SELLING SALVATION: ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETITION AND THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH

by

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(Under the Direction of David Smilde)

ABSTRACT

Just like other types of organizations, congregations are goal-directed, boundary-maintaining, and socially constructed systems of human activity. Unlike more traditional organizational forms, however, congregations are primarily dealers in otherworldly goods. Due to this distinction, the sociology of religion has generally overlooked theories of organizational competition when trying to account for macro-level changes in religious participation. Unfortunately, the theories that supposedly account for religious competition within the sociology of religion do not actually measure competition in meaningful ways. To remedy this important problem, I rely on insights from neo-institutionalism, population ecology, and the organizational culture metaphor to address four empirical research questions: 1) How does the organizational environment affect the emergence of new religious congregations? 2) How does the organizational environment affect the failure of religious congregations? 3 How do institutionalized pressures shape the competitive strategies of religious congregations? And 4) how do the organizational cultures of religious congregations combat/contribute to the

secularization process? To answer these questions, I use quantitative and qualitative data on a population of Southern Baptist congregations situated in America's "Bible Belt." My analyses reveal that congregations are subject to the same types of environmental pressures as other types of organizations. More specifically, congregations must work to garner and maintain a certain level of legitimacy, and they must compete with other like-minded congregations in their local environment in order to survive. Based on their adherence to institutional myths and their relationship to the normative pressures in their field, congregations adopt one of three competitive strategies that I call Zealous Advocacy, Local Visibility, and Charismatic Conservativism. Each of these strategies also creates an organizational culture within the congregation that has a direct impact on the secularization of their larger social world.

INDEX WORDS: Religion, Secularization, Organizational Competition, Neo-institutionalism, Population Ecology, Organizational Culture, Mixed Methods

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For Judy

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Religious congregations[1] are as American as apple pie. There is no way to measure the exact number of congregations in the United States, but estimates based on representative samples of Americans estimate there are at least 300,000 houses of worship serving thousands of distinct religious groups (Ammerman 2009). Not surprisingly, these organizations serve many functions. They socialize children (Ballantine and Roberts 2014), they are active participants in political life (Beyerlein and Chaves 2003), and they play a vital role in the formation of communities of belonging (Ammerman 2005). Recent evidence suggests that a declining number of Americans are actively involved in religious organizations, though (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2012).

Membership losses create interesting challenges for religious organizations just like health education creates challenges for fast-food chains and alternative fuels create challenges for the oil industry. The modern congregation is an organization that must compete to maintain its legitimacy and authority. Our current theories of religious competition in the sociology of religion, however, routinely fail to crack the black box between religious choices and religious vitality (Chaves and Gorski 2001, Hill and Olson 2009). Simply put, competition in the sociology of religion has been routinely mis-specified.

[1] Throughout this dissertation I will use the words congregation and church (small C) interchangeable. Church (capital C) refers to the low-tension, universal organizations where church (small C) refers to the local religious body.

Deregulation and a plurality of religious choices are the precursors to macro religious vitality, according to the dominant paradigm in the sociology of religion, (Stark and Finke 2000). Religious competition, this paradigm argues, "results in eager and efficient suppliers of religion, just as it does among secular commodities, and with the same results: far higher levels of 'consumption'" (Stark and Finke 2000: 36). This argument, though, goes against everything we know about religious conversion (Sherkat and Wilson 1995, Sherkat 1998) and religious capital (Iannaccone 1990). Namely, religious choices reflect constraints that have little to do with religious organizations (Sherkat and Wilson 1995). This dissertation will address this important shortcoming in the prevailing wisdom within the sociology of religion using theories of organizations that teach us to focus on a single organizational form.

In this dissertation, I use quantitative and qualitative data on a population of religious congregations of the same type to examine the relationship between religious organizations and their local environment. My research questions focus on several different dimensions of the competition question: 1) How does the organizational environment affect the emergence of new religious congregations? 2) How does the organizational environment affect the failure of religious congregations? 3) How do institutionalized pressures shape the competitive strategies of religious congregations? And 4) how do the organizational cultures of religious congregations combat/contribute to the secularization process?

When it comes to the failure and success of organizational forms, theories of selection and adaptation focus our attention on those things that directly affect the organizational form. Environmental factors like the presence of other organizations of the same form (Hannan and Carroll 1992), regulatory bodies and other important stakeholders that garner organizations with legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), and the strategic actions of individual organizations in

their attempts to procure and maintain important resources including their relationships with other organizations (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978) all capture "competition" in various populations of organizations better than sociologists of religion's current understanding of competition in the sacred sphere. Thus, in order to open religious competition's black box and answer each of my specific research questions, I will rely on several theories from the study of organizations including population ecology, neo-institutionalism, and the organizational culture metaphor.

The implications of this research are not limited to the sociology of religion, though. My examination of religious competition using the insights of organizational theory has important implications for organizational scholars as well. More specifically, religious organizations and their leaders tend to be viewed as key providers of organizational legitimacy (Aldrich and Ruef 2006). As such, organizational scholars have not addressed how these organizations garner their own cognitive and socio-political legitimacy. Nelson (1993), for one, highlights several reasons why the study of churches as organizations is valuable and promising for the study of organizations broadly speaking including a focus on how organizations acquire and maintain legitimate authority in the absence of financial, coercive, and other utilitarian goals. Additionally, congregations are voluntary institutions whose members play a key role in the creation and negotiation of their organizational cultures (Fine 1984). This makes congregations a valuable test of the scope of some of the organization literature's dominant paradigms.

Each of the organizational theories I draw from will be situated into the larger framework of the religious economies model and its various critiques. Both sides of this coin are rooted in the larger (mis)understanding of secularization within the sociology of religion that also serves as the basis for some of our discipline's most classic theories on social behavior. Since secularization theories – or theses rather – play such a vital role in the study or religious

competition, I take special care to situate my examination of religious competition using organizational theories within this larger paradigm. More specifically, I want to be clear how my understanding of secularization influenced this dissertation and its particular research questions. As I will explain in Chapter 2 when I outline my theoretical framework, my understanding of secularization rests in more recent arguments that the modern world is a place where religious and non-religious worldviews are forced to co-exist (Habermas 2002, Taylor 2007). In my final empirical chapter I will address this understanding directly by examining how religious congregations are directly involved in the secularization process.

Organization of the Dissertation

My dissertation is organized into eight distinct chapters. In the current chapter, I introduced the major problem, outlined my specific research questions, and explained my goals and objectives for the dissertation. Chapter 2 sets up my theoretical framework for examining religious competition as organizational competition. In Chapter 3, I discuss the data I use for the analyses as well as my methodological approach. This dissertation is a mixed-methods study aimed at improving our understanding of religious competition. Thus, the qualitative data and analysis are embedded in a larger quantitative project design in order to enhance the quality of both methods. Chapter 3 examines the structure of my quantitative data and my qualitative data including descriptions of my quantitative variables, descriptions of my qualitative cases, and the methodology behind my qualitative data analysis. The analytic strategies for my quantitative data analysis are explained in the appropriate empirical chapter. Chapter 4 is my first empirical chapter. In this chapter I focus on the effect of organizational environments on the founding of religious congregations. Chapter 5 is similar, but in this chapter I focus on the mortality of

individual religious congregations. In Chapter 6, I use qualitative data to examine how congregation's institutional environments influence their competitive strategies. Chapter 7 is my final empirical chapter. This chapter focuses on the effect of religious congregations on their organizational environment. Specifically, I look at the role that congregation's organizational cultures play in the secularization process. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the dissertation and summarizes my major findings, explores the empirical limitations, and remarks on the methodological and theoretical insights that are gained from this research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

At the core of the new paradigm in the sociology of religion is the notion that individual actors and religious organizations constitute a religious economy for the purposes of buying and selling otherworldly goods (Lechner 2007). This notion implies that religious congregations compete with other religious congregations, but there is little consensus within the sociology of religion about *how* religious congregations compete. As I explained in the previous chapter, the purpose of my dissertation is to improve our understanding of religious competition by focusing on questions like: How? With whom? And with what consequences? To do this, I draw upon insights from organizational theorists because, after all, congregations are organizations too.

According to anthropologist Mary Douglas (1986), it does not benefit our understanding of religion to protect it from the same sort of scrutiny that we apply to the study of profane institutions. On the contrary, Douglas argues, many of our classic theories are borne out in religion better than any other types of institutions. Research on Weber's different ideal types of legitimate authority (Nelson 1993), the social construction of reality (Douglas 1966), and Grasmsci's theory of hegemony (Billings 1990) all demonstrate that religious institutions function just as we might expect any other rational, natural, and open system to operate (Scott 1998). Thus, in order to understand religious competition, I will rely on a theoretical framework that is based in a social scientific understanding of organizational competition broadly speaking.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the major theoretical paradigms that I will draw upon throughout this dissertation. The theories described below are not the only

theories that I will draw upon in this text, but they are the theories most deserving of greater attention because of their prominence in the chapters that follow. First, I will discuss three different views of secularization within the sociology of religion. Secularization and its causes and consequences are at the core of the sociology of religion; the neosecularization thesis in particular is key in understanding many of the major contributions of this dissertation. Second, I will outline the sociology of religion's preeminent theory of religious competition: the religious economies model. Finally, I will outline two theories and one metaphor from the study of organizations: population ecology, neo-institutionalism, and organizational culture. I draw upon each of these perspectives throughout the dissertation in order to show how religious congregations are not unique organizational forms.

Three Views on Secularization

Secularization takes many forms, but there are three unique theses that require greater attention here. The first is the classic secularization thesis rooted in the notion that religion and rationality are incompatible forces. The second is a direct response to the failed predictions of the secularization thesis. This anti-secularization thesis focuses on the unreality of religious decline in modern times. Finally, the third model, or neosecularization thesis, offers a defense of the classic perspective by highlighting the important distinctions between the decline of religion and the extinction of religion. Below I will describe each of these theses in greater detail and explain why the arguments I will make in this dissertation are most compatible with the neosecularization thesis.

The history of the social scientific study of religion has been dominated by the atheism of our classic theorists (Stark and Finke 2000). Hobbes ([1651] 1956: 98), for one, characterized

religion as "ignorance" and "lies." Marx described it as the "sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions" (1978: 54). Durkheim ([1915] 2001), of course, believed that religion was simply a reflection of the society and a way for society to worship itself. These men, along with many of the social science's most classic figures (Comte 1896, Freud [1927] 1961, Hume [1748] 1962, Parsons 1951), ushered in an understanding of religion as something illusory, at the least, and outright harmful, at its worst. For these men, secularization was an inevitable, even necessary, part of the modernizing process and this "secularization thesis" became the dominant perspective in the sociology of religion for the better part of the twentieth century.

The classical perspective on secularization assumes that secularization is an inevitable part of the modernizing process. Weber ([1903] 2003), for example, argued that the capitalist spirit of the modern world would come to dominate those whose religious fervor helped create it. According to Weber ([1903] 2003: 181), "The Puritan wanted to work in a calling;" conversely, "we are forced to do so." This separation of the goal from the value is the very essence, according to Weber, of the type of rationality that developed in the West and will result in "the gradual decay of religious faith" (Stark and Finke 2000: 29). Similarly, Berger (1970: 21) argued that religious worldviews were "likely to be restricted to smaller groups, typically those whose social location (in 'backward' regions, say, or in the lower classes) gives them little interest or stake in the world of modernity."

Looking at the empirical data, it is not hard to see why the classical perspective was the dominant paradigm of the twentieth century. Cross-national comparisons show that religious participation is lowest in the most advanced countries in the world (Norris and Inglehart 2004). According to Norris and Inglehart (2004: 79), "As lives gradually become more comfortable and

secure, people in more affluent societies usually grow increasingly indifferent to religious values, more skeptical of supernatural beliefs, and less willing to become actively engaged in religious institutions." Even in the United States where religious involvement continues to outpace the rest of the post-industrial West, one in five Americans has no religious affiliation (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2012), and data on religious service attendance shows significant over-reporting among would-be churchgoers (Hadaway, Marler and Chaves 1993, 1998). In spite of this evidence, however, few contemporary sociologists of religion support the secularization thesis in its purest sense (see Bruce 2002 for an exception). Quite the opposite, a growing number of social scientists are focusing on the positive outcomes associated with active involvement in a religious community (Koenig and Larson 2001) and the pervasiveness of spirituality and belief in God among the religious "nones" (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2012).

According to this new paradigm's key figures, the sociology of religion should abandon its use of the term secularization altogether (e.g., Stark 1999). These scholars contest that religion is not in decline (Iannaccone 1996) and, in some contexts, is even growing (Smith 1996). In the United States, for example, "the proportion of the population enrolled in churches grew hugely throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, which, by any measure, were times of rapid modernization" (Warner 1993: 1048-9). At the very least, it is impossible for contemporary sociologists of religion to argue that religion is on the brink of extinction.

Stark and Finke (2000) argue that the secularization thesis is based primarily on the mischaracterization of Medieval Europe as a time of tremendous religious vigor. Indeed, historical accounts of this time period show that the Middle Ages were not a "Golden Age" for

religious institutions. On the contrary, religious attendance was sparse and attendees often used their congregations for secular purposes like gambling or sheltering their livestock (Coulton 1930). According to one of the most vocal critics of the anti-secularization thesis, however, embracing this view of Medieval religion requires a number of far-reaching assumptions (see Bruce 2002). Most notably, Bruce (2002) contests that Stark and Finke's (2000) argument rests on the assumption that the state's largest institution had seemingly little importance as well as the notion that Medieval Europeans provided large sums of money to something they considered relatively pointless. According to Bruce (2002), it is unlikely that either of these notions is true no matter how infrequently individuals filled the pews. In fact, Stark and Finke (2000) do concede that belief (demand) and practice are not equivalent nor was the former as low as the latter in Medieval times. Their argument, however, rests on the assumption that religious demand is constant across time and space, a point I discuss in greater detail below.

The most viable argument of the anti-secularization thesis remains the notion that science and religion are not incompatible. In addition to Warner's (1993) evidence that the most rapid period of modernization coincides with the most rapid expanse of religious involvement in U.S. history (see also Finke and Stark 1992), comparisons of religiosity across different scientific disciplines also fail to produce a strong link between science and irreligiousness (Stark and Finke 2000, Wuthnow 1985). Wuthnow (1985), for example, points out that there are more nonbelievers in the social sciences than among academics in the "most scientific" disciplines like physics or chemistry. Similarly, Ecklund (2012) reports that nearly 50 percent of the scientists she surveyed and interviewed are religious, and many of the others are "spiritual entrepreneurs" seeking creative ways to reconcile the tensions between scientific thought and traditional religious views. In all of these examples, though, the percent who regularly attend religious

services is fewer than half. Thus, by focusing on the (un)reality of secularization and the future of religion, Gorski and Altinordu (2008) argue that the sociology of religion is overlooking the broader implications of secularization for religion and the larger social world.

The anti-secularization thesis does not adequately capture all of the nuances of the secularization process precisely because it rejects all of the major points of the old paradigm and continues to focus on religion rather than religious authority (Chaves 1994). Instead of perpetuating the old paradigm's emphasis on religious decline, neo-secularization theorists argue that the primary contribution of the old paradigm is to point out that religion in the modern world is undergoing a transformation (Casanova 1994, Chaves 1994, Gorski and Altinordu 2008, Yamane 1997). The anti-secularization thesis fails to recognize the myriad of ways that secularization is occurring at the macro and micro levels because its proponents are fixated on the extinction of meso-level religious organizations. Neo-secularization theorists like Casanova (1994), on the other hand, argue that secularization can take any of three different forms: decline, privatization, or differentiation. The latter of these is the most significant for religion in the modern world.

By focusing on the transformation of religion, the neosecularization thesis is better equipped to address the process of differentiation. The neosecularization thesis purports that secularization is a decline in religious authority more than it is a decline in religion (Chaves 1994). Rather than vanishing, religion in the modern world is changing (Yamane 1997). The transformation of religion results in a world where religious and secular worldviews coexist (Habermas 2002) and even compete with one another (Smith 2003). It is not surprising that declines in religious authority and declines in religious participation are strongly correlated (e.g., Norris and Inglehart 2004). However, following Taylor (2007), I do not agree that the

differentiation of religion necessitates a decline in belief. Consider, for example, the empirical research suggesting that actual church attendance in the United States is about half of the reported level, or closer to twenty percent than the forty percent who claim to fill the pews (Hadaway et al. 1993, 1998, Hadaway and Marler 2005). As I explained above, these findings are used to suggest that the United States is not exceptionally religious among the post-industrial world (Hadaway et al. 1993, Hadaway and Marler 2005) or that overreporting is common cross-culturally and the United States remains unique but with much lower levels of religious participation than survey data suggests (Hadaway et al. 1993, 1998). Missed in both of these interpretations, however, is the social desirability associated with religious service attendance. In sum, individuals are "believing without belonging" (Davie 1994). This suggests that religion and belief remain an important part of people's lives even though we live in an age where it is increasingly acceptable to *not* believe in God (Taylor 2007). To understand this phenomenon, it is important to consider all of the useful points provided by both critiques of the old paradigm.

The anti-secularization thesis and the new paradigm in the sociology of religion challenged the prevailing wisdom that dominated our understanding of the secularization process for the better part of the twentieth century. According to the new paradigm in the sociology of religion, the scientific study of religion remains a valuable pursuit precisely because the old paradigm's predictions failed to come to fruition (Warner 1993). The neosecularization thesis, on the other hand, provides evidence that religious institutions are at least losing their authority, if not their members (Chaves 1994). Competition for religious organizations, therefore, must include secular institutions and secular worldviews (Smith 2003). Modern day congregations are forced to compete with children's sporting activities and the repeal of "blue" laws just as much as they compete with other congregations (McMullin 2013). Some congregations fail to adapt

and are forced to close; others learn to accommodate the secular alternatives to Sunday morning worship and remain viable institutions amidst their changing social milieu. For all of the reasons outlined above, throughout this dissertation I will argue that secularization is best understood as the decline of religious authority and not the total collapse of religion as an institution.

Religious Economies

According to Roger Finke, Rodney Stark, and their collaborators (Finke and Stark 1988, 1989, 1992, Finke, Guest and Stark 1996, 1998), the competition that is fostered by religious pluralism is the sine qua non of American religious vitality. These scholars theorize that religious commitment will be highest in areas where the religious economy is unregulated and competitive (Stark and Finke 2000). Proponents of this model argue that the multitude of religious options made possible by the pluralist situation forces religious organizations and their leaders to work more vigorously to maintain a following or else risk losing their flock (Chaves and Gorski 2001).

More specifically, the religious economy consists of a "market" of current and potential religious participants that generate "demand" for religious goods as well as the religious organizations that act as the "suppliers" of these goods. Accordingly, this market model attributes aggregate improvements in religious participation to the deregulation of religion and the multitude of religious options made possible by increases in the number of competing firms. Finke and Stark (1988), for example, find a significant and positive relationship between religious pluralism and religious participation in the 150 most populous cities included in the 1906 U.S. Census of Religious Bodies. Similarly, Finke, Guest, and Stark (1996) find a significant and positive relationship between religious pluralism and religious participation among the 942 cities and towns in the 1855 and 1865 New York State Censuses.

The process is not just limited to the United States, however. Introvigne and Stark (2005), for example, note a dramatic rise in Italy's religious fervor following the expanse of viable religious options since the 1980s and the semi-deregulation of the Italian religious economy. Likewise, Froese (2004, 2008) points out that religious participation among the former Soviet bloc countries increased dramatically after the fall of communism and the end of the Soviet Union's secularization experiment. According to champions of the religious economies model, over-regulation and ineffective monopoly religions explain the general dearth of religious participation in Europe. In fact, Stark and Iannaccone (1994) predict that more vigorous religious organizations will cause the eventual "churching" of Europe, contrary to others who have predicted the secularization of the United States (e.g., Bruce 2002).

Despite its generally reasonable propositions, however, the religious economies model has generated significant debate and numerous empirical critiques (Chaves and Gorski 2001). For one, a number of studies have noted that any positive relationship between religious pluralism and religious participation is simply a statistical artifact driven by the collinearity of certain religious groups and the measure of religious diversity used in most tests of the model (1989a, Breault 1989b, Olson 1998, 1999). This alone is not enough to end the argument that competition between religious groups yields greater religious vitality, however. On the contrary, scholars have turned from religious pluralism to religious market share to garner support for the religious economies model.

Indeed, religions that serve a smaller percentage of the population do appear to enjoy higher rates of commitment than those serving a larger slice of the pie. According to Perl and Olson (2000), religious market share is inversely related to per member financial giving across five different denominations. Similarly, Rabinowitz, Lazerwitz, and Kim (1995) find that rates of

giving to Jewish community federations is higher in U.S. cities where the Jewish population share is less. Others have found similar relationships between religious market share and the ordination rate of Catholic men (Stark 1992, Stark and McCann 1993), the number of subscribers to *Catholic Digest* (Stark and McCann 1993, Stark 1998), and the number of lay women and men in leadership positions in the Catholic Church (Stark 1998). In each of these cases, an increase in Catholic market share has a negative effect on the measure of religious commitment. These studies demonstrate a consistency in the negative relationship between population share and religious commitment across a number of different denominations and several unique measures of religious vitality.

Unlike empirical tests of the relationship between religious pluralism and religious participation (Chaves and Gorski 2001), the negative relationship between religious market share and religious commitment also appears consistent across different units of analysis. Religious market share and religious commitment are inversely related across counties (Hull and Lipford 2010), Catholic dioceses (Stark 1998), states (Stark and McCann 1993, Stark and Finke 2004), regions of the country (Stark and McCann 1993), and entire nations (Stark 1992). Hull and Lipford (2010), for instance, find that per member donations decrease in Baptist congregations when the number of other Baptist congregations in the county increases, but increase when the number of non-Baptist congregations in the county rises. In one article using U.S. states as the unit of analysis, on the other hand, Stark and Finke (2004) find that non-Mormon faiths in Utah experience higher rates of worship attendance, Sunday school attendance, and per member giving compared to their counterparts in other states. Is competition really the driving force behind the vitality of small market share faiths, though?

A Culture of Participation

Empirical research illustrating the negative relationship between religious market share and religious vitality or a positive relationship between religious pluralism and religious commitment does not provide sound evidence that the relationship is due to competition in any meaningful sense. Indeed, the logic of the supply side argument itself makes the conflation of pluralism and competition quite implausible. According to Finke and Stark (1992: 18):

> [P]luralism arises because of the inability of a single religious organization to be at once worldly and otherworldly, strict and permissive, exclusive and inclusive, while the market will always contain distinct consumer segments with strong preferences on each of these aspects of faith.

Following this logic, religious conservatives will not be attracted to moderate or liberal congregations no matter how well the leaders of these organizations compete. Just the same, religious liberals are unlikely to find the strictness of conservative denominations suitable to their tastes. To conflate religious pluralism with competition in this way is akin to assuming vegetarians care which restaurant serves the best filet. A plurality of restaurant options, to be clear, increases the likelihood that both vegetarians and meat eaters can find a suitable place to dine thus making the correlation between pluralism (the variety of restaurants) and participation (the number of individuals dining out) positive in places where there is demand for both vegetarian options and more traditional fare. In fact, the relationship could even be considered causal since the plurality of restaurants increased the total number of diners. Defining this relationship as competition between two unique organizational forms, however, demands additional evidence that the religious economies model does not provide.

The lack of competition between distinctive religious traditions is even more clearly spelled out in terms of religious capital. Laurence Iannaccone (1990), for instance, points out that religious knowledge is just another form of human capital and, not surprisingly, most religious converts choose a denomination that is similar to their former religious tradition. According to rational choice theorists like Iannaccone, such decisions rest on the fact that even the religious weigh the costs and rewards of their actions and choose the path that will maximize reward. In the case of religious conversion, similar religious traditions allow participants to transfer their religious capital and limit the costs of changing religions (Lechner 2007). Similarly, Stark and Finke (2000) acknowledge that conversion is most common where the convert is strongly attached to the members of their new religious tradition, calling into question the importance of zealous religious leaders and demanding a different explanation for the variation in religious vigor across cities, counties, and states.

Instead, instances of religious vigor appear to reflect cultural trends across all religious traditions, big or small. Take, for example, the case of Mormons and non-Mormon groups in Utah. According to Stark and Finke (2004), non-Mormon religious groups with generally low rates of participation across the United States display higher rates of commitment in Utah where the Mormon majority serves as an energetic and effective religious monopoly. Mormons, however, do not display the same sort of zealousness outside of the Mountain West. On the contrary, Mormon religious commitment more closely resembles the religious culture of the particular region (Phillips 1998). The same appears to describe the Catholics in Stark and McCann's (1993) analysis of the 102 Roman Catholic dioceses in the United States. Specifically, Stark and McCann note that priestly ordinations are highest in the "Protestant" South where Catholics are few in number, but not nearly as high in the West where Catholics are also few in

number. In fact, Stark and McCann report more ordinations per 100,000 Catholic males in the East (where Catholics account for 37.8 percent of the population) than in the West (where Catholics account for just 13.4 percent of the population).[2] This variation across regions suggests that something more than the effectiveness of the minority religion is the driving force behind religious fervor. Indeed, the South's characterization as America's "Bible Belt" (Zelinsky 1961) and the West's classification as a secular majority (Silk 2005) appear to offer a clearer explanation of variation in the ordination rate of Catholic men.

Outside the U.S., religious commitment also appears to be a product of a strong religious culture and not the product of organizational competition between diverse religious groups. Norris and Inglehart's (2004) cross-national study of secularization and religious values, for instance, demonstrates that the demand for religion is far from constant. According to Norris and Inglehart, the demand for religion is predicated on the level of development and security within the society and not on the degree of religious competition. Indeed, their measure of societal security accounts for 46 percent of the variation in religious service attendance and 42 percent of the variation in the frequency of prayer across the 76 societies in their sample (Norris and Inglehart 2004: 66). Focusing on religious values, they also find a strong and positive correlation between the importance of religion and each of their measures of religious commitment. This suggests that there is strong variation in the demand for religion which explains the variation in religious commitment around the world. Additionally, this culture of participation model

[2] Stark and McCann (1993) also included a Hispanic region made up of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. This region produced the lowest number of ordinations per 100,000 Catholic men but which reflects the general irreligiousness of three out of four states. Similarly, ordinations in the West are most likely inflated by Utah's inclusion in their 11-state grouping.

necessitates a reframing of competition in the sociology of religion. One way to accomplish this is to consider the competitive forces affecting other organizational forms.

Population Ecology – A Theory of Selection

Few organizations resemble the swift response and rational calculation of the "competitive" organizations championed as the forbearers of religious vitality by the religious economies model. Quite the opposite, most organizations are "complicated systems with strong limitations on [their] flexibility and speed of response" (Hannan and Freeman 1989: xii). Rather than the adaptability of individual organizations, variations in organizational forms stem from competitive environments and the slow-to-change nature of organizations causing the retention of certain organizational characteristics and the selection of certain organizational forms (Hannan and Freeman 1977). Applied to the sociology of religion, this means that congregations and their leaders will show little change in their attempts to provide a better "product" or procure additional members regardless of their share of the religious market or the degree of religious diversity in the larger population. In one test of this hypothesis, Hill and Olson (2009) conclude that U.S. congregations with a smaller share of the religious market do not do more to recruit new members, do not offer more services to current members, and do not have clergy that work longer hours than congregations with a larger share of the religious market. Instead, congregations appear subject to the same structural inertia and density dependence that shape the environments of other organizational forms (Baum 1996).

Structural Inertia

Organizations encounter a number of internal and external pressures that lead to structural inertia (Hannan and Freeman 1984). The culture of an organization, its investment in various forms of capital, normative pressures, and the bounded rationality of its leaders limit an organization's ability to adapt from within. Similarly, legal constraints, environmental uncertainty, legitimacy constraints, and opportunism serve as external constraints on the organization (Hannan and Freeman 1977). Hannan and Freeman (1984) argue that these constraints generate structurally inert organizations. According to population ecologists, selection favors reliability and accountability in organizations, and reliability and accountability demand that organizational structures be highly reproducible, or inert (Hannan and Freeman 1984). Selection, therefore, "*favors organizations whose structures have high inertia*" (Hannan and Freeman 1984: 155, italics in original), though empirical tests provide mixed support for this hypothesis (Baum 1996).

Some empirical tests of the structural inertia hypothesis do find support for Hannan and Freeman's (1977, 1984, 1989) assertion that the adaptability of organizations is limited by internal and external constraints (Greve 1999, Ruef 1997). Others refute these notions (Guillen 2002, Singh, Tucker and Meinhard 1991, Zajac and Kraatz 1993), and still others suggest that empirical examinations of structural inertia should focus on more than just age, size, and complexity (Amburgey and Miner 1992, Amburgey, Kelly and Barnett 1993, Kelly and Amburgey 1991). Traditionally, though, age, size, and complexity are considered the primary sources of variation in inertial pressures (Hannan and Freeman 1984) with older, larger and more complex organizations demonstrating the greatest structural inertia. Indeed, support for this argument can be found among hospitals (Ruef 1997), German auto manufactures (Dobrev, Tai-

Young and Hannan 2001), and even congregations (Edgell 2006). Among congregations, however, there is evidence to suggest that structurally inert organizations are at greater risk of failing (McMullin 2013). Moreover, the theory of structural inertia and the religious economies model are at odds specifically because the latter assumes that organizational vitality is the result of change and the former assumes that change is both difficult and a driving force behind the mortality of organizations (Hannan and Freeman 1984). This tension necessitates the question: how does structural inertia affect the vitality/mortality of congregations?

