians and pastors that the lead pastors have determined to be accurate, is true and infallible. With that belief system agreed to and established, then the impetus to engage in the specific behaviors is internal. Summarily, the leaders of the Pearl Church have engaged in the process of internalizing the belief system of the church and thus instances of incongruent beliefs and behaviors are rarely seen.

This process of internalizing beliefs is supported by the communication of the DNA metaphor in that literal DNA is an internal function. Things that an individual believes about themselves, for instance their mandate to serve the local church, produces behavior that coincides with the beliefs of the church and is lauded as DNA congruence. This internalization of beliefs by prospective leaders is encouraged and expected by established leaders during the DNA transfer process. The values and beliefs that are explained as DNA concerning individuals and the church are based on the Bible and as such produce a foundation for concertive control that is incredibly tenacious.

Instances of internal control were not discussed in an overt fashion by the leadership team because they are internalized beliefs that are typically only seen through behavior. Leaders are required to have the DNA before becoming members of the Vision Team or a Ministry Team Lead, thus the internalization is a past process that happens on a personal level and then is seen in the way that a person acts. During Sunday and Wednesday meetings, the pastors communicate the beliefs of the church and speak with an assumption of congruent beliefs that encourages members to accept the beliefs as their own (Field Notes). The knowledge set about church and congregational expectations is implied to be known by those who are in attendance. Thus if you

are committed to and involved in the church enough to be on the leadership team, the internalization has already happened, based on individual identity construction.

Being a leader provides a sense of camaraderie that translates into close relationships. Leaders within the Pearl Church are a tight-knit group of individuals. A leader involved in the MTLs said, "you're friends, you're in ministry together, build relationship when you can, and honor each other, you know, it's great, it's been awesome." (Jared, Personal Interview). The majority of the people who have been involved for two or more of the three years of the church's existence moved from Portland for the express purpose of building the church. Moving in order to join the church planting team combined with the amount of time required in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the church translates into the leaders spending time and building tighter relationships with each other than with others in their social circles. One leader characterized it as, "outside of a Sunday we rely on the church for our relationship[s], that's where all of our friends are" (Shane, Personal Interview). A portion of this is also due to the fact that the other leaders are in a position to understand the situations that they are experiencing and might be able to offer sympathy and support within those situations. In response to a question about if leaders rely on one another, a Ministry Team Leader said,

Definitely, they're some of my closest friends. I think that especially when you're helping each other and you're just doing ministry together, doing life together inevitably, when you're going to meetings and you're doing things and you know that these people have the same belief system as you, it's important, I think, and awesome to be able to call a certain person that you're on leadership with and know that it's confidential and you can really share your own personal stuff and be able to have that support cause you all

kinda get it cause you're doing the same sort of stuff, so you can kinda relate and support

and encourage each other (Rachel, Personal Interview).

This closeness in relationship provides the opportunities for leaders to engage a certain amount

of concertive control (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985) over one other, while at the same time

increasing the impetus for engaging in the process of identification.

      **Identification and identity construction.** Identification as the process of members

connecting to an organization happens in a complex interplay with the understanding and

enactment of organizational identity. As an individual decides that they wish to become involved

with the church, there is a connection made that causes them to engage in tasks that enact an

organizational identity. Once the leaders see that individual engaging in those behaviors, the

individual is asked to become more involved, which defines their organizational identity through

the formal structures of leadership tiers and furthers the process of identification. Suddenly the

leader has more responsibility and more association with the church which leads to attachment,

through relationships and individual acceptance of the presented organizational identity. A

member of the Core Team explained it like this,

> About week three of attending Pearl Church, [the lead pastor] pulls us aside and has a
>
> chat with us. 'Hey, I wanna talk to you guys, like this might be kinda forward, but I'm
>
> gonna ask you anyways, I'd like you to join worship team and start serving here.' From
>
> that point on he invited us to the first media team meeting where we didn't know anyone
>
> and just kinda sat over there. So yes, we were like, 'Okay. If you are ready to have us
>
> serve, we are chomping at the bit to get involved'" (Group Interview).

These leaders had engaged in identification whilst attending the church. It was mentioned earlier

in this leader's explanation that, "we visited and even before the first service ended I was like,

'This is it; this is where we need to be'… It was awesome." (Group Interview). The initial attachment (identification) to the church then led to the lead pastor presenting the individual with the option to be a leader, thus giving the leader a place to enact their connection and desire or commitment to see the church succeed.

Another member of the Core Team, involved in the youth and greeting ministries talked about her experience of joining the leadership team,

> Then on one Sunday, I was just like we need to start doing kid's, so I told my sisters, 'hey guys we need to do this k?' So we started doing kid's ministry and we did that for a while. We went to Five's [the youth ministry] meetings before it was actually like something solid when we met like once a month, so it was like 'okay, if I can make it, I'll go', but I wasn't committed and then last February we were asked to help with a team that we took to GU [youth conference]. So we went to that and then we launched the youth ministry in March and so at that point I just started doing whatever was asked of me or not asked of me, just hey there needs help, just stuff like that, do it (Group Interview).

Engaging with the church starts with a decision to enact an organizational identity of volunteer, which is indicative of identification, then leading to further involvement with the church and enactment of organizational identity. That singular decision to become involved in the church then established this leader on the Core Team and she is now highly involved and influential in the youth ministry, leading several girls small groups while being mentored by the youth pastor and a MTL. Choosing to become committed is indicative of identification and is seen in the construction of organizational identity. Making the decision to enact an organizational identity of

volunteer informs the church, other leaders, and the individual of their place in addition to the presence of DNA.

