Identification in Organizations with Multiple Identity Claims: The Role of Identity Claims of a Multiethnic Church in the Organizational Identification Process of Its Members

By Joel M. Solomon

B.A. in Psychology and Sociology, May 2003, Hope College
Masters of Divinity, August 2006, Regent University

A Dissertation Submitted to:

The Faculty of
The Graduate School of Education and Human Development
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

May 17, 2015

Dissertation directed by

Andrea Casey
Associate Professor of Human and Organizational Learning

The Graduate School of Education and Human Development of the George Washington University certifies that Joel M. Solomon has passed the final examination for the degree of Doctor of Education as of January 14, 2015. This is the final and approved form of the dissertation.

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Joel M. Solomon

Dissertation Research Committee:

Andrea Casey, Associate Professor of Human and Organizational Learning, Dissertation Director

Ozgur Ekmekci, Associate Professor of Clinical Research and Leadership, Committee Member

Marian Robinson, Adjunct Professor of Educational Leadership, Committee Member

Dedication

This entire work is dedicated to my mother and father, James and Priscilla Solomon. I firmly believe it was your constant prayers that sustained me through this entire program and dissertation process. Mom, you taught me if anything was worth doing, it was worth doing right. Those words ran through my mind so many times whenever I wanted to take any kind of shortcut. You are an epitome of determination and commitment to doing it right. Dad, your own pursuit of knowledge and belief in me to be all that God had for me was imprinted and imparted into my soul from birth. I am the man I am today because of you. You are my hero.

Acknowledgments

Andrea, simply put, I could not have made it through this process without you. Your guidance from topic to conceptual framework formation to chapter 4 revisions allowed this to come to fruition. You're a gift to the ELP and GWU.

Avery, you bore the brunt of this program and dissertation. Thank you for your patience and your support. Your words of encouragement and your loving hugs allowed this to continue when I wanted to give up. Thank you for allowing me this journey. I love you deeply.

Abstract of Dissertation

Identification in Organizations with Multiple Identity Claims:
The Role of Identity Claims of a Multiethnic Church
in the Organizational Identification Process of Its Members

The purpose of this research study was to examine the organizational identification process specifically in relationship to how a member identifies with the organizational identity claims in an organization in which he or she is a member. This study specifically sought to understand the members' identification with each of the identity claims or a subset of the claims of an organization over time.

The primary research question that guided the study was as follows: "How does organizational identification emerge over time in a multiethnic organization with multiple identity claims?" The study took place in a local multiethnic church. A qualitative case study method was employed as 16 church members were interviewed in order to understand the individual nature of their identification process.

The study found that as organizational identification emerged, participants responded to a set of multiple identity claims in a hierarchical manner. This resulted in the participants emerging with a primary identification to one of the organizational claims and a secondary identification to the reminder of the organizational claims. The study also found that the search for a church based on identity claims had an effect on the timeframe for identification, and the presence of faith was a significant influencer in the identification process.

This study helps to foster an understanding of the process of member choice to identify with the organizational claims as a subset of claims or the shifting hierarchy of organizational identity claims in the process. The implication of multiple identity claims

and varied identification to specific claims ultimately calls into question the nature of the definition of organizational identification. These implications also extend to the members themselves as they seek to identify or understand their sense of belonging to the organization.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The field of psychology has long researched the question of who we believe we are and how we, as individuals, define who we think we are (Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002). The field of sociology has asked the same question but began asking it on a collective level (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). Researchers within these two fields, psychology and sociology, began pulling on similar conceptual assumptions and began to address this question of "Who am I?" as one process. What was suggested was that the individual's self-concept was, in part, derived from his or her membership in a social group (Tajfel, 1978). Thus, the social elements of the group and the individual's self-concept were considered, and what ultimately emerged was a theory called social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Organizational theorists, picking up this same idea of the pursuit of identity, believe that corporations as well as individuals ask the question of "Who are we?" The answer to this question has been framed or known as the organization's identity; by definition, organizational identity is that which is central, distinctive, and enduring in an organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The belief is that organizations attempt to define their identity, but only in light of the collective, i.e., the organization (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Furthermore, organizational identity is made known by way of a set of claims about the organization that convey both its distinctiveness from other organizations and its collective oneness at the same time (Albert et al., 2000; Whetten &

Mackey, 2002; Brickson, 2005). Ultimately, it is the identity claims of the organization that send cues to both insiders and outsiders of the collective's answer to the question of "Who are we?" (Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Yet, these organizations are made up of individuals who are asking the very same question, only for themselves. It is the process of the individual answering the question of "Who am I?" in light of the organizational identity claims that has been termed organizational identification (Sluss et al., 2012).

In general, organizational identification is about belonging, a member's perception of oneness with the organization (Jones & Volpe, 2011), or a member's sense of belonging to the organization's values and to other members (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Cole & Bruch, 2006). The basic premise of organizational identification is that when organizational members define themselves, they define themselves at least in part by what the organization is thought to represent (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Identification can be viewed as an outcome, wherein, as a result of the self-concept identifying with the organization, the individual uses the group identity as self-referencing or self-defining for his or her own self-concept (Pratt, 1998; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Identification also can be seen as more of a nonstatic and emergent process of becoming-that takes into consideration the moment-by-moment attempts to align self-concept with organizational identity (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008).

The self-identity, as laid out by social identity theory, sees the self as not just influenced by society, but ultimately integrated into the individual's identity (Mead, 1961; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Stets & Burke, 2000). Identity formation emerges through a reflexive process of self-categorizing, of identifying one's self with the groups and

membership he or she belongs to (Stets & Burke, 2000). This self-identity, however, is in constant flux, as it is modified and revised with encounters and situational influences (Burke, 1980) and thus affects what the individual does in the certain context and speaks to the essence of why the individual ultimately joins the groups he or she does (Ashforth et al., 2008).

This identification process is considered to be present in individuals to the degree to which they cognitively think of themselves in relationship to the organization as a whole (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Dutton et al., 1994; Watts, 2010; Mael & Ashforth, 1995), the extent to which they cognitively define themselves by another group (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Dukerich et al., 2002), and how emotional they feel about their identification to the organization (Ashforth et al., 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Research on the phenomenon of organizational identification within organizations is quite extensive, addressing organizational identification to such collectives as organizations, departments, smaller work/project groups, and organizational leadership. Organizational members who have identified with the organization often report higher levels of positive attitudes, behaviors, and general well-being (Cole & Bruch, 2006). Recent trends within the literature are looking into the effect that organizational identification has on the members' commitment levels (Cole & Bruch, 2006; Jones & Volpe, 2011; Guatam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2004). Organizational identification as an outcome has been shown to have a wide range of impact on the members themselves, ranging from positive attitudes, decreased turnover rates, a higher sense of proactiveness, and, overall, a higher level of organizational beneficial behaviors (Sluss et al., 2012).

Organizational identification as a process has been shown to impact how members interpret organizational practices (Vough, 2000) and enact organizational policies (Besharov, 2014).

Furthermore, literature supports the importance of organizations assimilating the new member as quickly as possible as the identified member (versus a nonidentified member) works from a framework for making sense and developing organizational scripts that serve as the basis for organizational actions (Drori, Honig, & Sheaffer, 2009) and helps to foster positive organizational behaviors (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). The importance of organizational identification is not overlooked by the organization, particularly for these organizational newcomers. Sluss et al. (2012) put forth that a new member's socialization process begins with his or her asking and answering the question of "Who am I (now)?" Other research has suggested that the desired effectiveness of an organization may hinge on this identification process; negative organizational consequences are extensive if a significant disconnect exists between the organization's set of identity claims and the claims of its members (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Mael & Ashforth, 1995; Lichtenstein, Netemeyer, & Maxham, 2010; Rotondi, 1975). It is because of issues such as these that some organizational researchers have suggested that efforts to strengthen organizational identification are the primary tasks of an organization (Pratt, 1998).

Organizations have been found to have more than one identity claim as they attempt to both define themselves (Pratt & Foreman, 2000) and give organizational direction (Foreman & Whetten, 2002). The organizational challenge is that sometimes these multiple identity claims reflect different, competing, and (apparently) conflicting

organizational identities (Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Albert & Whetten, 1985; Pratt & Corley, 2007). For example, in Glynn's (2000) study on the Atlanta Symphony, two primary identity claims divided the organization: 1) "We are a world-class orchestra in a world-class city," and 2) "We are the best orchestra we can afford" (p. 3). For the Atlanta Symphony, these two claims became the lens by which every one of the members chose to view the organization's mission, goals, and actions; therefore, it was the presence of these multiple identity claims that become significant challenges for management as they led organizational members to make decisions, resolve conflict, or take organizational actions (Pratt & Corley, 2007; Glynn, 2000; Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997). Simply put, organizational identity, as seen in its claims, aims to cultivate a sense of identification among its members (Rindova & Schultz, 1998), thus creating a potential hurdle for organizations with multiple identity claims that may at times be conflicting.

For the organization, its identity is the way its members understand who it is (Price, Gioia, & Corley, 2008; Ravisi & Schultz, 2006). When multiple identities are present, there is the potential for identification to emerge based on divergent views of who the organization is (Besharov, 2014). Because of this, researchers are beginning to focus on this issue of organizational claim diversity and how it presents challenges for management, as often multiple organizational identities may prescribe antithetical actions for the same problem (Pratt & Corley, 2006) and fight for the same resources (Pratt & Foreman, 2000).

Though there is a great wealth of knowledge surrounding both the positive impact of identification and organizational identity, there is little research on the identification process as it relates to the organizational identity claims of the organization itself. More

specifically, the organizational identification literature has not yet explored how and why individual members identify with certain identity claims of the organization and not others or identify with some claims more than others. The unspoken assumption that has guided the identification literature is that identification happens simply to the aggregate (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), whereas the reality might be that individual organizational members all relate to the various identity claims differently or not at all. This provides a significant problem both for the identification literature as well as for the organization trying to make sense of how to understand how and where its employees are relating to the organization.

For example, some research has recognized that the member may identify with specific portions of the organization over others; however, this research has typically been limited to the saliency of specific identity claims to the member and the prototypicality (the degree to which the leader embodied these organization's values) of the organization's leadership to the espoused values of the organization (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Glynn, 2000). There may be parts, events, people, and rituals that resonate more with one individual than another. The issue of saliency is important in understanding the identification process specifically as it relates to which identity claims are found to be more salient to one individual than to others. Additional research has also found that leaders themselves promote various values to differing degrees (Brickson, 2005), but again, research has yet to tie these constructs back to the specific identity claims of the organization.

Sluss et al. (2012) performed a study around the process through which leaders enact their organizational values as related to the member's organizational identification.

This enactment of organizational values was then connected to the influence of the perceived level of leader prototypicality to identification. The study found that the perceived leader prototypicality was significant in influencing the member's identification process and ultimately impacted the degree to which the member integrated the organizational values into his or her own self-identity (Sluss et al., 2012). Yet, this study did not parse out the prototypicality of the leader or identification of the member to the specific organizational values or specifically connect them to the organization's identity claims (though one may assume the organizational values emerge and are congruent with the identity claims). Rather, the study grouped the various identity claims as one set of values (even though several different values were mentioned) that the member would identify with.

Inherent within the organizational identity conversation is the difference between values and claims. Values are defined as moral or transcendent principles that guide one's decisions and actions (B. Ashforth, personal communication, September 3, 2013), and claims are defined as that which the organization speaks about itself. As previously stated, there is a relationship between these two, but they remain distinct.

Several years earlier, Riketta (2008) studied workgroup identification. His study focused on the relationship between the motives of the member's desire for identification (self-esteem, distinctiveness, belongingness, uncertainty reduction, and power) and how salient the specific workgroups connected to these motives. Riketta (2008) ultimately defined member identification in much the same way organizational identification is defined, i.e., the degree of oneness to an organization's identity claims viewed as one set of claims; however, Riketta's (2008) and others' work on saliency may give significant

insight into future work on the identification process and saliency of specific identity claims to the members.

The lack of connection between specific organizational identity claims and the identification process in these studies may be more of a reflection of how organizations think about themselves and their members. For example, the lack of research in this area may be due to the fact that organizations themselves do not allow for the concept that a fully functioning member may not have fully adopted or identified with all of their organizational identity claims: it is all in or nothing. This can be seen in Pratt's (2000) work on identification. Pratt (2000) studied the process of identification within Amway. His study demonstrated that insiders did not convey an option to identify with only some of the claims and not others and still be considered a full-fledged "Amway member." This practice ultimately ostracized anyone who did not identify with every component of Amway's organization (Pratt, 2000). Kreiner and Ashforth (2004) suggested that members may simultaneously identify strongly with one aspect of the organization but actually disagree with another portion of it. Consequently, an organization may hold a distorted view of their members' identification process and may operate on various assumptions about their members that are not accurate. The question of why and how some members identify with parts of organizational claims and not others and how this evolves over time has yet to be understood through empirical research.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this research study was to examine the organizational identification process specifically in relationship to how a member identifies with the specific organizational identity claims in an organization in which he or she is a member.

This study specifically sought to understand the members' identification with each of the identity claims or a subset of the claims of an organization over time. Understanding this process has implications for organizations as they strive for congruence between their claims and their members. These implications also extend to the members themselves as they seek to identify or understand their sense of belonging to the organization.

This study described the process of member identification with the identity claims of an organization. The primary research question that guided the study was as follows: "How does organizational identification emerge over time in a multiethnic organization with multiple identity claims?" A subquestion within this study asked, "What is the role of multiple identity claims in the identification process?" The context for the study was a 12-year-old urban, nondenominational, multiethnic church that had multiple identity claims, including that of multiethnicity. The identification process was be the members' identification with these claims.

Significance of the Study

According to Sluss and Ashforth (2008), organizational identification entails people who bond cognitively and emotionally to the organizational life they are a part of. Literature extends the effect of organizational identification to who the members are and the kind of decisions they make in relationship to the organization and its other members and ultimately may speak to why they do what they do in organizations (Sluss et al., 2012) and how committed they are to the organization itself (Jones & Volpe, 2011). Organizational identification is a principal element affecting how people choose organizational membership, how the organization achieves its goals, and how existing members develop relationships with others (Ashforth et al., 2008). Organizational

identification has been linked to a lower turnover rate, including during organizationally turbulent times (Zagenczyk, Ginny, Few, & Scott, 2011), higher productivity, and a greater sense of job satisfaction (Guatam et al., 2004). Organizational identification links the constructs of the individual and the organization together (Albert et al., 2000) and holds tremendous opportunity for us to understand how we, as individuals, organize ourselves (Brickson, 2013).

So important is this issue of organizational identification that, if an organization is not careful, its practices can actually cause disidentification. Disidentification is the process of members perceiving their identity in terms opposite those of the organization (Zagenczyk et al., 2011; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004), which can ultimately lead members to psychologically disconnect or leave the organization fully (DeConinck, 2011; Mael & Ashforth, 1995; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Research has suggested that, rather than integrate values, individuals will literally try and undermine the group's values that conflict with their own (Drori et al., 2009).

Though research varies on this topic in multiple areas, there is a general consensus: understanding this process is pivotal for organizations. Identification, however, is directly linked to the individual's integrating the organization's identity claims into his or her sense of self (Dukerich et al., 2002). It is the internalization of the organization's identity claims and values that gives the member a sense of connection with the collective (Albert et al., 2000) and ultimately affects actions that would typify what it means to be a member of the organization (Sluss et al., 2012).

Organizational identification potentially becomes magnified in its importance when one considers identification and organizational issues surrounding organizations

that have multiple identity claims. Several studies have focused on the struggle of organizational members to both identify with and navigate within multiple-identity organizations (Glynn, 2000; Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997; Foreman & Whetten, 2002). In these studies of hybrid organizations, Glynn (2000) described organizational conflict occurring when some members identify with one of the claims and other members identify with the opposite claims. Golden-Biddle and Rao (1997) looked at organizational conflict and role confusion as members attempted to enact both organizational identity claims; and Foreman and Whetten (2002) uncovered member commitment levels and expectations of the organization as it related to the organization being able to meet (or not meet) those member expectations due to the organization's competing identities.

While organizational identity and identification have been extensively researched and debated, the link between the two is still unclear (Brickson, 2005), specifically as they relate to an organization's multiple identity claims and the role of each of these claims or the set of claims in the process of identification. This study should provide an enhanced understanding of organizational identification as it relates to the whole of the collective's answer to who they claim to be. This study also contributes to the theories of organizational identification through further clarification of the very definition of identification itself: To what degree does each of the identity claims need to be considered when measuring member identification?

Additionally, this study helps to foster understanding of the process of member choice to identify with the organizational claims as a subset of claims or the shifting hierarchy of organizational identity claims in the process. As it has been speculated in the organizational identity literature, does one claim or a subset of claims have "trumping

rights" in particular situations or, in this case, in particular aspects of the identification process, or do the identity claims shift in importance to the individual at different points in time depending on the salient relationship between the organizational identity claims and the member? From this study, there is potential significance for both practice and theory in organizational identity and organizational identification, as described in the following sections.

Significance for Practice

This study contributes to practice by providing organizations with insight into how their members are responding to their identity claims, both for the newcomer as well as long-standing members of the organization. As some scholars have suggested, the member's perceived role of (and thus identification to) the organization's identity claims is foundational to how that organization manages its relations with its stakeholders (Brickson, 2005). Pratt (1998) posits that identification is the fundamental task of any organization, as the organization's functions depend on identification to its identity. A deeper understanding of how members are choosing and perceiving organizational identity claims may provide insight for organizations as to how their identity claims and practices are really being received and why their members may not be identifying with them as strongly as they may like them to be (Bartles, Pruyn, & de Jong, 2009).

Furthermore, results of this study could offer insight into the ramifications for the organization when many members may not identify with every aspect of the organization. More specifically, for multi-identity organizations, this study may provide insight into a member-structured hierarchy of the organization's identity claims that the organization itself didn't know existed; therefore, a clear understanding of this relationship is pivotal.

Member identification has been tracked with higher retention rates, higher satisfaction of its members, and member effort that goes beyond the minimum requirements (Sluss et al., 2012; Riketta, 2005). However, what is taken for granted is the member's level of identification as it relates to the identity claims themselves. For example, is a member's organizational identification and outcomes of this identification, such as work effort and satisfaction, linked to all the organizational claims or just specific claims the member identifies with? Furthermore, does the identification with these identity claims change over time? Are organizational goals impacted due to how many of the espoused organizational claims the member identifies with? Are the social relationships—from executive leadership to mid-level managers to peer-level relationship—impacted by this issue of identification as it relates to the totality of identity claims?

Significance for Theory

This study contributes to theory in organizational identification by examining the relationship between the multiple organizational identity claims and the organizational identification processes of the organization's members. This is potentially theoretically significant and holds several contributions for theory.

First, the actual process of identification is not extensively researched. This study addresses this process. Research has primarily looked at identification through the lens of outcomes and antecedents (Riketta, 2005), symbolic interactions with others (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Ashforth & Mael, 1989), organizational prestige (Dutton et al., 1994: Jones & Volpe, 2011), organizational attractiveness (Dukerich et al., 2002), organizational distinctiveness (Jones & Volpe, 2011), customer service within

organizational employees (Johnson & Ashforth, 2008; Lichtenstein et al., 2010), and perceived benefits of identification for the member (Vough, 2012), to name a few. Organizational identification research designs are often based on the premise of taking a snapshot view of organizational identification and therefore may obscure one's understanding of identification over time (Ashforth et al., 2008). Furthermore, it is the lack of research within the literature that holds the view that a member consistently revisits his or her organizational identification that promotes a "snapshot" view of identification. This study, while rejecting the notion of an outcome-driven static model only, proposes that organizational identification is both a noun and a verb (Ashforth et al., 2008) and a process of conscious, deliberate decisions. The study ultimately contributes to the theoretical conversation by capturing what is going on in the midst of this process, which may include fluctuating dynamics and antecedents.

Secondly, the study begins to ask a critical question that the literature currently is not asking. For example, an organizational identification model conceived by Sluss, Ployhart, Cobb, and Ashforth (2012) explored the specific sensegiving actions of organizational leadership in a new member's identification process or the impact of the perceived prototypicality of the organizational leader; however, what was not explored in that study was to what degree of prototypicality, of the organization as a whole, the leader exuded. In other words, was the leader viewed as embodying every aspect of the organizational identity, or simply a critical mass of the organizational identity claims? This presents the following question for organizational leadership: Does the leader or manager need to both embody and enact all of the organizational identity claims or just

some of them to be seen as a "prototype"? This kind of organizational questions are uniquely related to multi-identity organizations.

Brickson (2013) proposed that the influence of leadership's sensebreaking and sensegiving actions as related to organizational identity and member identity value congruence. Her study suggested that members choose to identify with organizations based on an evaluation of values (Brickson, 2013). This study proposes a more in-depth, nuanced view of the process of congruence between the identity claims and the individual's identification with these claims. Does the member choose to identify (based on value to the member) to all of the organization's claims or just one or two? These models suggest that this question of the member's relationship to the multiple identity claims (or values in the case of Brickson, 2013) is important to understand.

Thirdly, this study contributes to the very definition of organizational identification. While nearly every definition of organizational identification speaks to the oneness by which the member views, feels, compares, internalizes, and cognitively perceives himself or herself to the organization's identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Pratt, 2000: Suss & Ashforth, 2008; Cole & Bruch, 2006; Dukerich et al., 2002; Jones & Volpe, 2011), what is not explored is the relationship to the specific identity claims themselves and how identification to those claims might change over time. Within the theoretical conversation surrounding organizational identification, the study specifically focused on the issue of multiple identity claims and ultimately sought to address the question, "Do members identify with certain organizational identity claims more than others?"

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical constructs that serve as the foundation for this study are self-identity, organizational identification, and organizational identity. The following sections provide the theoretical foundation and related definitions for each of these constructs and the relationships between them. A more extensive discussion of these theoretical constructs is found in chapter 2.

The conceptual framework for this study is represented in Figure 1.1. The two main boxes, organizational identity and organizational identification, reside in the grey box of social identity construction. This is important to note for several reasons. First, all of the constructs are only able to operate in a social context (Mead, 1961; Weick, 1995; Ashforth et al., 2008; Harquil & King, 2010). The entirety of the framework takes place in the context of social interactions of both society as a whole as well as individual subgroups, such as a bounded collective of an organization. Secondly, inherently organizational identification speaks to the perceived oneness of an individual to a larger collective body (Ashforth et al., 2008; Albert et al., 2000; Jones & Volpe, 2011).

Self-Identity

Identity theory has had a number of views within psychology and sociology. Stryker (2000) pointed out that self-identity theories range from individual to collectively formed identities where the individual's identity is formed around self-concepts, self-evaluation, or, simply put, the total of one's thoughts, feelings, and desires of who one believes himself or herself to be (Stets & Burke, 2000). Fisk and Taylor (1991) included this idea of self-identity in the idea of self-concepts to represent our own knowledge structures, which included our social roles and goals. Research has sought to show that

one has multiple self-concepts: the individual, the relational, and the collective (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010), which can find emergence by the various roles that the individual may play (Stets & Burke, 2000; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010).

For the purposes of this study, self-concept was defined as:

> The set of meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves . . . [that] is based on our observations of ourselves, our inferences about who we are, based on how others act towards us, our wishes, our desires, and our evaluations of ourselves. (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 5)

In addition to this, this study took a view that self-identity is a concept that emerges from its social environment, where individuals define themselves by a process of categorization and comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Organizational Identity

Organizational theorists believe that organizations as well as individuals take on identities as they begin to both ask and answer the question of "Who are we?" (Albert et al., 2000). The answer to this question serves as the basis of what can be considered the organization's identity (Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013; Whetten, 2006) and as such guides the organization's actions, responses, rules, regulations, etc. (Whetten & Mackey, 2002; Whetten, 2006; Albert et al., 2000). By definition, organizational identity is that which is central, distinctive, and enduring (Albert & Whetten, 1985) and what the organization represents (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). The question of "Who are we?" asked on the collective level, though related, is fundamentally different than the question of "Who am I?" asked on the individual level.

Organizational identity in this study was defined as Albert and Whetten (1985) defined it: that which is central to the organization, that which is unique to the

organization (providing distinction from other organizations), and that which has temporal continuity. It consists of the claims that the organization espouses about itself as well as attempts to enact behaviors (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008), communicate to others (Chreim, 2002), create symbols for its members (Pratt, 2000) and nonmembers (Dukerich et al., 2002), and ultimately seeks to share these identity claims among its members (Ashforth et al., 2008; Cole & Bruch, 2006).

Organizational Identification

Organizational identification can be defined as the individual's perceived sense of oneness with the organization (Dukerich et al., 2002). Some scholars speak of identification in terms of a cognitive process (Cole & Bruch, 2006) that is absent of any form of behavior or affective state (Ashforth & Mael, 1989); however, there are some scholars that distinctly add in the emotional investment of the members in this process (Guatam et al., 2004; Ashforth et al., 2008). Research has explored antecedents of organizational identification such as positive self-image and prestige (Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000), self-enhancement (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010), organizational identity (Dukerich et al., 2002), and organizational image (Dutton et al., 1994). This perceived oneness ultimately becomes part of the member's self-identity to the point that the individual feels both the pain and joy of the successes and failures of the group (Mael & Ashforth, 1995).

Organizational identification then becomes the process by which the individual answers the "Who am I?" question in light of the collective's "Who are we?" question. Within this process members see themselves connected with the organization, so much so

that any kind of insult or attack on the organization or critique of its identity is paramount to a critique or attack on themselves as well (Mael & Ashforth, 1995).

Bringing It All Together: The Conceptual Framework

Ultimately, we see the self-identity, organizational identity, and organizational identification operating with each other within the life of the organizational members: "Identity serves the function of identification and is in part acquired by identification" (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 267). While Albert and Whetten (1985) are referencing Erikson's (1980) work on individual identity, they use it here to bridge to the element of the distinctiveness of an organization's identity, which inherently speaks to the identification of the organization's members to these unique claims. Identification is looking at how the member integrates the claims into his or her own personal self-identity (Jones & Volpe, 2011; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

By its nature, organizational identity is rooted in the interactions and social processes of a collective (Hatch & Schultz, 2002) and the perspective of these claims and interactions that shape the theoretical understandings and definitions of organizational identity. This study suggests that there are critical events within the organization's life, formal or informal, that strengthen or weaken the member's identification. The organization's identity is what helps the members answer the question of "What does this organization stand for?" and also "How will we act?" (Dukerich et al., 2002). In the same manner, individuals' self-identity will also determine behavior and how they interact with those around them (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Stets & Burke, 2000).

Furthermore, it is when a person's own self-concept begins to adopt the same attributes (Dutton et al., 1994) and behaviors (Dukerich et al., 2002) as the attributes and

behaviors that emerge from the organization's identity claims that identification can occur. The organization's identity claims create the uniqueness needed for the member to know what or whom he or she is identifying to and with (Jones & Volpe, 2011). These organizational identity claims speak to how the collective defines and models the prototype (Sluss et al., 2012) and images (Dutton et al., 1994; Dukerich et al., 2002) that the members must align to.

At the top of conceptual framework (Figure 1.1) is organizational identity. In the middle are multiple identity claims coming from the organization. These claims each meet the three identity criteria mentioned by Albert and Whetten (1985), meaning that each claim is central to the organization, helps distinguish the organization from others in its industry, and is temporally continuous to the organization. These claims represent that which the organization believes about itself (espoused values): "We are Identity Claim 1, 2, 3, and 4." Additionally, I define these claims as that which guides the organization's actions, images, policy, etc. (Pratt, 2000; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Harris, 1994). Within the model are multiple organizational identity claims suggesting that an organization might have several distinct identity claims. Fundamental to this study is the assumption and belief that multiple organizational claims are not unique to just this organization.

The model puts forth that these identity claims become the pivot point or central premise to member identification; moreover, the model suggests that the identity claims play the central bridge or connecting point between the self-identity of the members of the organization and the organization itself. The arrows represent identity claims both from the individual and the organization and go into the identification process to show that identification happens when the individual member forms a self-concept or similar

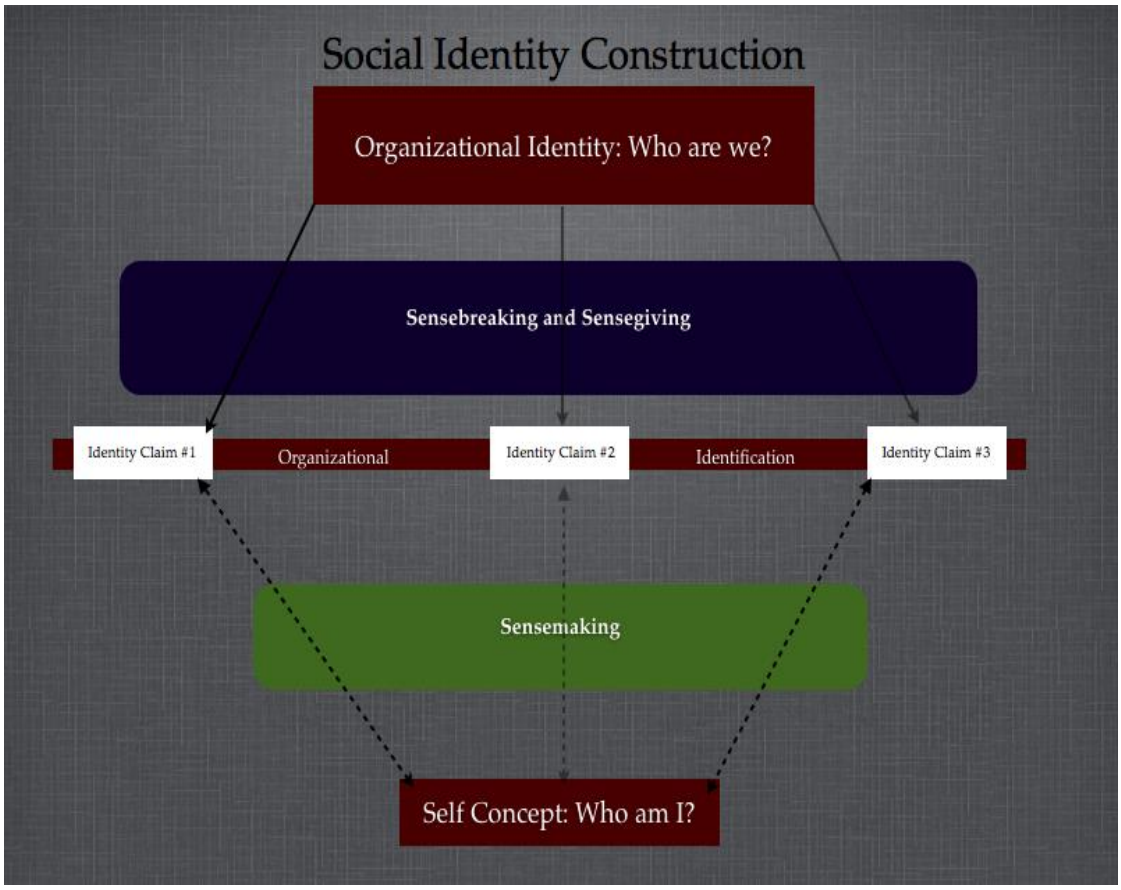

Figure 1.1. Conceptual framework.

attributes to the espoused and enacted identity claims of the organization (Dutton et al., 1994). The model attempts to show the direct relationship between self-identity and the organizational identity claims through the process of organizational identification. While identification has many layers, ultimately, it is defining and describing the relationship between the individual member and the organization (Jones & Volpe, 2011; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). More specifically, it is most often considered the intertwining of the espoused organizational claims of a set of organizational identity claims and the individual's oneness with those claims (Albert et al., 2000; Chriem, 2002). The importance of understanding the identity of the organization is seen as it allows both the

members as well as nonmembers to understand what the specific group in question stands for (Dukerich et al., 2002).

Returning to the model (Figure 1.1), the composition of the arrows is important, as it speaks to what the study is ultimately seeking to understand, with the top arrows pertaining to the organizational identity being solid and the arrows pertaining to the organizational identification process being dotted. The lines of the arrows in the top half of the model (organizational identity) are solid to show more of an objective reality. These are the claims that the organization makes about itself, such as vision statements, marketing materials, stated organizational practices, etc. These lines also represent the sensebreaking processes that the organization enacts to influence the member's process of sensemaking. The lines of the arrows in the bottom half of the model (self-identity) are dotted to convey the member's sensemaking as they relate to his or her own personal identity claims to the organization's identity claims. This pairing of the self-identity claims to organizational identity claims happens through a sensemaking process in the process of organizational identification. These dotted lines are both the crux of the study and what the identification literature has yet to discover: the sensemaking process links between the organizational identification of the member and the specific organizational identity claims.

In order for organizational identification to occur, the member will engage in an extensive process of sensegiving in response to the organization's sensebreaking tactics that will serve as direct links between the organizational identity claims and his or her own self-identity through the identification process (Pratt, 2000; Ashforth et al., 2008; Vough, 2012). The individual's ability to understand or make sense of organizational

identity claims and related actions is paramount to the process of member identification (Ashforth et al., 2008). The cues that will guide the member's sensemaking on these claims often come from the organization itself (Brickson, 2013; Sluss et al., 2013; Vough, 2012; Pratt, 2000). The underlying assumption that the study makes is that the sensebreaking and sensemaking processes cannot be separated. The member's sensemaking processes of the organizational claims are the process of identification itself; however, the sensemaking process is not done in a vacuum. Rather, these processes are in response to and influenced by way of the organization's sensebreaking and sensegiving processes on what it means for the member to be identified with their practices, claims, values, mission statements, goals, etc.

Returning to the arrows coming from the self-identity, the lines are dotted to show that the relationship between these specific claims may or may not exist, which secondarily points to the purpose of the study and crux of the model. Members may identify with organizational identity claims 1 or 2 but not necessarily with identity claims 3 or 4. As stated previously, the assumption within the literature is that organizational identification is a process that emerges over time and through social processes of a member's sensemaking (Pratt, 2000) and the organization's sensebreaking efforts (Ashforth et al., 2008). This study looked to uncover what is going on as it relates to the member's sensemaking processes in relation to each organizational identity claim. Why a member chooses to identify with one claim over another is still an unknown within the identification literature.

It is important to note that in this study the multiple identity claims may not represent claims that are in conflict with each other, as it is often represented (Pratt &

Foreman, 2000; Foreman & Whetten, 2002). Rather, they may simply represent several distinct claims about who the organization espouses to be, i.e., "We are multiethnic," "We are highly ethical," "We are a family atmosphere," etc. In their seminal organizational identity work, Albert and Whetten (1985) made a clear statement that organizational identity is often made up of several identities or claims. Often, the organization is not just "we are A" but rather "we are AB" (Albert & Whetten, 1985). This idea of multiple organizational identity claims creates a problem for the existing identification literature: mostly the literature does not take into account that a member may develop the "oneness" to one or two of the identity claims, but not all of them. Take, for example, this sentence from Ashforth and Mael's (1989) seminal work defining identification: "Social identification, therefore, is the perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate" (p. 21). This definition is frequently repeated (often directly quoted from this article) in a thousand ways: the trend being the "human aggregate" is simply lumped into one category even though organizations are often characterized by multiple identity narratives (Humphreys & Brown, 2002). Therefore, the question that this study asked, that remained answered in the organizational identification literature, is how, and if so, why do organizational members identify with different claims or subsets of claims? Furthermore, organizational identification must take into account the element of multiple identity claims: Can one call themselves identified and only identify with A and not have the same oneness to B and C?

Finally, the lines coming from the self-identity process into the identification process are two way. This is to represent a nonstatic relationship. For organizational identification, the two-way arrows also model a nonstatic relationship between the

individual self and the organization. The model suggests that the sensemaking which the member does around the identity claims is a dynamic process where (1) the member doesn't simply become "identified" at a single point in time and then is forever identified, but, rather, is in a process of becoming identified (Ashforth et al., 2008; Ashforth, Rogers, & Corley, 2011), and (2) the member is in a constant state of reevaluating and reconfirming his or her identification (Humphreys & Brown, 2002).

For the purpose of this study, the model does not attempt to account for identification among workgroups or other coworkers (Richter & Van Dick, 2004; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Jones & Volpe, 2011); rather, it is strictly focused on the identification with the organizational claims of "who we are" (Ashforth et al., 2011).

Key Terms

Attractiveness: The degree to which something is desired (Dukerich et al., 2002).

Distinctiveness: The degree to which something is unique (Jones & Volpe, 2011).

Identity claims: Public declarations in the form of mission statements, logos, codes of conduct, etc., which the organization members believe about themselves as a collective (espoused values): "We are Identity Claim 1, 2, 3 and 4" (Albert & Whetten, 1985). That which guides the organization's actions, images, policy, etc. (Pratt, 2000; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Harris, 1994).

Organizational identification: "The perception of oneness or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21).

Organizational identity: That which is central, enduring, and distinctive to the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

Prestige: The degree to which any recognized collective is seen to be highly valued and esteemed (Jones & Volpe, 2011).

Self-enhancement: The increase of one's perception of one's self (Dukerich et al., 2002).

Self-identity: "The set of meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves . . . [that] is based on our observations of ourselves, our inferences about who we are, based on how others act towards us, our wishes, our desires, and our evaluations of ourselves" (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 5).

Sensebreaking: "Involves a fundamental questioning of who one is and when one's sense of self is challenged . . . [creating] a meaning void that must be filled" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 342).

Sensegiving: "The attempts to guide the 'meaning construction of others towards a preferred redefinition of organizational reality'" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 342).

Sensemaking: The process by which people give meaning to experience based on their social context with others and organizational influences (Weick, 1995).

Values: Moral or transcendent principles that guide one's decisions and actions (B. Ashforth, personal communication, September 3, 2013).

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature for the study was gathered by way of computerized, searchable databases, which were used to identify relevant peer-reviewed journal articles on organizational identity and organizational identification: Academic Search Premier, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Premier, PsycINFO (via EBSCO), ProQuest, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and Dissertations Online. Additionally, the Surveyor catalog system was searched for book sources. Search terms used to locate sources were "organizational identity," "organizational identification," "identification," "identity," and "social identity."