Examining two of the traditional sources of structural inertia, Dougherty et al. (2008) find an inverse relationship between age and mortality and size and mortality among two distinct congregational populations: the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Church of the Nazarene. According to Dougherty and his colleagues, congregations are subject to the liability of newness (Stinchcombe 1965) that plagues many types of organizations. New organizations lack the external resources available to older organizations; they must also learn new roles and build efficient organizational structures among a collection of strangers (Stinchcombe 1965). These attributes coalesce to create a risky time in the life of the organization as evidenced by the high rate of failure early in the life cycles of labor unions, semiconductor electronics manufactures, newspaper publishing companies (Freeman, Carroll and Hannan 1983), and the congregations in Dougherty et al.'s (2008) analysis. Not all congregations benefit from stability, though. Edgell (2006), for one, argues that failing congregations are those that are still operating with a 1950s definition of the American family, and McMullin (2013) points out that the most successful congregations are those that make adjustments when faced with the challenges of members' competing Sunday morning obligations. These studies provide evidence that structurally inert

congregations may not be the most likely to succeed, though neither author uses mortality as their dependent variable.

Density Dependence

Unlike the theory of structural inertia, there is less dissention about the link between density dependence and competition. Density refers to the number of organizations in the population and serves as a proxy for competition and legitimacy much like pluralism and market share do for scholars of religion (Hannan and Carroll 1992). Unlike the ill-fitting measures of competition utilized by many sociologists of religion, however, density refers to the number of organizations of a single form. This is why Carroll and Wade (1991) examine the density dependence of breweries from 1800 to 1988 and not the density dependence of breweries, wineries, and distilleries (i.e. all commercial alcohol producers). This is also why Wholey, Christianson, and Sanchez (1992) study the relationship between organizational size and failure using the population of health maintenance organizations (HMOs) in the United States and not the population of all health insurance providers (HMOs, PPOs, etc.). Unlike religious pluralism and religious market share, focusing on the density of congregations belonging to a single denomination provides a way to circumvent the problems of preference and religious capital described above.

According to population ecologists, the founding rates and disbanding rates of an organizational form are dependent upon the density of organizations of the same type (Hannan and Freeman 1989, Hannan and Carroll 1992). When graphed, the foundings of organizations in a population resembles an inverted U-shaped curve (Hannan and Freeman 1987, Hannan and Carroll 1992). Minimal competition due to low density results in higher rates of foundings as

legitimacy increases. However, once a population reaches its maximum carrying capacity – the maximum number of organizations of a particular form that can be sustained by the environment – the rate of foundings will decrease (Hannan and Carroll 1992). This pattern is notable among labor unions (Hannan and Freeman 1987), hotels (Ingram and Inman 1996), and social movement organizations (McLaughlin and Khawaja 2000) just to name a few examples. Scheitle and Dougherty (2008) also find the founding rate to fit this U-shaped pattern among a population of congregations. Using data on the Reformed Church in America in the state of New York between 1628 and 2000, Scheitle and Dougherty find a positive relationship between foundings and increasing legitimacy and a negative relationship between foundings and resource scarcity.

Like the founding rate, the mortality rate among a population or organizations is also a curvilinear phenomenon, though it mirrors the founding process as a U-shaped curve (Hannan and Freeman 1988, Hannan and Carroll 1992). According to population ecologists, density increases legitimacy and reduces the rate of organizational mortality. When the number of organizations reaches its carrying capacity, however, the number of organizational failures is driven upwards by increased competition for the limited resources available to the population of organizations (Hannan 1991, Hannan and Carroll 1992). Many of the same populations of organizations that model the expected curve in their founding rates also fit the expected curve in their failure rates (Hannan and Freeman 1988, Ingram and Inman 1996). To my knowledge, no one has examined the effect of density dependence on organizational mortality among a population of congregations though.

Qualitative studies in the sociology of religion do provide some evidence that congregations are subject to the same processes of selection as other types of organizations. In a study of nine Lutheran congregations in California, Ellingson (2007) finds that changes in the

socio-cultural environment generate a "crises of meaning" that forces congregations to become "niche" churches. Similarly, Eiesland (2000) contends that organizational replacement, not adaptation, predicts change in the religious landscape of an Atlanta exurb. According to Eiesland, organizational environments sometimes change too rapidly for organizations to reinvent themselves; congregations in this situation either close or see significant declines in membership. Neither of these studies accounts for the density of congregations, though. Ellingson (2007) provides no evidence that certain types of congregations are selected out of California's Lutheran population, and Eiesland (2000) relies on case studies, rather than full population data, to support her argument. Nevertheless, these studies provide further support for Douglas's (1986) assertion that congregations are not a unique organizational form.

Neo-institutionalism – A Theory of Adaptation

Mixed support for population ecology's theory of structural inertia provides strong evidence that organizations can, and do, adapt to changing environments (Baum 1996). Neo-institutionalism is a theory of adaptation that provides a lens for exploring how organizations adapt (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Meyer and Rowan 1977). The goal of neo-institutionalism is to understand why so many organizations look the same (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Unlike population ecology which attributes similarity within organizational populations – and variations between them – to processes of selection, though, neo-institutionalism attributes these similarities to the "institutionalized products, services, techniques, policies, and programs" that serve as powerful myths (Meyer and Rowan 1977: 340). While Weber (1968) credited these similarities to a tendency towards effectiveness and efficiency in his classical conception of the "iron cage," though, neo-institutionalism recognizes that often times the adoption of institutional

rules stem from "institutional myths" that are neither effective nor efficient (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), the formal structures of organizations reflect the "institutional myths" of their environment. Organizations adopt these structures ceremonially because they increase legitimacy and aid survival (Suchman 1995). Organizations will use specific job titles, adopt policies and procedures, and adhere to established organizational roles because they serve to reassure the public that the organization is working in "good faith" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Since these formal structures may be inefficient and/or ineffective, however, organizations tend to adopt these "institutional myths" only ceremonially (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Put differently, the formal structures of many organizations are only loosely coupled with their actually activities (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Weick 1976). My purpose here is to demonstrate how this plays out in religious congregations.

Among congregations, Edgell's (2006) study of four communities in upstate New York illustrates the loose coupling between the formal structures of religious organizations and the institutional rules they must adhere to in order to garner and maintain their legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Weick 1976). Specifically, Edgell (2006) focuses on the different ways that congregations adapt to the changing definitions of family life. She makes the case that individual congregations tend to overlook their more traditional, institutionalized, views of "the family" by trying to be caring and inclusive of nontraditional family forms. Thus, the formal structure of these congregations retains the institutionalized definition of the family, but in order to survive – that is, in order to be effective and efficient – these religious organizations learn to adapt and accommodate non-traditional family forms. Interestingly, Edgell notes that this is more common among large congregations who have more traditional *and* more innovative programs for their

members. As more congregations respond in similar ways, though, isomorphism within the population of congregations will increase (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

Isomorphism persists because institutional pressures result in homogeneity within a population of organizations. Organizations do change, but greater degrees of institutionalization serve to generate uniformity and resistance to changes in cultural understandings as organizations attempt to increase their legitimacy (Suchman 1995). The result of this process is homogeneity in structures, cultures, and outputs as organizations make rational decisions when faced with uncertainty and constraints (Zucker 1987). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the isomorphic pressures that organizations face can be coercive, normative, or mimetic. My primary focus in this dissertation is on normative isomorphism, but for the current discussion, it is important to consider how normative isomorphism differs from coercive and mimetic forms.

Some organizations face coercive pressures from other organizations that they depend on for key resources (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), these pressures can be explicit or implicit, or direct or indirect. Lounsbury (2001) provides one example of how coercive pressures generate isomorphism both directly and indirectly. According to Lounsbury (2001: 49) "the passage of recycling mandates by state governments was an important aspect of the process of aggregate recycling program diffusion" across colleges and universities in the Great Lakes area. Additionally, the presence of the Student Environmental Action Coalition increased the likelihood that the program implemented included the creation of a new, full-time recycling manager position. As a result, coercive isomorphism occurred directly via government mandates and indirectly via the presence of a student action initiative.

Among congregations coercive pressures tend to stem from the federal regulation of religious bodies as well as the denominations that oversee them. Benson and Dorsett's (1971) theory of the religious organization contests that the relationship between denominations and congregations is a coercive one. They hypothesize that pressure toward the bureaucratization of the congregation stems from the administrative component of the denomination. Similarly, they argue that pressures toward professionalization in the congregation vary depending on the character of seminary education at the level of the denomination. Among congregations, coercive isomorphism will also be common in nations where a specific religion is supported – or prohibited – by the state. In the former Soviet Union, for example, the Communist government's attempts to eradicate religion forced congregations to perform their functions in secret or not at all (Froese 2008).

Isomorphism also results from uncertainty; DiMaggio and Powell (1983) call this form of isomorphism mimetic. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), mimetic isomorphism occurs when organizations try to emulate other organizations of the same form that they perceive as more legitimate or more successful. Haveman (1993), for example, finds that savings and loan associations are apt to imitate large and profitable organizations but not similarly-sized organizations unless the imitating organization is also large. According to Greenwood and Hinings (1996), though, the internal dynamics of some organizations lead them to respond differently despite exposure to the same institutional pressures.

Among religious organizations, waning levels of religious participation in the developed world is the source of uncertainty that drives congregations to seek legitimacy in various forms. Following DiMaggio and Powell's understanding of mimetic isomorphism, congregations will look to other, more successful congregations to determine the appropriate way to conduct

"business as usual." According to Becker (1999), congregations, despite their idiosyncrasies, tend to share similar cultures when they share similar environments. Becker (1999) suggests that there are four basic types of cultures among congregations: the house of worship, the family type, the community type, and the leader type. Congregations take on one of these four types in response to changing environments; in other words, uncertainty leads to mimetic isomorphism between congregations in the same milieu.

Normative isomorphism, finally, stems from professionalization (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In other words, professionals will attempt to define the conditions and methods of their work in a way that generates sameness across organizations of a similar form. This is true of art museums (DiMaggio 1991) as well as the health care industry (Ruef and Scott 1998). DiMaggio (1991), for one, argues that the diffusion of the model for today's art museum is the product of individual actors who aspired to change the structure and the mission of the organizational field. Similarly, Ruef and Scott (1998) maintain that hospital accrediting agencies generate normative isomorphism in hospital organizations that clusters around two forms of legitimacy: technical and managerial.

The professionalization of the clergy also generates normative isomorphism between congregations of the same denomination (Finke 2004). Finke (2004: 24) argues that "professional clergy will attempt to control entry and seek to define the necessary qualifications for the profession, the educational criteria for clergy will tend to be standardized, and the clergy's allegiance to professional networks and standards will increase." According to Finke, the "standardization" that occurs in these congregations generates normative isomorphism within the denomination that stalls innovation. Throughout this dissertation I will argue that normative pressures that stem from the agents of professionalization as well as the larger network of

legitimacy-granting institutions (DiMaggio 1991) serve to influence the formation and failure of religious congregations as well as the competitive strategies and organizational cultures that make so many of these organizations appear the same.

Organizational Culture – A Metaphorical Approach

Organizational cultures serve as the "glue" that hold organizations together (Smircich 1983). In the corporate world, these cultures have an impact on turnover, absenteeism, and commitment to the organization (Kunda 2006, McDonald 1991, Van Maanen 1991, Vaughan 1996). Kunda (2006: 90), for example, argues that culture is "engineered" by managers and top officials to serve as ideology and a source of control that is "reflected in the attitudes, orientations, and emotions of committed members." Similarly, McDonald's (1991) study of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC) demonstrates how rules and regulations create a culture that produces commitment to the organization and belief in its goals. The LAOOC's dress code, the use of symbols, and the "Peter test" all serve to rapidly generate a shared culture in a temporary organizational form.

Despite the general consensus that culture plays an important role in the success and failure of the organization, however, there is little consensus about how organizational cultures work and the appropriate methodology for studying their creation (Martin and Frost 1996, Ouchi and Wilkins 1985). These disagreements stem from three competing perspectives of organizational cultures: the integrated, the differentiated, and the fragmented (Trice and Beyer 1992). Studies that utilize the integrated lens find that cultures are organization-wide and characterized by consistency and clarity over time (e.g., McDonald 1991). Studies making use of the differentiated perspective, however, find that there is inconsistency between the beliefs of

organizations and their actions resulting in a lack of cultural consensus between subcultures and greater ambiguity within the organization (e.g., Van Maanen 1991). Finally, studies in the fragmented camp focus on the complexity of organizations and find that multiple interpretations of events generate ambiguity, uncertainty, and a lack of consensus within the organization (e.g., Weick 1991).

One way to avoid getting caught up in these differences is to apply a meta-theoretical approach that considers the possibility that organizational cultures might be simultaneously integrated, differentiated, and fragmented (Martin 1992, 2002). Martin's (1992, 2002) three-perspective approach serves to illuminate aspects of the organizational culture that are missed by the tendency to only apply an integrated, differentiated or fragmented lens. Martin's (1992) study of a Fortune 500 company, for example, details the way that each perspective highlights certain aspects of the organizational culture while blurring others by analyzing OZCO, the focus of several major cultural studies, through each perspective independently and then devoting her final empirical chapter to showcasing the differences that emerge.

Congregations are an interesting case for the study of organizational cultures because the customers (church-goers) play a significant part in the creation of church cultures. Many studies of organizational cultures focus on management and the use of culture as a mechanism for control (McDonald 1991, Van Maanen 1991). However, much like Kunda's (2006) study of a high-tech corporation, the cultures of congregations are simultaneously handed down from clergy and other church officials *and* (re)created by committed church participants; they are negotiated orders that are continually being redefined (Fine 1984). A few studies in the sociology of religion have explored these processes more closely (see Dougherty and Huyser 2008, Ecklund 2006, Harper and Schulte-Murray 1998).

Harper and Schulte-Murray (1998) and Ecklund's (2006) studies focus on the emergence of different organizational cultures within the Catholic Church. According to Harper and Schulte-Murray (1998), religious organizational cultures within the same institution differ in leadership styles, clergy roles, and the religious orientations of the laity. Ecklund (2006) argues, specifically, that these discrepancies lead to differences in the leadership roles for women in the church. Similarly, Dougherty and Huyser (2008) document the differences in congregations that result in their variable levels of success with racial integration. According to Dougherty and Huyser, cultures that permit racially diverse leadership, charismatic worship practices, and small groups within the congregation are more successful at racial integration. These studies demonstrate the importance of considering organizational cultures as a key predictor of the successes and struggles of religious congregations. I will also add that it is equally important to consider the role that these culture play vis-à-vis the secularization process I described above.

CHAPTER 3

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and explain my study design. The chapter is organized into four main sections. In the first section, I outline my research design and explain my rationale for using a mixed methods approach to examine the relationship between religious congregations and their organizational environments. Second, I provide a justification for the research site by situating my research site within my discussion of religious competition from the previous chapter. Third, I describe the quantitative data that I use to answer my first and second empirical research questions; this includes a description of the data collection procedures and summaries of the variables that I will use to answer both of these research questions. In the final section, I provide an overview of the qualitative data that I use to answer my third and fourth empirical research questions. This section includes a discussion of the sampling procedure that I used to select the congregations for this study, an overview of my interviews including the procedures I used to elicit participation of church leaders and members, and a description of the techniques I used to analyze the interview data. My final section also includes descriptions of each of the congregations in my sample.

Research Design

In order to examine the relationship between religious congregations and their organizational environments, I use an embedded mixed methods design. Many researchers using both quantitative and qualitative methods use a convergent mixed methods design for the

purpose of confirming the results of their quantitative or qualitative data analysis (Creswell 2002). Embedded mixed methods designs, however, serve the purpose of complementarity (Greene 2007). According to Greene et al. (1989), complementarity serves the purpose of elaborating, enhancing, or illustrating the results of the quantitative or qualitative data analysis. As I will explain in the paragraphs that follow, my decision to use an embedded mixed methods design stems from the inability of either quantitative or qualitative methods to fully answer all of my empirical research questions. For this reason, the specific purpose of my embedded design is the enhancement of the quantitative data analysis.

Figure 3.1. Embedded Mixed Methods Design

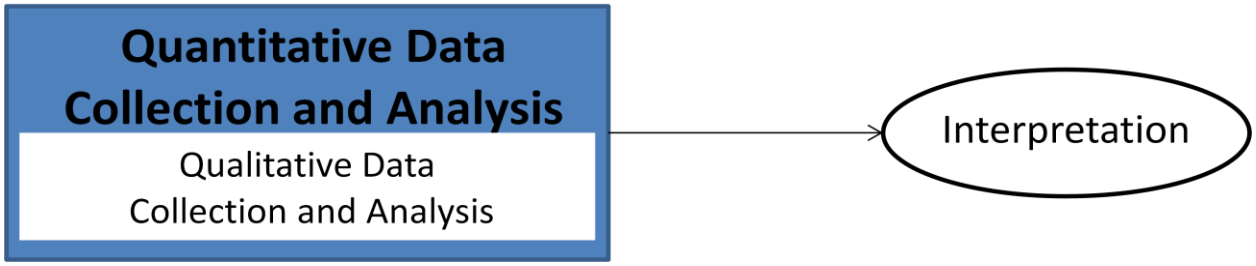


Figure 3.1 provides a detailed visual of the current embedded mixed methods design. In my study, the qualitative data collection and analysis is embedded within a more traditional quantitative research design. Studies of religious competition and studies of organizational ecologies are typically quantitative (see Eiesland (2000) for an exception). Indeed, the emergence of new religious congregations and the failure of existing congregations are uniquely quantitative phenomena. The emergence of new congregations, for example, can be tracked over time as a count of the number of new congregations. Statistical analysis techniques that are commonly used by population ecologists allow researchers to model the emergence of new

organizational forms using these counts (Hannan 1991). Similarly, the failure of existing organizations is traditionally modeled using longitudinal data depicting the moment when an organization exits the population (Hannan and Carroll 1992). A qualitative researcher might spend years studying multiple congregations without ever witnessing the closure of a church.

In order to understand the different ways that religious actors' perceptions direct their behavior, however, it is important to use a methodological approach that focuses on meaning rather than quantifiable values. According to Fine (1984), the study of organizational life as negotiated order or organizational culture requires a qualitative approach. Both metaphors focus on meaning and "they are not *primarily* quantitative" (Fine 1984: 245, italics in original). Within the sociology of religion there is no precedent for examining the creation of competitive strategies among a population of religious congregations. As I explained in the previous chapter, religious competition is generally assumed to exist where the regulation of religious organizations is low and the plurality of religious options is high (Stark and Finke 2000). This shortcoming within the sociology of religion requires a qualitative researcher's lens for the purpose of constructing a more complete framework of the different ways that religious organizations, their leaders, and their members engage their socio-cultural environments.

The congregations in my qualitative data analysis are drawn from the population of congregations in my quantitative data analysis. As a result, the concurrent nature of my research design allowed me to make improvements to the specification of my quantitative models based on insights gleaned during my qualitative data collection and analysis (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2006). By embedding my qualitative data collection and analysis within my quantitative design and analysis, my research design allows me to tap into different dimensions of the same complex phenomenon (Greene 2007). This provides a more complete understanding of religious

competition given the complex relationship between religious congregations and their social worlds.

The Research Site

As I explained in the previous chapter, the prevailing wisdom on religious competition within the sociology of religion cannot be reconciled with the empirical research on religious conversion and religious switching. Instead, I argue that religious competition takes place at the congregational level within denominations; thus, I rely on theories of organizational competition that focus on a single organizational form. For this reason it is important to focus on a religious tradition where the autonomy of individual congregations allows for the possibility of intradenominational competition. It is equally important to focus on congregations that are situated in areas where they might experience competitive pressures from similar or like-minded organizational forms. In order to meet these two fundamental criteria, the analyses that follow in the subsequent chapters draw upon data from Southern Baptist congregations in a single county in America's "Bible Belt".

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is currently the second largest denomination in the United States. Unlike the Catholic Church – the largest religious body in the U.S. – the SBC is a cooperative of religious congregations that affirms the autonomy of the local church and the priesthood of all believers. As a cooperative, the SBC's member congregations pool their resources for foreign and domestic missions, but the SBC exercises no authority over the local church. Instead, Southern Baptist churches follow the Baptistic principle of congregationalism whereby the local church is independent and self-supporting. This makes Southern Baptist congregations uniquely fit for organizational competition compared to other religious groups.

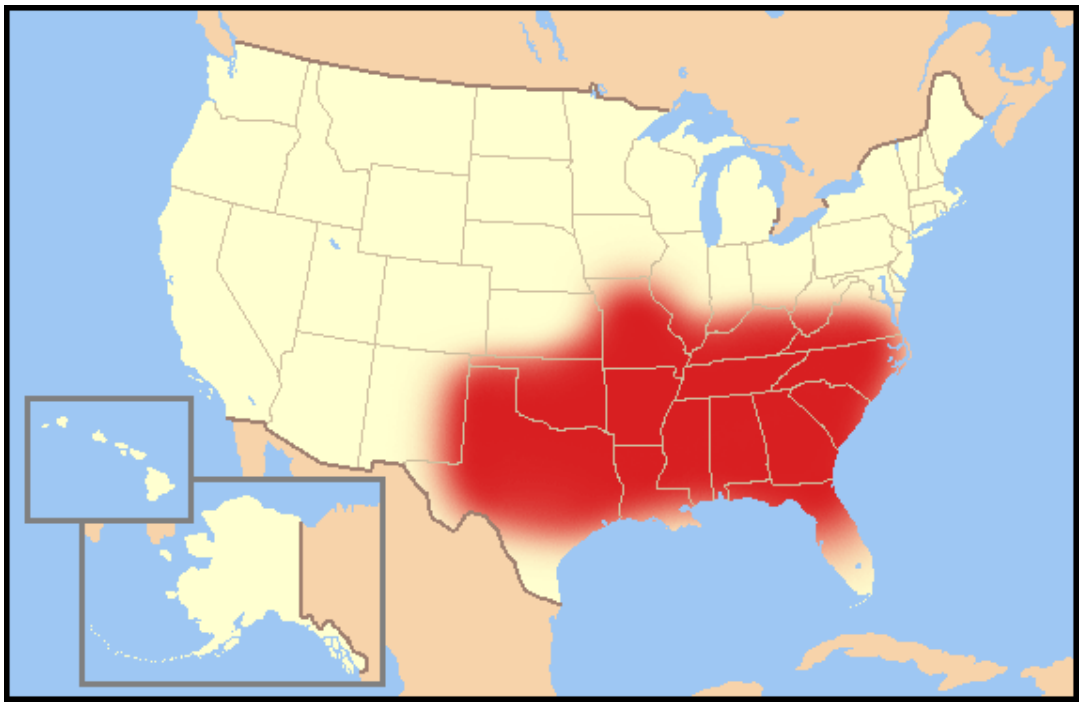
In other denominations with different forms of church governance, individual congregations report to local authorities (e.g., elders or bishops) who report to higher ranking authorities at the regional, national, or global level. In their most rigid form, there is little variation between the congregations in these denominations even when those congregations serve populations with clear socioeconomic, cultural, and demographic differences. Congregationalism, on the other hand, allows individual congregations to adapt to their specific environments within the loose confines of the larger cooperative.[3] As a result, struggling Southern Baptist congregations can hire new staff, preach on more timely topics, or restructure the format of their services without the consent of the larger denomination. The hierarchical structure of some religious denominations, on the other hand, makes it difficult for local congregations to remain culturally relevant institutions. For the members of these congregations, displeasure in one congregation is unlikely to be resolved in another congregation without switching religious traditions. Contrastively, Southern Baptists are able to "shop" for the Southern Baptist congregation that best fits their current religious needs.

The Southern Baptist congregations in this study are all situated in a single county in the southeastern United States within a region that is generally known as America's "Bible Belt." Figure 3.2 highlights this region which is known for its conservative Protestant value systems and unusually high rates of religious participation relative the rest of the United States (Zelinsky 1961). In general, conservative Protestants have less education (Darnell and Sherkat 1997,

[3] The constitution of the SBC states that congregations recognized by the SBC are those "in friendly cooperation with the Convention and sympathetic with its purposes and work" (sbc.net). Congregations that are not in cooperation with the SBC (e.g., a congregation that affirms homosexuality) can be (and have been) removed from fellowship with the SBC.

Sherkat and Darnell 1999), are less socio-economically well off (Keister 2003, 2007, 2008), and are less trusting of others (Hempel, Matthews and Bartkowski 2012) than the members of other religious groups. Conservative Protestant women are also more likely than other women to marry young (Glass and Jacobs 2005) and exit the labor force at an early age (Glass and Jacobs 2005, Sherkat 2000). These qualities permeate the culture of the American South (Zelinsky 1961) making the cities and counties in the "Bible Belt" an excellent context to study religious competition among a group of congregations that share these conservative values. My study is situated in Adams County[4], a large urban area where the non-Christian and secular values of urban life often clash with the conservative Protestant culture of America's "Bible Belt."

Figure 3.2. America's "Bible Belt"



[4] In order to protect the anonymity of my participants, the names of all places, people, and organizations in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

Adams County boasts a population of more than 750,000 and is home to more than 140 Southern Baptist congregations. The county's first settlers made their home along one of the Mississippi's major tributaries, and four years after their arrival a group of Baptists from the Virginia colony arrived and started the county's first Baptist church in the city of Edwardsville. Today, Edwardsville is one of the 30 largest cities in the United States and home to a large population of Catholics, immigrant religions, and the non-religious. Southern Baptists and other conservative Protestants continue to dominate religious life in the county, though, just like they dominate religious life in the rest of the American South.

The religious climate of Adams County, coupled with the unique dynamics of urban life, makes it an excellent place to study religious competition. The prevalence of Southern Baptist congregations alone gives Southern Baptists in Adams County options when it comes to selecting a church. In rural counties and smaller cities where there are few Southern Baptist congregations, the likelihood that members chose their congregation out of convenience is high. In Edwardsville, however, some of the city's residents are able to find multiple Southern Baptist congregations within walking distance of their homes. Additionally, the prevalence of Catholics and non-Christian groups in Adams County creates another important challenge for Southern Baptist congregations in the region. These individuals do not always share the conservative Christian values of most Southern Baptist congregations. Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County thus face an important decision when it comes to spreading their message: Do they stick to the conservative Christian values of the SBC? Or do they embrace a changing culture in order to grow their church?

Quantitative Data

My first and second empirical research questions focus on the religious organizational environment at multiple levels; thus, I relied on congregation-, county-, and national-level measures gleaned from a variety of sources. Data on individual congregations was derived from the annuals of the Mill Creek Baptist Association housed at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (SBHLA) in Nashville, TN. Aggregating this data up to the county-level provided important information about the religious organizational environment of Adams County. United States Census data from 1790 to 2010 also provided important county-level measures. Finally, the national level data were derived from historic accounts of the SBC including Nancy Ammerman's (1990) sociological analysis of the conservative takeover within the SBC and Gregory Wills's (2009) in-depth history of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

With the help of a small study grant from the SBHLA, I compiled the variables from these four sources into a complete dataset on the population of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County from 1784 to 2011. This is the most comprehensive dataset available on a population of congregations within a single county in the United States; it is also ideal for answering my questions about the relationship between religious congregations and their organizational environment. Specifically, my county- and national-level measures capture a myriad of the organizational and institutional factors that might influence the emergence of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County. Similarly, these same variables, along with my congregation-level measures, are ideal for predicting the hazard of failure among individual congregations.

I outline the variables for each of my quantitative empirical chapters below. In my first empirical chapter I address the following research question: How does the organizational environment affect the emergence of new religious congregations? Since organizational environments are local (e.g., the number of other similar congregations in the county) and national (e.g. the institutional norms of the national religious body), my models include multiple independent variables designed to capture changes at both levels. The unit of analysis in this chapter is years.

In my second empirical chapter I focus on organizational failure: How does the organizational environment affect the failure of religious congregations? In this chapter, the unit of analysis is congregation-years. For this reason, I not only include the same local and national-level variables that I included in the previous chapter, but I also include several time-varying variables at the organizational level.

Although I use multiple variables in both chapters, I present these variables separately below because the different units of analysis result in different means and standard deviations. Additionally, each chapter includes a full model (1784-2011) and at least one reduced model due to restrictions in the reporting of certain variables. As a result, I present the means, standard deviations, minimums, and maximums for all of these models separately. The variables for Chapter 4 are presented in Table 3.1 and described below. The variables for Chapter 5 are presented in Table 3.2 and also described below.