The process of identification and identity construction for the leadership team happens when there is an intersection of church needs and individual desire. The process starts with church attendance and continues in a snowballing fashion as the leader progresses over time and through the leadership levels. Individuals identify with the church, enough to attend the church and become members, which makes a way for them to have an organizational identity, which then requires an increased level of identification and the process continues until organizational exit occurs.

Overall, membership negotiation is enacted in the Pearl Church within the medium of formal structures, inclusive of hierarchical leadership levels, and explained through the DNA metaphor. The Vision Team, the MTLs, and the Core Team communicatively exist in a fashion which informs leaders of their place within the church inclusive of the responsibilities, power, and relationship connections that are present within the leadership position. The formal structures negotiate expected behaviors and are used to communicate to current leaders their role in building structure to exist long term. Furthermore membership negotiation happens through identity construction and maintenance. The use of the DNA metaphor to indicate both organizational identity and identification through acceptance and enactment of church beliefs and values facilitates construction of the meaning of membership through communication of "having the DNA". Additionally DNA transfer communicatively constructs the process of gaining the knowledge set required in order to become a leader within the church. This process of DNA transfer through communication of organizational identity enables leaders to resolve competing identities using one of three processes: submission, silencing, or overcoming. Pearl

Church leaders are highly involved with the church and experience high levels of identification which facilitates the process of concertive control, both through external, peer control and internalized beliefs. Organizational identity and identification exist in a bi-directional fashion through the way that individuals choose to become involved. The choice to be involved is based on a desire to further the vision of the church, thus those individuals have experienced the process of identification, which practically means enacting the organizational identity of being a leader, further solidifying their connection to and identification with the church.

In conclusion, membership negotiation as a communicative constitution of the Pearl Church organization is seen as leadership enactment of individual and organizational identity exemplified by purpose focused behaviors. Both constructs of formal structure and identification are highlighted through use and conceptualizations of the DNA metaphor. Leader membership is negotiated through place in the tiers of leadership, based on involvement, commitment, and acceptance of the church's belief system. Organizational identification was found to have a profound influence on leader's construction of membership meaning.

**Chapter Four**

**Discussion**

Leaders negotiate their membership within the Pearl Church primarily through the use of the DNA metaphor, which communicates a sense of belonging and provides a way for the leaders to negotiate their membership as an internal process of individual and organizational identity construction. As a form of communicatively constituting the organization, negotiation is enacted through behavior that both establishes and enacts the organizational structure. Membership is negotiated using the formal structures of the leadership tiers to determine their place, roles, commitment, involvement and level of DNA enactment. Furthermore, membership is negotiated through varied amounts of organizational identification enacted through the process of engaging in organizational tasks. The presence of behavior congruent with the DNA is used as the primary indicator, to leaders and congregation members, of a leader's role and place within the organization.

Leadership members negotiate the meaning of their involvement with the Pearl Church through enactment of formal structure and interaction with the church based on organizational identification. The implications for engaging in this process are discussed in terms of individual negotiation within the organizational structures, through enacting a strict church status, an identity connection to the Divine, and the use of concertive control.

**Formal Structure**

Formal structure in the Pearl Church is first evidenced in the hierarchical structure of the levels of leadership and the manner in which leaders negotiate their place within the organization through specific role requirements and tasks performed in those roles. The levels differentiate tasks such as setting up for worship services, performing music, educating children that are then

enacted by leaders on a weekly basis. By enacting these activities, members are reenacting their membership. Membership negotiation does provide room for negotiation of those leadership tasks, but the formal structures constrain the range of choices available to the leader. Secondly, the 12 core values function as a formal structure that guides the behavior of the church and its members, specifically leaders. Agreement to be a part of the leadership team includes an implicit agreement to believe and enact those 12 core values within organizational roles. The 12 core values provide boundaries for leaders to know what is acceptable and expected of them as leaders. Thirdly, the DNA metaphor functions as formal structure by communicating and monitoring behaviors that reflect those 12 core values and position within the leadership levels. Comprised of these three components, formal structure can be best understood through the enactment of a strict church identity, as well as through differentiated power and choice.

**Strict church status.** Based on the research of Iannaccone (1994), strict churches that claim an exclusive truth are becoming increasingly popular in the United States. The Pearl Church fits into certain facets of a strict church because of the strength of their beliefs and portrayed ideals, but the church does not believe that their expression is exclusively correct. While the Pearl Church believes that there are a variety of expressions of the truth that they believe, there is an unquestioning stance that they believe their expression is the best. The leaders of the Pearl Church know what they believe and are more than willing to talk about it to anyone who is interested. Therefore, a rigid structure in beliefs is functional for them as an organization at this time.

A strict adherence to the formal structure translates to a lack of perceived need to cater to the public. Given the belief that their church has been commissioned by God, then the responsibility of the organization is to do what they feel He wants them to do, without

conforming to outside pressures. This belief has the possibility of becoming problematic due to the lack of dissenting voices present within the church, or at least within the leadership teams. Another possible downfall is that the church might get so wrapped up in their own existence that they fail to accomplish their stated purpose of reaching the people of the city. Conversely, the belief that the leaders answer to God, not to people, provides the leaders with a system that is less ambiguous or changing thus meaning that their place and roles are more certain. The strength of the church beliefs means that there is a clear communication of the church's identity, which is a functional necessity for a church that is just starting and wishes to be as big as the Vision Team intends for it to be.

