HOW THE COMPASSION AND JUSTICE MINISTRY REFLECTS THE INSTITUTIONAL NORMS & VALUES OF WILLOW CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH AND CONTRIBUTES TO ITS LEGITIMACY

A thesis presented
by
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to
The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
In the field of
Education

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
July, 2015
Abstract

This intrinsic case study explores the relationship between the Willow Creek Community Church (WCCC) and its embedded nonprofit social services organization, the Compassion and Justice Ministry (CJM). In conducting this exploration, the study adopts the lenses of institutional theory and legitimacy theory to develop an understanding of how the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the values of its parent organization, and contributes to its legitimacy. The main goal of the study was to understand the dynamics of Willow Creek Community Church, and how it accomplishes its charitable pursuits through the Compassion and Justice Ministry. This study was carried out by interviewing leaders and surveying staff of both Compassion and Justice Ministry, and the Willow Creek Community Church. The study also interviewed leaders of partner and peer organizations. The findings revealed the presence of isomorphism in the relationship between both entities. It also demonstrated a connection between the work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry, and the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church. The findings underscore the importance of legitimacy in donor funded organizations and also a consistency in values between a parent organization and its embedded unit. A practical implication is that faith-based organizations can effectively carry out charitable work through an embedded unit, while maintaining their spiritual values. Since this organization has been successful, it suggests that other organizations could adopt some nuggets for running a successful faith-based embedded organization with the dual focus of spiritual and practical charitable work.

Key words: institutional theory, legitimacy theory, values, isomorphism
I want to dedicate this project to the many people around the world who happened to have been born on the wrong side of the tracks, and just need hope and opportunity to give their lives meaning; this one is for you. I pray hope and compassion finds you through organizations like the one this study is about. I pray you find peace and human dignity wherever you are in the world.

I was content with earning my first degree in Computer Science, and had no idea I would someday go for a doctoral degree. Somehow, I surprised myself and I did it! Thank God.

So first of all, I want to thank God for the strength and wisdom I received for this journey. You have made a difference in my life. You have given my life meaning. I am thankful.

I also want to thank my lovely daughter, Zara Grace Sade, the best gift I received...from Heaven. You changed my life forever. You inspire me continually in all I do, and to do better. Sweetheart, you kept writing me from your boarding school in Kent to ask: “How is your ‘disseNtation’ going, dad?” Well, I can finally tell you: my disseNtation is finally over. I hope I have the opportunity to cheer you when it’s your turn (no pressure).

I will always be grateful to Dr. Catherine G. O. for seeing something of value in me as a young man, and for believing I had a great future all this years. Your success and unwavering faith in me has been inspirational and made a world of difference over the years.

I want to thank my family for their support at various times of this project. I want to especially thank my different dads, biological and surrogate - Sunny, Nielsen (Norwegian) and Alex (African) for their tireless support and encouragement through this process. I called you in

Dedication
some of my most challenging moments and you encouraged me and prayed for me. Dad and Mom, you were two fearless young people who embarked on a journey from Africa to attend College in London many years ago. You began your family as students. You gave us a great future through your fierce commitment to education. Well, I pursued education as you always advised. Good news folks: it took quite a while, but I finally completed school!
Acknowledgments

No one successfully completes an endeavor of this magnitude without help along the way. I want to acknowledge my teachers who guided me through this process. I want to especially mention my favorite teacher, Dr. Carol Zulauf Sharicz who first taught grace and class. You were always respectful of your students, while teaching them. I was jealous to find out that some of my colleagues also considered you their favorite teacher. You were always available to provide support, even during terms you didn’t teach me. I will forever be grateful to you. I also want to thank my colleagues who played a great role in making me a better student.

I want to thank my advisor and fearless leader, Dr. Kelly J. Conn, who stepped into this process at a very crucial time when direction, thoughtful and steady leadership were needed to guide this ship. You took ownership of this project and put your stamp on it. You challenged me to think anew. You brought valuable insights that this project needed. You did it all with grace and kindness, which gave me peace and much needed re-assurance. For this, I am profoundly grateful to you, my advisor and lead partner on this project.

I also want to thank my second reader, Dr. Sara Ewell, for your fresh perspective and direction. And of course, my colleague and third reader, Dr. Nelly Cardinale for your friendship, contribution and time invested in this project to make this a perfect document. To my friend and colleague, Dr. Cilla Bercovici, your name is worth mentioning. Thanks for the many times you had to proof read my manuscript and cheer me on to completion. Thank you also, my friend, Jazz for all the moments we talked on the phone to encourage each other’s pursuits. You are a good friend, future Dr. Jackson.

I also want to thank Bill Hybels for his vision in building an organization that is making real impact around the world, and his able Executive Assistant, Jean Blount for making all this
possible. You epitomize the value of service and grace in all you do, Jean. And of course, the rest of the team at Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry for their commitment to this project. No study would be valuable without the willing participation of its respondents. I am grateful to you all, and the other participants, who did this for free, and without whose feedback, this study would not have been possible.

I want to thank my friends, including Mike B. I can’t forget my Facebook Friends who kept ‘liking’ and commenting on my protests and weary comments. Often times, some of you energized me by expressing faith in me. You don’t know how much of a difference you made when I needed it. I want to also appreciate some members of my church family for their support.

Finally, I want to thank the librarians in different cities and countries who put up with my constant demands, especially those who went above the call of duty. Thank you, Kelly K. You were the best. You didn’t only provide support, but you also provided encouragement and kept me focused. Patrick and Sara at my local library: thank you for the many times you accommodated my requests that were outside your job descriptions, but you pointed me in the direction I needed to go. I can’t say thank you enough to you guys. To those I forgot to mention by name, please know that I know all what you did, and will forever be grateful.
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Chapter I
Willow Creek’s Compassion and Justice Ministry fights local and global poverty and injustice. Whether serving local guests in our Care Center or meeting the tangible needs of our brothers and sisters in Latin America or Africa, Willow seeks to bring holistic care and the hope of Christ – to those who are struggling against poverty, both locally and around the world.

(Willow Creek Community Church, n.d.-a, para. 2)

Problem of Practice and Significance

Nonprofit organizations play a major role in providing social services to the poor and less fortunate. According to Deborah Hechinger, management leader and nonprofit advocate, the nonprofit industry is an incredibly important part of the economy (Deborah Hechinger, 2014). Religious organizations recognize the basic needs of the less fortunate: food, shelter and medical services. Consequently, they have become key players in addressing these needs, through the provision of social goods and services (Fitzgerald, 2010). “Faith-based and community organizations have had a long tradition of helping Americans in need and together represent an integral part of our nation’s social service network” (The Whitehouse, n.d., para 1). According to Bush (2001): “Faith-based organizations are a vitally important resource in our communities, reaching out to needy neighbors and neighborhoods in many ways” (p. 4).

In order to provide necessary services efficiently, some religious organizations embed sub-units dedicated to providing social goods and services to the needy in society. Most religious faiths make helping the needy an important aspect of their teachings. Some simply teach it, while others take the extra step of incorporating charity programs into their regular activities. In a few instances, some faith-based organizations excel at doing charitable work in a more effective
manner than their secular counterparts (Bush, 2001). They accomplish this goal by expressing values of compassion, love and care in ways others do not (Bush, 2001). Often times, religious nonprofit organizations bring a greater degree of a personal touch to their approach of doing social work than their secular counterparts (Sherman, 1995; Bush, 2001). Some religious organizations create these charities for the main purpose of offering social services in a manner that is consistent with their faith. Some religious organizations float charities in order to make their brand of services easily available or accessible, while others float medical charities in order to create or maintain an image (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013). The Compassion & Justice Ministry (CJM) of Willow Creek Community Church (WCCC) is an example of such an organization. The Compassion and Justice Ministry was formed, and is dedicated to expressing love through charitable work (Willow Creek Community Church, n.d.-b.). They do so in a manner, considered unique for a religious organization - one that combines market principles of efficiency, accountability and service delivery (Drucker, 1989).

Funding is an essential aspect of keeping a nonprofit organization afloat and viable. Some religious nonprofit organizations are limited from vying for government funding, since they seek to avoid the limits placed on recipients of government funding by the accompanying regulations. Religious organizations also want to avoid conflicts with the tenets of their faith. Consequently, these organizations seek legitimacy to enable them attract greater funding in a saturated environment. They seek funding, not only from their faithful members, but also from outside members in order to increase their resource capacity. Funders are inundated with significantly more requests than they can accommodate, which makes it important that they seek legitimate organizations, to ensure that they are fulfilling their fiduciary responsibilities to their board members, or funders who are within and outside their place of worship. It is important that these
charity organizations conduct their affairs in a manner that demonstrates their legitimacy, in order to attract the trust and consequent funding they seek.

If we could better understand how one religious non-profit organization gains legitimacy in the eyes of those members who support it towards the end of securing funding to do charitable work, then we might be able to aid similar organizations approach a strategy of gaining legitimacy towards the end of securing greater funding. Therefore, this study seeks to understand how the Compassion and Justice Ministry not only reflects the values of Willow Creek Community Church, but also contributes to its legitimacy. This study will use the lenses of institutional theory and legitimacy theory to explore this relationship.

**Positionality Statement**

There have been questions raised about how faith-based organizations (FBOs) should be studied, especially since research in this area has been lacking (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013). Since most people have strong views about religion, which is somewhat linked to FBOs, there is potential for some bias. In the words of Griffiths (1998):

> Bias comes not from having ethical and political positions – this is inevitable – but from not acknowledging them. Not only does such acknowledgment help to unmask any bias that is implicit in those views, but it helps to provide a way of responding critically and sensitively to the research” (p. 133).

It is important that the qualitative researcher not only acknowledges bias where it exists, but also takes appropriate steps to address it. This researcher acknowledges personal bias that might exist regarding the exploration of this subject. This researcher has extensive experience in the nonprofit environment, and also involvement with international social work, similar to the subjects of this study. As a nonprofit professional, the researcher does bring some personal
experience to this study, which provides an added advantage in understanding some of the nuances and jargon involved in the research. Consequently, this researcher acknowledges that the potential to have certain expectations regarding how events may unfold in this environment exists. This bias could tempt the researcher to go into this process with preconceived ideas that could easily limit effective inquiry that comes with research, rather than keep a curious mindset. The researcher, who shares Christian values like WCCC, has also been impressed by their rise and impact over the years as one of the most influential churches, social change organization, and leadership examples in America (Chu, 2010).

The researcher, who shares Christian values like WCCC, has also been impressed by their rise and impact over the years as one of the most influential churches, social change organization, and leadership examples in America (Chu, 2010).

The researcher, also finds their commitment to excellence impressive. There is a potential of obstructing curiosity needed for research. This could potentially pose objectivity challenges for the researcher, who has to be aware of the potential for bias, and take steps to minimize that risk. The researcher endeavored to be disciplined in following the research questions, and let the findings determine the conclusion, regardless of what they might be. This researcher made a disciplined effort to set aside personal views of the organizations being studied, to minimize bias. One way to accomplish this goal was to be accountable to fellow research colleagues and the study’s adviser. When in doubt, this researcher inquired from other experienced research colleagues how they might handle certain situations involving potential bias, in order to maintain objectivity.

**Research Question**

How does the Compassion & Justice Ministry reflect the institutionalized norms of Willow Creek Community Church, and how does CJM contribute to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church?
Significance Statement

In recent times, nonprofit organizations, churches, and other religious nonprofit organizations struggle with staying true to their primary goal of spiritual enrichment, while pursuing social action causes (Gaddis, 2011), in their quest for more resources to accomplish their mission. The more kinds of funders they appeal to, the greater the opportunity of attracting more funding. As an example, corporate funders are less inclined to give to a church, whereas, they might be willing to support a stand-alone embedded organization focused on practical charitable endeavors. The wisdom of separating these entities is a benefit to a faith-based organization with large scale charitable interests.

The vast majority of studies in the field of nonprofit organizations have been focused on secular or non-religious nonprofit organizations (Reda, 2012). Of the studies related to religious nonprofit organizations, the majority of research has been drawn from sociology and religious studies (Reda, 2012). The proposed study is significant because religious nonprofit organizations are playing an increasing role in providing social services in areas previously covered by the government (Bush, 2001). Consequently, these religious nonprofit organizations seek legitimacy, as it contributes to greater relevance in their field. Legitimacy enables these organizations attract more funding from the donors they appeal to, their members and some outsider, in order to accomplish their goal. In the case of WCCC and CJM, their target donors are predominantly private Christian donors, but also corporate bodies that support their charitable endeavors.

This study aims to fill some gaps in the literature that address this function. Another reason this study is important is that it addresses a major concern for nonprofit organizations, which is securing sources necessary to accomplish their goals, including serving resource deprived communities. Therefore, an investigation of the processes and relationships like that of the
Compassion and Justice Ministry and Willow Creek Community Church, an organization that has succeeded beyond the scope of others in its field (Drucker, 1989) will contribute to the literature.

**Research Boundaries**

It is important that case study research projects have clearly defined boundaries (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2008). According to Stake (1995), bounding a case study is important because it gives the researcher the ability to conceptualize the depth and breadth of the study at hand. Even though Aldrich (2007) defines an organization as one having boundaries within which its members operate by determined rules, organizations are also goal-oriented and boundary-maintaining. These organizations also have environments within which they and their partners operate. They are also bounded by the scope of their operations. Yin (2008) offers another perspective where bounding is concerned. He simply defines boundary as the beginning and end of the case. In bounding organizational environment, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) define organizational field as a collection of “organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products” (p. 143). In the words of Lune and Martinez (1999): “Organizational environments are defined by actors within the industry, sector, or field, who have an investment in the established order”(p. 613). In addition, Scott (2008) posits that organizational fields are bounded by shared cultural-cognitive values, and common regulatory system, which constitutes an acceptable sphere of organizational or institutional life. In distinguishing between organizational fields and their embedded subfields, Lune and Martinez (1999) also state that: “subfields are clusters within fields of organizations that more deliberately, and informally, share some set of organizational goals” (p. 612). For the
purpose of this study, this case was bounded by reflecting on the work of WCCC through CJM over the last five years (i.e. 2010-2015). It was focused on feedback of the administrative staff and leaders of WCCC and CJM, partners and peer leaders within this period. This study is also bounded by Willow and Compassion’s nonprofit partners. So the partners researched will have to meet IRS criteria for nonprofit organizations.

Nonprofit organizations are affected by various elements and interests, which include: funders, regulatory agencies, partners, and the communities they serve. Churches and religious organizations are primarily regulated by their tax exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Consequently, Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry are limited to only carry out nonprofit activities, and cannot participate in political activities/advocacy, as they might desire. They are limited from profitable ventures, and so have to depend on free will donations to support their operations, and meet their mission. This study focused on the immediate community of Chicagoland area and the ‘community’ of South America served by WCCC and CJM. To carry out their work effectively, CJM has to partner with other charities that are already established in areas and specialties of interests to them. Often times, these partners already have human resource on the ground in specific areas around the world. The Compassion and Justice Ministry provides financial support and management expertise in areas where their goals align with their partners.

A key aspect of nonprofit organizations is their volunteer relationships. Nonprofit organizations also create a “social boundary” around the work that they do/support in concert with other organizations, or entities. As a result of their values, WCCC and CJM have taken the responsibility of leading other churches and Christian organizations in the area of racial reconciliation and healing. Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice
Ministry have partnered with African American churches to preach racial healing and unity. According to a Chicago Tribune news report, their leader and founder, Bill Hybels has led his members on Justice Marches across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama (Malone, 2008). Hybels, a Caucasian, has consistently partnered with African American leaders to commemorate the Selma March by the late civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In this symbolic gesture, WCCC and CJM have led by their values. The Compassion and Justice Ministry of Willow Creek Community Church operates around the world in African countries like Malawi, South Africa and Zambia, and South American countries like Bolivia, Chile, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Costa Rica.

Bounding of international nonprofit organizations is carried out differently, since such organizations serve in multiple external locations, sometimes many miles and oceans away from their base. Nonprofits have many external controls (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) that are beyond their organization’s immediate location (Le Dantec & Edwards, 2010). Though management practices in nonprofit organizations are focused internally, they are also affected by external pressures of accountability, to increase efficiency mainly by funders, who exert influence through their donations (Le Dantec & Edwards, 2010). The research boundaries were limited to one international and one local partnership, for the purpose of this study, and consistent with the boundary definitions of organizational theorists (Aldrich, 2008; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Lune & Martinez, 1999).

**Theoretical Framework**

In researching the relationship between the Compassion and Justice Ministry and Willow Creek Community Church, this study will adopted the combined framework of Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and Legitimacy Theory (Suchman, 1995). This research
examined how the Compassion and Justice Ministry of Willow Creek Community Church, relates to, and adopts the processes of its parent organization, and its environment of operation in order to achieve its mission of addressing issues of poverty and social injustice both locally and internationally.

**Institutional Theory**

Institutional Theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding organizations and their processes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). It stipulates that an organization and its processes/formal structures are greatly influenced by the institutions within which it finds itself (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Institutional theory also contends that successful organizations often reach a point where they rather dominate their environment than adjust to them (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). An organization like Willow Creek Community Church prides itself in being the significant or most relevant, leader or example (we might say ‘dominant’) organization for others to emulate. The church was founded in 1975, and began to do things differently from other churches; 40 years later, they have been voted as the most influential church in America. Institutional Theory provides an important theoretical lens for evaluating progressive change in organizational processes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

In their study, Harvard University professor of philanthropy/nonprofit, Peter Frumkin and nonprofit management expert, Joseph Galaskiewicz, posit that the literature on nonprofit organizations in recent times have focused on how they are becoming more isomorphic, or similar as a consequence of institutionalization (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004). Recent studies have explored nonprofit organizations, aided by the lenses of institutional theory (DiMaggio, 1991). Perrow (1970) posits that oftentimes, institutions have bureaucratic tendencies, whose ultimate goal is to bring the organizations within them towards homogeneity. These
organizations maintain homogeneity, even as they seek their individuality. In the words of DiMaggio and Powell (1991): “organizational fields display considerable diversity in approach and form. Once a field becomes well established, there is an inexorable push towards homogenization” (p. 64). Nonprofit organizations are susceptible to their environment, and so when regulatory or other environmental pressures set in, they respond with their own institutionalized rules and processes (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004).

According to Frumkin and Galaskiewicz, (2004), coercive isomorphism emanates from the external pressures experienced by an organization, and its need for legitimacy. Institutional theory provides a lens for determining organizational habits that also contribute to their legitimacy (Zucker, 1989). According to Zucker (1987), institutional theory of organizations provides us with a rich and complex view of organizations. These theories paint a picture of organizations that are impacted by normative pressures that arise from their external environment, or within the organization itself. These pressures tend to guide the organization in a certain direction (Zucker, 1987). In the case of their members, they want to attract the best quality members who join them for reasons that include their legitimacy. This in turn speaks to their funders in a manner that confirms credibility. In their book about the history and success of the church they founded, Willow Creek Community Church (aka Willow Creek) founders, Bill and Lynne Hybels appreciated “financial donors who invest significant percentages of their income” in their church (Hybels & Hybels, 1995, p. 8). A venture they refer to as high risk.

Since organizations value their independence, it is important they run and manage their processes in a manner that keeps them viable over time (Bradley, Aldrich, Shepherd & Wiklund, 2010). The characteristics of these organizations and their processes are worth studying to enrich the literature. Institutional theory focuses on the habits and practices of
these organizations in a manner that is efficient and lends to their legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2004). Legitimacy is very important to these organizations as it demonstrates credibility and attracts more funding to support their causes. This invariably leads to accomplishing their mission, consequently making them viable in a crowded field of nonprofit organizations. Institutional theory also emphasizes taken for granted assumptions (Zucker, 1987) about the tasks that keep these organizations running well and also enable them to stand out. According to Scott and Meyer (1991), institutional environments provide a guide that organizations have to conform to, if they must be relevant, or enjoy legitimacy (Scott & Meyer, 1991). DiMaggio & Powell (1983) posit that organizations are always mindful of other organizations around them. Aldrich (1979) agrees with this point by stating: “the major factor that organizations must take into account is other organizations” (p. 265). In their attempt to dominate and attract the most members, support and funding, it is important to pay attention to their ‘competition’ – so they remain viable, and also stay ahead of the pack. These organizations understand that most funders like to identify with winners and leaders – something they can always boast about.

Large organizations (like WCCC) that create their own programs, and procedures consistent with modern organizations . . . “are manifestations of powerful institutional rules which function as highly rationalized myths” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 343). Institutional theory posits that while institutions may act differently, they are similar in many respects. They function in similar environments where they strive for financial success, and also legitimacy amongst their peers (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Zucker, 1987). Isomorphism describes the similarity between organizations that function within a particular environment.

To understand institutional isomorphism, it is important that one has an understanding of
the sphere or domain where these processes take place. There are different definitions for this domain. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) state that they “exist to the extent they are institutionally defined” (p. 148). Zucker (1987) defines institutional environment as the “positions, policies, programs and procedures of modern organizations” (p. 449-450), which are manifestations of important rules which act as rationalized myths. Consequently, the institutional environment, which is the boundary within which the institutions function, is not limited to the effects of networks of social behavior and relationships composing and surrounding an organization (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe this domain further by stating: “we mean those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar products or services” (p. 148). The value of this perspective is that it expands our focus beyond competing organizations, towards “the totality of relevant actors” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148). They further posit that organizations may change their goals over time, develop new goals, “but in the long run, organizational actors…construct around themselves an environment that constrains their ability to change further in later years” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148).

Institutional Isomorphism is “the concept that best captures the process of homogenization” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 149) amongst organizations functioning within the same environment (Zucker, 1987). Another definition of isomorphism is: “a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p.149). Over time, organizational characteristics are formed that define the organization’s identity, but still conform to its environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Meyer and Rowan (1977) make the case that
large organizations somehow find a way to tell their story, by framing their actions with a narrative that is consistent with acceptable societal expectations, thereby furthering the cause of their legitimacy. The act of framing their narrative is meant to paint a picture that reassures their environment, particularly the influential members of the public (Mizruchi & Fein, 1999). In the case of religious organizations like Willow Creek, their immediate environment consists of their members, clients and funders. In discussing institutions, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe large organizations as looking similar to others. There are three ways institutional isomorphic change takes place: coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism and normative isomorphism. Sometimes, organizations that function in this sphere are limited to the environmental circumstances they find themselves (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

**Coercive isomorphism.** This is the most prevalent and studied aspect of institutional theory. In their discussion of coercive isomorphism, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) consider organizations as part of a field, within an institution. These fields are defined by the institution, or in this case, the parent organization. These organizations experience regular pressures from the organizational field to conform to certain institutional expectations. According to Lune and Martinez (1999), an organizational field not only provides an immediate environment for an organization, but it also sets a standard of common interests for similar organizations, and exerts pressure to keep them consistent. According to Lune and Martinez (1999), coercive isomorphism is the process whereby organizations “experience constraining pressures…from both the other organizations comprising their field and the institutions of their larger environment” (p. 612). Thus the external pressures from other organizations may cause an organization to conform to cultural expectations and standards (Mizruchi & Fein, 1999). These standards include values that the parent organization or institution may consider important. Coercive isomorphism is also a
vehicle through which nonprofit organizations who need regular and significant funding to survive, are made to conform to the expectations of their financial benefactors (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). According to Mizruchi and Fein (1999), coercive isomorphism is a process whereby organizations are constrained by individuals or organizations who provide their resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The need to remain viable or legitimate is important to these institutions, which leads them to organize or react in a certain manner (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This form of isomorphism is also a consequence of political influence and part of an organization’s need for legitimacy. This comes from formal or informal pressures these organizations receive from external sources, or cultural expectations in the society where they function. In some situations, these changes could be as a consequence of a government directive (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This point is re-iterated in the statement: “the existence of a common legal environment affects many aspects of an organization’s behavior” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 150).