Dependent Variables

Foundings: The primary dependent variable in Chapter 4 is a count of the number of new Southern Baptist congregations opened in Adams County each year. My use of a count-

dependent variable situates this chapter within the larger tradition of population ecology and organizational scholars' attempts to model the numerical growth of an organizational form (Hannan 1991). Between 1784 and 2011, 287 Southern Baptist congregations opened in Adams County, an average of 1.57 congregations per year.

Percent Southern Baptist: Percent Southern Baptist is the percentage of Southern Baptists in Adams County in a given year. This percentage was calculated by dividing the total number of church members reported by Adams County's Southern Baptist congregations to the MCBA by the population of Adams County reported in the appropriate U.S. Census period. This variable is the dependent variable for the secondary analysis in Chapter 4.

Closed congregation: The dependent variable in Chapter 5 is a dummy variable indicating the operating status of the congregation. The variable is coded 1 if the congregation is closed and 0 if the congregation is open. In order to be considered closed a congregation must be listed at least one time in the annual report of the Mill Creek Baptist Association before its failure to appear in the annual report in subsequent years can indicate a change in operating status. Groups of individuals that meet in members' homes or share space with another organization are not included in the analysis unless they apply for membership in the Mill Creek Baptist Association. Excluding these congregations makes for a more conservative estimate of church failure. Between 1784 and 2011, 147 Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County (or 51.22 percent of the Southern Baptist congregations that opened) closed.

Independent Variables

Density: Density refers to the number of Southern Baptist congregations operating in Adams County in a given year. Although a total of 287 Southern Baptist congregations opened in Adams

County between 1784 and 2011, no more than 146 Southern Baptist congregations were in operation during any given year. Density and density squared are commonly used in studies of the population ecology of an organizational environment (Hannan and Carroll 1992). For population ecologists, density is a measure of legitimacy (i.e., as more Southern Baptist congregations enter the county, the organizational form gains legitimacy). Density squared, on the other hand, is a measure of competition (i.e., as more Southern Baptist congregations enter and saturate the religious market, they must compete in order to survive).

Conservative Revival: A religious revival is a period of intense religious fervor for the purposes of restoring the Church (with a capital C) after a period of perceived moral decline (Roberts and Yamane 2012). In the history of the SBC there have been two significant attempts to restore the Southern Baptist Church led by theological conservatives within the SBC. The first period followed the Great Depression and the displacement of many Southern Baptists in the South to northern cities where few religious organizations met their conservative-to-strict religious preferences (Ammerman 1990). The second period is part of a larger and ongoing Evangelical response to the perceived "war on Christians" (Hunter 1991, Smith 1998). In order to capture these variations in the institutional climate of the SBC, each year is coded 1 during times of conservative revivalism and 0 during all other periods in Southern Baptist history.

Conservative Seminary: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary also plays a major role in the institutional climate of the SBC. The SBTS is the oldest and most prestigious of the SBC's 6 Baptist seminaries. Much like the agents of professionalization in other organizational fields, the SBTS and its 5 sister schools serve as "important centers for the development of organizational norms among professional managers and their staff" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 152). Interestingly, the SBC and SBTS are not always on the same page in terms of their theology. In

fact, the first great conservative revival came during the pinnacle of theological "liberalism" at the SBTS (Wills 2009). In order to model the conservativism of the SBTS, each year is coded 1 if conservatives maintained control of the SBTS and 0 otherwise. Since the SBTS did not open until 1859, models including this variable are restricted to 1859-2011.

Population: The population of Adams County is a standardized measure of the county population reported in the U.S. Census for the appropriate block. The first U.S. Census was conducted in 1790 and every ten years thereafter. For each 10-year block, my population measures correspond to the previous census data. For 1860-1869, for example, the population variable is a standardized measure of the county population reported in the 1860 U.S. Census.

Age: Age is the age of the congregation in years. A congregation that opened in 1960 is 1 in 1961, 2 in 1962, and so on. The oldest congregation in this sample is 219 years old, but the age of the average congregation is less than 42 years.

Members: Members is the total number of church members reported to the Mill Creek Baptist Association by each congregation. Beginning with the first meeting of the MCBA in 1803, participating churches have reported their total membership during a roll call at the annual meeting. These numbers reflect the size of the congregation and vary tremendously from one congregation to the next and over time. Between 1859 and 2011, the average Southern Baptist congregation in Adams County reported 758 members to the MCBA. This is more than 10 times the national average of 75 for congregations of all types (Chaves 2004).

Baptisms: Like their membership totals, congregations have also reported the number of new members received via baptism each year since 1803. It is not uncommon for a congregation to not perform any baptisms during any given calendar year, but Southern Baptist congregations baptized an average of nearly 29 new members each year between 1859 and 2011.

Table 3.1. Description of variables in the analysis, Ch. 4

		Full Model, 1784-2011[a]				Reduced Model, 1859-2011[b]			
Variables	**Description**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Min**	**Max**
Dependent Variable									
Foundings	Count variable: the number of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams	1.14	1.68	0.00	7.00	1.57	1.87	0.00	7.00
Independent Variables									
Density	Continuous variable: number of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County	47.53	47.58	0.00	146.00	68.30	45.77	11.00	146.00
Density-squared	Continuous variable: the squared number of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County	4513.47	6416.53	0.00	21316.00	6746.67	6843.42	121.00	21316.00
Conservative Revival	Dummy variable: coded 1 during year of conservative vigor in the SBC	0.16	0.37	0.00	1.00	0.24	0.43	0.00	1.00
Conservative Seminary	Dummy variable: coded 1 during years of conservative control of the SBTS					0.57	0.50	0.00	1.00
Population	Standardized variable: Adams County population, most recent U.S. Census					0.00	1.00	-1.50	1.56

[a] N =228; [b] N =152

Table 3.2. Description of variables in the analysis, Ch. 5

		Full Model, 1784-2011[a]				Reduced Model, 1859-2011[b]				Reduced Model, 1875-2011[c]			
Variables	**Description**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**	**S.D.**	**Min**	**Max**
Dependent Variable													
Closed congregation	Dummy variable: coded 1 if the congregation closed	0.01	0.11	0.00	1.00	0.01	0.11	0.00	1.00	0.01	0.11	0.00	1.00
Independent Variables													
Density	Continuous variable: number of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County	94.62	41.61	0.00	146.00	98.52	38.14	11.00	146.00	100.09	36.66	13.00	146.00
Density-squared	Continuous variable: the squared number of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County	10683.79	6707.78	0.00	21316.00	11160.31	6459.88	121.00	21316.00	11361.31	6343.52	169.00	21316.00
Conservative Revival	Dummy variable: coded 1 during year of conservative vigor in the SBC	0.33	0.47	0.00	1.00	0.35	0.48	0.00	1.00	0.35	0.48	0.00	1.00
Conservative Seminary	Dummy variable: coded 1 during years of conservative control of the SBTS					0.39	0.49	0.00	1.00	0.38	0.49	0.00	1.00
Age	Continuous time-varying variable, age of the congregation in years	41.92	37.32	0.00	219.00	43.00	37.63	0.00	219.00	43.31	37.78	0.00	219.00
Members	Continous time-varying variable: total membership of the congregation					620.45	759.24	3.00[d]	8065.00	650.79	768.98	3.00[d]	8065.00
Baptisms	baptisms performed by the congregation during the previous year					20.31	28.90	0.00[d]	585.00	20.41	28.97	0.00[d]	585.00
Pastor's Tenure	Continuous time-varying variable: number of years that current pastor has pastored					5.46	6.54	0.00	58.00	5.54	6.57	0.00	58.00
Annual reciepts	Logged measure of annual church receipts									11.69	1.41	4.54	15.72

[a]*N* =11,124; [b]*N* =10,646; [c]*N* =10,455; [d]Observed minimum

Pastor's tenure: The number of years a pastor serves as leader is a reflection of stability within the congregation. Pastor tenure is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 58. Congregations without a pastor were coded 0. Between 1859 and 2011, ministers served their congregation for an average of nearly 5.5 years.

Annual receipts: Each year congregations take in money from member donations and other fundraising activities. These receipts reflect valuable resources that congregations need to pay their staff, maintain their facilities, and serve their communities. My measure of annual receipts is the log of the total yearly receipts reported by each congregation to the MCBA. The variable is logged to account for extreme skewness between the least well-off and most well-off congregations in Adams County over time. The MCBA first reported data on church receipts in 1875. Models including this variable are limited to 1875-2011 as a result.

Missing Data

For most variables in my analyses, complete data was available for every year that a variable appeared in the MCBA's annual report. As a general rule, when congregations failed to file a report with the MCBA or send messengers to the annual meeting, data from the previous year was used. In cases where no data was reported, I followed the same procedure if the congregation filed a report with the MCBA in the previous year. In cases where no report was filed, however, I imputed missing data using the Multiple Imputation (MI) command in STATA 12.0. MI generates multiple data sets with imputed missing values and produces a single output using the means of the parameter estimates across all of the imputed datasets (Little and Rubin 2002).

None of the variables described above had missing values for more than 8 percent of the cases. Annual receipts were missing for 7.18 percent of the cases in the sample. Members and baptisms were missing for 1.55 percent of the cases in the sample. For all of the models in Chapter 5 that make use of these variables, the parameters reported were calculated using the imputed data generated via MI.

Qualitative Data

In order to answer my third and fourth empirical research questions, I conducted 48 in-depth interviews with clergy, members, and former members of 4 Southern Baptist congregations and one Independent Christian church. As I explained above, in order to understand the different ways that religious actors' perceptions direct their behavior, it is important to use a methodological approach that focuses on meaning. The relationship between institutional environments and organizational cultures and decision-making are complex processes that cannot be easily quantified. As I explain below, my analysis of my interviews with the clergy, members, and former members of these 5 congregations is intended to capture the different dynamics at play in the creation of organizational cultures and the effects that those cultures have on the organization's institutional environment.

To generate a sample of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County, I relied on data published in the annuals of the Mill Creek Baptist Association (MCBA). The MCBA is a cooperative like the Southern Baptist Convention and serves the Southern Baptist congregations of Adams County and 3 neighboring counties. In order to better serve its member organizations, the SBC consists of many state and local Baptist associations like the MCBA. Each year, the MCBA publishes a list of cooperating congregations. I used this list published in the 2012

Annual of the MCBA to create a comprehensive list of Southern Baptist congregations operating in Adams County at the time.

The individual congregations that I included in my study are not intended to be a representative sample of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County. My focus is on religious competition, and the selection of the congregations in my sample is based on a purposive sampling procedure (Berg 2009). Using "special knowledge or expertise about the population" (Berg 2009: 50) of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County, I selected congregations that actively "compete" with one another. I use quotation marks here to indicate that these congregations do not necessarily engage in blatant attempts to steal the members of these or any other congregations in the area. Instead, I mean that these congregations routinely draw their participants from the same group of people within the larger community based primarily on their physical location and their racial and socio-economic make-up.

Three of the five congregations in my sample are all located less than 4 miles from the local Baptist seminary. Since tuition at the local seminary is reduced for the members of local Southern Baptist churches, these congregations benefit from a steady stream of seminary students and their families. These are not the only congregations serving the seminary community nor are they the only congregations within such a short radius of the school, but among the so-called "seminary churches" these congregations are representative of the extreme variations in size, racial homogeneity, and worship style. The fourth Southern Baptist congregation in my study provides a contrast to these churches in terms of its physical location and its general demographics. Its inclusion in this study strengthens my claims about the relationships between institutional environments and organizational cultures and organizational decision making in the chapters that follow.

Although this is a study of competition among Southern Baptist churches, I also included a fifth congregation that is not a member of the Southern Baptist Convention. My decision to include this congregation was based on my conversations with the members and former members of the four Southern Baptist congregations. Many of the members and formers members of these churches view this Independent Christian megachurch as the flag bearer of conservative Protestantism in Adams County. Whether they see this as a positive or a negative varies tremendously, though. My decision to include clergy, members, and former members of this congregation in my study is based on my goal to articulate a model of religious competition regardless of whether or not it fits my assumption that religious competition happens within denominations.

Interviews

The interviews for this study took place between June, 2013 and June, 2014. Most participants were selected based on their responses to a short questionnaire that was distributed by each congregation via an email list of members or the church's social media site. Leaders of each of the "seminary churches" agreed to speak with me and distribute my questionnaire after I explained the purpose and importance of my study. I exhausted several different congregations before I selected Avondale Road Baptist Church as my fourth Southern Baptist congregation, though.

A number of the leaders of other churches outside the "seminary ring" declined to participate in my study. In many cases, I was told that the timing was not good for the congregation based the current commitments of members and the staff:

> I think your research questions sound very interesting and normally I'd be very interested in hearing how my members respond to those questions. My problem is that right now we're in the middle of a building program that's taking a lot of time and energy from the staff and from the church, so I'm afraid that I'm going to have to decline.

Another responded:

> I hate to be the bearer of bad news but the staff doesn't feel like the timing is right for our church to participate in the academic research at this time. With us being in the midst of a pastoral transition and concerted focus on spiritual renewal we don't feel like we could do your research justice. As we are trying to focus our people on a few initiatives we don't feel like we could give the research the proper attention at this point.

Unlike the leaders of these congregations, Pastor Cary at Avondale Road Baptist Church expressed his willingness to involve his congregation in this study almost immediately after I contacted him and he heard the purpose and importance of my research.

Including the Independent Christian megachurch in this study also presented another unique problem of access. With 30,000 members and many others who call this church their own, the church's senior minister and preaching pastor are equivalent to local celebrities and get more requests for interviews than they can possibly fulfill. As a result, I spoke with the leader of the congregation's pastoral ministry who oversees all 50 ministers on staff at the church. In total, I interviewed 6 ministers across all 5 congregations; three of these men were members of their congregation before joining the staff.

Questionnaires distributed by the congregation resulted in an additional 34 interviews with the members of all 5 congregations. Completion of this questionnaire was completely voluntary and only those respondents that provided contact information indicating their

willingness to participate in a longer interview forfeited their anonymity. I used the information provided in these questionnaires to build a list of potential participants and contacted these individuals via phone or email to schedule the interviews.

Not everyone that expressed their willingness to participate in a longer interview was contacted to participate in this study. I selected individuals based primarily on their age, gender, and length of affiliation with their congregation with the intent of building a sample that was representative of the larger congregation. Some individuals declined to participate after initially agreeing to take part in a longer interview. In most cases, these individuals did not return my emails or phone calls after multiple attempts to contact them. In other cases, these individuals could not find time to meet with me after agreeing to do the interview. In both cases, I contacted a different individual from the same congregation with similar responses on the pre-screening questionnaire.

Finally, members I spoke with often volunteered the names and contact information of former members of their congregation. This snowball method allowed me to interview at least one former member of each congregation. In some cases, I was able to interview multiple former members about why they left the church, and in one instance the former member that I interviewed was currently the member of another congregation in the sample. In total, I interviewed 8 ex-members across all 5 congregations. All 48 participants in this study and their congregational affiliation are listed in Appendix A.

Interviews with all 48 individuals were conducted in person and lasted approximately one hour each. The shortest interview took 35 minutes to complete. The longest interview lasted nearly 2 hours. At the beginning of each interview, I took a few minutes to explain the purpose of my study. I also outlined the steps I would take to ensure each participant's confidentially, and

I asked each participant to sign a consent form indicating their willingness to continue with the interview. The questions that I asked church leaders, members, and former member of these congregations were designed to answer my third and fourth empirical research questions: How do institutionalized pressures shape the competitive strategies of religious congregations? And, how do the organizational cultures of religious congregations combat/contribute to the secularization process? The questions I asked were divided into four sections: 1) member's/minister's personal biography; 2) the culture of the congregation; 3) the institutional environment; and 4) the competitive strategy of the congregation. The complete interview protocol for members and ministers is available in Appendix B.

The sequencing of questions in the interview guide is designed to illicit a natural flow that resembles a conversation between myself and my respondents (Hermanowicz 2002). Thus, the ordering of questions does not correspond to their relationship to specific research questions. Instead, all four sections of the interview protocol are intended to address different aspects of my third and fourth research questions. In the first section, I asked members and church leaders to tell me about themselves and how they found their congregation. These questions set the table for more specific questions about their role(s) in their congregations and the congregation's role(s) in the larger social world.

The questions in the second section of the interview guide were designed to provide detailed information about each congregation's organizational culture. My initial question focused on the history of the congregation. Subsequent questions and their probes were designed to generate data on the (unique) culture of each congregation and my respondents' role in helping construct the organizational behavior of their church. These questions provided valuable

insights about institutional memory, negotiated orders, and the different dynamics at play in the creation of competitive strategies.

The third section of the interview guide focuses primarily on my final research question: How do the organizational cultures of religious congregations combat/contribute to the secularization process? In this section, I asked respondents to tell me about the social and religious climate of Adams County and their congregation's place within the larger community. Questions about the culture outside of their church are intended to gauge the meaning that Southern Baptists give to the ongoing secularization of their social worlds. By focusing on the meaning that individuals attach to the secularization process, I am able to address the different ways these individuals help construct an organizational culture that will effectively or ineffectively combat this process.

The final section of my interview protocol includes questions about the congregation's competitive strategy and its effectiveness. Asking members to tell me about the things they would like to change about their church, for example, is a non-directive way to solicit information about conflicts and disagreements that occur during the process of constructing an organizational culture within a religious congregation. I ended each interview by asking my respondents if they had any questions for me. Often times, this question proved to elicit the most detailed information about respondents' perceptions of Christianity in the modern world and their views on their own congregation's need to compete.

Audio recordings of each interview were transcribed and analysis of the interview data proceeded in two steps. I used the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) program Atlas.ti to facilitate the coding of my interview data. CAQDA programs like Atlas.ti are designed for conceptual network building and serve as a tool to more easily build and test theories when

working with large amounts of textual data (Berg 2009). The first phase of coding included the identification of categories both deductively – driven by theory – and inductively – driven by the data – and the creation of codes corresponding with these items within and across interviews (Strauss 1987). A comparison of codes within and across interviews served to refine and elaborate each category; next, I made comparisons of the categories across groups.

In the second phase of the analysis, I used the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to generate themes pertaining to the different research questions. According to Butler-Kisber (2010: 47) the constant comparative method provides "an explanation of the context under study that is grounded carefully in the field text (data) materials." This was accomplished by comparing and contrasting codes across and within different groups of respondents. In this study "groups" refer to the four unique Southern Baptist Congregations and 1 Independent Christian Church. Each of these congregations is described below.

The congregations

Below I provide a brief description of each of the five congregations in my sample. These descriptions are not intended to be a complete overview of each congregation's personality and organizational culture. I will discuss these topics in much greater detail in the chapters that follow. Rather, these descriptions are intended to provide a quick overview of the general make-up of each the five congregations that serve as my cases for examining the relationship between religious congregations' organizational environments and their competitive strategies and cultures. Table 3.3 provides a quick summary of some of the general descriptives of each of the congregations that can be used as a quick reference throughout the rest of the dissertation. A more detailed description of each congregation appears below.

Avondale Road Baptist Church

Avondale Road Baptist Church is a large congregation situated within one of Adams County's wealthiest neighborhoods. The church was founded in 1962 as church plant in a rural area on the outskirts of Edwardsville. Urban sprawl and white flight have significantly altered the landscape around Avondale Road over of the last fifty years, though. Pictures of the church from the early 1960s depict a solitary structure surrounded by green and yellow fields. Today, standing in the church parking lot provides a view of endless commercial developments that stretch for miles in every direction. In fact, the intersection of Avondale Road and Dearborn Parkway where the church is situated is one of the busiest intersections in the entire county. This makes for an interesting dilemma since thousands of motorists pass by the church every day, but the scarcity of land on every side of the congregation means that parking is at a premium.

Today, Avondale Road Baptist Church offers two services to accommodate its 700 regular attendees and its constrained parking situation. Churchgoers refer to the 9:30 AM service as the "contemporary service" because the worship team features drums, an electric guitar, and caters to a more youthful crowd. There is a definite graying of the church that happens between the 9:30 and 11:00 services each Sunday. Though the sermon does not change, drums and electric guitars are replaced by a piano, a choir, and more traditional Baptist hymns. A men's a cappella group called the Avondale Boys also performs regularly at the 11:00 AM service. Many of the women and men that attend this service prefer this traditional style of worship because it is more consistent with the Southern Baptist churches they grew up in.

Table 3.3. Congregations in the sample

	Avondale Road Baptist Church	Covenant Baptist Church	Endeavor Community Church[a]	Hillview Christian Church[a]	Newport Baptist Church
Denomination	SBC	SBC	SBC	Indepdent Christian	SBC
Year Founded	1962	1887	2000	1962	1900
Average Weekly Attendance	700	400	3000	20,000+	250
Formal Theology	Moderate/ Conservative	Very Conservative	Conservative	Very Conservative	Very Conservative
Demographics	Mostly older, some young families, mostly white	Young, racially diverse	Young, mostly white	All ages, mostly white	Young families, mostly white
Worship Style	Mixed	Contemporary	Contemporary	Contemporary	Traditional

[a]Main campus

The sanctuary itself is quite dark due to the wood-paneling that covers every wall and the ceiling of a room that seats close 500 people and is never completely full during either of the churches two services. Outside of the sanctuary, though, a large atrium fills with natural light and serves as a stark contrast to the dimly lit sanctuary on the other side of several large wooden doors. Not surprisingly, many of the congregation's members and visitors gather in the atrium before and after both Sunday morning services. Opposite the sanctuary is a small café and library where members and visitors can purchase coffee before their Sunday morning service or checkout books written by various Christian authors. All of the proceeds from the café support Avondale Road's various local and international missions. Beyond their local and global outreach, though, the church also offers a number of in-house programs including a food pantry and ESL classes that keep the building bustling during regular business hours almost every day of the week.

One thing that makes Avondale Road Baptist Church such a unique congregation is its availability to the local community. Numerous classrooms, a gymnasium, and a prime location make it an excellent place for groups from all over the city to meet for business meetings, hold their company events, or drop off donations for people in need. Unlike some other congregations, the doors of Avondale Road Baptist Church are almost never locked, and Pastor Cary, the congregation's Senior Minister, thinks it is important to let local businesses utilize the space whenever they can.

In many ways, Avondale Road Baptist Church is not unique, though. A quick glimpse into either Sunday morning service will reveal a congregation that is reflective of its white, upper-middle class neighborhood. Its lack of racial and socio-economic diversity is typical of most American congregations (Emerson and Woo 2006). Despite a number of young families,

many with long-time ties to the church, the congregation is also aging. In fact, the majority of Avondale Road's outreach programs are run and staffed by women and men in their sixties and seventies. By most accounts, Avondale Road Baptist Church is a thriving congregation, but like many thriving congregations its current building and its strained parking situation serve as a physical barrier to growth. For the time being, Avondale Road Baptist Church appears to be destined to remain a congregation of 700 to 800 regular weekly attendees who are reflective of the affluent community that surrounds the church.

Covenant Baptist Church

Covenant Baptist Church is one of the oldest Southern Baptist Congregations in Adams County and sits just miles from Edwardsville's bustling downtown in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods. Founded in 1887, the church moved to its current location and adopted its current name in 1905. From the beginning of the twentieth century until the early 1970s, Covenant Baptist enjoyed steady growth and seemed to be a thriving congregation. Covenant's fortunes changed significantly following the conservative takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention, though. Beginning in the 1970s Covenant's membership steadily declined as the church's traditionally white patrons found other congregations outside of Covenant's predominantly African American neighborhood. In 1972, Covenant Baptist Church reported 1,197 members to the Mill Creek Baptist Association; 30 years later the same congregation reported just 65.

Covenant's fortunes took another unexpected turn in 2003, however, when the struggling church's members voted to enlist the help of a young seminary student named Kevin Fraser. Today, Covenant Baptist Church offers two Sunday morning services to accommodate a growing

congregation of whites, African Americans, and Hispanics. In a country where 80 percent of congregations are 95 percent racially homogenous (Emerson and Woo 2006), Covenant Baptist Church is one of the most diverse congregations in the county. With a membership that is close to 35 percent African American and Hispanic, Covenant Baptist Church is markedly diverse. More interesting, though, is Pastor Kevin's insistence that the church is not where it needs to be in terms of racial and ethnic integration. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Covenant Baptist Church's neighborhood is 45 percent white and 52 percent African American. According to Pastor Kevin, Covenant Baptist Church will not be where it needs to be until the congregation is reflective of these numbers. Pastor Kevin grew up in Toronto, Ontario and his understanding of race relations clearly does not reflect the attitude of your typical white, Southern Baptist minister. By bridging the racial divide that plagues many other congregations, though, Covenant Baptist Church is once again a growing congregation.

Like Avondale Road Baptist Church, Covenant Baptist offers multiple Sunday morning services to accommodate a congregation that cannot fit into a sanctuary with seating for less than 300 people. The 100-year-old building is in dire need of repairs, and there is little space within the facility for members to gather outside of the sanctuary itself. Seating in the sanctuary resembles an old movie theatre with rows of individual seats, covered in tattered red fabric, and arranged stadium-style on either side of a single middle aisle leading down to a small stage. As a result of its recent growth and poor amenities, Covenant Baptist Church is in the market for a new building, but Pastor Kevin is determined to keep the congregation close the heart of the city and its predominantly African American neighborhood.

All three of Covenant's services are contemporary in style and, not surprisingly, the average Covenant member is considerably younger than the average participant in most Southern

Baptist congregations. Many of Covenant's young, white members are students of the local Southern Baptist seminary and recent transplants to the predominantly African American neighborhood. Many of Covenant's non-white members, however, are long-time residents of the struggling community that surrounds the church on all sides. Covenant's racial diversity also gives its services a more charismatic feel that is consistent with many black Baptist congregations, but not many white Southern Baptist churches. Together, the members of Covenant Baptist Church are trying to "build a community from all cultures where Christ is King."

Endeavor Community Church

Endeavor Community Church is a young congregation in every sense of the word. Endeavor held its first worship service in 2000 when a group of 20-somethings gathered inside a small apartment building to discuss the Scriptures outside the confines of the organized Church. Today, the 15-year-old congregation offers 4 worship services every Sunday at its main campus, serves more than 3,000 members and visitors each week, and continues to be a congregation for 20-somethings who might not fit the description of "typical" among Southern Baptists in the South.

Like many modern megachurches, Endeavor grew quickly from that first meeting in a small apartment building near the local Southern Baptist seminary. In no time at all, the congregation was renting space from another local church, and in 2007 they purchased an old school building and turned it into a combination art-gallery and religious congregation. In 2012, the congregation moved into its current location, an old Catholic Church just one block away from Covenant Baptist Church.

Endeavor's main campus continues to resemble a Catholic Church in more ways than one. The building itself is considerably more ornate than the typical Southern Baptist Church, although key Catholic features like the Stations of the Cross no longer grace the church's walls. Unlike most Southern Baptist congregations, services at Endeavor Community Church also follow the liturgical stylings of a Catholic mass. Anyone who has spent time in Southern Baptist and Catholic communities might not realize they are in a Southern Baptist church when Endeavor's entire congregation responds "Thanks be to God" after reading the morning's Gospel passage aloud. Likewise, communion at Endeavor also resembles the typical procession of a Catholic mass and not the more subdued, reflective time that is common in most conservative Protestant congregations. Although Endeavor appears to look like a Catholic congregation in many ways, though, its differences from the Catholic Church are equally striking.

Endeavor Community Church's most distinguishing feature is the praise and worship team. Dubbed the "hipster" church by members and non-members alike, art and music play an important role in the lives of many of Endeavor's young members. Unlike many modern worship services that feature popular songs from contemporary Christian radio, though, the worship team at Endeavor Community Church plays entirely original material. For many of Endeavor's members the music is the first thing that got them in the door. Service options at 5:00 and 7:00 PM also help attract a young crowd not eager to attend Sunday morning worship after a late Saturday night.

If the music and style at Endeavor serve to attract a different kind of crowd, though, they are also the source of considerable tension with some members of the local community. A 2008 article in Edwardsville's most circulated alternative newspaper criticized Endeavor for being hip and socially aware while abiding by conservative Christian values like the SBC's strong stance

against homosexuality. For many, "hipster church" is an oxymoron, but for young students trying to balance Christian values with music, culture, and community outreach, Endeavor is providing the perfect home.

Since moving into their current location, the average age of the congregation is beginning to climb. Endeavor's leaders that were in their mid-to-late twenties when they started Endeavor Community Church in a small apartment building 15 years ago are now in their late thirties with families of their own. Procuring a permanent building helped give the congregation more legitimacy to older residents of Adams County that previously viewed the congregation as "a bunch of kids playing church." Programs like Endeavor Kids help attract young families and keep existing church members that used to seek out other congregations when they decided to settle down, and community groups of 8-15 members help give this large congregation a small-church feel. Despite these changes, though, Endeavor remains a remarkably young congregation for the "unchurched" and "overchurched" according to its leaders.