Concurrent with the belief that there is no need to change or adapt according to other beliefs, the leaders of the Pearl church do not believe that people are a finite resource within the Denver area, meaning there are plenty of people to be involved in a variety of churches in the city and the Pearl Church does not need all people to attend their services in order for them to be successful. This belief may partly be a function of the large population of the Denver area, but it is also attached to the idea that the Pearl Church is not for everyone and that other expressions of belief in God are valid. As one leader stated,

> I'm not a debater, I'm not a freaking theologian, if you don't believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, I'm sorry; I do though. I'm not gonna sit there and argue with you and give you scriptures about how it's true or not. We both are saved; let's go introduce some people to Jesus (Jared, Personal Interview).

In this way the leader is expressing two points, first, that you can believe different things and that's not a problem; second, there is a larger purpose and cause for which people in the larger Christian community should be striving. This conceptualization further highlights the

transcendence that nullifies the incongruences in beliefs between people and churches. While the leaders communicate that the Pearl Church might not be for everyone, there is also communication that the work they do is highly valuable and it is the best for them.

The voluntary positions within the church provide a place for people to use their talents to accomplish the work that they feel called to. Whether it is musical, technical, administrative, or child care abilities, the Pearl Church is a space for individuals to belong and to contribute to something they believe in using the things they are good at. Therefore, leaders have a common goal to work towards and a purpose to enact in their everyday lives, which is a powerful reward for continued participation.

From a structuration standpoint the formal structures of an organization provide members with rules and resources that enable and constrain agents. At the Pearl Church, in some ways those formal structures (12 core values), as the foundation for being a strict church, constrain members and do not enable change.  The formal structures of DNA based on those core values encourage conformity and discourage leaders from seeking change. Furthermore, formal structure creates a means for enacting the desired organizational outcomes. The hierarchical nature of the levels of leadership means that tasks and responsibilities are handed down from the level above any given leader, thus the lead pastors are able to accomplish organizational goals through the subsequent behaviors of their leaders. The formal structure provides a way for the Vision Team to control voluntary participation outcomes. However, leaders continue to have agency and thus chose to enact the church by engaging in reproducing the structure as instructed by the leaders and the DNA. Additionally, formal structure gives space for individuals to enact the church, while simultaneously enacting the meaningfulness of their involvement with building the ministry.

**Membership negotiation as power and choice.** Examining the role of formal structure in membership negotiation highlights the organization's (upper level leader's) power to set guidelines through the resources of 12 core values and DNA. While the power in the church rests with the organization, through the structure of rules and resources, the power of choice to maintain membership is solidly in the hands of the individual, based on membership agency in the system. This conceptualization of the structure/agent relationship as dichotomous is untrue to a certain extent because those two entities are unquestionably interrelated. However, negotiation requires two parties and whilst recognizing the interrelatedness of the two constructs, for the time being individuals and the organization will discussed as functionally separate entities. The structure of values and beliefs for the church is in the 12 core beliefs and the pastors' knowledge and interpretation of systematic Biblical theology. Within the structure of those beliefs, the choice to learn, follow, and conform to the behaviors indicative of the DNA becomes the job of the individual. When individual involvement is voluntary a higher investment and commitment level is necessary for participation in leadership.

Within the overall structure of the Pearl Church, the structuring power rests primarily with the organization. Individuals are imbued with the power to choose to either be involved with the church or not; however, once an individual has chosen to become a part, the rules and the resources are quite established and a large number of them are non-negotiable. While the practical outcomes of the structure are allowed to vary based on the individual resources available and organization needs present, the beliefs that inform those outcomes are expected to have been understood and agreed to before becoming a formal member and leader of the church. Through the process of taking the Journey Class and becoming involved on the volunteer teams, inclusive of formal or informal mentorship by an existing leader, individuals are provided with

the necessary knowledge sets to make an informed decision about becoming and being a leader. Through the acquisition of the church knowledge sets, the member is then required to negotiate their membership with the church by agreeing to involvement, in order to gain acceptance, relationship, and the fulfillment of their belief that serving the church and the pastor's vision is necessary for them as an individual.

When there is incongruence between church and individual beliefs, an individual then has the choice to stay and change their beliefs or behaviors or to leave the church and find another place to be. Leaders and prospective leaders are encouraged to talk to the lead pastors about any questions they might have concerning the rules and beliefs of the church. There is not much chance of the belief or the structure changing, but nonetheless there is an opportunity for clarification and explanation to be given to those who seek it. Leaders are brought into the group through the process of inclusion, but those who choose not to be involved are implicitly encouraged to find another church where they will choose to become involved.

Formal structure has been established and enacted in such a way that having the DNA, through accepting and enacting the church values and beliefs, is the only way to become and remain a member of the leadership team. This understanding of the structure is expressed as "you don't change the system, you change to fit the system". The structure of beliefs in the organization does not change and is oftentimes not up for discussion. While this firm structure eliminates ambiguity for prospective leaders, the way that the structure has been established through the formal structures, including the DNA metaphor, keeps the church system from being questioned. Dissonant voices might be entertained, but the likelihood that those structures or belief will be changed is highly unlikely. While this inherently places the organization at risk for becoming so rigid that they no longer serve their purpose within the city, it also is highly

functional to them as an organization that is in desperate need to establish themselves as a successful, young church. There is the possibility that the lack of dissonant voices found in the data is the result of having gathered interviews with only individuals on the leadership teams, and the majority of those interviews were with people in the upper two levels of leadership. Thus the extent to which the Vision Team is willing to listen to the congregation is a variable that would be relevant. The individual agency of the leaders paired with the strict formal structure currently encourages individual adherence or organizational exit.