Meyer & Rowan (1977) posit that as large organizations increasingly dominate the social arena, smaller organizations have a tendency to model themselves after larger successful organizations, which they consider to be more successful and legitimate, within their field (Zucker, 1987). In turn, other organizations coming from behind could observe, learn, and replicate their success. These organizations exert pressure on other entities that depend on them by setting their own standards and rules that these dependent organizations have to follow. Coercive isomorphism is not always explicit, but sometimes come in subtle forms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Sometimes, coercive isomorphism causes organizations to take steps they consider necessary to gain acceptance by more established organizations in their environment.
Mimetic isomorphism. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983): “not all institutional isomorphism derives from coercive authority. Uncertainty is also a powerful force that encourages imitation” (p. 151), or mimetic isomorphism. In this form of institutionalization, organizations conform by mimicking other organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) they look up to as the gold standard. According to Mizruchi and Fein (1999), mimetic isomorphism is usually an organization’s response to uncertainty. In explaining this aspect of institutional theory, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) explain that in attempting be more effective or successful, organizational leaders mirror successful organizations in their field, by adopting their approach. According to Mizruchi and Fein (1999), mimetic isomorphism is adopted especially when organizations encounter difficult challenges, or in response to uncertainty. Mizruchi and Fein (1999) explain this by stating: “in situations in which a clear course of action is not available, organizational leaders may decide that the best response is to mimic a peer that they perceive to be successful” (p. 657). These organizations obviously consider this form of isomorphism an efficient method as it avoids the cost of reinventing the wheel, in their attempt to accomplish their goals. It makes logical sense that if they adopt the processes of a successful organization, it would help them accomplish success like the organization they are mimicking. Modeling, another term for this process, is an organization’s attempt to avoid re-inventing the wheel, but instead, to find practical and viable solutions to an organizational challenge at minimal cost (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe modeling as an unconscious form of innovation, whereby the one initiating the modeling is also accomplishing the goal of bringing solutions to an organizational challenge, by adopting principles or unique attributes from the organization being modeled, who may or may not approve, but whose model is a solution for the situation at hand. As DiMaggio and Powell (1983) note, others may attempt to
copy this unique solution, and so the innovation-imitation relationship continues. An interesting fact about mimetic isomorphism is that despite the desire of organizations to be different, there are generally few options for variation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). According to DiMaggio and Powell, these organizations through their identical practices, begin to function in a similar manner. The structuration of these organizations eventually leads to homogeneity in “structure, culture and output” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 147). This is a deliberate move by the organizations to be similar.

Normative isomorphism. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) explain normative isomorphism by using the concept of professionalization. Professionalization is seen as the collective action of members of a particular occupation to define the boundaries and principles of their profession, in order to control the quality of their members, especially the new ones (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In attempting to control output, members of the same profession take similar professional exams, as part of their institutionalized standardization. As a result, doctors who may have trained in different locations, may end up working in the same hospital carrying out the same processes. Their ability to work effectively together is mainly because they have done the same professional (medical) examinations. Normative isomorphism as a form of institutionalization usually relies on a large bureaucratic organization, or the government, which has a vision for homogeneity (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Oftentimes, organizations tend to recruit certain professionals from the same human resource pool such as graduates of certain colleges whose training and quality of work, they consider consistent with their values. These graduates, having been groomed in the same background and attributes, tend to share similar professional philosophy and similar solutions to professional challenges (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Even when new career professionals somehow escape the aforementioned filtering process, their
organizations send them to the same employer-professional networks, courses and training, where the networking, or professional socialization that occurs act as a force for isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

According to Larson (1977): “Organizational professions proper are generated by heteronymous bureaucracies, and primarily by the expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus of the state” (p. 179). Furthermore, Larson (1977) posits that all professions depend on large bureaucratic organizations. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), in order to maintain continuity and homogeneity, leaders of government and other organizations, mentor other leaders, who in turn mentor other leaders, with the goal of having a similar manner of thinking in carrying out the vision of the organization and others within its environment. This also happens in government, where political leaders mentor younger politicians, who they eventually endorse to replace them when they retire. In recent times, organizational leaders are selecting their replacement a few years in advance and mentoring them prior to handing over the reins of leadership. Institutionalization is prevalent in organizations and utilizes tools for bringing about consistency, continuity and homogeneity, which sometimes are responses to uncertainty (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004). An important goal of institutionalization is ensuring the legitimacy of these organizations or professions. Institutionalization of these organizations could potentially lead to legitimacy. Leaders of larger organizations are also honored with ceremonial positions of influence in professional and trade organizations where they have an opportunity to influence more of their professional colleagues with their way of thinking (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Organizational leaders understand that when they eventually reach levels of legitimacy, they have the ability to influence other leaders who invariably steer their own organizations in directions that emulate the leader’s successful and legitimate organization. This is a consequence
of organizational existence, which includes the need for competition for resources (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Consequently, such an organization is rewarded for sharing similar values and structures as their fellow successful or legitimate organizations.

**Organizational Legitimacy**

There has been little done in the area of studying organizational legitimacy from a social science perspective, but it is a logical extension to the existent scholarly conversation, and of interest to the researcher. Organizations had been studied from a rational systems perspective that consider organizations as tightly bounded entities, with specific boundaries that could be clearly demarcated from their environment (Suchman, 1995). Later on, open systems theorists began to see organizations as anything but bounded, with porous and problematic boarders. Suchman (1995) further states that organization/institutional theorists view organizations based on their norms, ritual and cultural habits. Organizational legitimacy could be found in the midst of these perspectives.

A definition worth mentioning describes legitimacy as: “a process whereby an organization justifies…its right to exist” (Maurer, 1971, p. 361). Drawing from the work of organizational scholars like Weber, Suchman (1995) suggests that the concept of legitimacy has become an important aspect of viewing organizations. Suchman synthesizes the diverse literature on legitimacy from an organizational context, viewed from both strategic and institutional approaches. Suchman (1995) offers ideas on gaining, maintaining and repairing legitimacy, considering the pros and cons of the organizational manipulation required. Suchman (1995) makes a case for the importance of research on legitimacy. According to Atack (1999), the increased prominence of nonprofit organizations as key players and actors in developmental issues raises questions of legitimacy. Nonprofit organizations have to demonstrate legitimacy for
them to be considered as viable actors, especially when it comes to the funding they need to
accomplish their mission. They have distinct roles in the process. According to O’Brien (2010):
“maintenance of legitimacy is central to the survival of any organization” (p. 339). O’Brien
(2010) combines the lenses of resource dependency theory and institutional theory to analyze the
legitimacy of a center. O’Brien’s article argues that an organization has the ability to strengthen
its legitimacy when it is able to effectively respond to its external environment. In the words of
O’Brien (2010): “Interaction with the external environment plays an important role in
determining organizational legitimacy, shaping actions and determining opportunities” (p. 339).
O’Brien (2010) further posits that these organizations need a level of legitimacy or credibility to
enable them gain sufficient trust to attract the much needed resources. Legitimacy is the moral
currency by which organizations function. Larson (1977) posits that the organizational drive
towards institutionalization is as a result of their need for legitimacy. Since legitimacy is a goal
organizations pursue in order to stay relevant, and it has such rich literature behind it, this
researcher determined from the legitimacy articles studied, that exploring the relationship
between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry with the
lenses of institutional theory and legitimacy theory would be a rich study to investigate.

**Legitimacy theory.** Legitimacy theory is defined as the commitment of organizations to
continually seek to ensure that they operate within the bounds and norms of their respective
societies, that is, they attempt to ensure that their activities are perceived by outside parties as
being “legitimate”. These bounds and norms are not considered to be fixed, but rather, change
over time, thereby requiring the organization to be responsive to the environment in which they
operate (Deegan, 2000, p. 253).

Organizational legitimacy has been defined in different ways. First of all, Herlin (2013)
describes legitimacy as: “an intangible and socially constructed concept” (p. 4). Suchman (1995) defines legitimacy as: “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within the socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions.” (p. 574).

In discussing legitimacy, Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) state: “Organizations seek to establish congruence between the social values associated with or implied by their activities and the norms of acceptable behavior” (p. 122) within the societies they operate. Whenever we find an alignment between these two value systems, the principle in play is referred to as organizational legitimacy. Consequently, when there is a disparity or nonalignment between these two value systems, there is a threat to organizational legitimacy (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). Since organizations value credibility (or legitimacy), they take necessary steps to attract credibility and avoid anything that has the potential to undermine their credibility. This enables them to move towards legitimacy, and avoid any challenge to attaining this status. Oftentimes, an organization’s behavior relative to its environment demonstrates its drive towards legitimacy, which suggests that legitimacy is the congruence between an organization’s means and ends, and acceptable social norms, values and expectations (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). Legitimacy theory is based on the premise that organizations have a social compact with the communities within which they operate. This includes the communities they serve, and invariably leads to their funders. Organizations (especially those in the nonprofit environment) that depend on the public for financial support, cannot afford to take legitimacy and its inherent responsibilities for granted. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) consider legitimacy as a resource which organizations continuously seek, and also one which competing organizations might attempt to deny them. Perrow (1970) posits that organizations get legitimacy conferred upon them by the public, or
communities they serve. In their bid to succeed and thereby attract more support, it is essential that these organizations are considered credible or legitimate by the communities they serve, because even funders typically want to be associated with an organization deemed credible, or legitimate by those around them. Organizations, especially those in the nonprofit environment, who depend on the public for financial support, cannot afford to take legitimacy for granted. According to Parsons (1960), legitimacy justifies an organization’s role in the public sphere. Legitimacy is not limited to a specific set of standards or individual judgments, but a generalized set of standards. Therefore, as Suchman (1995) states: “legitimacy is dependent on a collective audience, yet independent of particular observers. An organization may deviate from an individual’s values yet retain legitimacy because the deviation draws no public disapproval” (p. 574). According to Suchman (1995), legitimacy affects how an organization’s audience perceives and also treats the organization. The organization’s constituents or its customers consider a legitimate organization as more worthy, more trustworthy, more meaningful and their actions as more predictable than their peers or competition. Invariably, organizations that lack legitimacy are often times vulnerable to charges of questionable choices and irresponsibility (Meyer & Rowan, 1991).

Theory & Methodology

Since this study adopted the theoretical framework of institutional and legitimacy theories, the researcher concluded that a case study was the appropriate methodology to adopt. Consequently, this qualitative study was carried out using a case study methodology. A case study is usually adopted for institutional theory research (Kerlin, 2013). A case study is the appropriate methodology for this study, because it is typically used to study a particular issue, an organization and its processes and when such exploration is done within in a bounded system
(Creswell, 2012). Case study is also the methodology of choice when studying *institutional* legitimacy (Cherney, Fisk, Hornsey, and Smith, 2009). O’Brien also agrees that a case study is the appropriate methodology to study organizational legitimacy. O’Brien (2010) uses a case study methodology when researching the legitimacy of an organization. According to Stake (1995), a case study not only focuses a particular case, but it helps to enlighten others with knowledge on what they do not know about that case.

This research used a data collection and analysis process (Creswell, 2012) to explore this case. Consequently, this study explored the aforementioned relationship using the instruments of questionnaires, interviews and surveys of prior selected personnel of Willow Creek Community Church, and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. This case study research examined public accounts of Willow Creek Community Church, Compassion and Justice Ministry, and their relationship.

In conclusion, this research explored the relationship between the Compassion and Justice Ministry, and its parent organization, Willow Creek Community Church, and how this symbiotic relationship contributes to the legitimacy of Willow Creek. This study was conducted in the context of their environment, especially from the perspective of their members and financial supporters, who they need to fund their mission related projects. This research used the framework of *institutional theory* and *legitimacy* theory to explore this relationship. This chapter will be followed by a literature review discussing this subject in further detail in the next chapter.
Chapter II: Literature Review
Willow Creek Community Church/Compassion & Justice Ministry: Overview

Willow Creek Community Church was founded in a northwest suburb of Chicago in October, 1975 by Bill Hybels, a young youth minister from Michigan (Vaudrey, 2010). It began with a few young people meeting in a cinema hall with the name Son City, but grew into a full-fledged church, with a desire to be uniquely different from the traditional church and a focus on creating a conducive environment for irreligious people (Braoudakis, 2000). The church began with hundreds of young people but soon grew into the thousands as many found this to be a place they could experience the Christian faith, and not feel judged or out of place (Hybels & Hybels, 1995). They began with a simple mission from the lessons 20-year old Bill Hybels learned in a Deerfield, Illinois classroom from his mentor, Dr. Gilbert Bilezikian, about the early, Acts 2 Bible church. This early church was a community of Christians who focused on expressing God’s love by loving each other and caring for strangers, because God wanted them to do so (Vaudrey, 2010). Hybels mission was to recreate a church like that in modern times. As Willow grew, their focus remained on being a church that provided spiritual nourishment for the faithful, and also hope and care for seekers. Their mission was simple: “people matter to God, therefore they should matter to us” (Vaudrey, 2010, p. 24). Over the last 40 years, even though the methods of conducting church have changed, the mission has not changed.

The vision of Willow Creek also grew into one of being an oasis for the weary, and taking the message of hope from the pages of the bible to real people around the world. Bill Hybels, their leader and founder decided very early to investigate what people wanted mostly from church and how best to give it to them while providing spiritual nourishment. To find out people’s needs, Hybels and his team did something unusual for a church at the time. They
utilized a market survey in order to get specific feedback. As Willow Creek grew larger, and with a global vision, Hybels continued to use market principles and strategies to run this growing organization. Adopting lessons from the survey feedback, Willow Creek decided on creating unique services that were not uncomfortable for new people, seeker (visitors seeking to learn about the Christian faith) friendly, as they refer to it. They also began to run their church office with professional staff and market principles – with a focus on customer service, results and strong visionary leadership. According to Drucker (1995), the services were brief, with well-produced drama skits and contemporary music. Hybels would teach a practical message that was recorded, but rather than the traditional Christian messages, it was made relevant to daily lives, and ended with a challenge on practical ways the attendees could bring about change in their lives, as they placed their faith in God. Many people heard about Willow Creek, and their welcoming style, and were attracted to this unique church, which in the 1990s became the largest church in America (Drucker, 1995). Today, over 20,000 people attend one of their six campuses each weekend for service, and many more connect globally online (Willow Creek Community Church, n.d.-a).

Willow Creek Community Church was founded based on unconditional love for others, and has a commitment to reach people with God’s unique kind of love. Considering themselves as God’s vessels, they increased in ministry activities to reach their community and people around the world. One of the major ways they accomplished this was to create the Compassion and Justice Ministry with a mission of fighting poverty and injustice on a local and global level (Willow Creek Community Church, n.d.-b). They accomplished this with staff dedicated to finding innovative solutions for different kinds of needs locally and internationally, and also by financially supporting partners dedicated to bringing solutions to under resourced environments.
Compassion and Justice Ministry is the arm of Willow Creek Community Church dedicated to doing good works through practical social endeavors around the world. The work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry is a practical expression of the Christian faith preached by Willow Creek Community Church. As its responsibility has grown the cost of funding its operations globally has increased. Willow is responsible for providing the funding of the Compassion and Justice Ministry.
Figure 1. The relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the compassion and Justice Ministry vis-à-vis their mission, and in the context of the theoretical framework.

Values. The values of Willow Creek Community Church are rooted in the simple premise that all people matter to God, and so they should matter to the church (Vaudrey, 2010). The people of Willow also believe that the local church, including theirs is the hope of the world. They accomplish their outreach tasks by upholding key values with include: spiritual enrichment which includes a commitment to learning from the bible, serving, empowering and offering hope to the less fortunate through biblical inspiration and practical solutions, leadership, excellence, compassion and justice, community and value for each individual (Hybels & Hybels, 1995)

The relationship between a religious nonprofit and its parent organization, and the consequent impact this relationship has on the legitimacy of the parent organization, especially where their financial backers are concerned, is important to explore and understand (Figure 1). This study helps an organizational theory student appreciate the connection between such a relationship and organizational legitimacy. The literature review will discuss institutional theory and its significance in the relationship between a large organization and its embedded unit. This literature review will also demonstrate that this study is grounded in theory. The aim of this study is to address how institutional theory and legitimacy theory are connected to the funding of a nonprofit organization, specifically a religious nonprofit (aka faith-based) organization. This literature review will attempt to address the following:

- Religious nonprofit organizations: providing social services.
- Funding religious nonprofit organizations
- Religious nonprofit organizations - existing literature.
• Embedded relationships.

The next four sections will connect the dots for the reader about how institutional theory and legitimacy theory are intertwined with the relationship between an embedded organization and its parent organization, and also the dynamics of their funding.

Organizational Legitimacy in the Literature

Organizational legitimacy has been studied in the context of accounting integrity (Carpenter & Ferroz, 1992; Goddard & Assad, 2006; Mobus, 2005) but also from a social responsibility and integrity perspective (Elshach & Sutton, 1992; Herlin, 2013; Moon & Jang 2007). In addressing legitimacy from the context of religious nonprofit organizations, this study also considered the perspective of organizational social responsibility and integrity. In this perspective, organizational legitimacy has been studied from institutional and the strategic angles (Suchman, 1995). The institutional legitimacy perspective (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1991) of legitimacy theory is driven by the innate institutional expectations beyond the control of any one organization. In this regard, the environment exerts its pressure and dictates its expectations on organizations operating within a given environmental field.

These nonprofit organizations operate in environments within which they serve, environments that also include their peers and competitors, who assess the credibility of these organizations. On the other hand, the strategic perspective (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) focuses on a managerial point of view whereby organizations manipulate the system in a public relations manner, in order to send the right signals that attract society’s attention and support (Suchman, 1995).

The institutional legitimacy scholars (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1991) depict legitimacy as a specific set of beliefs, not manipulated by organizations, but a set of
firmly held values that are projected on organizations. These scholars take legitimacy out of the realm of uncertainty, where spin is the order of the day. They portray legitimacy as a value that organizations need in order to survive. According to Suchman (1995), external institutions determine and define legitimacy for an organization. In this perspective: “cultural definitions determine how the organization is built, how it is run, and simultaneously, how it is understood and evaluated. Within this tradition, legitimacy and institutionalization are virtually synonymous” (Suchman, 1995, p. 576).

Unlike strategic legitimacy, institutional legitimacy is not an operational resource that could be manipulated from an organization’s environment (Suchman, 1995), but it is a specific set of expectations that the environment or institution has of the organization(s) functioning within its sphere. Elsbach (1994) drives home this point by stating: “institutional theorists have focused on how organizations, or even whole industries, may project legitimacy by merely adopting and maintaining widely used and accepted practice” (p. 57). In this perspective, organizational leaders are cognizant of their environmental or institutional legitimacy requirements, and they conform to these requirements in a manner consistent with coercive isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This is akin to government regulatory pressures that cause organizations to be institutionalized.

In advancing the strategic legitimacy perspective, some of its leading scholars (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Pfeffer, 1981; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) begin with the premise that "one of the elements of competition and conflict among social organizations involves the conflict between . . . systems of belief or points of view" (Pfeffer, 1981, p. 9). The scholars of this perspective build upon this premise by positing that legitimacy is an operational tool that organizations extract from their environment, which they subsequently utilize in their
journey towards accomplishing their goals (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Suchman, 1995).

Furthermore, scholars of strategic legitimacy posit that legitimacy lies a lot more in intangible symbolic gestures, which are easily manipulated by organizational leaders, than in measurable results like an organization’s balance sheet (Suchman, 1995). Ultimately, if organizations master the art of manipulating the public’s perception of them, they stand a good chance of being considered legitimate by their constituents. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) drive this point home when they assert that organizations need to be able to explain their conduct in the past, in light of new standards or social values.

According to Suchman (1995), organizations utilize powerful symbols for legitimacy by using respected celebrities for endorsing their products, placing respected national figures on their board of directors and oftentimes including the country’s name or the term ‘national’ as a symbol of patriotism. Strategic legitimacy scholars suggest that organizations stay away from defining legitimacy by easily measurable standards like resources, or setting high moral standards which they could easily not meet. Instead, these researchers recommend that the organizations keep using symbols, associations and gestures that suggest to the public that they are doing the right thing (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). Any organization that does not pay attention to the importance of legitimacy, the connection it has to their support and viability, does so at its own risk (Perrow, 1970).

The difference between the institutional and strategic legitimacy perspectives could be simply summed as strategic legitimacy being driven from within, and institutional legitimacy, driven from without. Elsbach (1994) drives this point home by positing that strategic legitimacy theorists having a perspective of organizational managers looking out, while institutional theorists have a perspective of society, or the institution looking in.
**Legitimacy and nonprofit funding.** Legitimacy not only gives an organization the moral justification to operate in the public square, but also the ability to attract the resources and funding it needs to operate (Parsons, 1960). An organization’s desire for legitimacy is one of the key forces that drives institutionalism, or **coercive isomorphism** (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004). According to Verbruggen, Christiaens and Mills (2011), nonprofit organizations are confronted with an increasing demand to demonstrate accountability and financial transparency. Accountability means that nonprofit organizations are expected to manage the resources donated to them properly, spend prudently, and also direct the resources towards the purposes for which they were donated. Religious nonprofit organizations are no different. The requirement for nonprofit organizations to demonstrate financial integrity has now become the standard in this arena. Often times, accountability adds to an organization’s strength and viability, and consequently determines the funding they are able to receive. This explains why some religious nonprofit organizations focus on legitimacy; it represents the intersection of an organization’s objectives, credibility and financial support.

Religious nonprofit organizations with an emphasis on social programs, like other nonprofits seek legitimacy (Froelich, 1999). One way they demonstrate their desire for legitimacy is in their drive for public and private funding. Private funds not only provide these organizations the much needed resources, but also offer them **legitimacy**, by demonstrating the level of support they receive from the public for their mission (Gronbjerg, 1993). In the words of Moon and Jang (2007): “public funding reduces nonprofits organizational autonomy but helps them establish their reputation and legitimacy” (p. 206). Elsbach and Sutton (1992) discuss legitimacy by referring to organizations that “seek to be recognized by a wide set of groups and individuals that will provide endorsement and support” (p. 699). Nonprofit organizations also
seek legitimacy in order to get credibility, which eventually attracts financial support, which is a stamp of acceptance. If they must earn legitimacy, then they have to conform to certain societal norms and expectations (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992). Consequently, if these organizations do not adhere to certain standards, they disqualify themselves from opportunities to receive financial support. As stated earlier, organizations that take legitimacy for granted, do so at their own risk (Perrow, 1970).

**Religious Nonprofit Organizations: Providing Social Services**

In their study of this subject, Chaves and Tsitsos (2001) find that religious bodies through their nonprofit organizations, have a goal of meeting needs through their involvement in social work (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001). Though government has a responsibility to address the social needs of its less fortunate citizens, often times, it is limited by the limited availability of committed and dedicated human resources to help accomplish this goal (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001). Some argue that since religious nonprofit (or faith-based) organizations share a similar goal as the government, but lack adequate resources, they should be co-opted into a mutually beneficial relationship (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001). To drive home the point, Carlson-Thies (1999) stated:

> People and communities in crisis need assistance that is challenging and inspiring, that connects them to social networks and resources, that invites them to examine their approach to life and if necessary to cast away attitudes and patterns that are unproductive. Such relational, morally compelling, and even openly religious help is...the natural mode of operation of nongovernmental groups, from nonprofit organizations....to congregations (p. 30).
Sherman (1995) further states: “one attraction of religious based social service groups is that they tend be more personable than their secular counterparts…at its heart, a religion-based (nonprofit) service provider aims to transform lives” (pp 60-61). In 2001, President George W. Bush decided to connect faith-based organizations to government funding. In establishing the premier Whitehouse Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, he stated:

Faith-based and grassroots organizations….are a vitally important resource in our communities, reaching out to needy neighbors and neighborhoods in thousands of ways. And when they do so, they often help in ways that government programs cannot, providing love and services, guidance and friendship as well as meal or training (Bush, 2001, p. 4).