The literature review begins with the social identity literature, which ultimately forms the foundation upon which organizational identity and organizational identification is based. Because this study takes a social identity approach to the formation of self-identity, it is in this section that the construct of self-identity is discussed. After this, the organizational identification and organizational identity theoretical and empirical literature is reviewed. Based on the literature, the relationship between organizational identity and organizational identification is described to provide the argument for this study.

Social Identity Theory and Self-Identity

Social identity theory stems from the social constructivist ideas of George Herbert Mead. Our understanding of social constructionism (also known as collective identity formation) can be traced back to the seminal writings of Mead. Out of this seminal work came the theories of social identity formation. Mead became a pioneer in this area of

study as he explored the relationship between meaningful stimuli and social objects and how our individual consciousness and identity emerge from these social communication processes. Mead (1961) suggested the way individuals develop their identity is by thinking through they fit into a larger role within society and inversely how society as a whole views them. Mead would term this *social interaction*. In Mead's (1961) model of identity development, individuals learn and become mature members of society as they increase their ability to share in a social consciousness and then adjust their activity based on reflection and a thought process of how others would view their actions. Mead would eventually term this social process the *I* and the *Me*.

This I and the Me particularly take form as we learn the rules of our social environments or the rules of the social game. The viewing of ourselves through the eyes or experiences of another doesn't happen in a vacuum; rather, it takes place in an environment where social rules or cues impact how we believe others think we should act or behave. Organizationally, these rules take place in the form of organizational scripts that are often built around an organizational identity. It is out of the conceptual framework of social identity formation that the idea of organizational identity emerges (Jones & Volpe, 2011).

Stets and Burke (2010) suggested that the core of the individual's identity takes place within the context of a categorization of one within a role as one measures his or her own social position based on that role (McCall & Simmons, 1978). Moreover, Tajfel (1978) actually suggested that the individual's identity cannot be separated from his or her own social context. The individual in turn views others and their identities as their occupant of roles in relationship to the individual (Stryker, 1980) and views others not as

individuals, but as members who hold roles in other groups (Tajfel, 1978). Mead (1961) ultimately added to this social interaction what he called *the role of the other*. It is in this movement that the individual thinks about and takes on (cognitively at least) the collective's perspective on his or her own role, actions, and thought processes. He called the final stage of maturity when the individual can play many different roles at different times in light of this generalized other's perspectives. The central premise of identity within social identity theory is that individuals obtain multiple roles based on the expectations of society (Pratt & Kratz, 2009). These roles ultimately have influence on the way people perceive themselves in their social environments. As Mead (1961) pointed out, roles have norms, expectations, and behaviors that are recognized between all parties.

Salience also becomes an idea that is essential to the discussion of self-identity within social identity theory. Salience, as described by social identity theory, is the activation of an identity based on fit within a specific social context (Cole & Bruch, 2006) that is rooted in complicated personal motives (Jones & Volpe, 2011; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). In other words, people integrate elements of their social context to that which is closely fitting and attractive to them. The choosing of that which is salient is often on the basis of self-enhancement. As it relates to the issue at hand, that of organizational identification, salience can be viewed through both a quantitative and a qualitative lens. "Quantitatively, salience is dependent on the number of others to which a person is related in the social structure. Qualitatively, salience is dependent on the strength and depth of meaning associated with the structural ties" (Dorion, 2012, p. 32).

Social identity theory bridges the disciplines of sociology and psychology and proposes that individuals identify with each other through a myriad of constructs, the primary being *social categorization* (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This theory is most often viewed from a psychological lens that views the individual as the unit of analysis, having a unique sense of self even though the individual is held in the context of a collective (Ashforth et al., 2008); however, that unique sense of self is deeply connected to and unified with the values, preferences, and behaviors of the groups that they see themselves a part of (Mael & Ashforth, 1995). The work within social identity theory has had a profound influence within the organizational identity and organizational identification literature of the last two decades (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Jones & Volpe, 2011). The following section examines social categorization in greater detail.

Social Categorization

Social categorization is ultimately about the formation of groups. According to social identity theory, people will classify themselves and others into "categories" such as members or nonmembers or categories related to religion, gender, age, geographic location, etc. (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Tajfel (1978) suggested that social categorization is a process where the individual attempts to systemize and simply his or her environment. Inherent to the concept of identity is the difference of something or someone from something or someone (Gioia et al., 2013). Tajfel (1978) suggested that this idea of categorization can find its roots in Festinger's (1954) idea that people are almost exclusively interested in social comparisons with others.

A principal idea within social categorization is the idea of optimal distinctiveness (Brewer, 1991). Brewer (1991) suggested that people desire a balance of being distinctive enough from another group to be recognized as a separate entity but not so distinct that they feel too individualistic. Social identity keeps in mind a fundamental assertion that people want to be a part of something greater or more than just themselves (Ashforth et al., 2008). Ironically, actual distinctiveness is not actually needed; rather, it is simply a perceived distinctiveness (Gioia et al., 2013).

Social identity theory more specifically recognizes two broad categories of groups: in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In-groups are the self-referenced categories of which people see themselves as members. These in-groups are often seen as salient to the member's own self-concept (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Rink & Ellemers, 2007) and thus begin a process of uncovering their "fit" within that salient group (Cole & Bruch, 2006), as research has found that people are more likely to identify with social groups that they perceive to already be more similar to their existing self-concept (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). For this reason, some scholars have suggested that work group identification is stronger than organizational-wide identification, as the work groups become "cognitively closer" to the individual (Riketta & van Dick, 2005). Tajfel (1978) postulated that people need positive in-group distinctiveness in order to arrive at a desirable social identity.

Out-groups are categories with members that are different from those who belong to the in-group (Ashforth et al., 2011) and to which the in-group members compare themselves (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Rink & Ellemers, 2007) and thus derive self-esteem (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Ashforth et al., 2008). Categories of groups are based on

perceived differences (Rink & Ellemers, 2007), which can often be the source of in-group bias (Gonzalez & Denisi, 2009).

From this work on self-categorization, elements of collective identity and antecedents of organizational identification have emerged, such as group prestige (Jones & Volpe, 2011; Dutton et al., 1994; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000) and distinctiveness (Riketta, 2008; Dukerich et al., 2002). Based on these categorizations (and others), social identity theory's basic premise is that the more distinctive, attractive, and prestigious the group is perceived to be, the greater the desire to be in that group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This distinctiveness and prestige allow individuals to bask in the reflective glory of the group (Jones & Volpe, 2011) and may shape how they actually feel and perceive themselves (Dutton et al., 1994), as they may see membership within this prestigious group as a way of self-enhancement (Vough, 2012). These comparisons stand to be potential causes of competition and jealousy (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) as they compare themselves from one group to the other group (Stets & Burke, 2000; Pratt, 2000).

Organizations may leverage descriptors such as prestige to gain certain elements from their members, such as longer hours or a greater time investment (Brickson, 2005). In the same regard, members may choose to join such groups for their own motives and needs (Riketta, 2008) or due to a perceived value of group membership (Brickson, 2013; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Riketta, 2008).

Organizational Identification

In their seminal work, Ashforth and Mael (1989) viewed organizational identification through the lens of social identity theory. Ashforth and Mael's (1989)

perspective brought a significant shift within the work of organizational identification, with its consideration of the organization as its own kind of category with which people choose to socially identify. Their social identity perspective of organizational identification and their seminal definition (though often modified or explored further) has become one of the primary approaches (if not *the* primary approach) in the organizational identification literature.

Organizational identification in this study is defined as "the perception of oneness or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21). Furthermore, it is more than just individuals' consideration of themselves as a group member but the measure to which they include the organization in their self-concept (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). Moreover, this study takes the stance that identification is both a noun and verb, one that designates a process of becoming (Ashforth et al., 2008; Pratt, 2000) that ultimately emerges from the organization's identity (Vough, 2012), connects to the organizational identity claims (Brickson, 2005), and enacts the organization's identity (Chreim, 2002). This study also defines this oneness as cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Chreim, 2002; Ashforth et al., 2008; Sluss et al., 2012). Pratt (1998) added the element of values and beliefs into the identification conversation, believing that values are at the center of identification. Pratt (1998) indicated that identification occurs in two ways: members identify with organizations that already hold a value system that is similar to theirs (which Pratt called "affinity"), or individuals change their value system to match the organization's (which Pratt called "emulation"). In either case, according to Pratt (1998, 2000), it is the value system that measures identification.

Since values tend to be one of the most defining elements of an organization, it is important to include them within the discussion of identification, as they are central to organizational identity. This study suggests that the organization's values find their source within the organization's identity claims; therefore, the values are simply an outcome of the claims themselves. While essential to both the organizational identity and organizational identification, values do not make up the whole story:

> An organization may also be defined and its identity can be manifested by its mission, goals, beliefs, norms, ways of doing things, and any other feature that one may regard as central, distinctive, and enduring to what the organization 'is.' So while value congruence tends to be a major part of the identification process, it is not the entirety of what it means to identify. (B. Ashforth, personal communication, September 3, 2013)

Thus, this study used values congruence as one of the many ways and elements with which a member may choose to identify, with the understanding that it is not synonymous with identification itself.

As previously mentioned, this study took into account a process-oriented view of organizational identification that cannot be fully understood by simply taking a snapshot of a member's identification at one time; rather, identification is a process that is ongoing and visited and revisited over and over again (Ashforth et al., 2008; Humphreys & Brown, 2002).

Considerable research has looked at the outcomes of organizational identification. Some of the commonly referenced outcomes include member motivation and job satisfaction (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000), lower turnover (Mael & Ashforth, 1995), greater compliance to organizational behaviors (Dukerich et al., 2002), better cooperation with other organizational members (Dutton et al., 1994), personal sacrifice for the organization (Vough, 2012), stronger customer service (Johnson & Ashforth,

2008), goal achievement (Chreim, 2002), higher work motivation, and extra role performance (Riketta, 2005), to name a few. In the same manner, organizational identification research has focused on the antecedents, both for organizational identification and relational identification. Riketta's (2005) meta-analysis found several consistently studied antecedents: organizational tenure, job challenge, and organizational prestige.

Organizational identification has been researched as a multifoci construct (Ricotta & Van Dick, 2005; Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008) with different targets of identification including individual levels (Cole & Bruch, 2006), group levels (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005), and organizational levels (Pratt, 2000; Dukerich et al., 2002). The research on levels is important to our understanding so that we do not just see organizational identification beyond the macro scale only. Returning to Ashforth and Mael's (1989) definition of identification, the perceived oneness of the member to the organization, research on these various targets has shown us that the individual member may identify with a subgroup (Riketta, 2008; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008) or a manager (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Sluss et al., 2012) in different measures than the organization as a whole. In other words, it is important to recognize that the member may report high levels of identification with his or her work group but not the organization as whole (Ashforth et al., 2011; Knippenberg & Schie, 2000).

The following sections describe some of the primary conversations within the identification literature in more detail to provide a foundation for organizational identification. These topics are not intended to be an exhaustive review of the

identification literature related to identification theory but rather serve as a subset of elements that are pivotal to understanding the concept of organizational identification and its relationship to organizational identity. These conversations are focused on organizational identification as it relates to self-enhancement, commitment, and sensemaking.

Identification and Self-Enhancement

On the individual level, psychological needs drive the individual to a place of identification (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Riketta, 2008). Self-enhancement, one of the antecedents often discussed in the identification literature, becomes one of the basic motives for identifying with a group. It is the enhancement of individuals' sense of self as it connects to the collective sense of identity, and thus allows them to think of themselves in a positive light (Ashforth et al., 2008). Self-enhancement works as members perceive organizational identity as attractive; therefore, it enhances their idea about themselves, and thus they choose to identify with this claim (Dukerich et al., 2002). Pivotal to organizational identification is the premise that a person's self-concept contains or aligns with the same attributes of the organization (Dutton et al., 1994), thus allowing the member to "bask in the glory of the organization" (Dukerich et al., 2002; Jones & Volpe, 2011, p.18). This "basking" is ultimately done for self-motivation and enhancement (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Self-enhancement works as the glue that connects other antecedents such as prestige and distinctiveness to identification (Jones & Volpe, 2011; Dukerich et al., 2002; Dutton et al., 1994). It is this mix of individual needs and motives with the organizational elements that makes identification diverse and complex (Humphreys & Brown, 2002).

Identification and Commitment

Recent trends within the literature are looking into the effect that organizational identification has on the member's commitment level (Cole & Bruch, 2006; Jones & Volpe, 2011; Guatam et al., 2004). There has been a considerable debate within the identification literature about the exact relationship between these two constructs, with the conversation circling around the following question: "Are these two constructs intrinsically the same or rather related but yet distinctly separate?"

Returning to their seminal work, Ashforth and Mael (1989) defined identification as something that is self-referenced and self-defined, something that organizational commitment is generally not considered to be (Guatam et al., 2004). Simply put, organizational identification is ultimately concerned with the individual's question of "Who am I?" whereas this is not a question with which organizational commitment is concerned. Instead, organizational commitment is concerned with the positive attitude the member has towards the organization, and thus the construct of commitment keeps the self and organization as separate entities (Ashforth et al., 2008). Commitment is seen as the level of attachment to and involvement in the organization (Cole & Bruch, 2006). Riketta and Van Dick (2005) extended this definition by way of Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) to include a strong belief and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership.

Though organizational identification and organizational commitment emerge from different sources within the individual (Cole & Bruch, 2006), there are some obvious connections. These connections in part deal with either outcomes of

identification or stand-alone concepts that relate directly to commitment. Ashforth and Mael (1989) discussed these two constructs as they relate to each other and suggested that an individual can have a deep commitment to the group due to his or her own self-enhancement from being a part of the group, but not necessarily because he or she shares a oneness with the group. If another group provided a better opportunity, then the individual may very well leave and join that group. The member, when identified with the organization, will feel a sense of pain or joy over organizational losses or victories (Ashforth et al., 2008). Furthermore, when identified, the member will also feel a sense of personal insult if the organization is insulted or joy if the organization is praised (Sluss et al., 2012). These internal connections are not things or feelings attributed to organizational commitment; rather, commitment is seen as an attitudinal, stable, and enduring state (once established), whereas identification is seen as more flexible and dependent on perceived salience (Guatam et al., 2004).

Sensemaking and Identification

There is significant dialogue in the research concerning organizational identification and its relationship to sensemaking, particularly as it relates to the organization's identity and behaviors. When considering the fact that the identification process is centered around the question of "Who am I?", sensemaking would seem to be the center of answering this question (Pratt, 2001). Research has connected Weick's idea of sensemaking (1995) to organizational identification (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Ashforth et al., 2008; Pratt, 2000). As Weick (1995) suggested, humans are searching to make meaning for their lives and interactions with others; thus, sensemaking is included as a pivotal part of the process of identification in that the organization must be able to help

the new members "make sense" of organizational cues, values, and behaviors in order to form a new lens that is congruent with that of other organizational members and the organization itself. Sensemaking, as it relates to identification, provides a theoretical contribution, as it gives us content to the thought processes of the member, i.e., what employees think about when they think about their organization and their own relationship to it (Vough, 2012).

Ashforth et al. (2008) put forth a model in which the processes of sensebreaking and sensegiving influence identification. Sensebreaking and sensegiving operate in a distinct manner. "Sensegiving refers to attempts to guide the 'meaning construction of others towards a preferred redefinition of organizational reality'" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 342). For identification to occur, the member must sensemake and attribute meaning and alignment of behaviors (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). Because sensemaking by nature is a social process (Weick, 1995) and requires others to participate in it, and as discussed earlier is found to be the process of explaining organizational practices and scripts (Harquil & King, 2010; Labianca, Gray, & Brass, 2000; Harris, 1994), it is included in the identification conversation often. Organizations, by way of labels that are captivating, attempt to affect the way in which the member places meaning on the organization's values and practices (Chreim, 2002) and provides to the members the sanctioned answers to "Who we are?" (Ashforth et al., 2008). Vough (2012) found four sensemaking logics that members go through in the identification process: familiarity, the degree to which members feel knowledgeable about the group; similarity, the degree to which individuals feel they have commonality with the group; benefits, the degree to which individuals find

group membership beneficial; and investment, the degree to which time, commitment, and effort are required.

With knowledge of how important sensemaking is to members, organizations often suggest to the members how to "make sense" of their relationships to the organization's identity claims; this process is called sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Brickson, 2013; Harrison & Corley, 2008) and is ongoing (Pratt, 2000). Sensebreaking, then, "involves a fundamental questioning of who one is and when one's sense of self is challenged . . . [creating] a meaning void that must be filled" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 342).

Pratt (2000) discussed this very same process in his study of Amway. Pratt (2000) observed "managers" using sensebreaking processes to drive the existing members into a greater awareness of their "mis-fit" to the organization, with the hope that this would move the member into identification. It is in the sensebreaking that the individual is made clearly aware of two kinds of dissonance: the distance between the organizational identity claims and the individual's own ownership of them and the dissonance between the individual's reality of who he is and who he wants to become in light of the organizational identity claim (Ashforth et al., 2008). In other words, it makes the individual aware of the real self and the desired self (Pratt, 2000).

All of this has the purpose of inspiring the individual to bridge that identity gap with a positive identification held in view (Pratt, 2000). In contrast to this, sensegiving is seen as providing knowledge or deeper understanding in order to make meaning that will help bridge the identity gap (Ashforth et al., 2008), as the member must now engage in sensemaking in response to having his or her identity questioned (Pratt, 2000). In his

study of identification within Amway, Pratt (2000) found that when sensegiving was not successful (fully aligning the members' sensemaking processes to that of Amway) the result was disidentification (identification in opposition to the organization) or ambivalent identification (identification torn between the in-group and out-group).

There are some significant questions surrounding the relationship between sensemaking and organizational identification that have not been fully uncovered: Are there any significant characteristics of the sensemaking process for the new member? What are the defining elements of the social influence to identification? Does a higher level of the sensegiver create a greater effect on identification? A greater understanding of the principal sensemaking processes and elements should allow the organization and its leadership to leverage this process and produce a greater success rate of member identification by adjusting their actions accordingly.

Organizational Identity

In their seminal work, Albert and Whetten (1985) began the theoretical conversation on organizational identity that, to this day, has what is considered to be one of the primary definitions. While the elements that Albert and Whetten (1985) chose to explore in order to define organizational identity are generally accepted and often cited, how these elements are formed and the way the phenomenon of organizational identity plays out within the life of the organization are strongly debated (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). The organization's identity determines how the organization will relate to members and nonmembers (Brickson, 2005) and in turn how organizational members should act on behalf of the organization (Albert et al., 2000). Ultimately, what

organizational identity is concerned with is the answer to the collective's question of "Who are we?" (Albert et al., 2000).

Ravasi and Schultz (2006) outlined two primary ways that research has guided the thinking about organizational identity: the social actor perspective and the social constructionist perspective. In its simplest form, the social actor perspective (according to Ravisi & Schultz, 2006) mirrors Albert and Whetten's (1985) proposition that organizational identity is more static in nature and made up of the claims of the organization. Proponents of the social actor perspective say that these organizational identity claims are self-referential and self-determined and help the organization take up its own unique space within a social space (Whetten, 2006). The social actor perspective is grounded in institutional theory and thereby defines organizational identity as temporally continuous and slow to change. Within this social actor paradigm, scholars suggest the organization itself engages in actions and ultimately possesses its own rights and responsibilities (Whetten & Mackey, 2002).

By contrast, the social constructionist view aligns itself with the propositions of Gioia et al. (2002) that identify a process embedded within the interactions and shared understandings and beliefs of the collectives about themselves. In this paradigm, rather than the external existence that the social actor suggests, the social constructivist would say that the organizational identity is within the collective and is more process driven, with individual members interpreting organizational actions (Whetten, 2006) and thus creating their own meanings about themselves as a collective (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). The social constructionist's lens is that the organization's identity is not simply a set of

claims that the organization espouses they should be but may not be; rather, its identity is made up of the perceptions of its members (Gioia et al., 2013).

Albert and Whetten's (1985) seminal definition of organizational identity centered around that which is central, enduring, and distinctive to the organization. This study used this definition and these three primary elements when referencing organizational identity. The next sections provide a brief understanding of the conversations within the organizational identity literature around these three elements (central, enduring, and distinctive), the important conversation surrounding the ontological nature of organizational identity, and finally a look at the scholarship around organizations with multiple identities.

Central

Central is used to reference the claims that speak to the essence, or what Albert and Whetten (1985) called the central character of the organization. These are the items that are most important and most essential to the organization (Whetten, 2006) because they guide organizational action (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Albert et al., 2000) and how other organizations view and interact with the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Brickson, 2005). These core claims are often considered to originate from the founders of the organization themselves and then are purposefully disseminated to the rest of the organization (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010).

Emerging from that which is central to the organization are the organization's values, goals, and beliefs (Ashforth et al., 2011). It is from here that what is important to the organization can be determined (Albert & Whetten, 1985) and thus the accepted and enacted organizational actions (Harris, 1994). Since what is central to the organization

ultimately answers the question of "Who we are?" some scholars have suggested that the central element is the most important element of the three (Gioia et al., 2013). This central definition of who the organization is also filters its way down to the individual level, as the central identity of the organization also affects the individual actions of the members as they attempt to act in congruence with both the organization as a whole and their own particular roles (Golden-Briddle & Rao, 1997).

So powerful is the centrality of the organization identity to the organizational members that the identity may actually give guidance to members in how to act so that they do not actually have to use sound personal judgment themselves, meaning the organization based on who it claims to be has made the decision for them (King, Felin, & Whetten, 2010; Whetten, 2006). It is through the lens of organizational identity that items are filtered and screened and then through the gate of organizational identity that conformists are rewarded and nonconformists are ignored (Smith, 2011).

This "rudder" or central identity then is manifested by way of the organization's identity claims and what they say about themselves (Whetten, 2006). When the collective asks the question of "Who are we," the answer that is provided is generally considered to be related to the items that are most central and important to them (Brown et al., 2006). It is out of what the organization believes to be central to their identity that corporate insider language and vision statements are created (Harquail & King, 2010; Harris, 1994) and threats are identified and responded to (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Whetten, 2007). This answer to "Who are we" ultimately creates the organization's social context (King et al., 2010) and foundation of sensemaking as the members look to understand how to think about events within this context (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

Sensegiving within the organization often pivots around these central claims in order to avoid identity ambiguity (Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al., 2013), and the organizational identity operates as a lens to guide the member, a tool to assign meanings and interpret data (Smith, 2011). Based on this relationship between the member and the centrality of the identity, some scholars have suggested that organizational identification stems from a perceived congruence or fit between members and the central identity of the organization (Foreman & Whetten, 2002).

Enduring

Enduring is used to reference the degree of "sameness" that the organization has over time (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The key word in this is "temporal," and it is essential to Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organizational identity. If we consider that the same identity claims need to be both central and enduring, then it would seem obvious that some form of longevity is needed when discussing identity. By the same logic, there are elements of the organization that are in constant flux, which may help describe something about the organization but ultimately are outside of the concept of the essential identity of the organization (Whetten, 2006). Through repeated actions, responses, and longevity of structure, the organization creates an organizational history that becomes formulated and institutionalized over time that will preserve its core central identity claims (Martin, Johnson, & French, 2011).

This is not to imply that organizational identity never changes or shifts; in fact, in the face of an ever-changing environment, organizations must change, lest they stagnate (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). King et al. (2010) found that, particularly in the beginning, the organization may shift and change as it settles, but because the identity

claims are so central to how the organization operates, changes to this identity may actually endanger the organization itself (Freeman et al., 1983). Mirroring Lewin's (1951) idea that to discover the true nature of something one must attempt to change it, organizational upheaval is here being discussed as the time when the organizational identity can most effectively be seen, as organizations will make their "fork in the road" kind of decisions based on their central and enduring identity claims (King et al., 2010).

The enduring element may be one of the most contentious elements of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition (Gioia et al., 2013). Others (often taking a social constructionist perspective) suggest that organizational identity is a dynamic process in constant negotiation and that the enduring portion is simply the labels that the organization uses about itself (Gioia et al., 2000). In other words, the labels or claims stay the same, but what these claims mean changes (Gioia et al., 2013). Advocates adhering to Albert and Whetten's (1985) initial idea of enduring suggest that if the meaning of the identity claim changes, then it is not identity (Whetten & Mackey, 2002).

Proponents of the view that these central claims can change have suggested that the term "enduring" is too imprecise and have argued for a label along the lines of continuity (Gioia et al., 2013). This gives way to agreement that there are in fact items that are central and do last but can be changed. The question then of "Who are we?" is often based on the idea of "Who we have been" as it relates to the founders' initial ideas of who the organization would be (Whetten & Mackey, 2002; Albert & Whetten, 1985); however, some scholars suggest the process of answering those questions falls under revisionist history, as the question of "Who we have been" is reworked each time it is answered (Gioia et al., 2000).

Distinctive

Distinctive is used to reference the organization's identity claims that set it apart from others (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The question within this element of organizational identity is the degree of actual distinctiveness (Gioia et al., 2013). In other words, to what degree is the organization actually different than other organizations in similar fields rather than just a perceived difference? Organizations often attempt to distinguish and define themselves from what is similar as well as what is different from other organizations within their field (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010), even if their organization (or product) may contain most if not all the same elements as others (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Some research has shown that the *actual* difference from one organization to another (specifically in the same field) may be overstated (Chatman & Jehn, 1994).

Still, out of this pursuit of distinctiveness, organizations produce logos, symbols, slogans, etc. (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Gioia et al., 2000). Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness theory, which says that members balance striving to both fit in and stand out, is found here in the organizational identity claims, as these organizations seek the right amount of similarity in order to gain legitimacy and distinctiveness (Whetten & Mackey, 2002) in order to gain a competitive edge (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010). This competitive edge is dependent on the ability to sell believability of this distinctive identity to an outside world (Gioia et al., 2013) and is a prerequisite for sustained social interaction with others (King et al., 2010).

Ironically, it is through this element of distinctiveness that organizations have a two-way street in their identity formation. As mentioned previously, out of these distinct

identity claims comes a construed organizational image (Gioia et al., 2000), and it is here that the organization begins to ask, "Who do others think we are, and who do we think they think we should be?" (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). In other words, it is the organization's own thinking about how others think about its distinctiveness that helps shape its identity, and this perception is a principal one on how the organization acts specifically as it relates to outsiders (Gioia et al., 2013; Brickson, 2005).

Originating from this organizational distinctiveness is the attractiveness for members to both join and ultimately engage in the identification process (Dukerich et al., 2002). Research has found that individuals' self-concept is shaped by the knowledge that they belong to a specific and distinct organization (Dutton et al., 1994). Implications abound: This effort to become distinct may greatly affect organizational identification, and knowledge of such a relationship would seem to validate the organization's effort to be markedly distinct.

Ontological Discussions

Despite the immense amount of scholarship and research around organizational identity, the literature is becoming increasingly fragmented and complex (Price & Gioia, 2008; Ravasi & Rekom, 2003). Among many different conversations within the literature, a considerable debate surrounds the topic's epistemological and ontological status (Oliver & Roos, 2007); however, most of the conversation in the literature relates to two primary overarching perspectives: the social actor (Albert & Whetten, 1985) and the social constructivist (Gioia, 2006). The debate around these two perspectives can be boiled down to the distinction between viewing identity as shared perceptions between

members rather than identity as organizational claims available to the members (Whetten & Mackey, 2002).

The social actor perspective, as related to organizational identity, was ultimately first proposed by Albert and Whetten (1985) as defining organization identity as a set of discernible organizational identity claims that allow the organization to take up its own unique social space (Whetten, 2006). In doing so, the social actor paradigm in part refers to the organizational identity as a social fact in the way of believing that the identity is outside of the collective as an external thing (Durkheim, 1985). Within the social actor perspective, the identity of the organization is a property of that specific organization (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010; Pratt & Foreman, 2000; Brown et al., 2006) that is set forth by its founders (Price & Gioia, 2008; Whetten & Mackey, 2002); moreover, beyond just taking up space, the organization as a whole is able to exert influence on individuals, interact with its environment, and actually shape its community (King et al., 2010; Oliver & Roos, 2007). Furthermore, it is the premise of the social actor paradigm that the organizational identity in itself is the property of the collective (Brown et al., 2006) that allows any individual member to act on behalf of the entire organization (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Critics of this perspective, however, suggest that just because an organization makes specific claims about itself does not mean it actually is those things (Gioia et al., 2013).

In contrast to the social actor perspective is the social constructivist perspective, the idea that the organization's identity is centered around the interactions of the organization's members (Oliver & Roos, 2007; Gioia et al., 2013). The constructivist's lens has moved the organization's identity from distinct identity claims to shared

meanings and understandings (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), where the members become the generators of labels, meanings, and anything that produces understandings about their organization (Gioia et al., 2013). Under the constructivist lens, organizational identity emerges from how the members think of themselves (Price & Gioia, 2008) and negotiated shared meanings about who they see themselves as (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010), which may or may not align with the organization's official narrative (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). Within the constructivist lens, these interactions and shared meanings are under constant revision and negotiation (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), which points to another fundamental difference between these two paradigms: the enduringness of the organization's identity (Gioia et al., 2000). Within the constructivist lens, the identity is emergent, and there are constant revisions of the initial identity (Gioia et al., 2000; Price & Gioia, 2008), which speaks to the dynamic nature that the social constructivist lens gives to organizational identity formation (Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

Critics of this paradigm suggest that organizations are more than simply social collectives making meaning together (Whetten, 2006). In their critiques, some scholars, such as Whetten (2006), have differentiated between organizational identity (the identity of a collective actor) and collective identity (the identity of a collection of actors).

While the literature has predominantly been divided down these two lines, scholarship is beginning to have conversations about how both views may give a more holistic view of organizational identity (Oliver & Roos, 2007; Price & Gioia, 2008; Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010; Gioia et al., 2013). Some scholars (Hatch & Schultz, 2002) actually join these two perspectives, although they do not use the language

of social actor or social constructivist. While these conversations that join these two perspectives are not common, they are beginning to happen.

Multiple Identities

Returning to Albert and Whetten's (1985) work, they suggested that an organization may have several identities. Albert and Whetten (1985) suggested that the dual identity arises for several reasons: environmental complexity (the organization's environment changes in its complexity, forcing the company to take on a second identity), default (right from the start they must take on several tasks that other organizations will not, primarily seen in the public sector), and divestiture and organizational success (during organizational growth or success the organization may take on a second identity or move into another domain of activity).

Scholarly conversation surrounding dual organizational identities often is focused around identities that seem to contradict each other (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Pratt & Foreman, 2000; Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997; Glynn, 2000). Examples of this could be a for-profit hospital or university. The hospital is in existence to serve the community, i.e., heal people with broken bodies, yet it is also in existence as a business to make money.

What is often not discussed within the multiple-identity literature is the issue of an organization that simply makes several identity claims that are not inherently contradictory. The Christian church would be an example of this, as it has several tenets and identity claims that are central to the Christian faith but not in conflict. Multiple identity claims may be found in the same church. For example: "We are a church devoted to wholehearted worship, devoted to scripture as authoritative, devoted to prayer, and

devoted to impacting our communities." These four claims, which have been central tenets and claims to the Christian church for centuries, are not inherently in conflict, yet its members may more strongly identify with some more than others. The musician may integrate the claim of worshiper into his identity more than that of one devoted to scripture, yet another may identify with the claim of being a collective who is looking for community impact, which would be different than those devoted to lives of prayer. While these claims do not inherently contradict each other, the members of the same congregation may identify with very different aspects of the organization. Part of the trouble within research is that there is still not a systematic way of determining or measuring dual-identity organizations (Foreman & Whetten, 2002).

Simply put, when the question of "Who are we?" is posed to the organization, there may not be a single answer (Pratt & Foreman, 2000). The idea of dual identities relates to both the individual and organizational level: individuals have and interact with several identities (Mead, 1934), individuals identify with several kinds of groups (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Ashforth et al., 2008), and the organization itself may own multiple identities (Pratt & Foreman, 2000). For the organization, however, dual identities have been discussed in several ways: multiple identity claims (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) that may sometimes compete with each other (Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997; Foreman & Whetten, 2002) or different identity claims for different collectives within the same organization (Pratt & Foreman, 2000). Member perception is another element to be considered, as the organization's identity may simply not be perceived the same way by every member (Martin, 2002). Thus, dual organizational identity may be present when two distinct claims are not being made and may not be present when two distinct claims

are being made, since organizations must deal with different versions of reality between subgroups (Brickson, 2005).

Albert and Whetten (1985) defined the dual identity in two ways: a normative identity and a utilitarian identity. Albert and Whetten (1985) proposed that organizations may take on a normative identity system that speaks to traditions, symbols, and an internalization of ideology and a utilitarian identity system that relates to profits and self-interest. Albert and Whetten's (1985) example would be that of a church needing to both operate as a family of selfless actors but then also have a business mindset in order to remain viable. Therein lies the struggle for the organization: It must determine if all the multiple identity claims are central to the organization. If these claims are not, then its managers may or may not exert effort to adopt strategies to bridge all of the claims together (Pratt & Foreman, 2000; Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997). This struggle is compounded if the multiple claims are not held by the entire organization (speaking in terms of structure, not people), but rather, certain claims are held by distinct units and departments within the same organization (Glynn, 2000).

It is this dual identity that may cause issues with identification, as members may not know which identity to identify with (Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Brickson, 2005); it may also cause issues in organizational members' understanding the roles that they are required to enact (Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997) or may pit one unit against another as they fundamentally see and define the organization's identity differently (Glynn, 2000). Pratt and Foreman (2000) proposed that organizational members will respond to the multiple claims in one of four ways: compartmentalization (preserve all identity claims but make no attempt to connect them together), deletion (remove one or more of its

multiple claims), integration (fuse together all of the claims to produce a distinct new whole), and aggregation (keep all of the claims and attempt to create connections between them). Leadership and management within these dual-identity organizations, however, are often required to hold both identities (Albert & Whetten, 1985), and the inability to do such may hinder effectiveness. Foreman and Whetten (2002) found that organizational members must enact separate organizational identification processes for the normative and utilitarian identity claims.

There are some suggested benefits of the dual organizational identity claims, as the multiple identity claims may allow for the organization to become attractive to a broader array of people (Ashforth & Mael, 1996), may give it more flexibility when needing to make strategic choices (King et al., 2010), and may allow it to engage in interorganizational conflicts better (Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997), particularly if the dual identities are recognized across the entire organization (Pratt & Foreman, 2000), thus becoming what Albert and Whetten (1985) termed a holographic multiple-identity organization.

Albert and Whetten (1985), when writing on these multiple identities, suggested that many organizations do not simply make one claim as suggested; rather, they may make several claims: "We are A, B, and C." Much of the research on multiple-identity organizations has taken Albert and Whetten's (1985) ideas of normative and utilitarian identities and created a term called *hybrid-identity* organizations that define organizations that have two distinctly competing identity claims (Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Humphreys & Brown, 2002). This is demonstrated in research mentioned earlier by Glynn (2000), Foreman and Whetten (2002) and Golden-Biddle and Rao (1997). These

studies were preeminently focused on how members coped with the reality of two seemingly competing identities; however, this study proposes that to view multiple identities as only contradictory is too simplistic for the nature of multiple-identity organizations. This study suggests extending the title of "multiple identities" to organizations that espouse several identity claims, where each one of those claims could be a standalone claim by itself, but the claims are not inherently competing with each other.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design and procedures used in this study. Specifically, it explains the research questions, study design, sampling approach, data collection procedures, research instruments, pilot testing, and data analysis.

Paradigm

This study takes a pragmatist approach to understanding the identification process within an organization with multiple identity claims. Crotty's (1998), Eisenhardt's (1998), and Hammersley's (1995) conversations on the role of a researcher's epistemology were used to guide the assumptions in how the study viewed organizational members as they engage in the organizational identification process.

The study took a pragmatist stance in the way of joining together a social actor paradigm (positivist) and a social constructivist paradigm (antipositivist). Together, the collective asks and answers the question of "Who are we?" Individually, each member also asks and answers "Who am I?" in light of the collective. Organizations do, however, make identity claims such as "We are A, B, C, and D" (Albert & Whetten, 1985). These identity claims are replicated and accepted by the organization as they are externalized and institutionalized (Barley & Tolbert, 1997). These claims speak to something that is outside of the actors themselves and thus beyond just their interactions, speaking to the social actor perspective of organizational identity. This study was guided by the assumption that these identity claims objectively are outside of the members and that through various methods (images, employee handbooks, messages, marketing material, staff conversations), these specific claims can be identifiable.

However, I do believe that these organizational identity claims and the identification process are constantly in flux. The identity claims are only objectified if the collective allows them to be and places the appropriate meaning on them; they are never-ending and constantly going through revisions. Ashforth and Mael (1989) described this pragmatic process: "Through symbolic interactions the newcomer begins to resolve ambiguity, to impose an informational framework or schema on organizational experience" (p. 27). Thus, the shared meaning-making processes of the individual members around the claims and ultimately identification are not done in a vacuum but rather in an environment that is intentionally structured by organizational leadership declaring through its claims who they as an organization desire to be.

Methodology

Problem Statement

Identification is directly linked to the individual's integrating the organization's identity claims into his or her sense of self (Dukerich et al., 2002). It is the internalization of the organization's identity claims that gives the member a sense of connection with the collective (Albert et al., 2000) and ultimately affects actions that would typify what it means to be a member of the organization (Sluss et al., 2012). While organizational identity and identification have become highly researched and debated topics, there are two links between the two of them that are still uncertain. The first link relates specifically to an organization's multiple identity claims and the role of each of these claims or the set of claims within the process of identification. Describing this process will help to deepen our understanding of organizational identification as it relates to the whole of the collective's answer to who they claim to be. Furthermore, it could offer

insight into the ramifications for the organization that many members may not identify with every aspect of the organization.