Membership negotiation as a tension of power to structure and power to choose is an expression of the formal structures that have been established by the Vision Team. The rigid structure of the organizational levels, the 12 core values, and DNA presence provides a lack of ambiguity that the leaders then engage with and enact that constructs and further highlights their membership. Because the Pearl Church is by nature a voluntary organization, with only four staff members, there are differences in the process of formal structure between the church and a business. Primarily, there are no formal or legal contracts that inform the boundaries of membership on the teams. Thus the leaders have communicatively constructed membership boundaries based on the 12 core values of the church and the levels of leadership. For the Pearl Church, formal structures are enacted through practices, the framework within which leaders enact their membership is through the relatively informal processes of building relationships with the church, established leaders and the lead pastors. Though these processes are not formal in a business sense, they are formal and heavily structured having been constructed by the leaders, through an understanding of those processes having worked for other similar organizations. The formal structures enacted within the Pearl Church enable and encourage control that leads to desired behaviors. Overall, the implications of this structure are multi-faceted.

**Formal structure implications.** Theoretically, this research supports the work of Scott and Myers (2010). Formal structures provide a medium for membership negotiations through establishing the organizational processes that members must engage with to become members of the leadership team. This research extends the concept of formal structure to include values as structures within a voluntary organization (Hinings, et al., 1996). The voluntary nature of membership gives leaders the ability to maintain the rigidity of formal structures by focusing individual agency as a matter of membership or exit. Membership and level of leadership are negotiable, but formal structures are not negotiated. The core values and the DNA provide boundaries within which the leaders have the freedom to lead, as they choose.

Formal structure is the medium by which leaders engage the process of constructing meaning from their membership within the Pearl Church leadership teams. Within that medium, leaders negotiate their membership through the complex construction of identity.

**Identification.**

For the Pearl Church leadership team the DNA metaphor extends to reference identity structures within the leader, including both organizational and individual identity. Knowing that organizational identification is inextricably tied to identity the following discussion is presented. I will discuss the following four concepts: the social construction of meaning, the resolution of competing identities, the process of concertive control and the duality of structure through the interaction of identities and identification conceptualized as identity negotiation.

**The social construction of meaning.** The Pearl Church leaders individually have a fundamental belief in a connection to the Divine. Decisions made by the church, the leadership teams, and the individual members of those teams are guided and informed by this connection to the Divine. For each member that was interviewed it was clear that their belief in God and His

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power over their life is a foundational component of both their individual and organizational identity. Thus a direct connection to Divine power transcends individual and organizational identity to construct a consistent life of ministry.

During interviews, when describing the process of becoming a leader, each participant made mention of their involvement being attached to a belief that God had called them to the Pearl Church. For these leaders, the meaning of their membership is foundationally attached to doing what God told them to do. "[we] thought about and prayed for about a year about whether to come out here and help and so we did move out here about a year and a half ago" (Rachel, Personal Interview). "I started thinking about it [moving to Denver] and praying about it, [the] longer time went the more I felt like this is what I was supposed to be doing" (Group Interview).

God just started changing my heart for Denver and so it was over a process of about a year and a half, God just speaking to me and I just got a Word and you know people would come up and confirm it, even prophetically and so I just decided to move out here (Yvonne, Personal Interview).

Although leaders are formally recognized in the organization, more importantly leaders choose their involvement based on their understanding of the calling of God on their life.

Again there is a double hermeneutic that involves the DNA metaphor and subsequent behavior. A portion of the DNA belief system is the belief that God speaks to individuals and informs them of the plan for their life, thus to fully enact the Pearl Church DNA includes knowing that they are called to enact leadership. Furthermore, there is no objective understanding of what God has spoken to an individual, so being involved in the Pearl Church is an indication that God has called them to be there, which indicates the presence of the Pearl Church DNA. Thus having the DNA of a Pearl Church leader includes being called by God to

lead and being a leader is indicative of having the DNA. Leaders are called, thus they have the DNA. Since they have the DNA, leaders then understand how leading enacts their calling. Using this double hermeneutic allows the leaders to better conceptualize and articulate, to themselves and others, their organizational and individual identity.

Though the calling of God on a leader's life is primarily an internal process, it is communicatively constructed and understood. The existence of that calling and the recognition of that calling by the Vision Team and other leaders are necessarily socially constructed. The enactment of the calling is the enactment of individual and organizational identity, or DNA. Through the construction of high levels of identification and subsequently, a strong organizational identity through the identification process, membership negotiation does not just engage the process of communicative constitution of the organization (McPhee & Iverson, 2009), but facilitates the communicative constitution of self for leaders. For the organization this process maximizes the involvement and commitment of voluntary participants. By engaging leaders in the process of identity construction through the lenses of church and organizational identity, the church ensures that high organizational identification (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998) will be present in their leaders.

**Transcendent belief resolves competing identities.** The leader's organizational identity is also based on their calling, as recognized by the Vision Team. Giftings and talents are recognized, as they fit with organizational needs and then a person is invited to be a part of a ministry team, perhaps leading to a leadership position, and is placed within a team. That invitation positions them within the formal structure, informs them of their organizational identity, and encourages further identification. Additionally, answering to the pastors, to the other leaders, and to God, encourages individuals to go above and beyond what they might

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otherwise do in a volunteer situation. The transcendence of the belief in the calling of God nullifies tensions and conflict between individual's roles and identities. When things get hard and people are tired or experiencing dissatisfaction with their current situation, whatever it might be, the belief that this is exactly where they should be and where God wants them to be supersedes the temporary discomfort or tension. This conceptualization of life and work in the church is mutually agreed upon and encouraged amongst the leaders, thus to be a leader means they have been called and their responsibility is not just to the church or to the fellow leaders, but to God as well.