In President Bush’s attempt to reinforce the importance of his faith based-initiative, he emphasized the value religious nonprofit organizations bring to social work when he stated:

Without diminishing the important work of government agencies and the wide range of nonprofit service providers, this initiative will support the unique capacity of local faith based and other community programs to serve people in need, not just by providing services, but also by transforming lives (Bush, 2001, p. 5).

Religious nonprofit organizations tend to bring a certain spirit, passion and value to their work, in a manner that secular nonprofit organizations do not. According to Occhipinti (2015), the ‘faith’ component of “faith-based” is not just the religious ties to an institutional body, but an expression of the underlying principles of that community of faith, principles that in essence shape the work of the organization, and give them extra motivation.

Some even argue that religious nonprofit organizations do a better job of providing social services than government agencies and secular nonprofits, and so deserve more of the funding.
According to Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013): “some studies show superior performance by FBOs compared to their secular counterparts” (p. 473). In a review of nearly 800 studies, Johnson, Tompkins, and Webb (2002) state that evidence from research support the theory that faith-based nonprofit organizations do a better job of providing social services than their secular or government counterparts.

**Literature on Nonprofit Organization Funding**

Researchers have studied religious nonprofit funding from different perspectives. Some have studied this subject from a basic funding perspective (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Froelich, 1999; Gronbjerg, 1993), while others have studied it from a partnership or inter-sectoral cooperation perspective (Jung & Moon, 2007). This study focused on the straight funding angle. In doing so, this study considered two main perspectives, *institutional theory* and resource *dependency* theory. Both lenses have given scholars of religious nonprofit funding a basis for their research.

**Institutional perspective.** Some studies have focused on nonprofit funding from an institutional theory perspective (Chaves, M. & Tsitsos, W., 2001; DiMaggio, 1991; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Frumkin, & Galaskiewicz, 2004), whereby institutions like governments and foundations use grants to control the actions of nonprofit organizations, in order to create a level of homogeneity. In this perspective, religious nonprofit organizations compete for government funding, but have to conform to regulations that tend to make them similar to others functioning in the same environment, and consistent with their funder’s (government) values.

Government especially uses its funds to create organizations that function in similar manner, via regulations (Frumkin, & Galaskiewicz, 2004). In their bid to gain important government funding, some nonprofits set up their organization to fit a certain structure to make
them viable for government funding. There is no doubt that government controls the levers of institutionalization through its regulatory laws resources (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004). In analysis of several sources, Frumkin & Galaskiewicz (2004) found that government regulatory pressure was directly responsible for the structuring of other organizations, especially nonprofits. Family foundations accomplish this through their funding rules. In addressing this phenomena while discussing institutional isomorphism, Meyer and Rowan (1977) state:

 Organizations are structured by phenomena in their environments and tend to become isomorphic with them. An explanation of such isomorphism is that formal organizations become matched with their environments by technical and exchange interdependencies…This explanation asserts that structural elements diffuse because environments create boundary spanning exigencies for organizations (p. 346).

 According to Frumkin & Galaskiewicz (2004), organizational practices tend to gain acceptance or credibility, as a consequence of the external pressure exerted on them by the government. Since legislative and judicial authority state and reinforce legal mandates, and also guidelines for operating within the boundaries they create, the organizations functioning within this domain have to conform if they want to be players (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

 Thus:

 As legal and regulatory pressures increase, nonprofit and business organizations respond with increasing levels of institutionalized rules and procedures. Organizational fields rich in myths and ceremonies are constructed when pressure is exerted on organizations by forces in the surrounding environment. Government agencies are some of the most potent and influential environmental actors, which come into contact at some level, be it through laws or regulations with most organizations (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004, p 56).
Resource dependence. Another perspective for studying nonprofit funding has been through the lens of resource dependency theory (Verbruggen, Christiaens & Mills, 2011; LeRoux, 2009; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Froelich, 1999). In this perspective, nonprofit organizations compete for limited resources, based on an open systems perspective (Katz & Khan, 1966). Buckley (1967) emphasizes the relevance of open systems by explaining that it is not the simple act of an organization interacting with its environment, but the importance of its relevance for the survival of that organization.

According to Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), the premise for resource dependency theory is that organizations need resources to survive. Consequently, organizations (especially nonprofits) will do whatever is necessary to acquire and maintain the resources. In speaking along these lines, O’Brien (2010) makes the case that organizations need resources to function. Most of these resources are not generated internally, so these organizations have to get them from their external environment. O’Brien (2010) also posits that these organizations need a level of legitimacy or credibility to enable them gain sufficient trust to attract the much needed resources.

LeRoux (2009) also discusses organizational legitimacy in the context of resource dependence by stating the importance of these organizations balancing their time, effort and commitment between their key stakeholders i.e. their commitment to serve their mission, and their commitment to fundraising. LeRoux (2009) argues that a lopsided commitment in favor of fundraising might compromise an organization’s legitimacy in the eye of those it serves, to the extent that it compromises their ability to operate effectively. In her discussion on revenue diversification, Froelich (1999) asserts that acquiring resources demands that nonprofit organizations interact with organizations or individuals that control the resources they need.
Since resources are neither assured nor adequate, organizations, especially nonprofits have to adjust to their environment and the dictates of the resource providers in order to get the resources they need to meet their goals (Froelich, 1999).

Consequently, “Organizations…are not totally autonomous entities pursuing desired ends at their own discretion. Rather, organizations are constrained by the environment as a consequence of their resource needs” (Froelich, 1999, p. 247). As the age old saying goes: “he who pays the piper calls the tune” (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2015, para 1). This means that funders tend to have their own agendas, and place expectations on nonprofit organizations to adapt somewhat to the funders own goals. Consequently, organizations that have little desire to conform have to go elsewhere for resources and are consequently limited. Nonprofit organizations that depend on fewer sources for funding are invariably heavily dependent on those sources for survival.

**Managing resource dependence.** According to Froelich (1999), most nonprofit organizations do not have the luxury of pursuing their goals at their discretion, because of the unstable resource environment within which they operate. Since these nonprofit organizations have resource needs, and have to function in an unstable environment of resource dependency, a major part of their responsibility is managing these dependencies. There are different approaches to managing resource dependence relationships, which include: complying with important funder demands, reducing funder control by acquisition of significant power, and completely avoiding dependence or control by seeking alternate sources of funding (Froelich, 1999). Successful organizations, not only acknowledge, but also manage such dependencies by modifying them to levels of minimal dependence (Froelich, 1999). At some point, it is imperative that these organizations justify their continued dependence on each resource provider (Pfeffer & Salancik,
1978), since these providers have competitors vying for their limited resources. The *institutional* and *resource dependency* theories have provided lenses for viewing nonprofit funding in the literature. There are multiple funding sources that come under these lenses, some of which will be addressed in the next section.

**Funding sources for religious nonprofit organizations.** Religious nonprofit organizations, focused on social programs (aka faith-based organizations (FBO) represent a major percentage of all Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). These NGOs send a significant amount of financial resources from developed countries to the “developing” world (Occhipinti, 2015) through their network of churches. These religious nonprofit organizations or FBOs play an important role in channeling much needed resources to different areas of need because of their faith’s imperative to help the less fortunate (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001). Guo, Webb, Abzug, and Peck (2013) put it best when they state: “Religion is an important source of values of benevolence and civic engagement” (p. 35). There are several ways of funding religious nonprofit organizations. They include:

- Congregational giving
- Private giving.
- Government grants
- Commercial activities

These options for funding nonprofit organizations are unique and each have their advantages and disadvantages. They will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

**Congregational giving.** This constitutes the freewill regular donations of members of different religious congregations, towards sponsoring programs they support locally and internationally (Occhipinti, 2015). According to Bekkers and Wiepking (2007), studies have
shown that individuals with a public commitment to their faith, are more likely to give to charity. This form of giving is not always sufficient to meet the needs of most projects religious nonprofit organizations support. However, depending on the size of the nonprofit, this is their preferred source of funding, because it has the least strings attached (Barman, 2008).

According to Occhipinti (2015), religious nonprofits accomplish this goal by taking the collective donations of “the faithful” and linking these resources, especially financial, to specific organizations which carry out desired projects locally and internationally. In some cases, large organizations create (or embed) smaller organizations with the specific purpose of doing charitable work locally and internationally, while still maintaining the character of the parent organization. These funds are limited in nature, and so these organizations have to oftentimes look beyond their congregants for resources to accomplish their charitable goals. These funds are given by members whose intention is that their resources be used to make a difference in the lives of others with whom they may never have any contact. Religious houses of worship have been very successful in their developmental or social work overseas (Tonkin, 2009).

Some religious leaders and organizations, on a local and national level, designate certain percentage of their regular income to go to foreign aid (Tonkin, 2009). These could be considered as private giving. However, once it goes into the funds earmarked for charity work, the religious body controls the disbursements of the funds. This is why leaders of religious nonprofit organizations prefer this avenue of funding, even though in some cases, it is comparatively less than other sources of income, especially that of government. Religious nonprofit organizations, like others, struggle with a choice between exclusive reliance on this form of giving (limited as it may be), while maintaining their principles, on the one hand, and accepting government funding (which meets more needs), which has the potential of
compromising their values, on the other. It is a choice between quality and quantity for some.

Private giving. Private giving to nonprofits, especially religious nonprofit organizations, come in the form of individual, corporate and foundation donations (Froelich, 1999). These are donations earmarked by individuals for specific charities; in this case their religious nonprofit organizations of choice, to fund projects that the individual donor cares about. In this example, individuals send checks to these organizations directly, or in the case of corporate donations, they make commitments through their job. In some cases, donors designate some of their income to specific charities or give to charity through a work place charity drive. This is a process whereby different charities advertise themselves through a fundraising drive organized in the work place. Barman (2006) explains that different “communities” are represented by specific charities in an annual or regular fundraising drive in the workplace. The United Way organization had a monopoly on workplace charity funding years ago. However, in recent times, alternative funding sources have begun to gain a foothold in their competition for funds, and are also breaking the workplace funding monopoly previously held by the United Way (Barman, 2006). According to the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (2003), workplace contribution through alternative sources of funding nonprofit organizations rose to over $200 million. This represented a 33% increase since 1996.

Donor choice. This is the modern way of giving to charities in an informed manner, and intentionally in the work place. In time past, funders gave their resources to organizations like the United Way, trusting them to disburse the funds wisely, on their behalf. However, in recent years, the concept of donor choice, whereby donors specify where they wanted their resources to be spent, became the trend in nonprofit giving (Barman, 2006). The act of earmarking donor funds for specific projects has become a method for funding nonprofits. Private donors are taking
matters into their hands, and not letting organizations decide for them (Barman, 2008). Nonprofit organizations therefore have to compete for these limited funds, which mean that some organizations get some funding, while others get overlooked. Religious nonprofit organizations make a choice as to what level of external control they can accept. Some religious nonprofits accept funds with some strings attached, while others do not.

**Corporate giving.** Corporations contribute to nonprofit organizations in different ways. They donate cash sometimes, and other times, donate in-kind gifts to charitable organizations. However, the predominant form of support these corporations offer are in cash giving (Froelich, 1999). They make their donations directly, but other times do so through their company sponsored foundations (Useem, 1987). In certain cases, a corporation is owned by someone with strong religious ties, so such an individual tends to support a religious charity they are affiliated with. Charitable religious nonprofit organizations find this source of funding to be quite unreliable, and so rarely seek or depend on it.

**Foundation funding.** Foundation funding is one of the forms of private giving, and is typically specific in nature to the goals of the foundation. Foundations wield a lot of power, and their funding, when received, has tremendous ability to meet needs, because of the vast resources available to them (Froelich, 1999). According to Ylvisaker (1987), foundations have this uncanny ability to use their visible platform and medium to generate public competition for their funds, because of their vast resources. Major foundations like Ford and Rockefeller not only offer multiyear donations, but their funding support also gives prestige to the recipients. Such recipients are able to attract more credibility and sometimes, further opportunities by touting the fact that they are supported by a respected foundation. This is because others automatically assume that the recipient has undergone significant vetting and also has staying power, because
of the foundation they are affiliated with. Foundational funding requirements tend to give little room for flexibility for the grantee (Froelich, 1999). This kind of funding is least popular amongst religious nonprofit organizations because foundations rarely give recipients of their funding, the flexibility to pursue their own goals (Froelich, 1999). Instead, foundations tend to use their grants to steer their grantees in the direction of the foundation’s own goals (Gronbjerg, 1993; Kelly, 1991). Religious nonprofit organizations tend to find this source of funding too restricting for them, as it limits their ability to fully pursue their agenda (Barman, 2008).

A challenge for religious nonprofits organizations is that the goals most foundations have for offering grants are usually different from that of the nonprofit organizations and their beneficiaries (Barman, 2008). Foundations exist for a specific purpose; therefore their funding goals are specific to their mission. Those who accept foundation funding have to assess if they can function within the funding guidelines or not. This is why foundation funding is the least acceptable source of funding for religious nonprofits. The limited foundation funding that are acceptable to religious nonprofit organizations tend to share their religious goals. In such cases, this creates a happy marriage or relationship between both organizations.

**Government funding.** Government funding is a mixed bag for religious nonprofit organizations. It usually consists of significantly more resources than private funding, but oftentimes is limited because of the restrictions placed on it (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Froelich, 1999). In some cases, government is limited in human resources and capacity. Since faith-based organization have a unique responsiveness to members of the public, in the area of social service delivery, government can meet this need by utilizing FBOs for this service (Bush, 2001). Consequently, since the enactment of the Faith-based Initiative by President George W. Bush, government grants are made available to these religious nonprofit organizations (Bush, 2001),
which is mutually beneficial for both the faith-based nonprofit organization and the government. Government funding comes with some limits, but unlike foundation funding, government funding is less restricting (Froelich, 1999). Consequently, some religious nonprofit organizations pursue this funding, while others avoid it, to enable them stay completely true to their religious values. Since the faith-based initiative was instituted in 2001, the government has made significantly more funds available to religious nonprofit organizations with considerably more flexibility (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001). The faith-based initiative was created so that the US government is able to make more accommodations and flexibilities for religious nonprofit organizations. To affirm this point, Chaves and Tsitsos (2001) state:

Several States have created “faith-based liaisons” or established programs to encourage religious organizations to apply for funding or somehow develop partnerships with government anti-poverty programs. The most dramatic development along these lines have been attempts to create public funding streams for which only religious organizations are eligible to apply. California recently launched a “Faith-based Initiative” that dedicated up to $5 million for grants to religious organizations (p. 661).

Consequently, more religious nonprofit organizations are seeing more opportunities to work with government funding, to enable these religious nonprofit organizations meet their goals.

**Commercial activity and funding.** This is an interesting form of funding for nonprofits. Many have found this source of funding least preferable, but a necessary means to raise funds for their charitable work (Froelich, 1999). In this approach, goods are sold, and a recommended donation or fee is assessed, with the aim of directing the added revenue towards the nonprofit organization’s projects. Even though some nonprofit organizations have resorted to using this means, it has garnered strong objections from many in the nonprofit field, especially the religious
ones, mainly because it goes against the idea and essence of nonprofits (Hodgkinson, 1989). These organizations have a fundamental belief that their role is to help the poor and less privileged, and so have a moral question with selling goods for profit. Those who object believe that selling goods for profit goes against the ideals for which nonprofits exist (Froelich, 1999).

**Religious Nonprofit Organizations**

According to Occhipinti (2015), religious nonprofit organizations and the work they do have been studied minimally by scholars over the years. However, they have generated some scholarly interest in recent times. Religious nonprofit organizations were studied as subsets of nongovernmental organizations, without attempts to differentiate them from their secular counterparts (Occhipinti, 2015). This pattern has changed since the mid-1990s when religious nonprofits began to attract significant interest and funding for their social work (Occhipinti, 2015). The initial attitude of dismissal came from the fact that academic scholars, like most secular organizations have had some suspicion or discomfort with all things religion, and their role in modernity. Religion was often considered to be anti-modernization and too traditional (Occhipinti, 2015).

According to Occhipinti (2015), religious nonprofit organizations are mainly influenced by their faith tradition, not only in the area of theology but also in their structure and scope. Occhipinti (2015) further posits that these organizations tend to vary in size. They could be a couple people working out of a church, or they could be a team of multiple international professionally trained social service providers. They vary in their strategy for addressing developmental issues and in their vision for helping the less fortunate to live a resourced and dignified life. Religious-focused nonprofit organizations, just like secular nonprofits have a goal of not just surviving, but also making significant impact within the environment they operate.
Many factors, including resources and processes are vital to ensuring the success of these smaller groups, and so the relationships they have are important to ensuring their long-term success.

According to Reda (2012), a significant portion of research on religious nonprofits has been focused on the sociology of religion. The vast majority of theoretical literature on the economic impact of religious charities, or nonprofit organizations has been focused more on donations, and less on their relationships and the impact they have on their environment. Religious nonprofits are unique in the kind of service they deliver and the manner in which they deliver their services. This is because religious nonprofits not only provide social services, like many secular nonprofit organizations (Reda, 2012), but they do so in a manner different from secular nonprofit organization. They do so with a unique care than others (Bush, 2001).

Religious nonprofit organizations do their work with a fervor that is motivated by a sense of obligation and imperative, as a result of their commitment to their faith. Religious nonprofit organizations also bring a spiritual quality that people experiencing need sometimes desire. It is not unusual for people facing disaster or devastation of some sort to need not just practical solutions, but also a sense of spiritual encouragement and affirmation. Religious nonprofit organizations provide such through their prayer and spiritual counseling. Spiritual counseling in times of crisis is an edge religious nonprofits have over their secular counterparts (Luo, 2006).

Sometimes, religious nonprofits find a meeting point between their goals and that of secular nonprofit organizations. In such cases, they are happy to collaborate for the common good of their clients. This typically happens in the social services area, especially with food banks, counseling and medical services (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001)
Bounding ‘Boundless’ Organizations

Most of the research on organizational environment has been done from a context of a single location. There is recent interest in studying organizations with multiple locations and reach (Le Dantec and Edwards, 2010). In bounding unique organizational environments (i.e. organizations whose reach go beyond their immediate local environment), it is important we find definitions that work for organizations of this nature. Scott (1987) posits that in an open systems perspective, “organizations are not fortresses, impervious to…their environment” (p. 117). No organization is self-sufficient. Since organizations are in regular need of resources, all organizations need more resources as a means of survival (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Over time, organizations construct boundaries from which they relate to the world around them, especially their partners and competition. They do so in ways that are conducive to their bottom line (Scott, 1987). The external environment of an organization is the sphere in which it functions and the important relationships it requires to function. This definition will work for organizations regardless of their physical boundaries. According to Scott (1987), one way of considering an organization’s boundary is by considering a concept known as organizational sets; the study of an organization’s sphere of influence. The concept of organizational sets is akin to the responsibilities a mother has towards her children. Though she is one person, she might have 3, 5 or even 7 children, all for whom she has responsibility. Picture this mom at the head of the organization, then her children as one set of her organization. Consider the other responsibilities she has.

They are classed into different sets, e.g. professional, spiritual, social etc. This mother may have responsibilities towards the children’s dad, their teachers, doctors, coaches and friends. All these responsibilities are within her sphere of influence, or her organizational set, in a
manner of speaking. Even a little corner shop will have multiple relationships with its clients, suppliers, government, landlord and its competition (Scott, 1987). The concept of organizational sets considers the organization as a focal point in a set and its various important relationships with other members of the set with whom it has dealings. In discussing nonprofit communities and boundaries, Boston University sociology professor, Emily Barman (2006), describes a concept of an environment that transcends location and focuses on people with shared interests; one of such communities might even span different geographical locations.

Nonprofit organizations, especially the religious ones are beginning to look at their faith-based community as one that also includes their fellow human beings around the world. These organizations are motivated by their religious teachings that encourage them to look out for their fellow humans, especially the less fortunate. In her book, Contesting Communities, Barman (2006) expands on how the traditional notions of community has changed, and newer kinds of communities based on new, eclectic, non-traditional definitions are being formed around the world. Willow Creek uses terms like “new community” to describe an association of people of like-minded faith and common interests (Willow Creek Community Church, n.d.-a). Religious nonprofit organizations like WCCC are finding members of their community in multiple locations around the world, especially people who share their faith, as well as others of different faiths, or no faith; individuals with a need for hope and practical human amenities.

Barman (2006) not only observed a new modern concept of community that transcends geographical confines, but also noticed an emergence of a modern concept of community that creates opportunity for diverse membership without regard to location, and collective action. Barman reinforces this point by stating: “what then characterizes this emergent conception of community...Social scientists maintain an understanding of community as the existence of
individual understandings of, and beliefs in a larger social entity” (p. 7). Barman contends that the forces of modernity have changed the idea of a structural vision of community, and have replaced it with communities of purpose. Members of these communities must often look past their divergent interests, and seek the common good, ideals and a set of shared values of the collective group; values that transcend individual self-interest.

**Embedded (Parent- Child) Relationships**

The study of embedded relationships “allow us to constructively conceptualize an organization’s location in a field, and hence, how its location informs the relationship between the organization and its environment” (Lune & Oberstein, 2001, p. 18). In recent times, embedded relationships have begun to attract some attention from researchers, even though the focus had been on for-profit organizations (Nell, Ambos & Schlegelmilch, 2011). Studies have demonstrated that embedded relationships are of a dynamic nature, since they are two organizations with shared goals but different capacities (Nell et al., 2011). Understanding their relational dynamic requires an appreciation for complexity. In the words of Lune & Martinez (1999): “For organizations acting within an identified subfield, organization / environment relations become more complex, or at least multilayered” (p. 612).

In discussing embedded nonprofit organizations (NPOs), Lune and Oberstein (2001) posit that this relationship presents opportunities and also constraints. Studies have found that even though nonprofit organizations act on behalf of different constituencies/interests and are drawn in different directions, there is an effort to have them confined to formerly defined locations (Lune and Oberstein, 2001). Consequently, through embedded relationships, there is a concern of a potential loss in autonomy. According to Lune and Oberstein (2001), even though embedded organizations are characterized by the work that they do in different locations, their
immediate environment is still considered to be the community from which they emerged, in this case the church environment. The research finds that embedded relationships are significantly affected by the locations or environment they find themselves (Nell, Ambos & Schlegelmilch, 2011). The location they find themselves has a significant impact on their processes. Nell et al. (2011) found that embedded relationships have been able to appropriate information from their external environment for their parent organization.

Embedded relationships also lead to new market opportunities. In industries characterized by competition, finding new markets can be a tall order for any organization. Studies reveal that having one or more embedded relationships increases a parent organization’s chances of increasing its market reach, especially since they initially face environmental uncertainty (Neil et al., 2011). In an attempt to gain legitimacy, embedded organizations within a defined field can maintain their identity or integrity without compromising their organizational forms including power, goals and customer relations (Lune & Martinez, 1999). They accomplish such feat through “survival” instincts, which includes maintaining a core group of personnel dedicated to the organization’s original mission (Lune & Martinez, 1999).

According to Lune and Martinez (1999), some of these organizations make a decision not to conform to their local surroundings regardless of pressure. Lune and Martinez further posit that if an embedded organization “wishes to preserve its collective identity in an environment that is not conducive to that identity” then it has no choice but to change the environment within which it finds itself, or redefine its role in that environment, in a manner that is not destabilizing (p. 616). This could be accomplished by leaving the environment, which is akin to making minor adjustments to the organization’s niche (Oliver, 1991). Studies indicate that embedded relationships are advantageous because they (at the transactional level, where they operate) bring
about greater results, because of their personal relationships and networks (Granovetter, 1985; Lincoln, 1982). According to Johnson, Tompkins and Webb (2002), Christian nonprofit organizations (faith-based organizations) account for $20 billion of privately contributed funds, targeted to providing social services for at least 70 million Americans annually. It sounds like a lot of money, but more often, these funds are competed for by many organizations with less resources than what they require to execute their programs. The limited availability of resources places a lot of pressure on funders to determine who receives their funds. Consequently, religious nonprofit organizations have to compete with each other, and their secular counterparts also for these limited funds. They also have to ensure that their financial house is in order to be considered worthy of funding support.