The second link relates to the emergence of identification to these organizational identity claims over time. The instrument primarily used for measuring identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1992) is only six questions long, does not specifically take into account identity claims, and only allows for a snapshot view of identification, i.e., the reported survey scores only give a "right now" view of identification. What is lost in much of the identification literature is qualitatively uncovering and quantitatively measuring identification over time. By looking at identification's emergent process, we may find dynamics to this phenomenon that give deep insight into the process the individual goes through: What claims did they identify with sooner rather than later? Was their identification process linear and progressive, or was it reevaluated all along the way? This study could not answer all of these questions, but it did address issues and questions like this.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this research study was to examine the organizational identification process specifically in relationship to how a member identifies with the set of organizational identity claims of the organization in which he or she is a member. This study specifically sought to understand the member's identification with each of the identity claims or a subset of the claims over time. This study helps to foster understanding of the process of member choice to identify with the organizational claims as a subset of claims or the shifting hierarchy of organizational identity claims in the

process. These implications also extend to the members themselves as they seek to identify or understand their sense of belonging to the organization.

The study addressed one primary research question: "How does organizational identification emerge over time in a multiethnic organization with multiple identity claims? It also addressed one subquestion: "What is the role of multiple identity claims in the identification process?

Research Design

A qualitative case study method was employed due to the need for an in-depth, holistic understanding of a specific phenomenon at it relates to a known theoretical construct (Yin, 2009). More specifically, this study desired to understand the dynamics of organizational identification that are present within a single, specific, and bounded setting (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 2009). That bounded setting is a multiethnic church that has ethnic diversity as one of its primary identity claims that is actually being enacted. The senior pastor of Hope Church is a leading voice within the multiethnic church movement. He is the founder of Hope Church, a multiethnic church network of multiethnic churches all across the United States. For example, when one visits Hope Church's website, the first thing that one reads is, "A multiethnic." For this study, a multiethnic church is specifically defined as a church where minority ethnic groups comprise a minimum of 20% of its total population. To give some context to this, the senior pastor cited The National Congregations Study, which surveys a representative sample of America's churches and gathers information about a wide range of characteristics and activities of congregations. This study stated that currently only 13.7%

of churches in America can claim to be multiethnic, a percentage that has grown from 7% over the past 10 years (DeYmaz, 2013).

As Yin (2009) suggested, a single case study is appropriate when the case can be considered representative or unique. The context of a multiethnic church fits both of these categories: It is unique in the sense that few churches can be considered multiethnic, and it is more than likely representative of the churches that actually practice multiethnicity as they are intentionally espousing to be multiethnic. Additionally, as Pratt (2000) pointed out, extreme cases often provide contexts that give the clearest expression of the studied phenomenon. As the study focused on the identification of organizational members to the organization's identity claims, the specific claim of being an ethnically diverse church was expected to provide a rich environment for the study. The choice of a multiethnic church also clearly aligns with Albert and Whetten's (1985) premise of identity being distinctive as it relates to other organizations and the idea of social categorization advanced through social identity theory.

Different kinds of case study designs have been described (Merriam, 2008; Stake, 1995; Smith, 1990), specifically case studies that explore, describe, or explain (Yin, 2003). This case study can be described as an exploratory case study (Yin, 2009; Yin, 2003), as it does not connect with an exact theoretical framework within the organizational identification literature since there is a lack of literature surrounding organizational identification as it relates to specific organizational identity claims. The conceptual framework presented bounds the study theoretically to organizational identity and organizational identification and pulls from the practice-driven and theory-driven research conducted on these constructs.

The process of how a person chooses to identify with one or more of the organizational identity claims over the others and the reasons for these decisions are neither clear nor simple. This process of member identification over time is deeply embedded both in the person's past experiences and the organization's influential actions (both intended and unintended) on/within this identification process. Moreover, the same identity claim in one organization may be enacted in a completely different manner than in another organization; thus, the same person may experience an entirely different identification process depending upon the target organization. Furthermore, identification must also factor in the member's specific personal issues in his or her own identification process. Consequently, Yin's (2003) premise about how closely the phenomenon is connected with its environment frames the reason as to why case study research would be needed to understand the role of the organization's actions in the individual's identification process.

Data Collection

While data were collected on the organization itself, ultimately the level of analysis was the individual organizational member. Due to the nature of case study methodology and because research has clearly shown that individual members are influenced by the organization in their identification process, it became important to collect data on the organizational context that the members were in. However, this study was specifically interested in the individual level and the individual's identification journey to the specific claims of the organization. Data collection was split into two sections: (1) data that built on and explained the context of the research site and the

specific organizational identity claims and (2) interviews that uncovered the identification process of the site's members to these claims.

Three specific aspects of the organizational identification process that were explored were the saliency of the identity claims to the individual organizational member, the factors that influenced this process, and the individual's perception of the distance between himself or herself and the identity claim(s) (Pratt, 2000; Ashforth et al., 2008). An additional element of the data collection was an attempt to gather a view of the member's identification to the organization that accurately represented their journey over time. Consequently, part of the interview protocol (see Appendix A) was to ask the members to recall how they felt about the organization and what they heard about the organization from when they first joined the church up through the time of the interview. The hope was that within their stories of how they became connected to the church, their identification story would emerge—specifically, how they began to integrate the identity claims of the church into their own personal identity.

This study used a combination of methods as recommended by Yin (2009), Strauss and Corbin (1996), and Glesne (1998) that included documentation, in-depth interviews, and participant observation. However, semistructured interviews were the primary data source in order to gather "both retrospective and real time accounts by those people experiencing the phenomena of theoretical interest" (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012, p. 19). Furthermore, the data collected by these sources were managed and analyzed as guided by Miles and Huberman (1994), along with Saldana's (2009) suggestions for coding the interview data.

Through these data sources, the study explored how members chose the specific identity claims to connect to. Yin (2009) put forth six different sources of evidence that can be used in case study research: "documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts" (p. 99). Yin (2009) and others (Merriam, 2008; Krefting, 1991) posit that the use of multiple data sources is a significant strategy to embolden both the strength and validity of data collection within a case study. This study relied on interviews, documents, and observations. This enabled triangulation between multiple sources of data and allowed for cross-checking of data from multiple sources (Merriam, 2008). Interviews served as the primary data source, while internal company documents and formal and informal observations of organizational events served as secondary sources. Together, these three data sources offered a much more holistic view of the member's identification journey.

Data collection took place over two visits: the first focused on collecting data on the organization itself, and the second focused on the member's identification process. This staggered collection was chosen to allow time to accurately understand the nature of the site context and uncover the claims of the organization prior to the member interviews. This data collection on Hope Church served as the backdrop for the members' reported identification process through the in-depth interviews.

Phase 1 Data Collection: Building the Case

This first phase of data collection concentrated on the study site itself. The purpose of this phase was to discover as accurately as possible the exact context of member identification. As stated before, research has clearly shown the role of sensebreaking and sensegiving actions within the member identification process. Thus, a

clear picture of how the site historically sent messages of itself, how its leaders embodied the organization, and how it historically has spoken about its claims was needed.

In-depth interviews. In this data collection phase, the participants who were interviewed as a form of data collection were paid staff members of various organizational rank. The paid staff members were interviewed on the first visit to the site in order to gain a clearer perception of the organizational identity claims and a more accurate analysis of the organization's sensegiving and sensebreaking methods (see Appendix B). These interviewees provided a deeper understanding of the study context.

Interviewees were purposefully selected according to organizational rank, time within the organization, and ethnicity (due to the specific organizational claim of multiethnicity). Appendix C lists the details surrounding the interviews, including the subject, date, location, length, and transcript length.

Direct observation. Data were also gathered through participant and passive observation. My field notes were minimally recorded by handwritten observations and meetings were audiorecorded. These observations were logged into an observational summary form for each meeting (see Appendix D).

Observations of various events that directly spoke to those identity claims were conducted, with attention to those individuals participating in this study. Events included new member classes and weekend services. Initially the plan was to observe staff meetings and strategic planning meetings, but due to Hope Church's schedule, these events were not available on either visit. These observations were used to potentially corroborate or expand upon member answers to the interviews. Appendix E provides the observation protocol.

Documentation. Organizational documents were selected based on their relevance to the specific identity claims of the church as well as to the identification process. The term *documentation* is used in a broad sense that can cover anything such as written documents, visual/digital items, or artifacts displayed—essentially any physical material that is produced by the organization and relevant to understanding how the organization speaks about itself (Merriam, 2009). Specific kinds of documentation that were gathered included mission statements, periodic bulletin/newsletters, the organization website (specifically aspects that addressed activities, ministries, etc.), pictures (which speak to the demographic they claim to be), the employee handbook, documents specifically created for use by new members and visitors, the senior pastor's and the Hope Church's Twitter page, and advertisements used for recruitment.

As critical events were identified through the interview process, an examination of the diverse range of documents corroborated and extended insights from the interview data. The pictures were all taken from the camera on my phone, and all of the printed documents, with the exception of two items, were meant for public consumption. The two items that were not were produced for the public were supplied by two different staff pastors and used for their pastoral meetings. The list of documents analyzed is provided in Appendix F.

These documents were analyzed in order to determine how they expressed organizational identity claims and to determine the congruence of organizational identity claims across departments. As previously stated, the level of analysis for this study was the individual member, yet organizational identification does not happen in a vacuum but

rather in the context of the organization itself, as identification is a social process based on social identity theory.

Furthermore, because the focus of this study was the identification process as it relates to the identity claims that the organization makes about itself, it was paramount to have an understanding of what the organization in the study was saying about itself and how it was saying it. How the organization makes its identity claims known may have particular importance as it relates to the individual's sensemaking within the identification process, as members will take their cues about identity claims from the organization itself (Pratt, 2000) or representative organizational leadership (Gioia & James, 1996; Sluss et al., 2012). These documents also served as a checkpoint to give further understanding to the members' interviews.

There is considerable dialogue in the research concerning organizational identification and the kind of identity it holds, i.e., organizational distinctiveness (Dukerich et al., 2002; Cole & Bruch, 2006), attractiveness (Dutton et al., 1994), and prestige of the corporate identity and how all of these aid in both the willingness and commitment level of member identification (Jones & Volpe, 2011). Furthermore, there is research within the identification literature that describes how the organization plays a key role in dictating what the identity claims are and how the members should feel and think about the claims and how they should ultimately identify with them (Pratt, 2000; Ashforth et al., 2008). Organizational sensemaking and sensebreaking around the organization's identity claims are two processes that are intertwined as a part of the member's identification process.

"Sensegiving refers to attempts to guide the 'meaning construction of others towards a preferred redefinition of organizational reality'" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 342). Sensebreaking, then, "involves a fundamental questioning of who one is and when one's sense of self is challenged . . . [creating] a meaning void that must be filled" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 342). In short, sensebreaking is the organizational process of challenging and accentuating the knowledge gaps and ultimately the identification gaps between the individual and the organization. It is in the sensebreaking that the individual is made clearly aware of two kinds of dissonance: the distance between the organizational identity claims and the individual's own ownership of them and the dissonance of the individual's reality of who he or she is and who he or she wants to become (in light of the organizational identity claim) (Ashforth et al., 2008; Pratt, 2000). All of this has the purpose of inspiring the individual to bridge that gap. In contrast to this, sensegiving is seen as providing knowledge or deeper understanding in order to make meaning that will help bridge that gap (Pratt, 2000).

The member is making sense of these claims as it relates to their own identity in real time and in a real experienced context. This means that organizational identification does not happen within a vacuum but within an organization's attempt to influence that identification process. These two processes of sensebreaking and sensegiving may be happening nearly simultaneously as the member is in a constant state of evaluating and integrating the organization's efforts to assimilate its new members, recodify its existing members, and communicate what it thinks about itself. Documents were gathered to help portray the organizational attempts of sensebreaking and sensegiving. For example, within the guest brochures, the church made its specific identity claims known as they

attempted to communicate to the newest person who they desired to be. These claims should be congruent with other kinds of documentation: mission statements, sermon content, etc. If there is not congruency between documents, the member may get conflicting signals of sensegiving that lead to confusion in the member's sensemaking process.

How the organization speaks about itself (method, exact words used, etc.) and positions its claims in relation to other churches may have an effect on the individual member's choice to identify with certain identity claims over others. This may serve as a sensebreaking and sensemaking function that is essential to understanding the member's identification process. For example, if an organization has a particular identity claim that is associated with prestige and thus espouses it as such, it may influence the member to identify with this cue over a more common identity claim. Consequently, how the organization espouses this claim affects the member's sensemaking process about the identity claim and ultimately shades the member's view of the identity claims.

The organization's documentation also becomes one of the primary avenues through which members interact with the identity claims; therefore, it may prove to be an integral part of the identification process. Consequently, to achieve the purpose of the study to understand the identification process clearly, the study took into consideration past and current experiences of the individuals' own journey (interviews) as well as the individuals' perceived organizational attempt to influence their gap of dissonance between the identity claim and their identification with that claim. Furthermore, documentation was gathered to corroborate other observations and interviews to produce a rigid and trustworthy set of findings (Glesne, 1999).

Phase 2 Data Collection: Uncovering the Identification Process

This phase was specifically focused on understanding the members' identification journey over time as it specifically relates to the multiple identity claims of the organization. The data from these interviews were triangulated with the background gathered from Phase 1 data in order to see how the sensebreaking and sensegiving processes affected the members' sensemaking processes.

In-depth interviews. In this data collection phase, the participants interviewed were nonpaid members. These voluntary members were interviewed on the second visit to the site in order to understand their identification journey.

It is this study's belief that due to the personal and individual nature of the identification process, understanding exactly what moves the new member from nonidentification to identification with the organizational identity claims cannot be fully understood by many existing/available identification scales. Moreover, because the nature of why and if members choose to identify with certain claims and not others is so closely bound to the context of their own personal lives, a standardized survey may not give the most robust picture of this process. Thus, an interview process that specifically seeks to access the inner perspective of the member is needed (Patton, 1990).

These interviews served as the only data source for this part of the study and were semistructured, in-depth interviews as outlined by Merriam (2009) to understand the process of member identification as it relates to the specific organizational identity claims and to uncover and describe the organizational context. The interviews were specifically structured to surface the saliency of each of the identity claims to participants. Also, questions were structured to uncover any organizational actions that influenced each

member's identification process. These insights were augmented and validated by observation data and document analysis, with attention to the participants, and aimed to see how the organization's actions (as seen in observations and documentation) affected their identification process to these identity claims.

Due to the fact that sensemaking is inherent in the identification process and might be different for each individual member, the in-depth interviews allowed me to capture their distinctive identification journeys. The interviews uncovered this individual journey by seeking to understand how the member thought and felt about his or her relationship to the organization. This insight is pivotal to understanding the reasons for the difference of saliency from one identity claim to another. Furthermore, as Merriam (2009) pointed out, the interview process is often needed to explore past events that cannot be repeated; obviously, for those members who would already claim to be identified with the organization, the study probed into past salient events that have shaped their identification journey.

A purposeful sample was used to choose the participants for this study. Participants were chosen based on three categories: those who self-identify themselves as members, length of time of membership, and ethnicity. Appendix C lists specific details surrounding the interviews that took place, i.e., who interviewees were, the date, location, length, and transcript length.

Credibility

Ultimately, the reliability of a qualitative study depends upon the researcher's ability to measure what he or she thinks he or she is measuring. This study took into consideration Merriam's (2008) premise that "reality is holistic, multi-dimensional and

ever changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed and measured" (p. 213). Qualitative research offers a number of strategies for improving the reliability of study findings; for this study, I employed triangulation of the data, participant validation (Merriam, 2008; Maxwell, 2005), and peer examinations (Krefting, 1991). In the following sections, each of these three selected strategies is highlighted.

Data Triangulation

Data were triangulated by looking to different sources: written, verbal, and observed. Respondent validation and peer debriefing by study participants and a colleague provided an examination of the data for accuracy, logic, bias, and adequacy. Multiple data methods (as outlined above) were used. Documentation was gathered from all sources possible: the direct observations were from various kinds of events and meetings, all led by organization staffers in order to determine if identity claims were being conveyed differently and thus confounding the identification process, and interviews were conducted with the same set of members.

Peer Examination

Two other pastors who currently serve within other multiethnic churches served as a professional peer source. They were asked to reflect on their own lived experiences as pastors in a multiethnic church surrounding church members' identification. These pastors served a critical analytical role for some of the selections of some of the participants' stories and gave feedback not through a theoretical lens but through a practitioner lens, having functioned in a setting similar to Hope Church. They also were

ethnically diverse, which provided a wider lens for analyzing some of the stories. These pastors were asked to read a few excerpts of two transcripts and give some general feedback of the themes that they heard emerging from the participants' journeys. In order to retain anonymity, each of the excerpts was deidentified, and the pastors did not receive any information on the participant that could be used to identify them in any overt way. It is also important to note that these pastors were not in any way connected with the research site and were not in any way invested in the participants' lives; they had no relationship with the participants, nor would the participants know them. In addition to these pastoral peer reviewers, my committee chair reviewed transcripts and coding processes, and my methodologist assisted in establishing data collection processes and coding processes and reviewed findings and conclusions.

Participant Validation

Member checks, or participant validation, in which study participants review interview transcripts, is considered "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Since interviews were the primary source of data, it was important to ensure that participants' feelings, thoughts, and descriptions of events were accurately captured. Once the content from the interview was captured, the interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber frequently used by the doctoral program. Any discrepancies or follow-up information was then clarified with the participants themselves.

The Study Context

Site Selection Criteria

The research site was desirable for this particular single case study from several vantage points. First and foremost, a multiethnic church was desired. Secondly, multiethnicity needed to be one of the purposeful identity claims of the organization. In other words, the desire was to identify an organization that held multiethnicity as an espoused and enacted value, not simply something that happened without purposeful thought. An enacted value in this study was defined as actually seeing the hoped-for value come to fruition, i.e., the church has the desire to be multiethnic and by their demographics they *actually* are. While there are varying degrees to which one can measure multiethnicity, this study specifically defined multiethnicity as having a minority population of at least 20% of the total population (Deyoung, Emerson, Yancey, & Kim, 2003).

Gaining Access

I became aware of the research site through my job. I am currently serving as a pastor of a multiethnic church that belongs to a network of multiethnic churches. Hope Church is both a member as well as the founding church of this multiethnic church network. Because of our close relationship to this church and the senior pastor there, asking for access to that organization was a very easy process. Moreover, the fact that Hope Church is a national leader within the multiethnic church landscape made it an attractive choice. I initially contacted the senior pastor directly through email and shortly thereafter we set up a phone conversation to discuss the project. This phone conversation was held on July 2, 2013. He agreed to allow me to perform the methods listed above

with his staff and members of the congregation. A follow-up phone conversation with Jon Harrison, my gatekeeper, was held on July 18, 2013, to clarify the research purpose and to give basic parameters of the study's needs.

Site Description

Hope Church is self-described as multiethnic, multinational (with 30 different nations represented), and economically diverse. The church has three different campuses: two campuses in Arkansas (Little Rock and Conway) and one campus in North Carolina (Durham). The senior pastor started Hope Church in 2001 after 4 years of wrestling with the ethnic and economic divide among churches in Little Rock. The church was launched with this vision statement:

> Hope Church is a multiethnic and economically diverse church founded by men and women seeking to know God and make Him known through the pursuit of unity, in accordance with the prayer of Jesus Christ (John 17:20-23) and patterned after the New Testament church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26; 13:ff.). (Johnson, 2007)

While many churches in America might have similar vision statements of "seeking to know God and make Him known," the specific call to be a multiethnic church is unique. As stated earlier, only 13.7% of churches in America can claim this statistic (DeYmaz, 2013), which has grown from 7% over the past 10 years (Deyoung et al., 2003).

Sampling Plan

Nonprobability sampling was purposeful, proceeding from theory-based categories (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Whom to interview, what documents to review, and what events to observe were chosen gradually, based on who

and what could speak to the organizational identity claims of the organization and could voice an experience surrounding organizational identification to those claims. My gatekeeper created a list of official members who were regular attendees. From that list, these members were sorted by ethnicity, length of membership, and level of involvement. Three member groups were designated by length of membership: 1 year, 2 to 4 years, and 5+ years. From this list, a certain number in each category were selected. Those selected were invited to participate in the study; those who chose to decline participation were replaced with others from that category in the list. The gatekeeper helped arrange the visit, provided space for the interviews, and arranged for my attendance at the different events.

Phase 1 data collection, specifically the staff interviews, was geared to gain a greater understanding of how the staff (who should technically be the clearest of anyone) spoke about these claims. Phase 1 participants were a part of a purposeful sample with two primary filters: ethnicity and length of time of employment by Hope Church. Ethnicity was chosen due to the multiethnic makeup of the church and length of time within Hope Church to attempt to track if there were any significant differences of the staff along the lines of time. All Phase 1 participants were paid staff pastors. Three of the interviews were with people who were a part of Hope Church from the beginning: the founding pastor, an associate pastor from the beginning, and a founding staff/volunteer; all of these three were of different ethnicities (Anglo, Asian, Black). The other interviewees ranged in their ethnic makeup (Hispanic, Black, Anglo), organizational level (executive/equipping pastor, associate pastor, etc.), and time in the organization (two of them were the newest staff to be hired, to a mid-range hiring of 7 years). In total, eight

staff were interviewed. Organizational documents were also examined to match the voiced claims from the interviews to the written or visually expressed claims present.

Phase 2 participants were a part of a purposeful sample with two primary filters: ethnicity and length of time of membership within Hope Church. Ethnicity was chosen due to the multiethnic makeup of the church, and length of time within Hope Church was chosen to attempt to track if any significant differences emerged from the participants along the lines of length of membership. All but one of the Phase 2 participants were official members. This was not planned within the interview process; however, it could not necessarily be avoided. While this nonmember participant had not gone through the official membership protocol, he viewed himself as a member and the decision to interview him in order to gain his insight was made. His was the last interview, and his answers mirrored what I heard from the previous participants.

A total of 16 participants were interviewed. Their involvement within the ministry varied, from not very involved, to very involved, to formerly very involved all the way to elders (primary church leadership) within the church. None of them were paid in any way by the church itself. As mentioned earlier, the ethnic mix was varied due to the ethnic mix of the church: most participants were Anglo and Black (similar to the church demographics as a whole), one Hispanic participated, and an Asian participant was scheduled but cancelled at the last minute.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began during the data collection phase (Miles & Huberman, 1994), with a more formal analysis beginning once all interviews, documents, and observations were concluded. Several analytical processes were utilized to describe, integrate, and

interpret the diverse data. These processes triangulated the three data streams for the study—interviews, documents, and observations—in order to develop what Yin (2009) called "converging lines of inquiry" (p. 115). Adhering to Miles and Huberman's (1994) lens on analysis: "Writing, in short, does not come after analysis; it is analysis, happening as the writer thinks through the meaning of data in the display. Writing is thinking, not the report of thought" (p. 101). The data analysis and thought needed to bring together and clearly communicate the research findings required making connections and drawing inferences between the three streams of data collected; some of these connections were overt and others more latent. Thus, the use of peer reviewing and committee help were pivotal in assessing if these connections were viable.

Coding: Creating, Defining, Reviewing

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that codes are an efficient way of labeling and retrieving analyzed data and provide a way to speed up the analysis process. Thus, as soon as the first interview transcriptions became available, analysis began on these data sources. With the help of the interview summary form, analysis of these transcripts were not void of context but helped with a remembrance of the feel of the interview, persons, and opinions described by the participant. This not only allowed for a fuller analysis of not just the words spoken within the interview, but also allowed for each of the transcripts to paint a fuller picture, as some of the nonverbals were recalled, categorized, and implemented in the analysis, thus allowing for the strength of the qualitative research design to come into play (Merriam, 2009; Maxwell, 2005).

Coding was done with Saldana's (2012) definition in mind, "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or

evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). Furthermore, Miles and Huberman's (1994) three types of codes (descriptive, interpretive, and pattern codes) were used to guide code creation and code organization. Descriptive codes were created and used to generally categorize segments of text from the interviews, specifically to summarize key concepts that were talked about within the interview or events that were observed (Saldana, 2012). For example, several times the conversation around multiple languages within the church emerged as an expression of Hope Church's identity claim of being multiethnic. A subcode of *language* was created under the parent code of *multiethnic* and applied to these instances. The *language* code fell under *multiethnic* because the presence of multiple languages spoke to the enacted claim of being a church with multiple ethnic groups present. Another example related to references to specific events or experiences of the staff, members, or myself at Hope Church. A parent code of *first experiences* was created and then two subcodes of *nonwelcoming event* and *welcoming event* were created. A subcode was then created and applied to one of those two kinds of event codes. For example, one of the staff members talked about feeling pressured to dress a certain way. A subcode of "pressured/bullied" under the parent code of "nonwelcoming event" was created and applied to describe the staffer's experience. In most cases, these descriptive subcodes were in vivo, with the subcode exactly describing the emotion, event, or thing that the member expressed.

Miles and Huberman (1994) also discussed interpretive codes. These codes were primarily drawn from the literature in order to display an underlying meaning to the text that was not necessarily explicitly said but was understood. One such code was *distinctive.* This is a part of the definition of both organizational identity (Albert &

Whetten, 1985) and social identity theory (Riketta, 2008; Dukerich et al., 2002). Because Phase 1 data collection was about building a case and understanding how the staff of Hope Church spoke of themselves as an organization, I wanted to see how often they discussed their church or their identity claims as distinctive from other churches. While each of the claims would of course need to be enduring, central, and distinctive, I wanted to see if they viewed these claims differently or if they spoke about some of the claims differently than others. *Distinctiveness* was also looked at in terms of an influencing factor for identification.

Within this code, 15 subcodes were created and applied in order to parse out and nuance how the staff was using the idea of being distinctive. For example, they saw their claim of being *diverse* as being distinct from other churches. As the study went on, the members and staff also spoke of the condition of their *facility* or their *ministry philosophy* as being distinct and different from others. Another was their mentioning the fact that they were in a much different socioeconomic environment from *West Little Rock.* Thus, not every subcode related to an organizational identity claim; some related to another element of their description of Hope Church. In all of these cases, when directly mentioned or inferred, these subcodes were used to unveil the idea of staff and members seeing themselves as distinct. Sometimes the participant would actually use the word "distinct," and thus the code *distinct* functioned both as a descriptive code and an interpretive code. At other times the staff would talk about something about Hope Church as being distinct from other churches, and the code *distinct* was used as an interpretive one; therefore, a code could be both interpretive and descriptive at the same time.

Finally, pattern codes were also used. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined these codes as words or subject matter that consistently emerged throughout the interviews. These codes were unknown coming into the interviews and were discovered as analysis of the interviews began. An example of this was the topic on the role of prayer and the role/philosophy of shared leadership within the church. For example, the conversation around the building was one that emerged constantly, both with staff and members. The conversation about the facility playing an integral part of Hope Church was the overall pattern; however, the facility was spoken of in multiple ways. Thus, a parent code of *facility* was created. Then subcodes (primarily in vivo) such as *philosophical* or *first observation* or *bad signage* were created that pertained to the different kinds of conversation about the facility.

Another kind of pattern code related to conversations around some of the unofficial values of Hope Church. Thus, a parent code of *unofficial value* was created. Then, in vivo subcodes of *prayer* and *dependence* were created and applied when the participant would use these areas as a response to a question. These subcodes were created because over a span of multiple interviews, they came up again and again as the staff or member referenced them as a "value." This was ultimately termed unofficial value because (a) they were not a part of the official rhetoric or statement of identity claims; and (b) they represented important insight into Hope Church itself.

When coding on the identity claims specifically, the identity claim of being an ethnically diverse church was coded as *multiethnic.* This code was used when the participant specifically mentioned ethnic or cultural diversity. I also coded any observed event, artifact, or conversation that I felt specifically spoke to a focus on or a claim of

ethnic or cultural diversity. For example, the artwork on the walls, the flags of the many nations, or bilingual signage would have been coded *multiethnic,* as would an interview when a participant said something like this: "Because we knew we needed a full-time Latino pastor" or "multiethnic church" or "you know it's a different culture, different backgrounds." The point was to designate when the identity claim was specifically stated or the value of it was being practiced. There were 17 subcodes used underneath the primary code of *multiethnic* that served to nuance when the issue of multiethnicity was being talked about.

In addition to the *multiethnic* code, I also felt I needed a code that expressed diversity in a general way; thus I generated and applied the code *diversity: general.* This is discussed further in chapter 4, but it is important to note that diversity left to itself was not an identity claim of this organization; it was a high priority or value, but not an identity claim. Yet it was referenced often; thus, a code labeled *diversity* was needed. This need principally arose from the interviews, when the participant would reference the diversity of the church as a whole, not specifically mentioning ethnicity. Due to the fact that the church valued diversity in general (ethnic, economic, subculture, etc.), interviewees often used the term to speak to their value of diversity or to express diversity as an identity claim but keep it at a generic level. Thus, 22 descriptive (Miles & Huberman, 1994) subcodes were created, each highlighting the exact kind of diversity mentioned. Examples would be sexual orientation, political, academic, clothing style, church denomination, etc. In most cases, these subcodes were created in vivo, but in a few cases (such as other denominations of churches), a term was used to capture the idea of what was being said. While many other kinds of diversity were mentioned, I believe

ethnic diversity was often the intended meaning of the participant when the term *diversity* was used. It was said so often that to stop and clarify every time would have hindered the flow of the interview. If we would apply even 60% of these uses to ethnically diverse meanings, it would clearly separate the identity claim of ethnic diversity from all of the rest.

As for the other codes, one was made for *economic diversity;* this code, of course, was used when economic diversity was specifically referenced, and *church as community* was used when unity or the togetherness of the church was discussed. Finally, the code *community outreach* was used when the church's mission to reach its communities was discussed.

When coding for the identification processes, various codes such as *affinity, emulation, self-enhancement, distinctive,* etc. were pulled from the identification literature. These items were ultimately parent codes, and sublabels were created underneath them to further describe these elements in a finer-grained way. Other parent codes were created based on themes that emerged from the questions asked, such as, *Hope Church success, Hope Church failure, prototype, value change,* etc. A full list of codes appears in Appendix J.

Saldana (2012) discussed cycles of coding. My first cycle of coding took place with only a few codes. These codes were generated and applied as interpretive codes that I knew I would be looking for (identity claims gathered from documentation and literature) and that would more than likely serve as parent codes for multiple subcodes. An example of this is the parent code *prestigious.* This term was taken out of the identification and social identity literature, and I knew I would be looking for words and

conversations around it. The subcodes, of course, were in vivo, but the parent code was planned well before the interviews took place.

A second cycle of coding then took place that looked for the descriptive and pattern codes. These codes would have been elements of how the members and staff spoke about Hope Church or their connection to Hope Church that emerged that I was not initially planning on looking for nor would have known to look for before the interviews. This cycle in particular was when the pattern codes emerged as a more in-depth look as to how the interviews linked together. For example, this is when the pattern code of *facility* took shape as I saw this topic come up in conversation time and again.

Then, a third cycle of coding took place where I drilled down into a more granular level of these parent codes and subcodes. In this cycle, I took a closer view of even the subcodes and found subcodes for the subcodes. The kind of codes that emerged here could have been interpretive, descriptive, or pattern codes. An example of this occurred in Phase 2 interviews addressing the issue of time and the emergence of identification. The parent code was *timeline* and two of the subcodes were *first visit* and *took a while.* These subcodes represented the participants who spoke of how quickly they felt identified to the organization. For both subcodes (*first visit* and *took a while*), other subcodes were created that began to describe the events or elements that either accelerated their identification (*first visit*) or were the elements that slowed it down (*took a while*). These subcodes gave me the ability to have a more nuanced understanding of Hope Church, how the staff at Hope Church viewed themselves, and how the members were connecting to Hope Church.

Because of the nature of organizational identification and its relation to organizational identity and the organization's efforts to influence the sensemaking processes, some of the coding that was done was what Saldana (2012) called "process coding"; this is coding that captures actions. This allowed me to look for and code catalytic events through the members' organizational history. Other codes included "catalytic events," which can be defined as items that the member identified as important events—conferences, sermons, conversations, experiences, etc.—that moved them towards or away from identification with that particular organizational identity claim, thus influencing the member to not integrate that organizational identity claim into their own personal self-identity.

A matrix of significant events that the participants reported was compiled. These matrices served as a part of the coding process in order to establish a bridge between the interview data and the impact that those certain events had on the member's identification process (see Appendix G). These events were connected with the member's sensemaking process that was discussed in the interviews as it related to the particular organizational identity claims. This analysis helped guide the choice of codes with regard to events described by members and helped identify potential codes in the interviews as the analysis and coding process continued. It also provided content for a few of the follow-up interviews that were needed as well as providing a grid to view some of the consistent events that emerged several times throughout the other members' responses.

Matrices

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that within data analysis procedures, charts or matrices may provide an overall perspective of the analysis of the case. Miles

and Huberman (1994) defined matrices as follows: "Matrix construction is a creative, yet systematic, task that furthers your understanding of the substance and meaning of your database" (p. 240). Ultimately, these matrices help organize and categorize data by way of simple descriptions or possible explanations and allow for a way to combine several of the data streams into a clearer story.

The analysis remained focused on the primary question: What is the process by which identification happens as it relates to the organizational identity claims of this multiethnic church as it is uncovered from triangulated data sources? What have been the catalytic events in the members' organizational identification journey? A matrix of interview respondent quotes was created to align with what is known about social identity and social categorization: distinctiveness, self-enhancement, prestige, and attractiveness, along with other codes that emerged from the interviews (see Appendix G). This provided a way of connecting the study back to the theoretical underpinnings of organizational identification.

Limitations and Delimitations

A recognized limitation to the study is that the members were asked to recount past events and experiences in an accurate manner. I recognize that many of the members' memory of such events or the members' feelings about these events may not fully reflect the reality of when they first experienced them. This reflective process, however, was the study's attempt to gain understanding into the journey of identification over time.

Secondly, the identification of these participants was not an exhaustive list of all members of Hope Church. Thus, the list of catalytic events, the feelings that accompanied

them, etc., did not represent every single way/method of identification. While certainly this study looked for trends and themes among the members, with a qualitative methodology each person's account was weighted equally, even if it was the only one reported that way. In an effort to provide the best representative sample of Hope Church, the participants chosen were delimited to a small list with varying ethnicity and length of time at Hope Church and, for the staff interviewees, varying hierarchy within the organization.

The identification of a member within a church can differ from church to church, as each church has its own membership practices. Thus, in order to gain any kind of clarity by way of a case study, this study was bounded to one church, in one city, in one state, and in one country. While some trends may be transferrable, it was not this study's purpose to find a universal principle to be applied to all churches. Thus, the study delimited itself to a single church with multiple identity claims, one of which happened to be a claim of being a multiethnic setting. This study made no assumptions that a monoethnic church would be or would not be any different. The study's primary purpose was to understand identification within a setting of multiple identities.

Research is significantly sparse in the area of organizational identification that does not take place within a job employment setting. Thus, the literature used to create the study, mold the questions, and analyze the data came from a research setting that is slightly different than that of a nonemployment setting. Furthermore, the identification literature does not discuss the role of faith within the individual's choice of identification. Thus, the literature may not be able to speak to some of the elements of the members' identification processes.

Subjectivity Statement

One of the recognized limitations of a study is the closeness of the researcher to the context and phenomena (Krefting, 1991) and the potential threat that conclusions may be drawn based on the researcher's existing theory and preconceived ideas (Maxwell, 2005).

I have been either a member or staff pastor in an urban, multiethnic church for the past 13 years. During this time, I have been involved in, held leadership roles in, and been employed by a church that fits this exact description. I sit in weekly meetings discussing how we will, as leaders, move members into a stronger identification with our church. In 2010, I spearheaded a multiethnic church conference, specifically geared at equipping church leaders in my community to engage, lead, and inspire their own churches to move in this direction. When I walk into a room, particularly another church service, my first instinct is to check the ethnic diversity in the room. At this point, it is an automatic response. My education and training has specifically focused on this church context along with the interpersonal elements of studying the psychology of how people process their social identity.

Over this period of time, particularly as a staff pastor within a multiethnic church, I have developed a vested interest in understanding why congregants do and do not identify with the church's identity claims. This is more than just a research topic; it is the passion of my life: to foster a church that has in it a group of members who have a deep desire to be in community with people of different ethnicities. I consider myself more than just a pastor of a multiethnic church but also an advocate for this vision.

My subjectivity and passion for this topic (ethnic diversity) and study context (a church) may have in it both benefits and dangers. Maxwell (2005) suggested this very same thing as he cited Glesne and Peshkin (1992):

> The subjectivity that originally I had taken as an affliction, something to bear because it could not be foregone, could, to the contrary, be taken as 'virtuous.' My subjectivity is *the* basis for the story that I am able to tell. It is the strength on which I build. . . . Seen as virtuous, subjectivity is something to capitalize on rather than to exorcise. (p. 104)

Due to my length of time and role in this kind of a setting, I believe I was better able to establish a rapport with the participants, which greatly enhanced the study. I understand church life and how churches think and have had many conversations about church members wrestling with their connections to a local church. I believe my experience allowed me to, in the moment of the interview, pick up on and hear emergent issues and themes that a pure researcher would not hear or pick up on. My role as a pastor and counselor within my church also has trained me to read people and their nonverbal communication and how they respond to conversations.

However, because I have been in this setting for so long, there was the possibility that I might overlay what I believe to be catalytic events or themes that I think should be there. My background meant that the participant's response was laid on a backdrop of my experience, not just a blank canvas of the individual's journey itself

Human Participation and Ethics

This study complied with guidelines established by The George Washington University and the requirements of the institutional review board. Participation in the study was voluntary. The participant's keys rights were verbally explained before the interview and then informed consent was obtained from each person interviewed. The

informed consent forms explicitly stated the purpose of the study and the methods for gathering data (see Appendix I). All data were treated as confidential, and no identifying information regarding individual study participants was revealed other than needed. For example, due to the fact that the study was about individuals identifying with a church that has multiethnicity as one of its primary identity claims, the ethnicity of the participant, at times, had a role in the saliency of this claim. The ethnicity of leadership who play roles of organizational sensebreaking also, at times, became significant. In these cases, only when it emerged and was important did I recognize the participant's ethnicity.

Participants were assigned a code for tracking purposes, and this list was confidential. Participants were identified as current member or nonmember respondents and whether or not they were employed by the church. While every effort was extended to maintain the confidentiality of study participants, anonymity could not be guaranteed by these efforts. As I documented the findings of the study and included quotes of study participants, it may be possible that study participants could be identified by the quotes used even if names are not used.