A belief in God's calling on individuals' lives and on the church as a whole contributes to the ability to carry on in the face of hardships. Additionally, there is a belief that God will provide resources, both material and immaterial, so leaders can accomplish needed tasks. In this way, leaders believe that no matter what is happening, God will take care of their needs. External tensions, between individuals, are resolved through communication with one another that highlights God's supremacy and the individual security of God's personal calling for each leader. Internal identity tensions are resolved through God speaking, as a personal enactment of the DNA.

This research stands as a strong counter example to Tracy and Trethewey's (2005) real self – fake self dichotomy. The lines of the fractured self begin to fade as leaders enact their individual identity through their organizational identity, establishing strong organizational identification. Transcendent belief resolves not only the tensions of individual and organizational identities, but serves to unify those identities.

**Concertive control.** For the leaders of the Pearl Church, concertive control is an implicit organizational structure as well as a form of membership negotiation. Due to the voluntary

nature of leadership and membership, traditional authority alone fails as a system of control (Barker, 1999). Concertive control fits the process of socialization, identity negotiation, and navigation of the tension between organizational beliefs and values and congregational needs. Through the use of concertive control the leadership of the Pearl Church is able to maintain excellent functioning of all its leaders within the organizational settings. Additionally, through the internalization of beliefs and values, the concertive control becomes an extension of membership negotiation as leaders must engage in identity work.

Concertive control allows for the church identity to be continually negotiated through individual behavior. This encourages, and at times requires, leaders to reproduce their identity in the image of the church. This type of concertive control means that not only does the church get the agent to engage in organizational behaviors, but conflates church and individual identity. The process of concertive control happens through DNA enactment and transfer. Leaders manage one another's behavior and teach sets of knowledge that are then internalized. Fundamentally this creates an environment where leaders engage in behavior not only for the church's benefit, but also for their own identity. The organizational tasks then become consistent with who the leaders believe themselves to be and thus organizational behaviors enact and further establish both the leader's organizational and individual identity. As a result, concertive control, at the Pearl Church, means engaging in the process of identity negotiation in order to construct membership meaning.

This research suggests that concertive control as internalized beliefs functions differently in a church organization than in a business, further supporting the theory of concertive control (Barker, 1999). In some ways concertive control is less powerful within the Pearl Church because organizational exit without financial repercussions is an option. However, in other ways

it is more powerful due to the convolution of identities, individual, organizational, and church. Within the Pearl Church concertive control allows for leaders to guide the membership negotiation of current and future leaders.

**Membership negotiation as identity negotiation.** Membership negotiation for the leaders of the Pearl Church is a process of identity negotiation. For the current group of leaders, identity is partially determined and established through involvement in other churches prior to the Pearl Church existing. Though there are components of organizational identity that are understood based on previous knowledge, there are new aspects of identity that are unique and require negotiation in order to maintain membership within the Pearl Church leadership teams. Leaders must continue to agree with the 12 core values, and believe in their calling to the Pearl Church. Thus the voluntary nature of involvement and the strict structure of the belief system combine to necessitate identity negotiation by leaders.

Voluntary participation in the church encourages organizational identification for the leaders. By engaging in the activities that enact membership on the leadership team, the leaders come to view themselves as important to the functioning of the church and thus their involvement has worth and further connects them to the church. While voluntarily setting up sound equipment for a Sunday service, the leader doing so is simultaneously enacting church identity, organizational identity, individual identity, and further establishing organizational identification. The behavior of participating in the practical aspects of the church service communicates membership negotiation as a process furthering the mission of the church through fulfilling the practical needs. Given the understanding of structuration theory, this re-enactment process solidifies the structures and the subsequent expectations for leaders, both current and future.

Identity negotiation constitutes a significant portion of membership negotiation based on the use of the DNA metaphor. Identity expression is negotiated by the individual attempting to fit the expectations and needs of the organization and by the church anticipating that the leaders will express the DNA according to specific, though often abstract, guidelines. Though individual and organizational expressions are unique in the application of the beliefs and values, the basis for the behaviors is demanded to be in accordance with the overlapping individual and organizational identities. The DNA metaphor foundationally is used to invoke the idea of an internal process that manifests an external product or more succinctly, a specific identity that produces desired behaviors. DNA provides a communicative tool to express the ideal of a leader. The process of membership negotiation is understood by the leaders as DNA, using place in the organization, as well as behaviors that indicate organizational identification, to define the organizational identity of the leader, which acts and reenacts the structure of the church.

Membership negotiation is established through enacted relationships. As previously discussed, identity and identification are social constructs, but furthermore leaders are established within the church in relation to connections with other leaders. The DNA of an individual is necessarily established through relationship, as was discussed by several leaders during their interviews. This relational method makes concertive control easier to enact and ensures church and organizational identity compliance by leaders. Leaders are pressured to maintain their involvement and commitment to the church because of the close relationships between leaders on all levels. Thus the relational cost of not engaging in identity negotiation leading to compliance is high.

Organizational identification includes a connection between individual and organizational identity construction through voluntary participation in church behaviors. Within the Pearl

Church, leaders are expected to engage the beliefs and values of the church identity both during church activities and in their daily lives, which blurs the distinction between leaders as individuals (individual identity) and church leaders (organizational identity). Through the construction of transcendent belief, the tensions of the fractured self (Tracy & Tretheway, 2005) are resolved by blending the expectations present in individual, organizational, and church identity. By convoluting the distinction between individual and organizational identity, involvement in the Pearl Church not only encourages identification with the church because organizational actions are such an important piece of leaders' individual identity, but works to eliminate any discord or disidentification (Scott, 2007) between leaders and the Pearl Church. The existence of an identity component in the flow of membership negotiation for members of the Pearl Church is important to an understanding of voluntary participation in churches. Given the identity negotiation process that happens, the connection of individual identity to organizational identity is imperative to creating and maintaining high identification.