Newport Baptist Church

Newport Baptist Church is the smallest congregation in my sample, and the only one that does not offer multiple weekend services. In many ways, the history of Newport Baptist Church is similar to the history of Covenant Baptist Church. Newport is an old church made up of young members and their families. Like Covenant, the congregation suffered significant membership losses during the latter part of the twentieth century due to the changing nature of city life. Also like Covenant, the congregation experienced a resurrection of sorts thanks to a group of young seminary students whose vision was more in line with the conservativism of the Southern Baptist

Convention than with the vision of many of Newport's long-time members. In many ways, Newport is also unique, though.

Like many congregations founded in the early part of the twentieth century, Newport is a neighborhood church that historically served the residents of the Newport neighborhood. Unlike the neighborhood that surrounds Covenant Baptist, though, the Newport neighborhood is a classic example of an urban area *after* gentrification. The area's large Victorian homes are occupied by young, white professionals from mostly middle-class and upper-middle class backgrounds, and the main road through the heart of the neighborhood features a number of restaurants, coffee shops, and small boutiques. Also unlike Covenant, Newport Baptist's revitalization resulted from the merger of the struggling Newport Baptist Church and the young, but thriving Holy Spirit Baptist Church.

Holy Spirit Baptist Church started in 2001 with a strong base of seminary students, but no building and few resources. Less than a year later, the two congregations merged and Holy Spirit occupied the building and took the name of Newport Baptist Church, though little else remained the same. Holy Spirit's minister, and the Associate Dean of the School of Theology at the local Baptist seminary, continues to lead the congregation today. In 2008, Pastor Jason Kelsey, a graduate of the local seminary and a member of Newport since 2001, joined the staff as the congregation's Pastor of Preaching and Discipleship. Much like Holy Spirit Baptist Church, Sunday morning services at Newport Baptist Church continue to reflect the conservative theology of the SBC and the local Baptist seminary.

Today, Newport remains a small congregation relative the other Southern Baptist congregations in Adam County. The congregation's membership consists of mostly white, seminary students and their families. The family aspect is an important part of life at Newport,

and on a typical Sunday morning children ages 0-12 seem to outnumber adults in the congregation nearly 2:1. Serving a transient population like the local Baptist seminary, though, means that long-lasting relationships among church members are hard to come by. This can make long-time members and permanent residents of the area feel like outsiders in their own congregation when their friends and fellow seminary students complete their degrees and move home or pursue their calling in different congregations near and far.

Worship at Newport is also unique because it is the only congregation without at least one contemporary worship service. Unchurched visitors and those who are not familiar with traditional Southern Baptist hymns are less likely to find something they can latch onto in the traditional worship service (Ellingson 2007). This keeps Newport small, but it also results in a highly committed group of believers with an unwavering conviction to their conservative Protestant faith.

Hillview Christian Church

Hillview Christian Church is an Independent Christian church, and the only church in this sample that is not a member of the Southern Baptist Convention. I decided to include Hillview in this study because of my conversations with the members and former members of the 4 Southern Baptist congregations described above. For the members of every other congregation in this sample, Hillview Christian Church serves as a reference point at the least or a major competitor at the most. Indeed, it is impossible to talk about religious competition in Adams County without taking into account this 30,000-member behemoth situated at the city's southeastern edge.

In July of 1962, 53 members of South Edwardsville Christian Church formed a new congregation in a part of the city where there was little Christian presence at the time. Three

years later, the congregation of 120 hired a young graduate of a small Christian college 100 miles up the road to lead their congregation as they grew and flourished on Edwardsville's southeastern side. By 1998 when the congregation moved into its current building along the county's perimeter, weekly services were bringing in more than 15,000 people and the young man that they hired to lead them in 1965 had become one of the most recognizable church leaders in the country. The man primary responsible for Hillview's rapid growth retired from the pulpit in 2006, but he left the church to his charismatic assistant who has seen the congregation grow from 18,000 members at a single campus in 2006 to more than 30,000 members across 4 different campuses in the greater Edwardsville area in 2015.

From the nearby interstate, Hillview's main campus resembles a university with multiple buildings and several large parking lots that require the use of shuttles to transport church members and visitors from their far ends to the 656,000-square-foot facility at the campus's center. From the inside, Hillview resembles a shopping mall with a café, a Christian bookstore, a service desk, and multiple escalators that take members and visitors to the second and third levels of the sanctuary. Even on a Tuesday morning on a cold January day there are more people milling about the church's main facility than will attend Newport Baptist Church in the coming weekend. Members also receive free access to Hillview's state-of-the-art fitness center paid for by the congregation's $470,000 annual fitness budget; for comparison, the entire annual operating budget of Newport Baptist Church is only $517,000.

Hillview's sanctuary itself can seat up to 9,000 people but still requires 3 weekend services to accommodate the number of participants that frequent the church each week. Three levels of stadium-style seating surround the stage and the six 14-by-14-foot screens that broadcast Saturday evening and Sunday morning services to patrons seated at the upper levels of

the sanctuary. Although the third row of seating is rarely open, Easter and Christmas Eve services are often filled to capacity. For many years, the congregation's now-defunct Easter pageant sold out every seat in the sanctuary on multiple nights as Broadway actors, some stars of local television, and live donkeys and camels retold the story of Jesus's death and resurrection.

The church's former Easter pageant is just one of many examples of the ways that Hillview turns ordinary church functions into spectacles (Sanders 2012). The men's Bible study group that meets every Saturday morning, for example, is larger than most congregations and the praise and worship team at Hillview features a number of professional musicians whose songs are often featured on contemporary Christian radio stations. According to Sanders (2012), these spectacles are made possible through the integration of technologies, producers, and consumer bodies within congregations that utilize a corporate business model. At Hillview, these features are simply part and parcel of a congregation with a $42 million annual operating budget.

CHAPTER 4

THE EMERGENCE OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONGREGATIONS

Baptists in Adams County held their first meeting in January of 1784. This small congregation did not survive the Restoration Movement of the early 1830s, but it did pave the way for other Baptist congregations in Adams County to grow and flourish over the next 200 years.[5] To be clear, a second Baptist congregation joined that first congregation at Deerfield in 1792. A decade later, in 1803, the county's four Baptist churches joined the Baptist congregations of three neighboring counties to form the region's first Baptist association, the MCBA. Between 1784 and 2011, 287 Southern Baptist congregations opened their doors to worshipers in Adams County. In 2011, 140 of those churches remained.

In this chapter and the next I will focus on the different ways that congregation's organizational environments influence the formation and mortality of this unique organizational form. In this chapter my focus is on the former: How does the organizational environment affect the emergence of new religious congregations? More specifically, I will demonstrate how theories of selection (population ecology) and theories of adaptation (neo-institutionalism)

[5] The Restoration Movement aimed to end sectarianism and unite all Christians under a single body fashioned after the early Church in the New Testament. The movement's pejorative name, Campbellism, comes from the movement's key figures in the United States: Alexander Campbell and his father, Thomas. The Restoration Movement divided many congregations in the early part of the nineteenth century and sparked the emergence of the Churches of Christ and several other denominations (Ammerman 1990).

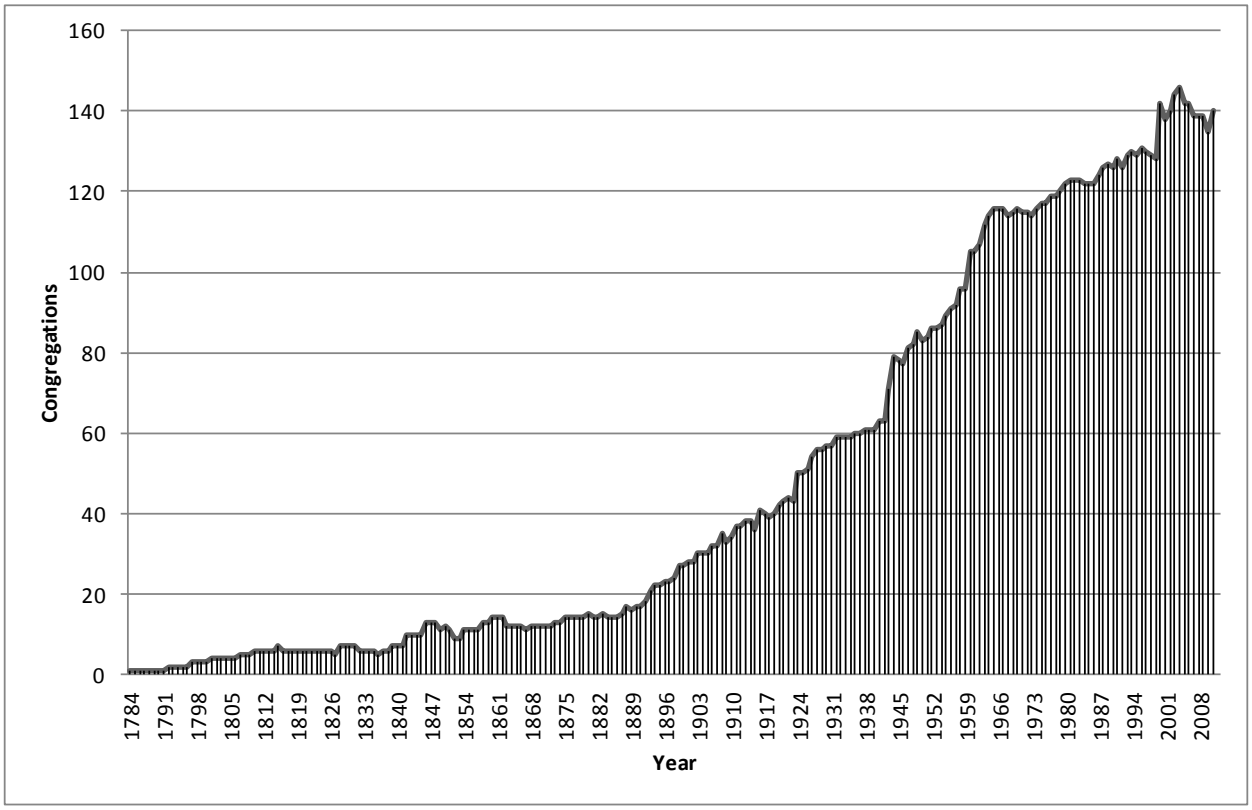
provide valuable insights into the study of religious competition where more traditional theories within the sociology of religion continue to come up short.

Southern Baptists in Adams County

Figure 4.1 shows the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County over time. The number of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County grew slowly at first. Over the first 100 years of Baptist life in Adams County, just 30 Baptist congregations were gathered and half of them closed. Things really changed for Southern Baptists during their second 100 years in Adams County, though. Figure 4.1 reveals a steep and dramatic rise in the density of Southern Baptist congregations during the first half of the twentieth century. By 1983 there were 123 Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County, an increase of 820 percent versus the previous 100 years.

During the second century of Baptist life in Adams County, 176 new Baptist congregations emerged. More importantly, though, the rate of failure dropped from 50 percent (1784-1883) to 38.6 percent during the Adams County Baptists' second 100 years. Since 1984, the population of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County appears to have stabilized. A total of 81 new congregations were founded between 1984 and 2011, but 64 of those congregations dissolved. This slowed the growth of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County to just over 4 percent per year, its lowest percentage change during any quarter century since before the Civil War.

Figure 4.1. Density of SBC congregations in Adams County



Why was the growth of Baptist congregations so slow at first? And why has it slowed during the last quarter century? For reasons that I outlined in Chapter 2, these are important questions that traditional understandings of religious competition in the sociology of religion cannot explain. Instead, I rely on theories of selection and adaptation within the study of organizations to explain the emergence of Southern Baptist congregations as an organizational form.

Theoretical Framework

Theories of selection and theories of adaptation each offer unique views on the emergence of new organizational forms. A primary focus in both cases is legitimacy. According

to population ecologists, the simple prevalence of an organizational form increases its legitimacy (Hannan and Freeman 1989). For neo-intuitionalists, however, simply being – no matter how innumerable – is not enough to impart an organizational from with legitimacy. Instead, neo-institutionalists argue that legitimacy rests in the ability of organizations to prove their actions are desirable and proper within a pre-defined system of rules and norms (Suchman 1995). In the paragraphs that follow I will briefly rehash the basic tenets of these two theories as they pertain to my hypotheses about the relationship between organizational environments and the emergence of religious congregations. Then I will turn my attention to a test of these hypotheses using data on the population of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County from 1784 to 2011.

Population Ecology

According to population ecologists, the founding rate of an organizational form is dependent upon the density of organizations of the same type. When graphed, the founding rate resembles an inverted U-shaped curve (Hannan and Freeman 1987, Hannan and Carroll 1992). As I explained in Chapter 2, the left side of this curve represents the legitimacy of the organizational form. Thus, foundings will only increase to the extent that more organizations serve to provide legitimacy to the organizational form (Hannan and Freeman 1989). The right side of the curve, on the other hand, represents competition, and once the population of organizations reaches its carrying capacity the founding rate will decrease due to the rise in competition (Hannan and Carroll 1992). Changes in the environment such as immigration or emigration can raise or lower the carrying capacity, but an environment can only support so many schools, auto dealerships, or frozen yogurt shops, for example. As a result, in tests of these

assumptions density serves as the primary measure of legitimacy and its squared term serves to capture the level of competition in the organizational environment (Hannan and Freeman 1989).

Like other types of organizations, congregations also have a carrying capacity based on the religious preferences of the population. According to the most recent Pew Forum Data (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2014), 26.3 percent of Americans identify as Evangelical Protestant, 23.9 percent identify as Catholic, and 16.1 percent report no religious preference. Therefore, the carrying capacity for Evangelical Protestant churches in the United States rests somewhere around the point where all 84 million[6] Evangelical Protestants have a church to call their own. For many religious organizations, however, this goes against the prevailing wisdom that if you build it, they will come. On the contrary, though, Scheitle and Dougherty (2008) find that the founding rate for a population of congregations does resemble an inverted-U. Using data on the Reformed Church in America in the state of New York between 1628 and 2000, Scheitle and Dougherty find a positive relationship between foundings and increasing legitimacy (density) and a negative relationship between foundings and resource scarcity (density squared). Consistent with these findings as well as the patterns among the populations of other organizational forms, I hypothesize that the relationship between the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County and the founding of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County will resemble an inverted U-shaped curve. On the one hand, density will increase the expected number of new Southern Baptist congregations each year because more Southern Baptist congregations mean greater legitimacy for the organizational form. On the other hand, density squared will have a negative effect on the expected number of new Southern Baptist

[6] This estimate is based on the current U.S. population of roughly 320 million.

congregations because more Southern Baptist congregations mean more competition for the organizational form.

H1a. The relationship between the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County and the founding of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County will be positive.

H1b. The relationship between the square of the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County and the founding of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County will be negative.

Neo-institutionalism

Density is not the only factor involved in the emergence of new organizations, however. The actions of individuals are often guided by social forces that bestow them with legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan 1977, Scott 1998). The expected count of charter school submissions, for example, is higher in districts within states with less restrictive charter schools laws (Renzulli 2005). According to Renzulli (2005), less restrictive laws reflect institutional support for the organizational form. Similarly, temperance laws in the 1930s reduced the legitimacy of alcohol production causing a precipitous drop in the founding rate of American breweries (Swaminathan 1995). Individuals responsible for the formation of new organizations are encouraged by supportive institutional forces that give legitimacy to their actions. Likewise, they are discouraged by institutional forces that challenge the legitimacy of the organizational form.

For Southern Baptists, support for the formation of new congregations rests in the conservativism of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS). According to the SBC's constitution, the Convention was created "to provide

a general organization of Baptists in the United States and its territories for the promotion of Christian missions at home and abroad and any other objects such as Christian education, benevolent enterprises, and social services which it may deem proper and advisable for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God" (sbc.net). According to Ammerman (1990), the push to "further the Kingdom of God" is most heavily driven by religious conservatives within the Southern Baptist Convention. This was especially true in the years following the Great Depression when many Southern Baptists found themselves displaced throughout the North and without a church that fit the Bible-believing ideals they had established in the South. According to Ammerman, for more than two decades beginning in the early 1940s, Southern Baptists outgrew every other Protestant denomination in the United States. What is more, even though "official policy was to avoid starting new churches where Baptist ones already existed, overzealous 'pioneers' often violated that rule, looking for prospects wherever they could find them" including the Baptist South (Ammerman 1990: 52). This great revival diminished in the early 1960s, but the growing conflict between conservatives and moderates within the Southern Baptist Convention sparked a second great revival beginning in the later years of the twentieth century and continuing to the present day.

Since the late 1970s, control of the SBC has been a contentious issue (Ammerman 1990). For many years, moderates controlled the Southern Baptist Convention and its programs, but the 1985 meeting in Dallas marked the completion of a 6-year-long conservative takeover. A denomination that was becoming more and more progressive now took several steps in the opposite direction. In 1993, the appointment of Albert Mohler as president of the SBTS marked the end of the moderate era, for the foreseeable future, in Southern Baptist life. Mohlers's approval by the Board of Trustees showcased their alignment with the views of the larger

Convention and resulted in the resignation of a significant portion of Southern's faculty.[7] Today, the views of the SBC and the SBTS are clearly conservative and there is no shortage of literature pronouncing their vision for Southern Baptist life.

A quarterly publication, *Southern Seminary Magazine*, features a "From the President" section in every issue and unapologetically promotes the conservative views of today's Convention. An article in the Fall, 2013 issue, to give a clearer picture, reads "A Vision Reaffirmed: Progress at Southern Seminary, 1993-2013" (Hanbury and Smith 2013). This article praises Mohler's ability to recruit faculty who sign the seminary's Abstract of Principles "without reservation" after the (mostly) former faculty gave him a vote of no confidence in March of 1995. By 1998, the article notes, the "faculty overwhelming [affirmed] their support of Mohler" (Hanbury and Smith 2013: 33) showcasing the Seminary's support of conservative ideals.

Since the conservative takeover of the Convention and the Seminary, support for mission work has become a major focal point. Conservatives generally place greater emphasis on missions and outreach for the purpose of conversion (Stark and Finke 2000). This is most apparent in articles like "Breathing new life into dying churches" challenging the readers of *Southern Seminary Magazine* to assist the North American Mission Board in founding 15,000

[7] In 1988, the Seminary's Board of Trustees tried to block the promotion of Dr. Molly Marshall-Green because her universalist theology was considered a threat to the conservative Convention's commitment to missions, but Marshall-Green was ultimately granted tenure under moderate President Roy Honeycutt. Following the appointment of Albert Mohler in 1993, however, Marshall-Green was forced to resign. Today, Marshall-Green is the president of Central Baptist Theological Seminary, a seminary of the American Baptist Churches, USA.

new congregations (Ezell 2014), but it was also a major point of contention during the promotion of Dr. Molly Marshall-Green (see Footnote 7). Due to the importance of institutional forces in shaping the actions of individuals and conservatives' emphasis on missions and evangelism, I expect the number of new southern Baptist congregations to be greater during periods of conservative revivalism and when conservatives hold control of the SBTS.

H2a. Periods of conservative revival will increase the number of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County.

H2b. Conservative control of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary will increase the number of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County.

Additionally, the greater emphasis on missions for the purpose of conversion suggests that there will also be a positive relationship between conservativism of the SBTS and the percentage of Southern Baptists in Adams County and elsewhere. Thus, I hypothesize that the percentage of Southern Baptists in Adams County will be higher during periods when conservatives maintain control of the SBTS.

H3. Conservative control of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary will increase the percentage of Southern Baptists in Adams County.

Analytic Strategy

This analysis proceeds in three steps. First, a simple bivariate analysis of the number of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County by year provides a visual test of H1a and H1b. Second, several negative binomial regression models provide more comprehensive tests of H1a and H1b as well as H2a and H2b. Finally, I use an OLS regression model to test my final hypothesis, H3.

Negative Binomial

The founding of new congregations is a count process generally requiring a Poisson model, but Poisson models assume that the conditional mean and conditional variance will be equal. When the conditional mean and conditional variance are unequal, the standard errors of the Poisson model will be downwardly biased (Barron 1992). This is a common problem requiring a model that accounts for overdispersion in the data. Since the mean and variance of my data on Southern Baptist congregations are unequal, I use a negative binomial model to adjust for the problem of overdispersion.

For the negative binomial regression, I use a step-wise approach beginning with the ecological measures. My first model is an examination of the effect of density across the entire sample, 1784-2011; in Model 2 I include a dummy variable distinguishing periods of conservative revivalism from other years in Baptist life. Since none of the other variables used in the analysis were available before 1790, however, and most were unavailable until 1859, my subsequent models examine the emergence of new Southern Baptist congregations from 1860 to 2011. I begin at 1860 because this allows me to model the lagged effect of variables that are unlikely to have an immediate impact on the emergence of new Southern Baptist congregations. The third model in Table 4.1 is identical to the first, though it includes a control for population that was not available in 1784. Model 4, on the other hand, includes both institutional predictors that I hypothesize will influence the expected count of new Southern Baptist congregations. Specifically, Model 4 in Table 4.1 includes a measure of the conservativism of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary as well as the measure of conservative revivalism from Model 2. Like Model 3, Model 4 also includes a measure of the population of Adams County from the corresponding U.S. Census data.

OLS Regression

The percentage of Southern Baptists in Adams County is a continuous variable requiring an OLS regression. Like my negative binomial regression, I also use a stepwise approach between both of the Models in Table 4.2. beginning with the unrestricted model and adding a control for the population of Adams County in Model 2. Since the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary did not open in Greenville, South Carolina until 1859, these models are restricted to the appropriate years (1860-2011).

Results

Figure 4.2 shows the number of new Southern Baptist congregations over time in Adams County and depicts a pattern that is consistent with H1a and H1b. Unlike Figure 4.1, Figure 4.2 is broken into 4-year segments to make it easier to interpret. Like Figure 4.1, however, Figure 4.2 shows minimal growth in the number of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County over the first 100 years of Baptist life in the region, followed by steady growth over the first 50 years of the twentieth century. In fact, no more than 3 new Southern Baptist congregations were opened during any 4-year period between 1784 and 1891. At the turn of the century, however, the number of Southern Baptist congregations founded during each 4-year period began to steadily increase. 1940 marked the beginning of a 24-year period where no fewer than 9 congregations were founded during any 4-year block. A closer examination of these same years in Figure 4.1 shows that this dramatic rise in the number of new Southern Baptist congregations also corresponds with the most dramatic rise in the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County over time. More specifically, the steepness of the line in Figure 4.1 is greater between 1940 and 1963 than during any period of similar length as predicted in Hypothesis 1a.

With more competition caused by the dramatic increase in the number of new Southern Baptist congregations between 1940 and 1963, foundings fell dramatically in the following years.

Returning to Figure 4.2, between 1964 and 1999, no more than 7 Southern Baptist congregations opened in Adams County during any 4-year block. In fact, including 2000 to 2003 when 29 new congregations opened to worshippers – the most of any 4-year period – just 75 new congregations opened over the last 40 years. By comparison, 87 congregations opened between 1940 and 1963, a rate of 3.6 new congregations per year. With the exception of the two 4-year periods between 2000 and 2003 and 2008 and 2011 – two 4-year periods where the failure rate and founding rate were nearly identical – the line depicting the emergence of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County in Figure 4.2 clearly resembles an inverted-U. The pattern in Figure 4.2 suggests that the emergence of Southern Baptist congregations fits the expected curve, but the models in Table 4.1 provide even stronger support for H1a and H1b.

Three out of 4 models in Table 4.1 produce the expected relationship between density and density-squared and the emergence of new Southern Baptist congregations. More specifically, density has a positive and significant effect on foundings in three out of four models, but the effect of the squared density term in each model is significant and negative indicating that there is a point where each additional Southern Baptist congregation will reduce the expected number of new Southern Baptist congregations in the county. Models 1 and 2 are a test of this assumption using complete data from 1784 to 2011. Models 3 through 4 are left censored at 1860, one year after the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary opened in Greenville, South Carolina and the first year data is available for each of the variables included in Model 4.[8]

[8] The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary relocated to Louisville, KY in 1877.

Figure 4.2. New SBC congregations in Adams County

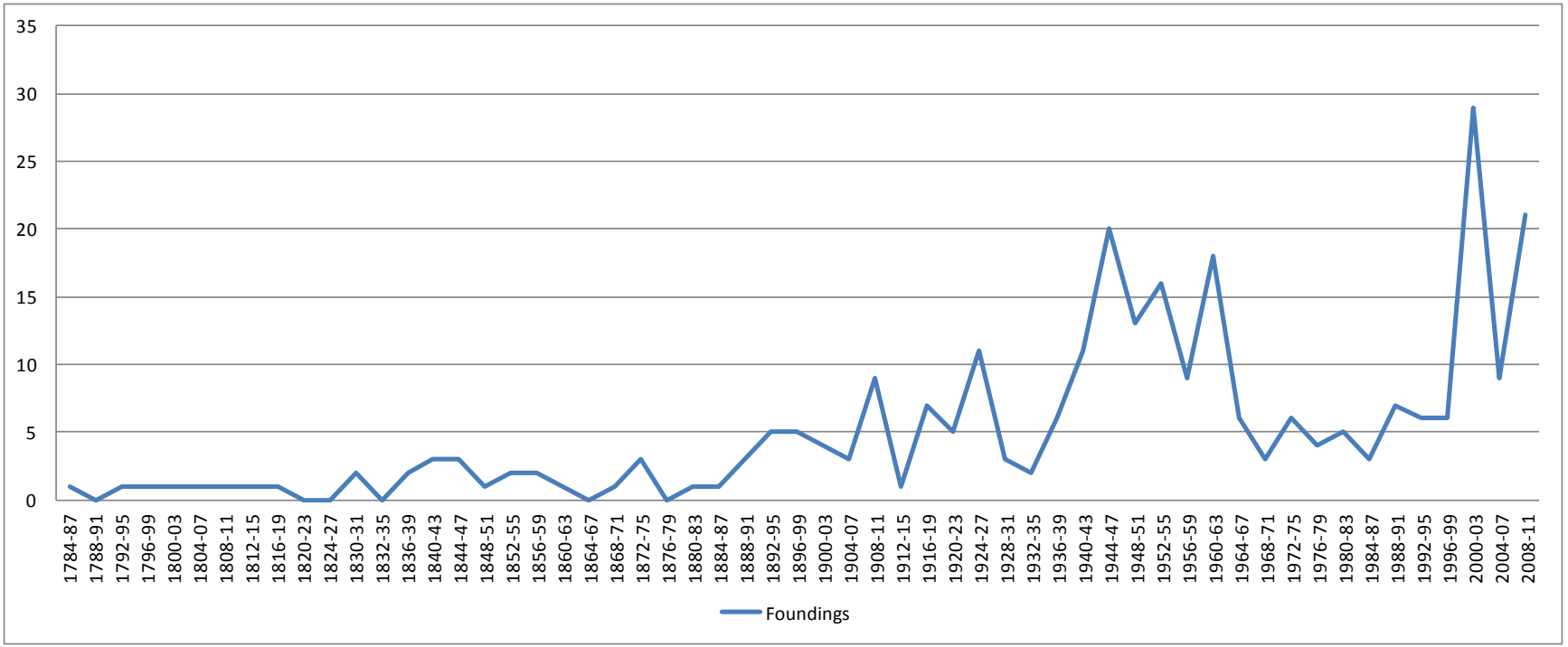


Table 4.1. Negative binomial regression predicting foundings of new SBC congregations

	1784-2011		1860-2011	
	Model 1 expß	Model 2 expß	Model 3 expß	Model 4 expß
Population Ecology				
Density of SBC Congregations	1.05 ***	1.04 ***	1.05 **	1.03
Density Squared	0.9998 ***	0.9998 ***	0.9998 **	0.9997 ***
Neo-Institutionalism				
Conservative Revival		2.35 ***		2.78 ***
Conservative Seminary				2.27 **
Controls				
County Population[a]			0.61	3.25 †
N	228	228	152	152

†p <.10; *p <.05; **p <.01; ***p <.001

[a]Standardized Coefficient

As expected, the relationship between density and the emergence of Southern Baptist congregations is curvilinear in Model 1 of Table 4.1. Using the coefficients in Model 1 (ln(expß)), the carrying capacity of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County can be calculated by taking the first derivative of the equation $y=.047005x + -.000238x^2$ and solving for x when y' = 0. Solving for x when y' = 0 produces a quotient of 98.84 indicating that the expected number of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County increases (at a decreasing rate) with each additional congregation up to a maximum of 98 congregations. Each additional congregation beyond this threshold reduces the expected number of new congregations at an increasing rate. Not surprisingly, the population of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County first crossed this threshold in 1960. Recall from Figure 4.2 that 1960-1963 marked the end of a 24-year period of rapid growth for Southern Baptists in Adams County. Looking more closely at these years (data not shown) indicates that 9 congregations were founded in 1960, but just 1, 3, and 5 congregations in 1961, 1962, and 1963 respectively. In

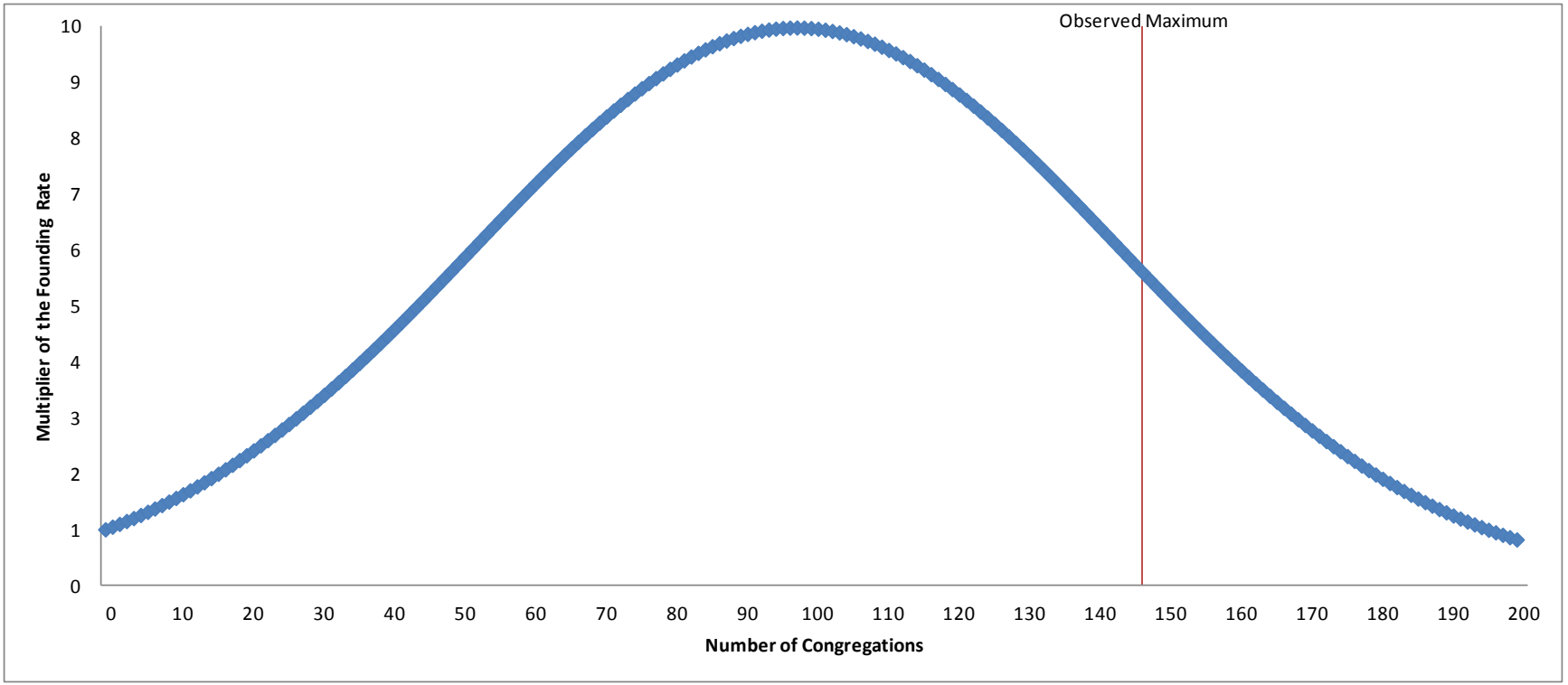
fact, no more than 5 congregations were founded between 1961 and the end of the twentieth century.