Conclusion

Whereas the review demonstrated the relationship between legitimacy and nonprofit funding, a case could be made for further relationships with religious nonprofit funding and embedded relationships. The limited studies in the area of embedded organizational relationships, also suggest that embedded relationships provide a positive outcome for organizations (Granovetter, 1985; Nell et al., 2011). They play a role in driving organizational performance (Nell et al., 2011). However their impact in the specific area of nonprofit organizations have been explored to a limited degree. Whereas most of the reviewed research is clear regarding the connection between nonprofits and funding, it is vague when addressing the specific connection to religious nonprofit organizations. It is important that further work is done to address the experiences of religious nonprofit (faith-based) organizations, when it comes to funding and legitimacy. This literature review provided some background and context for the proposed research.
Chapter III: Methodology and Research Design

This goal of this study was to explore and understand the institutionalized relationship between a large religious organization and its embedded nonprofit unit, and also how the work of the embedded unit contributes to the legitimacy of the parent organization. A researcher should consider their philosophical leanings, prior to beginning a study, as it affects their thinking and decision making (Merriam, 1998). This qualitative case study used the theoretical lenses of both institutional theory and legitimacy theory. The research question that guided this study was:

- How does the Compassion and Justice Ministry (CJM) reflect the institutionalized norms/values of Willow Creek Community Church and how does the work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry contribute to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church?

In addressing the main research question, and also giving context to the different aspects of this study, this research will address the following sub-questions:

- How does CJM reflect the institutionalized norms of its parent organization, WCCC?
- What evidence is there of isomorphism in the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry?
- How does the work done by CJM contribute to the legitimacy of WCCC?

The legitimacy of an organization is viewed from the perspective of those in its environment, but mainly from the perspective of the funders, who play a vital role in enabling the organization meet its goals and mission. This study was conducted with the aid of a qualitative research design, specifically a case study method (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009).
Table 1.

*Research Assumptions and Corresponding Data Collection Protocol*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Institutionalism:</strong></td>
<td>Organizations that share similar values tend to have identical practices</td>
<td>- Mission statements - Organization website - Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways does CJM reflect the institutionalized norms of its parent organization?</td>
<td>Certain large organizations tend to dominate their environment by creating offshoots.</td>
<td>- News reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. Isomorphism:</strong></td>
<td>Embedded organizations tend to mimic the practices of their parent organization.</td>
<td>- Survey feedback - Interviews - News reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the relationship between WCCC and CJM evidenced by institutional isomorphism?</td>
<td>Organizations find value in being similar with other organizations they respect.</td>
<td>- Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Legitimacy: In what ways does the work done by CJM contribute to legitimizing the legitimacy of WCCC? Embedded organizations have a vested interest in legitimizing their parent organization.

Legitimacy leads to funding support, and longevity.

- Interviews
- Questionnaire feedback
- News reports

It is essential that a qualitative researcher counts the cost before embarking on their research journey (Merriam, 1998). The assumptions for this study are addressed in Table 1.

Research Approach

An important benefit of the case study approach is its context to the results. In describing a case study, Merriam (1998) states: “a case study design is employed to get an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (p. 19). Even though it sounds obvious, a case study is defined as the study of a case (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Merriam, 1998). The goal of a case study is to gain an understanding of how certain things are happening within a certain organization or area (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

Furthermore, Merriam (1998) posits that a case study helps shed further light and also gives understanding to a set of processes. In the perspective of Stake (1995), there are three kinds
of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental and multiple. In an *intrinsic* case study, the research is focused on a specific individual or situation. It is not focused on building a theory, even though that is an option. An *instrumental* case study is focused on understanding more than just a single case, and how the case has a greater meaning or consequence beyond itself. Finally, a multiple case study, is one in which the research examines multiple cases as part of a larger study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Case studies are not easy process as some may assume, especially as they do not follow specific routines (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, Yin (2009) advises that a case study researcher must be prepared to deal with unexpected occurrences. Developing a protocol for a case study is essential because it aids the researcher in keeping the investigative process on target. This process should be disciplined and logical, rather than made up as the researcher goes along (Stake, 1995).

**Case study development.** Case study has its origins within the field of anthropology as early as around 1900. It began with systematic investigation of different cultures, from which field studies emerged. The observation of participants became the predominant form of data collection (Johansson, 2011). Western colonizing nations relied on human disciplines like sociology and anthropology for representation of the ‘other’ culture. This enabled researchers to produce actionable information about a world ‘foreign’ to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). According to Denzin and Lincoln, the observer went to a foreign land to investigate the culture of a group. Case studies emanated from this quest to understand a group or a case (Denzin & Lincoln). The first use of case studies in a modern formal academic context was at the Chicago School of Sociology (Platt, 1992). Case studies evolved to the point of comparing expected findings of a case, along with its empirical data, thereby determining or falsifying a theory. Generalizations could then be drawn from the theory and facts of a case. This model of case
study was developed by Robert Yin. Other leading researchers in the field of case studies are: Sharan Merriam, Robert Stake and John Creswell. Robert Stake’s contribution to case study research is his insistence that the research be based solely on the ‘case’ and not the methodology. Stake (1995) defines case study as showing interest in individual or specific cases. Finally, collective case study is about studying several instrumental cases, with a view to getting better understanding or a broader context (Berg, 2001). Merriam (1998) defines case studies as an analysis of a phenomenon within a bounded state.

The critics of case studies, like other forms of qualitative research have sought to undermine it, by referring to it as “soft science” or journalism. Their goal has always been to portray case studies and other forms of qualitative research as unscientific (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The approach most relevant to this particular study is the intrinsic case study. The differences between intrinsic and instrumental will be explored further.

**Intrinsic case study.** An intrinsic case study is relevant when there is a real interest in understanding a particular case (Stake, 1995). In this type of case study, “the researcher is primarily interested in understanding a specific individual or situation” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 430). An example of an intrinsic case study research might be how the student council of a school operates (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) further posit that intrinsic case studies are exploratory in nature, and adopted when researchers seek to learn about a particular phenomenon, and do so in an in-depth manner. An intrinsic case study is the study of choice when exploring within a unique situation, person or organization. According to Creswell (2007), this is a case that presents uniqueness to the level that requires some exploration. Here, a case study of the details of such phenomena, set within its context or surrounding is needed. In identifying their case, the researcher must decide on a bounded system to study (Creswell, 2007).
An intrinsic case study is not undertaken because the case represents other cases, or there is necessarily a construct to be learned but, because the specific case holds special interest.

Part of the reason Willow Creek Community Church holds special interest where this researcher is concerned is dual fold. Not only was this church considered the most influential church in the United States (Chu, 2010), but is considered a nonprofit that has excelled beyond measure (Drucker, 1989). Willow Creek Community Church was profiled by ABC News, Walter Cronkite, The Today Show, National Public Radio, Time Magazine, Fortune Magazine, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, The Congressional Quarterly and also the Chicago Tribune (Hybels & Hybels, 1995). This unique attention puts them in the category of unique case for a church. Baxter and Jack (2008) re-affirm this point when they state that an intrinsic case study “is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest. The purpose is NOT to come to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon” (p. 548). Baxter and Jack (2008) further posit that if a researcher is interested in learning about a unique situation, then conducting an intrinsic case study is appropriate. It means that the researcher has an intrinsic interest in the subject, and is aware that the results have limited transferability.

**Participants.** According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the case is the unit of analysis, and some sort of phenomenon, occurring within a boundary. So the relationship between these two organizations was the focus of analysis. The boundary included both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. Since this research was focused on Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry, two key leadership individuals (one each from both WCCC and CJM) were interviewed with the aid of an
interview protocol (Appendix E). This study also surveyed a total of five regular employees from both WCCC and CJM with the aid of an online questionnaire (Appendix H). In determining the environment of these organizations, this study determined that since the activities of CJM have a global component, it would be impractical to conduct an exhaustive investigation. Since the work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry has a global reach, this study interviewed a leader each of their local and international partners. The interviews were conducted with the aid of an interview protocol. The aim of questioning these partners was to investigate the level of consistency between the values espoused by Compassion and Justice Ministry, and the experience of these partners. This study limited its investigation to a few partners, because it is confident a determination of consistency could be made from that number. The focus of the study was on the processes and nonprofit work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry.

When researching an organization, access to the organization and its personnel should be confirmed prior to the data collection exercise, and negotiations should be made regarding the scope and details of the study (Lofland, Snow, Anderson & Lofland, 2006). Leadership and personnel with authority should be determined, and formal consent should be sought, which should include the number/kind of participants needed for the study. Even when consent is received from an organization’s leadership, it is always advisable to contact the lower level staff to be interviewed, to get them on the same page (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Accordingly, this research sought the necessary permissions from both WCCC and CJM. The researcher made the initial contact in the summer of 2013 to determine the willingness of these organizations to participate. The office of Bill Hybels, the leader of WCCC was contacted through his Executive Assistant, and also the operations chief for the Compassion and Justice Ministry. Upon their
agreement to participate, it was decided that the leadership would decide on the staff to participate in this study, as long as they were willing to participate.

**Recruitment and access.** For the purpose of this case study, access to the research site was secured by contacting the office of Bill Hybels, the head of the Willow Creek organization prior to the start of this study. The participants for this study from both WCCC and CJM were decided via agreement with the Executive Assistant to Bill Hybels, and the Executive Director for the Compassion and Justice Ministry. The other participants who were not staff of WCCC or CJM were selected by the researcher, to balance the effect of potential bias in feedback from the staff of CJM and WCCC. They are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

_Data Collection - Participant Population Table_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Direct Dealings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>WCCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>CJM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff - Leader</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>WCCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff - Leader</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>CJM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Leader</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>CJM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Leader</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Leader</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Leader</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>WCCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Member</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>WCCC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researcher designed the survey to first ask the participants for their consent to participate. If a participant consented, they moved on to the survey. In the event that a participant did not give their consent, then they could not participate and the process was consequently terminated. In one instance, a participant offered by the organization did not participate, so the researcher recruited a church member to fill that void. A different recruitment protocol (Appendix I) was designed for the specific purpose of recruiting a church member.

Since participants for the survey were picked by leaders of both WCCC and CJM, that placed a limitation on the study. Anyone selected by their boss would have a realistic commitment to the person that picked them, which has the potential of limiting objectivity in their responses. Participants for the interview included a leader of Compassion and Justice Ministry, and also a leader for Willow Creek Community Church. The participants were interviewed with a prepared interview protocol (Appendix E) (Creswell, 2007). This study made use of an online questionnaire (Appendix H) and also requested relevant documents that referenced the work, values and impact of both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. Lofland et al. (1995) recommends financial incentives for participants in a case where they were external participants. This was not necessary since the participants were staff of WCCC and CJM, and did not need financial incentives to participate.

This researcher concluded that leaders of successful organizations, including WCCC and CJM, under the right circumstances welcome the opportunity to showcase their success, for purposes that include educational and domination. Consequently, the recruitment email requesting access to the organization made reference to the future educational value of this study. Appendix B contains samples of the recruitments letters. This study prepared a proposal for the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which included the researcher’s questions for the participants,
and also detailed their level of participation. Documents for this research were retrieved from library and online sources. Others were retrieved from the websites of both organizations. More documents were requested from leaders of the organization for an in-depth document review.

**Protection of human subjects.** The most important ethical consideration in a case study research is protecting the confidentiality of the study’s participants (Stake, 1997). Since this research is a case study, the human subject protection component will not be as detailed as a phenomenology research, as there is not an individual psychological component. This study provided each of the participant with an *informed consent* form, which described their involvement and the risks associated with this research. It also stated their right to withdraw at any time if anyone changed their mind. Interview subjects were also informed about how confidentiality would be maintained. The participants were assured that every reasonable step would be taken to protect their information, and in the unlikely event of any information leak, necessary steps would be taken to minimize any potential damage. This was part of a proposal submitted to the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval, after consultations with the research supervisor. Appendix C contains the researcher’s certification. As a certified IRB researcher, this researcher followed the recommended protocols for conducting research.

**Informed consent.** The proposal included an informed consent form, which is included as Appendix D. The Informed Consent form spelled out the involvement of the interview subjects, and the risks associated with this research. The participants were assured that every step would be taken to protect their information. The disclaimer stated that there is always the minimal risk of some information getting out. The participants were also informed that if at any time they decided to discontinue with the research, their wishes would be respected.
Data Collection. First of all, it was important for this research to decide the scope of the exploration in order to determine the requisite data collection. Data for this research project was collected through multiple sources of information, which included: questionnaires, taped interviews, and documents (Creswell, 2012). The researcher came up with effective, relevant and practical interview questions (Creswell, 2012). This researcher also made use of telephone and email correspondence to communicate with the participants involved. Questionnaires and interviews protocols were structured in advance of the data collection process. Two leaders (one each) of CJM and WCCC were also interviewed. The interview protocols are contained in Appendix E. Appendix F contains the interview protocol for a leader each of two partner organizations. While Appendix G contains the interview protocol for a leader each of two peer organizations. The views of the peer organizational leaders were relevant to this study as they would provide objective information to balance the information from the staff participants. The peer leaders are competitors who have no obligation to speak positively on behalf of these organizations. Also the peer leader participants were recruited without the help/knowledge of the leaders of WCCC or CJM. The researcher triangulated their information with that of the participants from WCCC and CJM and also participants from partner organizations.

Five staff members of both WCCC and CJM were surveyed using an online questionnaire (Appendix H). One member of the Willow Creek Community church was surveyed using an email questionnaire (Appendix I). Appendix J contains the Memorandum of Understanding between the researcher and the organizations. The document review for this study made use of documents that included a couple of annual reports, WCCC insider’s guidebook, newspaper articles and previous case studies (Harvard) on Willow Creek Community Church. The
researcher also requested relevant documents from the participants. Appendix K is the document review sheet for the study.

As stated earlier and indicated in Table 3 below, this study included interviews of leaders of both peer and partner organizations in order to gain objective perspective and relevant data to compare with data from participants from the primary research site. The data from interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher for analysis. The data was re-checked for accuracy. According to Gironis (2013), in the course of data analysis, it is helpful for a researcher to combine multiple data. Multiple sources of information create opportunities for making new and interesting discoveries, and lead to opportunity for new studies. Data was collected via document review, which included prior interviews, newspaper articles, online information, and prior Harvard studies on WCCC. This study was designed to ensure sufficient data for analysis.

**Coding Variables.** This study made use of relevant variables that were identified from themes that emerged in the early process of data analysis. Based on the feedback received from the surveys and interviews, certain themes stood out in the responses the different participants offered. In the subsequent stages of the study, the researcher not only refined these themes, but consequently sought recurrences of these themes through the use of specific codes. They were further studied to aid in answering the research questions.

**Interviews.** The researcher conducted interviews of a leader each from WCCC and CJM to elaborate on the data collected via survey. The leaders were interviewed specifically because the researcher concluded that they were in the best position to have firsthand information about the running of their organization. Since interviews are more in-depth, they gave the researcher the opportunity to ask follow-up questions and gave the participants the opportunity to offer more detailed answers that a survey could not provide. To strengthen the data collection process,
two leaders of partner organizations of CJM and peer organizations of WCCC (Church leaders) were also interviewed.

Table 3

*Data Collection Protocol*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>DATA COLLECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non Personnel</td>
<td>Church Member</td>
<td>Email Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion and Justice Ministry</td>
<td>Regular Staff A</td>
<td>Online Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular Staff B</td>
<td>Online Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Org. Leader</td>
<td>Phone Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow Creek Community Church</td>
<td>Regular Staff A</td>
<td>Online Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular Staff B</td>
<td>Online Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regular Staff C</td>
<td>Online Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Org. Leader</td>
<td>Phone Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Organizations</td>
<td>Partner Leader A</td>
<td>Email Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner Leader B</td>
<td>Email Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Organizations</td>
<td>Peer Leader A</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer Leader B</td>
<td>Online Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>Staff = 7</td>
<td>Surveys = 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non Staff = 5</td>
<td>Interviews = 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total = 12 Subjects</td>
<td>Total = 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interviews were conducted via telephone for the convenience of the participants. The participants of the interview were informed in advance that the interview would be recorded, in order to ensure accuracy and limit potential threat to validity.

**Questionnaires.** Case studies benefit from the use of questionnaires (Baxter & Jack, 2008). It was important for the researcher to manage time wisely. Questionnaires are most effective especially in cases where there are logistical challenges with meeting participants. Since the location of these organizations makes meeting a challenge, this researcher chose the option of emailing questionnaires. This also made the process more convenient for the participants. Since relevant questions are key to getting the answers needed for this study, the researcher, in developing the questions, tested them with others including the principal researcher.

The online questionnaire is an effective tool, as it honors the researcher’s commitment to the environment, and conserves time for the participants. A link to the survey was sent to the participants, which directed them to the survey site (google.com/Forms) to complete the online survey. The questions in the online and email surveys covered the three sub research questions of this research. The feedback gave the researcher an opportunity to get relevant information/data from the participants. The analysis of data from the participants gave the researcher an opportunity to answer some of the research questions of this study.
### Coding / Data Analysis Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Cycle Coding</th>
<th>2nd Cycle Coding</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial coding across 3 phases</td>
<td>Axial coding across all 3 phases</td>
<td>Thematic Analysis – to be conducted across 6 phases:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invivo Coding</td>
<td>- Determine concepts and Categories</td>
<td>- Data familiarization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Coding</td>
<td>- Develop sub-categories and by grouping similar data</td>
<td>- Initial code generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Determine relationship Between concepts &amp; categories.</td>
<td>- Review of themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Define parameters for each category to determine uniqueness</td>
<td>- Theme definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Production of Report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data analysis.** Berg (2001) states that case study of an organization is “the systematic gathering of enough information about a particular organization” to give the researcher sufficient insight about the functions of that organization (p. 233). The researcher began the process with the *in vivo* coding approach (Table 4), which meant that the researcher used the exact words of
the interview subject to form codes (Saldaña, 2009). This was followed by a reduction of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994), since the strategy of this process was to reduce the data to manageable codes in order for the researcher to observe themes and make deductions or find meaning. This researcher mainly used an open coding approach, which involved taking interview data and segmenting them into appropriate categories (Saldaña, 2009). Thomas (2006) posits that an important goal in the research analysis process is to observe consistent and significant themes from the data, and let the results emerge. This research adopted the General Inductive Approach to aid the process. This process also adopted axial coding, which enabled the researcher ascertain if determined concepts and categories were consistent with the interview data. Axial coding further explores relationship between concepts and categories (Biddix, 2009).

This data analysis process adopted a “systematic and rigorous” approach (O’Connor & Gibson, n.d., p. 65). The data analysis process also included the determination of coding techniques for identifying underlying information from the data, grouping similar forms of information into categories, and then matching and relating similar ideas to each other (O’Connor & Gibson, n.d.). According to Gillham (2000), data analysis should involve the pattern matching method. This is a predictive approach that observes the data/results in either an effect or no effect perspective. If the results fit a certain pattern, one of two options is predicted, if not, the other option is the answer. This option appeared simplistic and prone to error, since there could be outliers beyond the two options, or a more nuanced answer. Process coding was the researcher’s preferred choice of analytical technique. It encourages a consideration of the complex interplay of events over time. The researcher found this approach appropriate for this research, since there are a few factors to consider for research results. After the tabulation of data from the surveys, this researcher clarified deductions, results and emerging themes with
stakeholders interviews (Thomas, 2006). This research also paid careful heed for outliers in the data, and considered the reason for their presence (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher also paid heed to Creswell’s (2012) advice that researchers can make deductions or generalizations as they make meaning of the emerging themes, following the evidence wherever it might lead (Thomas, 2006). This research was careful to identify and limit researcher effect on the outcome of the interview process (Miles & Huberman, 1994; O’Connor & Gibson, n.d.).

**Analysis tool.** This study used MAXQDA, the computer assisted qualitative data analysis software to analyze the data, since it has specific capabilities that the researcher considered appropriate for this process. First of all the reasonable nature of the cost, particularly the discounted price for students, made it easily affordable for the researcher. Some of the capabilities of the MAXQDA software were:

- Ability to tabulate occurrences and frequency of specific code to indicate a theme.
- It marks important information in the raw data by its use of regular codes
- The user interface is divided into four sections that addresses key processes involved in the research analysis, which makes the process user friendly for the researcher.
- It also has the ability of supporting the researcher’s defined words. This was especially helpful, since the raw data usually contains too many words that may not easily bring out a theme the researcher is searching for across a wide spectrum of participants.
- Its fx function has a unique ability to search and locate unique text or code saving the researcher the time of a manual search (This feature was important for efficiency).
- It is able to organize and categorize the research data for easy reference purposes.
- It is able to code and transcribe audio/video files.
It uses color codes that enhances visualization for the researcher, in distinguishing selected codes.

The ultimate goal of any data analysis tool is that it aids the researcher in making meaning of the raw data that comes from the research. This researcher was convinced that the capabilities of the MAXQDA software are consistent with the tools needed for scholarly research data analysis.

**Data storage.** Storing and backing up recorded data is an important part of qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). According to Creswell (2012), the approach to storing qualitative data is dependent upon the type of information being collected. This researcher saved the audio files on his laptop with passwords known to only the researcher. For backup, the researcher emailed the files to his email address. Every reasonable attempt was made to protect the anonymity of the participants by using synonyms to refer to the interview subjects in all the files. Every document emailed to the researcher was saved on his laptop computer, which is protected by password known only to the researcher. This researcher did print copies of documents received in order to minimize the risk of exposure.

**Trustworthiness.** According to Shenton (2004), if researchers want their work to gain credibility, it is important they factor in the following provisions during the research process:

- Adoption of well-established research methods
- Familiarization with the culture of the research organization
- Random sampling of participants if possible
- Triangulation of different data collection methods
- Tactics (including option to opt out) to ensure willingness and honesty of participants
- Iterative questioning to test for contradictions in participants
- Examination of findings relative to recent studies on the subject
- Thick description of the phenomena under study
- Opportunities for peer scrutiny of the research should be sought and welcomed
- Regular debriefing sessions between the researcher and advisor

These steps go a long way to ensure trustworthiness for a qualitative study. This researcher put systems in place to ensure trustworthiness of the research data. This plan played the role of limiting threats to internal validity. One threat to internal validity is in the area of implementation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). This has a lot to do with the manner in which the participants of information are viewed, or different data are perceived. It was important that this research determined uniform and consistent ways to compare data. An effective way to limit such a threat is to standardize the conditions under which the study is done.

Another threat to internal validity is the researcher’s bias. The researcher acknowledged personal bias where the subject of this research is concerned, to ensure objectivity, and maintain a less tainted research glass. Another threat to internal validity was the fact that the staff participants were chosen by their leaders, and so that created the possibility of the respondent’s views to be tailored to suit their leader. The researcher was also aware of the potential for bias in the feedback given by staff, especially leaders of the both CJM and WCCC, since most leaders would want to speak well of the organization they lead. Hence the corroboration of feedback from outsiders including a church member, partners and peer leaders.

Conclusion

The purpose of the case study was to utilize the theoretical lenses of institutional theory and legitimacy theory to explore the relationship between the Compassion and Justice Ministry, and its parent organization, Willow Creek Community Church. Furthermore, this dissertation study was designed to understand how the work of CJM contributes to the legitimacy of its
parent organization. The religious nonprofit environment is a relatively new area of study where nonprofit funding is concerned. It has come under greater scrutiny for government oversight, but has also received attention from scholars, especially where funding management is concerned.