Following completion of the study, audiotapes of interviews will be destroyed in adherence to university guidelines. Interview transcriptions will be held indefinitely by the researcher and may be used in the preparation of future publications.

Summary of Research Design

Table 2.1 summarizes the main elements of the study's research design.

Table 2.1
Summary of Research Design

Research strategy	**Description**
Interview questions for staff members	Phase I: Engaging the Interviewee 1. What would you say is important to know about Hope Church? 2. What was one of the things that you first noticed when you started coming to Hope Church? 3. What would be one thing that if was removed from Hope Church it would cause Hope Church to cease being Hope Church? Probe: If that happened, how would that change Hope Church for you? 4. In your own words, how do you describe Hope Church? Phase II: Critical Events 5. Suppose it was my first visit to Hope Church. What would it be like? 6. As you think about the history of Hope Church, what has been the most significant event Hope Church has faced? Probe: What made this particular event so significant? Phase III: Identity Claims 7. If I were to ask you, "Who is Hope Church?" how would you answer? 8. What word or phrase would you use to describe what this organization is about?
Interview questions for members	Phase I: Engaging the Interviewee 1. What would you say is important to know about Hope Church? 2. Describe your connection to Hope Church. 3. Share for a moment how it feels to be a part of Hope Church. 4. If/when you hear someone criticize Hope Church, how does that make you feel? 5. If a family asked you about joining Hope Church, what would you tell them? 6. If a family member asked you about how Hope Church enhanced your life, what would you tell them? 7. If a stranger asked you about joining Hope Church, what would you tell them? 8. If a stranger member asked you about how Hope Church enhanced your life, what would you tell them? 9. What would be one thing that if removed from Hope Church would cause Hope Church to cease being Hope Church? Probe: If that happened, how would that change Hope Church for you? Probe: And how would you feel about that? 10. How would you describe your connection to Hope Church? 11. What does it feel like to be a part of Hope Church? 12. What do you consider a prototypical Hope Church member? 13. How does your membership shape how you see yourself?

Research strategy	Description
	Phase II: Navigating Critical Events 14. Tell me about your decision process of joining Hope Church. Probe: Think back to when you first came to Hope Church. What had you heard about it? Probe: What was it that drew you to come to Hope Church in the first place? 15. As you think about your involvement over time with Hope Church, how has it changed? 16. When prejudice is shown, how does that make you feel? 17. When you see a church without community outreach, how does that make you feel? Phase III: Identity Claims 18. If I were to ask you, "Who is Hope Church?" how would you answer? Probe: What word or phrase would you use to describe what this organization is about? 19. If one thing was removed from Hope Church that caused Hope Church to cease to be Hope Church, what would that be? Probe: If that happened, how would it change Hope Church for you?
Overall method	Qualitative single case study, an objectivist ontology, and a subjectivist epistemology
Study site	Hope Church: The main campus (of three campuses)
Research design	Single researcher Individual level of analysis Purposeful sampling Primary data source: interviews Secondary data sources: documents, observational events
Data sources: 1. Interviews 2. Documents 3. Observations	1. 16 member interviews Semistructured interviews Interviews transcribed, reviewed by respondents Organizational Identification Scale used (Ashforth & Mael, 1992) 2. Internal documents: Mission statement, branding PowerPoint, company website 3. Weekend services, new member meetings
Data analysis	Atlas.ti software utilized for data storage, coding, and analysis Contact summaries created for interviews, observations All documents, summaries, and transcriptions stored in computer Initial coding followed by code reduction
Quality assurance	Triangulation of data sources, peer review of coding Respondents engaged in research process Researcher's reflections through journaling and memo-ing Computer software consultant employed
Limitations of study	One particular organization, a nonprofit religious organization Ability of participants to recall and articulate current and past feelings, thoughts, events

CHAPTER 4:

FINDINGS

This study's primary research question was: "How does organizational identification emerge over time in a multiethnic organization with multiple identity claims?" A subquestion that this study also addressed was, "What is the role of multiple identity claims in the identification process?" The purpose of this research study was to examine the organizational identification process specifically in relationship to how a member identifies with the specific organizational identity claims in an organization in which he or she is a member. This study specifically sought to understand the member's identification with each of the identity claims, a subset of the claims, or the set of claims as a whole of an organization over time.

This chapter presents the findings to the overarching question of how identification emerges over time in an organization with multiple identity claims. First, this chapter gives a brief description of the history and setting of Hope Church. Next, the chapter reviews the organizational identity claims as identified from staff and member interviews that are triangulated with other data sources of observations of two events and organizational documents. Finally, the findings relating to the emergence of identification within a multiethnic church with multiple identity claims are described.

Hope Church

Hope Church's Environment

Hope Church is in the heart of Little Rock, Arkansas. Hope Church sits minutes away from historic Little Rock Central High School, which was the turbulent scene of

forced integration of nine Black students with an all-White school in 1957. Nearby is the national monument to the "Little Rock 9" in honor of those nine students who were escorted in by the National Guard that day amidst a venomous crowd.

Little Rock as a whole seemed relatively economically depressed. The drive from my hotel room from downtown Little Rock to Hope Church 15 miles away was lined with run-down businesses, boarded-up windows, and several homeless shelters along the way. Hope Church resides in the zip code 72204; this zip code was referenced often in the interviews in reference to the church's desire to impact its community. The senior pastor stated:

> *We see ourselves as pastors of the entire community* and, but if you go to all the homeless guys sitting out in the street they're going to talk about [name of pastor], you know because [he] is over all *the community engagement*. [P02]

A member put it this way upon her first visit to Hope Church:

> No, we have always been hands-on, we believe in getting out and doing ministry, not in ministry, not just inside the church but outside the church and we began to observe all the things that are going on here and all the various ministries that really touched the community or impacted the community and we ... began to serve with the Orchard, which is our Tuesday, we serve the community with our, with the homeless and the economically diverse people that have need for food assistance and stuff like that, close, and so we began right away to work in the Orchard and serve the people of the community. [P09]

The zip code, 72204, is also very different than the affluent west end of Little Rock (zip code 72223). According to official Census Data (2010), the percentage of families in 72204 living under the poverty line is 23.1%, the percentage of people under 18 years living under the poverty line is 44.6%, the percentage of children under 5 years living under the poverty line is 52.1%, and the median family income is $35,641. In

contrast, the percentage of families in the more affluent zip code, 72223, living under the poverty line is 6.9%, with the median family income being $107,942.

The stark differences between the Hope Church area and West Little Rock were referenced often in the interviews. The two primary differences between Hope Church and the community of 72204 and that of other churches, specifically those in West Little Rock that emerged in the interviews with both the members and staff, were the ethnic diversity of the Hope Church area and the drastically different economic statuses. As one staff member noted after talking about the differences between the two geographic areas:

> I'm not just bashing on west Little Rock, because you can have the same thing in the hood. You can talk about football every Sunday, you can take trips that are real expensive ... *but here at Hope Church there's so many secondary identities*. You know there's rich, there's poor, there's powerful, there is homeless, there is the disenfranchised there's intellectuals, there's highly educated, there's blue-collar, there's 35 different ethnicities, there's Catholic, there's Methodist, there's Baptists, Bible Church, there's Presbyterians, there's charismatics. [P01]

Or, as expressed by another member, "I would be concerned about keeping kind of the DNA of Hope Church. If we, for instance, moved to a fancy building in West Little Rock, I mean that just wouldn't happen anyway; I just don't think, I just don't think we'd ever do that" [P12]. It is the depressed economic setting of zip code 72204 that connected directly to the church's desire to be economically diverse and how it chose to organize and plan its community outreach programs. The economically depressed setting of 72204 also influenced what the Hope Church building looked like:

> The high criminal rate is, homeless, prostitution, drug dealers? This is a hard place to be, a hard place to be and I don't, we try to reach every person you know around this community, around the city but when you build a fancy building, I was told you can scare a lot of people, you know it can scare people. [P06]

Hope Church's History

John Johnson, Hope Church's founder and senior pastor, was known as a very successful youth pastor in a monoethnic church in highly affluent West Little Rock. In describing those days, John spoke of his vision for a multiethnic, economically diverse church and how he struggled in leaving his position at his church. His church had a multimillion-dollar youth facility in a stunning edifice. He left to start a multiethnic church, in a house, in one of the most impoverished areas of Little Rock. John's success in his former church and the drastic change he undertook to create Hope Church led many of the members of his original church to question the logic of John's move:

> I remember before we started coming when I first heard John was forming the church, and *my first thought was what kind of crazy idea has John come up with*, because he was known, he was a student ministries pastor at another church here before they started Hope Church, and he was known for you know those wild youth group activities that he used to do and to me, *starting a multiethnic church* in Little Rock sounded very far fetched. [P14]

Early in Hope Church's history, they met in John's home. According to one of the members, as she recalled those early days, these meetings were about explaining and brainstorming about what a church that was multiethnic, economically diverse, and intentionally trying to reach their community could look like [P08]. Specifically, these meetings were primarily focused around what it would look like to be a multiethnic church and how important theologically it was that the churches become multiethnic. From the beginning, a well-respected Black leader in the city helped John start the church. This was, in John's words, one of the most significant events in Hope Church's history:

> So I think the first, most significant thing was that I, I didn't start the church and then try to add diversity to it. I went right away and started the church so that we

> could say a Black and a White man started this church together ... but [name] coming alongside me to actually plant? the church to, of his caliber and his reputation in the city, that helped to say to people both White and Black, John's not crazy. [P02]

Very soon after, two key people joined Hope Church's work: a PhD, tenured professor from the University of Idaho and a Hispanic pastor from Honduras known in Little Rock for his outreach work. These two individuals came to work at the church, leaving their careers for either no monetary gain or an extensive pay cut. John noted that this gave credibility to the work at Hope Church:

> So all this was happening and these are significant things because what it was doing, it was validating, it was validating the vision and it was verifying the credibility of the church in the early days that something unique is happening there because how are, how are these miracles taking place, how are all these diverse, really you know stout, high caliber character individuals are joining this work when there's relatively speaking there is no money, there's no building, it's still pretty much a vision, you know so what are they being attracted, what is attracting these people to you know this kind of caliber of staff of, and where is the money coming from, you know? [P02]

Soon the church moved from their homes into another church's facility. They met in the afternoon; however, often the meeting times and places would have to change to accommodate the schedule of the church. One of the members described the church at this time as the "stealth church." John described the circumstances surrounding the church acquiring its current building:

> In 2003, when we got this building, we rented this 80,000 square-foot Wal-Mart for $.10 a square foot, $800 a month and that was like huge because you know, I mean just the miracle of how much space we got for how cheap, which kind of stood in the face of all these churches, always buying land and building buildings ... And *then learning what that did for the community, and by taking over an abandoned space and bringing it back to life and of course over the next few years we would learn a lot about that, and the credibility that gave the church.* And just trusting that you know, just everything, we've been in this space now, we've been in the space month to month for probably like, probably 6 to 8 years,

> like we've been here month to month. So you know, at any moment they could go you have 90 days to leave and it's just never happened. [P02]

Vine and Village, one of church's most recognized outreach programs, was started shortly after they moved into the building. This program began as an intentional effort of the church to reach and help their community.

Hope Church was founded 12 years ago and since then John has started an international affiliation of multiethnic churches. John is nationally recognized as a leader in the multiethnic church movement; he has authored several books on the topic of multiethnic churches and has pioneered an international multiethnic church network.

Hope Church's Identity Claims

Three organizational identity claims emerged from the data analysis. The claims are multiethnic, economically diverse, and community outreach. These were seen most clearly in Hope Church's official statement of "who they are" as an organization:

> A multiethnic, economically diverse church established by men and women seeking to know God and to make Him known through the pursuit of unity in accordance with the prayer of Jesus Christ (John 17:20-23) and patterned after the New Testament at Antioch. (Organizational website; New members booklet, 2014)

This section presents these claims and other related evidence.

Multiethnic

Building. Just inside the door of Hope Church, the idea of this being a multiethnic church can be clearly seen. In the entrance of the building, the flags of nearly 30 nations hang from the ceiling, with the three most prominent flags being those of the United States, Mexico, and Spain. Secondly, signs were in English and Spanish, and on the seats

there were prayer cards in English and Spanish. A few steps through the door, there are tables advertising a leadership conference conducted by Hope Church for Hope Church leaders. One of the primary sessions was this: "Helping our *Latino/Hispanics* become better integrated into the life of Hope Church" (Rise: 2014 Leadership Advance Booklet).

Many paintings were on the walls of the building; these paintings were primarily in the African-American tradition. A large sign that hung in the hallway said, "Walk together in Christ" and a similar one in the sanctuary said, "Worship the Father as One." Pictures of their congregation were prominently placed in many areas of the building, and all of these pictures showed people of multiple ethnicities.

Scriptural basis. The claim of being a multiethnic church also surfaced in the interviews of both the staff and the members in different ways. One example was in how the church saw scripture portraying this claim. For example, the senior pastor noted that Hope Church believes that a multiethnic church is the way the Bible portrays God's mandate for how a church should exist. During his interview he stated: "How Paul prescribed it and says this is the way you're supposed to do church, it's to be inclusive for the sake of the gospel" [P02]. Participants suggested that the fundamental assertion that scripture portrays a multiethnic church as the prescriptive way served as the fountainhead for how the church viewed the claim of being multiethnic. Hope Church was a multiethnic church because it believed scripture said this was the way churches should be. As a member noted in her interview, "I think it's the more ideal way that God would've wanted it to be" [P09]. These ideas also appeared in the book for new members. For example, the opening paragraph reads: "Our church is helping pioneer the path for a growing, international, movement that is changing the face of the church. We

are always asking the question, 'The kingdom of Heaven isn't segregated; so on Earth is the church?'"

The staff often referenced the multiethnic church to the first-century Christian church and noted the church in Antioch as the model by which Hope Church was patterned. John often referenced Jesus' prayer as recorded in John 17 in speaking about the church operating in a spirit of unity. This unity, for Hope Church at least, was thought of as unity in the way of not only all believers in Christ, but specifically multiethnic believers. As the senior pastor suggested:

> It [the multiethnic church] was envisioned by Christ on the night before he died, John 17:23-23. It was described by Luke at Antioch and Acts 11:19-26, 13:1 and then it was prescribed by the apostle Paul throughout his writings like in Romans and Ephesus or Ephesians. [P02]

John suggested that being multiethnic was prescribed or suggested by scripture. By connecting to John 17 and Acts 11, members attributed this characteristic of Hope Church to the ideal and the biblical way church should be done. John's commitment to this claim extended to helping other churches also become multiethnic. As stated on John's Twitter account, "Want a free hour of competent coaching for our [sic] multiethnic church plant, or help w/a homogeneous church transition?" and "Planters/Pastors now using this excellent small group study to develop healthy multiethnic churches! Order here: [website url]" (Senior Pastor Twitter Account).

Leadership team. Ethnic diversity also played a role in the leadership for the weekend service. Many staff referenced this as being an intentional part of their service planning because it reflected the ethnic diversity of the staff: "[People] can see a lot what kind of church we are because we are very diverse staff" [P06]. One staff member mentioned ethnic diversity as a part of how he spoke to guests, "I encourage people who

are new to our church to visit us at least three times in order to understand how we mix diversity from the platform" [P07]. The members echoed the same kind of thought process, "I think it's important and I've enjoyed and I think it's been very beneficial at Hope Church if we're going to be a thriving multiethnic church, that that multiethnic view is reflected in our teaching pastors" [P12].

The many different ethnic backgrounds of the church's leadership were observed in all aspects of the weekend service. The senior pastor that morning spoke (White), the campus pastor greeted and gave announcements (Asian), and the whole church was greeted by Hope Church's hospitality coordinator (Black). Throughout the morning worship services, several references were made from the platform (primarily from the senior pastor) about Hope Church's mission and call to be a multiethnic church:

> Because that's what people see when they visit. You know…it just doesn't have to be every week but I mean if there's nobody on staff, that's preaching, that's Hispanic or multiethnic, either one, you know or Black, at all. I just think that would, you know I just think it's hard to really convey the, the true mission of the church, you know even if it's in your mission statement. [P12]

The focus on creating a multiethnic leadership team was highlighted in hiring decisions:

> So [name] was part of this church early, in its early days, some of the other staff that were African American, etc., before [name], and then when [name] joined and got a Chinese guy, and *just that expression I think's been really important to embracing people in a leadership position regardless of their ethnicity and that conveys a really important message.* So they, you know they're different in styles from what [name] is but it's not stylistic. I mean I'm from an environment that has multiple voices that teach, on worship and with that comes stylistic differences but you, not the ethnicity and etc., and that then spans over into who's on the elder board and again the worship style that has brought with it musically etc., and so it gives really a tremendous diverse feel. [P04]

Congregation. During the first visit to the Sunday services, I observed the people gathering, setting up, and getting ready for the morning. People from many different ethnicities were present. For example, a Hispanic man sang songs in Spanish as he walked down the hall, an African American man was serving as a greeter and getting a coffee bar ready, and several Caucasian people were busy setting up tables. A few minutes later, an Asian man came up to greet me. This was only one of many experiences during my visit to Hope Church where multiethnicity was present in the people and groups. My experience matched what is on Hope Church's website ("What to expect"): "As you enter the facility (a former Walmart), you'll be warmly greeted by people from a wide variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds."

The staff often simply referenced the people of Hope Church themselves when referencing the claim of multiethnicity, "Those African Americans are from several socioeconomic backgrounds and communities. You'll see Caucasians, same thing, various academic backgrounds, socioeconomic, and you'll see Latinos" [P05]. While multiethnic certainly has multiple layers, within the interviews this claim was often expressed simply in skin color, "And so, what I always say is, you know, if God can do this between Jew and Gentile, then why can't He do it between Blacks and Whites" [P01].

One of the newest staff members echoed this idea when asked, "Who is Hope Church or what is central to understand about Hope Church?" The member's initial response was its ethnic diversity:

> We are Hope Church. Yeah, I mean I think the people represent Hope Church ... I think the people, I mean the people represent Hope Church, I *mean the people are Hope Church, they are just a diverse group of people* committed to like worshipping together, living in community together, serving together. [P03]

Another staff member spoke of the church's continual emphasis on multiple ethnicities:

> You know when we, when every, *every time when we preach* we talk about how God loves everyone and the first years, the first week and every, the first week at the beginning of the year we [talk] about the mission, what is about Hope Church, *why are we here you know, it's no, this is not a church only for the Latino people, this is not only a church for the African-American, not only church for the White people.* [P06]

Multiethnicity was also how the church united members, as noted on the website:

> Apart from ethnically and economically diverse relationships, we cannot understand others different from ourselves, develop trust for others who are different than us, and/or love others different than ourselves, etc. Apart from understanding, trust and love, we are less likely to get involved in the plight of others different than ourselves. Without involvement, nothing changes; and, the disparaging consequences of systemic racism remain entrenched in our culture (Church Website, "Why multiethnic?").

Worship service. The worship style was diverse from week to week. During my first visit to the weekend worship services, the music played would be considered all Gospel, which might be in the Black tradition. During my second visit to the weekend worship services, the music was more of the contemporary Christian music genre, which traditionally might be thought of for a White congregation. For Hope Church, the weekend service was pivotal in communicating and enacting the multiethnic claim. The importance of ethnic diversity in the leadership of the worship service also surfaced in the interviews; it was spoken of as one of the ways Hope Church communicated the claim of being a multiethnic church:

> *If the whole staff were the same color or same kind of people, the same mind, that's not Hope Church* ... Okay, you came Sunday morning, you see, when you come into the hallway you *see so many diverse people*, you know. I imagine you talk to [name] and he explained about what is Hope Church and then in the service you would be, you watch it with the African American pastor, I don't know if they do gospel choir this Sunday or no, but it's different you know, and

> [name] preached, he's the White pastor or the main pastor but he's White you know? He preached, and his style of preaching is completely different to [name], [name] is African-American, it's completely different. [P06]

The importance of multiethnicity in the worship service also related to the volunteer teams, as the worship pastor explained, "because normally we always try to have a diversity of music, diversity and you know, the singers that's on the stage, you know, the whole time" [P08].

Multiethnicity and the church's outreach to the community. In the class required for membership, a notebook describing the church was handed out. In this book, the following statement appeared: "To affect Real Community Transformation, Hope Church first addressed the spiritual leg of the stool [a graphic within the book] by intentionally being multiethnic and economically diverse" (p. 36). This mirrors the senior pastor's comments in our interview:

> So if we're going to be about the gospel and getting you know Christ to individual hearts, to the community scene, right, you know redemption and transformation of the individual as well as communities, which is the gospel, we have to present the gospel in a credible way, and *if the gospel is all about God's love for all people, and, but we proclaim that from a segregated pulpits and pews, it undermines the credibility of that gospel in an increasingly diverse society.* [P02]

Another staff pastor, who self-identified as Latino, positioned reaching the community as an automatic outcome of being multiethnic:

> Serving the community and reaching the community, doing a lot of stuff for the community, when you are in a multiethnic church, you will be a, what is the name, a missional church too, you can't be multiethnic and nonmissional ... You can not, yeah, there's both in the same time, you know, because if you have so many background here in the church, you can reach a lot of people. [P06]

This pastor was hired to reach the Latino population of Hope Church's community. Hope Church's leadership used a phrase, "For the sake of Gospel" often

when talking about them being a multiethnic church. As seen in the earlier quote, one of the primary purposes of being multiethnic was that they believed monoethnic churches invalidate the gospel, specifically in an ever-increasing diverse community and environment. The connection between being multiethnic and the role of outreach was seen in Hope Church's vision statement, "To be a healthy multiethnic and economically diverse church in order to present a credible witness of God's love for all people throughout Central Arkansas and beyond."

Additional evidence from documents for the claim of multiethnic is presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1
Document Evidence for the Organizational Claim of Multiethnicity

Quote	Source	Method of obtainment
"Championing the biblical mandate of the multiethnic church via the Global Network ..."	Rise: 2014 Leadership Advance	Staff Pastor
"Hope Church is a multiethnic, economically diverse church established by men and women seeking to know God and to make Him known through the pursuit of unity in accordance with the prayer of Jesus Christ (John 17:20-23) and patterned after the New Testament at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26; 13:off)."	Statement of who Hope Church is	Website
"Hope Church is a multiethnic, economically diverse church established by men and women seeking to know God and to make Him known through the pursuit of unity in accordance with the prayer of Jesus Christ (John 17:20-23) and patterned after the New Testament at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26; 13:off)."	Front Cover	New Member Booklet
"WORSHIP the Father together as one." [reference to Multiethnicity]	Developmental Strategy	Website
"It's official: @Hope Churchchurch now has 4 campuses incl Hope Churcho Iglesia de A Coruna (Spain); 200 members frm 25 nations! http://www.Hope Churchoruna.com/	Tweets	Hope Church Twitter Page

Economically Diverse

Economical diversity was another identity claim that emerged from the data. It was core to the church and how staff and members distinguished their church from other churches. One staff member noted, in comparing Hope Church to a church in a more affluent area of Little Rock:

> *It just becomes another social club, really.* Because, because then, see what's so, it's easier to have that in a place where it's a homogeneous, well defined his sector, right? Where everybody's at church, everybody votes Republican, everybody goes to the same school, everybody roots for the same school and everybody has a high-level income, okay? [P01]

Members did not only identify this claim as one that distinguished Hope Church from other churches in general, but they often specifically named the affluent church in West Little Rock where John had worked before. For example, during my first visit, a member recognized me as a visitor, came up to me, and almost the first words out of his mouth were references to this same affluent church in comparison to Hope Church. He specifically referenced the economic differences.

One of the ways the claim of economic diversity was referenced in the interviews related to the homeless population of their congregation. This staff member spoke of it this way:

> *You know it's, when you go to church on Sunday it's interesting because you can have someone who's homeless,* who doesn't smell like they've had a shower for quite some time on one side of you and on the other side of you could have somebody who's very well educated, middle-class may be even upper middle class and or wealthy and you know it's just a part of what the experience is here, and that's a norm here where in many churches that's a bit of an anomaly, there's not that drastic of a difference between the homogeneity that makes up a congregation. [P04]

Another member also spoke of how this claim could sometimes be offensive to others:

> I like the idea that like on the Sunday morning there are guys in the, homeless guys before we would set up like this you know, a few, well they do come in, but then I can remember this one guy [name] in particular, way, way back when, he would come in like on a hot day, he could be sweaty, dirty, you know have his, his bag on him and he would just come in and sit, you know? *It was, it was offensive to some people but I felt a need to go up to him* and back then I was a greeter, I wore a lot of hats back then, but I felt the need to go up to him and make sure he felt welcome, can I get you some water because I can see you sweating, you know? Trying to do what I could to make him feel comfortable. [P13]

In my interview with one staff member, he mentioned that Hope Church's janitor/facility manager was a homeless man who was allowed to sleep in the building, and as a way of payment he cleaned the facility.

This claim was also referenced when they spoke about their building. One staff member responded to my question, "What do you imagine my first visit was like?":

> I also hope that you would've noticed the building itself, so and you would have internalized something just from the structure, because a physical presence does speak to a person whether you walk into a posh office, a posh church or a church that is meeting in a Wal-Mart building at this time. [P05]

The staff member contrasted the Hope Church building with other churches. She chose the word *posh* to describe another place that was nicer than theirs. In making this comparison, there seemed to be a tone of superiority rather than simply distinguishing her church from others. Another staff member highlighted similar thoughts about their building:

> I mean it's a little bit like going into a truck stop, that's kind of what it looks like, smells like you know, it just, *yeah it's not the kind of facility that you know, I am used to, in West Little Rock,* it's more of a five-star kind of hotel experience and that's true with office space, that's true with every inch of the campus ... Then of course I have an office here and work out of here and this is my primary place. Yeah, so it's two very different worlds and so when you think about inviting

someone to come to church here, you know you're not leaning on the ah-ha experience when they walked to the door. [P04]

Additional evidence from the documents for the claim of economically diverse is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2
Document Evidence for the Organizational Claim of Economically Diverse

Quote	Source	Method of obtainment
"Hope Church is a multiethnic, economically diverse church established by men and women seeking to know God and to make Him known through the pursuit of unity in accordance with the prayer of Jesus Christ (John 17:20-23) and patterned after the New Testament at Antioch (Acts 11:19-26; 13:off)."	Statement of who Hope Church is	Website
"To be a healthy multiethnic and economically diverse church in order to present a credible witness of God's love for all people throughout Central Arkansas and beyond."	Vision Statement	Website
"As you enter the facility (a former Walmart), you'll be warmly greeted by people from a wide variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds ..."	What to Expect	Website
To effectively engage a community, churches must address its spiritual, social and financial needs	Tweets	Hope Church Twitter Page
"We welcome economic diversity"	Dynamics of Hope Church	New Member Booklet
Homeless people sitting outside of building talking with greeters		Observation
Several homeless people working on building for church		Observation
Very nicely dressed woman greeting me at door and in sanitary		Observation
Staff talking about financial aid request for a church member needing help with bills		Observation

Community Outreach

The focus on community outreach also surfaced as an identity claim of Hope Church. Hope Church's new member book spoke of community outreach as the way Hope Church could reach and meet the spiritual, social, and financial needs of its community in the 72204 area code. In this book, Hope Church spoke of itself as being so in touch with its community that it was literally one with it: "If we 'are' the community, there is no degree of separation, no 'us' and 'them.' Instead it's 'us.' We attempt to stay in touch with the needs of the community, the problems of our people" (p. 36). Examples of community outreach included the feeding program, a ministry to help women in prostitution, foster care adoption, and financial classes for the community.

The claim of community outreach was referenced frequently in the interviews when staff and members spoke about what was important to the church. For example, one of the interview questions was, "How does the church communicate about itself?" A senior pastor responded to this question in this way:

> In my case when I talk with my people, you know they speak Spanish, different language, different culture. *I challenge them to reach more people,* not only Latinos and I am one of the examples you know, I *reach different kind of people*, you know homeless, White people, African-Americans, Latinos and I want to be a good example for my people, not only talking and *reaching Latinos* you know. [P02]

The senior pastor referenced this focus on mobilizing the members of the church to reach out to their community as being as important as their call to pastorally take care of the members: "You know we were more of a mission for the first 8 to 10 years of the church than we were really a church. You know, we are just in these [current] days trying to balance church and mission" [P02]. During the new members' meeting, when a facilitator who was a staff pastor spoke about their life groups and the pastoral care of the

church, he noted that members have left the church because they were burnt out from outreach and having no pastoral care or community with others in the church. He indicated that the mission to reach their community had been more of a focus than ministering to their own members within the congregation. He, the staff member, went on to say that the shift to become focused on caring for their community and the church members was only a recent one.

The two most frequent answers from staff members to the interview question, "If I were to ask you who is Hope Church, how would you answer that question?" were first multiethnicity quickly followed by community outreach. For example:

> Yeah, you see our mission statement and that's always a good place to start. So, we're about being a catalyst to certain people, like I said, they live right here ... *we're about helping to meet the social, economic and the spiritual needs of people that live in this part of town,* and *so all of that leads to something that Hope Church has called real community transformation* ... So we have currently *nine different ministries or programs* that make up vine and village and these have all been a part of people that either were from Hope Church or that were *interested in reaching this zip code*, this part of the city, the university district. So The Orchard, which is our food pantry, clothing closet, Little Rock Pride which is an athletic outreach to young boys and basketball, Immerse Arkansas, you may know all about all of these you know foster care, kids that are aging out of foster care, teen moms and moms ... Shepherds Hope is one of the newest ones, it's a dental outreach that we have that provides acute dental care to people that live in this community of course at no charge for any of this. Evangelical Alliance for immigration service, that's for people who want to become naturalized ... Aviators, that's again an outreach that is headed up by [name], [name] is our children's director here at Hope Church ... [who] live at no cost and then provided another apartment that we remodeled, basically just took everything out of it and made it into a classroom so it's a place where we meet on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday where we have classes and some of them are aimed at, most of them are aimed at the children, some involve like on Wednesdays, entire families to be a part of the dinner that's offered. [P04]

A similar response to an interview question on identity claims was from a staff member who saw that Hope Church exists primarily to minster to the community around them. As one staff member noted:

> I believe God's heart is just a heart of love, compassion, you know Luke, I think Luke 17 talks about the poor, the needy, that what he came for is purpose. *I think Hope Church's purpose is for the you know, the downtrodden, setting free the captives you know, the poor, the needy, you know?* [P08]

Another outreach program was mentioned that reached out to the wealthier or middle-class community. This was their soccer program that was geared to youth of all ages and economic statuses. The remainder of the church's many outreach programs were geared towards the poor in the area. Interestingly, this soccer program was a joint program with the affluent West Little Rock church that many of the members referenced as the antithesis to Hope Church in terms of economic diversity.

Community outreach as a claim also surfaced in responses to critical events in Hope Church's history. As stated by the longest-tenured associate pastor:

> Because of the first big fight the leadership got into, and it happened about 2 months after I got here and it was such a huge, spectacular fight between [name] and [name], you know the two founding pastors ... Over [name] coming here ... No, just a disagreement on whether or not he was ready to come, because he couldn't speak any English, you know it was a bold thing for us to hire [name] ... *Because we knew we needed a full-time Latino pastor that could make good inroads into the Hispanic community* [in order to reach them with the gospel]. [P01]

This staffing action represented this claim in that they emphasized a commitment to diverse leadership (they needed a Latino on staff) to reach the church's immediate community. This commitment, at the time, would be, in one of the staff's words, a risk, as this pastor could not communicate with most of the staff but had the potential to increase the church's ability to reach this community. This was important both for the betterment of their lives and ultimately to attract potential new members.

In the new members class, the commitment to reach the Hope Church community was expressed often. It was referenced in the "Work" portion in their second mission

statement. Their zip code, 72204, was often referenced, mostly in relationship to reaching and impacting the families and homes around them. The majority of the second part of the new members class was dedicated to talking about what it meant to see community transformation through the church's outreach.

The focus on community outreach was evident in the building itself. There were flyers on their outreach programs as you walked into the building. It was also a part of the sermon that I observed. The back of the room in which the sermon was delivered was roped off for several programs that worked with kids who were "aging out" of the foster care system. Flyers for *Vine and Village*, a program that feeds hundreds of homeless and poor families, were prominently displayed on tables in their lobby.

Additional evidence from documents for the claim of community outreach is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3
Document Evidence for the Organizational Claim of Community Outreach

Quote	Source	Method of obtainment
"18,078 individuals served, total households 2,893: this represents 106.87% of the 2,707 households living in poverty in 72204"	Vine and Village 2013 Highlights: The Orchard	In lobby of sanctuary
"150 Families were blessed with furniture for their homes"	Vine and Village 2013 Highlights: The Orchard	In lobby of sanctuary
"Approximately 12 5th-6th grade students received mentoring and coaching in basketball"	Vine and Village 2013 Highlights: Little Rock Pride	In lobby of sanctuary
"Ending year with 4 houses plus apartments making room for 20 kids [exiting foster care)"	Vine and Village 2013 Highlights: Immerse Arkansas	In lobby of sanctuary
"Commitments for nearly $1,000,000 [to outreach program's of the church] were made"	Vine and Village 2013 Highlights: Immerse Arkansas	In lobby of sanctuary

Quote	Source	Method of obtainment
"50 young women in 2013 (over 1,000 diapers a month are given away to moms)"	Vine and Village 2013 Highlights: Teen MOPS	In lobby of sanctuary
"Every Tuesday evening 12-14 patients, mostly from 72204, are seen for acute dental care ..."	Vine and Village 2013 Highlights: Shepherds Hope	In lobby of sanctuary
"300 active/open cases helping people to become naturalized/US citizens"	Vine and Village 2013 Highlights: Evangelical Alliance for Immigration Services	In lobby of sanctuary
"Only in doing so can Hope Church become a church of long-term impact in your own life and the life of your family, this community and beyond."	Rise: 2014 Leadership Advance	Staff pastor
"Vine and Village is a catalyst to serve people living in and around Little Rock's emerging University District by helping to meet their social, economic and spiritual needs resulting in real community transformation"	Vine and Village Flyer	In lobby of sanctuary
Soccer outreach program aimed at Youth	Upward Soccer	In lobby of sanctuary
"Upward Soccer Outreach: Register for Upward Soccer and help reach families in our community"	THREADS: weekly bulletin	In lobby of sanctuary
"WORK together as on in the Spirit: serve others and share the Gospel."	Member Expectations	Website
"Joyful Volunteer Service We serve in ministries that fit our gifting and passions for the sake of Christ within and outside the church."	Welcome Letter from Pastor	New member booklet
"We as Christians have the tremendous privilege and opportunity of being called to such a life. And a broken and hurting world is waiting to see, to hear, to receive, and to be comforted."	Marks of an Authentic Church	New member booklet
Set up for food outreach: Vine and Village		Observation
Clothes in back of building for outreach to those needing clothes		Observation
Foster Care outreach office space		Observation

The Facility and the Identity Claims

Hope Church's facility was one representation of the interrelationship of all three claims: multiethnicity, economic diversity, and community outreach. The building's pictures, banners, and bilingual signage, as well as its run-down condition, combined the claims of multiethnicity, economic diversity, and community outreach together.

The building was a Walmart storage facility, but was now a part of a larger strip mall and thus Hope Church's building was connected to several other stores. The signage on the building and the road leading to it was easily missed and inaccurate. In the first room, the office spaces were made up of movable 5-feet-tall partitions. You could both see and hear everything that was going on inside of the offices. The building echoed and consequently there was a chorus of voices seemingly singing different songs in different keys. The sanctuary was designated by black fabric to separate it from the rest of the building. The room looked "pieced together." In the lobby and in the classrooms were stained ceiling tiles and floors and loose wires, and the bathrooms were quite small and run down. Simply put, the building was in poor condition with many things within the building not functioning.

Hope Church believed that its humble physical facility would make those with economic hardships feel more welcome. In other words, Hope Church's thinking went like this: if the building is too nice, then those with economic hardships will not come; if those with economic hardships do not come, Hope Church will not be an economically diverse place. One of the staff, in his interview, talked about the building as it related to the community around them, with the premise that in order to adequately be welcoming

to the economically disadvantaged within their community, the building needed to be humble:

> *I know it's hard to do that when we, when we hire the visionary architect company to do the building, we asked them to don't make the building so, so fancy* you know because sometimes buildings scare people [laugh] and because the area where we are you know, I don't know if you know about this area, do you already have numbers about this area, how poor it is? [P06]

Another member commented along the same lines:

> No I don't think so. I think what's funny is when we met with the architects and all of that they would meet and they said let's not make it too nice, and I think all I want to make sure is that, that it is a place that a homeless person walks right into and feels good? [P10]

In addition to the economic diversity piece, Hope Church did not improve the building because they believed it aided in the work of reaching their community, specifically as it related to budgeted money. In the interviews, the issue of the building came up frequently in terms of being central to who Hope Church was, being central to telling their story and, more specifically, central to their ministry philosophy as it related to community outreach. The staff described the building as depicting the "DNA" and philosophy of the ministry within Hope Church, and it went back to the very beginnings of the church.

The senior pastor noted:

> On purpose because, well number one, is we couldn't afford nice facilities, and none of these are in particular order but obviously it takes a lot of money to have a decent facility and we didn't have any. You know we were more of a mission [a place of community outreach] for the first 8 to 10 years of the church than we were really a church. You know we are just in these days trying to balance church and mission [outreach to the community]. *But so, not only did we not have the money for it but, but at a philosophical level,* and I had come from large wealthy churches or you know, a couple of them I had worked for over 20 years ... Okay, well we didn't want to do that, we wanted to make Hope Church a church that the

> vision is what drew you, you know? Like because vision is something that doesn't cost anything. [P02]

Here John was referencing the early years of the church when money was scarce, yet this philosophy of building and money had not changed: the goal (and claim) of community outreach was so critical that even now, when the church had money, the church still chose to allocate those resources into its outreach programs rather than to updating its building. And the members spoke to the church's philosophy and related budget priorities of money to programs rather than buildings in a favorable way: "The building is really not what it's all about and I know that, I knew that before we started, and so we've been comfortable with it and we're grateful for it and we have no regrets" [P09]. Another member said, "The members want it that way," explaining:

> *Well, I like the fact that they didn't spend a lot of money on building*, that it was, and I could see, by what you could, and what we heard, what we found out online was, how they were serving their community around them and *so we knew that the money that we would be giving, or whatever we got involved with, it would be not toward promoting a building, but the church [and it's goal to reach the community] itself.* [P15]

Hope Church's Membership Class: A Bridge from the Organization to Identification

A general understanding of membership within churches may be helpful to understand how Hope Church both spoke of its identity claims and how Hope Church viewed its members. This section on Hope Church's membership class describes a structured membership process as decided by the church itself. The church offered a structured class designed to give insight for prospective new members on Hope Church's philosophy of ministry and church practices. Ultimately, this class served as a

sensegiving and sensebreaking actions around how Hope Church members should think about the church's identity claims.