Figure 4.3 shows the effect of density as modeled in Model 1 of Table 4.1. Between 1 and 98 congregations, each additional Southern Baptist congregation in the county increases the founding rate of Southern Baptist congregations in the county at an ever decreasing rate. When the total number of Southern Baptist congregations reaches 99, however, the founding rate begins to fall, at an increasing rate, with each additional congregation. In 2004 when the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County reached its peak (146 congregations), the expected number of new congregations was at its lowest point since 1924 when the number of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County reached 50 for the first time.

The subsequent models in Table 4.1 reveal that the pattern remains relatively the same after controlling for institutional predictors of church foundings or left-censoring the data to reflect the years of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's influence over the denomination. Model 2 in Table 4.1 provides strong support for H1a. During the years of both conservative awakenings (1940-1963 and 2000-2011[9]) in Southern Baptist life, the expected number of new congregations in Adams County is 2.3 times higher than during the other years in Baptist history. This coefficient is consistent with the two large spikes in Figure 4.2 and speaks to the importance of conservativism in the formation of new Southern Baptist congregations. When Southern Baptists are taught to feel threatened by the liberalism (real or perceived) in their

[9] Although the data are right censored at 2011, the second great conservative revival is still ongoing in Adams County and the rest of the Southern Baptist world.

Figure 4.3. Effect of density on founding rate (Table 4.1, Model 1)



area, the number of new Southern Baptist congregations will grow. This relationship holds in the SBTS era as well.

Model 3 in Table 4.1 echoes the relationship between density and the emergence of new Southern Baptist congregations in Model 1. That is, density has a positive effect on the expected number of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County and the coefficient for density squared is negative and significant. More interesting, though, is the effect of conservativism on the expected number of new Southern Baptist congregations in Model 4. Compared to years with more moderate leadership, Model 4 reveals that a conservative Seminary increases the expected number of new congregations by 126 percent. This is most surprising since Model 4 includes the same measure of conservative vigilance described in Model 2. In fact, between 1860 and 2011, conservative revivals increased the expected number of new Southern Baptist congregations by 178 percent. Therefore, conservative control of the SBTS is positively related to the emergence of Southern Baptist congregations independent of the general climate in Southern Baptist culture. The inclusion of the neo-institutionalism variables in Model 4 also reduces the effect of density to non-significance. In part, this may be due to a problem of left censoring. Clearly, though, there is more going on in this model since the effect of density is still significant in Model 3. Instead, it appears that, for Southern Baptist congregations, legitimacy is not as strongly tied to prevalence but is tied to some conveyance of desirable actions that are partly tied to the SBTS.

The support for neo-institutionalism in Model 4 of Table 4.1 is consistent with Hypotheses 2a and 2b, but the relationship between the SBTS and the expected count of new Southern Baptist congregations is a bit surprising given the dramatic growth in Southern Baptist life during the seminary's most liberal years in the middle of the twentieth century (Figure 4.1). To help explain this phenomenon, Table 4.2 is an OLS regression showing the effect of a

conservative SBTS on the percentage of Southern Baptists in Adams County. Both models in Table 4.2 reveal a negative relationship between the seminary's conservativism and the percentage of Southern Baptists in Adams County that is the opposite of what I predicted in H3. More specifically, controlling for the population of Adams County, a conservative Southern Baptist Theological Seminary reduces the percentage of Southern Baptists in Adams County by 4 percent. This is a sizable change considering Baptists in Adams County have never made up more than 17 percent of the population (according to total reported memberships to the MCBA), and it remains a puzzling finding given the relationship between a conservative SBTS and the founding rate of Southern Baptist Congregations in Model 4 of Table 4.1.

Table 4.2. OLS regression predicting percent Southern Baptist

	1860-2011	
	Model 1	Model 2
	ß	ß
Institutional Environment		
Conservative Seminary	-0.07 ***	-0.04 ***
Controls: County Charactersitics		
County Population[a]		0.03 ***
Constant	0.13	0.11
R^2	0.589	0.912

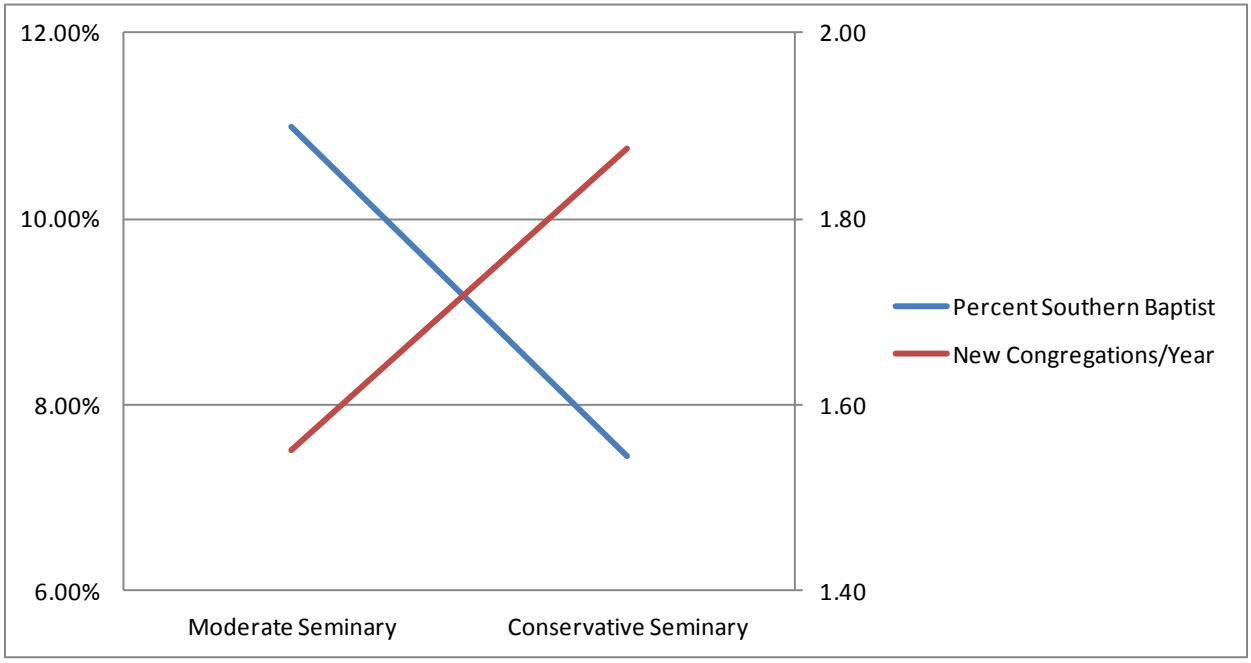
N =152

***p <.001

[a]Standardized Coefficient

Figure 4.4 more clearly illustrates this unusual relationship. The vertical axis on the left side of Figure 4.4 depicts the percentage of Southern Baptists in Adams County and corresponds to the blue line. The vertical axis on the right side of Figure 4.4, on the other hand, depicts the

Figure 4.4. Seminary influence



average number of new Southern Baptist congregations per year and corresponds to red line. For all of the years with a moderate Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern Baptists make up an average of 10.99 percent of the population. However, during the conservative years, Southern Baptists are, on average, just 7.44 percent of Adams County's population. The number of new Southern Baptist congregations tells a different story, though. On average, 1.55 new congregations are founded each year that the Seminary is more moderate in its teachings. A conservative SBTS, however, accounts for 1.88 new congregations per year. Together, these two patterns tell an interesting story about the growth of the Southern Baptist Church in Adams County. Specifically, conservatives found more churches, but moderates attract more women and men.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from this chapter suggest that congregations are subject to many of the same pressures as other types of organizations even though they "sell" an intangible product and lack a bottom line. When it comes to the emergence of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County, the theories of population ecology and neo-intuitionalism clearly account for changes in the organizational landscape. Population ecologists predict a positive relationship between legitimacy and foundings and a negative relationship between competition and foundings (Hannan and Freeman 1987). Neo-institutionalism, on the other hand, predicts that individuals' actions (founding new Southern Baptist congregations, in this case) are driven by social forces that bestow them with legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan 1977, Scott 1998).

According to my analyses, there is reasonable support for theories of selection. Over the course of the entire sample (1784-2011), legitimacy (density) increases the number of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County, and competition (density squared) has the opposite effect. Clearly there is a carrying capacity at which point new Southern Baptist congregations make it more difficult for additional Southern Baptist congregations to enter the field. For Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County, though, legitimacy is about more than density. Indeed, my measures of neo-institutionalism appear to account for much more of the variance in the number of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County each year than the density of Southern Baptist congregations in the county.

Neo-institutionalism predicts that organizations garner legitimacy to the degree that they are able to prove their actions are desirable given an institutionalized set of rules and norms (Suchman 1995). According to my analyses, the conservative emphasis on "reaching the world for Christ" give the actions of church planters legitimacy and increases the expected number of

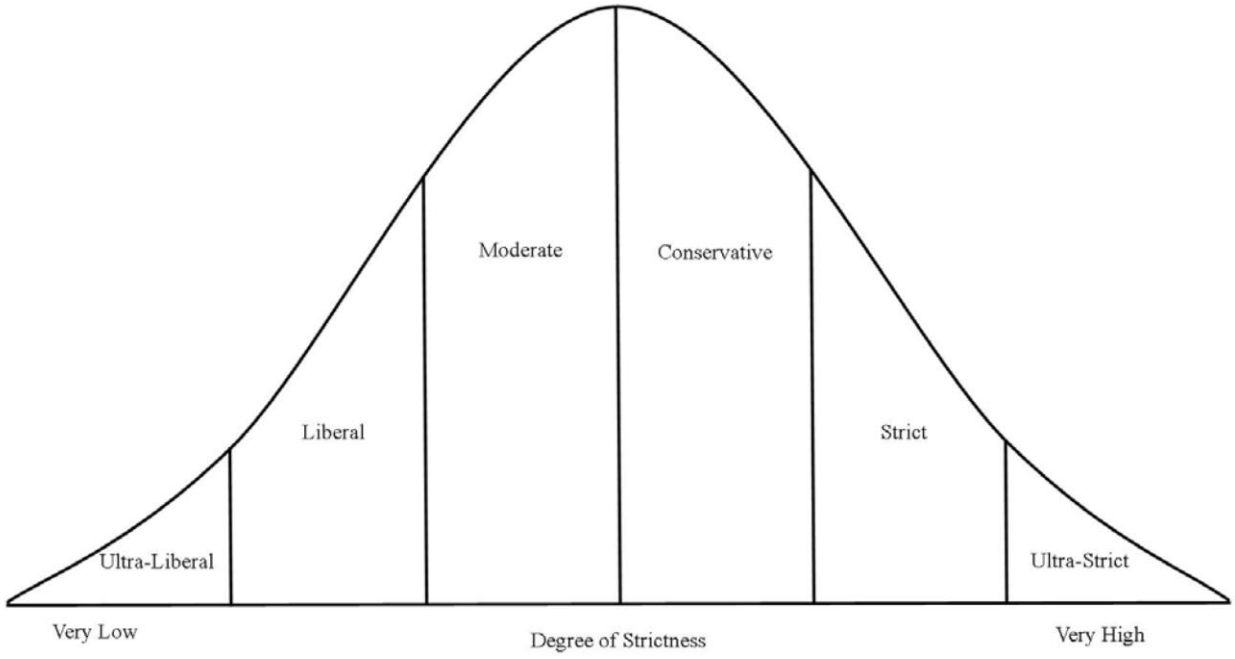
new Southern Baptist congregations per year. Despite the strong support for H2a and H2b, however, I did not find support for H3. Understanding this relationship requires a closer look at what it means to be conservative in the theological sense.

According to Stark and Finke (2000), individuals' religious preferences fit into 1 of 6 different niches roughly resembling a bell-shaped curve (Figure 4.5). At various points in their history, the appeal of Southern Baptist congregations has reached across several different niches from moderate (Ammerman 1990) to strict (Ammerman 1987) on Stark and Finke's bell curve. For most people, the right amount of religion rests somewhere between a faith that is demanding but not overly strict in terms of duties and prohibitions (moderates) to one that requires a certain level of sacrifice and stigma or serves as a point of reference in daily life (conservatives). As a result, Southern Baptists have generally appealed to a larger segment of the population than any other Protestant denomination serving the United States. Changes in the Southern Baptist Convention, however, have shifted this appeal overtime. These changes often began, or were at least reflected, in the conservativism of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and its 5 sister schools.

Most denominations have the ability to straddle multiple niches, but their appeal is significantly limited by the niches that they straddle. The Southern Baptist Convention has, for much of its history, successfully straddled the two largest niches in terms of individuals' religious preferences thus maximizing its appeal. When the Convention leans conservative, however, the straddling shifts from moderate to strict and greatly reduces the number of women and men that feel a Southern Baptist church will best meet their religious needs. This shift may explain the negative effect of seminary conservativism on the percentage of Southern Baptists in Adams County, but it does not explain why Conservatives are more likely to found new

congregations. The answer to this question rests in the beliefs and commitment of those that are left in the pews when the Convention shifts from moderate/conservative to conservative/strict.

Figure 4.5 Hypothetical breakdown of Americans' religious preferences[10]



Strict churches are strong (Iannaccone 1994), but the strength of churches is not indicated by their size alone. On the contrary, Iannaccone (1994) argues that strict churches reduce free-riding by imposing high demands on participants. The elimination of free-riders leaves strict congregations with a constituency of highly-committed members. According to Stark and Finke (2000), people in the strict niche are inclined to do a lot for their religion. This includes giving up their time and their money, but it also extends to founding new congregations. Indeed, the push to "win the nation for the Lord" meant planting more new (conservative) congregations throughout Adams County anytime that anti-liberalism took hold of the Southern Baptist world

[10] Adapted from Stark and Finke (2000: 197)

(Ammerman 1990). Therefore, the support for H2a and H2b but not H3 actually makes sense because of the negative effect of conservativism on the appeal of Southern Baptist churches.

When explaining this phenomenon, it is reasonable to assume that the dramatic decrease in the percentage of Southern Baptists in Adams County is a product of the last 20 years and not a product of any conservative disadvantage when it comes to the leadership of the Convention, though. For one, shifts in the racial and ethnic make-up of Adams County over the last 20 years are unlike any other period in the county's 235-year history. Unlike the Europeans who came before them, recent immigrants to Adams County and the rest of the United States are decidedly Catholic or non-Christian. Therefore, anyone that controls the Seminary today or in the recent past is going to see their control of the religious market wane. However, what is more telling about this relationship is the actual decline in the number of Southern Baptists in Adams County over the past 20 years. Since conservatives took control of the SBTS in 1993, the number of Southern Baptists in Adams County fell from just over 93,000 to 71,000 in the span of 18 years. Conservatives *are* building more congregations, but these congregations are failing at a remarkable rate. Put differently, coercive pressures from a conservative SBC and SBTS encourage lay women and men to start more and more new churches to serve an ever-decreasing slice of the religious pie. Like Blockbuster building more video rental stores, however, conservative Southern Baptists are building an unwanted organization at unprecedented rates.

These results have several important implications for the sociology of religion and the study of organizations. First of all, these findings indicate that intradenominational forces are an important phenomenon affecting the emergence of new Southern Baptist congregations. Competition caused the by the density of other like-minded congregations – and not the plurality of religious options – limits the expected number of new congregations entering the

organizational environment. Similarly, legitimacy granting organizations specific to a particular denomination also play a key role in changes in the population. In this case, though, there is some support for the religious economies model since these new congregations do not meet the wide spectrum of religious demand.

Additionally, these findings suggest that organizations without traditional organizational goals also fit the expectations spelled out in theories of selection and theories of adaptation. Theories of adaptation are particularly useful for explaining the emergence of religious congregations. The taken-for-granted nature of Southern Baptist congregations in the United States makes the number of Southern Baptist congregations a less important source of cognitive legitimacy. Inspiring individuals to found new congregations, therefore, depends on other social forces like the message of the SBC and the SBTS. In the next chapter, I will show that theories of adaptation play a vital role in explaining the mortality of Southern Baptist congregations as well.

CHAPTER 5

THE MORTALITY OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONGREGATIONS

For proponents of the religious economies model, the relationship between the religious environment and religious vitality is explained in terms of competition between unique religious organizations. According to Roger Finke, Rodney Stark, and their collaborators (Finke and Stark 1988, 1989, 1992, Finke et al. 1996, 1998), the competition that is fostered by religious pluralism is the sine qua non of American religious vitality. These scholars theorize that religious commitment will be highest in areas where the religious economy is unregulated and competitive (Stark and Finke 2000), but, as I explained in Chapter 2, tests of this theory find little support for the notion that pluralism and competition are one in the same (e.g., Hill and Olson 2009).

As I explained in Chapter 2, there is greater support for the notion that religious market share contributes to the vitality of a religious denomination. Recall from Chapter 2 that research shows an inverse relationship between religious market share and per member financial giving (Perl and Olson 2000), ordination rates (Stark and McCann 1993), subscribers to religious magazines (Stark and McCann 1993), and the number of lay women and men in leadership positions (Stark 1998). These findings give credence to the notion that religious environments matter, but they still provide little evidence that market share is indicative of competition in any meaningful way.

Instead, in the previous chapter I showed how the organizational environment plays a role in the emergence of new religious congregations using theories of selection and adaptation to explain these changes over time. In this chapter, I will turn my attention to the question of

mortality. Specifically, this chapter focuses on my second empirical research question: How does the organizational environment affect the failure of religious congregations? As in the previous chapter I will address this question by testing the theory of population ecology against the theory of neo-institutionalism, but in this chapter I also include another theory of adaptation (resource dependence) that is described below.

The Mortality of Southern Baptist Congregations in Adams County

Like the emergence of the new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County over time, the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Figure 4.1 also reflects important trends in the mortality of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County over time. In the early years of Baptist life in Adams County, half of all congregations that opened closed. However, between 1884 and 1983, the rate of congregational failure dropped precipitously. Much of this change took place during the early part of Baptists' second century in Adams County. Prior to 1934, but after 1883, just 25.4 percent of congregations failed. Between 1934 and 1983, however, the rate of failure once again neared 50 percent. This change in congregational mortality over time reflects the U-shaped curve that describes the disbanding rates of many new organizational forms. Greater legitimacy meant fewer disbanded congregations between 1884 and 1933, but over the next 50 years the dramatic rise in the number of new Southern Baptist congregations meant increased competition and higher rates of failure that continue to this day.

Theoretical Framework

Theories of Selection

Like the founding rate, the mortality rate among a population or organizations is also a curvilinear phenomenon, though it mirrors the founding process as a U-shaped curve (Hannan and Freeman 1988, Hannan and Carroll 1992). According to population ecologists, density increases legitimacy and reduces the rate of organizational mortality. When the number of organizations reaches its carrying capacity, however, the number of organizational failures is driven upwards by increased competition for the limited resources available to the population of organizations (Hannan 1991, Hannan and Carroll 1992). Many of the same populations of organizations that model the expected curve in their founding rates also fit the expected curve in their failure rates (e.g., Hannan and Freeman 1988, Ingram and Inman 1996).

To my knowledge, no one has examined the effect of density dependence on organizational mortality among a population of congregations. Though, as I explained in Chapter 2, qualitative studies in the sociology of religion do provide some evidence that congregations are subject to the same processes of selection as other types of organizations. As a result, I hypothesize that the relationship between the density of Southern Baptist congregations and the mortality of Southern Baptist congregations will resemble a U-shaped curve. On the one hand, density will decrease the mortality rate among Southern Baptist congregations each year because more Southern Baptist congregations mean greater legitimacy for the organizational form. On the other hand density squared will increase the mortality rate among Southern Baptist congregations because more Southern Baptist congregations mean more competition for the organizational form.

H1a. The relationship between the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County and the mortality rate of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County will be negative.

H1b. The relationship between the square of the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County and the mortality rate of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County will be positive.

In addition to competition from other organizations in the population, organizations also encounter a number of internal and external pressures that lead to structural inertia (Hannan and Freeman 1984). The culture of an organization, its investment in various forms of capital, normative pressures, and the bounded rationality of its leaders limit an organization's ability to adapt from within. Similarly, legal constraints, environmental uncertainty, legitimacy constraints, and opportunism serve as external constraints on an organization (Hannan and Freeman 1977). Hannan and Freeman (1984) argue that these constraints generate structurally inert organizations. According to population ecologists, selection favors reliability and accountability in organizations, and reliability and accountability demand that organizational structures be highly reproducible, or inert (Hannan and Freeman 1984). Selection, therefore, "*favors organizations whose structures have high inertia*" (Hannan and Freeman 1984: 155, italics in original).

Traditionally, age, size, and complexity are considered the primary sources of variation in inertial pressures (Hannan and Freeman 1984) with older, larger and more complex organizations demonstrating the greatest structural inertia. Indeed, support for this argument can be found among hospitals (Ruef 1997), German auto manufactures (Dobrev et al. 2001), and even congregations (Edgell 2006). Among congregations, however, there is evidence to suggest that structurally inert organizations are at greater risk of failure (McMullin 2013). Moreover, the

theory of structural inertia and the religious economies model are at odds because the latter assumes that organizational vitality is the result of change and the former assumes that change is both difficult and a driving force behind the mortality of organizations (Hannan and Freeman 1984). This tension necessitates the question: how does structural inertia affect the vitality/mortality of congregations?

Thus far, I have made predictions based on the assumption that congregations are not a unique organizational form subject to a different set of standards than other organizational forms (see Douglas 1986). Analogous to these predictions, I hypothesize that selection, for congregations, favors congregations that are highly inert. Following tests of the structural inertia hypothesis among other organizational forms, I attribute structural inertia to the age and size of the congregation, and I hypothesize that older congregations will be less likely to close than newer congregations and larger congregations will be less likely to close than smaller congregations. These hypotheses reflect more than structural inertia, however. According to Stinchcombe (1965), more new organizations fail than old organizations because new organizations have to engage in the processes of learning and creating new roles while also trying to secure important relationships using a group of individuals that resemble a collection of strangers. This "liability of newness" makes it difficult for new organizations to compete with older organizations. Similarly, organizational scholars also point to a "liability of smallness" based on the ability of larger organizations to provide greater benefits to employees and champion their size as evidence of success to important stakeholders (Baum 1996).

H2: New congregations will be more likely to close than older congregations.

H3: Smaller congregations will be more likely to close than larger congregations.

Theories of Adaptation

Unlike population ecology, neo-institutionalism and resource dependence are theories of adaptation that acknowledge that organizations do have some control over their survival. Resource dependence theory posits that survival is based on an organization's ability to acquire and manage necessary resources (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). According to resource dependence theory, organizations that can reduce their dependency in an uncertain environment will increase their chances of survival (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). Neo-institutionalism, on the other hand, posits that survival is based on an organization's reflection of the institutional myths that confer the organizations in their environment with different forms of legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan 1977). According to the theory of neo-institutionalism, to the extent that organizations' formal structures reflect these myths, there will be a tendency toward isomorphism among the population of organizations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

For congregations, money is the resource that allows them to serve their members and the larger community. According to Chaves (2004: 52), the median congregation in the United States has an annual budget of $56,000 and is "more committed to social services than other organizations whose main purpose is neither charity nor social services." Meeting this annual budget and fulfilling their social service obligations requires individuals that are willing to give of both their time and money.

A congregation's members provide valuable resources in terms of time and money. The latter is especially important given the budgetary needs of most congregations. At the very least, congregations must rent a building and pay a pastor. Though many small congregations are able to share space (and sometimes leaders) with other organizations, even the smallest congregations require financial contributions from their members in order to survive. As a result, I hypothesize

that the more money a congregation brings in, the more likely it will be to control its own fate in the face of environmental uncertainty. When other congregations are being forced to cut back their social programming, for example, congregations with large financial reserves are able to continue doing business as usual while poorer congregations will suffer (McRoberts 2003).

H4. A congregation's annual receipts will be inversely related to its risk of failure.

Their attempts to procure important resources like member donations are not the only ways that organizations adapt. In the face of uncertainty, organizations start to look more like other organizations of the same type because of the ways they respond to pressures in their organizational environments (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). The result of these responses is homogeneity in structures, cultures, and outputs as organizations make rational decisions when faced with uncertainty and constraints. More specifically, since organizations in the same population face the same types of constraints and unstable conditions, there is a tendency toward isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the isomorphic pressures that organizations face can be coercive, normative, or mimetic. For Southern Baptist congregations, the coercive nature of conservative revivals will likely decrease the risk of failure for congregations that are able to adapt. Like other fundamentalist groups, conservative Southern Baptists perceive themselves as an embattled community in an anti-Christian world (Smith 1998). According to Smith (1998), these communities thrive on a rhetoric of us-versus-them even if there is no real threat to their legitimacy. As a result, these religious communities rely on fear and coercion to convince their members that their belief system is under attack. This, in turn, increases members' participation. In the previous chapter, I hypothesized that conservative revivals will increase the expected number of new Southern Baptist congregations because these revivals give legitimacy

to the organizational form. Similarly, I hypothesize that the same periods will reduce the risk of failure because they increase legitimacy and coerce congregations into adopting the organizational structures of the newer, conservative organizational forms.

H5a. Periods of conservative revival will decrease the likelihood of failure among the Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County.

H5b. Conservative control of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary will decrease the likelihood of failure among Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County.

Finally, I hypothesize that leadership will also play a direct role in the success or failure of Southern Baptist congregations. Although leaders are an important resource for congregations of all types (Chaves 2004), Southern Baptist congregations are unique in many ways. Specifically, the autonomy of the Southern Baptist church allows a congregation to remove or retain its leadership as its members see fit (Ammerman 1990). A congregation's decision to fire their minister or move in a different direction is a sign of uncertainty and likely reduces that congregation's legitimacy to current and potential members. As a result, I hypothesize that the longer a minister is with a church, the lower the risk of failure.