**Membership Negotiation**

Identity within the Pearl Church leadership team is necessarily a complex interplay of individual, church, and organizational identity that produces and reflects organizational identification. Within the medium of formal structure, the leaders use the DNA metaphor to explain their connection to and function within the team. Identity composition becomes a significant portion of membership negotiation through the abstract communication of beliefs and values that are then translated into concrete actions. The lead pastor communicates from the pulpit that being involved with the Pearl Church is not based on rules, but on the heart; "we would rather be transformed people than program people" (Field Notes). The communication of what it means to be a part of the church and subsequently the leadership team is centered around

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an internal process and an intangible understanding of belief and behavioral expressions. The conceptualization of being a leader as "having the church DNA" (Field Notes), provides the leaders with a lucrative exchange wherein individuals are included or excluded based on their position within the organization. There are ways in which this is functional for the organization, such as strong identification. In other ways, it is a risky situation where the exercise of organizational power over agents could be harmful to the organization, the leadership, the congregation, or any combination of those three entities, such as the lack of dissonant voices leading to organization stagnation. Overall, membership negotiation becomes the leaders' and the church's most important flow for constituting the organization because without the leaders the success of the church would need to be found through a different method of structuring.

In conclusion, membership negotiation as the process of identification through the medium of formal structures is currently the most important process happening within the Pearl Church. The formal structure that has been established and is maintained through power and choice and strict church status enables leaders to become and remain members of their respective teams. The informal processes for engaging with formal structures additionally provide freedom for leaders to enact the system in the most functional manner. Identification within the Pearl Church is the foundation for leadership establishment and enactment of the system. Individual and organizational identities are understood in the context of a Divine calling and a transcendent belief which defines leader place and identity. Additionally, by convoluting church identity with organizational and individual identity, leaders effective use concertive control to produce desired behaviors, both through external control and internalized beliefs. Membership negotiation, through the prolific use of the DNA, becomes primarily a process of identity negotiation for the

leaders of the Pearl Church, as they strive to fulfill church needs and communicate the values and beliefs held by the organization and the individuals.

The communicative constructions of the Pearl Church organization through interactions that establish members and structures have implications for the theoretical conceptualizations of churches as non-profit, social institutions. While this study is not intended to be generalizable to all churches, it does present implications that would be worthwhile to examine further.

**Chapter Five**

**Conclusions**

This research examines the functioning of the leadership team of the Pearl Church. Specifically, the membership negotiation process of leaders has been examined through the role of formal structure and the process of identification. While certain ideas presented might apply to other organizations, specifically church plants, these results, and the subsequent discussion, are not necessarily generalizable on a large scale. For instance, involvement in the MFI organization is variable that has an incredible impact on the organizational self-structuring of the Pearl Church, while the physical location, not owning their own building, influences the membership negotiation of the leaders. However, there are implications that not having a building necessitates and allows for a focus on DNA and need focused activities, which compensates for the lack of a physical gathering place. For the Pearl and its members the church is not a building, it is a people with a vision. Overall, this research project provides some implications for theory and practice, has limitations, and leads to questions for future research.

The leadership teams of the Pearl Church negotiate the meaning of their membership, specifically through formal structure and organizational identification, by using the double hermeneutic of the DNA metaphor which represents individual and organizational beliefs and values, as well as behaviors which indicate the presences of those values and beliefs. Formal structure exists in three components: hierarchical levels of leadership, the 12 core values, and the DNA metaphor. These components are interdependent and function as the framework wherein membership is negotiated. Within the formal structures, identification and identity is established and enacted by members of the leadership teams. Individual members negotiate their membership by engaging in organizational identification that impacts their individual and

organizational identity. Through the socially constructed definition of identity, members use a transcendent belief in God to overcome identity tensions and engage in concertive control with one another. The Pearl Church leadership team members negotiate their membership through identity negotiation at the beginning of their involvement with the leadership team. In order to be involved with the team an individual must accept the values and beliefs of the church and agree to enact those values and beliefs within the structure of the levels of leadership. Those values and beliefs convolute the lines between individual, organizational, and church identity, which allows for the church to manage leader behavior and subsequently the church's identity. These findings have implications for theoretical work, both church and organizational theory, as well as practical implications for the Pearl Church and perhaps similarly structured and constituted churches.

**Research Implications**

Churches occasionally experience times where members of the church feel that they can no longer be involved in a particular church and thus leave. Some times when a large enough group decides to leave the church and start their own church. This research presents a possible explanation for that kind of church splintering. Based on the strict church status and structure of the Pearl Church, the agency of the individual is constrained to the choice of adherence to values, including involvement and commitment to the church, or organizational exit. Thus it is reasonable to suggest that churches splinter because the formal structures are too rigid to allow for individuals to express themselves in a way that they feel comfortable, which leads them to seek another venue to express the spiritual component of their humanity. The high levels of identification and identity construction work that was found may also explain the strong negative reactions that individuals when a church splinters.

This research supports the theories presented in the literature review and offers some unique insights into those theories. The four flows model (McPhee & Iverson, 2009; McPhee & Zaug, 2000) and specifically membership negotiation (Scott & Myers, 2010) provide a helpful model for explaining the construction of meaning both within and for the church organization. For the Pearl Church, membership negotiation is key for constituting the organization, the use of the DNA metaphor encompasses the membership negotiation process. Thus, membership negotiation is the most important of the flows in this case. This understanding is interesting within the realm of non-profit organizations, due of the voluntary nature of the organization that requires a focus on volunteer membership. This research highlights the formal structures that guide the process of membership negotiation and also addresses the interactions between the two constructs.