This study used the first three chapters to systematically lay out an introduction of the study, a discussion of the rationale, a detailed literature review that demonstrates grounding for the study and finally discussed the methodology for this research. The institutional theory is based on the premise that these organizations are institutionalized and tend to have isomorphic or homogenous relationships that make them similar in nature (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

The premise of legitimacy theory is that organizations, especially nonprofits need to justify their right to exist (Maurer, 1971) through their congruence with environmental or institutional expectations. It considers legitimacy as the tool these organizations use to accomplish their goals (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975) especially their initial goal of securing the requisite funding. Simply put, when organizations demonstrate their legitimacy, through proving their credibility and viability, they invariably position themselves for consideration from funding sources in a crowded field of applicants. The research findings will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter IV: Research Findings

This chapter discusses the study findings based on the data analysis conducted by the researcher. The purpose of this study was to explore the institutional relationship between the organization, Willow Creek Community Church and its embedded unit, the Compassion and Justice Ministry, an entity dedicated to doing charitable work in the United States and around the world. The study also considered if the work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry contributed to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church. The study took place at the campus of the Willow Creek Community Church that also contains the offices and Care Center of the Compassion and Justice Ministry in Barrington, Illinois. The interviews and surveys were mostly conducted online and by telephone communication.

Problem of practice. This study focused on the premise that religious nonprofit organizations play a major role in addressing social needs in society, but are limited by access to significant funding needed to address the practical implications of their goals, which align with their values. The ability to carry out these goals in a manner that is consistent with their values is important to these organizations. Consequently they seek funders who share their values. These funders in return seek legitimate organizations whose values they share in order to support with their resources. This study explored the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and its embedded unit, the Compassion and Justice Ministry, whose focus is to carry out charitable works consistent with the values of its parent organization and how the work done by CJM contributes to the legitimacy of WCCC.

Research Question. The main research question of this study was: How does the Compassion & Justice Ministry reflect the institutionalized norms of Willow Creek Community Church, and how does the work done by the Compassion and Justice Ministry contribute to the
legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church? As discussed earlier, legitimacy is derived from the immediate environment of an organization. In certain cases, like this one, the organization pays great attention to legitimacy not only in the context of its environment, but also in the context of its funders. In order to answer the main research question, the study considered three sub questions. The three sub questions that guided this study were: a) *How does CJM reflect the institutional norms of Willow Creek Community Church?* b) *What evidence is there of isomorphism in the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church, and the Compassion and Justice Ministry?* And c) *How does the work done by the Compassion and Justice Ministry contribute to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church?*

Sub Question A

The first sub question: *How does CJM reflect the institutional norms of Willow Creek Community Church?* - speaks to the institutional and organizational relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. To answer this question, the researcher asked specific questions of the participants with direct knowledge of either/both organizations in a survey, and also conducted an online document review. The surveys of staff and interviews of leaders of WCCC/CJM, and their peer and partner organizations shed light on this subject.

Findings

Themes emerged from the data after the researcher triangulated feedback from the participants, especially personnel who know their organizations best. The researcher subsequently analyzed the data from the feedback to check for emerging themes. In the course of analysis, the themes that emerged in relation to this research question were: love, service, strong
leadership and identical organizational culture. These themes were consistently evident in the analysis of the data this study received from questioning the various participants.

Motivation of Love. It was quite clear from the study that most of what the teams at WCCC and CJM did was motivated by unconditional love for others. In the course of analysis, a motivation of love for others emerged as a motivating factor for the work done by WCCC and CJM. It was obvious that unconditional love drove the teams at both WCCC and CJM to serve less fortunate strangers. It was evident that love was an organizing principle around which both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry operate. One participant, a staff responded: “Willow Creek reaches out in love to everyone.” Another staff, participant said: “we love people and want to help.” One more participant referred to their vision as: “a vision to show the love of Christ to everyone, no matter what their circumstance.”

The Care Center, which is the main facility that houses the Compassion and Justice Ministry on their campus, is all about loving and also assisting less fortunate people in need. From the manner in which it is set up, and the respectful way they treat their visitors (who are people in need, with no means of paying back, or filling the coffers of the church), it is obvious that an unusual love for people is a motivating factor for these entities. The Compassion and Justice Ministry describes its mission as one of fighting poverty and injustice, so that lives are transformed. Willow Creek Community Church, through the Compassion and Justice Ministry accomplish this mission by sharing their Christian faith, hope and God’s unconditional love. They carry out these practical goals by meeting some basic needs of their less privileged visitors.

Compassion and Justice Ministry empowers the less privileged visitors who come to them for help, while offering long term solutions that help to empower these individuals toward a stable and self-sufficient future. Another participant expressed appreciation for the work CJM
does at their care center in helping women facing unplanned pregnancy. These women are desperate, helpless and sometimes feel morally judged. However, Willow Creek through the Compassion and Justice Ministry has created an environment where these women could feel welcomed and find unconditional love and support. A motivation of love is a theme that is evident in how CJM reflects the norms and values of WCCC.

**Serving Others.** Another theme that was evident in the data was serving others. In a lot of the feedback, the researcher observed a commitment to meet the needs of others through their service and within their organizational structures. Both WCCC and CJM are set up with similar organizational structures and an organizational culture centered on serving others. Their mission which includes service informs their organizational culture, which in turn speaks to the motivation of their personnel. Both physical structures at the church and the CJM-run Care Center also speak to the theme of service. They welcome their visitors and create a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere for them. Interwoven in the feedback from respondents, particularly personnel of both WCCC and CJM was a commitment to serve these strangers, people to whom they felt a responsibility as a result of their spiritual values. Some of the respondents used the refrain: “all people matter to God.” Consequently, people matter to WCCC and CJM who consider themselves as representatives and also compassionate soldiers of God in this world.

In all they do, one overriding theme is that personnel of both WCCC and CJM feel called to serve others, especially those who are less fortunate and connected. When asked important values they perceived from Willow Creek Community Church, one participant responded: “service - assisting the less fortunate” and “the local church is the hope of the world” which suggested a desire to offer hope to the world through service. Another participant responded: “serve with a joyful heart” and “people matter to God.” When it came to the Compassion and
Justice Ministry, a staff participant, responded: “serving those in need” and (doing so) “well” – while another participant responded: “service…assisting.” In describing their job, one participant, who happened to be a leader of WCCC used the phrase, chief servant. One more participant, a staff of Willow Creek Community Church stated: “it is at the very heart of who and what Willow Creek is. We love to help and serve people that need a hand.” This attitude was a consistent theme that emerged from the study.

**Identical Organizational Culture & Shared Values.** During the course of analysis, another theme that emerged was that both WCCC and CJM shared identical culture and values. These were common threads woven around the data. Behind the feedback from participants, especially personnel from WCCC and CJM, was the presence of two strong parent/child organizations that were mirror images of each other, with a commitment to accomplish their goals by complimenting each other. It is evident that there was an intentional design to have both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry impact the world around them by the force of their shared values, identical operations and organizational culture. Both WCCC and CJM stand out because of their strong organizational qualities. This was an underlying message that was evident during the analysis of the research data. It was also evident that the parent organization depended upon its embedded unit to act as a conduit for carrying out its mission. Most of the feedback reflected this theme.

As an example, one participant stated: “CJM is a ministry of WCCC” and in referring to the similarities between WCCC and CJM, the participant also stated that their “human resources, I.T., and accounting seem to line up.” Another participant, who happened to be a leader, while referring to WCCC and CJM noted that “Willow is quite efficient, meaning that from an operational standpoint, it’s been admired as a Christian organization.” This participant further
stated, that in talking about Willow Creek Community Church, they were also referring to the Compassion and Justice Ministry. Another participant said: “they have a similar culture and some of the same values in how they operate.”

One participant, a CJM staff affirmed that the basis for organizational similarity was their religious beliefs. A participant stated: “we abide by the same theological beliefs.” Another participant, a staff with CJM noted the presence and importance of identical financial and accounting practices. Another participant stated: “CJM global has met with accounting to ensure processes are held to a high standard matching that of WCCC.” One participant, a WCCC staff confirmed the institutional relationship between WCCC and CJM by stating: “all WCCC policies apply to…CJM.” Another participant, who is the leader of a partner organization of both WCCC and CJM, focused on work in South America stated: “they sponsor leadership development…in El Salvador.” This further speaks to the fact that strong organization and leadership are important to both WCCC and CJM. They also want to see these principles replicated with the organizations they support financially.

Behind the feedback is the common theme that Willow Creek Community Church is an organization that is intentional about expressing its values of love and service through its embedded unit by emphasizing similar organizational culture and identical mode of operation.

**Conclusion.** An analysis of the data in relation to this question, speaks to the institutional relationship between both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. Their love and care for all people, especially the less fortunate, not only leads to their commitment to service, but also leads to building an institutional relationship that speaks to their values. Consequently, the data from this study leads the researcher to conclude that the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the institutional norms of its parent organization,
Willow Creek Community Church by reflecting and sharing its values of love for all people, service to accomplish its goals and finally strong leadership and organizational capacity that makes it clear to all that they are part of the same institution with shared ideals and values.

**Sub Question B**

The second sub question, *what evidence is there of isomorphism in the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry?* was addressed with the aid of interview and survey questions addressed to the research participants. Relevant questions were asked of individuals with direct knowledge of either and/or both Willow Creek Community Church, and the Compassion and Justice Ministry, with the aim of determining if their relationship demonstrates the presence of institutional isomorphism. From analyzing the survey instrument and interviews, the researcher was able to look for consistency in answers that confirmed the presence of an isomorphic relationship between WCCC and CJM. The researcher then triangulated the data from their feedback with those of the partner and peer participants, in order to observe for themes that might emerge.

According to DiMaggio & Powell (1983), isomorphism is a process that makes one unit in a population resemble another. Part of the assumptions of this study is that embedded units tend to mimic the practices of their parent organization. Another assumption is that organizations that share similar values tend to have identical practices and also some large organizations tend to dominate their environment by creating similar offshoots. This study premised this question with a uniform definition of the term ‘values.’ For the purpose of this study, the term ‘values’ was defined as an organization’s ethics or morale code, and also refer to what an organization considers very important. In seeking to address this question, the researcher visited the campus
of the Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry and toured the various sites of the campus, which includes the main church and its auxiliaries.

The themes that emerged in this area were: consistency/shared values, strong leadership and finally, valuing human lives and dignity. Different respondents spoke to the presence of shared values between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. There was a common thread that went through the feedback which spoke to the presence of similar values between these entities. Also strong leadership was another theme that was evident in the research data. Willow Creek’s success is mainly credited to the strong leadership of Bill Hybels and his team, and that same ideal was evident in the data collected for this study. It was also evident that the CJM shared this ideal with WCCC. Finally, valuing human lives and dignity was another theme that emerged in the course of the study. In studying the services provided by CJM and WCCC, it was evident that they both placed significant value on human beings, especially the less fortunate ones, and it seemed important to communicate this value in their policies.

Consistency. In the course of analyzing the data, one of the themes that stood out to the researcher was that of the consistency which exists between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry, in their practices. Several comments spoke to the fact that consistency existed between both WCCC and CJM. This study concluded that a consistent approach to conducting the business of both WCCC and CJM was an important organizing principle for the leaders of both entities. Oftentimes, when someone referred to the operations of WCCC and CJM, they came across as a mirror image of each other. This is an important factor that speaks to the isomorphic relationship, as it is consistent with the discussion of isomorphism by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). As stated above, isomorphism is said to be present when one
organization resembles another. This is important to funders who identify with the values of Willow Creek Community Church, and are called upon to fund the work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry. If a funder determines that both entities mirror each other in values, it is an advantage where their decision to support CJM is concerned.

One participant who has worked closely with both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry alluded to this value in their comment: “when I’ve used the term, Willow, I really have meant their Compassion and Justice Ministry.” Another participant, an international partner spoke to the theme of consistency by stating: “WCCC empowers and engages individuals and helps them to connect to other people and grow their capacity to empathize and show compassion. CJM gives the members an outlet to use these capacities.” One CJM leader, during their interview stated: “the way I do strategic planning will be the exact way as a leader in WCCC” - obviously to ensure consistency with their values. Another participant alluded to the joint leadership meetings they have on a regular basis. Another response was: “the church was founded on Acts 2…and through that foundation we have adapted…how we care for the under-resourced.” One participant spoke to this value of consistency by stating of both WCCC and CJM’s values and practices: “loving people equally, rich or poor. Giving all that we can to help and serve others.” Another participant stated: “Our entire global program is to partner with…churches like Willow.” Another participant with direct knowledge of the office systems stated: “CJM global has met with [WCCC’s] accounting [department] to ensure processes are held to a high standard, matching that of WCCC.” This value was one that was intentional on the part of the architects of WCCC and CJM and it is evident to anyone observing their processes.

**Strong & Visionary Leadership.** Another theme that was evident in the data collected was strong leadership, especially the visionary kind. For both WCCC and the CJM to stand out
as effective organizations making a tremendous difference around the world, the role of strong visionary leadership has obviously been an important one. It is obvious to the researcher that these entities did not achieve their unique success by happenstance. From different commentaries on how they are run and also the intentionality involved in moving their policies in a specific direction, the presence of strong visionary leadership is a recurring theme within the data. This is reflected in the vision behind both entities and the manner in which they are organized and also their interactions with their environment. Even the document review indicated that others on the outside considered and voted WCCC as the leading Christian organization in their field. The fact that their Annual Global Leadership Summit attracts key global social, political and business leaders, including US Presidents speak to the importance of strong and visionary leadership to both CJM and WCCC.

One participant alluded to this theme while answering a question about important values of both WCCC and CJM, by stating: “leadership.” Another respondent answered: “we connect with multiple WCCC and CJM leaders” and further stated: “WCCC does a great job of creating a sense of community” while “CJM has an informed and broad approach to sustainable church-based community development.” Another participant in describing a key value answered: “leadership would be a value, and excellence.” One more participant, a peer leader referencing the importance of WCCC and CJM to his organization said: “[this] has been a chance to learn from an organization that has thought systematically about effective stewardship…so I have valued their models, the principles I’ve been able to glean from watching them in action.” When asked a question about consistency in values between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry, an overseas peer leader simply responded: “leadership emphasis.” Finally, one of the personnel in answering a question about what the core values of
these entities were, simply responded: “evangelism and leadership.” It is evident from the data that leadership plays an essential role in the operations of both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. The data constantly pointed to results that spoke to the presence of leadership and intentionality in guiding both WCCC and CJM.

**Valuing Human Lives & Dignity.** In reviewing the data collected for this study, one theme that was evident was how both WCCC and CJM value the dignity of humans. This is also important in the lives of the people they serve. No matter who it is, both WCCC and CJM are committed to offering human dignity to everyone who walks through their doors. As stated earlier, Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry both believe every human being matters to God. They also believe that each live has equal value and should treated as such. This theme was evident in most of the feedback, the way WCCC and CJM are set up as organizations, and also in the way they both attend to the less fortunate. The personnel of WCCC and CJM do not simply give their visitors handouts, but as one of the participants alluded, they give their less fortunate visitors the opportunity to contribute something. CJM also gives their visitors the opportunity to find work and earn a living by providing cars to help people pursue employment, and others transport themselves to their places of employment, when these individuals find themselves in dire straits. This commitment is shared by both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry.

One participant reinforced this point when they stated:

*We talk about in our local strategy that we have three pillars or values into when we serve: hope, dignity and transformation. So when someone walks through the door, the moment they open the door, we want their experience to be filled with dignity, and that*
means in the way they sit, as they wait, that means in the way we offer…treating them as dignified individuals who have something to contribute.

This participant concluded their commentary by stating:

There are times we are asking them to serve, to volunteer or sometimes…bring a monetary donation. We are all about empowering and seeing people as individuals and not letting their time of need define who they are, but looking at their intrinsic value…creating opportunities and services that help people move out of the [unfortunate] situation they find themselves in.

Another participant, a leader of a partner organization alluded to this when they referenced their work with CJM and WCCC by stating: “we have a satellite counseling site at the …Care Center and work them to provide counseling,…and support services to women facing unplanned pregnancy.”

As an indicator that the theme of valuing human lives and dignity is not only an intention on the part of WCCC and CJM, but a one that is observed also by outsiders. Another participant, a peer leader who has worked with both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry encapsulated this theme by stating:

One of the values I respect highly there is their care for the issue of human dignity, and I’ll illustrate that. So when they created the care center, they could have created a traditional food pantry. Instead of that, they decided to create a supermarket – an effect that allowed under resourced people to experience the same kind of personal respect and care that comes from frequenting a Jewels or Marrianos might experience today. That was very purposeful.

Another commentary in reference to how different WCCC and CJM are from other Christian organizations, where dealing with the less fortunate is concerned was:
Often in Christian communities, there is an attentiveness to relief needs, basic food, shelter, clothing, etc. They have to move to the next level of betterment, which involves the provision of practical skills for living in life…job training, or other basic competences. People have to have the tools to better themselves when you are not in room…Willow’s Compassion and Justice Ministry has its eye on that continuum.” Finally, a participant, who is also a leader observed: “I think the church was founded on the notion that lost people matter to God and what we do here at Willow is creating an environment for people.

**Conclusion.** Consistency, visionary leadership and human dignity are themes that were evident in the data analysis. These are significant threads that are noticeably woven through the fabric of the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. One participant in reference to both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry said: “they are part of the same fabric.” Another said: “they are one and the same organization.” One more participant responded: “I think the same value is reflected in how Compassion and Justice does its work.” The processes of WCCC and CJM reflect a significant level of consistency, which in turn creates a sense of trustworthiness, to the extent that it demonstrates to outsiders, including their funders that they have shared values. This is advantageous in attracting more support to fund their goals and projects.

The analysis of the data leads this researcher to conclude that the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry is evidenced by isomorphism. As Willow Creek Community Church attempts to influence their environment through their relationship with the Compassion and Justice Ministry, the presence of an isomorphic relationship is evident to an organizational leadership student. The normative
patterns that exists in their choices, between themselves and also in their relationship with other organizations speak to their inherent commitment to an isomorphic themed relationship.

**Sub Question C**

In addressing the third sub question, *How does the work done by CJM contribute to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church?*, this researcher asked specific questions designed to elicit feedback on the subject. In an effort to ensure a uniform interpretation of the key term, *legitimacy*, for the purpose of this study, the researcher adopted the dictionary definition of the term legitimacy: *trustworthiness* of an organization, the recognition of an organization as honest, reliable or honorable by those around it. Survey and interview participants were asked relevant questions regarding this subject. Respondents were asked subsequent follow-up questions which explained why the respondent gave a certain answer. One such question was: “*Do you believe that the work CJM does contributes to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church?*” of which participants answers ranged from a simple ‘yes’ to a strong response of ‘absolutely.’

The themes that emerged from the analysis of the data regarding this question were: *practicing what they preach, Authenticity/Credibility* and *Relevance*. In the different data reviewed by this study, these themes manifested themselves as important in the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. A significant amount of feedback spoke to the respect directed at both WCCC and CJM because of how they lived out their faith and so were considered genuine.

**Practicing what they preach.** This was one of the powerful themes that emerged in the researcher’s review of the data. The commitment of Willow Creek Community Church to express their values through the Compassion and Justice Ministry is a manifestation of WCCC’s
commitment to practice what they preach. Since this is a respected value amongst organizations, the feedback indicated that many valued both WCCC and CJM for practicing what they preach. This invariably is a positive for both entities, as a greater respect, or sense of legitimacy puts them in an advantageous position to receive support, especially funding to carry out their mission. In this regard, the funding is a means to an end – one of achieving their goals. In an age where individuals or organizations are derided for not living up to their word, it is always considered positive and advantageous when an organization keeps its word.

In speaking to this theme one participant, a leader with experience with both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry noted:

Willow will not be living its full mission if all it did was attract large crowds to worship services…and so the Compassion and Justice Ministry is…a critical expression of…an authenticating dimension of Willow…because without the existence of the Compassion and Justice Ministry, one could question whether they are truly meeting their mission.

Another participant, a leader of a partner organization reaffirmed this principle when they stated: “CJM provides the opportunity to live out what is taught and experienced through WCCC’s core purposes.” One participant, who is a leader of an organization that partners with CJM, spoke to this theme when they stated: “Willow Creek says that all people matter to God, and the Compassion and Justice Ministry puts those words into action by serving those who are most marginalized and in need.”

Credibility. Another theme that emerged from the data of this study was the theme of credibility. Some of the different responses spoke to the credibility of both WCCC and CJM. First of all, the data spoke to the credibility of the Compassion and Justice Ministry because of the good work that they did on behalf of Willow Creek Community Church. This came from the
fact that CJM is considered to be reliable and dependable by the individuals they serve. These individuals from less fortunate backgrounds depend on the care of CJM to lift them up, creating hope for improving their circumstances. The environment created at the CJM Care Center was one that made the visitors experience a sense of acceptance, rather than judgment for their unfortunate circumstances. If these individuals felt this way about the Compassion and Justice Ministry, it is logical that they would transfer the positive feeling to Willow Creek Community Church, the parent organization represented by CJM.

One participant’s feedback reinforced this theme. While referring to the relevance of the work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry, this participant said:

It is one of the leading edges of the values of Willow Creek Community Church…there is probably more care for the poor, and more care for issues of racial reconciliation, and more care for community development, in the Compassion and Justice Ministry…I think it is an engine that is pulling…towards those dimensions.

Another participant’s response was: “Willow in general, as an entity, and Compassion and Justice Ministry…are quite good…at,,trust and credibility.

In discussing CJM’s contribution to the legitimacy of WCCC, one participant, a peer leader stated: “Willow is committed to life change in the world, to seeing kids have opportunity, to seeing moms have cars, and hope that legitimizes its existence.” Another respondent, a leader of an international partner organization with the Compassion and Justice Ministry, affirmed the importance of their work by stating: “I wish more churches would to this. Willow seems to understand that the church does not exist for its own good. The church is called to go beyond its walls and transform its community.” One more respondent spoke to credibility when they said of CJM: “It supports the claims of WCCC to be a church focused on changing the world with a
practical faith.” The various feedback speak to the value of credibility which Willow Creek Community Church has earned as a consequence of the work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry in its immediate community and around the world.

**Relevance.** One more theme that emerged in this study was *relevance.* The data kept speaking to the importance of the work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry and subsequently Willow Creek Community Church in their community and around the world. A significant portion of this relevance comes from the significant impact they make in the lives of people in their immediate community and around the world. The document review also revealed how their annual global summit is most attended because a lot of organizations in their field value their success and want to learn the “how to” from CJM and WCCC. It was heartening to read comments from one critic, who still acknowledged that WCCC was most relevant, because of the level of its impact. It certainly speaks to relevance when one’s critic gives grudging respect for an organization after criticism in a particular area. This level of respect is capital that an organization earns over time.

In speaking to this value, one participant stated: “Organizational legitimacy and trust value can only be earned…by standing by your values over a period of time. CJM has proven its organizational legitimacy.” Another respondent, a peer leader, in speaking along the lines of relevance, stated:

We are experiencing today, not only in our cities, but also in our suburbs, the spread of poverty. Poverty is overcome by establishing resourceful relationships for people, and the Compassion and Justice Ministry is really targeted at building that relational strength both here in the United States and in places like the Dominican Republic and elsewhere.

Again, speaking of relevance, a respondent stated:
With race relations, it’s well known that Bill Hybels [WCCC founder] himself, some years back, experienced a pretty significant conversion on that subject…and so now the church is seriously championing, reflecting in its own life, and its missional commitments, a more holistic…inter cultural community. So I really respect that. I think it’s highly relevant in a world that is fragmented, conflicted, balkanized as the news reports today, regularly remind us.