It is important to note that none of the participants themselves referenced this class as a part of their identification journey. Yet, because the membership class provides a rich understanding of the church context and church practices that the participants were a part of, it provides an overall sense of how Hope Church thought about membership. Thus, it seemed appropriate to include this section and to place it in the section describing Hope Church and not the identification section.

"Membership" is a common term among churches in general. It is a term that most churches use to differentiate a person who simply attends the church to a person who "belongs" to that church. While words like "identification" are rarely used in church life, the idea of identification is often inherent within how churches think about the status of membership. For example, here is an excerpt from the welcome letter within the Membership Book, "Welcome to Discover Hope Church! We are thrilled that you are interested in learning about our unique community of faith. Please feel no pressure from us as you prayerfully consider Hope Church your church home." Here two themes emerged: (1) the understanding that this structured class was about discovering or learning about the church and what made Hope Church unique, and (2) the use of the language of "church home," which connotes a sense of connection or oneness. The very same use of the language of "home" was heard throughout the interviews as the participants spoke of their sense of connection to Hope Church.

Membership is so important to some churches that some churches only count the size of their church by the number of those who have become "members." In any case, it

is a designation that is given to those who choose (self-select) to belong to the church they attend. The process of how churches move people from attendee to membership varies from church to church.

Membership classes were not part of the early years of Hope Church but began in 2005 because the church had grown in size. Therefore, a more formal process was needed in order to communicate the vision better (personal communication, staff member, 2014). A staff member explained:

> *For the first two years of our church, people became members with "their feet". Meaning if you showed up, you were a member*. John jokes often that he would ask the crowd to "raise their hand" if they were "all in". At that moment, he would declare them a member of Hope Church (personal communication, staff member, 2014).

This staff member went on to say that in 2005 the first version of the new member class was created, which consisted of two Sunday morning classes, each lasting about an hour. When you completed the class, you were declared a member. Later, in 2008, their current system was put into place. Now, the new membership class involves two 3-hour sessions. The first session is focused on vision, history, doctrine, and mission. The second session is focused on being a part of a community together within the church and the member's unique fit. Each prospective member is asked to take a survey that is designed to discover their own personal makeup and spiritual gift sets. Then each member is personally interviewed by one of the elders within the church. After this, the individual is declared a member. Now, every individual who wants to become a member must go through this class.

In this class, the prospective new members and the presenters reflected the congregation's ethnic diversity. The church leaders emphasized the importance of ethnic

diversity to the church as part of the instruction and example to the new members. The presenters themselves appeared to represent several different ethnicities, including a White male and a Black woman. There were several other volunteer helpers within the room, with one being Black and another White. The prospective new members attending the class also represented many different ethnicities. The prospective new members appeared to be a mix of ethnicities, including Asian, Hispanic, White, and Black. The class focused on the idea that Hope Church was intentionality multiethnic and that there was a clear biblical purpose of being a multiethnic church. A considerable amount of time was taken to speak about being a church made up of many different kinds of people. The first page of the new member manual described the church as a place "where diverse individuals walk, work, and worship God together as one."

Hope Church spoke of membership as the individual's unique and purposed fit to the congregation of Hope Church. During the new members class, the presenters spoke of Hope Church being a welcoming group to anyone and indicated that its members should be welcoming as well; in a paradoxical manner, the presenters made it clear that not everyone would or should belong to the church. As one leader stated, "We don't want you here unless you are called here. . . . You are here to fill in the holes of the Hope Church that only you can fill." For those who felt they were called to Hope Church and filled that hole within Hope Church, they could become a part of their family. Moreover, this understanding of membership, that of those who were "selectively called," was voiced well beyond the membership class; it was also mentioned by some of the members in their interviews. When asked to reflect on what it meant to be a part of Hope Church, one of the participants described a conversation with a friend:

> You know I'm thinking back to a guy that, that I went to high school with that I you know was talking to him about Hope Church and you know was kind of telling him about the vision and you know that you know, you're going to you know be there with a lot of diverse people, and you know I could kind of tell that you know, that wasn't what he had in mind for church, and *you know I kind of said to him you know it's not for everybody.* [P20]

The second session focused on members discovering their "unique" fit with Hope Church. Potential members were asked to consider how much they "fit" into this community, with the idea that not everyone would fit. At the end of the two membership classes, the new members were assigned a small group for a short period of time. One of the staffers told me that the point of the small group assigment was to integrate the new members into the idea of being in community right from the start of their membership.

This "fit," or their special sense of connection, once discovered by the member, became, for many of the participants, a source of much personal pride: "I feel good to be a member here. You know. we go anywhere in town, and I hold my head high, you know, and gladly represent being a member of Hope Church." Another put it this way:

> Researcher: What, what does it mean for you, let me rephrase that, how does it feel to be a part of this church?
> Participant: Blessed. You know, you want to say proud but I don't think that's the right, that's the right word.... I'm just so blessed that these people [Hope Church], I mean they are our family." [P10]

For the purposes of this study, "membership" was not equated with identification. Thus, this section should not be seen as describing the identification process of the members, and completing the class did not necessarily mean that it was part of the identification process.

The Emergent Process of Identification

This section describes the organizational identification process at Hope Church and the role of Hope Church's identity claims in this process. The organizational identity claims described in the previous section serve as a backdrop to the emergent process of identification of the members of Hope Church. This section describes the identification journey of the church members, specifically the events, conversations, and experiences that were pivotal in their identification process. Data for this phase were collected only through semistructured interviews.

As an overview for this section, the identification process that emerged from the study showed that there were certain elements that nearly all of the interviewed members referenced. However, other elements in the identification process were found to be specific to a particular individual member voicing his or her experience. The figures in this chapter depict the identification process as expressed by the members.

This study defined organizational identification as "the perception of oneness or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21). The process of identification as expressed by members of Hope Church was expressed through the participant speaking to a sense of belonging or a sense of oneness of their self-concept to the church, even if they did not use the term *identify* or directly specify one specific claim or set of claims. The participants spoke of a general sense that membership connected to a sense of oneness with the church:

> You know life's a team sport man, it's not an individual deal, it's a team sport and so all that stuff I said that you're supposed t*o do as a member, that's part of being part of the team,* you know, and that's important to be part of a team, to be a team player. [P22]

In addition, when church membership or being a member of the church is referenced in this study, it is understood to represent a oneness of the member with the church and not simply the process of joining the church.

The identification process that emerged in this study and is described in this section is depicted in Figure 4.1 as it relates to the original conceptual framework in chapter 1 (Figure 1.1). Figure 4.1 depicts the final, overall process of identification over time that emerged in this study and how the multiple identity claims, and the interrelationships between the claims, played a role in the identification process. Each of the elements was part of the identification process as experienced by members, and thus the following sections describe the process in the figures. There is no significance to the kind of shapes or colors chosen within the figure; they differ in shape and color simply to help differentiate the different processes within the identification process. At the very top is a general process that gives an overview of the different processes. The green star labeled "Church Seeker" represents the individual seeking a church home. Two lines come from this star: one representing the specific area upon which the individual focused their church search prior to coming to Hope Church. This line represents the specific identity claim or set of identity claims that the individual searched for and found enacted at Hope Church. This church search line bypasses the organization's sensebreaking and sensegiving processes and moves straight to the individual's sensemaking and then into identification.

The second line represents the participant's identification to the non–searched-for identity claims. In contrast to the line that represents the church search, this second line represents the participant's encounter with the organizational claims that were not

necessarily existent within the participant's self-concept prior to coming to Hope Church. Thus, the church seeker must engage these claim(s) differently than the claim(s) he or she searched for. The result is the need for the prospective church member to engage the sensegiving and sensebreaking actions of the organization around these non–searched for claims in order to shape their own sensemaking processes, which will lead towards a positive identification.

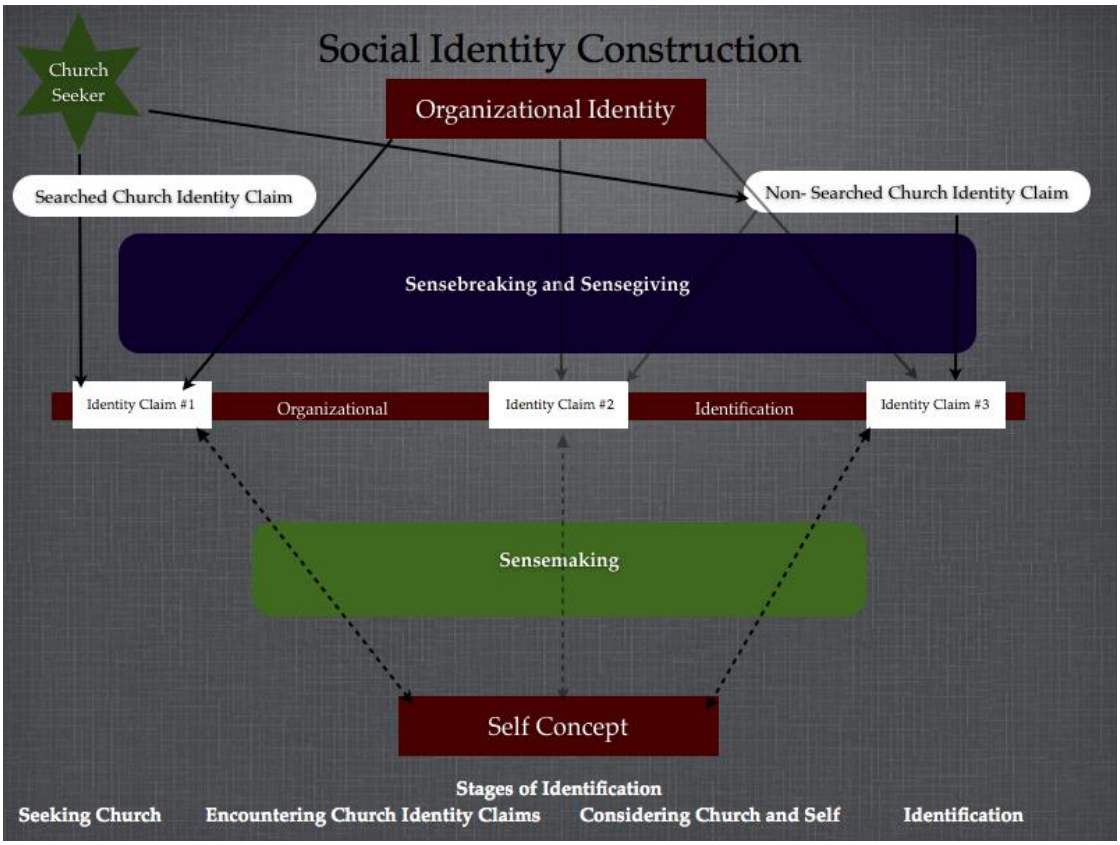

Figure 4.1. The emergence of identification over time for a new church member.

Sensebreaking and Sensegiving

Organizational sensebreaking and sensegiving play an integral part in the identification process. Prospective church members may bypass these two organizational

functions through their church search or engage these organizational functions entirely. Bypassing them may represent the fact that the individuals already had this specific searched claim as a part of their self-concept, as indicated by them seeing this preliminary searched identity claim enacted and reporting a sense of identification with Hope Church. When the member engages the sensebreaking and sensegiving actions it is because these two organizational functions were needed, as the claim(s) that were not searched for may not be resident within the self-concept of the individual. This is evidenced by the individual's indication of events that were needed to help him or her with a sense of connection to the church.

As defined earlier, the sensebreaking actions of the organization are those that highlight the distance between the integration of the organizational identity claims and the individual's self-concept. After this distance is enhanced, the organization then provides individuals (aka, prospective church members) a narrative, known in the literature as sensegiving, as to how one should think or act in relation to these identity claims. These are pivotal encounters for prospective members with the organizational sensebreaking and sensegiving actions. These encounters, also termed *catalytic events,* will lead to the individual's identification with the organization.

Catalytic Events

The members often referenced catalytic events (or a series of these events) during the identification process, as depicted in Figure 4.1 by the line that goes through the sensebreaking and sensegiving actions. For the purposes of this study, catalytic events were defined as specific events that the individuals reported as pivotal in their identification journey. For the member, these events were part of the process as they

developed a sense of belonging to the church. Some of the types of events were repeated among the members, while some were only related to one participant. The effect of these events on their identification process, however, was the same.

Many of these events were organizationally initiated. In contrast to the church search, where the individual initiated the action and came to the church, many of these events were actions by the church. Yet all that the events had in common was that, in some way, the actions influenced the member to have a deeper sense of belonging and revealed to them a characteristic of the church. There were four main types of events: involvement in Hope Church's ministries and programs, being supported by Hope Church for their own ministry, a personal connection to the senior pastor, and the experiences of the members with the enacted claims themselves.

Catalytic event type 1: Involvement in Hope Church's ministries and programs. In this type of catalytic event, the participants described involvement within the church's ministries and programs as one of the events that connected them to the church. For some, what made involvement in the ministry significant was that they were specifically asked to serve or help out. One member reflected on his reluctance to be involved in the music ministry that the choir director asked him to be a part of:

> And I remember we were talking about, in choir rehearsal one evening we were talking about the difference in singing in unison and singing in harmony and I had no idea what that was until my wife was saying can you not hear that? Unison just sounds like one voice and then when you sing in harmonies, they are the different parts and I was like, it all sounds the same to me, it all sounds the same and I remember coming in one Sunday morning and I was sitting in, in the, I had put the prayer cards out and *I was just sitting in their while they were doing sound check and I said Lord I just, if this is where I'm supposed to be, if this is what I'm supposed to be doing can you please just give me some kind of sign or something and they had gone from unison to parts and at that moment, I heard the difference. And it almost brought me to tears that I was just like thank you Lord,*

> *that's you know that was just that, that affirmation or confirmation if you will* that you know I was, I was on the right path and I was learning to be obedient. [P21]

He described the result of his involvement as a sense of affirmation that he was in the right place and a sense of oneness with Hope Church. For another member, it was simply the presence of specific ministries and programs that were available to the members:

> I think, because we continued to come, we continued to get familiar with the people here, they were very friendly, they would have you know different like, *I think the women's ministry would have something and then the children's ministry,* so just different things to draw you into getting involved and so as my husband said once you're getting involved and you know people and of course that makes you feel even more comfortable coming here and we just, we just stayed. [P18]

Some members spoke of their involvement in programs in relationship to other churches that they attended that did not have them:

> That was an important factor you know at the time there was probably a more, kind of vibrant young adults program. I think it's kind of waxed and waned a little bit but, but having, *there's a lot of opportunities like that to connect that maybe other churches didn't have that we visited.* [P11]

Still another member suggested a similar event:

> *Right away, within three months or so of starting attending church regularly at [name], [name] was asked to help pick up some Hispanic families who didn't have transportation* and we didn't, both of us have had Spanish in high school but we didn't really speak Spanish, you know so he started making the drive out to the trailer park where these Spanish-speaking families lived and he would go pick them up and bring them in on Sundays and he said you know what, we're going to go and we're going to find some Spanish lessons and we're going to take Spanish and we're going to learn to talk to these people and get to know them, and so we started learning how to speak Spanish and we started going to the trailer park whenever there were activities involving the Hispanic [name], and we would go out there and participate and sometimes we would understand what was being said, and sometimes we wouldn't. [P14]

These participants spoke to common elements of the friendliness of the church and/or a sense of comfort by being involved in the various ministries as influential elements to their identification. In the last example, one of the members spoke of choosing to stay because of a program; in her case, the presence of the young adult program was the basis for keeping the family in the church, which would eventually find the wife identifying with the church.

Catalytic event type 2: Being supported by the church for their own personal ministry. For other participants, the catalytic event was a sense of *being supported* by Hope Church to do their own ministry that served to create a sense of connection to the church:

> You know, just living that and I think there are other, you know I think there are churches who voice that or it's in their mission statement or they would, they try you know they would say that they tried to do that and they can, it's just amazing to watch it happen at Hope Church. The other thing that to me is so cool, I mean there's so many people individually at Hope Church that are involved in just doing awesome work for the kingdom, outside the church, and you know like we are doing all this stuff with Rwanda, *I've got to tell you in this more traditional, huge, you know kind of upper middle-class Methodist Church, people thought we were crazy, they thought we had like you know a midlife crisis or something when we started doing all this work in Africa, it was highly unusual and you know at Hope Church we are just, we are just another couple that's just working to serve the Lord and follow the Holy Spirit* and I mean there are people better doing so much bigger, better staff then we do at Hope Church, so many people, you know? And that, that is so, it's such a blessing and that was something that we really felt comfortable with, connected to as opposed to coming into you know [the other church] uncomfortable or not connected to these people. [P12]

Another member described a similar event:

> *In other situations where we weren't happy with the church and everything, we just found another outlet to, but here we can fulfill our outlet through this church*. Whereas in other places like the prison ministry, our church wasn't doing anything and they would support us but they didn't, it was us, we had to establish our own nonprofit. And here, here we can do it through the church. They've said if you want to do prison ministry, we'll support you and you can use our, our

> organization. We wouldn't have to have a separate organization to do what God has put on our hearts to do. [P15]

Catalytic event type 3: Personal connection with the senior pastor. The members spoke of another type of catalytic event influencing their connection to the church: a personal *connection with the senior pastor*:

> One of the members came over and said, hey I noticed that you guys for new, Pastor John wanted to speak to you guys, but he's talking to somebody right now do you have just a couple of minutes*? And that really impressed me that you know A, you know he's recognized we had not really been here before and that he personally wanted to come over and speak to us, and that was one of the things I always wanted in a church no matter what the size was, I always thought it was important that I have a personal relationship with my pastor*, and for him to take the time to come over and introduce himself and welcome us to Hope Church, I was just like wow that's really cool. [P21]

Another member voiced a similar experience as it related to a connection with John:

> But, when ... John met with me, John and I went out to lunch the first month that we lived here and we just talked and you know he played baseball and I like baseball, and we started talking about baseball and then it was just, *he was so real and I thought this is a guy that's written these books and he speaks all over the world and he's hanging out with me and we're having lunch.* [P10]

Catalytic event type 4: Encounters with the identity claims. One of the ways the sensebreaking was seen within the identification process was the enacted values of the church. Some of the participants spoke of their encounter with the identity claims of Hope Church as a way of having their self-concept challenged. In this case, it involved the claim of economic diversity:

> *Economic diversity at Hope Church was a first for us* ... but in terms of the way we lived. You know actually getting to know people who are homeless, or who have extremely you know, limited, challenging economic situations, *and actually knowing them on a personal level was, it was really new for us at Hope Church.* [P12]

Another participant commented on the experience of encountering the value claim as a way of sensebreaking and sensegiving:

> *You know just the people that you interact with are going to be a lot different than you, you're going to have to you know, you're going to see homeless people out in the parking lot, and it's just, that's, that's your every Sunday is ...* You know wanting to interact with them, you know wanting to be friends with somebody that didn't grow up in [name] and have you know my exact same you know point of view. So that's you know, that's the great part of this church, but it's also the challenging part of the church for me. [P20]

Another member commented on encountering the claims as a part of the identification journey. In this case, it was the claim of multiethnicity:

> Since *becoming part of a multiethnic church and experiencing the values* that it has had for me (gaining a broader perspective on what the kingdom of God looks like, breaking stereotypes and helping me to connect and love others who are different than me better, etc.), i*t has been hard to imagine myself ever being a member of a church that was not multiethnic.* [P11]

One can see here the new experience of being within a multiethnic church functioned as a sensebreaking action that ultimately led to his sensemaking processes of how a church should look, as seen by his comment of not attending a monoethnic church again.

One individual combined the role of the teaching about multiethnicity and the interactions with other people of other ethnicities at Hope Church as the entry point into adopting the identity claim of multiethnicity as his own:

> *I think it's teaching* but I think it's also just *... walking through life with people* but it, it is that. I think it's, you know I'm, I really feel like I can see everybody now. I mean I recognize skin color *but I don't look at people as being different or have different thoughts about people now,* about you know skin color meaning something than I would have before. *So I think the teaching is part of it but I think it's just relationally,* you know just getting to know people and having relationships with people that it's, I mean that skin color really doesn't matter, you know? That wouldn't have, I don't think I would've thought that before. [P11]

Figure 4.2 adds the role of sensebreaking and sensegiving to the conceptual framework.

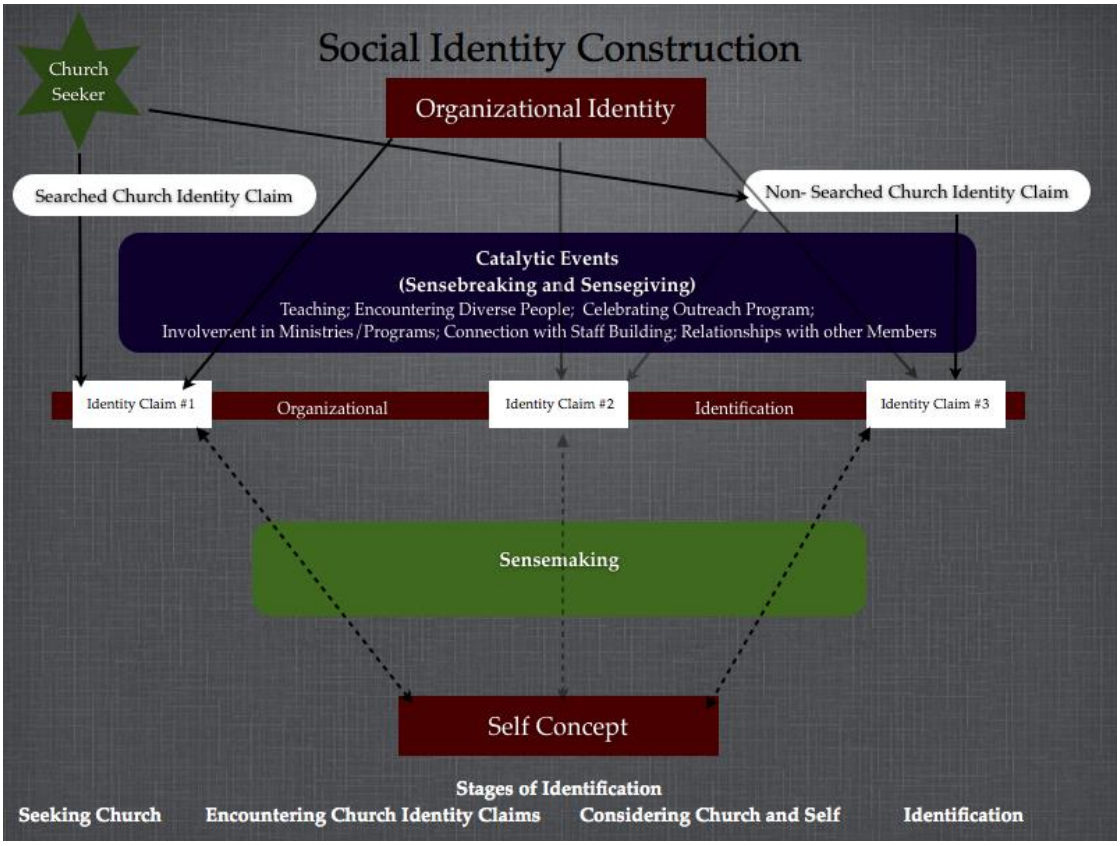

Figure 4.2. The emergence of identification over time for a new church member: Sensebreaking actions.

Participant's Search for a Church

Another part of the identification process that emerged was the participant's search for a church. This portion within the identification process as depicted in Figure 4.2 is the line that extends up from the seeker and bypasses the sensebreaking and sensegiving actions.

From interviews with church members, the search for a church to be their own or to call their "home church" emerged as the earliest phase of the identification process. One member described the following process:

> Well at the time we were searching for a church home, and we chose three different churches that we would go to and we chose to visit Hope Church first. *And we enjoyed it, we thoroughly enjoyed it and after service I said we don't have to look any further, we found our church home* ... We kind of was looking for a *church that was multiethnic*, nondenominational, not so much caught-up in you know the Baptist church of Christ, or any denominational backgrounds and, but just, church similar to Hope Church. [P18]

Most of the members visited other churches prior to coming to Hope Church. Nearly all of them reported planning to visit other churches after their visit to Hope Church. After coming to Hope Church for the first time, though, they did not return to other churches and their church search ended. As an example, one member explained:

> We started deciding which ones we wanted to visit and checked off you know, as we went and visited them and one of the things I noticed was they were mostly White churches and at the supermarket, that wasn't the case, and I thought there's a discrepancy between the culture, the population and the population in churches and I thought that's just not right. *And so I made a comment to [husband] and so he started searching more and came up on the Internet, Hope Church that, what they talked about and everything and so we decided we'd go and that was the end.* [P15]

These descriptions of the search for a home church and the rapid sense of belonging felt during their first experience with Hope Church were often attributed to the perceived similarity between the individual's values or sense of who they were as a person and what they thought the church represented and expressed, or its identity claims. Upon coming to Hope Church and seeing and experiencing the church, the members reported considering themselves a part of Hope Church and decided to begin the membership classes immediately. As an example, one member offered the following:

> So I began to ask her [wife] what do you think because we had in mind, and that's a good question Joel because we had in mind to visit a couple other churches we had in mind to go visit but once we came here that, after that service, and during that week we went home and even on the way home I just began to inquire with her what she thought about Hope Church ... we began to speak in agreement that yes this is the place we are we should stay ...[P09]

Interestingly, multiethnicity was the only organizational identity claim that any of the participants specifically mentioned searching for. As one member reported:

> So I started *Googling multiethnic churches when I was in Tokyo and I find this place called Hope Church* ...When my wife and I, we moved here from out of state and we had read about Hope Church online a little bit before we came, a*nd we were kind of drawn to the multiethnic you know aspect of the church* ...We moved here, to be fair we tried some other churches, *we walked in here and we were like this is absolutely it*. [P10]

Another said it this way:

> I had a job transfer here and we were, I was actually told about this, about Hope Church by a coworker in Iowa who had found the information online, knew I was moving here and knew what type of church I was looking for. A nondenominational is pretty much what I was looking for. I worked in the prison, I worked for a prison ministry and so you know, the experience of dealing so many races and so many church backgrounds of the inmates you know, I learned to be open and understand a lot of you know, diverse, diversity, and so that's what kind of church I was looking for because that's what actually we did a lot of church stuff in a prison so I loved that. So I wanted to actually go to a church that was like in the prison. [P16]

This member continued as she described the tension between her and her husband in choosing a church that was outside of her prerequisite of being diverse:

> It was a Baptist Church, a Black Baptist church that we been, you know that type of atmosphere we'd been used to for our whole lives, *and that's what, that was the thing we were really trying to step out of and step into something different* ... I just didn't fit, and so finally got to a point, I told my husband, hey man I love you but I can't go to church with you anymore. [P16]

The members expressed many reasons why they were seeking a church that represented multiple ethnicities. In some cases, the person had been exposed to a diverse

environment and sought that based on that experience. “I lived in California, and got used to being around people from all over the world, so I was looking for a congregation that was like that when I move back to Little Rock in 2003” [P17]. Another couple who worked overseas for many years stated:

> You know just after spending so much time in Africa, you know to come home and sit in a worship service with a bunch of White people in suits and ties just really felt weird to us, you know? [P12]

Another member who now serves as a primary volunteer offered an example of how his past experiences with people from many different ethnicities influenced both the church search and identification process:

> So long story short, in Australia we went to a church in Melbourne, we lived in Melbourne, a*nd it was ethnically diverse and we just loved that*, and then we moved to Tokyo ... my wife, she said you know I’m in Bible study with women from obviously Japan, Russia, Fiji you know, Germany, and she said we have nothing in common ... So I *started Googling multiethnic churches* when I was in Tokyo. [P10]

For some of the participants, the church search on multiethnicity was based on a desire that they had never experienced, i.e., the absence of an aspect of a church that they had not experienced that they now wanted to be identified with:

> So I didn’t have a lot of interaction with African-American students and I had a lot of preconceived ideas and so having the opportunity to get to know African-Americans just as fellow believers, *wanting to serve and worship together and be part of the same church, that was a new experience for me and I realized that God is so much bigger than my little world that I had you know lived in up until that point,* and so you know God opened up through a lot of different ways and one of the ways was *we had members from different countries* and so they would have opportunities to pray in their native language and so just the idea of God being God of all of these people and all of these countries, and God knows all of those languages. So that, that was a big idea to me at the time and my view of God expanded so much, and then coming to understand that again, my understanding of God was based on who I was and the churches I had gone to growing up and the communities that I had lived in and *that there are different aspects to God that I had never experienced before.* [P14]

While multiethnicity was the only identity claim actually searched for, several other participants mentioned that the other identity claims of economic diversity and community outreach were important to them prior to coming to Hope Church. However, they did not specifically state searching for them. These enacted claims, though not searched for by the participants, served to influence the participant's identification process in a manner similar to the searched-for claims. For example, many members highlighted the importance of community outreach in their initial impressions of the church and their sense of belonging:

> And I have found that Hope Church lines up with a lot of things that I believe ... I've *always believed in helping people*, I have the gift of helps to a fault, I go out of my way to help people so, *reaching out to the community* and help you know, Tuesday we've got The Orchard, *we serve so many people*, so those are the kind of things that I naturally or already believe in and so it just kind of lines up. [P13]

The church's community outreach drew people with a desire for this type of activity as an expression of their church, and when they saw it happening, it affirmed their decision to join:

> No, we have always been hands-on, we *believe in getting out and doing ministry*, not in ministry, not just inside the church but outside the church and we began to observe all the things that are going on here and all the *various ministries that really touched the community or impacted the community* and we began to serve with The Orchard, which is our Tuesday, we serve the community with our, with the homeless and the economically diverse people that have need for food assistance and stuff like that ... *So we just got in and got our hands busy and because of all the ministry areas, the ministries that seem to fit where God had brought us to, it made us feel confident that this is where we should be.* [P09]

In all of these cases, the members were either looking for a particular kind of church (multiethnic) prior to coming to Hope Church or had the other claims (economic diversity or community outreach) as something important to them prior to coming to Hope Church and had read about the claims prior to coming, "We felt like can't believe we're actually in a place like this that we had read about" [P10].

Sensemaking

The final stage prior to identification was the sensemaking stage. This is the stage where individuals put together the whole of their experiences of either the searched-for identity claim that was already present in their self-concept or their collective experiences of the catalytic events (sensebreaking and sensegiving). Essentially, individuals begin to think about how they are connecting to the church, what kind of church they should attend, and ultimately why these particular identity claims were important. What emerged from this study concerning the sensemaking processes was not necessarily the questions being asked in this stage but more so the influence on the answers to those questions. Figure 4.3 adds the process of sensemaking to the conceptual framework.

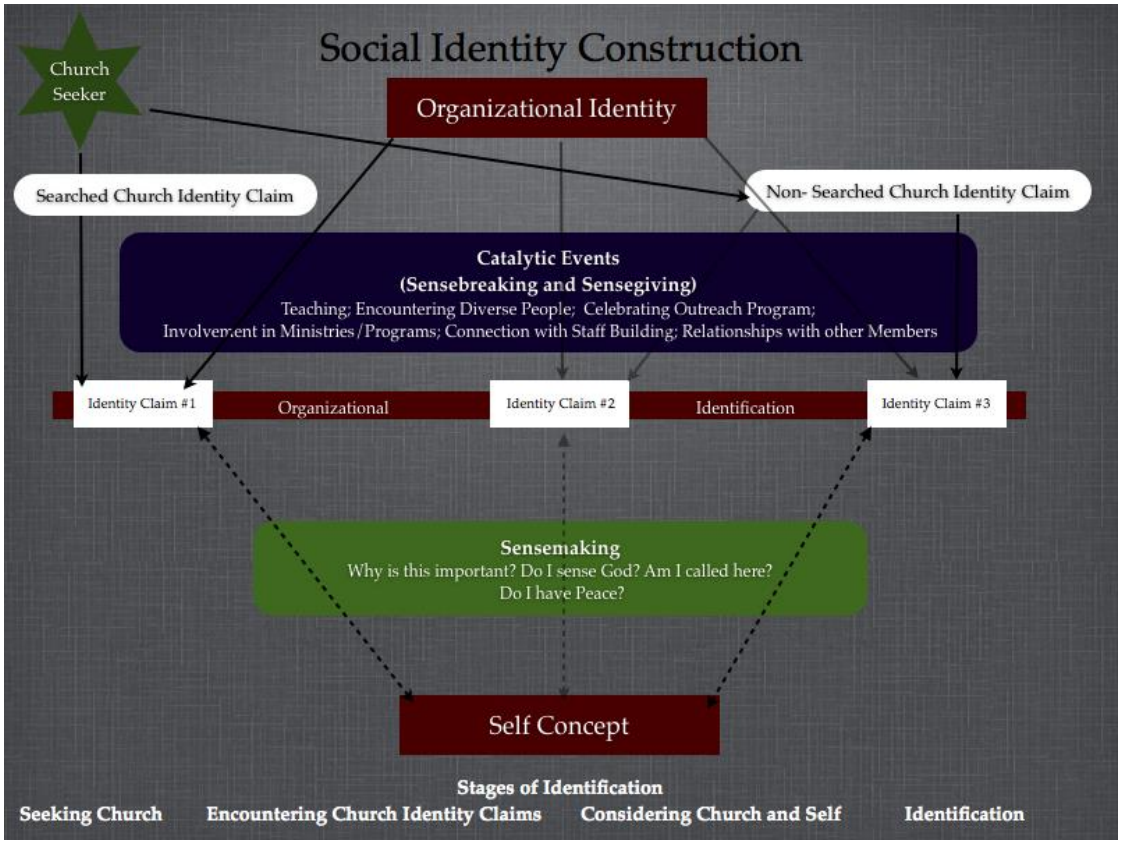

Figure 4.3. The emergence of identification over time for a new church member: Sensemaking actions.

Faith and Sensemaking

The primary influence that emerged on this portion of the identification process as interviewees answered those kinds of questions was the individual's faith. This portion of the identification process is represented by the gold diamond around the oval of sensemaking. This gold diamond is labeled as "faith." In this study, faith emerged as the presence of a divine being that speaks and leads people into courses of action and can manifest its presence in a generic sense as well.

Faith played the pivotal role for many and a primary role for others. For some, it was pivotal in that individuals expressed being "called" to Hope Church. These members spoke of a spiritual element and a sense of God's leading or a sense of God's presence in their decision to stay and join Hope Church. This idea of faith and God's leading was key to why they chose to become a part of the Hope Church community:

> So I began to ask her [wife] ... do you believe this is a place where God may be sent us? . . .That second Sunday we came back and I just became more and more sure that this is the place that God has for us and we never made it to the other churches. [P09]

He went on to speak of the supernatural element:

> Our hearts where we were, then it came up again in the Spirit and as it came up in the Spirit we began to check it out and ask around and of course, through time we showed up here and after the first time we showed up we just [stayed]. [P09]

The role of faith was described as events that were initiated by God Himself. Members expressed a sense of peace as they had faith in God and as their own sense of fitting within Hope Church:

> *I kept coming back and one day this peace just came over me*. There was [an internal] debate, should I go to this other church, should I keep continue looking, where does God want me, where would I fit? I would love to be here, but where

> would God want me to be ... what settled it in my mind was that peace coming over me and saying get involved. I said okay. [P17]

Often that peace was contrasted with experiences at the other churches the member had visited:

> I mean like I said we had visited a couple of other churches but a lot of it ... just ultimately, it was just, there was a peace between the both of us so that the other churches did not, we did not experience that and just I think, you kind of get that to join or not to join kind of [peace]. [P11]

For others it simply became a sense of God's presence, not necessarily a specific feeling that provided the guidance:

> So I would say in that case I would say well you know when we joined Hope Church we were feeling like we were stagnant at our previous church and some friends asked us to visit Hope Church with them and we did and that Sunday, just like I told you actually, *I just felt this overwhelming sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit.* [P14]

For these members, this feeling was both God Himself and ultimately gave the reason to join the church: "Like I said, this feeling about the Holy Spirit, you could cut it with a knife. I've never felt that in my life, really in any church. So for us it was a pretty easy, and we were in, we were in right away" [P10]. He continued speaking of the sense of feeling God's presence serving as the sign that they had found their church home:

> Well, the first thing was, and this is, you'll hear this often but I remember [wife's name] crying at the first service ... And I think when we left the first time, we got in the car and I said we don't have to go to any other places, you know we just, we just knew it. [P10]

Other members expressed their sense of God's presence in this way, "This [experience at Hope Church] was fairly new and I felt, I felt God" [P13]. Whether or not the individual was able to use specific words to describe the experience or described it in more general terms, letting their expressed emotions speak for them, the element of faith

and the sense of God's leading was key in their identification process with Hope Church. Figure 4.4 now includes the influence of faith within the actions of sensemaking in the conceptual framework.