H6: Pastor's tenure will be inversely related to the risk of failure for his or her congregation.

Analytic Strategy

This analysis proceeds in two steps. First, a simple bivariate analysis of the number of closed Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County by year provides a visual test of H1a and H1b. Second, several negative binomial regression models provide more comprehensive

tests of H1a and H1b as well tests of H2-H6. The different models in my event history analysis reflect the limited availability of certain key variables.

Event History Analysis

In order to test my hypotheses about the mortality rate of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County, I use an event history analysis. Event history analyses are commonly used in models of organizational failure (Hannan and Freeman 1989). In addition to examining the effect of environmental factors like the density of Southern Baptist congregations and the conservativism of the SBTS, an event history analysis allows me to model mortality as a function of the amount of time that passes between the date a congregation opens and the date that it dissolves. These models also permit the inclusion of time-varying variables at the congregation level like the congregation's total membership or its total receipts for the previous year.

As in the previous chapter, I use a step-wise approach beginning with the ecological measures. Model 1 in Table 5.1 models the effect of density and age across the entire sample, 1784-2011. This model is a test of H1a, H1b, and H2. Since the membership of each congregation was not available until 1803, I cannot include this measure until the data is left-censored in Models 3 and 4. Model 2 in Table 5.1 includes the conservative revival dummy variable. This model is a test of H5a. Unfortunately, no other variables can be included in these first two models, though. Instead, the remaining models in Table 5.1 test the predictions of population ecology, resource dependency, and neo-institutionalism from 1860-2011.

Model 3 in Table 5.1 includes a measure of total membership that serves as my measure of size. The inclusion of church membership in Model 4 is a test of H3. Of course, Model 3 is also a test of H1a, H1b, and H2 like the previous models. In this, and all subsequent models, I

also control for the number of baptisms reported to the MCBA. Baptisms are reported annually and reflect the number of new Christians joining a church each year. Unlike denominations where infant Baptism is the norm, baptisms in Southern Baptist churches are indicative of new members who are generally old enough to contribute to the congregation in meaningful ways. Finally, Model 4 in Table 4 tests all of my measures of selection against all of my measures of neo-institutionalism. Model 4 includes tests of H1a-H3 and H5a-H6, but not H4.

Since each congregation's annual receipts were not reported until 1875, I can only include this in a reduced sample, 1875-2011. Since congregation's reported their previous year's receipts in 1875, these models do not have to be lagged like Models 3 and 4 in Table 5.1. Model 1 in Table 5.2 is the same as Model 3 in Table 5.1. All subsequent models in Table 5.2, however, include my measure of church finances (in constant dollars) based on the annual reports of each congregation. This variable is a test of H4. The final model in Table 5.2 is a test of all of the hypotheses outlined in this chapter. As such, Model 3 in Table 5.2 shows the relative effects of ecology, resources, and institutional pressures on the mortality of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County over time.

Results

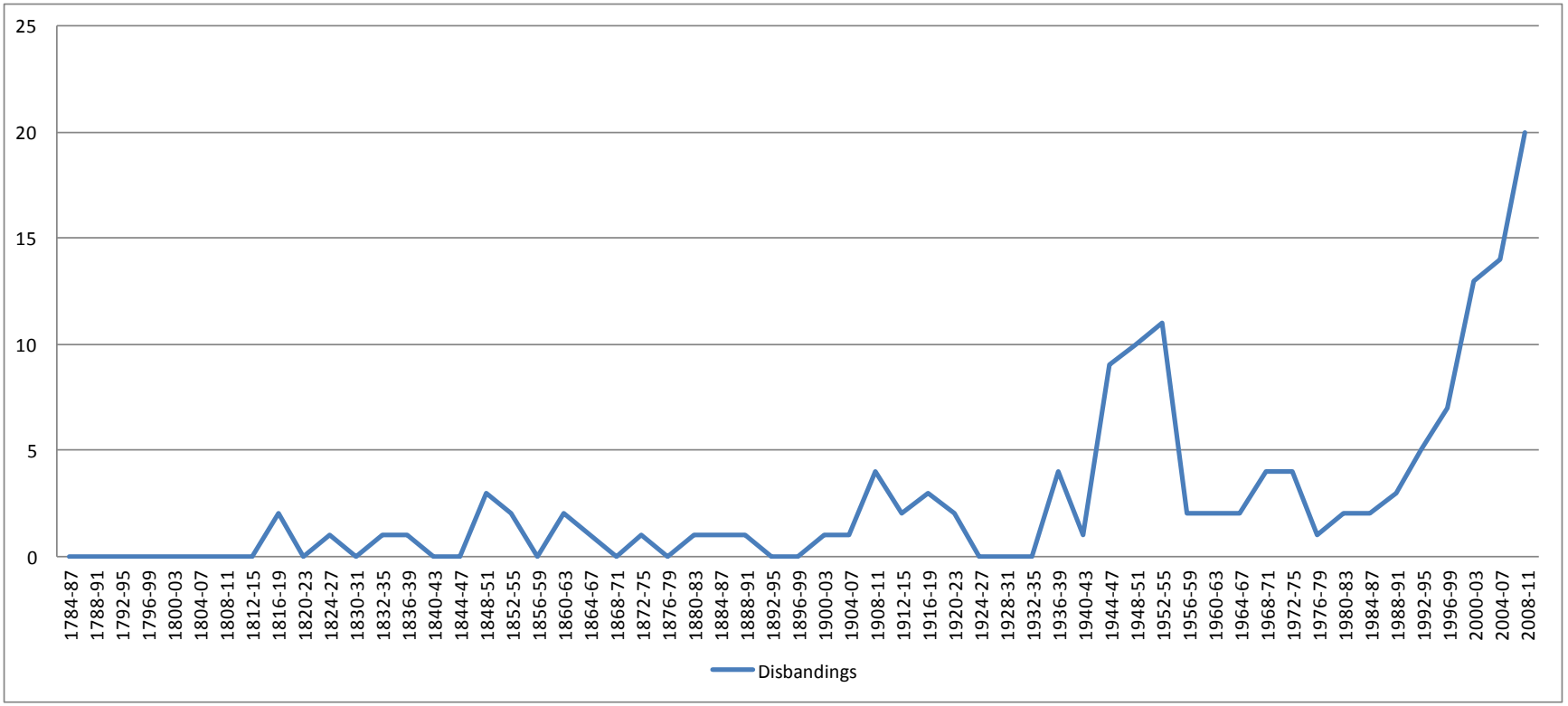
Figure 5.1 shows the number of disbanded Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County over time. Like Figure 4.2, disbandings are grouped into 4-year segments for easier interpretation. In raw numbers, few Southern Baptist congregations closed between 1784 and 1883 (just 15 congregations over the course of 100 years), but a closer look at the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County in 1883 (see Figure 4.1) shows that 1 in 2 congregations failed during the first 100 years of Baptist life in the area. This dramatic rate of

failure declined significantly over the next several decades, though, as the density of Southern Baptist congregations in the county grew. Between 1884 and 1943, Figure 5.1 shows that just 20 congregations closed in a span of 50 years, though the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County swelled from 15 to 71.

In Chapter 4 I discussed the steep rise in the number of new Southern Baptist congregations between 1940 and 1963. This, coupled with the low mortality rate among Southern Baptist congregations, meant increasing competition in the 1950s and 1960s. Not surprisingly, the number of closed congregations jumped considerably during this time period. 1944 to 1947 marked the first 4-year period in the history of Southern Baptist life in Adams County where the rate of failure exceeded one congregation per year. While record numbers of new Southern Baptist congregations were emerging, record numbers of congregations were closing. Even still, the density of Southern Baptist congregations managed to grow considerably during this period of time. This growth eventually began to stall, however. Over the last several years of these data, closings reached unprecedented heights. Between 2000 and 2011, 59 new congregations opened to worshippers (see Figure 4.2), but 47 congregations closed. As a whole, Figure 5.1 suggests there is a relationship between congregations and their environment. Indeed, the seven models that follow provide at least partial support for 5 of my 7 hypotheses about the mortality of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County over time.

Model 1 in Table 5.1 shows the effect of competition, legitimacy, and age on the failure of individual congregations from 1784 to 2011. Consistent with H1a and H1b, the effect of density is negative and significant, but the effect of the squared density term is positive and significant. This indicates that the relationship between density and Southern Baptist congregation closures is U-shaped like the relationship between density and mortality among

Figure 5.1. Disbanded SBC congregations in Adams County



other organizational forms. Like the carrying capacity for foundings, the point where competition supersedes the positive effects of legitimacy can be calculated using the coefficients in Model 1 (ln(expß)). Taking the first derivative of the equation $y=-.0214198x + .00017259x^2 - .03334053(age)$ and solving for x when $y' = 0$ and age is set at its mean value (42.12 years) yields a quotient of 62.05. This means that before the total number of congregations reaches 63, every new congregation in the population decreases (at a decreasing rate) the odds of failure for each congregation in the population. Once the number of congregations in the population reaches its carrying capacity (62 congregations), however, competition supersedes the positive benefits of density. At this point, each additional congregation begins to increase (at an increasing rate) the odds of failure for each congregation in the population. Interestingly, this number is much lower than the carrying capacity in Model 1 of Table 4.1 suggesting that there is a period of rapid growth and equally rapid failure when the density of the population is between 62 and 98 congregations. Indeed, the 24-year period between 1940 and 1963 marked the most rapid growth of Southern Baptists in Adams County's history, but it was a period also marked by significant risk of failure. In 1953 alone, 11 congregations closed, 7 of them in their first year of existence.

Figure 5.2 shows the effect of density as modeled in Model 1 of Table 5.1. The curve in Figure 5.2 makes clear that the odds of failure are reduced (at a decreasing rate) by each additional congregation up to a maximum of 62 Southern Baptist churches in Adams County. This trend supports ecological arguments that additional organizations increase the legitimacy of the organizational form and reduce the likelihood of failure (Hannan and Freeman 1988). Beyond 78 congregations, however, the rate of failure begins to increase (at an increasing rate) with each additional congregation. This is also consistent with ecological theories predicting a higher risk of failure in overly saturated environments (Hannan and Freeman 1988).

Table 5.1. Logistic regression predicting SBC congregation closures

	1784-2011		1860-2011	
	Model 1 Odds	Model 2 Odds	Model 3 Odds	Model 4 Odds
Population Ecology				
Density of SBC Congregations	0.98 *	0.97 ***	0.996	1.02
Density Squared	1.00 **	1.00 ***	1.00	1.00
Age	0.97 ***	0.97 ***	0.98 ***	0.98 ***
Size			0.998 *	0.998 *
Neo-Institutionalism				
Conservative Revival		2.80 ***		1.87 *
Conservative Seminary				1.92 **
Pastor's Tenure				0.93 **
Controls				
Baptisms			1.01 *	1.01 †
N	11,124	11,124	10,646	10,646

†p <.10; *p <.05; **p <.01; ***p <.001

[a]Standardized Coefficient

In Adams County, the population of Southern Baptist congregations exceeded its carrying capacity for the first time in 1941 (see Figure 4.1). Above, I noted that 1944-1947 was the first time in Adams County's history where the rate of failure exceeded one congregation per year; this is also roughly the time when Southern Baptists exceeded their carrying capacity based on my calculations from Model 1. Between 1947 and 2011, the number of Southern Baptist congregations increased by 173 percent. In turn, the odds of failure in 2011 (density = 140) were higher than the odds of failure at any point in the first 200 years of Southern Baptist life in Adams County. Together, Figure 5.2 and Model 1 in Table 5.1 provide strong support for H1a and H1b: the relationship between the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County and the mortality of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County resembles a U-shaped curve.

Figure 5.2. Effect of density on disbandings (Table 5.1, Model 1)

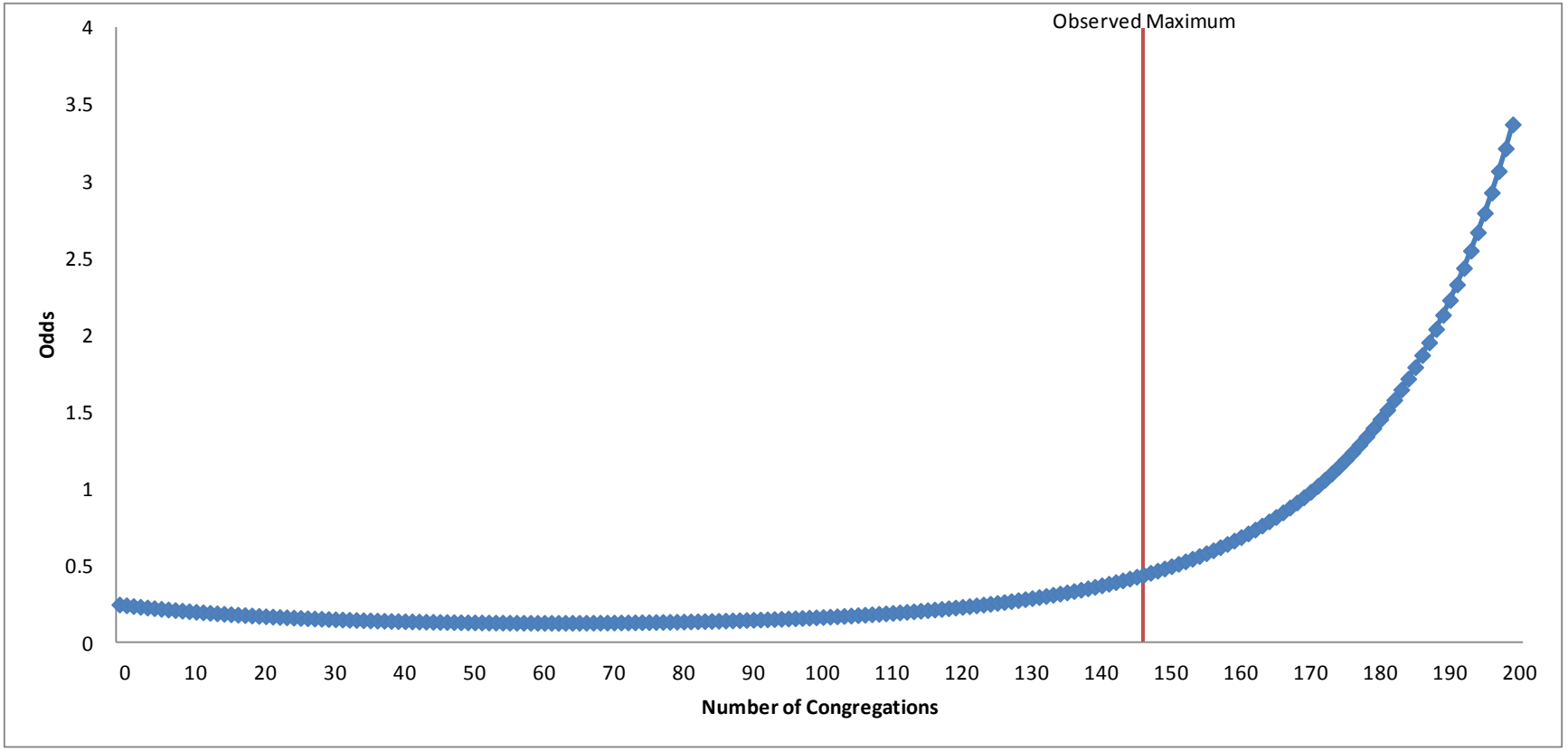
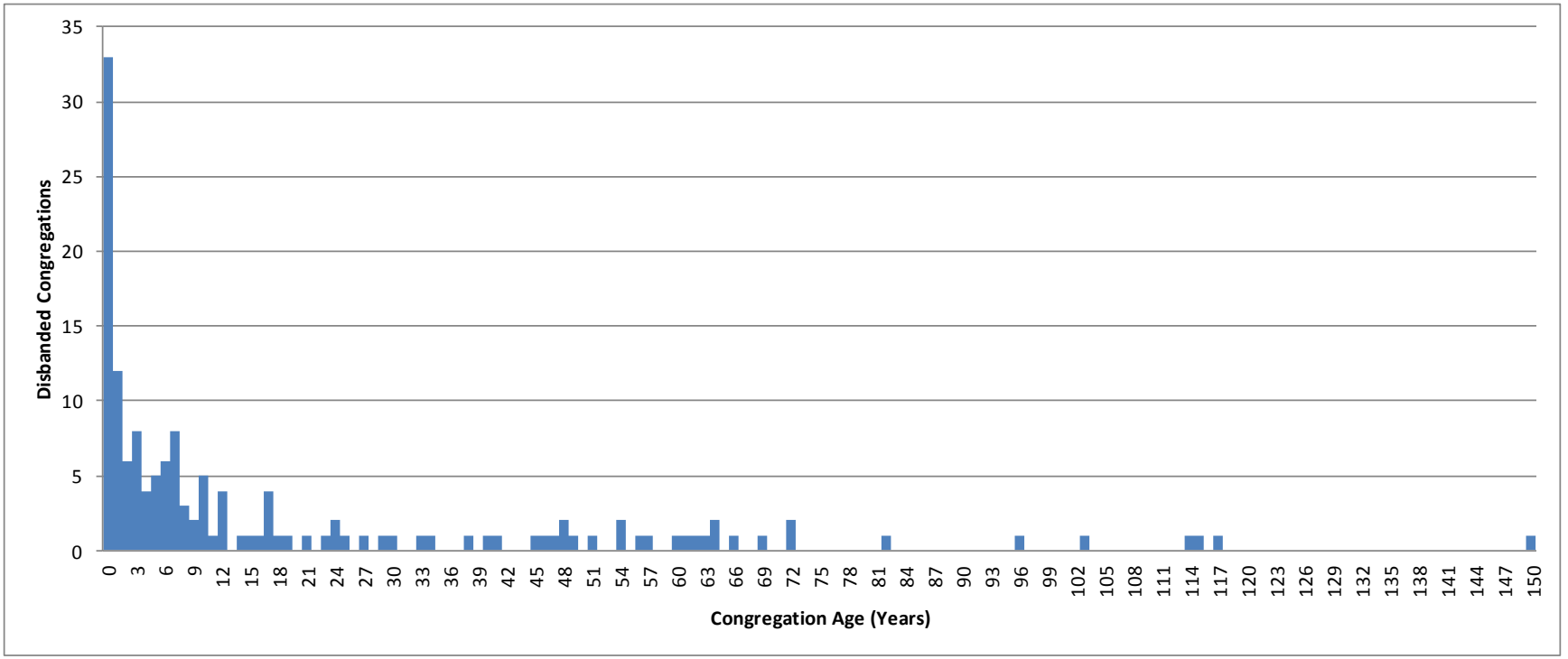


Figure 5.3 Age of SBC congregations at closure



The models in Table 5.1 also provide strong support for H2. Newer congregations are at a significantly higher risk of failure. Figure 5.3 is a histogram depicting the age (years since founding) of all 147 disbanded congregations in Adams County before 2012. Figure 4.8 shows that 33 congregations closed (22 percent of all closures) within the first year of the congregation's existence. Another 12 congregations closed in their second year. The liability of newness demonstrated in Figure 5.3 is consistent with Hypothesis 2 and research showing that the risk of failure is high for new organizations that lack control over their environment (Freeman 1982) and must create and learn new roles (Stinchcombe 1965). It is the models in Table 5.1, however, that show just how much the liability of newness influences the vitality of religious congregations.

According to Model 1 in Table 5.1 the likelihood of failure drops by more than 3 percent every time a congregation is able to celebrate another year of existence. Net of the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County, congregations are clearly subject to a liability of newness. In each subsequent model in Table 5.2 the effect of the age variable is negative and significant even though other ecological predictors lose their strength. Across all of the models in Table 5.1, a one year increase in age is worth no less than a 1.83 percent reduction in the odds of failure. Extrapolated out over several years this means that for every decade's worth of worshippers, a congregation can expect an 18.3 percent reduction in its risk of failure.

Model 2 in Table 5.1 includes the only institutional measure available for the entire sample. According to Model 2 in Table 5.1, the same periods of revival that resulted in more new congregations than any other point in Baptist history (Chapter 4) are also the source of more failed congregations than any other point in Baptist life in Adams County. During periods of anti-liberalism, Southern Baptist congregations are 2.8 times more likely to fail than during any

other point in time. This finding is not consistent with H5a, though it is consistent with the unusual relationship between theological conservativism and the appeal of Southern Baptists described in the previous chapter (Figure 4.4). According to Model 2 in Table 5.1, ecological explanations for the mortality rate of a population of organizations also stand up against the strong significance of this institutional predictor, though. Density, density squared, and age are all significant and in the expected direction in Model 2 of Table 5.1, but the support for theories of selection wane in the subsequent models.

Models 3 and 4 in Table 5.1 are left censored at 1860. Left censoring the data and including size and baptisms in the model completely reduces the significant effects of legitimacy and competition in Model 3 of Table 5.1. Consistent with H3, the effect of membership in Model 3 of Table 5.1 indicates that larger congregations stand a better chance of survival than smaller congregations. For every additional member, a congregation's risk of failure decreases by a factor of .998. This may not seem like a sizeable difference, but consider that the average congregation in 2011 claimed 529 total members while congregations ranged in size from 12 to nearly 8,000 members. This means that compared to the average congregation, Adams County's smallest congregation was 516 times more likely to close. At the other end of the spectrum, its largest congregation was 7,414 times less likely to close. These are sizeable differences that make the effect of density no longer relevant. However, support for theories of selection remains strong given the effects of size and age.

Interestingly, the number of baptisms performed in a congregation has a significant and positive effect on the risk of mortality. This unusual finding may be due to the fact that the same enthusiastic conservatives responsible for planting new congregations are also the ones responsible for gathering new recruits. Indeed, the significance of this effect is only marginal

when my measures of revival and conservativism are included as predictors in the final model of Table 5.1.

Model 4 in Table 5.1 shows that Southern Baptist congregations are most likely to fail when anti-liberalism is the motto and when conservatives control the SBTS. Adding further support to a neo-institutional explanation of church mortality, the tenure of a pastor has a negative and significant effect on failure as well (H6). Whether the first conservative awakening in the 1940s and 50s or the most recent resurgence of anti-liberalism since the start of the new millennium, though, Southern Baptist congregations are nearly 1.9 times more likely to fail when there is pressure to save the souls of a world gone astray. Similarly, conservative control of the SBTS increases the likelihood of failure by 92 percent among the congregations that are present at the time. Neither of these findings is consistent with my predictions about the relationship between theological conservativism and congregational mortality outlined in H5a and H5b, but neither is all that surprising given the relationship between conservatives and the appeal of Southern Baptism documented in Chapter 4.

The models described thus far provide modest support for population ecology and strong support for a model predicated on coercive isomorphism. The final 2 models in Table 5.2, however, demonstrate the importance of financial resources for Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County as well. In 1875, congregations began reporting their annual receipts to the Mill Creek Baptist Association. Models 2 and 3 in Table 5.2 include a measure of the natural log of each congregation's annual report (in constant dollars) for the years with available data. The results are consistent with my prediction in H4 and suggest that resources do matter despite the evidence that baptisms have a negative impact on church survival.

Model 1 in Table 5.2 is a replication of Model 3 in Table 5.1. Reducing the sample by an additional 15 years causes no change in the effects of legitimacy, competition, age, or size. Models 2 and 3, however, include the church finance variables and the results are striking. Based on the odds ratios in Models 2 and 3 of Table 5.2, the benefit of additional members is

Table 5.2 Logistic regression predicting SBC congregation closures

	1875-2011		
	Model 1 Odds	Model 2 Odds	Model 3 Odds
Population Ecology			
Density of SBC Congregations	1.00	1.02	1.05 *
Density Squared	1.00	0.9999	0.9998
Age	0.98 ***	0.98 ***	0.98 ***
Size	0.998 *	0.999	0.999
Resource Dependence			
Logged Annual Reciepts[b]		0.60 ***	0.62 ***
Neo-Institutionalism			
Conservative Revival			1.83 **
Conservative Seminary			2.01 *
Pastor's Tenure			0.94 *
Controls			
Baptisms	1.01 †	1.01 *	1.01 †
N	10,455	10,455	10,455

†p <.10; *p <.05; **p <.01; ***p <.001

[a]Standardized Coefficient

[b]Constant dollars

clearly in their pocketbooks. Although the strong benefit of more financial resources is not enough to completely derail the negative effects of conservative theology on Southern Baptist life in Adams County, it is clear that money matters. Given that conservativism reduces members, and fewer members means fewer dollars, it is perhaps not surprising that there is

strong support for H4 given that there is a positive relationship between conservativism in all its forms and church mortality. Overall, the models in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 suggest new congregations and financially-challenged congregations are at the greatest risk of failure. These models also point to the importance of coercive pressures in the likelihood of failure among Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County over time.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings in this chapter give additional credence to my argument that religious competition is best articulated using theories of organizations. The same theories that explain the emergence of new Southern Baptist congregations also appear to explain why congregations fail. More specifically, congregations are not born with legitimacy nor does their ability to adapt suddenly increase their appeal. Quite the opposite, securing members only goes so far. Those members must also bring financial resources to the congregation and hope that religious conservativism is not limiting their congregation's appeal.

Like the theory of population ecology, my empirical findings suggest that organizations require legitimacy and experience competition regardless of the "products" they produce. Congregations are unique because they deal primarily in "otherworldly goods" (Stark and Bainbridge 1980). Schools can test students to determine if they are learning the material they are supposed to learn, labor unions know if worker conditions improve under their watch, and social movement organizations are aware of social change that results from their efforts. Congregations, on the other hand, are selling promises that will never be paid out in any tangible sense, and yet they remain subject to the same types of environmental constraints as these more traditional organizational forms.

For the sociology of religion, this means that competition is more than the share of other denominations in the religious market or the political constraints placed on religious groups by the state. On the contrary, competition exists *within* denominations. This makes sense given our knowledge of religious conversion (Loveland 2003, Sherkat and Wilson 1995) and religious preferences (Sherkat and Wilson 1995, Stark and Finke 2000), but it is clearly a shift from the market models dominating the sub-discipline for the past 30 years. Indeed, the results of my analyses show that the findings from many qualitative samples (e.g., Eiesland 2000, Ellingson 2007) hold up against quantitative data and quantitative data analysis techniques.

Much like the previous chapter, though, the most interesting finding here may be the effect of conservativism on the mortality rate of the Southern Baptist congregations. Although I predicted that conservativism would increase foundings (Chapter 4) and decrease failures, periods of conservativism in the SBC and the SBTS actually increase foundings *and* failures. Consider, though, that more congregations equal more competition. Indeed, the first time that the negative effects of competition surpassed the positive effects of legitimacy occurred during the first conservative awakening in the 1940s and 1950s.

That said, strict churches are strong and few will question the commitment of individuals willing to devote the time and money it takes to start a new church. As my models show, finances are a key predictor of church success and previous research shows that giving is highest in places where like-minded churches are few (Stoll and Petersen 2008). Furthermore, Dougherty (2004) notes that age and size are secondary to the importance of participation for church growth in Southern Baptist congregations. My results also support this notion by pointing to the importance of financial contributions for Southern Baptist congregations' success. Even more to the point, the benefits of size are completely reduced by the inclusion of the financial variables in

Table 5.2. This suggests that members are less indicative of size in Southern Baptist congregations and more indicative of a valuable financial resource.

Taken together, the results reported in the current chapter and in Chapter 4 speak to importance of focusing on a single denomination or a group of like-minded congregations when it comes to articulating a theory of competition in the religious sphere. Beyond the sociology of religion, though, these findings also show that theories of adaptation do a better job of explaining the foundings and mortality of Southern Baptist congregations than theories of selection that place legitimacy in the simple existence of an organizational form. In the following chapters, I will continue to rely on theories of adaptation to demonstrate how a subset of congregations in this same sample develops their competitive strategies and how these same strategies influence the ongoing tension between the religious and secular spheres.

CHAPTER 6

CONGREGATIONS' COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES

In the previous two chapters, I used quantitative data on the population of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County to show how the organizational environment affects the foundings and disbandings of religious congregations over time. In this chapter, I turn my attention to the competitive strategies that congregations employ to attract participants and retain their current flock. More specifically, I rely on in-depth interviews with clergy, members, and former members of four Southern Baptist congregations and one Independent Christian megachurch in Adams County to examine how institutionalized pressures shape the competitive strategies of religious congregations. Solving this puzzle requires a closer look at the way(s) congregations build legitimacy and the normative pressures that generate isomorphism between organizations of the same form.

The theoretical framework for this chapter is firmly situated in the perspective of neo-institutionalism. As I explained in Chapter 2, neo-institutionalism is a theory of adaptation that aims to illuminate the different ways that organizations respond to pressures in their institutional environment (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Meyer and Rowan 1977). There is an assumption here that organizations can and do modify their internal structures in order to survive. The process of modifying the internal structure of an organization is not a random or chaotic process, though. Modifying an organization's internal structure is done with an eye toward increasing its legitimacy in response to environmental pressures (Meyer and Rowan 1977). In the paragraphs that follow, I will explain the different environmental pressures that serve to confer religious

organizations with legitimacy and the different organizational structures that emerge within religious congregations based on each organization's attempt to maintain legitimacy.