One more commentary stated: “you know, Willow is one of the Christian ministries today that I think is attacking some of the most relevant questions.” One more respondent stated: “it has impacted how [people] live out the mission and vision of the local church, and how local churches engage globally as well.” Another respondent spoke to the theme of relevance when they stated: “I am unsure there is another church handling the issues of the world like WCCC through CJM.” I think this participant summed the theme of relevance up when they shared:

I think over the years what we are doing to help our brothers in need both locally and globally have given legitimacy to anybody from the outside who is skeptical about what Willow is doing…I think all you have to do to a skeptic…is point to….scriptures about caring for the…needy and it removes doubts….I think looking to Willow (WCCC) as a model or example of a church who really cares for the needy is undeniable.

This statement underscores the leadership and also the special role the teams at both WCCC and CJM believe they have in the world when it comes to loving, giving hope and changing the lives of the less fortunate individuals in their midst and the world.

**Conclusion.** In answering this research question, the themes of practicing what they preach, authenticity and relevance all speak to the fact that people consider the Compassion and Justice Ministry as playing a critical role in legitimizing its parent organization, Willow Creek
Community Church. The value of authenticity CJM brings as a result of keeping the word of its parent organization speaks to the credibility of Willow Creek Community Church. This is akin to the Ambassador of one country stationed in another. The activities of the ambassador is usually assessed on behalf of his/her country. If they do laudable work, the credit is ascribed more to their home country, and less to the individual, since he/she is representing their country. This is similar to the activities of the embedded organization in relation to its parent organization. The actions of the embedded unit either does or does not contribute legitimacy because it brings either credibility or discredit to the parent organization. These themes draw a road map towards the destination of an organization that has increased in legitimacy because its embedded arm is doing significant work that gives its parent organization credibility. Consequently, from the results of the data, this study comes to the conclusion that the Compassion and Justice Ministry contributes to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church.

More Themes: WCCC & CJM Values

Environment of hope. Creating an environment of hope was as an important theme evident in both organizations. The consistency of this value led the researcher to conclude that hope is a very important value to both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry.

The value of hope was certainly a value both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry wanted to emphasize. In a world where a lot of people are beaten down, dismayed and hopeless, the leaders of WCCC truly believe that their organization has a biblical and practical mandate to offer hope as a remedy. Hope that comes from their faith in God, but expressed through practical means. It is clearly part of their DNA to offer hope in all
they do. Some participants referred to the regular reminder of Bill Hybels, founder and main
leader of WCCC: “the church is the hope of the world.”

One participant, an international partner leader with the Compassion and Justice
Ministry, expressed pride at their work and support for the annual 3-Week celebration of Hope
held by both WCCC and CJM for their work and impact overseas. In making this point, one of
the participants, a leader with the Compassion and Justice Ministry mentioned that in their
weekly strategy meetings: “we have three pillars or values we enter into when we serve. And that
would be hope, dignity and transformation.” When asked of a value they learned from dealing
with WCCC and CJM, one participant, a partner leader repeated: “the local church is the hope of
the world” – an answer also given by multiple Willow personnel who participated in the study’s
survey. One survey participant went further to describe their responsibility thus:

In the global sector of the CJM we partner with churches around the globe to
provide resources and hope to their communities. This reflects the value that both
WCCC and the CJM believe that the local church is the hope of the world.
Figure 3 – Bar chart representing the number of times the Top 6 Values are identified in data.

**Sense of Community.** Creating a sense of community was another important theme that emerged from the data. Community is part of the DNA of this WCCC and CJM that it was included in the name of the church – Willow Creek *Community* Church. Giving people, a sense of community is such an important value to WCCC and also CJM. It is reflected in their work. This was the most referenced value in the study, as noted in Figure 3. When asked to name a couple of important values of Willow Creek Community Church, a partner leader participant responded: “Willow does a great job of creating a sense of community.” A peer leader put it best when he said of WCCC:

The church is seriously championing, reflecting in its own life, and in its
missional commitments, a more holistic biblical kind of community – inter cultural community. So I really respect that, I think it’s highly relevant in a world that is as fragmented, conflicted, balkanized, as the news reports today, regularly remind us. You know, Willow is one of the Christian ministries that is I think, attacking some of the most relevant questions.

**Leadership.** This was one key value this study observed in the process of data analysis. A significant number of participants mentioned leadership directly or referenced the presence of strong leadership where both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry are concerned. Some participants referenced leadership as a core value for both CJM and WCCC - a value with which they impact other organizations. References were made to the founder of WCCC, Bill Hybels’s emphasis on strong leadership for the success of any organization. Other leaders applauded WCCC and CJM for exemplifying strong leadership. While addressing the value of leadership, some participants referred to features like vision, goal setting, building a team and also inspiring followers to accomplish a vision. One participant, a partner leader valued WCCC and CJM because they “sponsor leadership development of churches” overseas.

Two participants, one a leader with WCCC, and the other a leader with CJM both identified leadership as one of the key values of their organization. One participant made referenced their founder and leader, Bill Hybel. Hybels is credited during one of WCCC’s annual global leadership summit with teaching that leadership begins, not just with making people excited about where they are being taken (destination), but also with making them uncomfortable with where they are currently. Finally, a participant, an international peer leader, when asked
about one consistent value between both CJM and WCCC, simply responded: “their emphasis on leadership!”

In a document review, some reference was made to management and leadership expert, and also former CEO of General Electric (GE), Jack Welch, and his view of WCCC and its leader, Bill Hybels (Chu, 2010). According to Welch, Hybels is a unique and strong leader, who embodies the 4 Es of leadership. According to Welch, the 4 Es are: an individual with energy (one who energizes others); an individual who has edge (one who can say yes or no decisively); and one who executes well. Welch ended by stating that Bill Hybels has all these qualities. He could run a corporate organization, and even run the country (Chu, 2010). This is certainly an affirmation of the value of leadership behind the running of WCCC and CJM. Another leader, Len Schlesinger, President of Babson College and former Chief Operating Officer for Limited Brands, who studied WCCC for about 20 years, stated: “Willow Creek offers a deep set of lessons about organizational life that I have not been able to learn anywhere else” (Chu, 2010, para 3). The value of leadership was evident in the data, and this researcher was able to connect the dots of intentionality with the decision to run the organization in a specific way, and also to have CJM reflect the values of WCCC.

**Selfless service.** Again, serving the less fortunate is a theme that was evident in the data. This was mentioned by most respondents to the survey and interviews. This theme emerged in the course of data analysis, and became one this study focused on. A majority of participants within and outside of Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry identified selfless service a stated goal for WCCC and CJM.

This value is so engrained in the organizations that some staff participants who completed the survey described their official roles with word ‘serve.’ One staff responded with
the phrase: “I serve as…” One staff survey participant described one of the two important values they perceive from their organization as the “need to serve the less fortunate” while another described an important value of their organization as “serving with joy.”

This value is also evident to outsiders engaging with WCCC and CJM. One participant, who happened to be a partner leader, not only identified service as a core value for both WCCC and CJM, but noted their desire to replicate this value with the people they impact around the world. This participant said: “there is a focus on developing leaders that would serve others.”

The study observed that both CJM and WCCC personnel equally cited the importance of service in their feedback. This pattern, observed in the analysis, also manifested isomorphism in the relationship between the Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. They are both built on a culture/value of service, and this culture is evident in their institutional approach to running both entities.

**Reflection of God’s love.** Another theme that emerged was a love for people, which led to a desire to help. Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry both operate from a heart of love. They assert that they preach and live the unique biblical agape or unconditional kind of love for everyone. According to participants, WCCC leader and founder, Bill Hybels preaches this message on a regular basis, so it is part of the fabric of both WCCC and CJM. It is important to both WCCC and CJM that they reflect God’s unconditional love that welcomes and forgives everyone in need. When asked to name three key values of CJM, a participant, who is a leader summed it up when they responded: “A vision to show the love of Christ to everyone, no matter their circumstances.”

**Authentic faith.** This was an important value for some of the respondents. Willow Creek Community Church prides itself in authenticity. Different participants within and outside both
entities pointed to the activities of both WCCC and CJM, especially the Compassion and Justice Ministry as proof of their authenticity – the fact that they were living out their faith by their corresponding actions, not just talking it. Authentic Faith was the 3rd most talked about value. In characterizing their partnership with the Compassion and Justice Ministry, one participant, a partner leader asserted that by making the choice CJM had made to help at risk pregnant women: “they are putting their words into action.” Another response in this area asserted that Willow makes the claims that all people matter, and CJM proves that through its work with the less fortunate. As stated earlier, a peer leader asserted as much when he said the work done by the Compassion and Justice Ministry validates the claims of Willow Creek Community Church. The value of authenticity is also connected to legitimacy as it earns the organization trust whenever it is seen to be keeping its word.

**WCCC & CJM: Exploring Their Relationship**

The relationship between the Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry was part of the exploration of this study. This went to the heart of the research questions. The presence of an isomorphic relationship between both CJM and WCCC, on the one hand, and CJM’s contribution to the legitimacy of WCCC on the other, were both explored by this study. Consequently, this study designed research questions that addressed these questions from different angles. Some questions were indirect and required a discussion by the participants, while others were direct. In the latter case, there was no doubt as to how the participants felt. For example, participants were asked if they saw similarities between both the Willow Creek Community Church, and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. 100% of the respondents found similarities between both WCCC and CJM. A majority of respondents also found congruence between the values of WCCC and CJM. The analysis program identified 16
mentions of similarities between both organizations. Some respondents even went as far as describing the Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry as one and the same. In interviewing the leaders, one way the study wanted to get an objective response was to ask how they thought outsiders perceived them. One participant, who happened to be a leader of another organization, and who had worked with both WCCC and CJM said they are so similar, in their values and some of their operations, that he saw them as a reflection of each other.

When it came to answering the question that addressed if the participants felt that the Compassion and Justice Ministry contributed to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church, they were first asked if they believed legitimacy was important to the success of any organization, particularly a donor funded nonprofit organization. This followed a definition of the term ‘legitimacy’ so that there was a uniform understanding of the term. For the purpose of this study, the term ‘legitimacy’ was defined as: a) the trust value an organization has with the public or the community within which they function, b) the way the organization is perceived by those in its environment, or c) the trustworthiness of an organization.

While discussing the work at the Care Center, respondents pointed to the care extended to the poor and the empowerment and restoration of dignity given to the less fortunate individuals served by CJM, as confirmation of the ideals, and a meeting of the goals and mission of Willow Creek Community Church. One peer leader with intimate knowledge of both WCCC and CJM, responded by stating: “Willow’s core mission is well known.” He went further to say: “Therefore, Willow [WCCC] will not be living into its full mission if all it did was attract large crowds to worship services...[WCCC] must externalize itself in works of service.” This partner-leader ended by stating: “the Compassion and Justice Ministry is in my view, a critical
expression of the gospel’s implications, and an authenticating dimension of Willow’s ministry.”

Another participant, who happens to partner with the Compassion and Justice ministry in their work overseas, stated:

I think WCCC empowers and engages individuals and helps them to connect to other people, and grow their capacity to empathize and show compassion. CJM gives the members an outlet to use these capacities … they complement each other.

Another respondent stated: “I think that CJM provides the opportunity to live out what is taught and experienced through WCCC’s core purposes.”

**Conclusion**

The data collected by this intrinsic case study was done with the aim of exploring and understanding the institutional relationship between the Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. The study also explored whether the work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry contributed to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church. As the analysis found, there are strong opinions in attempting to answer the questions and navigate the research. The data collected aided the study by giving an in-depth understanding of the subject matter from the perspectives of individuals with both direct and indirect knowledge. In the process of conducting the study, several themes emerged that gave further clarity to the study. The analysis of these findings are discussed in Chapter V.
Chapter V: Discussion & Interpretation of Findings

Introduction

Nonprofit organizations are usually limited by funding to accomplish their mission and also their goals. In a saturated field of organizations seeking funding and a limited availability of funds and resources, a nonprofit organization will have to stand out, in order to attract significant funding for their cause. One way to effectively stand out is to demonstrate one has a well-run organization, focused on accomplishing its mission, and whose operations are consistent with its values. The congruence of its processes with its values goes a long way to demonstrate legitimacy, especially in the eyes of the funders, who these organizations need to attract the necessary resources in order to meet their goals.

In this chapter, the researcher attempts to make meaning of the research findings, by application of both Institutional theory and Legitimacy theory to the data. This study was embarked upon for the purpose of understanding the institutional relationship between the Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. The study also considered if the work done by the Compassion and Justice Ministry contributes to the legitimacy of its parent organization, Willow Creek Community Church.

The premise of this study is that nonprofit organizations play a major role in providing for the needy and less fortunate in societies around the world, and that faith based organizations, as a consequence of their religious teachings, make this goal a priority and focus. Faith-based organizations also bring a unique touch and care to the work they do, in ways that others do not (Bush, 2001).

They also increase the networks of access for their members. In order for large religious congregations to focus on addressing the needs of their members and at the same time tackle the
needs of the less fortunate, some embed smaller units to focus on the work of addressing the needs of the poor in society and sometimes overseas. Some religious organizations have been able to carry out this work in a more efficient and effective manner than their secular counterparts (Bush, 2001). Willow Creek Community Church is one of such organizations. They were not just the largest church in the United States of America (Drucker, 1989), but in a poll of pastors across the country, they were voted the most influential church in the United States (Chu, 2010). In his Harvard Business Review paper on *what businesses could learn from nonprofits*, leading management expert and professor, Peter Drucker, cited Willow Creek Community Church as one nonprofit organization that has excelled beyond measure; one that other organizations could learn from (Drucker, 1989).

Unlike a lot of nonprofit organizations, who tend to measure success by their good intentions, nonprofit organizations like WCCC have learned to measure differently, by defining their mission and setting clearly defined measurable goals (Drucker, 1989). Drucker identified Willow Creek Community Church as one of the leading and successful nonprofit organizations because they not only had a clearly defined mission, but they also ensured that their objectives were relevant to the needs of the people they serve (Drucker).

Nonprofit organizations need significant funds, even more than for profit corporation. Since they are typically focused on needs, they tend to have less than what they need (Drucker, 1989) and they do not sell products for profit. Consequently they depend on the goodwill financial support of others. This study is premised on the idea that legitimate and well run organizations stand a better chance to attract financial support than organizations that are not well run, or considered legitimate by the public/funders. Willow Creek and the Compassion and
Justice Ministry are trailblazers in the religious nonprofit field, hence the decision to conduct a case study on them.

The research question that guided this study was: “How does the Compassion & Justice Ministry reflect the institutionalized norms of Willow Creek Community Church, and does CJM contribute to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church?” This question was addressed with the aid of three sub questions. They are: a) How does CJM reflect the institutional norms of Willow Creek Community Church? b) What evidence is there of isomorphism in the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church, and the Compassion and Justice Ministry? and c) How does the work done by the Compassion and Justice Ministry contribute to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church?

The study was designed to collect data from participants with direct relationship with, or clear knowledge of Willow Creek Community Church and/or the Compassion and Justice Ministry. Participants were drawn from leaders, regular staff and a member of the Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. To get objective perspectives and data that could balance what the study received from within WCCC and CJM, the researcher also included participants from outside WCCC and the CJM. They included leaders of partner and also peer organizations of WCCC and CJM. Half of the participants who happened to be personnel were drawn from WCCC and the remaining were drawn from CJM. As for the organizational leaders who were interviewed, some were drawn from within the United States, and others were recruited from overseas, consistent with the global reach of WCCC and CJM.

The interviews and surveys began by determining the relationships each participant had with either or both ‘Willow’ and ‘Compassion.’ The study further questioned the participants regarding their views on the relationship between WCCC and CJM. Finally, the participants
were questioned regarding their views on the contributions of CJM to the legitimacy of WCCC. These surveys, questionnaires and interviews were transcribed, and analyzed with the aid of the tool – MAXQDA, a qualitative analysis software. Recurring themes were observed from the analyzed data. In this chapter, the researcher seeks to explore meaning for the findings and discuss its implications for future research. This chapter ends with a discussion on some of the limitations and make recommendations for future research.

Themes and Implications

A few themes stood out to this researcher in the course of the study and analysis. These themes stood out from the analysis and triangulation of feedback staff of Willow Creek Community Church, Compassion and Justice Ministry, a church member and finally, leaders from partner and peer organizations. They represent some of the most important values identified for both CJM and WCCC and will be discussed in this chapter.

Leadership. Multiple participants spoke about leadership. Some participants believed that Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry were successful and exemplary as a consequence of strong intentional leadership. Participants who were staff and leaders at Willow Creek Community Church or the Compassion and Justice Ministry spoke proudly of their organizations, pointing to leadership as something that was important to their organization. They considered leadership as a value that they were willing to export around the world, especially through their annual global leadership summit that attracts leaders from around the world. The global leadership summit has regularly featured a diverse group of speakers that ranged from business, arts to political leaders. Past Global Leadership Summit speakers include then US President, William Jefferson Clinton (2000), former president, Jimmy Carter, famed management expert/former CEO of General Electric (GE), Jack Welch, Irish
rocker/Humanitarian, Paul David Hewson (aka Bono), and former US Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Luther Powell. In the annual summit, Willow founder/leader, Bill Hybels emphasize how they have adopted business principles to run their religious nonprofit organization. They teach spiritual and nonprofit leaders to carve out a niche, learn about their clients, and use the best tools of leadership to inspire their people to accomplish identifiable, measurable goals. Even participants who happened to be peer leaders identified leadership as a key reason for their respect for Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry – the main reason leaders pay to attend the WCCC annual leadership summit.

**Love.** Another recurring theme from the study was the observation of a unique expression of love for people by WCCC and CJM. Different participants mentioned the unique love expressed as a characteristic that made WCCC and CJM stand out. In their book about the story behind the founding of Willow Creek Community Church, founders Bill and Lynne Hybels refer to their church members as “people who demonstrate their love for God by loving and serving others” (Hybels & Hybels, 1995, p. 3). Some participants expressed admiration for the exemplary manner with which both WCCC and CJM demonstrate love and a passion to meet the needs of/uplift the people they serve, regardless of their circumstances.

**Isomorphism.** Another theme that was manifest in this study was the similarity between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. At different times, respondents pointed to the similarity in how WCCC and CJM operate. WCCC seemed to be the spiritual arm and the larger arm with the main vision, while CJM was the practical arm of WCCC – doing the practical work, consistent with the vision of WCCC. Some participants referred to both CJM as a sister organization of WCCC, while one participant referred to WCCC and CJM as the same organization. Participants who were personnel attributed this similarity to
the intentionality by their leaders. Some participants simply saw CJM as the practical manifestation of the spiritual values of WCCC, while others saw them as the fulfillment of WCCC.

**Authenticity/Legitimacy.** This theme was quite evident in this study. Some participants characterized WCCC as an organization with a significant level of legitimacy. As discussed in detail below, some participants pointed to the work that CJM does around the work as a significant reason for WCCC’s legitimacy. Simply put, one respondent referred to the Compassion and Justice Ministry as the one responsible for legitimizing Willow Creek Community Church, since people encounter CJM and its many projects done on behalf of the less fortunate.

**Compassion.** Another theme that was evident in the data was compassion. Consistent with their name, participants expressed how less fortunate individuals who visited the Compassion and Justice Ministry were treated with a heart of compassion. Subsequently, for visitors to the Care Center, solutions were proffered that respected these individuals – solutions with the goal of restoring their dignity. Finally the themes of hope and service were evident in this study. Willow Creek Community Church and Compassion and Justice Ministry believe strongly that the church is the hope of the world. Consequently, their mode of operation is centered on offering hope to those they serve globally. Both WCCC and CJM also place a high premium on service. Through a heart of humility and a commitment to service, both WCCC and CJM are able to offer hope to the less fortunate. Therefore service was a key theme that was evident in this study. Different survey participants who happened to be staff of WCCC and CJM characterized their role as one of service.
**Analysis.** In comparing and contrasting the comments from the data, this researcher observed the uniformity of feedback given by not only the insiders, but also the outsiders on a local and global level. This consistence in positive opinion between insiders and outsiders of WCCC and CJM give the opinion greater credibility than if it only came from insiders, who are disposed to speaking favorably of their organization. These strong affirmations of CJM’s contribution to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church are noteworthy, where this study is concerned. In additional support to this argument, another participant, a peer leader, considered the work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry relevant, and also agreed that CJM contributed to the legitimacy of its parent organization. This participant responded *absolutely* to the question of CJM contributing to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church. This participant argued that if all Willow Creek Community Church did was only advocate their faith and run well-attended/exciting services, they would be considered a loud organization, which has little potential for sustainability. However, since they are committed to life change, through the practical work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry, they now have credibility or legitimacy.

There should be no illusion that everyone agrees with the premise of Willow Creek Community Church being a legitimate organization. In conducting a document review, this researcher found commentaries of fellow peer leaders who criticize Willow Creek Community Church for being too dominant, and also for veering away from part of their mission, which includes standing up for biblical principles. Some have accused WCCC of being too *worldly* – a strong accusation in the Christian evangelical community; one that implies that an evangelical individual/organization is inauthentic where living out their beliefs is concerned. This criticism also suggest that the organization is more concerned about pleasing outsiders (secular/non conservatives) and not attracting criticism for standing firm by their beliefs.
The study finds that these kinds of criticisms are not unusual for large dominant organizations, especially when they come from competitors or other organizations they dominate within their organizational field. This study observed that most people who support organizations like WCCC understand that they attract critics, but remain committed to funding them regardless of the criticism.

Some supporters also expressed reservations in specific areas. One participant, a peer leader, while expressing great respect and admiration for WCCC and CJM, expressed concerns that their partnerships with smaller organizations to accomplish specific goals, were not sustained enough. WCCC seemed to have short-term contracts with their CJM partners, which did not allow sufficient time to accomplish their goals. This participant observed that for large organizations like Willow, which need the novelty of short-term results that they could showcase to their funders as proof of achieving results, there is a cost associated with that approach. The cost is staying the course (with not much exciting results to advertise), while focusing on projects with short term results. This approach has the potential of sacrificing sustained impact, which ultimately has the potential of undermining their credibility, or legitimacy.

According to Bruchi (2001), a critic questioned WCCC’s legitimacy, after they discontinued their partnership with Exodus International, a major Christian organization, committed to advocating Christian social values. This was due to Willow’s differences with Exodus’ on their policy of conversion or reparative therapy of people with a gay lifestyle, one forbidden by Christian conservatives. This critic suggested that WCCC was inauthentic for making that decision, since he believed it had a lot to do with maintaining positive public relations. This critic believed that WCCC was more concerned with not offending public opinion, rather than standing on principle (Bruchi, 2001). He further referred to WCCC as one of
those kinds of Christian organizations who turn away from members of their community, “simply because they’re afraid of the backlash people will direct their way if they are seen with somebody who might not be politically correct” (Bruchi, 2001, para 9).

For an organization that prides itself with authenticity, criticism of this nature is not one they take lightly, as it is considered a challenge to their credibility, which is part of their legitimacy. The researcher noted that while this document shared this criticism, there was no proof that Bill Hybels, the leader and founder of Willow Creek Community Church had changed his beliefs regarding the subject, so the main concern behind the criticism was unsubstantiated. The same article began by acknowledging that not only was WCCC one of the largest church organizations, but it was also considered “the most influential church in America” – in a poll of pastors across the country. This study values the fact that the critic acknowledged the relevance of WCCC and the sources they cited were competitors, who share the same organizational field as Willow Creek Community Church.

**Interpretation of Findings**

The findings of this research relate directly to the questions posed by the study. The ensuing sub sections will discuss the connection between the research question and findings. The goal of this section is to answer the research question based on the data.