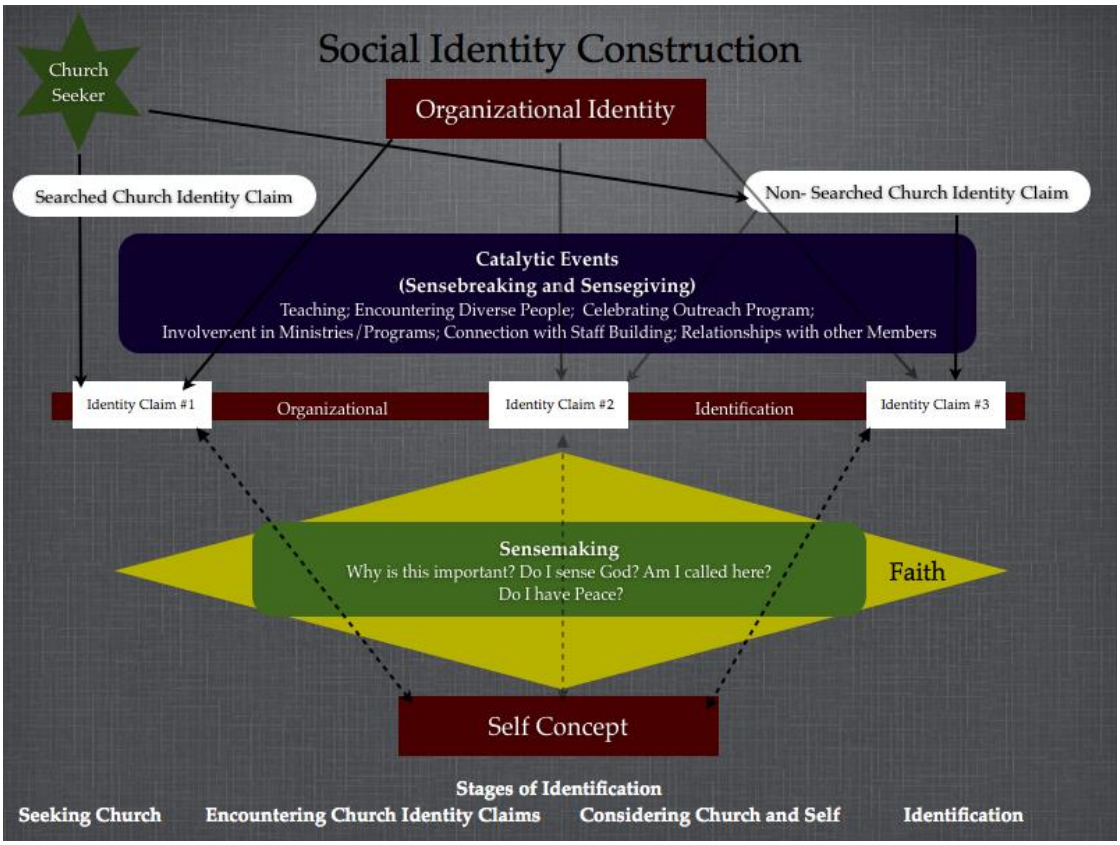

Figure 4.4. The emergence of identification over time for a new church member: Faith.

Catalytic Events that Hindered Identification

In contrast to the catalytic events that facilitated identification, some members reported some catalytic events that hindered their own identification process. Some of the members reported that their identification process took some time to develop due to some negative catalytic events. One reported negative catalytic event was *past church hurt* or disappointments: "She asked me what I thought about it, you know, and I said it was

great, I really enjoyed it. You know, I really, really enjoyed it, and I thought it was really a place that I wanted to come back to, but I still was struggling with that past church hurt" [P22]. For others the negative event was a distrust of a church: "I had a major issue with trust. I didn't trust church people, you know? I thought church people were extremely judgmental. I thought they were extremely hypocritical and so I didn't trust church people" [P21].

However, for one member, the spouse became a barrier to her identification process. The member describes this situation:

> Participant: "So anyway, we came here, moved here, we went to Hope Church for six months, my husband wanted to do a little church shopping."
> Researcher: "Okay."
> P: "I was satisfied but you know, keep peace at home, I went to church shopping with him. We visited a few churches and you know they were pretty traditional and we ended up at a church that was very, you know a traditional church, we stayed there about [crosstalk]"
> R: "By traditional church what do you mean?"
> P: "It was a Baptist Church, a Black Baptist Church that we been, you know that type of atmosphere we'd been used to for our whole lives, and that's what, that was the thing we were really trying to step out of and step into something different. So, I didn't connect their with anybody, I didn't make, I made like one friend and didn't get involved in any activities, any, anything there, I just didn't fit, and so finally got to a point, I told my husband, hey man I love you but I can't go to church with you anymore."
> R: "Was he happy there?"
> P: "He tried to make himself fit [at the other church], he was determined to fit and he didn't fit there and so I said I'm going to go to Hope Church, new people here and it's just immediately, the first day I stepped back in here, so many people that I knew and that, that was it"
> R: "Did he come with you that day?"
> P: "He came back and she's very involved here ...." [P16]

In either case, what was apparent was that the individual's identification process was hindered by an external force, outside of Hope Church and outside of themselves. These were catalytic events just as the others, but rather than move the individual into a closer sense of connection to the organization, they kept them away. They were also more

closely connected with the member's sensemaking processes, as these negative events had nothing to do with any organizational actions taken or facilitated by Hope Church. As presented in Figure 4.5, this section references the one rectangle feeding into the member's sensemaking process. This rectangle represents the negative catalytic events that hinder/weaken member identification.

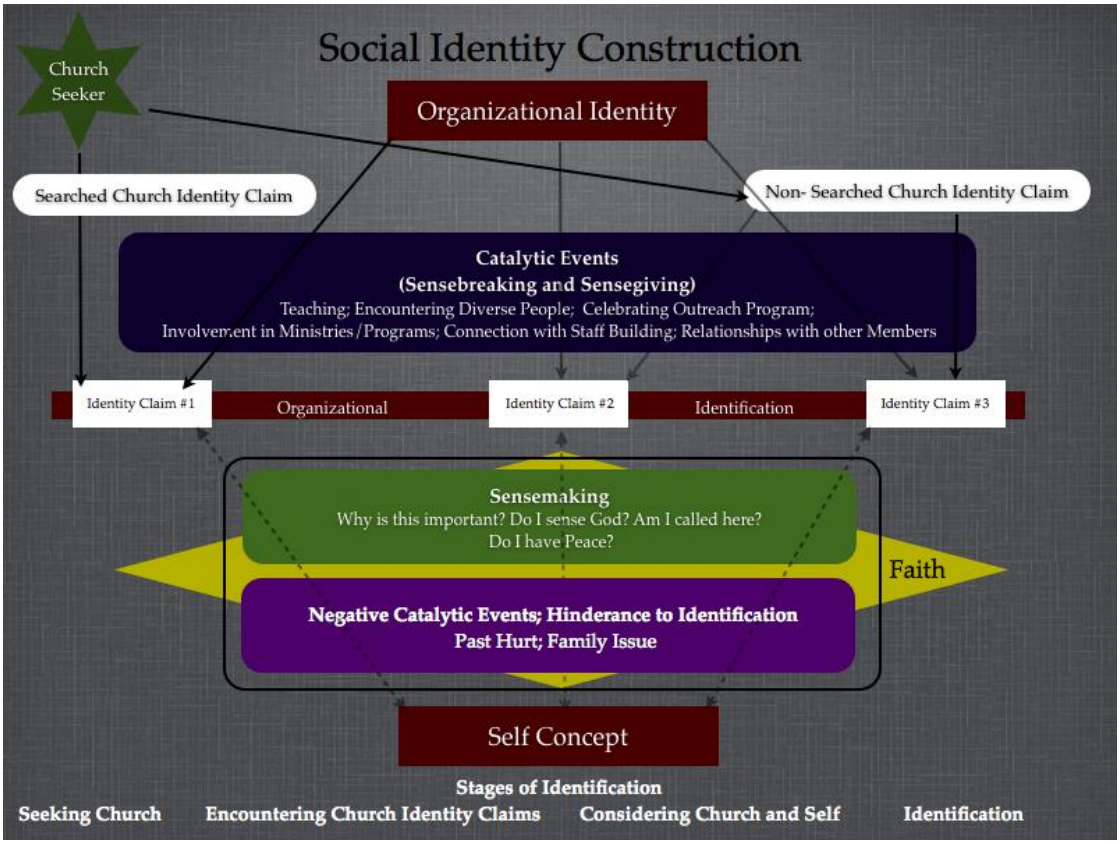

Figure 4.5. The emergence of identification over time for a new church member: Negative catalytic events.

The Role of Multiple Identity Claims

In the interviews with members, an understanding of and an identification with all three of Hope Church's identity claims (i.e., multiethnic, economic diversity, and community outreach) emerged as they described their process of becoming one with or

belonging to the church. The participants spoke of their identification in two ways: one to Hope Church as a whole and then secondly to the claims specifically. When identification was spoken of, Hope Church as a whole was often referenced in terms of connection or relationship to each other, "If you come here, you have to be willing to love everybody and to share a loving relationship with the membership" [P09], or a general vision of the church, "It's very important for us to be a member here because we both fully agree with the vision of Hope Church" [P14]. This conversation was easy to target, as the member spoke of his or her close connection to Hope Church as a general whole (people, programs, values, claims, etc.). No specific process seemed to emerge here, but the concept of the general connection to a general group of people and an organization was apparent.

Yet, the conversation took on a different tone and feel when it focused on members' identification to specific claims. Thus, another nuance in the identification process, beyond experiencing the searched-for organizational identity claim, was the individual's identification with those other identity claims. Quickly emerging was the picture of an identification process being influenced by the presence of multiple identity claims.

Even though many of the participants found Hope Church in the midst of a church search that looked for a church with a specific identity claim or set of claims, what they found in Hope Church was a place that also enacted other identity claims beyond the specific identity claim(s) they were searching for. The participants spoke of their identifying with some of Hope Church's identity claims even though they may have not searched for all of them:

> *I was not necessarily looking for ethnic diversity* but I was looking for a place where I felt comfortable, you know where I felt like, I guess I was looking for a sense of belonging ... and of course having grown up in a very ethnically diverse family, *I never really thought about an ethnically diverse church,* because I had only grown up in church with Black people. So, you know I thought it was pretty cool that I now was part of a body of believers that you know were represented from so many different nations, you know so many other people who were truly my neighbors, you know that didn't look like me. [P21]

Another member shared his identification with one claim, economic diversity, that was not one with which he had experience nor an initial intention of looking for:

> For a while it was, kind of how do I avoid these [homeless] people and I don't want to you know, I don't really want to talk to, I'd rather just keep to myself but, you know I think as, as God helped the vision kind of grow in me I find myself, even though it's still uncomfortable, really wanting to engage people, wanting to get to know people that aren't like me. [P20]

The data began to reveal that many of the members spoke of identification with all the claims, yet they often did not describe their connection to all claims equally. For example, one member spoke differently about the identity claim of community outreach than the other two claims of multiethnicity and economic diversity. This excerpt is from a Spanish member of the congregation:

> Researcher: If I were able to take something away from Hope Church that would then cause Hope Church to no longer be Hope Church ...
> Participant: [Spanish translation] [Spanish response] She said it would be to separate the cultures. If you separate the cultures, then Hope Church wouldn't be Hope Church.
> R: How would that make her feel?
> P: [Spanish translation] [Spanish response] She said she'd feel bad and that she'd feel left out.
> R: If all of the cultures were separated, would she stay here?
> P: [Spanish translation] [Spanish response] Possibly, yes.
> R: Possibly, why possibly?
> P: [Spanish translation] [Spanish response] She says that you know until now, she has you know been okay, but she's been able to feel good and that she's very grateful for the American culture here it's been provided for.
> R: Yes, if all of a sudden everybody that came in here was very rich, and there was no longer economic diversity, would she stay?

> P: [Spanish translation] [Spanish response] She says yes.
> R: And if the church removed all of its outreach programs, and didn't do anything for the community, would she stay?
> P: [Spanish translation] [Spanish response] No. She says that what—that's what makes Hope Church, Hope Church. You know, they can, they can reach out and serve straight to the cultures and communities and stuff. [P19]

In this passage, a member noted she did not experience the same level of identification with all of the claims. The claim of community outreach was critical in her decision to stay as a member of the church; without it, she would leave. She did not communicate a strong connection to the economic diversity claim, but did feel a strong connection to the multiethnic claim, in that she reported a break of belonging or oneness to Hope Church and said she would feel left out if the multiethnic identity claim was not enacted. However, she would choose to stay a part of the church.

Another member, an elder (nonstaff but a pivotal role within the governmental structure of church), in discussing the three different claims, spoke of community outreach as the one claim that was the fabric of the church, more so than the other claims (specifically the multiethnic claim):

> Yeah, I mean I'd love to say that I'm so involved with all the outreach but that would just change everything but you know truthfully that's, that's not a huge part of who I am or what I'm involved in. I mean obviously it means a lot to me that, that that's the heart of the church and you know it, it would definitely, it would change my perspective of the church, you know it would sort of be like, *I mean to me that's such a fabric of the church. I mean I would say more than race, more than diversity, I would say the outreach of the church is really what makes it Hope Church.* [P20]

The importance of one particular identity claim in a member's decision to stay or leave the church was also described in the following passage, as one member spoke of his and his wife's decision to move to another church:

> Participant: I just remember probably our first year here, like Christmas time or something my wife and I we were having a discussion, it was one of those things, it was like Christmas weekend and we're missing family because we're here and just kind of talking about what's next for us and I remember kind of having a little, little argument about because *my wife is like this 100% you know we can never go to another church that's different than this* because this is just the way you do it you know, and I said well, and I was probably wasn't 100% sold at the time and I said yeah, I think it's great, but what if, you know what if God calls me to work at another church that's all White somewhere or whatever you know, are we going to be 100% definite that we can never go to a church like this?
> Researcher: You know what, what did, what were the factors that brought you from it's a cool idea, I can take it or leave it, to there's no way I could ever not do.
> P: *Yeah. I would say I mean I guess any time that we've, we've ever visited a church like if we're back home or something and where it is all White or all Black or whatever I mean it just, there's something about it just doesn't sit right with yo*u ... Because, because we've seen it the other way and because we feel like ultimately this is what heaven will be like. [P11]

One member, when speaking of economic diversity (if it were removed) responded this way:

> Participant: I've got to get out of here [laugh], time to go, when is this going to be over. You know, there's just a stuffiness there, you know most likely there's a lot of you know racism and just, they're no better, they're probably worse off than you know the church you just talked about it doesn't do any outreach.
> Researcher: Unpack that for me, what do you mean by that? Why, I mean why do you think they're no better in that way?
> P: Because they are, they live in the small world, they live in a box and they are not bringing people to Christ in their you know, they're just in those four walls and they're not experiencing or they are not being obedient to what we've been you know, if instructed to do, they're missing out on the joy of serving, serving God in a way that he, he has told us to do. [P16]

This participant placed the value on economic diversity more than the others. Yet again, what was conveyed was the need to leave when this one particular claim was not expressed. Another member suggested the same idea, leaving if one of the claims was removed, only this time it was on the issue of outreach:

> I probably would not continue to attend. I'd be, we'd be like well, I guess it's time to, I guess our time was up here and we can move on and see what else we, where else we could, where we could grow and continue to flourish. [P16]

The finding that emerged was a bifurcated sense of identification that hinged on the multiple identity claims: one of three identity claims held a status of primary identification and the other two held a status of secondary identification. Figure 4.6 depicts this process. As described by the participants, the claim holding a primary identification became the deciding factor on whether or not the participant stayed at Hope Church. The two claims that held a secondary identification were negotiable for the participant. While they valued these secondary claims and spoke of the importance of these claims, their connection was not as strong to them as it was to the other claim. In the presence of multiple identity claims in this church context, the identification process for participants (or prospective church members) was one in which all claims shaped their attachment, with one exerting stronger influence on the final decision to join or to stay (once they have joined). Ultimately, the member created a hierarchy of claims that defined their identification to the church. Participants varied in terms of which specific identity claim held the status of primary identification, e.g., X or Y.

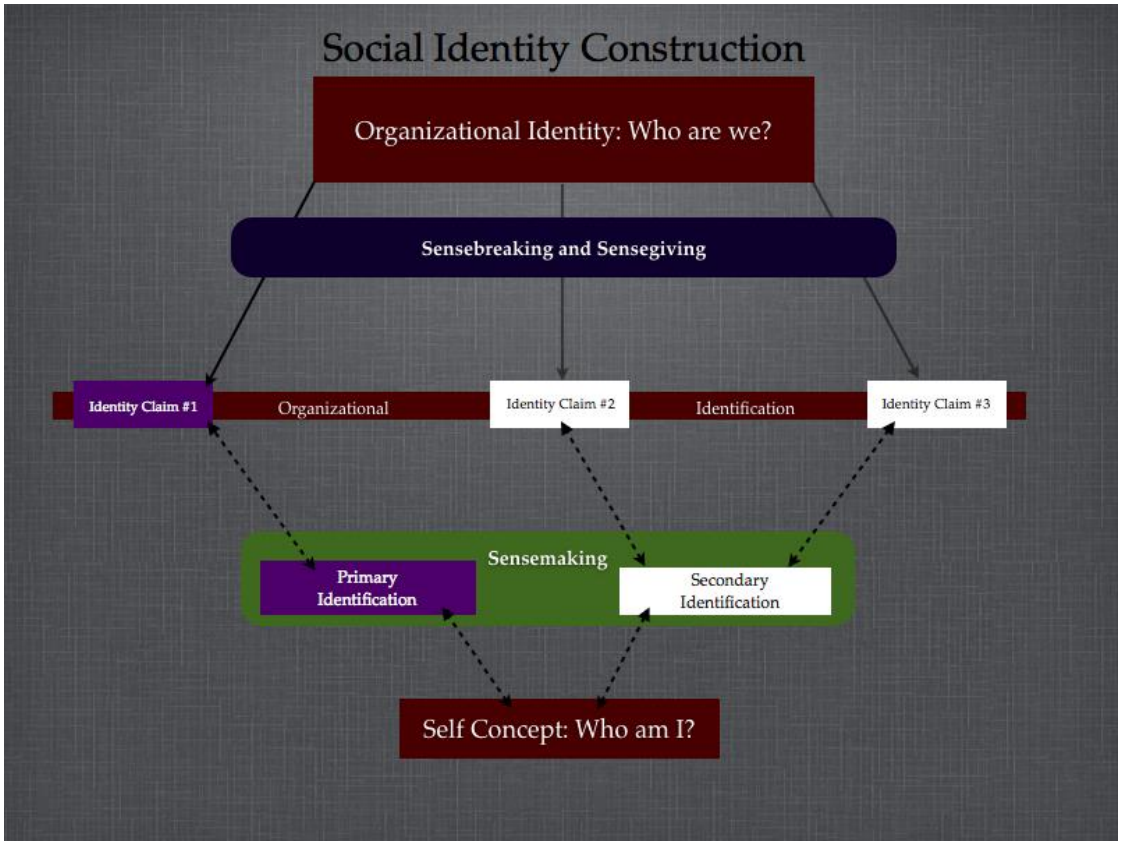

Figure 4.6. Identification and the participant's hierarchy of multiple identity claims.

Scriptural Roots Within Participant Identification to the Identity Claims

What emerged from the participants' discussion on the organizational identity claims was the use of scripture. In order to display this emphasis within the identification process map, a gold diamond is the backdrop for the three identity claims. This gold diamond represents the manner in which members spoke of the claims in their attraction to the church; specifically, it represents the ontological underpinnings of why Hope Church was multiethnic, economically diverse, and committed to reaching out the community.

Throughout the study, many participants referred to multiethnicity in a similar way. This specific participant's response is an example of how the participants, as a whole, thought of multiethnicity in terms of visually seeing multiethnicity expressed in their church and its connection to the message of the Gospel: "That people would, you know, would see that the gospel's true because of what they see visually [in the church]" [P11]. They spoke of multiethnicity in its importance, "Hope Church's position or footprint in the community, or helping the people in the community, is much greater than a lot of the traditional homogeneous churches in the community" [P18]. And, ultimately, they spoke of multiethnicity different in its foundational roots, "If he [Jesus] had intended for the church to be monoethnic and that's what he would have left us, you know, but that's not what he left us; he made the church multiethnic" [P21]. Members and staff also described/framed the multiethnic vision as heavenly: "You want to experience something [church] that, that is like what heaven will feel like" [P11] or "If we can experience just a slice of what heaven's going to be like here [church experience], why wouldn't you do that, and I think that's right, that's kind of how I explain it" [P10]. This language was used when the members talked about how they spoke about Hope Church to their family members: "I say we found a great church, it's multiethnic, and it really reflects what we're going to see in heaven and we couldn't have found a better church" [P15].

Another theme that emerged within the study was that many members also asserted that Hope Church, as a multiethnic church, represented God's desire of how His church should exist. For example, one member explained: "I count it [a part of Hope Church] as an opportunity to really experience on earth what God's church is supposed to look like. . . . This was a true picture of what God's church would look like" [P21].

In many cases, the same member would report a different answer of leaving Hope Church or staying at Hope Church depending on which of the different identity claims would be present or removed. Take, for example, this member when asked what would happen if Hope Church no longer was multiethnic but kept the other two identity claims of economic diversity and community outreach: "I don't think I would stay, simply because again I think Hope Church is just a true picture of what God intended his church to look like" [P21]. For this member, her leaving was not just based on Hope Church being multiethnic, but her view that being multiethnic was God's intention.

Spiritual language was also, at times, used for the claim of community outreach. "I understand that local churches can be very different from one another in terms of how they do ministry, yet God's heart throughout scripture for the 'least of these' is evidently clear over and over again" [P19]. Another member, when talking about outreach, spoke of it as simply a sign of a disciple of Christ. In this member's statement, outreach was viewed as what they were supposed to do:

> The church is supposed to be in the community. *We're supposed to reach people, you know we're supposed to be disciples for Christ* ... I think it's our responsibility is to not only reach those who are I unreached inside the church but it's also our responsibility to go beyond the walls of the church and reach those in our communities. [P21]

Interestingly, even though this member [P21] used similar language of a "prescribed" kind of church, like she did with multiethnicity earlier, she said she would leave if multiethnicity were removed, but would stay if economic diversity or community outreach were removed.

A few participants spoke of economic diversity in similar ways. One member responded this way when he was asked if economic diversity was not present within a

church, “I feel that the church is missing a critical part of loving and serving Jesus, which compromises its effectiveness” [P13]. This participant equated a church’s love for Jesus and serving Jesus Himself with the church’s connection to the poor. Figure 4.7 integrates the role of scriptural roots into the conceptual framework.

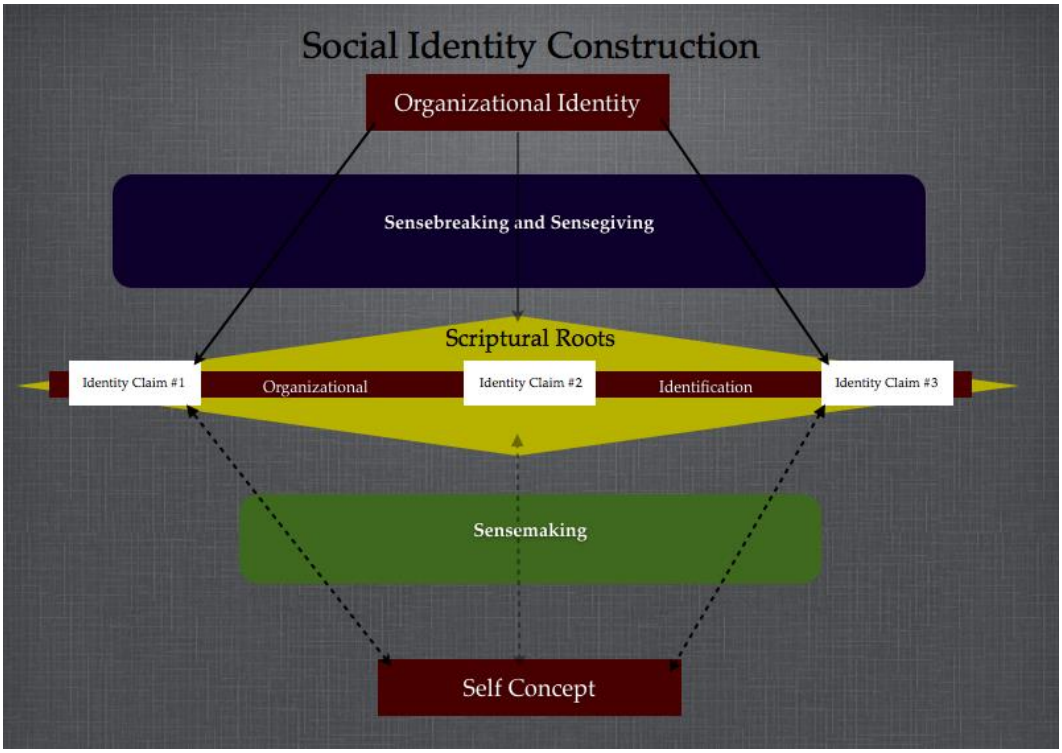

Figure 4.7. Scriptural roots.

Summary

This study found that the participants engaged in an identification process that was hierarchical in nature. The participants spoke of their identification in two ways: (1) to Hope Church as a whole and (2) to the claims specifically. The members reported a primary identification to some of the claims and a secondary identification to the remaining claims. The member’s initial church search was the guiding connection to their primary identification. The search for a church also connected to the rapid sense of

belonging felt during their first experience with Hope Church. This rapid sense of identification was attributed to the perceived similarity between the individual's values or sense of who they were as a person and what they thought the church represented and expressed.

The role of organizational sensebreaking and sensegiving found its role in the identification process as it related to catalytic events. Here, the participants encountered specific organizationally initiated events that were pivotal in their identification journey. The specificity of these events varied by member, but the theme of encountering Hope Church's identity claims remained constant.

Finally, the role of faith in an individual's sensemaking process was seen to influence the identification process. Faith played the pivotal role for many and a primary role for others. For some, it was pivotal, in that individuals expressed being "called" to Hope Church. These members spoke of a spiritual element and a sense of God's leading or a sense of God's presence in their decision to stay and join Hope Church. This idea of faith and God's leading was key to why they chose to become a part of the Hope Church community.

CHAPTER 5:

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The purpose of this research study was to examine the organizational identification process in relationship to how a member identifies with the specific organizational identity claims in an organization in which he or she is a member. The primary research question that guided the study was: "How does organizational identification emerge over time in a multiethnic organization with multiple identity claims?" A subquestion within this study was, "What is the role of multiple identity claims in the identification process?" The context for the qualitative case study was a church in Little Rock, Arkansas. This church was founded 12 years ago with the intention of being intentionally multiethnic, economically diverse, and outreach focused to their community. Practically speaking, the study had two specific purposes: first, to understand how identification emerged over time and, secondly, to understand the role of multiple identity claims as it related to the identification process. Qualitative evidence was gathered through observations, documents, and interviews of staff members and nonstaff members.

When considering the conceptual framework of the study, the social actor perspective (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006) served as the framework for understanding organizational identity, i.e., that which is central, enduring, and distinctive to the organization. Organizational identity was defined as "the perception of oneness or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21). This conceptualization of organizational identification anchored the study, and social identity

theory according to Tajfel and Turner (1986) and Stets and Burke (2005) served as the foundation for the role of self-concept:

> The set of meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves . . . [that] is based on our observations of ourselves, our inferences about who we are, based on how others act towards us, our wishes, our desires, and our evaluations of ourselves. (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 5)

Together, these three constructs—organizational identity, organizational identification, and social identity formation—served as the frame for the purpose and structure of the study.

This chapter first presents a summary of the primary and secondary findings and interprets these findings in relationship to the research questions and the theoretical and empirical literature on organizational identification. Next, conclusions are offered, followed by a discussion of the theoretical and empirical contributions of the study for organizational identification theory and research. Finally, implications for theory, research, and practice are addressed.

Primary Findings and Interpretations

Overall, the study produced one primary finding and two secondary findings that related to the issue of identification. The primary finding was that, as organizational identification emerged, participants responded to a set of multiple identity claims in a hierarchical manner. This resulted in the participants emerging with a primary identification to one of the organizational claims and a secondary identification to the reminder of the organizational claims. The exact order of hierarchy of claims differed for the various participants. Secondary findings were that the search for a church based on

identity claims affected the timeframe for identification and the presence of faith had a significant influence on the identification process.

Primary Finding: Role of Multiple Identity Claims

The primary finding of the study is rooted in discovering the influence of multiple identity claims in relationship to organizational identification; principally, how do members identify with certain claims differently than others? With reference to this question, the study found that the participants' identification process resulted in identification with the various claims differently.

New Insights: Multiple Identity Claims

This study found that individuals' identification varied from claim to claim, with some participants identifying with one claim more than another as certain claims held a primary identification and other claims held a secondary identification. The role of the multiple identity claims in the organizational identification process has not been fully addressed in the literature. The definition of organizational identification used for this study is the most commonly found definition in identification literature and is as follows, "The perception [of an individual] of oneness or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21). With this seminal definition in mind, organizational identification literature has viewed identification as a connection to the organization as a whole (Jones & Volpe, 2011; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Dutton et al., 1994; Watts, 2010). Little research has explored the different organizational identity claims as individual points of identification. An assumption of this study was that the organizational identification process is more complex and that organizational members

may identify with claims differently. While research has shown that many organizations across multiple industries espouse and enact multiple identity claims (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Brickson, 2005; Foreman & Whetten 2002), the process by which members identify with multiple claims is still an open topic waiting for new insights (B. Ashforth, personal communication, September 3, 2013).

The finding of primary and secondary identification to certain claims over others gave evidence, in part, to the participants' organizational identification process emerging into a hierarchical set of identity claims—specifically, in how one or two of the claims were more meaningful than others at different stages of the identification process. How the participants spoke about the different identity claims differed depending on which identity claim they were discussing. Some members spoke of some claims with a sense of frustration at being in churches in the past without that specific claim. Other members connected certain claims with past experiences and fondness.

A prominent feature of participant descriptions was the use of spiritual language and scripture to articulate the identity claims and to describe their own personal connection to these claims. For example, multiethnicity was often framed in a way that suggested that churches in general should be multiethnic. Furthermore, multiethnicity was described as the prescriptive way the Bible suggests for church. The members made sense of the multiethnicity as the prototype of what "God's church" would and should be, and it was often spoken of as a "picture of heaven" or "what heaven looks like." To reinforce this belief, the participant would use scripture to highlight the importance of the multiethnic claim. In some cases, such as the discussion around economic diversity, a few of the participants would speak of "loving people," having an inferred sense of scriptural

foundation; in the case of community outreach, "God's command" was to go and impact their surrounding areas.

When a member highlighted one claim over the other in the identification process, he or she often referred to that claim in light of scripture. This use of holy scripture became a primary aspect of sensemaking in relationship to participants' perception of the claims and their identification with them. This aspect of sensemaking is essential to understanding the individual's identification as it relates to one claim versus the others. For the individual and the church, scripture is the bedrock for the sensemaking processes, and the rooting of this claim in scripture would trump any kind of reasoning. Consequently, when one of the claims is associated with this bedrock and not the others, this claim becomes more significant to the participant in the identification process. If one believes that the Bible does, in fact, give this kind of emphasis on these claims and if one believes that the Bible is an ultimate authority, then how can the member not identify with a church holding this claim? Moreover, how could the member not elevate this organizational identity claim higher than the others if the other organizational identity claims (those not given this emphasis by the individual participants) are not given this kind of connection to scriptural authority?

Secondly, identification to one claim over another was seen when participants spoke of the importance of the claim in their decision to join the church and also to remain as members in the church. In many cases, if one claim were removed, the member would respond by saying he or she would still stay. If a different claim were removed, that produced a response of leaving Hope Church. This kind of response reflects a hierarchy of identification to the identity claims, i.e., some claims are more critical to

their identification (primary identification) over the other claims (secondary identification). Moreover, the participants also noted the potential decision to leave if some of the claims were no longer expressed while the others remained.

New Insights: Coherence of Identity Claims

While participants' responses reflected a hierarchy of identification to the individual claims, they also perceived the claims to be coherently aligned. This is an important point as it relates to findings regarding primary and secondary identification. Had the claims been overtly competitive in nature, the assumption is that the participants would need to choose certain claims over the others. Another assumption is that if the organization was divided in how these claims were expressed and enacted, the member would be influenced in which claims would become a primary or secondary identification. However, because the individuals saw these claims, in a variety of combinations, as a coherent set, the participant identified with the organization as a whole. For identification literature, this finding of participants seeing the identity claims as coherent is a new insight.

Although the issue of identification with multiple identity claims has not been widely researched, findings to date are similar. Specifically, members in organizations with competitive multiple identity claims tend to identify with one claim over the other (Pratt & Corley, 2007; Glynn, 2000; Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997). These studies emphasize the hierarchy of claims that attract members' attention. The findings of this study suggest two clear departures from past research. First, this study found that the members identified with all of the claims promoted by the organization. Second, the claims were presented by the organization in a coherent manner.

In prior studies (Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997; Glynn, 2000), participants were not found to have identified with the two primary organizational identity claims. The participants' roles in the organization positioned them to identify with one claim over another. In this study, participants identified with all the claims, as the claims for Hope Church were not overtly expressed or enacted in a contradictory manner. In actuality, at Hope Church the claims were expressed in a complementary way. Therefore, the members were able to identify with all of the claims because they saw all of the claims as equally important to the church and coherent with each other. It seems logical that if a member perceives the identity claims as contradictory and his/her role in the organization is primarily to enact a particular claim, then an identification will form around that claim.

Additionally, the findings from these studies asserted that competing claims positioned the member to have to choose to identify with one claim over the other. When past research has explored multiple identity claims, it generally has viewed the claims through the lens of competing claims. Within this competing identity claim framework, studies (Glynn, 2000; Pratt & Corley, 2007; Biddle & Rao, 1997) found how some members were forced to perform organizational actions that seemed contradictory to another members' actions. Specifically, the member saw their organizational actions in direct contrast to their fellow member's organizational actions. This contradiction was found, in part, due to their organizational roles and actions centering around a certain organizational identity claim that was perceived as contradictory to another claim. Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of organizational identity suggests a congruent or coherent set of claims that are positive to the organization in its nature. However, the more recent studies (Glynn, 2000; Pratt & Corley, 2007; Biddle & Rao, 1997; Besharov,

2014) assert that the organizational identity claims, when viewed from member perspectives, appear to be in competition with each other. Brickson (2005) found that sometimes two distinct claims are not inherently competitive. Different groups may interact with those claims very differently, thus creating different perceptions of those claims.

Yet, at Hope Church, the claims were not viewed as competitive because all of the members were encouraged to engage the claims equally. Members were exposed to all of the claims throughout the organization's activities and, at times, most if not all of the claims represented a single church activity. The participants that were interviewed for the study were involved in the media department, the worship team, the greeting team, security teams, and outreach coordinators. Pratt and Foreman (2000) proposed that organizational members respond to the multiple claims in an organization in one of four ways: compartmentalization (preserve all identity claims but make no attempt to connect them together), deletion (remove one or more of its multiple claims), integration (fuse together all of the claims to produce a distinct new whole), and aggregation (keep all of the claims and attempt to make connections between them). This study found that many of the staff and members responded in what Pratt and Foreman (2000) called the aggregation phase.

Participants of this study saw the claims as being coherent or bound with each other. Members spoke of the claims being connected in a number of ways. For some, not allowing the building to look too nice combined the claims of economic diversity and community outreach. For others, the claim of community outreach was present and enacted when they encountered the claim of multiethnicity. The church leaders were also

enacting these claims as an organization in an interrelated manner. As the church was growing, one initial leadership fight, according to a number of the staff, was the hiring of a non-English speaking Hispanic pastor to attract new members from the growing Latino population in their area. In this case, the claims of outreach and multiethnicity were intrinsically bound together.

Additionally, the participants described Hope Church's claims as distinct from one another. Thus, the idea of the claims being coherent should not be confused with the idea that the claims were meshed together as one general claim. If this were the case, member identification would inherently take place with one claim because all of the claims would be interrelated; they would not be distinct (Pratt & Foreman, 2000). Rather, the participants voiced a clear understanding that Hope Church had three distinct claims that worked together. This coherence of the claims appeared to facilitate an identification with all of the claims.

Supporting Previous Literature: Identification to the Church and the Claims

In addition to finding a hierarchical set of claims, this study also found that individuals reported identifying with the set of claims as a whole, i.e., the church as a whole. All the members clearly communicated that all three of the claims fully represented Hope Church and voiced their identification to Hope Church as a whole. This identification to the set of claims as a whole is important in regards to the definition of identification and the issue of multiple identity claims. Currently, the leading definition within the identification literature is an individual's identification to the human aggregate as a general whole (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This would include the organization's full set of identity claims. According to this definition, if the participants of this study did not

identify with all of the organizational claims, then their reported identification could be considered to be incomplete. Hope Church's leaders, setting, and materials, according to all staff and members interviewed, defined Hope Church by the same three distinct identity claims. Even though there was a designation between a primary and secondary identification, both were just that: identification.

Secondary Findings and Interpretations

New Insights: A Variable Timeframe for the Emergence of Identification

The study's first research question was: "How does organizational identification emerge over time in a multiethnic organization with multiple identity claims?" According to Ashforth et al. (2008), much of the research on organizational identification has studied identification as a snapshot in time, using surveys. Research has failed to explore and capture the dynamic nature of social identity construction and organizational identification. This study began to address this issue by allowing the participants to explore the process of identification over time and frame their answers from their experiences. The study found that the presence of multiple identity claims created a potential for two different timeframes of identification: a fast-paced emergence of identification based on one claim that was searched for prior to the participant joining the church and a slower-paced emergence based on the two other claims not searched for that the participant encountered upon arriving at Hope Church. This variable timetable of identification provides some new insight into the literature as to how the presence of multiple organizational identity claims and the saliency of the individual to one of those claims have an effect on the process of identification. These two timetables are represented in Figure 4.1 by the two arrows: one arrow moving from the seeker to the

sensemaking circle and ultimately into identification and the second arrow moving through the organizational sensebreaking and sensegiving actions into the sensemaking circle and ultimately into identification.

The study found that the primary influencer regarding the timeframe of identification was the role of the individual's church search prior to coming to Hope Church. As a result of the church search, participants reported a sense of identification to Hope Church that emerged quickly. The members' description of their identification was principally described in terms of their experience with the one specific claim they were searching for when they visited Hope Church and found it enacted there. Upon seeing the church enact that specific searched-for claim, through being asked to be involved in a specific ministry, for example, many of them reported "feeling connected" or "being at home" or being "ready to become members" after their first visit.