The duality of structure model of identity and identification (Scott, Corman, & Cheney, 1998) was supported by the research and yielded insight into the process by which identification enacts identities. As a contribution, this research project finds that identification can not only strengthen organizational identity, but can also encourage or sometimes *necessitate* the convergence of identities such as organizational, individual, and church. The communicative process by which individuals negotiate their membership through identity construction was highlighted in this research.

Practical implications of this research are highly dependent upon organizational structure and needs; however, some broad ideas are helpful to consider in light of church functioning First, the strong demand for high organizational identification and thus identity conformity currently appears to work, but this may not continue to be the best option for the church. The rigidity of the structure that requires identity conformity could lead to organizational exit by individuals or

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groups of people. Since churches need congregants in order function as churches, organizational exit is something to be avoided. Second, the strict adherence to the formal structures of the church functions well to create an environment and leadership that is unambiguous may also function to alienate individuals who do not precisely fit within the church. Both of these may then lead to an inability to or difficulty with fulfilling the constructed purpose of the church. Also, the manner in which the Pearl Church has been constructed is quite functional for them as an organization and the leaders that have chosen to be involved and committed are satisfied with their place in the church. The Pearl Church effectively provides a place for individuals to express and experience their spirituality, as well as a venue for leaders to enact their identity, inclusive of their talents.

**Limitations**

Two limitations are present in this study. First, limited access to individuals and organizational gatherings focused this research on members of the leadership. Additionally, organizational gatherings, such as leadership team meetings, were infrequent during my time at with the organization. Second, I had a limited amount of time to be involved with the organization. More time with the leaders would have allowed for additional  access to meetings, both formal and informal. If I had more time to be involved in the church, the novelty of my presence as a researcher would have lessened and allowed me to become more involved in the communication circles of the organization.

**Future Research**

Future research into membership negotiation within a church organization could go in a plethora of directions. A great deal could be learned about the way volunteers engage with church organizations in the process of membership negotiation. Specifically, examining how

organizations perceive the meaning of membership as opposed to the manner in which leaders conceptualize the meaning of their membership would be a useful comparison. A similar research approach would be beneficial to further expanding the ideas presented in the results and discussion portion of this paper. Furthermore, another similar research area to explore would be to interview congregational members and attendees of the church to understand their conceptualization of the meaning of leader membership, inclusive of organizational identity and identification of the congregants.

In the realm of new or unique research in church organizations, the following three ideas are presented. Primarily, it would be interesting to see how different types of churches communicate their own organization identity and structure. Do other church organizations use a metaphor, or multiple metaphors, to describe themselves? Are there certain metaphors that work better than others within specific communities? Secondarily, I would suggest a project that examines the connection between the perception of people as a finite resource and organizational self-structuring, inclusive of strategies for functioning and for reaching people. It came through in the data that the Pearl Church views people as a resource, but also as though it is not necessary to get everyone to attend the Pearl; different people will go different places, we don't have to be the only church in town was the general idea communicated by leaders. It is possible that there are organizations that do not see people in the same way. I would posit that an organization's strategic choices would vary dependent upon their view of people as resources and other churches. Thirdly, an examination of the conceptualization of organizational identity when individuals are involved in things that are not a part of their individual identity would be interesting. The idea presented in this paper concerning the resolution of identity tensions engages a different process than the process found and proposed by Tracy and Trethewey (2005).

Tracy and Trethewey propose that resolution of identity tension happens through recognizing facets of one's identity as a real-self versus fake-self dichotomy. The results from the Pearl Church suggest that individuals in the church organization setting communicate identity as being faceted, but that there are facets that are expressed as prioritized while continuing to be their real-self. A leader might not see themselves as being good at working with the children's ministry, but they do see themselves as a person who does whatever is necessary to maintain church functioning, and with that being the more important facet of their identity to express will then work with the children's ministry. This particular area might be worthwhile to examine in contrast between non-profit and for-profit organizations.

**Conclusion**

The Pearl Church is a viable, functional church that is steadily growing in numbers. Currently, approximately four hundred people worship in the congregation on a Sunday with approximately two-hundred and fifty people who are official members. For the time being, the evidence suggests that the Pearl Church is functioning successfully. From a communication standpoint, their message is getting out to people in the Denver area and they are fulfilling the requirements for being a successful church.

The strong structure identification of leadership in the church allows for the Vision Team to find and empower teams of the individuals that share the beliefs of the church. The belief system is clear and the expectations are straight-forward, thus to be a part of the leadership team requires that the individual know, to the extent that one can, what they are becoming involved in and what the expectations are. For the majority of the leaders, being on the team is an outward expression of their individual identity. A great deal of satisfaction and fulfillment comes from involvement in the Pearl Church, thus they continue to be involved.

Through the research process, one concept stood out in the data which could be applicable to other non-profit or perhaps even for-profit organizations. Communication within the organization that attaches organizational tasks to a larger purpose is a powerful means by which to create organizational identification. This communication is even more powerful when communicated in a way that connects the purpose to an individual's pre-existing beliefs. Having this type of communication in place provides a transcendent belief for individuals, which allows for easier resolution of any competing identities. When the purpose is transcendent beyond the temporary and connected to existing beliefs, then concertive control can flourish. The concertive control allows the organization function smoothly without creating an oppositional relationship between those in managerial positions and those who are under them.

This research project found that the leaders in the Pearl Church organization negotiate the meaning of their membership according to the literature established in the review of literature. In accordance with the concepts of formal structure and identification, the leaders of the Pearl Church negotiate membership by attaching their individual beliefs to the organizational beliefs of the church through the conceptualization of DNA. The DNA metaphor includes reference to the organizational structures of the 12 core values, which in turn provides a set of rules and resources upon which all organizational functioning is based. Organizational structures beyond the 12 core values are enacted in whatever way is most functional to smoothly navigate the tension between the beliefs of the church and the needs of the congregation.