The analysis of my 48 interviews with the leaders, members, and former members of the five congregations in my sample revealed two sources of institutional pressure: 1) the network of local Southern Baptist organizations including the local Baptist seminary; and 2) the conservative Protestant theology that permeates the local culture. Organizations feel these pressures differently, and their responses tend to vary in kind. My analysis revealed three different organizational strategies based on each congregation's involvement with the network of local Southern Baptist organizations and their alignment with the institutional myths of the local religious culture. I call these strategies Zealous Advocacy, Local Visibility, and Charismatic Conservativism, and in the paragraphs that follow I will explain how each of these strategies emerges from the structural position of the congregation within its organizational field.

Legitimacy

Much like the last two chapters, my primary focus here is on legitimacy. According to Suchman (1995: 574), legitimacy is a "generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions." In the previous two chapters, I focused primarily on selection and retention using a theory that equates legitimacy with the density of organizations of the same form. Unlike the previous two chapters, however, my focus here is on the adoption of certain organizational structures within the highly institutionalized contexts of modern organizations (Meyer and Rowan 1977). According to Meyer and Rowan (1977: 340-1), "Institutionalized products, services, techniques, policies and programs function as powerful myths, and many

organizations adopt them ceremonially. But conformity to institutionalized rules often conflicts sharply with efficiency criteria."

According to Aldrich and Ruef (2006), there are two types of legitimacy: cognitive legitimacy and socio-political legitimacy. Cognitive legitimacy refers to the taken-for-granted nature of an organizational form. In the previous two chapters, I outlined the growth of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County over time and highlighted their prevalence in Adams County since at least the 1940s. SBC congregations in Adams County are clearly a taken-for-granted feature of the local environment. As such, they are not lacking in cognitive legitimacy. My concern here is how individual congregations build socio-political legitimacy. According to Aldrich and Ruef (2006: 198):

> Sociopolitical legitimacy is the acceptance by key stakeholders, the general public, opinion leaders, and government officials of a new venture as appropriate and right. Sociopolitical legitimacy has two components: the moral value of an activity within cultural norms, and acceptance of an activity by political and regulatory authorities.

Typically religious organizations, along with civic organizations, serve as an indication of conformity to moral norms and values. In this case, I am interested in the way congregations achieve moral legitimacy based on the prevailing norms and values of the local culture. For Southern Baptist congregations, moral acceptance is granted in two ways: from their adherence to the myth of religious conservativism and from the normative pressures of local seminaries and the larger networks of Southern Baptist organizations in their field.

Suchman (1995) argues that there are four types of moral legitimacy: procedural, structural, consequential, and personal. Procedural legitimacy rests on the use of socially accepted techniques (Aldrich and Ruef 2006). Among Southern Baptist congregations, this

typically means strict adherence to the myth of religious conservativism. Members and leaders of all five congregations highlighted their church's adherence to the myth of religious conservativism even though the actual practices of at least two of these congregations tend to deviate from the strict conservativism they espouse:

> The leadership and the membership at Newport is trying their best and is trying really hard to be faithful to the Scriptures and faithful to the teachings of Scripture. (Jeremiah, Newport Baptist Church)

> We're inerrantists. We would believe that the Bible is authoritative and infallible. So yeah, we would definitely—some would call us fundamentalist. But have you ever seen a true fundamentalist? We're not that. But we're definitely conservative. (Keaton, Covenant Baptist Church)

> When [my husband and I] started going to Endeavor, it was like, "Whoa, they're really teaching theology and they're really teaching what is in the Bible." (Sandra, Endeavor Community Church)

> When we preach and do Bible study, we're looking at what the Bible says. We're not paraphrasing. We're not leaving [the Bible] out of the conversation. We always start with, "Take out your Bible." And to me, that's important. That's the integrity of everything that church and theology should be about. (Shelia, Avondale Road Baptist Church)

> We're definitely not theologically liberal, okay. Now, the reason why I'll say that is because, first of all, we're not gonna water down the message. We're gonna preach right out of the Bible. And our views on marriage or our views on homosexuality are gonna be right out of the Word of God. So, in answer to your question, I would say that we are theologically conservative. (Dan, Hillview Christian Church)

Similarly, structural legitimacy requires the use of the proper form expected of organizations in their population. For Southern Baptist congregations, structural legitimacy tends to manifest itself in the autonomy of the local church and the priesthood of all believers. In other words, to maintain structural legitimacy, the members of the congregation must be the deciding voice in all major decisions. Even in congregations with thousands of other members and a bureaucratic structure that seems very distant from the individual, most of my informants believed that they could have a voice in the decision making process and tended to blame their lack of a voice on their own disinterest. Lisa, a 39-year-old middle school teacher with two young children, explained her thoughts on the decision making process at Hillview Christian Church:

> *Do you feel like you have a voice in the decision making process?*
> I feel like I could. I know they vote and stuff like that, and I've done that. But not really. It's such a big place, I guess. But on the other hand, I completely trust the elders to make those good decisions.

Okay. So, if you wanted a voice, you feel like you could have one, but you don't necessarily care to get that involved?

Right. Not on those things.

Members of Endeavor Community Church shared similar views about their large congregation. Katrina, a 26-year-old volunteer coordinator at a local Baptist mission explained her feelings about the process:

How do you think decisions are made in this congregation?

I think by our leadership, so our elders or pastors. They're kind of like a group that will make decisions and then they present them to the body. "What do you guys think about this?" And I think even in that body that they seek wisdom among each other and then among people outside their circle to make wise decisions.

So as a member do you feel like you have any role or part in this decision making process?

I've never really thought about that. I think for me growing up, being a pastor's kid and kind of seeing behind the scenes, I've just chosen to be like "I don't wanna know that stuff." So, in my mind, this might not be true for everyone, but in my mind, my role is to support and…what the pastors say and whatever decisions they make are best for us. So, for me personally, that's kind of how I look at it and I'm just like "I don't wanna know." I trust that [the leaders] make good decisions and I don't wanna be a part of it. I think when they bring something in front of us, there's been a lot of prayer and a lot of, you know…maybe you'd worry about "Is this the right decision?" So, I think by the time it's

> come to us, I'm like "you've already done weeks, if not months, of work on this decision that you're coming to me about." And for me to say, "Well, what about this?" You've probably thought about it like a hundred times. And so, I'm just like--I just trust that [the elders] know what's best.

Riley, a 26-year-old mechanical engineer shared a similar outlook about the leadership at Endeavor:

> I feel like my voice hasn't been solicited…but I, I've always felt like if I did have a question about something or, you know, whatever, that it's a very open door policy. I don't feel like just because I say something that the church is necessarily gonna listen to me and do it. And I'm okay with that because I'm only one person—as long as the leadership is making their decisions while rooting the Scripture…then I don't really have a problem with [following their decisions].

Structural and procedural legitimacy help Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County maintain a solid base among the large pool of conservative Protestants in the region even for congregations that only adopt these practices ceremonially (Meyer and Rowan 1977). To reach beyond this conservative base, however, congregations must work toward consequential legitimacy – based on the production of a public good – or personal legitimacy – based on the charisma of organizational leaders.

According to Suchman (1995), not every organization produces an output that is easy to measure. Congregations, of course, are dealers in primarily "other-worldly goods" making it

exceedingly difficult for these organizations to develop consequential legitimacy (Stark and Bainbridge 1980). According to Stark and Bainbridge (1980), organizations that deal in intangibles like salvation, must provide compensators that prove their value to potential participants. For these five congregations, community involvement is the simplest way to demonstrate the production of the public good. Endeavor Community Church, for example, provides free medical clinics for members of the congregation and other people in need in the local community. Erica, a 27-year-old librarian, talked about her involvement with the medical clinic program and its larger impact on the community:

> What I've done before is help people fill out paperwork at the very beginning, with a brief medical history and then just their basic personal info. But the medical clinic setup—and they get a lot of donations from different people—it has a dental facility where they actually bring in dental chairs and do basic checkups and they can do x-rays…and eye care, basic hygiene. They give people lunch. There's a food pantry. And they have general doctors that do, you know, "Hey, take a look at this on my arm." Or just some general things. They have basic medicine that they can give out like over-the-counter things and all of that. The people that are doing that are actually dentists and actually doctors and nurses. A lot of [the volunteers] are Endeavor members, but then they do draw in other people too as well. And it's free for the people that come. You know, you don't have to show that you're homeless or anything like that. There are some members [of Endeavor] that go through it too because they don't have insurance.

Similarly, Avondale Road Baptist Church regularly sends volunteers to Avondale Road Middle School and Benjamin Harrison Elementary School where there is not a lot of parental involvement. These actions help confer the congregation with consequential legitimacy as Pastor Cary explains:

> We have partnered with the public schools in this area. And at first that was very hard to get into but now they invite us. Avondale Road Middle School, which has a lot of issues with poverty and things like that, took out a full-page ad in their yearbook and put us on their [school] sign thanking us for everything we do during the year down there. We've done things like paint all their restrooms. We totally re-did and refurnished their teachers lounge. We provide chaperones when they have school events because they don't have any parental involvement. We provided all of the volunteers for their testing this year. So those are just some things.

All five of the congregations in this sample also work together with a number of other congregations in the area to minister to women in the adult entertainment industry, assist the victims of domestic violence, and provide resources to the local homeless missions. Community involvement is certainly not equal across these five congregations, but each congregation is making some efforts to demonstrate their worth to the larger community.

The final type of moral legitimacy, personal legitimacy, is the most difficult to hold onto because it rests on the charisma of individual organizational leaders (Suchman 1995). Nelson (1993), for one, highlights the questionable importance of personal legitimacy. Nelson's point is particularly significant for the current study because his comparison of different types of

authority is based on a sample of multinational denominations. Unlike the current study, however, Nelson argues that religious organizations that belong to different denominations are part of the same organizational form whereas I contest that each denomination is its own organizational form. Charismatic authority and personal legitimacy, therefore, rest on the qualities of the leaders of individual congregations and not in the attributes of entire denominations as Nelson suggests. Indeed this can be seen by comparing the different congregations in this sample, and I will do this in much greater detail below. First, however, it is important to consider the agents of professionalization that confer religious organizations with socio-political legitimacy.

Normative Pressures

Normative isomorphism is the product of professionalization. Larson (1977) argues that professionalization is the collective struggle of the members of an occupation to define the condition and methods of their work. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 152), two distinct aspects of this process play an important role in producing isomorphism: "One is the resting of formal education and of legitimation in a cognitive base produced by university specialists; the second is the growth and elaboration of professional networks that span organizations and across which new models diffuse rapidly." Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County are particular affected by both of these phenomena due to the presence of a local Baptist seminary and a strong network of Southern Baptist congregations and like-minded congregations that serve as a source of information sharing for congregations and their staff.

The senior ministers of all four Southern Baptist congregations in my sample attended the same local Baptist seminary for a period of time. As a result, the organizational structure of each

congregation tends to look the same even though there is considerable variation in their actual practices. Differences that have arisen over time are largely due to each congregation's relationship with and dependency on the local Baptist seminary and the professional organizations and collectives that constitute the organizational field. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 155), "The greater the participation of organizational managers in trade and professional associations, the more likely the organization will be, or will become, like other organizations in its field." At times, these processes appear coercive, but the real cause of the similarities between some organizations and their differences from others is based on voluntary engagement with the superordinate units that confer them with legitimacy (Scott 1991).

While the local Baptist seminary serves as an important agent of professionalization, the ability of the local Baptist seminary, the SBC, and various networks of local churches to grant authorization to certain organizational forms serves a more important role in the legitimation of many area churches in and around Adams County. Institutional theorists pay particular attention to the organizations that stand outside an industry, but within a sector or field, and influence or constrain the goods- or service-producing organizations within it (DiMaggio 1991). My conversations with the leaders of all five congregations showed how seriously they take these relationships. Newport's Pastor of Preaching and Discipleship, Jason Kelsey, discussed Newport's involvement with the local Baptist associations as well as a group of pastors he meets with every other month to troubleshoot various problems within the local Church:

> The way Southern Baptists do cooperation or church partnerships, you have local associations, which for us would be the Mill Creek Baptist Association, and then you have state conventions, and then you have the national convention…I have been

somewhat involved in our local association, I have been on some committees with them. It's been okay. But there is also, a little bit more of a pastors' fellowship that has begun where there is a group of pastors—there's probably, in the Edwardsville area now, maybe 50 pastors. We meet about every other month. So like 3 times in the spring, 3 times in the fall. We do lunch together, and we just either have a speaker from within us or we just have a panel discussion on topics related to ministry. So we've been doing that for about three and half, coming up on the end of our fourth year. So any given time you might have 25 guys there. And that actually spreads a little beyond denominational lines. So that's not all Southern Baptist pastors, although most of them are, but not all of them. But that's been a real encouragement to me, just some of the relationships that have developed out of that. And then some of the topics of just trying to sharpen one another and help each other think through things.

Similarly, Pastor Robby's description of Covenant Baptist Church's relationship with the SBC highlights that importance of these superordinate organizations in terms of resources:

> I think for us, broader associations are huge. The Southern Baptist Convention enables us to send way more overseas missionaries than we could ever send by ourselves…the International Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. We have 15 people overseas. We wouldn't be able to have that if we were a lone church.

Not all Southern Baptist congregations and like-minded churches are strongly tied to the Southern Baptist Convention, the local Southern Baptist seminary, and the network of other like-

minded organizations that make up the organizational field of Southern Baptists in Adams County, though. The autonomy of Southern Baptist churches allows some Southern Baptist congregations to distance themselves from the normative pressures of their organizational field. Two of the Southern Baptist churches in my sample maintain a reasonable distance from the local association of Southern Baptist churches. When I asked Pastor Cary of Avondale Road Baptist Church to tell me why it was important to be involved with the local Baptist association and the larger state association, he laughed and responded, "I ask myself that same question." Avondale Road's moderate theological position vis-à-vis other Southern Baptist congregations also makes it difficult for some seminary students and professors to reconcile the congregation's position with the conservative religious culture of the local Baptist networks. Pastor Cary laughed as he explained, "What we always say when the Seminary students come: 'When a black woman serves the Lord's Supper, it may be the end of the Mississippi boy coming to church here.'" The distance that some congregations maintain from the agents of professionalization and their adherence to the institutional myths of the local religious culture determine the competitive strategies that congregations use to appeal to the maximum number of "buyers."

Congregations' Competitive Strategies

Southern Baptist congregations and like-minded churches that appeal primarily to individuals in Stark and Finke's (2000) conservative niche make use of three different competitive strategies that are based on their relationship with the local Southern Baptist seminary, including their embeddedness within the larger network of Southern Baptist organizations in the area, and their adherence to the institutional myth of religious conservativism I call these strategies Zealous Advocacy, Local Visibility, and Charismatic

Conservativism. Table 6.1 shows the type of congregation that makes use of each of these strategies. There are no congregations in the upper left cell because it is impossible for a congregation to be strongly aligned with the local seminary and moderate in its theology since theology is negotiated by the leaders and members of each congregation (Fine 1984). In the paragraphs that follow, I describe each strategy in greater detail by drawing on data from my semi-structured interviews with leaders, members, and former members of all five congregations in my sample.

Table 6.1. Congregation's competitive strategies

		Theology	
		Moderate	**Conservative**
Seminary/ Convention Ties	**Strong**	N/A	Zealous Advocacy
	Weak	Local Visibility	Charismatic Conservativism

Zealous Advocacy

Congregations that are deeply embedded in the social networks of the local seminary and the state and local Baptist convention employ a competitive strategy that I call Zealous Advocacy. In ancient Judea, the Zealots tried to lead a rebellion to remove the Romans from the Holy Land in order to preserve their faith. These passionate individuals were uncompromising and often resorted to raids and violence against their Roman occupiers and even other Jews that were considered sympathetic to the Roman cause. Congregations that I describe as "zealous" certainly do not use violent tactics to attract new members or retain their current flock. The

parallel between these two groups rests in their unwillingness to compromise their faith regardless of the changes that are going on in the world outside their organizational field.

Although four of the five congregations in my sample maintain some relationship with the local Baptist seminary and other local Southern Baptist collectives – Hillview Christian Church being the exception as an Independent Christian church – only two of the five congregations in my sample maintain strong ties with the local Baptist seminary. These congregations are Covenant Baptist Church and Newport Baptist Church, and as I alluded to above the leaders of these congregations tend to be more involved with the local and national Baptist associations and often join with other congregations in sharing resources and ideas. What makes these congregations particularly unique is their dependency on the local Baptist seminary relative other congregations in the "seminary ring."

Covenant Baptist and Newport Baptist are both relatively small congregations and their memberships primarily consist of seminary students, faculty, and their families. In order to maintain their strong base of seminary-affiliated members, it is important for both of these congregations to maintain a formal structure that is strongly in line with the SBC. Pastor Robby's account of the "seminary effect" shows just how important it can be to maintain close ties with these organizations. I asked Pastor Robby to tell me about the effect of the seminary's transient population on turnover of members within his church. His response was clear: "Huge turnover. I mean there have been years where we, I remember a year not long ago where we brought in 100 members and lost 100 members." This is particular noteworthy because 100 members is nearly a quarter of Covenant's total membership. Failure to maintain the support of the local Baptist seminary would mean significant losses for this church.

Newport has a similar relationship with the local Baptist seminary, but there are a number of key seminary faculty on staff and even fewer unaffiliated (with the local seminary, that is) members in its pews. Transience also plagues this congregation as Leah, a stay-at-home mom and mother of four, explained to me when I asked her why she thought Newport was not growing like some of the other churches in the area:

> There's two things that I think of immediately. One is that the church constantly has seminary students who are leaving. I mean, we just—we had, at Sunday two weeks ago I think where we lost five families. Not because they left the church because they're disappointed, but because one is going to Africa and one is going to California. You know, people are just leaving to go with [their] ministry, which is good. Ultimately, I think it's growing the Church. But our little body is not growing.

Levi, a former Newport member expressed a similar idea when I asked him if he would ever consider returning to Newport Baptist Church. Levi and his wife recently decided to stop attending a different Southern Baptist congregation in the area, but they have yet to find a new congregation where they feel comfortable taking their three kids:

> [The seminary is] actually part of the reason why we're not strongly considering going back—because of the connection to the seminary. Not that we have a problem with the seminary. But it's such a large portion of the membership…is seminarians—that they turn over pretty regularly.

In order to maintain their ties with the local Baptist seminary, it is important for Newport and Covenant to closely adhere to the religious conservativism of the SBC and its instructional institutions. As a result, many of the practices of these congregations are extremely conservative even for churches within the SBC, placing them near the strict end of Stark and Finke's (2000) bell curve (Figure 4.5) and limiting their appeal across the spectrum of religious preferences. One practice that clearly fits this model is Covenant's regular use of disciplinary action toward members that are not living in accordance with the church's moral ideals. Every member (and former member) of Covenant that I spoke with mentioned the congregation's commitment to church discipline. Pastor Robby explained the process to me during the following exchange:

> *When you were talking about some of things that the congregation does, you mentioned church discipline. What do you mean by that?*
>
> By church discipline, I mean the process of seeking—let me back up. My understanding is that the local church is made up of people that are generally born again; they don't just have a cultural link, sociological link. But they are actually linked in the Gospel, and they are really committing themselves to walk in obedience with Jesus Christ together—so hold each other accountable in that. When someone begins to clearly and repeatedly disobey Jesus, then the instructions in Matthew 18, Romans 15, First Thessalonians—Second Thessalonians 3, Titus 3, First Corinthians 5, is basically to go after them for their good. For their redemption. To see them restored. But if they refuse to be restored, then they're to be—Jesus says they are to be treated as a gentile and passed over. Which doesn't mean treated rudely, it just means treated like an unbeliever.
>
> *What is a typical church discipline case?*

> There's no such thing as a typical church discipline case, but maybe a typical thing would be, let's say you have a person that joins the church—and really clearly Jesus teaches sexual purity before marriage—and they begin to indulge in fornication, there would be members of Covenant going after them, encouraging them, encouraging them to live a life of holiness. If they refuse, then Jesus says "tell it to the church." So we would go before the church and say, "Hey, our brother," and this is often done with tears, "our brother or sister is in sin. Won't leave it." We usually sit on it for a month or two and if they just continue to walk in unholiness, they would be released from the membership of the church.

Such an extreme practice reflects the zealous nature of Covenant's organizational culture, but it can also be a source of tension within the local setting. According to Stark and Finke (2000), the beliefs and practices of congregations in the strict niche (Figure 4.5) can be off-putting to outsiders that cannot fathom a group of people that might allow religion to fully dictate their lives. As a result, congregations in the top right cell of Table 6.1 tend to focus less on building consequential legitimacy and more on building procedural and structural legitimacy which are conferred via superordinate units like the SBC (Scott 1991, Suchman 1995). In general Southern Baptist congregations are in a position to appeal to one of the largest segments of the American population. Due to the intangible nature of their products, though, congregations with clear ties to the network of legitimacy-granting institutions are quick to trade efficiency for the institutional myths of their organizational field (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

A similar, but less extreme, example of the tradeoff between form and function is the contemplative nature of Sunday morning services at Newport Baptist Church. Newport is the

only congregation in this sample without a contemporary worship option. Members and former members of the congregation described its traditional worship service to me as "serious," "somber," and even "stoic." Jeremiah, a 31-year-old seminary student and father of four, described his views of Newport's traditional worship service to me:

> You know, someone who visits, let's say…"You know, your worship just really isn't that exuberant." It's really not that. People there aren't really that expressive. And I would say—I would caution them against making that premature judgment, that "I think people really are expressive at Newport. It's just in different—in ways that are new to you." You know, the person I'm talking to. So, for instance, one thing we do in our service is like confession and repentance of sin. Like we read these things and then we have responsive readings and then we have prayer. We pray for people in the congregation. Somebody gets—and prays for all these different needs, all these different things. And it's just very personal. Very personal. You could just feel the mood in the sanctuary. Especially like these confessions and prayers of repentance. It's really somber and solemn and I think appropriately so. It's just really grateful for the grace of God and the forgiveness of God. For me, I know that that drew me to the church from the very first service. I was like "What is this?" And this is really like—it was very moving. So, obviously, there's emotion there. And I think it's a good use of emotion, when you have emotion kind of following your doctrine and your theology in a good healthy way.

When Leah's husband Adam, a former seminary student, also characterized Newport's Sunday morning worship service as more "serious and somber than your average SBC church," Leah

agreed with these sentiments but also expressed an appreciation for Newport's culture similar to Jeremiah:

> The goal is to help make you recognize your sins, see what Christ did on the Cross for you, and it brings you to the Gospel each week. That being the goal—it is kind of serious. If you're just singing songs always about "God is so good," you know, you can kind of—you can kind of miss the rest of the Gospel. So that's one thing I appreciate about it…. it's definitely more somber than some of the things [in other churches], but it's not like—I feel uplifted after I've been for sure.

Although members like Leah, Jeremiah, and others I spoke with expressed their appreciation for this style of worship, this traditional, contemplative service does not appeal to most people on the religious spectrum (Ellingson 2007). As a result, Newport remains a small congregation that relies heavily on the seminary's support for legitimacy and resources.

The organizational cultures of Newport and Covenant Baptist churches make clear that Zealous Advocacy is a strategy for congregations that are strongly dependent on procedural and structural legitimacy over personal or consequential legitimacy. Strong ties to the local Baptist seminary plus strict adherence to the myth of religious conservativism – the latter being an automatic product of the former in the Convention's current state – limit these congregations ability to compete even though they appear to be legitimate and efficient organizations based on their formal structures (Meyer and Rowan 1977).

Local Visibility

Not all Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County are strongly tied to the local seminary, the SBC, and the other networks of like-minded organizations that make up their organizational field. When congregations do not face the same normative pressures as others that are more strongly aligned with the superordinate organizations in their field, they are able to deviate from the institutional myth of religious conservativism in their actual practice. More specifically, the activities in these organizations are decoupled from their formal structures (Meyer and Rowan 1977, Weick 1976). The congregations in this cell use the strategy of Local Visibility to garner consequential legitimacy which extends their appeal beyond the stricter congregations in the top right cell of Table 6.1. In the current sample of congregations, these congregations are Avondale Road Baptist Church and Endeavor Community Church.

Above, I highlighted Pastor Cary's dismissive attitude toward the local Baptist association. Similarly, Endeavor Community Church's brief history does not include strong ties to the Southern Baptist Convention or the MCBA. In its earliest days, Endeavor Community Church was just Endeavor. The fact that "Baptist" remains absent from its name is no mistake either. Endeavor started in 2000 as a church for the "unchurched" and the "over-churched" according to Pastor Craig, the lead pastor at Endeavor's main campus. Pastor Craig described the early congregation as a group of "ruffians" that felt like they had been "burned" by the church. His description not only captures the culture of the early church, but it also sheds some light on the unique vibe that makes Endeavor's weekend worship services unlike any other Southern Baptist church in the community:

> [Endeavor's first members] were kind of anti-Church. Anything a Church would do they wanted to do differently. And so basically, for those first years it was kind of like, "against the man." Everyone wore black…from its inception Endeavor was created for the un-churched and the over-churched. And the un-churched would be those that maybe don't feel clean enough. Like the statements we hear sometimes, even around this neighborhood, even though we're real welcoming, it's like "if I came into that church the walls would fall in on me."

Later in our conversation, I asked Pastor Craig to tell me about Endeavor's relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention:

> We're part of [the] Southern Baptist world and we see it as—not our flagship. Let me rephrase it, maybe. I guess one of the ways we describe it is like we're NASCAR drivers and one of our stickers is Southern Baptist. And one of our stickers used to be Acts 29, which is the church planting network, now it's Endeavor Network. One of our stickers may be something else.

Between Endeavor's desire to reach the unchurched and the over-churched and their lukewarm commitment to the SBC, many of Endeavor's members did not realize they were visiting a Southern Baptist congregation the first time they decided to give Endeavor a try. It took Patrick, a 28-year-old financial consultant, and his wife six months to figure it out:

> The other thing they don't mention—which I kind of wish they would—was the fact they're even affiliated with Southern Baptist Convention. I was hoping that—it was actually news to me until I became a member. I did not know that after sitting in that church for six months, I did not know they had any affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention—which I don't necessarily have a problem with. I just didn't know that.

Mark, a former Catholic, described the congregation as "nondenominational Baptist," and when I asked what drew him to the church he held up his Bible as simply said, "This."

Their relatively weak commitment to the SBC and the local Baptist seminary does not mean that Avondale Road and Endeavor Community's congregations are devoid of members with stronger ties to these organizations. On the contrary, Endeavor's geographic proximity to the seminary makes it a common stop for many new seminary students trying to find their church home for the next several years. For these students, however, the different feel is clear. Nate is a member of Endeavor Community Church and a student at the local seminary. He explains the different vibe he gets when interacting with the other members of his congregation versus his interactions with some of the members of other congregations in the same small radius:

> Being involved in the seminary—there's a very distinct seminary culture—and that's another reason why I kind of like Endeavor. Because it doesn't as much endorse [the] seminary…it just feels like some of these other—the other churches just have this air about them, the seminary is very much woven into the life of [those churches]… There's just this seminary-ness that can permeate churches that I don't think is very reflective of how life actually is.

Similarly, Pastor Cary of Avondale Road reflected on the number of seminary professors and students that attend his church despite the differences between the congregation's actions and the seminary's conservativism:

> We have seminary professors who have no issue with being a member here at all. And as a matter of fact, we've had 3 seminary professors since I've been here that have joined the church. And we have seminary students come all the time. And sometimes I'm amazed, but they show up.

Without a strong seminary influence, the members and leaders of Avondale Road and Endeavor Community Church have negotiated a religious culture that is left of most Southern Baptist congregations. In formal structure, they are both Bible-believing, saved-by-grace-alone congregations. In their actions, though, these congregations stray considerably from the conservativism of many of the congregations in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The following exchange with Pastor Cary highlights the culture of Avondale Road Baptist Church well:

> *From a theological perspective, would you describe this congregation as more conservative, moderate, or liberal?*
>
> How would I describe it? Or how would others describe it [laughing]?
>
> *You can answer both.*
>
> I would describe it as mainline traditional Southern Baptist. I think this church is fairly conservative in its theology. I would think that there are very few positions that we would

> be considered liberal or extreme or anything like that. And so I would think people that come here or hear me preach or go to Bible studies don't have issues. We have seminary professors who are members of the church here. But in the [state-wide] Baptist Convention, we are considered more of a moderate church mainly because we do not have an issue with women in ministry. So we have female deacons. We have female staff. And so that has just never been an issue with this church. So from a large convention perspective, we are considered maybe a more moderate Southern Baptist Church.