While the variable timeframe of identification is a new insight for the identification literature, this same finding also supports existing research that has shown that individuals find perceived organizational identities more attractive when they match the individual's own self-concept (Dutton et al., 1994; Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000) and individuals may tend to be drawn to these kinds of organizations as they provide salient opportunities for self-expression (Shamir, 1991). Brickson (2013) proposed that individuals choose to identify with organizations based on an evaluation of values and the saliency of these values to their own values. This supports Linde's (2001) research study on insurance agents and their rationales for choosing to work for a particular company. Linde (2001) found that the agents chose the MidWest company because the company values matched their own personal values. Pratt (1998) discussed

identification in terms of emulation and affinity towards the organization. Pratt (1998) suggested that people either identify with organizations that hold values that they already hold as their own (affinity) or they identify with these values over time with exposure to the organization (emulation). The members' church search played two important roles as it related to the identification process. First, the church search allowed the participant to have a clear "test" if the church was the kind of church they wanted. These "tests" were mainly centered around the identity claims of Hope Church. Secondly, if the claims were, in fact, present (thus Hope Church passed the "test"), this led to an expedited identification with Hope Church.

While Linde (2001), Pratt (1998), and Brickson (2013) focused on values, not identity claims, there is a strong relationship between values and identity claims, and it may be assumed that the principle can be applied to both. Organizational values can be considered those things, which may often be intangible, that describe the essence of the organization (B. Ashforth, personal communication, September 3, 2013). Sluss et al. (2012) looked at identification through the lens of values of the Army (loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage). It would be easy to see the value claims as simply those values put to action, e.g., "We are those who are loyal, we are those who are respectful, we are those who are honest," etc. A fully identified member might simply be able to make this statement, "I am A (name of organization) and therefore this (organizational value) is important to me" (Ashforth et al., 2008). Yet, as Barker (1998) suggested, there is a difference between values and claims, "Rather than just articulating values, organizations also promote a series of categorizations: 'We are a research institute' instead of 'We Value research'" (p. 263). This study makes an

assumption that for any organizational claim, there would be a set of values corresponding to those claims. Furthermore, this study makes an assumption that the claims themselves are different than the values. In other words, the values are an outcome of an identity claim. While both are defining elements to an organization, the values are embedded within the claims.

Within this study, the members searched for a particular type of church, based on their own personal values, and found that Hope Church matched or closely resembled the desired identity they were searching for. For some, upon seeing those espoused claims being enacted through Sunday morning services or outreach programs throughout the week, they immediately felt a sense of identification with Hope Church. This was due to the presence of the specific searched-out and enacted identity claims and their affinity towards those specific claims (Pratt, 1998).

This study differs from other studies (Pratt, 2008; Linde, 2001; Brickson, 2013; Sluss et al., 2012) in relation to the findings regarding the role of the multiple claims in the identification process. The focus of the study was both on how identification emerges over time, but also how it emerges over time in the context of an organization with multiple identity claims. This study takes into account that the saliency of the identity claim to an individual may vary depending on the claim. Figure 4.1 explores this process.

The line that tracks the church search identity claim goes up and around the organizational actions of sensebreaking and sensegiving right into sensemaking and leads to identification. Organizational identification emerged quickly as the member sees the searched-for identity claim being enacted within the church. Thus, due to the saliency of this searched-for claim, sensebreaking and sensegiving are not needed (Ashforth et al.,

2008; Vough, 2012). The searched=for claim is already present within the individual's self-concept. The sensebreaking and sensegiving actions that the organization needs to use in order to explain organizational practices and scripts to the individual (Harquil & King, 2010; Labianca et al., 2000; Harris, 1994) are not required. The individual already assumes that these kind of organizational practices are important. The individual specifically looked for an organization that valued and enacted those practices. The individual's sensemaking about how a church (or organization) should function already includes the enactment of these claims. Furthermore, the sensebreaking and sensegiving actions that bring an awareness to the individual's lack of saliency of their self-concept to these claims (Pratt, 1998; Pratt, 2000) for the purpose of identification (Ashforth et al., 2008; Vough, 2012; Brickson, 2013) is not required either. In this case, the enacted claim is already salient or present within their self-concept. They are simply aligning a pre-existing salient identity claim with the enacted organizational identity claim. Thus, the identification process emerged more quickly for participants in this study.

As noted above, the individual's search for a church with particular attributes and then finding those claims espoused and enacted in a church facilitated a process of identification that emerged quickly. However, true to the study's context/setting of an organization with multiple identity claims, there were additional organizational identity claims other than the claim searched for that the individual will encounter. An encounter with all of the claims is needed for there to be an identification to the set of organizational identity claims. Though one particular claim was searched for and encountered, in this study, participants soon discovered the other identity claims of Hope Church which, at times, were not part of their self-concept. Thus, the process of

emulation (Pratt, 1998) must occur. In this process, the organization engages in sensebreaking and sensegiving actions in regard to these claims and why they are important (Pratt, 1998; Pratt, 2000; Ashforth et al., 2008). It is within the emulation process (Pratt, 1998) that this study found that the need to experience the catalytic events that led a person to identify with the other claims became pivotal. It was the participant's encounters with these catalytic events, often directly surrounding the other claims, that led him or her to begin to integrate the claims into his or her self-concept.

Vough (2012) found that, in order for members to go through the identification process, they had to navigate four sensemaking logics that often were associated with organizational experiences. While Vough (2012) was not necessarily looking at identification through the lens of searched-for claims or a timeframe, the principle would apply here. For the claims that were searched for, these four stages may not be needed, as already discussed. However, in this study, the participants' identification journey with the non–searched-for claims walked through three of Vough's (2012) four stages, namely, familiarity, similarity and benefits. This portion of the identification journey had a longer timeframe than the searched-for claim portion.

While emulation and affinity processes may be part of the same identification process, they have different timeframes. Consequently, participants could report a fast-paced identification based on their experience with the searched-for and enacted organizational identity claim that was salient to an already present part of their self-concept (Brickson, 2013; Linde, 2001). The other organizational identity claims either were embedded in the experience of the first or took on a separate identification process, which would have taken much longer to emerge (Vough, 2012; Pratt, 1998, 2000). It is

the combination of those claims that are salient and searched for and those claims that are not salient and not searched for in the context of an organization with multiple identity claims that allows this finding to offer new insight to the identification literature, specifically when related to the timeframe of the identification process.

Supporting Previous Literature and New Insight: Sensemaking and the Influence of Faith

Sensemaking has been a well-researched aspect of organizational identification (Vough, 2012; Pratt, 1998, 2000; Ashforth et al., 2008, 2011) and, similar to past findings, the sensemaking processes of the participants in this study played a pivotal role in their identification process. It was the participants' process of categorizing events, teachings, and conversations with other members and other elements that navigated them through the identification process. While this finding supports the sensemaking and identification connection that much literature has put forth, this finding also adds a new element to the sensemaking process that is currently not a major topic of conversation: faith.

Faith played a significant role in the emergence of identification and the individual's sensemaking process. Many participants spoke of a spiritual element and a sense of God's leading or a sense of God's presence in their decision to stay and join Hope Church. For these individuals, the role of God, their faith, and their perceived sense of His leading became the anchor for their sensemaking when considering membership in Hope Church. Sensemaking, in a general sense, is seen as the process by which people give meaning to their experiences (Weick, 1995). Essentially, Weick (1995) suggested that humans are searching to make meaning for their lives and interactions with others.

Within other identification literature, individuals' sensemaking process is the process of understanding and defining their own relationship to their organization (Vough, 2012; Pratt, 1998, 2000; Ashforth et al., 2008, 2011). Sluss and Ashforth (2008) found that, within individuals' identification process, they must "sensemake" along organizational behavior lines as well as they look to align the organization's identity to their own self-concept. For this study, the participants' sensemaking processes of understanding the claims, defining the claims, understanding how those claims were enacted, placing importance on the sense of those claims, and ultimately placing meaning on identification with a church were all run through a filter of divine guidance.

This sense of God's presence and leading described by members also may have shaped the timeframe of the emergence of identification in these cases. Several of the participants spoke about a divine sense of peace or a trust on their first visit. Others commented about crying the first time they visited Hope Church. The result in either of these cases was a reported sense of knowing that they were ready to join/identify with the church after that first visit. Many of the participants reported a desire to join and be a part of Hope Church quickly, in part because they just "knew" this was God; they did not seek more time to ask around, consider, or think about it. For them, they felt that God had led them, God had met them while they were in the church, and so it was decided. Moreover, some participants attributed their identification to a journey of being willing to stay within the church even when they wanted to leave. One participant reported that he wanted little to do with being a part of the fabric of Hope Church and being "one of them." Yet he kept staying around and getting involved because he believed that God was

telling him to. The time needed for this participant to overcome some of his own personal hindrances in order to identify with the church was only because of God.

The influence of this divine order, for a person of faith, trumped any other emotional or cognitive rationales. The role of saliency and the individual's self-concept may help shed some light on this dynamic. Within the identification literature, saliency and the closeness of the organizational claims to the self-concept claims of the individual have been seen to play a role in the kind of organization chosen and may account for the different timing of identification among the various claims (Riketta, 2008; Brickson, 2013). Saliency can be any guiding characteristic that an individual considers central to who they are, and research has shown that individuals identify with groups that are more familiar to their own perception of their self (Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000). Leaders within organizations promote various organizational values to differing degrees based on which values are more salient to their own self-concept (Brickson, 2005). Members may enact organizational behaviors that stem from organizational identity claims that are more salient to who they define themselves as (Besharov, 2014). Their identification may be influenced by leaders who exemplify certain organizational values which are more salient to their own self-concept (Sluss et al., 2012; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Glynn, 2000; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). The general point is that the characteristics that the individuals perceive to define themselves affect their identification processes in how they journey through them to how they choose the groups they want to be a part of. Viewing faith as a salient claim that guides the individual's sensemaking may provide the lens needed to understand this dynamic.

Out of the identification, literature has emerged a sense of "nested identities" (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Essentially, within an organization, various layers of identification may occur; for example, an identification to a workgroup identity (lower level) may be nested within the individual's identification to the organization (higher level) as a whole (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). Individuals' highest identification may be one of a person of faith, and their identification to a local church or any aspect of life thereof may be nested within that identification. Thus, the role of faith supersedes and guides the decision-making and sensemaking processes of life as a whole, with church identification being one of those nested identifications. As such, those holding their faith central to their identity may view their options to do what they want only when they feel God's leading. This study found that when members believed that God Himself was suggesting that they join the church, this feeling/experience overrided their own desire or superseded a sense of cognitive or emotional response. This was seen within the participants who sought to join even though they wanted to leave due to past church hurt, as well as with others who could not explain why they felt particularly drawn to Hope Church, but joined regardless. In the case of staying even when the participant did not want to, the role of faith was more salient than anything else (God's desire for him to join trumped his desire to leave). Or, in the case of those saying it was God's peace as a sign that this was their church home, the role of faith confirmed a connection to Hope Church (their membership to being led by God to come and to belong at Hope Church).

This study suggests that the participants' faith and the perception of God's leading became the centerpiece to their sensemaking. It was a main reason they chose to become a part of the Hope Church community.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to understand how organizational identification emerges over time in a context of a church that has multiple organizational identity claims. In reaching conclusions, this study joins the conversations in literature surrounding organizational identification and social identity construction. The research objective was to understand how identification emerges over time, specifically, in the presence of multiple identity claims by the organization. Conclusions that support and add to the referenced scholarly literatures are presented.

Conclusion 1: Members Identify with Both the Organization as a Whole and the Individual Claims

The presence of multiple identity claims within the organization presents an environment where the identification of the individual will be to the specific claims, an identification to the set of claims as a whole and, more specifically, an identification to the organization in general. From the beginning, this study proposed that Ashforth and Mael's (1989) definition of identification, "a perceived oneness to a human aggregate," may be too simplistic. This study proposed that each individual's organizational claims must be taken into consideration. Literature has shown that individuals identify differently (or not at all) with different parts of the organization (Glynn, 2000; Pratt & Corley, 2007; Biddle & Rao, 1997; Besharov, 2014; Pratt & Foreman, 2000).

Participants clearly communicated an identification to Hope Church as a whole. Often the participants voiced an identification in connection to the church in broad terms. This kind of a reference was evident in participants' use of language such as "we," "us," "belonging," and "connected." This usage supports much of the findings from other

studies on identification. Identification literature often uses this kind of language as measuring points or markers of identification (Sluss et al., 2012). This kind of language used by the members would align with the identification literature that views the organization or group in one large aggregate (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). This corporate language has been suggested by some as a sign of identification to an organization (Glynn, 1998).

Yet, while speaking of Hope Church as a whole, the participants communicated an understanding of all three of Hope Church's claims. The corporate language of "us" and "we" was used to speak of themselves as a part of the overall body of Hope Church, which they defined as a multiethnic, economically diverse group of individuals who are all working together to change their community. In short, the participants spoke not only of an identification to Hope Church as a whole, as Ashforth and Mael (1989) would have suggested, but also of their identification to a group called Hope Church that had three defining identity claims. The members' use of the word "us," while having the full understanding that the collective "us" embodies all three claims, speaks to a full identification to all of those same claims.

This study suggests that one of the ways the individual may connect to the specific identity claims is through their sense of identification to the organization as a generic whole. As noted, the participants spoke of a connection to a group called Hope Church and also effectively defined this group to be a collective group with three distinct claims. The question becomes: Could a connection to some of the claims be present simply because of a connection to the collective? In other words, if the individual held a full sense of "us" and the meaning of "us" was clearly understood to embody the three

claims, then, in identifying with the human aggregate, individuals may have also identified with some of the other claims. One member may identify with economic diversity and community outreach not because he or she *actually* does, but because another member *actually* does. Because both members are a part of "us" and because they both understand that "us" means all three of the claims, they inherently identify with all of the claims. The member goes through a process of primary identification to the one claim that he or she has specifically incorporated into his or her self-concept. The process of the secondary identification is connected to the organization as a whole. This connection to the whole has embedded in it the secondary identification to the other claims because someone else has a primary identification to those claims. Figure 5.1 depicts this process.

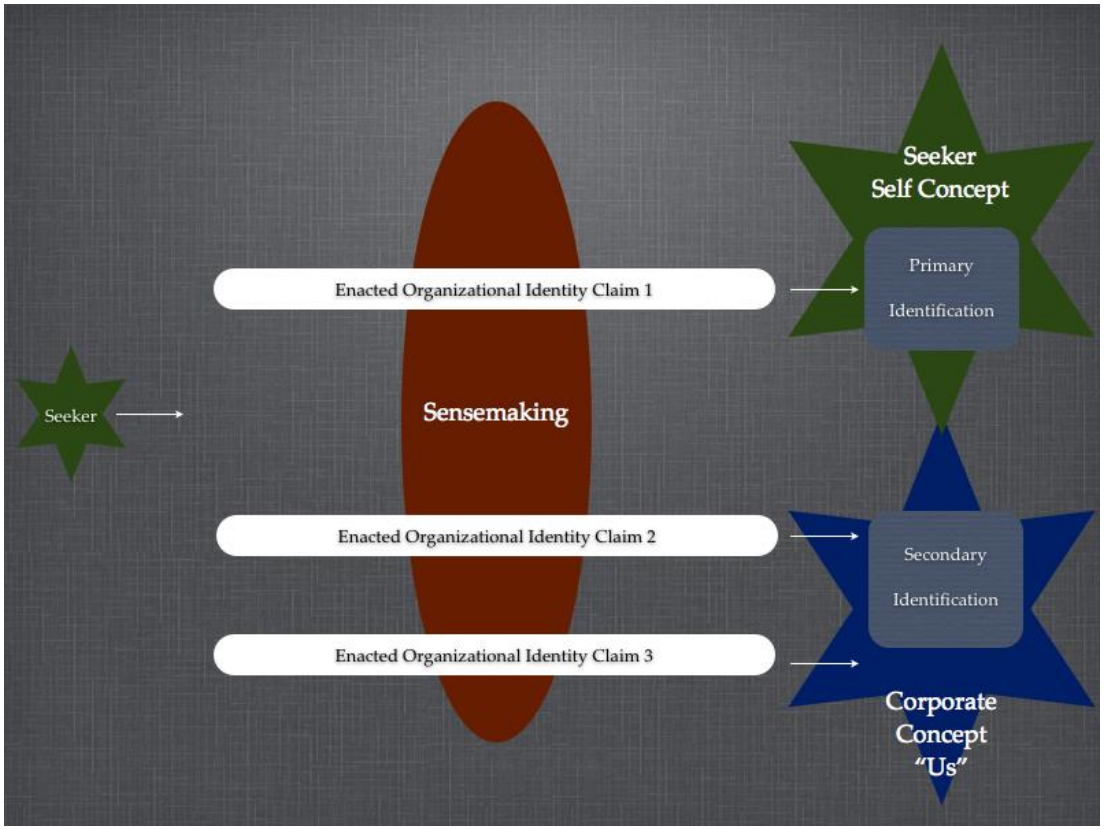

Figure 5.1. Identification to the whole and to specific claims.

This study concludes that both identification to the claims and identification to the whole are needed to fully understand the identification process. Identification should include both a sense of connection to each of the individual organizational claims and a sense of connection to the "human aggregate." This assertion presents an entirely new aspect to the idea of identifying to the whole of the organization, as it takes the individual's sense of connection to the whole and integrates it into his or her sense of identification to the claims themselves.

Conclusion 2: A Multifaceted Identification Process Emerges in the Presence of Multiple Identity Claims in an Organization

As stated above, a conclusion of this study is that the presence of multiple identity claims presents a complex environment for the identification process of the member. The environment of multiple identity claims may also allow for the individual to have a different identification process that occurs differently for each of the specific claims. The study found the participants engaging in a singular identification process to the organization as a whole, which manifested itself within the individual's sense of connection to Hope Church as a whole. Yet a more granular view showed that the emergence of the participant's identification, how the identification journey took place and the reason why the member engages in certain aspects of the organization, may be different for each of the individual claims. In other words, the way the individual arrives at his or her identification may be different for each of the specific claims. Thus, a multifaceted identification process is needed that, up until now, identification literature has not discussed.

Saliency (Riketta, 2008; Brickson, 2013; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005; Van Knippenberg & Van Schie, 2000) and the closeness of the organizational claims to the self-concept of the individual will play a role in the kind of organization (church) chosen and may account for the different processes of identification to the distinctive claims. The more salient the claims are to the individual's self-concept, the less organizational actions (sensebreaking and sensegiving) are needed to guide the individual through the path of identification. The less salient the claims are to the individual's self-concept, the more organizational actions are needed (sensebreaking and sensegiving) to guide the organizationally approved enactment of the claims and instruct on why these claims are important. It is the distinction of the nonsalient claims to the prior salient claims that makes the identification processes different. Dutton et al. (1994) suggested that people value self-integrity and want the ability to authentically act out that which they value and see themselves as. Moreover, Chatman (1991) found that a close fit or saliency of organizational values and claims predicted members' satisfaction and intent to stay with the organization. Interestingly, this was the exact topic of conversation that the leadership presented to the prospective members within Hope Church's new members class: the close fit of the church member to the church—so much so that leadership voiced the concern that if the prospective member did not feel as if there was a close fit, he or she should reconsider joining.

While saliency was not the specific focus of the study, Pratt's (2000) study on Amway may have some implications that speak to this issue of saliency and a multifaceted identification. In Pratt's (2000) study of Amway, he found that identification hinged on those already in Amway challenging the individual to align with the

organization's way of viewing things (money, business, etc.) which he called "sensebreaking." The use of imagery, testimony of Amway members, guided reflection with Amway mentors on Amway's values, and the prospective member's encounters with organizational events were used to create a dissonance between their enacted self-concept (not in alignment with Amway) and what their intended self-concept should be (in alignment with Amway) (Pratt, 2000). Essentially, Amway's sensebreaking was done in order to increase saliency of their values and identity to the individual's. Pratt (2000) found that if this saliency was not achieved, the individual would not fully identify to Amway and in some cases actually engage in disidentification (becoming anti-Amway). Along similar lines, Ashforth et al. (2008) suggested that sensegiving is an organizational action that explains and fills in gaps of information that enable further identity exploration. Ashforth et al. (2008) said sensegiving is a part of the explanation of the claims and how they are enacted and ultimately gives the new member validation that this is the right way to see an organization. Simply put, sensebreaking may be the process that the individual understands and sees that the claim is not salient, but sensegiving is the process by which saliency is walked out and a new self-concept begins to develop (Ashforth et al., 2008).

This study presents that saliency and notes that multifaceted identification is not completely encased in sensebreaking alone. Rather, the organizational process of sensegiving for the non–searched-for claims is also needed. Figure 4.4 aims to describe this multifaceted identification process with the two lines of identification: the line that extends up from the church seeker and bypasses the sensebreaking and sensegiving actions represents the pre-searched for salient claims, and the line that goes down from

the seeker through the sensebreaking and sensegiving actions of the organization represents the non–searched-for nonsalient claims. The distinction also may exist between the non–searched-for claims as well, not just between the searched-for and non–searched claims. For example, multiethnicity may be the searched for claim, yet the claim of economic diversity may have a different identification process and require different kinds of sensebreaking and sensegiving actions than the claim of community outreach. Furthermore, because these different processes are needed, there may be different timetables of identification as the member identifies with different claims at different times.

Conclusion 3: Multiple Claims Support a Hierarchy of Identification

The presence of multiple organizational identity claims creates an opportunity for a hierarchy of identification. This study found that members described two layers of identification as related to specific identity claims: a primary identification and a secondary identification.

This study differs from much of the multiple organizational identity research in that its participants reported identification to all of the organization's claims. There have been a few key and often cited studies on identification in multiple identity organizations, and in all of those cases the participants identified with one particular claim over the other (Pratt & Corley, 2007; Glynn, 2000; Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997; Besharov, 2014; Humphreys & Brown, 2002). For example, in Glynn's (2000) study on the Atlanta Symphony, two primary identity claims divided the organization: (1) "We are a world-class orchestra in a world-class city," and (2) "We are the best orchestra we can afford" (p. 3). For the Atlanta Symphony, these two claims became the lens by which each of the

members chose to view the organization's mission, goals, and actions. Because there were many within the organization who could not find a balanced expression of these two claims (quality of artistic expression and finances), the symphony shut down. In Besharov's (2014) work on Natural Foods company, she found most employees only enacted one or two of the four claims in contrast to the shift supervisors, who attempted to enact all of them. Within Pratt and Foreman's (2000) work on identification within multiple identities, they projected four responses: two of which include identification to all of the claims, one removes some claims, and one attempts to combine several claims to make a new set.

Amidst all of this literature, none of the research on multiple identity claims has suggested that (1) all of the claims can be identified with and (2) they are identified with in a hierarchical manner. Research on organizational identification within multiple identity organizations has not fully taken into account that an individual may identify with various claims differently (Pratt & Corley, 2007; Glynn, 2000; Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997; Besharov, 2014; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). This study completely differs from the other research in that all of its participants voiced an identification to all of the claims. A new insight emerging from the study is that the participant's identification to the claims might actually differ based on each of the claims. Within this study, some of the participants held some of the claims as so important that if those certain claims were removed, they would leave the church. This produced what this study has termed a "primary identification." Yet the other claims, to the same individuals, were negotiable, meaning that if those specific claims were removed, they may or may not leave. This produced what this study has termed a "secondary identification."

Ultimately this conclusion has implications for how organizational identification is defined in the literature. Can an individual have two different kinds of connections to the specific claims and still be considered identified? Can an individual create a hierarchy with a set of claims and still be considered identified with the organization? This study suggests that members perceive a hierarchy of claims and meet the criteria for the definition of organizational identification. Identification research may need to expand its view of identification from simply the view of just the organization as a whole (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), beyond work group identification (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; Riketta, 2008), and even the various identity claims (Besharov, 2014). Rather, a definition is needed that takes into consideration the whole and the claims and takes into consideration that the individual's identification to those claims may be different as well.

Conclusion 4: Identification Is a Holistic Process

The members spoke of their identification journey in terms of a holistic process: cognitive (thought processes of doctrine and beliefs), emotional (an emotional response to the church), spiritual (a sense of God leading them), and physical (physical interactions with elements related to the church). While not every participant reported the full holistic process as a part of their identification journey, many participants reported a set of two or three of them.

For some, it became an emotional journey as it was a sense of peace in their soul that confirmed their decision to remain within Hope Church. One member cited the feeling of emotional support for his own ministry from the church body as a deciding factor to identity with the church. For one member, it was the church's care and acceptance of her handicapped son that marked her process of identification. Finally, for

others it was not just a positive emotional element, but also a negative one. For one member, the sense of disappointment and hurt from past church experiences became a hurdle that took years to get over before he felt comfortable allowing any sense of identification to happen with Hope Church.

For others, it was the teaching on the identity claims (or other topics as well) that helped with the identification process. For their identification journey, this cognitive portion became integral. It was important for them to cognitively understand and be in unison with the church doctrine and teachings. Their connection was less emotional and more intellectual: their Bible told them to come to church, and in Hope Church they found a depth of teaching that fed their intellect. Consequently, their identification became cognitive as well; their connection was less about what they felt and more about what they believed.

Furthermore, for others, the connection was behavioral. Getting involved in ministries within the church and being put in circumstances where the members' sense of comfort was challenged was pivotal to their identification process. In these cases, the actions or external sensebreaking actions of the church specific to them marked their identification process.

Identification literature is lacking in its empirical or conceptual research regarding multiple elements of the components of identification. The cognitive, emotional, or behavioral elements of identification have been debated among scholars. An enduring question of identification has focused on the mix of components within the identification process and the outcomes of identification. For example, in Ashforth and Mael's (1989) seminal work on identification, they suggested, "[Organizational identification is] a

perceptual cognitive construct that is not necessarily associated with any specific behaviors or affective states" (p. 21). Harquail (1998) specifically mentioned that, early on, many researchers set emotions and behaviors aside when speaking of the cognitive components of identification. Harquail (1998) suggested that research needs to include all of the elements in understanding identification. Ashforth et al. (2008) supported a holistic identification to work in this way, "'I am A [organizational member], I value A (it's important to me), and I feel about A' as the heart or core attributes of identification" (p. 329). Tajfel's (1982) work, however, has always suggested that cognitive and emotional elements are components within the identification process:

> In order to achieve the stage of 'identification,' two components are necessary ... The two necessary components are: a cognitive one, in the sense of awareness of membership; and an evaluative one, in the sense that this awareness is related to some value connotations. The third component consists of an emotional investment in the awareness and evaluations. (p. 2)

Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley (2008) suggested that affect and cognition go hand in hand within the identification process: "In short one can think or feel one's way into identification (Ashforth, 2001) and cognition and affect reciprocally reinforce identification (e.g. Kessler & Hollbach, 2005)" (p. 329).

Harquail (1998) raised a question of how one can ever really separate the cognitive and affective state of an individual. Harquail (1998) proposed this thought:

> Perhaps, a few of us speculated, affective identification [emotional identification to an organization] is simply an outcome of a certain, deep level of cognitive identification. Affect may indicate how deeply one's cognitive self-definition as an organizational member is integrated into his or her sense of self. (p. 228)

Harquail (1998) would go on to include the emotional component as a separate identification called affective identification. It is intriguing to consider a conversation

about one's personal self-concept without considering how an affective state would be included. Yet it may be that, in the presence of multiple identity claims, the individual may have an affective identification towards one claim and simply a cognitive identification towards another. It could be highly possible that the claim holding the primary identification would have both a cognitive and affective identification to it because of the claim's saliency. However, the secondary identification may be secondary simply because it is only cognitive. This could explain why some of the participants suggested they would stay if one claim was removed, e.g., multiethnicity, and would leave if another claim was removed, e.g., economic diversity. One claim held an emotional investment (Tajfel, 1982) and the others only a cognitive identification.

Behavior, as either a component of the identification process or an outcome of it, however, has been a topic of debate (Ashforth et al., 2008). The question becomes: Does the individual's organizationally approved behavior (behavior that is in alignment with the identity claims) come only after identification has taken place (Ashforth et al., 2008)? Or, rather, is it possible for someone to "act" their way into identification (Ashforth, 2001) as, through rites and rituals, the "doing" turns into "becoming" as the heart begins to align with what individuals' actions are doing (Ashforth, 1998)? Sluss and Ashforth (2008) suggested that both affective and behavioral mechanisms mediate the process of the individual's identification. This study would suggest that behavior was both: an outcome and a component. Behaviors towards those claims certainly emerged as identification to the claim did; however, in the case of the couple working with the Spanish community with no real sense of community outreach or high value on multiethnicity, it was that behavior of driving the Spanish family that walked them into

identification with those claims. Or take for example the now elder of the church, initially put off by encountering the homeless people whom he tried to avoid. The weekly encounters with them led him to a place of identifying with that identity claim of being economically diverse.

The spiritual journey played an influential role in the members' sensemaking. The sense of the presence of God guiding them to Hope Church and confirming their "fit" or "call" to remain there was a principal factor for many of them. For some, this spiritual role, however, led directly to both a cognitive and emotional process. Some of the members reported crying in response to seeing the diversity and feeling God's presence as they came to Hope Church. For others, it was a spiritual influence that motivated them to continue to "do" or be involved in ministry even when they did not want to be involved. Yet, the spiritual element to members' identification process has not been heavily researched and may prove a rich ground for understanding how spiritually minded people who hold faith central to their personal identity process to the organizations they choose to join.

Implications for Theory:

Contribution to Organizational Identification

This study offers contributions to organizational identification theory: the inherent role of faith, the role of intentionally, the strength of identification, and the presence of multiple organizational identity claims within the identification process.

Faith, Sensemaking, Saliency, and Organizational Identification

Overwhelmingly, the participants in this study reported a sense of God in their decision to join Hope Church. Often this sense of divine guidance was the deciding factor on when they chose to join the church and why. This presence of faith and a sense of God's presence or leading superseded any form of emotional or cognitive identification journey (Chreim, 2002; Sluss et al., 2012). The presence of a meta-physical element within the sensemaking process has not been explicitly explored within the identification, sensemaking, and saliency literature. Point of fact, none of the articles researched for this study referenced the metaphysical. Yet for a person who has their faith central to their identity, their connection to a metaphysical presence may be the most salient element to their self-concept. Consequently the saliency of an individual's faith is an element that must be considered. The individual's personal faith may play a principal role in the individual's identification process. It is potentially more influential than the researched antecedents of identification: actions of managers (Sluss et al., 2012), the attractiveness of the organization (Dukerich et al., 2002) or the self motivation (Mael & Ashforth, 1995) and self enhancement of joining a specific group (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

Faith may also play a more substantial role in the relationship of identification with outcomes. What if the element of faith, when as a part of the identification process and the sense of "being called" actually created more job satisfaction (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000), created stronger customer service (Johnson & Ashforth, 2008), lead to more personal sacrifice for the company (Vough, 2012), more goal achievement (Chreim, 2002), or provided higher work motivation (Riketta, 2005) than simply being

identified? This presence of one's personal faith in addition to the researched antecedents may create a more enhanced set of outcomes of identification.

It's possible to reframe the process with faith as a primary identity and the organization is a nested identity within that (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). For example, there is extensive identification literature that suggests that the member's self-concept should be so connected to the organization that the individual is said to experience a sense of success when the organization succeeds, or failure when the organization fails, and a sense of personal attack when the organization is criticized (Mael & Ashforth, 1995; Ashforth & Mael, 1992; Dukerich et al., 2002; Jones & Volpe, 2011; Dutton et al., 1994). Yet, for the individual whose faith is the most central to their self-concept, successes and failures are measured through their faith, not their job. If the individual feels, acts, and thinks their way into identification (Sluss et al., 2012; Harquail, 1998; Ashforth, 2001), then it is the core tenets of the individual's faith that ultimately shades those feelings, thoughts, and actions. The point here is that for the individual who has faith central to their identity, that faith goes with them and is not relegated to just their time within the walls of their church or faith based organizations. Their faith and its influence is carried with them wherever they go and it may operate as the starting point for their sensemaking (Weick, 1995).

This was seen within the individual's sense of faith and divine guidance. The study found the individual's faith giving insight into how they processed their "fit" into their salient groups (Cole & Bruch, 2006), how they thought about in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and it shaded perceived differences between these groups (Rink & Ellemers, 2007). This speaks to the core of identification. The individual may

consider faith to be both the reason and the cause of how they "fit" or "belong" or "become one" with their group. The presence of faith may find itself interwoven into every fabric of the identification process because, ultimately, it is how the individual sees and defines themselves. Moreover, depending on how central faith is to their personal identity, it will be the filter that the individual processes the weight, value, and enactment of the organizational claims. There is currently little research looking at the element of faith within the individual's self-concept as it relates to organizational identification. This study suggests that the individual's faith in their sensemaking must be considered. While it overtly plays a role within an FBO, if the individual's faith is central to their identity, their faith will influence their sensemaking processes no matter what kind of organization they find themselves in. And its influence may be greater than what the individual is cognitively or emotionally experiencing within the organization.

Intentionality Within the Identification Process

Data from this study suggest that many individuals would voluntarily come to their organization of choice for very specific reasons. Those reasons revolve around a self-identity claim that the individual is searching to be expressed within the prospective organization. The prospective organization or group is chosen because that group has espoused a match to one of the self-identity claims of the individual. These findings confirm Pratt's (1998) theoretical concept of affinity. Identification frameworks that posit that people choose organizations strategically based on value congruence (Pratt, 1998; Brickson, 2013) place a sense of deliberateness to the identification process. Specifically, people find the organization they want and then it is assumed that the individual strategically engages that organization a certain way based on that claim. However, what

has not surfaced in past studies is the potential randomness to the member's identification journey. This emerged in this study with the catalytic events described in the study; specifically in regards to those claims that fall in the secondary identification category. The members did not come into the organization with a strategic plan to engage the two claims that were not salient to them prior to joining the church. Encountering these secondary claims and the related catalytic events were not planned. This dynamic of randomness may shed light into the nonlinear process of identification in future theorizing and research..

Strength of Identification

A potential implication of the study to identification theory may be in the nature of the strength of the individual's identification. Figure 5.1 portrays multiple views of strength of identification. First, it potentially presents a view of identification that shows the member having a stronger connection to one claim over the claims. Even though the member is in fact identified with all of the claims. Secondly, it posits the member's identification to the aggregate as greater than the set of claims themselves (those claims that hold secondary identification only). This may show that Ashforth and Mael's (1989) idea of identification to the aggregate whole to be accurate. Finally, it presents the individual's identification to one claim to be stronger than both the secondary claims and the aggregate as a whole.

In all three of these cases the strength of the member's identification was a part of understanding the individual's identification. Strength of identification should be considered in future research is exploring identification to multiple claim organizations.

This contribute to the definition of identification. What does "strong" identification or "weak" identification look like and how are they defined.

Multiple Identity Claims

Within the identification literature, the most commonly used definition is as follows, "The perception of oneness or belongingness to some human aggregate" (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21). As the above definition shows, what has mostly been assumed is that when the individual "identifies" with the organization they do so to the aggregate (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), other groups within the organization (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010) or the identity claims as one general set of claims (Brickson, 2005). This study suggests theoretical implications to organizational identification when the identification process is in the midst of an organization that uses more than one claim in an effort to define itself (Pratt & Foreman, 2000; Foreman & Whetten, 2002). The implication here is that the individuals may not identify with all of these claims equally and may not identify with all of the claims at the same time (Besharov, 2014).

This study found that, when asked about the various claims being removed one at a time from Hope Church, the participants voiced a willingness to leave for some claims and not the others. While the specific claim of such importance varied based on the individual, the pattern remained. One claim had the appearance of being held higher to the individual than the others; even though the organization and the member spoke of these claims equally. The claim that the individual searched, visited, and stayed for may hold a hierarchical role within the individual. If this is the case it would be logical that the

individual would leave over the same claim that they came for in the first place if that claim were removed; as the interview question suggested.

The implication of multiple identity claims and varied identification to specific claims ultimately calls into question the nature of the definition of organizational identification. If an organization has multiple identity claims and an individual only identifies with some versus the others, is that individual really identified? Moreover, if that identification experience is repeated over the breadth of the organization where many other members also identify differently based on a certain section of the identity claims, then, what does a "oneness with a human aggregate" really look like? Furthermore, it could speak to the reasons for group identification (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005) as those groups that the individual identifies with may be the groups similar to them. These highly salient groups may determine which claims hold the primary identification and which claims hold a secondary identification The implication may be that group identification is actually a more realistic identification than an organizational level of identification.

What Figure 4.4 puts forth is a distinction between the primary identification and a secondary identification. The individual may actually incorporate all the organizational claims into their self-concept, just not equally. If that is the case, then, it would be accurate to say they have identified with all the claims. However, strength of identification to each one of the claims, individually, must be considered; thus the claim that holds the strongest sense of salience or the closest role of their self-definition may serve as the primary identification. This would be the claim that the individual would leave the organization over. The other claims, though a part of the self-concept, are

negotiable. In this case, the individual may consider staying within the organization even if these organizational claims are no longer enacted. It is in this case that the individual's relationship to the claims might be considered a secondary identification. While strength of identification is not a new topic for research, the nuance here is that the strength of identification is being parsed out by each individual organizational identity claim. This nuance of multiple-organizational identity claims must be considered; particularly if the organizational identity claims have the appearance of being competitive (Glynn, 2000; Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997; Pratt & Corley, 2007).

Finally, there may the issue of these claims evolving over time. In the context of a church where the cannot "fire" its members, there is an issue of the ability to control identification. If members who do not define the claims the same or hold them in the same manner do not leave, the claims may evolve over time. Specifically, if an organization holds five distinct identity claims and over time a large percentage of volunteers builds within the organization that does not identify to three of those five claims, the landscape of that organization may change. Or if a large percentage of the organization beings to define those same identity claims differently than the initial founders definition the organization may begin to look different. The question as it relates to organizational identity and organizational identification theory in either case is this: if a significant portion of the members no longer interpret the claims the same way or identify with the claims will the claims themselves and ultimately the organization change over time?