**Q1-Reflection of institutionalism.** The question: *How does CJM reflect the institutionalized norms of its parent organization?* was analyzed mainly from the survey instrument, but also from the interview data. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), even though the participants did not use the sophisticated nomenclature of organizational theory, their feedback indicated a presence of institutional norms and values present in the relationship between both CJM and WCCC. This study attempts to give a brief overview of institutionalism
and organizational values, and does so in the context of Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry.

According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), institutional theory focuses on the formal structures and processes that influence an organization, due to the larger organization or institution within which it finds itself. As stated earlier, institutional theory is focused on understanding large organizations and their processes, since they tend to dominate their environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). WCCC and CJM stand out because of their values, which tends to shape their identity, ethical standards and their relationships with others. Bottom line, values influence the important processes and characteristics of any organization (Bourne and Jenkins, 2013). According to Herbele (n.d.), cultural norms keep members of the same group moving in a similar direction. Beliefs are usually referred to as values, and values are referred to as norms. As an example, while some countries encourage a collective/communal responsibility for their citizens, the United States is one that promotes individual responsibility that advocates each person being responsible for their own destiny. For example, the phrase *it takes a village to raise a child* is a principle shared by many countries around the world. This is not a widely accepted principle in the United States as parents feel individually responsible for their children. Organizations function in a similar manner. They promote values and norms that people who work for them imbibe as a culture, or way of doing things within these organizations. Consequently, any embedded unit or subsidiary tends to adopt their institution’s way of thinking or approach to doing things. This is consistent with the spirit of institutionalism.

In attempting to answer the above research question, this researcher triangulated feedback from staff of WCCC and CJM, with that of leaders from peer and partner organizations. The study found support for the fact that the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the values of
its parent organization, Willow Creek Community Church. Therefore some ways the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflected the institutional norms and values of Willow Creek Community church are:

- The adoption by Compassion and Justice Ministry of Willow Creek Community Church’s accounting practices.
- The adoption by CJM of WCCC’s commitment to serve, uplift and empower the less fortunate locally and around the world.
- CJM’s commitment to adopt the ethical code and standards of WCCC.
- CJM’s commitment to focus on strong leadership in running their organization – just like WCCC.
- CJM’s commitment to accountability and stewardship, similar to WCCC.
- CJM’s commitment to justice, an important value of WCCC.
- Like WCCC, CJM’s believe that all people matter to God and their consequent organizational practices that embodies this principle in their Care Center and other areas they operate.
- Like WCCC, CJM’s focus that transcends local to one that is international.

In conclusion, the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry is characterized by institutionalism, as supported by the data. This study observed this theme consistently revealed in the feedback given by the various participants, especially staff of both entities. It is obvious that the leaders of both Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry designed their organization to share similar values and an identical relationship consistent with institutional theory.
**Q2 Evidence of isomorphism question.** In addressing this question, which stated: *What evidence is there of isomorphism in the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry?*, the researcher, used the analysis tool, MAXQDA to look for the frequency of confirmation or lack thereof. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), normative isomorphism, as a form of institutionalism, tends to rely on large organizations with a vision of homogeneity. This study also relied on the understanding that when organizations share similar values, they tend to have identical practices, and also, embedded organizations tend to mimic the practices of their parent organization.

As established earlier, institutional isomorphism is divided into: coercive, normative and mimetic isomorphism. According to Zucker (1987), organizations create an ideal world for themselves in the process of isomorphism. The idea behind isomorphism is that more than one organization behave in a similar manner, or have similar processes as a result of institutional constraints (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The mission of WCCC acts as a constraint on itself and also on CJM.

**Coercive isomorphism.** This comes from formal or informal pressures organizations experience from external sources. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), coercive pressures also come from government regulations. An example of this is the rules from the Internal Revenue Service for which organizations operating in the United States have to conform. Also when nonprofit organizations accept government funding, the funding comes with specific regulations, with which these organizations must comply.

Different survey participants alluded to the Compassion and Justice Ministry being compelled to adopt specific guidelines set by Willow, its parent organization. Some participants even mentioned how staff of the Compassion and Justice Ministry were required to abide by the
same code of conduct as personnel from Willow Creek Community Church. One participant said: “WCCC policies apply to CJM.” The same case obtains for their accounting policies and practices. Some participants made it clear that the accounting procedures of CJM were being brought to mirror those of WCCC. Several survey participants, who were staff of either WCCC or CJM alluded to the requirement for certain processes of the CJM to match those of WCCC. One participant said: “CJM global met with WCCC accounting to ensure their processes are held to a high standard.”

**Normative isomorphism.** This occurs when homogeneity or similarity exist between two or more organizations as a result of deliberate efforts made in the area of professionalization via education and professional networks (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Often times, different organizations would hire personnel from the same academic institution or human resource pool, who bring similar professional or technical perspective to their job. Some organizations tend to hire graduates from Harvard Business School for specific leadership positions. These organizations like the Harvard culture and values, and want these graduates to bring the Harvard approach to their organization.

Different participants stated that the CJM hired staff from Willow Creek Community Church which is akin to two entities hiring staff from the same human resource pool. The hires will tend to share some similarities in their approach to work or problem solving. Some participants also mentioned that some WCCC and CJM staff were hired from the church membership. This move obviously made it all but certain that the staff shared similar beliefs and spiritual motivations. These efforts also extended to other organizations. A partner leader from another organization acknowledged hiring staff from the Compassion and Justice Ministry to run
this peer leader’s overseas missions. The reason being that they believed that hiring that staff would bring the technical expertise and philosophy of CJM to this leader’s organization.

**Mimetic isomorphism.** In this form of institutional theory, organizations conform by emulating or mimicking other organizations they respect (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Entities like the Compassion and Justice Ministry practice mimetic isomorphism as their response to some form of uncertainty (Mizruchi & Fein, 1999). When asked how staff of CJM would react in challenging circumstances, some respondents confirmed that the CJM staff would adopt the same attitudes as staff from WCCC.

In their attempt to be successful at their craft, leaders of smaller organizations mirror successful larger organizations by adopting their processes. A review of the data indicated significant similarity in the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. CJM leaders look up to Bill Hybels, the leader of WCCC as their mentor. As stated earlier, organizations find value in emulating bigger organizations they respect.

The analysis of the findings of this study points to evidence of the presence of an isomorphic relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry.

**Q3-Legitimacy question.** In addressing this question, this study considered the premise that in order to be successful, embedded organizations have a vested interest in legitimizing their parent organization, thereby gaining the favor of their much needed funders. The legitimacy theme, addresses the third research sub question: *How does the work done by the Compassion and Justice Ministry contribute to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church?*
As discussed earlier, large organizations welcome opportunities to share their success story. These organizations tell their story by framing their actions within a narrative consistent with acceptable societal expectations, thereby furthering the cause of their legitimacy. By framing their narrative in a positive manner, these organizations paint a picture that reassures others, especially the influential members of their environment (Mizruchi & Fein, 1999). In the case of WCCC, their members and funders constitute the influential members of their environment, whose support they need in order to accomplish their mission.

Since legitimacy theory (especially where nonprofit organizations are concerned), is premised on the fact that organizations need to justify their right to exist (Maurer, 1971), organizations such as Willow Creek Community Church place a high premium on meeting the moral expectations of their environment or institutions surrounding them. And as this study determined earlier, the ability of these organizations to demonstrate their legitimacy puts them in a better position to attract financial support and additional resources. Simply put, for nonprofit organizations seeking more funding to accomplish their mission, greater legitimacy equals greater funding.

Not only did some respondents believe that legitimacy was a very important factor for a nonprofit organization, but they also affirmed that the work done by the Compassion and Justice Ministry around the world gives credibility and legitimacy to their parent organization, Willow Creek Community Church. As stated earlier, different respondents felt that when Willow Creek Community Church preaches their message of hope and uplifting of the less fortunate, the work done by the Compassion and Justice Ministry is a demonstration that Willow means what it says, or practices what it preaches. One participant, a partner leader summed it best by saying: “CJM provides the outlet for faith to be put into action and is therefore vital to the legitimacy and
testimony of WCCC.” Based on the analysis of the findings of this research, there is support for the theory that the work done by the Compassion and Justice Ministry contributes to the legitimacy of its parent organization, Willow Creek Community Church.

**Generalization & Transferability**

Since this study is an Intrinsic Case Study, the researcher makes no claims of generalization or transferability. An intrinsic case study is conducted because a unique case requires some exploration (Creswell, 2007). It is reserved for the exploration of a unique organization (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009), especially one that holds special interest (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Even though the results of an intrinsic case study are not transferable, it still has value from which others could learn. A researcher should be able to represent his/her case as intrinsic without the pressure of expectations in the academic world for the researcher to make the findings transferrable of generalizable (Grandy, 2009). Even though an intrinsic case study has limitations where transferability is concerned, the ability to generalize a case is not the only basis for legitimate academic inquiry (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Others could use the inspirational quality as motivation for their case study.

**Recommendations**

As a result of feedback received from participants, this study observed that there was sometimes inconsistency in how some personnel described their mission. Also, one participant, a peer leader who has had direct dealings with the workings of both CJM and WCCC observed that some of CJMs partnerships seemed to be short term, which while attractive to funders for the short term ‘results’ they could point to, was not conducive to the long term period needed to address some real challenges. The researcher also observed that CJM on its own is limited in what it could practically do globally. It might be useful to replicate its model for greater impact,
especially since they care about efficiency. One participant, a peer leader, noted: “Willow is also quite efficient, meaning that from an operational standpoint, it has been admired as a Christian organization that cared about good stewardship.” Since this is a reputation they have, it might serve them well to build on their success in this area. This study imagines a scenario whereby CJM replicates the model round the world. Only this time, they are a force for good doing charitable work in places where their spirit and their approach are very much needed.

Therefore, this study recommends the following:

- A clearer definition of the mission of the Compassion and Justice Ministry for greater efficiency and effectiveness. A clearer definition gives the team a more consistent message and sense of mission, and also gets the attention of more funders. Funders appreciate clarity.

- An openness to franchising the CJM model around the world for greater effectiveness and impact. This gives CJM greater impact for their mission and expands their funding base globally.

- A commitment to establish a dual track partnership system for CJM, whereby one form of partnership is long-term for sustained impact, and the other is short term for the benefit of funders and members. This way, they could get the short term results to advertise while focusing on real/long term results, which adds to their credibility or legitimacy, when they are considered to be committed to their goal. Funders value this level of commitment.

- An openness to hiring secular personnel to run CJM since they are competing in a secular environment and aim for excellence. If they are committed to excellence, then reaching
out to a broader field only increases their chances of attracting the best personnel, who in turn will provide the best services.

**Study Contributions/Implications.**

This study contributes to the literature, first by demonstrating that one religious nonprofit organization is able to reflect its values through an embedded unit. Even though the approach is not transferable, this study could be used as a building block for future study in organizational theory (Grandy, 2009). Secondly, when researchers refer to this case in the future, even though they are not able to transfer the findings of this case to their own study, they will be able to draw their own conclusions as to specific areas of this case that might be relevant to their own case (Grandy). For example, the knowledge that Willow Creek Community Church was able to adopt market principles to run its nonprofit organization effectively, while embedding an organizational unit might be of interest to another study in this field. It will also be of benefit to other faith-based organizations in their field, who hitherto might have been unaware of the possibility. This study also provides a basis for faith-based organizations to embed an entity whose values are consistent with theirs. This study has implications for faith-based nonprofit organizations, as it addresses how to make their message relevant to different kinds of funders.

A congruence in values is an effective way of attracting funding from private or foundation sources. These funders like to see evidence of isomorphism between their values and that of an entity seeking funding. This enables them to determine the legitimacy of the organization/entity seeking funding from them. Consequently nonprofits seeking funding need to strategize by doing the following:

- Identify the goals and mission they want to focus on
- List these mission and corresponding values
• If necessary, embed a unit focused on accomplishing this mission
• Provide strong leadership for your nonprofit organization
• Identify funding sources that share values similar to yours
• Sell your mission, values, similarities and leadership focus to potential funders.

This study also provides a basis for further research on Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry. Since Willow Creek Community Church is considered one of the largest church, and was also voted the most influential church in America, further studies will be done on it. Some studies have been done about WCCC in the past. This study relied on some of those studies, especially previous Harvard Case Studies carried out on Willow Creek Community Church (Mellado & Schlessinger, 1991; Schlessinger, 1999a; Schlessinger, 1999b). Since this study contributed to the literature in a specific area, it is reasonable to expect future studies to be done on Willow Creek Community Church and/or Compassion and Justice Ministry. This study will certainly be available as a useful resource. Future research on Willow Creek Community Church could focus on areas not covered by this study, with a reliance on this study as a building block.

Study Limitations

The researcher wishes to acknowledge the potential for some limitations where this study is concerned. First of all, the fact that the researcher had a vested interest in the success of this study posed a potential for bias. The researcher worked to reduce the effect of the potential bias by re-considering decisions made in this endeavor with the overarching question: would this serve the academic community or was this being done in the researcher’s self-interest? Focusing on the academic interest helped clarify matters for this study. The researcher also subjected the study to peer scrutiny and accountability, and also accountability to the lead researcher.
As stated earlier, another potential limit to this study was the gatekeeper effect. The fact the leaders of WCCC and CJM chose most of the participants for this study created a challenge for objective responses. First, it is not unreasonable to expect that the leaders chose participants who share similar views with them, and who could consequently convey the impression the leaders wanted this study to receive. The researcher attempted to reduce this limit by seeking feedback from participants outside WCCC and CJM, chosen randomly by the researcher, to balance the impact of feedback from the insiders.

Finally, the results of a study of this nature focusing on one organization and its embedded unit is hardly transferrable since the situation of these subjects are hardly representative of other organizations. However, there are certain principles that others could learn and gain from a study of an organization of this magnitude, one considered to be one of the most relevant in its field.

**Conclusion**

Most religious nonprofit organizations have a vested interest in funding projects that empower and/or give aid to the less fortunate. It is part of their stated goals and values. The challenge most of them face is the securing of funding for these projects. Since they differ in emphasis, this study is not representative of all organizations in this field. It is helpful if organizations first of all determine their core values, and then identify potential funders, especially funders who share similar values with them. These organizations must clearly articulate these values so that potential funders are able to first identify with the organization, which in turn places them in a favorable position to attract resources from these funders.

It is also helpful for these organizations to embed a separate unit, professionally led and focused on bringing practical solutions to issues they care about. Funders tend to donate more
money to credible and well run organizations, especially when they see results. Embedding specific units like the Compassion and Justice Ministry sends a message that the organization is serious about addressing these needs, thereby putting them in strong contention for funding.

Even though this study focused on a large and consequential organization in its field, it was a qualitative study and of an intrinsic nature, so future studies done as a collective case study, which is more representative, and also done quantitatively will be of a huge benefit to the literature in this field. Hopefully, different organizations could draw helpful values relevant to their organization from this study.
Prologue

The process of writing a dissertation was an incredibly personal and challenging journey for this researcher. It was a process akin to running a marathon. This researcher experienced a few setbacks in determining the appropriate research title and corresponding design. It took time and an iterative process to decide on a workable choice. There was a lot to learn as the researcher embarked on this journey. It came with high and low moments. Low moments included the lengthy time the process took, especially the different times the project missed important deadlines. High moments included getting approval for each chapter, and IRB approval to conduct research. The researcher found this process to be a character building experience.

At some point, this project moved in a new direction, with a new lead investigator/advisor, who had the unenviable task of redirecting some of the study’s focus and then guiding the process to a successful completion. This brought new energy to the process. It taught me to follow my instincts in managing projects, and seeking new guidance when necessary. The most exciting part of the research was the data collection process, as it was a culmination of all the prior work that had been done. The data analysis process felt like a marathon runner coming towards the end of their race. It was invigorating, and came with a sense of manifestation of results, and also anticipation of the completion of this process. Writing the final two chapters brought the entire journey into context. Having the lead investigator send me in a new direction, while challenging, taught me to be open to change. This fresh and innovative thinking produced a refined product. This was the same as the changes required by the 2nd reader. Using the marathon metaphor, I finished my race well.

Nothing else mattered.
References


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Retrieved on May 29, 2014 from:


Appendix A: List of Survey Respondents & Interview Subjects

I. Interviews

A. WCCC & CJM Leader
1. Willow Pastor
2. CJM leader

B. PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS
1. Director of Operations - Local
2. Director of Ops - International

C. PEER ORGANIZATIONS
1. Church Senior Pastor
2. Church Senior Pastor

II. Survey Respondents

A. WCCC & CJM STAFF
1. Exec Assistant
2. Operations Manager
3. Team leader
4. Secretary
5. Global Compassion Staff
6. DNP - Did not participate

B. CHURCH MEMBER
1. Bank Vice President
Appendix B: Recruitment Letter
WCCC/CJM Staff

Dear Participant:

My name is Sol Odafe and I am a doctoral candidate at the College of Professional Studies in the Northeastern University, Boston working towards my Doctor of Education degree. As part of my dissertation, I am conducting a case study research on how the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the norms of the Willow Creek Community Church and also contributes to its legitimacy.

In order to gather data for this research, I am inviting you to participate in my study. I have requested your participation in this study because you have been identified as a member of staff of the Willow Creek Community Church or Compassion and Justice Ministry. Your insights will be valuable in providing understanding on how these relationships are managed and how they impact each other. If you know of another individual who may be appropriate to include in my research, I welcome such a referral.

I am interested in surveying three to six individuals each from CJM and WCCC to discuss some key observations. This will be accomplished via an online questionnaire.

Please be aware that your participation is optional and you may withdraw at any point. Also, any participation in the study will be completely confidential; names and other personal information
will not be used in the final document. Those who choose to participate will receive a copy of the complete (though anonymized) questionnaire results.

Please respond via e-mail if you have any questions. I am working with my thesis advisor, Dr. Kelly Conn.

Please contact me by email, if you would like to participate. If you decide to participate, I will then send you the survey via email, and will look forward to your participation, after you complete and sign the Informed Consent Form I send you. This will be the only time that I will reach out to you to request your participation.

Sincerely,

Sol Odafe
Doctoral Candidate
Northeastern University,
Boston, MA.
Recruitment Letter
WCCC/CJM Leader - Interview

Dear Participant:

My name is Sol Odafe and I am a doctoral candidate at the College of Professional Studies in the Northeastern University, Boston working towards my Doctor of Education degree. As part of my dissertation, I am conducting a case study research on how the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the norms of the Willow Creek Community Church and also contributes to its legitimacy.

In order to gather data for this research, I am inviting you to participate in my study. I have requested your participation in this study because you have been identified as a leader at the Willow Creek Community Church or Compassion and Justice Ministry. Your insights will be valuable in providing understanding on how these relationships are managed and how they impact each other. If you know of another individual who may be appropriate to include in my research, I welcome such a referral.

I am interested in interviewing one individual each from CJM and WCCC to discuss some key observations.

Please be aware that your participation is optional and you may withdraw at any point. Also, any participation in the study will be completely confidential; names and other personal information will not be used in the final document.
Please respond via e-mail if you have any questions. I am working with my thesis advisor who could be contacted at xxxxx.

Please contact me by email, if you would like to participate. If you decide to participate, I will set up an interview appointment with you by email, and will look forward to your participation, after you complete and sign the Informed Consent Form I send you. This will be the only time that I will reach out to you to request your participation.

Sincerely,

Sol Odafe

Doctoral Candidate

Northeastern University,

Boston, MA.
Recruitment Letter
Peer/Partner Leader Interview

Dear Participant:

My name is Sol Odafe and I am a doctoral candidate at the College of Professional Studies in the Northeastern University, Boston working towards my Doctor of Education degree. As part of my dissertation, I am conducting a case study research on how the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the norms of the Willow Creek Community Church and also contributes to its legitimacy.

In order to gather data for this research, I am inviting you to participate in my study. I have requested your participation in this study because you have been identified as a leader of a peer or partner organization of Willow Creek Community Church or Compassion and Justice Ministry. Your insights will be valuable in providing understanding on how these relationships are managed and how they impact each other. If you know of another individual who may be appropriate to include in my research, I welcome such a referral.

I am interested in interviewing a leader to discuss some key observations about the relationship between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion and Justice Ministry.

Please be aware that your participation is optional and you may withdraw at any point. Also, any participation in the study will be completely confidential; names and other personal information will not be used in the final document.
Please respond via e-mail to if you have any questions. I am working with my thesis advisor, Dr. Kelly Conn, who can be contacted at xxxx.

Please contact me by email, if you would like to participate. If you decide to participate, I will set up an interview appointment with you by email, and will look forward to your participation, after you complete and sign the Informed Consent Form I send you. This will be the only time that I will reach out to you to request your participation.

Sincerely,

Sol Odafe

Doctoral Candidate
Northeastern University,
Boston, MA.
Recruitment Letter
Willow Creek Community Church Member

Dear Participant:

My name is Sol Odafe and I am a doctoral candidate at the College of Professional Studies in the Northeastern University, Boston working towards my Doctor of Education degree. As part of my dissertation, I am conducting a case study research on how the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the norms of the Willow Creek Community Church and also contributes to its legitimacy.

In order to gather data for this research, I am inviting you to participate in my study. I have requested your participation in this study because you have been identified as a member of the Willow Creek Community Church. Your insights will be valuable in providing understanding on how these relationships are managed and how they impact each other. If you know of another individual who may be appropriate to include in my research, I welcome such a referral.

I am interested in surveying about three church members to discuss some key observations. This will be accomplished via an emailed questionnaire.

Please be aware that your participation is optional and you may withdraw at any point. Also, any participation in the study will be completely confidential; names and other personal information
will not be used in the final document. Those who choose to participate will receive a copy of the complete (though anonymized) questionnaire results.

Please respond via e-mail to XXXX if you have any questions. I am working with my thesis advisor, Dr. Kelly Conn, who can be contacted at xxxx.

Please contact me by email, if you would like to participate. If you decide to participate, I will then send you the survey via email, and will look forward to your participation, after you complete and sign the Informed Consent Form I send you. This will be the only time that I will reach out to you to request your participation. After completion, you may email your response.

Sincerely,

**Sol Odafe**

Doctoral Candidate

Northeastern University,

Boston, MA.
Appendix C: Researcher Certification

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Sol Odafe successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion:
09/20/2012

Certification Number:
1004972
Appendix D: Informed Consent Forms

Institution: 
Northeastern University 
College of Professional Studies 

Names of Investigators: 
Dr. Kelly Conn, Principal Investigator 
Solomon Odafe, Student Researcher 

Project Title: How the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the institutional norms of Willow Creek Community Church and contributes to its legitimacy: An Intrinsic Case Study 

Request to Participate in Research: Online Questionnaire 

We would like to invite you to participate in a web-based online survey. The survey is part of a research study whose purpose is to apply institutional theory and legitimacy theory to get an understanding of how the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the norms of Willow Creek Community Church and also contributes to its legitimacy. 

This survey should take about 30 minutes to complete.
We are asking you to participate in this study because you a leader at Willow Creek Community Church and/or Compassion & Justice Ministry. You must be at least 18 years old to take this survey.

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the web-based online survey, you can stop at any time.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your responses may help us learn more about how the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the norms/values of Willow Creek Community Church and contributes to its legitimacy.

You will not be paid for your participation in this study. As a token of our appreciation for completing the questionnaire, a copy of the full data set will be made available to participants, anonymized to protect participants’ confidentiality.

Your part in this study is anonymous to the researchers, although you have the option to include your institution’s name. However, because of the nature of web based surveys, it is possible that respondents could be identified by the IP address or other electronic record associated with the response. Neither the researcher nor anyone involved with this survey will be capturing those data.
Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being affiliated with this project.

If you have any questions regarding electronic privacy, please feel free to contact Mark Nardone, NU’s Director of Information Security via phone at 617-373-7901, or via email at privacy@neu.edu

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Solomon Odafe, Xxxx, the individual mainly responsible for the research. You may also contact Dr. Kelly J. Conn, xxxx, the Principal Investigator.