This examination of a church as a structured organization answers the question set forth at the beginning of this project: How do leaders negotiate the meaning of their membership through formal structure and identification?  Leaders of the Pearl Church negotiate the meaning of their membership through the communication of values and beliefs using the DNA metaphor.

Furthermore, examination of the church as an organization found there to be a complex and heavily interrelated relationship between individual, church, and organizational identity in the conceptualization and articulation of membership meaning by the leaders.

Overall for the leaders of the Pearl Church, there is genuinely nowhere in the world that they would rather be than in Denver volunteering at the Pearl Church. There is a certain charisma that the lead pastor has which plays a part in the leaders being involved, but there is something bigger at work.

We wanted to make sure we were creating an experience for people, it wasn't about a Sunday service, but about a life in the church and we wanted to duplicate that DNA to other people, so they get involved because this is the most exciting thing you'll ever be a part of and there's nothing more exciting than a part of something bigger than yourself and so that has always been our motivation is do this because we believe in you and we want that there will be nothing more exciting than your decision to get involved with something like this. (Group Interview).

The kind of excitement, commitment, and interest in gathering people to the organization found in the Pearl Church is a rare thing in the organizational world. The transcendent belief in the calling of God, allows for the leaders of the Pearl Church to believe that success is imminent both for them individually and as a member of the organization.

The leaders of the Pearl Church are attached to the organization, but are also connected to something stronger in their own conceptualization of identity. The leaders connect to an ideology and an organization that is larger than the Pearl Church, characterized by one leader as "the Global Church" (Field Notes) and by another as "the Kingdom of God" (Yvonne, Personal Interview). The presence of these conceptualizations of purpose and identity suggests that

perhaps these individuals would be the same people and do the same things regardless of where they were. Perhaps their involvement with the Pearl Church is a function of location combined with an understanding of the call of God on their life. It may not be this specific organization that causes them to do what they do, but perhaps something inherently or foundationally unique about these people as individuals. The Pearl Church may simply provide encouragement and an avenue for this portion of their identity to be expressed. However, it is likely that the combination of individual and church beliefs together that creates the unique construction of meaning found in the Pearl Church. The leaders of the Pearl Church provide insight into the identity construction of its members and the organization as a whole. With firm formal structure and high levels of identification that blurs the lines between individual and organizational identity, the Pearl Church is an organization that has created an environment conducive to their definition of church success.

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<center>**Appendix A:**</center>

**Interview Questions:**

Interviewees will be asked a selection of the following questions, with the option of follow-up

questions as needed.

**Pearl Church**

What would you define as being the overarching purpose of the Pearl Church?

How would you describe the mission of the Pearl Church?

Describe your relationship to the Pearl Church.

Please explain the process by which you became a/the (fill in the blank).

How do you accomplish your job as a/the (fill in the blank)?

Do you have previous experience being a/the (fill in the blank)?

How would you describe the way in which your experience has changed the way that you

approach your role here at the Pearl Church?

**Host Church Questions**

Why did you choose to start another church?

In establishing the church plant, how much information or policy did you pull from CBC?

Could you give me some examples of what you pulled from them?

How connected to CBC is the Pearl Church?

How many members of the leadership team were originally from CBC?

Have you found that there are ways that CBC did things that don't work for the Pearl Church?

Could you describe one of those situations?

**Organizational Self-Structuring/Knowledge Set**

How are decisions negotiated when there is disagreement amongst the team?

In the process of becoming a member and a leader, were there specific sets of information you were required to know?

How did you come to know those things?

How much of the knowledge that you have about how to be (specific role) was taught here at the Pearl Church?

What sorts of information that you use here did you gather elsewhere?

Can you describe a time when the information you knew from elsewhere worked really well?

Can you describe a time where the other information wasn't very helpful?

How did you find a new way to do things?

Within your role, do you teach those things to other members or leaders?

Is there room for interpretation of those processes and functions?

**Membership Negotiation**

Do you feel as though you have an impact on the Pearl Church and how it functions?

What are those ways that you impact the functioning of the church?

How did you come to know the beliefs and values of the Pearl Church?

When making decisions about what to do in specific situations (mention an example), what information sets do you use to guide you?

When you are asked to complete a task, what sorts of guidelines are given, or in place, that focus the action?

How involved are you in the functioning of the Pearl Church?

Describe your commitment to the leadership team.

To what extent do you rely on other members of the team?

Could you give an example of when that might happen?

Do you have more than one role within the organization?

Are there times where you feel as though those roles conflict?

**Identity**

Individual Identity

Are there ways in which being a member of the Pearl Church has impacted or changed who you are and how you define yourself?

In what ways has it changed you?

Were there things that you had to start doing to be on the leadership team? Could you give an example?

Was there anything you were required to stop doing when you became a leader? Can you give an example of that?

Organizational Identity

How did (specific rule) come into being?

How did the decision get made to conduct services in that way?

Describe the decision making process for (specific set of actions).

Are there times where you have felt a tension between who you are and what you are expected to be within the church?

Can you give an example of those times?


**If time allows**

Do you find there are times when the practical needs of the church come into conflict with the spiritual needs of the members?

Could you describe how you might handle the process of balancing those needs?

**Questions Added During Interview Process**

What would you say is the church's biggest constraint?

What is the church's "DNA"?

How do you transfer that DNA to people?

How did you get assimilated or integrated into the team?

How do you handle role conflict?

How would you define success for you?

How would you define success in your roles within the church?

How would you define success for the church?