Implications for Practice

While the context for this study was a faith-based organization it's possible to consider the implications for practice both in faith-based as well as non-faith based organizations. . Findings from this study suggests several ways the organization may be able to address the identification of its members to further advance the mission and goals of the organization. This discussion will suggest that this process rests significantly on management's actions of sensebreaking and sensegiving.

This study suggests that leadership creates a sense of temporal continuation (enduring) and coherence of the identity claims for the membership to identify with. Due to the role of saliency and primary identification, at any time a leader or manager may enact a specific claim in a different way. As leaders and managers change the employees may receive mixed messages about the identity claims, which may lead to confusion that hinders the identification process. Thus if the organizations views leadership that is concentrated in specific people it may be problematic to a consistent and coherent identification process of the organization's members. However, if leadership is seen as a function of the organization and those functions are seen throughout the organization it may prevent the mixed message of one claim being espoused differently in different parts of the organization. Additionally, leadership as a function may aid in the transference of the claims from one generation to another, thus facilitating the enduring nature of the of the identity claim itself.

Secondly, organizational leadership may want to consider the visibility of the organizational identity claims in relationship the identification process. The visibility of the claims being enacted, such as multiethnicity or community outreach, may become an

influential factor in the individual's identification process. If certain claims have a more prominent presence than the others, the individual may choose not to engage in an identification process with the organization. If all the claims are not easily seen by newcomers they may leave because they may believe that of a belief that certain claims are not part of the organization. If managers, leadership, and other members consistently celebrate these claims, it may act as a powerful sensebreaking strategy for new members to hear how existing members speak about their positive encounters relating to the identity claims.

Additionally, the role of the Senior Leader, for some members, played a significant role in their identification. An assumption of this study is that church members grant those in the role of a pastor a unique role in their personal lives: one that is different than other people in their life. Consequently, consistent accessibility for newcomers to the Senior Leader may prove to be extremely influential in the individual's identification process. Due to this particular role that a pastor plays, consistent interaction with the senior pastor may have the most influence on the identification process of new members as it relates to the organization's sensebreaking and sensegiving actions.

Finally, understanding that the identification process is a holistic process may help managers and leaders understand the nature of the member's identification. Simply because some of the members are engaging in behavioral actions congruent to the identity claims does not mean they are identified. If a member is simply "obeying" the organizational norms, but feels emotionally detached or opposed to the claim that the norms represent identification may be weak at best and nonexistent at worst. Managers and leaders should consider organizational identification as a holistic process (cognitive,

affective, behavioral, and spiritual) processes, elements, and influences when considering the nature of identification of their members.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is still much to learn about identification and the impact multiple identity claims have on the identification process. The findings from this study suggest several distinct areas of recommendation for future research.

First, this study has illustrated how multiple organizational identity claims impacted the time and the connection to the organization. A call for further research on the timetable of identification is still greatly needed. A limitation of this study was that it was retrospective in its nature. The study asked existing identified members to reflect back on their thoughts and feelings of their beginning journey. For some this was many years prior and the stories and feelings that were used to understand their identification journey over time was fully dependent on their memory. The limitations of a retrospective study may be that the members forget smaller events that worked together to have a culminating effect on their identification process and lean towards larger more prominent events. A longitudinal study that can track with the individual as he/she is walking through the events may give a better sense of the timetable of emergence. Furthermore, a longitudinal study may also give insight into the member's sensemaking process as they consistently are revisiting their connection to the organization. A longitudinal study may give insight to not just the kinds of events but timing and frequency of such events. The member's sensemaking within their identification process may be more detailed and multidimensional than what a retrospective study can provide.

More research on the timetable of emergence between the specific claims is also lacking. The identification field is still dominated by a snap-shot view of how individual's connect with organizations; developing a more nuanced understanding of the process over time of how identification emerges will be an area that has many layers for years to come. Moreover, is identification static or dynamic in its nature? Specifically, do the members go back and forth in their identification processes? Is there a dynamic such that a member may identify at one point with an organization and then de-identify at another point and still maintain their membership? These kinds of questions speak to what it means for an individual's identification process to be just that: a process of becoming (Ashforth et al., 2008).

Secondly, the study has shown how the element of faith contributes to how people identify with, and ultimately seek, membership in a particular church. The element of faith in a person's sensemaking can play an influential filter in how the individual sees the organizational claims. The saliency of a member's faith may also shape how they process their connection to that organization. Further research on the role of faith to the personal identity of the member may provide some significant insight concerning the individual's sensemaking around the identity claims. When central to the individual, faith plays an influential role in sensemaking no matter what kind of organization or group the individual is in. With the member's faith in mind, organizations may enhance identification by connecting their organizational identity claims to areas of faith. More specifically, the role of faith as it relates to the antecedents and outcomes of identification may shape how the individual sees self enhancements and in group and out-groups differently than one without faith as a central personal identity claim.

Thirdly, research surrounding the degree of oneness of the individual might be needed. Identification literature has suggested that the perceived oneness of identification ultimately becomes part of the member's self-identity to the point that the individual feels both the pain and joy of the successes and failures of the group and feels personally critiqued when the organization is criticized (Mael & Ashforth, 1995). In this study, the perceived oneness with the organization seemed at times disjointed and not complete. As a member may suggest they would be upset at Hope Church being criticized but showed no connection to its successes or failures. And although not a clear finding it is a potential area for future research. Yet may provide a significant addition to identification research.

Finally, future studies should consider the population and the sample chosen for the study. In this study, a broader understanding and definition of the population and ultimately the sample selected may have provided a more robust understanding of identification. In this study, the filters for population did not include the homeless of the organization. One specific way this may have added a more robust understanding of identification in this study is because of the specific connection between the claims of economic diversity and community outreach. Hope Church specifically develops outreach programs for the poor. If the very poor or homeless members of the church were included in the sample it would have provided a broader understanding in particular because the poor or homeless person who is both a member of the church and the recipient of the outreach. How would this influence their identification to the church?

This study adds to a body of empirical research on the impact of multiple identity claims on organizational practices. An area of future research with multiple identity claims is wide open, specifically as it relates to identification. A deeper understanding of

the dynamics of primary and secondary identification to certain organizational identity claims is needed. Furthermore, how and why the individual identifies to specific organizational claims is not yet fully clear.

Closing Thoughts

This study is ultimately about how the groups we have joined with effect our own self-identity. How we interact with the heart of the organizations and how we interact and connect with those who are a part of the groups that are closest to our hearts. This study found a particular richness to my own heart as I was given some insight into the "organization" called the Church of Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that this study would not only advance organizational identification literature, but ultimately deepen our ability to lead and pastor our churches well.

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APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR MEMBERS

SECTION I: Warm up (lead statement)

Hello. My name is Joel Solomon. I'm a doctoral student at GWU. Thanks for taking some time with me. I'm interested in studying people's connections groups that they are connected to in some way, specifically in the context of a multiethnic church. Over the next few moments, I'd like to chat with you about your connection to Hope Church.

SECTION II: Logistics and demographics

Date: _____ Location: _____ Time: Start: _____ Stop: _____

Participant Demographics

a) Name:
b) Age:
c) Ethnicity:
d) Length of time at church?
e) Official member of church?
f) Regular attender?
f) Current involvement in church, if at all

SECTION III: Questions

Phase I: Engaging the Interviewee

1. What would you say is important to know about Hope Church?
2. Describe your connection to Hope Church
3. Share for a moment on how does it feel to be a part of Hope Church
4. If/when you hear someone criticize Hope Church, how does that make you feel?
5. If a family asked you about joining Hope Church, what do you tell them?
6. If a family member asked you about how Hope Church enhanced your life, what do you tell them?
7. If a stranger asked you about joining Hope Church, what do you tell them?
8. If a stranger member asked you about how Hope Church enhanced your life, what do you tell them?
9. What would be one thing that if it was removed from Hope Church it would cause Hope Church to cease being Hope Church?
   Probe: If that happened, how would that change Hope Church for you?
   Probe: And how would you feel about that?
10. How would you describe your connection to Hope Church?
11. What does it feel like to be a part of Hope Church?
12. What do you consider as a prototypical Hope Church member?
13. How does your membership shape how you see yourself?

Phase II: Navigating Critical Events

14. Tell me about your decision process of joining Hope Church?
    Probe: Think back to when you first came to Hope Church. What had you heard about it?
    Probe: What was it that drew you to come to Hope Church in the first place?
15. As you think about your involvement over time with Hope Church, how has it changed?
16. When prejudice is shown, how does that make you feel?
17. When you see a church without community outreach, how does that make you feel?

Phase III: Identity Claims

18. If I were to ask you, "Who is Hope Church?" how would you answer?
    Probe: What word or phrase would you use to describe what this company is about?
19. If one thing was removed from Hope Church that caused Hope Church to cease to be Hope Church, what would that be?
    Probe: If that happened, how would it change Hope Church for you?

Follow-Up Interview (as needed)

SECTION I: Logistics and Demographics

Date: _____ Location: _____ Time: Start: _____ Stop: _____

Participant Demographics

a) Name:
b) Age:
c) Ethnicity:
d) Length of time at church?
e) Official member of church?
f) Regular attender?
g) Current job title, if employee
f) Current involvement in church, if at all

SECTION II: Questions

Phase I: Engaging the Interviewee

1. Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I appreciate your taking the time to talk with me a bit more about your connection with Hope Church. You probably recall that we briefly discussed some of the events that you played an important role in your connection with Hope Church. I want to follow up on that discussion today and discuss those events just a bit more.

Phase II: Critical Events
Phase III: Navigating Critical Events
Phase IV: Identity Claims

APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STAFF

SECTION I: Warm up (lead statement)

Hello. My name is Joel Solomon. I'm a doctoral student at GWU. Thanks for taking some time with me. I'm interested in studying people's connections groups that they are connected to in some way, specifically in the context of a multiethnic church. Over the next few moments, I'd like to chat with you about your perspective on Hope Church in order to get some background information on Hope Church itself.

SECTION II: Logistics and Demographics

Date: _____ Location: _____ Time: Start: _____ Stop: _____

Participant Demographics
a) Name:
d) Age:
e) Ethnicity:
d) Length of time at church?
g) Length of time as staff?
g) Current job title, if employee

SECTION III: Questions

Phase I: Engaging the Interviewee
1. What would you say is important to know about Hope Church?
2. What was one of the things that you first noticed when you started coming to Hope Church?
3. What would be one thing that if was removed from Hope Church it would cause Hope Church to cease being Hope Church?
   Probe: If that happened, how would that change Hope Church for you?
4. In your own words, how do you describe Hope Church?

Phase II: Critical Events
5. Suppose it was my first visit to Hope Church. What would it be like?
6. As you think about the history of Hope Church, what has been the most significant event Hope Church has faced?
   Probe: What made this particular event to significant?

Phase III: Identity Claims
7. If I were to ask you, "Who is Hope Church?" how would you answer?
8. What word or phrase would you use to describe what this company is about?

APPENDIX C:

INTERVIEW DETAILS

Phase 1

Interviewees	Date	Location	Length (min)	Transcript length (pp.)	Ethnicity	Length of employment
Participant 1	2.17.14	Equipping room	57:28	25	Asian	11.5 yrs
Participant 2	2.17.14	Equipping room	50:07	24	Anglo	12.5 yrs
Participant 3	2.17.14	Equipping room	36:21	21	Anglo	3 yrs
Participant 4	2.17.14	Equipping room	37:57	17	Anglo	1 yr
Participant 5	2.18.14	Equipping room	47:46	21	Black	12 yrs
Participant 6	2.18.14	Equipping room	25:06	9	Hispanic	10.5 yrs
Participant 7	2.18.14	Equipping room	44:11	17	Anglo	7 yrs
Participant 8	2.18.14	Equipping room	33:02	21	Black	8 1/2 yrs

Phase 2

Interviewees	Date	Location	Length (min)	Transcript length (pp.)	Ethnicity	Length of membership
Participant 1	5.30.14	Office space	53:00	25	Black	5 yrs
Participant 2	5.30.14	Office space	5:40	24	Anglo	5 yrs
Participant 3	5.30.14	Office space	43:55	21	Anglo	9 yrs
Participant 4	5.30.14	Office space	60:54	17	Anglo	7 yrs
Participant 5	5.30.14	Office space	41:09	21	Black	12 yrs
Participant 6	5.31.14	Office space	39:03	9	Anglo	12 yrs
Participant 7	5.31.14	Office space	26:19	17	Anglo	1 yr
Participant 8	5.31.14	Office space	35:02	21	Black	3 yrs
Participant 9	5.31.14	Office space	27:47		Anglo	8 yrs
Participant 10 & 11	5.31.14	Office space	41:14		Black (both)	6 yrs
Participant 12	6.1.14	Office space	32:55		Hispanic	4 yrs
Participant 13	6.1.14	Office space	42:27		Anglo	12 yrs
Participant 14	6.1.14	Office space	41:16		Black	9 yrs
Participant 15 & 16	6.1.14	Home	71:21		Black & Anglo	12 yrs & none

APPENDIX D:

OBSERVATIONAL SUMMARY FORMS

Observation #1

Observational event: Weekend Worship Service
Location of observation: Hope Church's Main Campus
Observed by: Joel Solomon On date: 2.16.14

1. Brief summary of observations.
Music was very mixed. High emphasis on coming together to worship with each other. Sermon was more intellectual, they have a teaching team. Fairly welcoming congregation. Spoke often of Multiethnic. Pretty mixed economically.

2. Significance of this observational event.
Gives insight to what a weekly expression of a church member would look and feel like. These weekend services are the gateway event for any new member and the primary way they "socialize" new members. It shows me how they communicate. Allowed me to come covertly and see how they operate, to see how their claims are being enacted.

3. Who suggested this observational event? Why?
I did and the XP did as well. Gives clear insight into their values and claims.

Observation #2

Observational event: New Member Class
Location of observation: Hope Church's Main Campus
Observed by: Joel Solomon On date: 2.16.14

1. Brief summary of observations
Very informal. Vastly diverse group. Some have been in the church a long time, others nearly brand new (first service). Hit multiethnic piece hard. Clearly communicate the identity claims over and over again. Two very different kinds of presenters.

2. Significance of this observational event.
This is a required step for someone to become a new member at Hope Church. Thus should be a clear way the church communicates who it is and how they bring along someone in the identification process.

3. Who suggested this observational event? Why?
I did and the XP did as well. Gives clear insight into their values and claims.

APPENDIX E:

OBSERVATIONAL PROTOCOL

Goal: To observe conversations, room set up, engagement of participants, content of meeting, etc., in order to understand how the organization's identity claims are being espoused and enacted.

My role: My role will be nonparticipatory. I will attempt to be as discrete as possible, only having attention drawn to me when necessary to acknowledge my presence. Depending on group or meeting size, this may vary.

How: My own observations will be taken electronically on my iPad. The meetings themselves will potentially be audio recorded. While more extensive of course, these notes will provide the basis of the observational summary form.

APPENDIX F:

DOCUMENT REVIEW SUMMARY FORMS

Document #1

Document form: Company Website
Date reviewed: 4.19.14 Date received: N/A

1. Name and description of document.
Company Website

2. Event or contact person with which document is associated.
Public website/public consumption

3. Significance/importance of document to participant.
Primary way visitors or guests will see their Church.

4. Brief summary of contents/purpose of document as it relates to organizational identity.
All documents were scanned for looking to identify identity claims. Website is the most public document Hope Church has. It clearly has statements of Who Hope Church is, their mission statements, staffing, etc.

Document #2

Document form: Employee Handbook
Date reviewed: 4.19.14 Date received: N/A

1. Name and description of document.
Employee handbook. Handbook of policy and procedures for church.

2. Event or contact person with which document is associated.
The executive pastor

3. Significance/importance of document to participant.
Potential to see how the staff is asked to act, etc. Expectations of what kind of church and staff they want to be.

4. Brief summary of contents/purpose of document as it relates to organizational identity.
All documents were scanned for looking to identify identity claims. Idea behind this was to see if they made any claims about who and how they should be as staff in order to reflect Hope Church.

Document #3

Document form: New Member Booklet
Date reviewed: 4.19.14 Date received: N/A

1. Name and description of document.
New Member Booklet. An instructional booklet used to walk new members through a description of who Hope Church is and what it means to be a member.

2. Event or contact person with which document is associated.
New Member Class

3. Significance/importance of document to participant.
Primary way new members are walked through membership. It should clearly speak to identity claims and who Hope Church is. And speak to what it means to be an identified member.

4. Brief summary of contents/purpose of document as it relates to organizational identity.
All documents were scanned for looking to identify identity claims. See above

Document #4

Document form: Weekly Bulletin
Date reviewed: 4.19.14 Date received: N/A

1. Name and description of document.
Weekly Bulletin. A weekly publication of church to all church attendees.

2. Event or contact person with which document is associated.
Weekend service.

3. Significance/importance of document to participant.
Second way the churches announces its events and the ongoings of the church life. Inherently speaks to identity claims.

4. Brief summary of contents/purpose of document as it relates to organizational identity.
All documents were scanned for looking to identify identity claims. The idea would be the events the bulletin displayed would be a part of the larger church story people would identity with or speak to some events that would be seen in the identification process.

Document #5

Document form: Twitter pages: social media
Date reviewed: 4.19.14 Date received: N/A

1. Name and description of document.
Sr Pastor and church's official Twitter pages.

2. Event or contact person with which document is associated.
Church and Sr. Pastor

3. Significance/importance of document to participant.
Social media is a way that a church or person can display the kind of things they are thinking about. Someone who follows either of these would see the kind of internal conversations that are important to the person or organization.

4. Brief summary of contents/purpose of document as it relates to organizational identity.
All documents were scanned for looking to identify identity claims. The topics on both were often on multiethnicity, which is one of the primary identity claims. Twitter gives an insight into not just what the church and Sr. Pastor is saying, but also how.

Document #6

Document form: Outreach Booklet
Date reviewed: 4.19.14 Date received: N/A

1. Name and description of document.
Outreach booklet. A Small booklet that speaks to one of the primary outreach programs Hope Church has, "*Vine and Village"*

2. Event or contact person with which document is associated.
Feeding program at Hope Church.

3. Significance/importance of document to participant.
Outreach to the community is one of the Identity claims of Hope Church. This document clearly points out all of the kinds of outreaches "*Vine and Village"* does. If a participant wanted to get involved this would show them how.

4. Brief summary of contents/purpose of document as it relates to organizational identity.
All documents were scanned for looking to identify identity claims. It clearly points to identity claims and shows how they church funnels money and resources into outreach programs. The sheer number of programs listed is quite impressive.

Document #7

Document form: Prayer Card
Date reviewed: 4.19.14 Date received: N/A

1. Name and description of document.
Prayer card. Any person who comes into sanctuary has a prayer card on their seat.

2. Event or contact person with which document is associated.
Weekend service

3. Significance/importance of document to participant.
Tells church member/attendee they will be prayed for and gives sense of community within the church.

4. Brief summary of contents/purpose of document as it relates to organizational identity.
All documents were scanned for looking to identify identity claims. Prayer card is in two languages: speaking to multiethnicity and speaks to the value of prayer.

Document #8

Document form: Leadership Advance
Date reviewed: 4.19.14 Date received: N/A

1. Name and description of document.
Manual during a leadership conference church has.

2. Event or contact person with which document is associated.
Leadership conference.

3. Significance/importance of document to participant.
Gives member a sense of church equipping them to do outreach items within and outside the church's walls.

4. Brief summary of contents/purpose of document as it relates to organizational identity.
All documents were scanned for looking to identify identity claims. Hope Church hosted a leadership/church equipping for leaders and anyone at church. The kinds of classes and who they had come into teach them speaks to the church's claims.

Document #9

Document form: Other
Date reviewed: 4.19.14 Date received: N/A

1. Name and description of document.
Teaching slide from one of the Pastors. Showed the kind of division the church was under during the writing of the Apostle Paul and the 1st century church.

2. Event or contact person with which document is associated.
Little Rock Campus pastor.

3. Significance/importance of document to participant.
Represented this pastor's journey into understanding the role of unity within diversity. He uses it as a teaching tool for staff and equipping on diversity. One of the other pastors within the interview actually referenced this slide.

4. Brief summary of contents/purpose of document as it relates to organizational identity.
All documents were scanned for looking to identify identity claims. Shows how one of the lead pastors is thinking about the claim of diversity, how he is teaching his team to think and talk about it and shows their connection to the multiethnic church and the early writings of the Church.

APPENDIX G:

DOCUMENT SOURCES

Document	**How identified/secured**
Company website	Researcher
Employee handbook	Researcher/Gatekeeper
New Member Booklet	Researcher/Gatekeeper
Weekly Bulletin	Researcher
Social Media	Researcher
Guest Brochure	Researcher
Prayer Card	Researcher
Leadership Advance	Researcher during observations
Other	Participant during interviews

APPENDIX H:

MATRIX OF CATALYTIC EVENTS

Phase 1

Participant	Event description	Mentioned catalytic events: Organizational identity			
		Ethnically diverse	**Community outreach**	**Economically diverse**	**Unity**
Participant 1	Hiring of Latino Pastor	Needed to ethnically diversify their leadership	Needed someone to reach that specific community		Primary Leadership fought over it
Participant 2	First Muslim Saved	Saudi Arabia	Spiritual Salvation		Showed Unity
	Founding Co-Pastor is Black	Diverse Leadership			
	Tenured PhD comes on staff				
	Hiring of Latino Pastor	Validated the Vision	Reach Hispanics		
	Getting (old) building		Refurbished a run down facility for neighborhood		
Participant 3	Church Wide Prayer	Showing Dependence on God Did not reference or connect it to any of Claims			
	Buying New building	Showed maturity and future longevity Did not Reference or connect it to any of Claims			
Participant 4	Getting (old) Building	Showing Dependence on God Did not reference or connect it to any of Claims			
	Beginning with Diverse Leadership Team	Showed Diverse Leadership. Kept it enduring over time			
Participant 5	People in beginning not with Hope Church any more	Showed longevity of Hope Church Did not reference or connect it to any of Claims			

Phase 1

Participant	Event description	Mentioned catalytic events: Organizational identity			
		Ethnically diverse	**Community outreach**	**Economically diverse**	**Unity**
Participant 6	Buying new building	Shifting cultural practices			
Participant 7	Dr. Perkins coming	Gave Validity to Vision being accomplished			
	Buying new building: Specifically the capital campaign	Showed Dependence of Hope Church and buy in of church body Didn't reference or connect it to any of Claims			
	Outreach concert		Worked to get Hope Church's name out to public about their commitment to community		
Participant 8	First Muslim saved	Showed ethnicity	Spiritual salvation		
	Vibrant youth ministry		Reaching all kinds of kids in trouble		Shows a young generation feels love of a church.
	Financial up and downs	Showing Dependence on God and Prayer Did not reference or connect it to any of Claims			

Phase 2

Event description	Mentioned catalytic events: Organizational identification				
	Self enhancement	**Prestige**	**Emulation**	**Affinity**	**Misc.**
Looking for a Specific Ministry	Hope Church offered a ministry that they specifically wanted for their family				
Asked to Serve: Vision of being a church of outreach			For others this was not a pres-ent value: worked to solidify why they needed to be connected to Hope Church	For some this was a present value and being asked to serve acted as a sign that this value could realized at Hope Church	For others this was a way of drawing them into relationship with others.
Relationships					Spoke of the closeness of the relation-ships with other members
Teaching	Teaching that would lead to their lives being changed			The desire to have "solid" teaching on Sunday	Teaching that would challenge their lives to live differently
Connection to Sr. Pastor		The draw of a nationally recognized pastor			Mark's charismatic nature in vision casting
Size of Church					Wanted a smaller church
Connection to other people					The desire to be in close authentic relationships
Sense of Being called					The "God" quotient. Feeling lead to join outside of just their own desires.

Phase 2

Event description	Mentioned catalytic events: Organizational identification				
	Self enhancement	**Prestige**	**Emulation**	**Affinity**	**Misc.**
Biblical Values					Wanting a church that held fast to "foundational" elements of Bible
Vision of being Multiethnic		There is a sense that they are one of the few that enact this value		Mostly those already having this desire to be ethnically diverse.	
Vision of being economically diverse	For some this was the source of being challenged knowing it would change them	There is a sense that they are one of the few that enact this value		For others they were looking for a church that reflected their neighborhood/city	
Worship	The vibrancy of worship experience		The diversity of style for some was a surprise as to how much they enjoyed it and now want it		
Building		Liked that their building is not like others: more than distinctive, take pride in it		See it as a philosophical way of ministry thinking.	

APPENDIX I:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

For Participation in a Case Study of Organizational Identification in a Multiethnic Church

I. INTRODUCTION

You are invited to offer an additional contribution to the dissertation research study chaired by Andrea Casey, Ed.D., with The George Washington University Department of Education and Human Development. The research will be conducted by the doctoral candidate listed below:

Joel Solomon, Doctoral Candidate, solomon3@gwmail.gwu.edu 757.227.6930 (office) or 757.630.327 (mobile)

You are being asked if you want to take part in this study because you are currently a member of Hope Church. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Talk to the research team if you have questions, including questions about your rights, have concerns or complaints, or think you have been harmed. You can contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Casey, at 703.726.3763 or the Doctoral Candidate, Mr. Solomon, at 757.630.5327. If you want to talk to someone else, call the Office of Human Research at 202.994.2715. Taking part in this study is up to you. You can refuse to take part. You can join now and quit later. Either way, it will not affect how we treat you.

II. PURPOSE

I am interested in learning more about individuals relate to the churches they attend: specifically a multiethnic church that is intentionally ethnically diverse.

III. PROCEDURES

This is a qualitative study that involves the following:

Interviews: You are being asked to participate in an individual interview. The interview will be conducted at a location convenient to you. This interview will be audio taped and transcribed. You will be asked to review the transcription of your interview to verify that the transcription reflects the topics you wish discussed. You may modify the content to more accurately reflect what you meant to say.

Your additional participation will consist of one interview with the doctoral candidate. This interview will probably last about 45 minutes. An additional interview may be needed to bring clarity or further discussion on content discussed from the first interview.

IV. POSSIBLE RISKS

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing in the interviews have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday work life. Despite confidentiality precautions, there is a risk that individuals who know that you participated in the study may be able to identify your contributions in the final document. However, for reporting purposes, all quotes will be attributed to a fictional name. While we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of this discussion, we request that you not discuss your individual interview with others in the company.

V. POSSIBLE BENEFITS

The results of this study will contribute to increased understanding of the relationship among churches, their identity claims, and its members.

You may enjoy the opportunity to think, as you are being interviewed and afterward, about important events in your journey with Hope Church that have influenced how you see yourself today.

Taking part in this research may also help you directly by identifying the places in your life that have been changed because of your involvement in Hope Church.

VI. CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESEARCH RECORDS

Access to the raw data is restricted to the principal researcher, his dissertation committee members, GWU faculty members and doctoral students who may assist with analysis and quality review of the findings and interpretation. At no time will your real name be used.

Quotes used in the final report for this research will not be attributed to specific participants. While direct quotes from interviews may be published, complete transcripts of the interviews will not be published.

Interviews, using pseudonyms, will be transcribed into a word processing format. At the conclusion of the research study, all audiotapes and backup CDs will be destroyed. The researcher will retain the transcripts indefinitely as supporting data for the study. All data collected using the procedures described here will be treated as confidential.

Any data gathered will be stored in a safe place during the study. Hard data will be locked in a file cabinet in a locked room. Any digital data will be on a password protected computer only known by me, as well as the files themselves will be password protected.

VII. COSTS

Except for your time, there are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

VIII. COMPENSATION

You will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

By signing this form, you acknowledge and agree that, in the event that this research study results in the development of any marketable product, you will have no ownership interest in the product and no right to share in any profits from its sale or commercialization.

IX. QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about this study, please call the researcher, Joel Solomon, or the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Casey, at the phone numbers listed in the Introduction to this Consent Form. You may also call the Office of Human Research with any complaints you might have about participating in this research.

X. SIGNATURES

By signing this Consent Form, you agree that you have read this Form, you understand what is involved in this study, and you agree to take part in this study. Except as stated in Section VIII, you do not give up any of your legal rights by signing this Form. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

_____	_____	_____
Participant (Print Name)	Signature	Date

XI. RESEARCHER STATEMENT

I certify that the research study has been explained to the above individual by me, including purpose, procedures, possible risks, and potential benefits associated with his/her participation. Any questions raised have been answered to the individual's satisfaction.

Joel Solomon	_____	_____
Researcher (Print Name)	Signature	Date

APPENDIX J:

CODING MATRIX

Code	Uses
Presence of God	19
peace	6
change agent	2
Hope Church Failure	0
frustrating	2
place of learning	6
personal	0
light let down	3
not bothered	11
not bothered by personal failure	4
Hope Church Value change	0
1st response	0
sad	1
lost our way	1
stay	3
struggle but stay	8
struggle	2
leave	8
couldn’t go to one without it	2
attempt to “restore”	8
2nd response	0
leave	4
violation of Hope Church value	0
introspection of self	2
misunderstanding	2
missing out on fullness of Gospel/life	2
outreach	0
have dialogue	1
not recognize it at first	1
encourage them to do it	1
doesn’t understand	1
slightly judgmental	1
not what church should be	4
feels sad	1
encourage them to	1
missing out	1
feels sorry	1
economic	0
missing out	1

Code	Uses
prays for them	1
feels sad	2
worse off than no outreach	1
leave immediately	1
multiethnic	0
try to understand why	2
thankful to be a part of Hope Church	1
have dialogue	3
not recognize it at first	1
very aware	2
pray for them	1
remove from situation	1
missing out	2
sad	3
disgusted	1
doesn’t know any better	8
feels sorry for them	1
offended	1
Talk about Hope Church	0
haven’t done it	1
happy to talk	2
no difference	8
Stranger	0
love it	2
worship	2
community	3
picture of heaven	1
location	3
facility	0
difficult	1
chance to serve	2
felt presence of God	3
overall vision	1
not for everyone	3
need to feel comfortable	1
careful of not sounding negative	1
feel challenged	2
believe in the vision	1
see for yourself	2
good word	9
great church	1
Christ first	2
not often	1

Code	Uses
invite	8
provide help	1
Family	0
given direction for life	2
authentic	1
on same page	1
invite	1
no one has asked	1
challenged	1
Lord calling us	2
makes you uncomfortable	5
feels at home	1
no pressure	3
friendly	1
worship great	1
word preached	4
diversity	6
totally different view	4
economic value	3
more volatile	1
more personal	1
picture of heaven	5
Multiethnic	7
picture of community	1
outreach	1
great church	5
Church search	1
proximity	1
friend mentioned it	1
boy friend/girl friend	3
mark specifically	2
intentionality	1
knew Mark prior	5
internet	10
non-Hope Church- outreach	0
non-Hope Church economic	0
Non-Hope Church - ethnic	2
more than Hope Church	11
only Hope Church	4
planned for more	4
Life History	0
long time at prior church	1
non-churched	2

Code	Uses
economically diverse	2
sheltered life	2
mono-economic	1
issue of disability	1
pressuring church	1
diversity	2
outreach	1
multiethnic event	19
different ethnicity event	1
Pro Multiethnic	6
mono-ethnic	32
family does	2
anti-multi ethnic	7
Membership	0
didn't care where	2
intentional	5
Why did you become one?	0
authentic	0
ministry	1
children	1
women's	1
young adults	2
not satisfied at old one	0
looking to be challenged	8
Connection to Mark	18
Mark's charisma	1
other people coming	1
size of church	0
small	1
old church too big	2
Vision	7
unity	1
economic	4
unified	1
different	0
diversity	3
multiethnic	22
sense of being called	28
Teaching	12
diversity of style	2
place of service	38
asked to serve	10
supported by church	4

Code	Uses
staying due to Biblical	1
relationships/connection	35
church leadership	3
enabling value enactment	3
How does it feel?	0
challenging	1
inspiring	1
pleased in yourself	1
gratifying	4
proud to be a member	1
love it	1
blessed	3
humbling	1
feels good	13
sense of excitement	8
sense of honor	2
partnering with God	2
grateful	1
special	2
sense of something bigger	3
sense of cost	1
perceived leader cost	1
acceptance	6
laid back	2
timeline	0
not a member	2
relatively quickly	14
1st Visit	16
badge of honor for length	2
spouse	3
took a while	7
children	2
be anonymous	1
past church hurt	2
didn’t want relationships	1
didn’t trust	2
teaching	2
spouse	2
enacted values	4
doctrine	4
Prototype	0
worships	2
involved in people’s lives	3

Code	Uses
caring for others	1
catch the vision	1
accept	1
pursuit of God	2
no one model	3
down to earth	1
unsure	1
economic	1
outreach	12
multiethnic	1
meaning of it	0
a part of a community	3
responsibility	4
hearts connected	2
financially committed	5
committed to keep coming	2
value outreach	5
value economic	1
value multiethnic	1
all about the Gospel	1
all about the church	0
church involvement	1
security	1
children’s	1
missionaries	1
as much as schedule allows	0
deacon	2
elders	8
glorifying God	2
consultant	2
youth	2
counting	2
media	1
women’s	3
worship	4
hospitality	4
disability	1
teen moms	2
light	2
very	10
small group leader	7
outreach	11
Administrative	5

Code	Uses
Hope Church Success	0
feels good	2
amazed	1
God's grace	3
proud for Hope Church	10
John emphasizing group	3
Christ	8
Hope Church	2
personal	2
not personal success	7
happy	2
proud to be a part	4
feels a part of it	9
feels good	1
Criticism	0
beyond all that	1
stop in mid-conversation	1
depends on topic	1
expected	3
ignorance	1
open with faults	8
protective	2
reflect on it	3
John taken his own	3
I understand it	5
bad	1
feel protective	1
defensive	2
confident in personal experience	1
other person's issue	5
frustrated	1
attempt to educate	13
by encouraging to see themselves	3
not heard any	8
not-bothered	12
personal insult	2
used to, but not any more	1
normally yes: Hope Church no	2
mis-understanding	13
Self-enhancement	1
none	1
growing	3
learning	4

Code	Uses
emotionally	1
relationally	6
spiritual	2
outreach	2
Affinity	4
diversity	3
non-denominational	2
community	4
building philosophy	1
Economic	1
Outreach	12
workers	1
Multiethnic	7
Emulation	1
diversity	1
teaching	2
cognition	1
community	0
Economic	4
outreach	3
inspired to do it	1
multiethnic	9
relationships	4
teaching	3
some still struggle	4
relating to others	1
view of God expanded	3
Thought it was crazy	1
Labor	16
church support	1
growth	2
Identification	6
second nature	1
self definition	3
it doesn’t	3
less self-righteous	1
care for people more	3
more open	6
mistakes allowed	2
perceived greater ownership	1
vision	1
initial uncomfortable	1
bigger than self	4

Code	Uses
way of thinking	4
self-concept	1
instant credibility	1
value	1
more than any other way	2
cognitive	1
value non-integrated	1
parallel definition	2
no change	2
expression of self	2
church	1
new members class	1
offended at not being known	1
Multiethnic	272
families	1
see the best	1
patience required	3
ethnic conversations	1
for sake of gospel	1
doesn't define us	1
language	23
first century church	12
sociological reasons	2
outreach implications	8
intentionality	13
cost of	2
picture of heaven	17
skin color	5
leadership	35
differences in style	3
multi-national	31
Economic Diversity	85
smelly	2
West Little Rock	3
rich	9
poor	6
homeless	25
down trodden	1
need	1
Community outreach	158
reach people where they are	4
primary value	1
community transformation	5

Code	Uses
intentionality	7
for the good of the city	6
cost of/hardship	2
72204	14
church to the community	3
work	18
for the sake of the Gospel	12
Distinctive	57
non-mega church	1
outreach	3
economic	1
Uncomfortable	1
vision	1
Bible Teaching	2
body ministry	1
facility	6
diversity	3
ministry philosophy	2
West Little Rock	1
dependence	1
multi-cultural	1
pride	1
non-competing	2
Prestigious	8
insider	1
not for everyone	1
God’s favor	8
Central	66
multiethnic	1
DNA	1
community outreach	1
Enduring	24
first experiences	0
non-welcoming event	23
door locked	1
no greeting	2
pressured/bullied	4
Welcoming event	65
non-embarrassment	1
welcoming atmosphere	3
answered questions	1
good feeling	1
cried	10

Code	Uses
feeling loved	14
reflective of community	34
community favor	1
facility	1
Church as a community	166
understands its responsibilities	1
pursuing spiritual maturity	4
“heart”	2
work through conflict	1
friendly	3
belonging	3
accepted	21
friends	2
unity	35
disunity	9
worship	68
non-pretentiousness	4
family	19
called to be a apart	4
walk	17
authentic	24
Hope Church is	8
brokenness	11
small groups	15
Diversity (general)	171
mainstream	2
prison	2
age	2
Primary value	1
sexual orientation	3
accommodate	6
cultural	18
worship	8
worship style	13
clothing	18
handicapped	4
generational	2
religion or belief system	2
influence	1
world view	5
denominational	18
academic	11
geographic culture	1

Code	Uses
personal identity	9
political	11
backgrounds	40
traditions	3
unofficial value	64
non fancy	1
tolerant	2
learning	2
for all people	3
glorify God	2
openminded	1
reflect God’s love	10
Christ Centered	7
willingness	21
fundamental of faith	24
secondary issues	1
God reconciliation	5
dependence	24
redemption	4
Flexibility	4
Prayer	40
leadership function	88
transparent	4
accountability	1
mature	6
empowerment of body	6
develop other leaders	3
leadership conflict	8
non-changing	1
shared leadership	17
Sr Pastor national recognition	23
vision	7
community outreach	1
problem solving	1
congregational care	5
communication	34
taught	5
style	5
social media	1
intentional	1
Facility	75
not functional	4
philosophical	19

Code		Uses
	West Little Rock	2
	community	4
	sign of maturity	5
	first observation	4
	temporary	1
	new building	5
	important event	1
	not maps updated	1
	bad signage	3
	not extravagant	12
	comforting	1
	money issues	9
	dissarray	14