By clicking on the survey link below you are indicating that you consent to participate in this study. Please print out a copy of this consent form for your records.

Thank you for your time.

Solomon Odafe
Northeastern University

College of Professional Studies

Name of Investigators:

Dr. Kelly J. Conn, Principal Investigator

Solomon Odafe, student researcher

Project Title: How the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the institutional norms of Willow Creek Community Church and contributes to its legitimacy: An Intrinsic Case Study
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study: WCCC/ CJM Leader Interview

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

**Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?**

We are asking you to be in this study because you are a leader in Willow Creek Community Church or the Compassion and Justice Ministry. You have also been identified as someone who has unique perspective of the Willow Creek Community Church and/or the Compassion and Justice Ministry

**Why is this research study being done?**

The purpose of this case study is to better understand how the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the values of Willow Creek Community Church and also contributes to its legitimacy.

**What will I be asked to do?**
If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to discuss the work of Willow Creek Community Church and/or Compassion and Justice Ministry (CJM), and their relationship, how they mirror each other, and how CJM contributes to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church.

This interview will be recorded.

**Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?**

You will be interviewed by telephone, or in person (based on your preference) at a location and time that is convenient for you. The interview will take a maximum of one hour.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**

There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort.

**Will I benefit by being in this research?**

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information learned from this study may help students/academics understand your organization better.

**Who will see the information about me?**
Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being of this project. You will be given a pseudonym as will your organization in any reports or publications.

Recordings of the interview will be transcribed by a third party with a great level of confidentiality involved. Only the researchers will have access to the recordings.

In rare instances, authorized personnel may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. We would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board to see this information.

**If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?**

You have the option to choose not to participate.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**

No special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment because of your participation in this research.
Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time prior to publication. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, job benefits, or services that you otherwise may receive.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Solomon Odafe, Xxxx, the person mainly responsible for the research. You may also contact Dr. Kelly J. Conn, xxxx, the Principal Investigator.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid for my participation?

No.

Will it cost me anything to participate?

No.
Include any pertinent information that may not be stated elsewhere.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

Affirmation will be verbal consent, per IRB protocols.

__________________________________________
Printed name of person above

________
Date

__________________________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the

__________________________________________
Printed name of person above

__________________________________________
Date participant above and obtained consent
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study: Partner/Peer Leader Interview

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

We are asking you to be in this study because you are a leader of a partner of peer organization of Willow Creek Community Church or the Compassion and Justice Ministry. You have also been identified as someone who has a unique perspective of the Willow Creek Community Church and/or the Compassion and Justice Ministry.

Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of this case study is to better understand how the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the values of Willow Creek Community Church and also contributes to its legitimacy.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to discuss the work of Willow Creek Community Church and/or Compassion and Justice Ministry (CJM), and their relationship, how they mirror each other, and how CJM contributes to the legitimacy of Willow Creek Community Church.

This interview will be recorded.

**Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?**

You will be interviewed by telephone, or in person (based on your preference) at a location or time that is convenient for you. The interview will take a maximum of one hour.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**

There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort.

**Will I benefit by being in this research?**

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information learned from this study may help students/academics understand your organization better.

**Who will see the information about me?**
Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being of this project. You will be given a pseudonym as will your organization in any reports or publications.

Recordings of the interview will be transcribed by a third party with a great level of confidentiality involved. Only the researchers will have access to the recordings.

In rare instances, authorized personnel may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. We would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board to see this information.

If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?

You have the option to choose not to participate.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?

No special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment because of your participation in this research.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time prior to publication. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, job benefits, or services that you otherwise may receive.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Solomon Odafe, Xxxx, the person mainly responsible for the research. You may also contact Dr. Kelly J. Conn, xxxx, the Principal Investigator.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**

No.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**
No.

Include any pertinent information that may not be stated elsewhere.

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

Affirmation will be verbal consent, per IRB protocols.

__________________________________________

Printed name of person above

_______

Date

__________________________________________

Signature of person who explained the study to the

__________________________________________

Printed name of person above

______________________________

Date participant above and obtained consent
Institution:
Northeastern University
College of Professional Studies

Names of Investigators:
Dr. Kelly Conn, Principal Investigator
Solomon Odafe, Student Researcher

Project Title: How the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the institutional norms of Willow Creek Community Church and contributes to its legitimacy: An Intrinsic Case Study

Request to Participate in Research: Questionnaire – Church Member

We would like to invite you to participate in a survey. The survey is part of a research study whose purpose is to apply institutional theory and legitimacy theory to get an understanding of how the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the norms of Willow Creek Community Church and also contributes to its legitimacy.

This survey should take about 30 minutes to complete.
We are asking you to participate in this study because you a leader at Willow Creek Community Church and/or Compassion & Justice Ministry. You must be at least 18 years old to take this survey.

The decision to participate in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the web-based online survey, you can stop at any time.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your responses may help us learn more about how the Compassion and Justice Ministry reflects the norms/values of Willow Creek Community Church and contributes to its legitimacy.

You will not be paid for your participation in this study. As a token of our appreciation for completing the questionnaire, a copy of the full data set will be made available to participants, anonymized to protect participants’ confidentiality.

Your part in this study is anonymous to the researchers, although you have the option to include your institution’s name. However, because of the nature of web based surveys, it is possible that respondents could be identified by the IP address or other electronic record associated with the response. Neither the researcher nor anyone involved with this survey will be capturing those data.
Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being affiliated with this project.

If you have any questions regarding electronic privacy, please feel free to contact Mark Nardone, NU’s Director of Information Security via phone at 617-373-7901, or via email at privacy@neu.edu

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Solomon Odafe, Xxxx, the individual mainly responsible for the research. You may also contact Dr. Kelly J. Conn, xxxx, the Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Please sign and attach the consent form below to participate in this study. Please print out a copy of this consent form for your records.

Thank you for your time.

Solomon Odafe
Affirmation will be verbal consent, per IRB protocols.

______________________________________________
Printed name of person above

___________________________
Date

______________________________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the

______________________________________________
Printed name of person above

__________________________________________
Date participant above and obtained consent
Appendix E: Interview Protocol (WCCC & CJM)

Interviewee (Title and Name):

Interviewer: Sol Odafe

Date: ________________________

Interview Format: Telephone

INTRODUCTION

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (3-5 minutes): Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions, review and affirm IRB informed consent.

Introductory Protocol

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a personal experience and working knowledge of either the Compassion and Justice Ministry and/or Willow Creek Community Church. It is my hope that this study will give us an understanding of the institutional relationship between both CJM and WCCC. Also, this study hopes to determine how CJM contributes to the legitimacy of WCCC.

Since your responses are essential to the effectiveness of this study, I would like to audio tape our discussion to enable me capture your exact comments. I will also write some notes during this interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used as reference when quoting from the transcripts. The tapes will be transcribed by a
transcriptionist, but the pseudonym will be used to label the tapes. I will be the only one privy to transcripts and information and the tapes will be destroyed after they are transcribed.

To meet our human subjects’ requirements at the university, I would appreciate it if you would sign the form I have sent to you by email. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm (allow time to review form).

Do you have any questions about the interview process or this form?

This interview has been designed to last approximately 45 mins. During this time, I have few questions that I would like to cover. However please feel free to bring up topics that you feel are related. Do you have any questions at this time?

Introduction to Interview

Interviewee Background – my name is Sol Odafe and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University. My dissertation research focuses on the nonprofit sector, specifically WCCC and CJM.
Questions

1. Which organization do you work directly with: CJM or WCCC?

2. Please tell me about your current position and how you work with your organization.

3. If I were to ask an outsider about the relationship between WCCC & CJM, what might they tell me? i.e. What might the general perception be?

4. What do you perceive to be the values of CJM? And WCCC?

5. Do you feel think CJM’s values are consistent or similar with WCCC? If yes, please could you share 2-3 examples?

6. Are there practices of CJM/WCCC that are similar to the other? If so, do you feel this is intentional? Could you please elaborate?

7. Do you think that legitimacy (or trustworthiness by others in an organization’s environment) is an important factor for organizations such as yours? If so, why?

8. If you answered yes to Q7, do you believe a sense of legitimacy (or trustworthiness by others) affects your survival as an organization?

9. Do you think the work CJM does is important/relevant to the legitimacy (or trustworthiness) of WCCC. If yes, please explain why.

Note: This research will benefit greatly from ANY documents relevant to this study. Please could you assist this study by providing us with relevant material for this research? Thank you.

[For those designated as stakeholder checks to make meaning of previous data collection only]
1. Survey results collected thus far in the research might be of interest to you. [Share overall findings and any points for clarification if this interview subject has been selected to make meaning of questionnaire results.] What do you think of these findings?

2. Are there things missing from the survey or the results that you think are important?

**Additional questions may be appropriate to clarify or expand on themes developed in the research.
Appendix F: Interview Protocol (Partner Organization)

Interviewee (Title and Name):

Interviewer: Sol Odafe

Date: ______________________

Interview Format: Telephone

INTRODUCTION

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (3-5 minutes): Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions, review and affirm IRB informed consent.

Introductory Protocol

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a professional experience working with an organizational partner of the Compassion and Justice Ministry (CJM) and/or Willow Creek Community Church (WCCC). This study hopes to gain from your knowledge of either or both of these organizations. It is my hope that this study will give us an understanding of the institutional relationship between both CJM and WCCC. Also, this study hopes to determine how CJM contributes to the legitimacy of WCCC.

Since your responses are essential to the effectiveness of this study, I would like to audio tape our discussion to enable me capture your exact comments. I will also write some notes during this interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used as reference when quoting from the transcripts. The tapes will be transcribed by a
transcriptionist, but the pseudonym will be used to label the tapes. I will be the only one privy to transcripts and information and the tapes will be destroyed after they are transcribed.

To meet our human subjects’ requirements at the university, I would appreciate it if you would sign the form I have sent to you by email. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm (allow time to review form).

Do you have any questions about the interview process or this form?

This interview has been designed to last approximately 45 mins. During this time, I have few questions that I would like to cover. However please feel free to bring up topics that you feel are related. Do you have any questions at this time?

Introduction to Interview

Interviewee Background – my name is Sol Odafe and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University. My dissertation research focuses on the nonprofit sector, specifically WCCC and CJM.
Questions

(Please note that for the purpose of this interview:

‘LEGITIMACY’ is defined as the trustworthiness of an organization. It is the recognition of an organization as honest, reliable or honorable by those around it, and those with which it has dealings.

‘VALUES’ is defined as a person’s or organization’s ethics or moral code. It is also considered as what a person, organization or group considers very important).

1. Does your organization partner with CJM? If yes, which specific area?
2. Are you a point person in the relationship with CJM? What is your position and title?
3. How do you think the relationship between WCCC & CJM is perceived by others?
4a. Could you please tell me 2 or 3 important values with which you identify CJM?
4b. Name 2 or 3 important values with which you identify WCCC?
4c. Do you see any overlap in values? If so, which areas?
5. Overall, you think CJM reflects the values of WCCC?
6. What does the partnership your organization has with CJM mean to you?
7. Organizational Legitimacy is often defined as: a) the “Trust Value” an organization has with the public or the community within which it functions, b) the way the organization is perceived by those in its environment, or c) Trustworthiness of an organization, do you feel that legitimacy is important for donor funded organizations? If so, Why?
8. Do you think the work CJM does is important/relevant to the legitimacy of WCCC.
   If yes, please explain why.
Note: This research will benefit greatly from ANY documents relevant to this study. Please could you assist this study by providing us with relevant material for this research? Thank you.

[For those designated as stakeholder checks to make meaning of previous data collection only]

9. Survey results collected thus far in the research might be of interest to you. [Share overall findings and any points for clarification if this interview subject has been selected to make meaning of questionnaire results.] What do you think of these findings?

10. Are there things missing from the survey or the results that you think are important?

**Additional questions may be appropriate to clarify or expand on themes developed in the research.
Appendix G: Interview Protocol (Peer Organization)

Interviewee (Title and Name):

Interviewer: Sol Odafe

Date: _____________________

Interview Format: Telephone

INTRODUCTION

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (3-5 minutes): Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions, review and affirm IRB informed consent.

Introductory Protocol

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone whose church or religious organization has some experience working with the Willow Creek Community Church, and perhaps its Compassion and Justice Ministry (CJM). This study hopes to gain from your knowledge of either or both of these organizations. It is my hope that this study will give us an understanding of the institutional relationship between both CJM and WCCC. Also, this study hopes to determine how CJM contributes to the legitimacy or trustworthiness of WCCC.

Since your responses are essential to the effectiveness of this study, I would like to audio tape our discussion to enable me capture your exact comments. I will also write some notes during this interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used as reference when quoting from the transcripts. The tapes will be transcribed by a
transcriptionist, but the pseudonym will be used to label the tapes. I will be the only one privy to transcripts and information and the tapes will be destroyed after they are transcribed.

To meet our human subjects’ requirements at the university, I would appreciate it if you would sign the form I have sent to you by email. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm (allow time to review form).

Do you have any questions about the interview process or this form?

This interview has been designed to last approximately 45mins. During this time, I have few questions that I would like to cover. However please feel free to bring up topics that you feel are related. Do you have any questions at this time?

Introduction to Interview

Interviewee Background – my name is Sol Odafe and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University. My dissertation research focuses on the nonprofit sector, specifically WCCC and CJM.

(Please note that for the purpose of this interview:
‘LEGITIMACY’ is defined as the trustworthiness of an organization. It is the recognition of an organization as honest, reliable or honorable by those around it, and those with which it has dealings.

‘VALUES’ is defined as a person’s or organization’s ethics or moral code. It is also considered as what a person, organization or group considers very important).

Questions

1a. What is your position and title?

1b. Does your church have dealings with WCCC and CJM? If yes, which specific area?

1c. How does your church relate to or work with them?

2. Have you had direct dealings as a leader with the leadership of WCCC?

3. What is your perception of the relationship between WCCC & CJM?

4a. Could you please tell me 2 or 3 important values with which you identify CJM?

4b. Could you please tell me 2 or 3 important values with which you identify WCCC?

4c. Do you see any overlap in values? If so, which areas?

5. Overall, you think CJM reflects the values of WCCC?

6. What does the partnership your organization has with CJM mean to you?

7. Organizational Legitimacy is often defined as: a) the “Trust Value” an organization has with the public or the community within which they function, b) the way the organization is perceived by those in its environment, or c) Trustworthiness of an organization, do you feel that legitimacy is important for donor funded organizations? If so, Why?
8. Do you feel that the work CJM does is important/relevant to the legitimacy of WCCC. If yes, please explain why.

9. Finally, when you think about Willow Creek Community Church and its work through the Compassion and Justice Ministry, what are your general thoughts about it?

Note: This research will benefit greatly from ANY documents relevant to this study. Please could you assist this study by providing us with relevant material for this research? Thank you.

[For those designated as stakeholder checks to make meaning of previous data collection only]

10. Survey results collected thus far in the research might be of interest to you. [Share overall findings and any points for clarification if this interview subject has been selected to make meaning of questionnaire results.] What do you think of these findings?

11. Are there things missing from the survey or the results that you think are important?

**Additional questions may be appropriate to clarify or expand on themes developed in the research.
Appendix H: Questionnaire – WCCC/CJM Staff

(Please note that for the purpose of this survey:

‘LEGITIMACY’ is defined as the trustworthiness of an organization. It is the recognition of an organization as honest, reliable or honorable by those around it, and those with which it has dealings.

‘VALUES’ is defined as a person’s or organization’s ethics or moral code. It is also considered as what a person, organization or group considers very important).

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

I.

1. Which organization do you closely work with?
   A. Willow Creek Comm. Church (WCCC/“Willow”)
   B. Compassion & Justice Ministry (CJM/”Compassion”)

2. Could you please tell me in a sentence how you work with your organization?

3. Could you please tell me 2 important values of WCCC

4. Could you please tell me 2 important values of CJM

5. Do you perceive any similarities in the values of both CJM and WCCC? (YES/NO)

6. Do you perceive it is important for both organizations to emphasize these values?
   (YES/NO)

7. Do you perceive that CJM ensures it emphasizes values of WCCC? (YES/NO).

8. If you answered yes to Q7, Could you please give me 1-2 examples?
9. In recent times, are you aware of any steps CJM taken to ensure that its practices are similar to WCCC? Please elaborate.

10. To your knowledge, are there WCCC policies that are adopted by CJM? If so, list 2.

11. Do leaders from Willow get appointed to run CJM?

12. Do you consider CJM as a branch of the Willow Creek organization?

   CJM Personnel:

   13. Do you have any major initiatives that have no bearing on Willow Creek?

II.

1. Do you think WCCC and CJM are similar in their values/culture?

   Yes/No

2. If yes, explain in a simple sentence. (If no, move to next question)

3. List 2 or 3 practices of Willow Creek that are identical to those of CJM?

   TRUE/FALSE

   The staff of WCCC have similar/identical code of conduct

4. The staff of WCCC have similar/identical code of conduct (YES/NO)

5. Some WCCC leaders have overlapping responsibilities with CJM (Yes/No)

6. There is absolutely NO overlap between the responsibilities of any WCCC staff and that of CJM
III.

1. Has your organization taken any steps to impact other organizations?
   YES/NO

2. How important is it to your organization to influence other organizations?
   a) Very important  b) Somewhat important  c) not important

3. Do you see the work of Compassion & Justice Ministry connected to the legacy of WCCC? Yes/No

4. When Compassion and Justice Ministry does its work around the world,

   A. the beneficiaries connect the service they receive to Willow Creek
   B. the beneficiaries do NOT connect the service they receive to Willow Creek

5. While serving overseas, the Compassion & Justice Ministry personnel conduct themselves with a standard similar/identical to the code of conduct of Willow Creek staff (TRUE/FALSE).

6. Has CJM taken any steps you know of in order to ensure that their work gives credit to WCCC?

7. Most people who interact with CJM think of them as an independent organization (no connection to Willow) TRUE/FALSE.
8. When CJM personnel face tough choices while working in cultures with lesser standards than they are used to, they will a) Do what they have to in order to get the job done, so long as it meets local standards b) CJM personnel will insist on a higher standard even though it costs them the results they desire.

9. Which of this statement do you identify mostly with?

- CJM is a charity organization with Christian values
- CJM is a Christian organization that does Charity work
- Other____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you have any pertinent information, please feel free to include it in the box below, or send email to me at: xxxx
Appendix I: Questionnaire - Church Members

(Please note that for the purpose of this survey:

‘LEGITIMACY’ is defined as the trustworthiness of an organization. It is the recognition of an organization as honest, reliable or honorable by those around it, and those with which it has dealings.

‘VALUES’ is defined as a person’s or organization’s ethics or moral code. It is also considered as what a person, organization or group considers very important).

Questions:

I. Institutionalization

1. Are you a member of the Willow Creek Community Church (aka WCCC)?

   C. YES
   D. NO

2. How long have you been a member?

3. Are you cognizant with the work of the Compassion and Justice Ministry (aka CJM)?
   (YES/NO)

4. This is true about your commitment to the work of CJM
   a. I give financially to support the work of CJM
   b. I do not give to support the work of CJM
   c. I volunteer my time to support the work of CJM
   d. I give and also volunteer to support the work of CJM.
5. Do you believe CJM reflects the values of WCCC in its work?

6. Have you perceived some values of WCCC emphasized in CJM? (YES/NO)

7. Do you perceive it is important for both organizations to emphasize these values?

8. Do you consider CJM a branch of the Willow Creek organization? Why?

9. In a sentence or two explain why you think the work of CJM is important.

10. What do you perceive as being values of CJM?

11. What do you perceive as being values of WCCC?

12. Do you see any intersection? If so, name one area.

II. Institutional Isomorphism

1. Do you think WCCC and CJM are similar in their values/culture?

   Yes/No

2. If yes, explain in a simple sentence. (If no, move to next question)

3. List 2 or 3 practices of Willow Creek that identical to similar in CJM?

   TRUE/FALSE

4. Willow Creek Community Church and CJM are synonymous

5. Some WCCC leaders have overlapping responsibilities with CJM (Yes/No)

6. There is absolutely NO overlap between the responsibilities of any WCCC staff and staff of CJM
III. Legitimacy Section

13. Do you think WCCC impacts other organizations?
   YES/NO

14. How important is it to WCCC to influence other organizations?
   b) Very important b) Somewhat important c) not important

15. Do you see the work of Compassion & Justice Ministry connected to the legacy of Willow Creek Community Church? Yes/No

16. When Compassion and Justice Ministry does its work around the world, the people served connect the service they receive to Willow Creek (TRUE/FALSE)

17. While serving overseas, the Compassion & Justice Ministry personnel conduct themselves with a standard similar/identical to the code of conduct of Willow Creek staff (TRUE/FALSE).

18. Has CJM taken any steps you know of in order to ensure that their work gives credit to Willow Creek?

19. Most people who interact with CJM think of them as an independent organization (no connection to Willow) TRUE/FALSE.

20. CJM carries out its activities with a goal of standing out or being exceptional (YES/NO)
21. When CJM personnel face tough choices when working in cultures with lesser standards, they will a) Do what they have to in order to get the job done, so long as it meets local standards b) CJM personnel will insist on a higher standard even though it costs them the results they desire.

22. Which of this statement do you identify more with?

- CJM is a charity organization with Christian values
- CJM is a Christian organization that does Charity work
- Other____

24. In a sentence or two, share your thoughts on the significance of the work of CJM and how it affects WCCC.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you have any pertinent information, please feel free to include it in the box below, or send email to me at:

odafe.s@neu.edu
Appendix J – Memorandum of Understanding

From: S. O'Nafe [odafe.s@husky.neu.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2015 1:42 PM
To: Heather Larson Cc: Jean Blount; S. O.
Subject: Doctoral Research Request

Mrs. Heather Larson,
Executive Director (CJM),
Willow Creek Community Church,
67 Algonquin Road,
South Barrington, Illinois 60010

Dear Mrs. Larson,

REQUEST TO CONDUCT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

I hope my mail meets you well?

My name is Solomon Odafe, a Doctoral Student at the Northeastern, University, Boston, with a focus on Organizational Leadership. My background and interests are in internationally focused service-driven nonprofit organizations.

I am currently in the dissertation phase of my doctoral degree, and my research is in using both Institutional Theory and Legitimacy Theory to study: “How the Compassion & Justice Ministry reflects the values of the Willow Creek Community Church, and contributes to its Legitimacy.” My research will take the form of an Intrinsic Case Study, and expect it be completed over the next few months.

For my study to be effective, I propose having about 5-6 personnel spread between Willow Creek Community Church and the Compassion & Justice Ministry fill out a questionnaire, and also brief interviews of two leaders, including yourself. If there is any further information of person that might help my research, I would appreciate your suggestions. As the research forms would indicate, interviewees always have the right to back out of an interview, and have their privacies protected.

In preparation for this phase, I have been in contact with Jean Blount and also Dave Cimo of the Willow Creek Community Church and CJM respectively. They have indicated your organization's willingness to support my research. I would appreciate a formal response from you confirming your organization’s acceptance and participation in my educational research.

Thank you for your kind assistance and consideration.

Regards,
Solomon Odafe.

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From: Heather Larson [xxxx@WillowCreek.org] Sent: Friday, January 23, 2015 3:34 PM
To: Solomon Odafe Cc: Jean Blount
Subject: RE: Doctoral Research Request

Hi Solomon! Thanks for the information on this.
We will commit to 6 hours total as a staff to be able to help you with this doctoral research.

Blessings, Heather
Appendix K: Document Review Sheet

Type of Document ____________________________________________

Source (Retrieved from) _______________________________________

Date __________________

Length ______________________________________________________

Publication Status (Internal/External)

____________________________________________________________