Longtime members of the Baptist faith also recognize Avondale Road's interesting blend of conservatism and progressivism. Bonnie, a 57-year-old business analyst, grew up in the Baptist Church and feared she might not be accepted into another Southern Baptist church when she divorced her husband and moved to Edwardsville seven years ago. Her seven years at Avondale Road, however, are exactly what she was looking for in a church:

> It's absolutely more liberal than other [Southern Baptist Churches] I've been a part of. But at the same time it's curiously traditional. It's absolutely Scripture based. And that's vital. I wouldn't have anything to do with the church if it was not. My father, who I'm very influenced by, was a very strict interpretationist and I guess I absorbed that from him, through him, or whatever. I believe the Bible is the inherent—absolute word of God. It's not a story. It's not a myth. It's not an analogy. It's not an allegory. I believe every word, if that's not what was being preached from the pulpit, I wouldn't be here…But I think that God puts us in places where we need to be for where we are in our heart and in our walk. So, I think that in the other churches where being a deacon wasn't available to

> women—I have no problem with that, because I wasn't ready. I wasn't in that place of my life…and I'm just thankful that God put me here where it was a possibility when I had [my service] to offer.

Many of the women I spoke with at Avondale Road Baptist Church expressed their desire to serve the church and their thankfulness for being able to do so in a "Bible-believing" congregation like Avondale Road Baptist Church. Similarly, members of Endeavor Community Church noted their congregations more liberal attitudes toward alcohol, dancing, and music, even though the congregation maintains a strong stance against homosexuality and has yet to let women serve in leadership roles.

Progressive theology and a reasonable social distance from the conveyors of procedural and structural legitimacy are at the core of the Local Visibility model. This strategy helps congregations build consequential legitimacy by making them visible to members of the local community in acts of service to various organizations, individuals, and the community at large. Most importantly, Local Visibility is a way of "doing good" for the sake of doing good and serves to distance these organizations from the organizations in the top right cell of Table 6.1 that are commonly viewed as off-putting for wearing their religion on their sleeve.

As I explained in my description of consequential legitimacy above, Avondale Road Baptist Church and Endeavor Community Church work to serve the community in a number of different ways; the aid that these congregations provide ranges from special medical screenings and education programs to various ministries in collaboration with other congregations in the region. Most congregations provide services to their local communities, though, and my intention here is not to rehash the different things that congregations do. Instead, I want to stress

the "doing good" for doing goods sake that motivate these congregations to be more involved in their local communities. Unlike more conservative congregations, these churches are able to separate evangelism from their actions in the local community, and in many ways this turns out to be a more significant way to sell their faith.

Pastor Craig of Endeavor Community Church put it simply when I asked him if he saw member's voluntarism as a way to tell people about the church: "When we're picking up trash, we just pick up trash." At Avondale Road, Pastor Cary emphasizes getting members and his staff out of the church and into the local community:

> We haven't done it yet, but we kind of discussed in staff meeting one day of having one morning a week, like from 9:00-12:00, whatever you wanted it to be, where staff wasn't to be in the building. They were to adopt an area and do something there. And it could be you and me are going to adopt Starbucks and we're going to go there every Thursday morning and have coffee and just get to know the people there. Or you and Joe are going to go over to LA Fitness and workout over there or something and just get to know people and try to get people out of here, even staff, and involved in the real world.

Pastor Cary, for one, recognizes how this community involvement helps bring consequential legitimacy to his church:

> Newspapers and television stations are not overly church friendly, but there are things that they get revved up about. If you're raising 15,000 pounds of food, they like that. If you've just renovated a room for Mercy Hollow—where every girl has been taken away

> from their families and has been severely abused—and you renovate a room there that causes a whole different feel to that campus, they want to show up and see that. And so we've been really good about making sure we get that stuff out and do that.

As illustrated by Pastor Cary's account and Pastor Craig's simple explanation, doing Local Visibility is more about being seen, but less about being heard. When organizations like the local news media are conferring churches with moral legitimacy, the payoff can be quite large. Not surprisingly, Endeavor Community and Avondale Road are two of Adams County's most successful congregations in terms of continued growth (Endeavor) and member giving (Avondale). Not all congregations that are socially distant from the local Baptist seminary are theologically moderate, though. I will now turn my attention to this final group of congregations in the bottom right cell of Table 6.1.

Charismatic Conservativism

The final group of congregations is also removed from the local network of Southern Baptist organizations, but they continue to closely adhere to the organizational field's institutional myths. For these congregations, moral legitimacy comes primarily though personal legitimacy. As I described above, this form of legitimacy is based on the charismatic qualities of organizational leaders (Suchman 1995), and as a result I refer to this strategy as Charismatic Conservativism. Among the congregations in my sample, only Hillview Christian Church continues to build its following in this way, though Avondale Road Baptist Church once occupied this cell and other Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County – including one I visited on multiple occasions – fit this description well.

As an ideal type, charismatic authority is too spontaneous and unpredictable to sustain long-term (Nelson 1993). As a competitive strategy, though, Charismatic Conservatism serves as a way to institutionalize the qualities of the charismatic leader into the complex bureaucratic structures of the corporate worship enterprise. According to Weber (1947), bureaucracy will trump all other forms of rationality, but this does not mean that charismatic authority and bureaucratic structures cannot coexist within the same organizational field (Biggart 1989). Biggart's (1989) study of direct selling organizations like Mary Kay Cosmetics shows how less rational forms of authority are more economically rational for some organizational forms. Following Glassman (1984), though, I argue that congregations in this cell actually manufacture charisma through their bureaucratic structures.

Behind the scenes at Hillview Christian Church is a bureaucratic structure unlike almost any religious congregation in the world. Hillview employs nearly 300 full-time workers, more than 200 part-time workers, and has an annual operating budget over $40 million. In order to serve more than 30,000 members across four different campuses, the congregation depends on a highly rationalized system of rules and procedures (Weber 1947). Nowhere in the congregation is this more apparent than in the specialization of the church's leadership. Pastor Doug oversees all of the other pastors on staff at Hillview and he explained to me that the church employs approximately 50 ordained ministers who fulfill the duties that 30 percent of U.S. congregations cannot pay one person a full-time salary to complete (Chaves and Anderson 2014). In a congregation as large as Hillview, it is impossible for the "pulpit preacher" to do house calls, provide pastoral counseling, and perform weddings and funerals as well. Instead, the bureaucratic structure demands specialization that allows Hillview's most visible pastors to focus on charismatic delivery and the mobilization of their followers.

Members' descriptions of Hillview's leadership highlight the importance of charisma in conferring this congregation with personal legitimacy. Lisa and her husband spent 5 years attending Hillview Christian Church's main campus before the church opened a satellite congregation closer to their home. Today, Lisa, her husband, and their two young children attend weekly worship services at this satellite branch. Even the satellite campus is a large change from the 400-member Christian church that Lisa grew up in. Like many of Hillview's other members, though, Lisa was drawn in by the spectacular presentation of Hillview's worship team and the charismatic qualities of Hillview's preaching staff. Lisa recalls one of her earliest interactions with Hillview's Senior Minister:

> Anytime I've been introduced to (Senior Minister) Paul or (Teaching Pastor) Kevin, they always made you feel like, like they knew you, I guess. Paul really impressed me the first time I went before [the church] and became a member. He took my name, there in the crowd, he heard me say my name. Then probably 20 minutes after he'd met a whole bunch more people and they pray and everything, he still remembered my name, and I thought 'that's pretty impressive.'

Later in our conversation she added, "They were a huge draw for me in the beginning," and she continued to highlight the different ways that Paul, Kevin, and Hillview's original Senior Minster worked to make their sermons feel more personal to the members and visitors of the congregation.

Lisa's account is not unique. Most of Hillview's members that I spoke with discussed the charismatic qualities of pastors Paul and Kevin. Doug, Hillview's Pastoral Minister and my lone

informant on the church's staff, put it simply: "Paul is a very outgoing kind of person and personality and everybody loves him." What makes Lisa's account more interesting, though, is that her family now attends one of Hillview's three satellite congregations. These congregations offer a shorter commute and a smaller feel than Hillview's primary campus. Each satellite congregation is a megachurch[11] in its own right, though, and none of the satellite churches offers live preaching. Instead, sermons are transmitted from the main campus to each of the satellite congregations and broadcast on several large screens during at least two different services each weekend. For many people, watching a religious service on a screen might seem like an odd way to do church. Lisa's narrative about the impersonal nature of these services, though, further illustrates the charismatic qualities of Hillview's leadership:

> You kind of forget. It looks like you're standing there. When I was at the [main] campus, I thought about that. I thought, that's kinda strange and that's gonna bother me. But then I realized I was usually watching the screen anyway. You're watching the screen anyway, so what's the difference? And I've said to several people that if they would have just had a different preacher, and not had Paul and Kevin, I wouldn't have gone to the [new] campus. I would have stayed at [the main campus].

For Lisa, the greatest appeal of Hillview Christian Church and its satellite campuses is the charismatic nature of Hillview's leaders and the quality of their delivery. Charisma is not something that you can teach, but as a competitive strategy, Charismatic Conservativism is as

[11] Megachurches are congregations with an average weekly attendance of more than 2,000 persons, a charismatic quality, and loose (or no) denomination ties.

intentional as the strategies of Zealous Advocacy and Local Visibility described above. It is a strategy that even extends into the other arms of Hillview's ministry like the men's Bible study group that meets regularly on Saturday mornings.

Dan is the area supervisor for a national greeting card company and a self-described "cradle Catholic." Dan and his wife decided to leave the Catholic Church and join Hillview when their daughter started attending another local Christian church. According to Dan, his daughter just "wasn't being fed" by the teachings and delivery of the Catholic Church, and he and his wife decided it was more important that their family all attend the same congregation than it was for he and his wife (also Catholic) to remain in the Catholic Church. The family's decision to join Hillview specifically, though, rested on Dan's experience in the church's men's Bible study. I asked Dan to tell me what was so unique about this particular group. His description of the men's Bible study group at Hillview is yet another example of the way that charismatic delivery is used to connect people with the church:

> What's so different about [the men's Bible study] is that, first of all, again, it gets back to content and delivery by the speaker. Our speaker, his name is John, and I feel like he's been gifted and that God has planted him in our church for a reason, and he has this way of making you understand the Bible.

The fact that Dan describes John as a gifted orator highlights the importance of delivery in congregations that garner their legitimacy from the charismatic qualities of their leaders. Pastor Doug also emphasized the importance of this when I asked him to tell my why he thought that Hillview was able to grow so much over the past 50 years:

> I [attribute our growth] to the Word of God being preached and preached well. Really well. Consistently every week. I can't think of a bad time, or any time that I've had to walk away and say "that's a bad sermon." Even if by some standards it wasn't as good as another, perhaps. But it's always good. People always get the Word and get it well here. And I think that's a huge difference. I don't know. I don't go to a lot of other churches unless I'm preaching, but from what I hear on the Internet occasionally or YouTube or whatever, I don't see that. I just don't see that good of preaching, consistently. Biblical preaching that is also not boring and people leave with joy because of what they've heard.

This sort of intentional focus on charismatic delivery is in stark contrast to the reserved nature of services at Newport Baptist Church or the less polished priests reciting mass in many Catholic congregations today. The result, though, is wide appeal to both conservative Christians – through the church's message – and curious moderates – through a delivery that resonates with most people's fascination with the spectacular (Sanders 2012). Charismatic conservatism is not without its problems, though, and few congregations in this cell garner the degree of personal legitimacy that Hillview Christian Church has managed to sustain over time.

The greatest problem with charisma is that it can be lost. At Avondale Road Baptist Church, Pastor Cary's arrival came on the heels of a tumultuous time for the congregation. In 2003, members of the congregation learned that their senior minister was having an affair with his married secretary. Members of the congregation who were around a decade earlier speak of Avondale Road's former minister much like the members of Hillview speak of pastor's Paul and

Kevin, though. Todd, a former marine in his early sixties describes the congregation's former leader:

> The way that guy could speak… [he] just had a way, I can't describe it. When I heard one of his sermons… it's like he's preaching from the heart all the time and he just brought it so alive and made it so real. The guy was just an amazing speaker.

Even after the scandal and his removal from the Church, Todd still speaks approvingly of his former pastor's qualities on the pulpit if not his behavior behind the scenes: "As far as I'm concerned, he's still the most awesome preacher I ever saw in my life."

Other descriptions of Avondale Road's former minister highlight another important attribute of charismatic leaders: tremendous authority (Eichler 1972). Sam and his wife have been members of Avondale Road Baptist Church for nearly 15 years. Sam recalls the authoritarian qualities of the church's former pastor:

> You didn't question anything. If you questioned anything, then you are out, not that you're excluded from the church, but you wouldn't be allowed to participate in anything. And a lot of secretive things about finances and his salary and so forth that nobody had any idea [about].

Mitch, a former member of the church, shared a similar account:

> [He] was very hands-on, almost to the point of micromanagement. He wanted certain things. He wanted certain things his way, which is fine. I mean, if you're—you know, that's what he's put into position for and to do that sort of stuff. So, I'm not saying that's wrong—right or wrong. I'm saying that's just [his] style. But [his style] was also very controlling. In the Baptist church there's committees that are put in charge to do certain things and a committee voted to do something else… He'd give the direction and say, "Well, this is gonna—Oh you misunderstood. I'm telling you this is what we need to do. Figure out how to make it happen."

The qualities that Sam and Mitch attribute to Avondale Road's former minister are reminiscent of the qualities of other notorious religious leaders that were lauded for their charisma and vilified for their micromanagement and control. They highlight an important difference between charismatic individuals and Charismatic Conservativism as a competitive strategy, though. As I have argued throughout this section, Charismatic Conservativism rests in the ability of charisma to be produced through bureaucratic structures that make the loss of any one individual – like Hillview's original senior pastor – a minor hiccup in the corporate church machine.

As a result of their minister's transgressions, many members of Avondale Road left the congregation and never returned. Today, Avondale Road relies on consequential legitimacy using the strategy of Local Visibility that I described above. For congregations that are able to institutionalize those charismatic qualities into the bureaucratic structure of the organization, though, Charismatic Conservativism is a powerful competitive strategy with wide appeal on the spectrum of religious preferences.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from this chapter have important theoretical implications for the sociology of religion and the study of organizations. An analysis of my in-depth interviews with the clergy members, and former members of five different conservative Protestant congregations shows that congregations construct competitive strategies in order to garner socio-political legitimacy within their organizational field. These strategies are dependent on the congregation's ties to the network of superordinate organizations in their field and the theology that characterizes the negotiated orders between members and staff. Table 6.2 shows where each of the congregations in my sample fall relative these different dimensions.

Table 6.2 Congregation's competitive strategies

		Theology	
		Moderate	**Conservative**
Seminary/ Convention Ties	**Strong**	N/A	Zealous Advocacy **Covenant Baptist** **Newton Baptist**
	Weak	Local Visibility **Avondale Road Baptist** **Endeavor Community**	Charismatic Conservativism **Hillview Chrisitan**

As I explained above, the competitive strategy of congregations in the top right cell closely reflects the institutional myth because of their strong attachment to the network of organizations that serve to confer them with socio-political legitimacy. Organizations in the other cells, however, showcase the classic breakage between formal structures and actual activities (Meyer and Rowan 1977). This is not the first study to demonstrate this process among a

population of religious congregations (e.g., Edgell 2006, Ellingson 2007), but it is the first study to do so in the context of religious competition.

Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that congregations are like other organizations (Douglas 1986) and that religious competition is best understood using theories of organizational behavior. In the previous two chapters I showed how the theories of population ecology and neo-institutionalism explain the emergence and failure of Southern Baptist congregations. In this chapter, I have shown how institutional pressures operate within organizations to create unique competitive strategies that increase their moral legitimacy (Suchman 1995), though they may inhibit congregations' actual growth. Clearly, this chapter adds additional evidence that competition is not about the plurality of religious options in a deregulated religious market (e.g., Finke and Stark 1988). Rather competition is about environmental pressures (Chapters 4 and 5) from other similar organizations and the like-minded power-wielding agents in an organization's field (DiMaggio 1991).

The contributions of this chapter are not limited to the sociology of religion, though. In the social scientific study of organizations, it is generally taken for granted that normative pressures cause isomorphic change (DiMaggio 1991, Ruef and Scott 1998). The current chapter shows, however, that normative pressures are not experienced equally by all of the organizations of the same form. Instead, normative pressures resemble coercive pressures in that they are experienced unequally across a population of organizations (Lounsbury 2001). Future studies of organizations will do well to consider that these pressures are not uniformly felt.

CHAPTER 7

CONGREGATIONS' SECULARIZING CULTURES

Each of the competitive strategies outlined in the previous chapter – Zealous Advocacy, Local Visibility, and Charismatic Conservativism – has a direct impact on the secularization of the local religious environment. The goal of this final empirical chapter is to understand the role of religious congregations in the secularization process. Relying on the same qualitative data that I used to answer my third empirical research question in Chapter 6, I now turn my attention to my fourth empirical research question: How do the organizational cultures of religious congregations combat/contribute to the secularization process? My focus here is in on the different ways sociologists of religion define secularization as well as the different ways members of local churches interpret their social world.

Recall from my discussion of secularization in Chapter 2 that secularization is a widely contested topic within the sociology of religion. Though our classic theories predicted widespread religious decline (e.g., Berger 1969), contemporary sociologists of religion recognize that there is greater nuance to the secularization process than the absence of religious belief (Chaves 1994, Yamane 1997). As I explained in Chapter 2, my understanding of secularization rests on the assumptions of these neo-secularization theorists, and their emphasis on the decline of religious authority rather than the total collapse of history's most powerful institution (Chaves 1994). More specifically, though, I am interested in how congregations might contribute to or combat this ongoing process. As it turns out, the organizational cultures that emerge within each

congregation through their unique competitive strategies serve to carry out the decline of religious authority in several important ways.

In the paragraphs that follow I will demonstrate how Zealous Advocacy, Local Visibility, and Charismatic Conservativism are more than just competitive strategies. Each strategy also characterizes the organizational culture of these congregations, and each of these strategies is a vehicle for the advancement of secularization as declining religious authority in the larger social world. Peter Berger (1969: 110), for one, raised an important question about the relationship between Western religion and secularization when he noted that "the Western religious tradition may have carried the seeds of secularization within itself." In the paragraphs that follow, I will show that there is considerable truth to this claim, although the processes at work behind the scenes are considerably different from the theoretical explanation put forth by Berger (1969, 1970).

Secularization

According to Peter Berger (1969: 127), religious pluralism plunges religion into a "crisis of credibility" making it difficult for any religious organization to demonstrate its value relative the myriad of religious choices available to consumers in the modern world. As such, Berger's theory posits a scenario where religion itself is the vehicle for religious decline. The persistence of religion despite widespread deregulation and dramatic growth in the number of religious options, though, caused many, including Berger (1997), to abandon this idea. This is unfortunate because Berger's (1969, 1970) theory of religious pluralism offers considerably more to the sociology of religion than an understanding of religious decline. More specifically, the notion

that religious organizations play a role in the secularization process is not dependent on the assumption that secularization is limited to macro religious decline.

Instead of focusing on religious decline, my focus is on the changing nature of religion in the modern world. In Chapter 2, I explained the different ways that secularization is understood and emphasized my focus on secularization as the differentiation between the sacred and profane. Recall from this discussion Habermas's (2002) point that the modern world is a place where religious and secular worldviews co-exist, and Smith's (2003) addendum that these worldviews also compete. My interest in this chapter is how the competition (or lack of) between religious organizations and secular worldviews solidifies the distinction of these separate spheres, or what Chaves (1994) noted is the declining scope of religious authority.

The proposition that religious organizations play a role in the secularization process remains untested against more nuanced understandings of the term. Specifically, if secularization is the process of diminishing religious authority, there is considerable reason to suspect that religious organizations play a role. McMullin (2013), for one, points out that failing congregations tend to attribute their declining memberships to external factors when internal problems are actually to blame. Successful congregations, on the other hand are "congregations that effectively engage the surrounding culture" (McMullin 2013: 53) Interestingly, "engaging the surrounding culture" means providing alternatives to the traditional Sunday morning worship service by offering services on Saturday evenings and abandoning traditional hymns for more contemporary worship styles that resonate with a younger crowd. In sum, stubborn religious organizations that fail to change their formal structures risk losing members and causing secularization in the classic sense while "successful" congregations are those that concede to the steady decline of religious authority and the consequential triumph of secular ideas.

Even the new paradigm offers evidence of secularization as declining religious authority. More specifically, the religious preferences outlined in Stark and Finke's (2000: 209) characterization of the American religious landscape include groups that want to limit religion to specific times and places as well as groups of people that "barely want religion at all." As such, the new paradigm carelessly dismisses secularization while simultaneously pointing out that more than half (since those with no religious preference are not even accounted for here) prefer that religion be relegated to the private sphere. The unfortunate result of this is more than two decades of research on religious competition that overlooks the broader implications of secularization in the modern world. Included in these oversights is Weber's (1968) conceptualization of religious authority via his focus on the means rather than the ends as well as Berger's (1970) thesis that contemporary religions will be relegated to marginalized social groups.

Berger's (1970: 21) assertion that religion will only persist among groups of people with "little interest or stake in the world of modernity" is based on the misguided assumption that religion and science are incompatible institutions. This, of course, is not borne out in the modern world, but there is still solid evidence that religion is primarily for the marginalized and stigmatized within the larger social world. Norris and Inglehart (2004), for example, highlight the prevalence of religion in the developing world compared to the post-industrial West. In the United States, Stark and Finke (2000) describe members of the strict and ultra-strict niches as individuals willing to let religion fully guide their lives. However, they also note that the high cost of doing so makes these faiths more appealing to marginalized and stigmatized groups that do not have as much to lose.

Competitive Strategies as Organizational Cultures

The members of religious organizations play a unique role in the creation of congregations' organizational cultures. Members are a congregation's most important resource (Chaves 2004) and they play an active role in the creation of organizational cultures. As I explained in Chapter 2, the cultures of congregations are simultaneously handed down from clergy and other church officials *and* (re)created by the congregation's members that make the organization possible by filling the pews. More specifically, congregations are negotiated orders that are continually being redefined (Fine 1984). According to Fine (1984: 243), negotiated orders are "based upon the way interactants perceive the structure in which they are embedded." Since the competitive strategies that congregations use are based on congregations' relationships to their organizational field, these strategies necessarily share similar traits with the congregation's culture.

The competitive strategies I described in Chapter 6 serve to confer religious organizations with socio-political legitimacy, albeit in different forms. Since the members of religious congregations are intimately involved in the creation of these strategies, though, they are also re-produced as organizational cultures that act as the "glue" between the organization's seams (Smircich 1983). Competitive strategies are often the first look that members get into the structures and the cultures of the religious congregations they choose. As such, these competitive strategies serve two important functions: 1) they convey the rules and the structures of the congregation to prospective members, and 2) they turn congregations into organizations of like-minded individuals who already share the religious preferences held by the other members of the church.

As voluntary organizations, the organizational cultures of religious congregations are distinct from the organizational cultures of other types of organizations. In general, the former are more integrated (Trice and Beyer 1992) due to the strong consensus between members and leaders and the continuity and clarity of each congregation's formal goals over time. In work organizations, workers are unlikely to be familiar with the organization's rules and structures until they learn these rules and structures over time (Kunda 2006). Furthermore, unhappy workers may not leave these organizations until they have secured employment elsewhere. These qualities serve to make ambiguity high and consensus low (Trice and Beyer 1992). In congregations, on the other hand, the competitive strategies that attract new members become the organizational cultures that help keep them there. Barring a major organizational change like a merger with another church or a change in the church's leaders, these organizational cultures are generally sustained over long periods of time.

To be clearer, I asked members to tell me if there was anything they would like to change about their church. An overwhelming number of responses were the same:

> No. Except more hours in a day so I can get in the community group. No. I wouldn't change anything. (Mark, Endeavor)

> I haven't really given that much thought. I'm fully happy with Hillview. I don't really have any desire to go anywhere [else]. I don't have really anything that I would wanna change. I'm truly happy with the direction the church [is] taking. (Dan, Hillview)

> I don't know. I think if I would want to change something about Covenant, I would need to go back and look at my heart and my pride. Like it may not be Covenant, it may be me. Like it may be—it's probably not…[it's] the circumstances. It may be me and my own sin of having—of having to work through something (Callie, Covenant)

> I really can't think of anything. I mean, we [my family] just got back from a week away, and, you know, it killed me. It's like I couldn't stand not being here. (Shelia, Avondale Road)

Even some former members still express sympathy for the views of their former congregations:

> Wow. I probably wouldn't change anything. They—Avondale doesn't know how blessed they are to have the congregation they do. (Mitch, formerly Avondale Road)

> I never thought that was—I never tried to change them. I can't think of anything I'd like to change. (Bruce, formerly Hillview)

In sum, the role of members in the creation of organizational cultures and their reproduction over time challenges the prevailing wisdom within the sociology of religion's new paradigm that religious organizations move niches and that large scale religious change is due to changes in supply and not changes in demand. The reality is that members (demand) play a vital role in the creation of congregational cultures (supply), and it is through this relationship that

macro level religious change occurs. In the paragraphs that follow I will demonstrate how this process works to enhance the decay of religious authority in the modern world.

Zealous Advocacy as Opiate

If we assume that Stark and Finke's (2000) bell curve of Americans' religious preferences (Figure 4.5) is correct then congregations at either end of the curve will have limited appeal within the American religious landscape. For proponents of the new paradigm, though, this is simply part of the "churching" of America (Finke and Stark 1992). More specifically, in order to meet the religious demand of 320 million Americans there must be high tension *and* low tension faiths as well as a sizeable collection of congregations in between. These supply-side models assume that religious demand is constant and religious change depends entirely on religious supply (Stark and Finke 2000, Warner 1993). This is a bold assumption, though, given the growing number of religious "nones" in the United States (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2012) and the dearth of participation across the most advanced countries in the world (Norris and Inglehart 2004).

Instead of trying to procure more members from a growing population of unchurched religious "nones," congregations in the top right cell of Table 6.2 continue to focus their efforts on their own members. In many ways, Zealous Advocacy is only a competitive strategy in the sense that it confers these organizations with procedural legitimacy and helps them maintain their current base of members. Adam, the 33-year-old insurance analyst quoted in Chapter 6, described his congregation's emphasis on serving the conservative Christian population, and not the growing numbers of unchurched Americans:

> When you kind of take the weight off and trust that the Lord is gonna bring who He will—serve the church and He's gonna put in your path who He wants in your path—we wanna be diligent to share with the people that He puts in our path. But I'm not walking down Michigan Avenue—I wouldn't say that Newport is actively trying to bring the unchurched—and [we're] definitely not your seeker-friendly type of church. Newport is not offering a sermon series on "Seven Ways to Improve your Finances," you know…[Our pastors] are not targeting the sermon series—or, sermons are not targeted at the unchurched. [The sermons] are targeted at Christians.

Adam and his wife Leah both expressed their desire to see the congregation serve its own members and their families before trying to reach out into the larger community. Similarly, Pastor Jason gave his congregation a "C" when I asked him to tell me how successful he thought the church was in reaching the local community. Interestingly, he blamed the church's lack of success on the culture that permeates the congregation:

> *What is preventing you from giving this church a higher grade?*
>
> I think it's just partly the culture. In churches there are cultures that develop in terms of what people are thinking about, talking about, doing—and I think there's a variety of factors in this. You could argue we have a lot of students. They're more transient so they're not as planted in the community. They're busy; they're trying to work and go to school. A lot of times they have a family. Seminary is different from college because a lot of times you have a family. So there are some factors that I don't think have to do with Godliness. I think they just have to do with circumstantial—that create challenges for us

> in that regard. I think there are some factors that are—it's easy, it's comfortable to be with people that believe like you believe…The Gospel can be an offense to people; it's hard to hear people not like what you say. So there can be things like that, and I'm sure that's all part of it.

At Covenant Baptist Church, success in reaching the local community is considerably higher, but the culture of the organization is still focused on core Christian values versus reaching the unchurched. For Courtney, a 29-year-old counseling major at the local seminary, this was grounds for her to seek a different church:

> A family that I lived with that went to Covenant—that I cared for—had adversities and had kind of a different trial, and I felt it was handled in an uncharitable way. And so—they were very, very dear to my heart. And so—I just wrestled through that, you know. Trying to see perspective on why they're being addressed for who they are and handled the way they are…So just a couple years of wrestling, having conversations, trying to feel like—there's nothing that makes this church non-Christian, you know. They're definitely holding to the Gospel and preach it faithfully. But is this a place that I personally can grow and help other people grow?

Courtney's account speaks to the difficult time that churches with such a strict adherence to a conservative interpretation of the Bible can have with reaching the unchurched. On the other hand, these congregations often do an excellent job of reaching marginalized groups like racial and ethnic minorities and women who are already a part of the Christian community.

I asked Pastor Robby to tell me why he thought his church was able to grow and build a following that more closely resembles the demographics of the church's neighborhood since his arrival in 2004. His response highlights the appeal of conservative religious groups to the members of traditionally disadvantaged groups.

> At the end of the day I think that the Biblical Gospel began to be preached with the power of the Holy Spirit. That was the primary thing that happened…In terms of what we did, I certainly didn't have any expertise on how to reach the inner city or how to attract African American people…but Covenant certainly has grown in diversity—racial diversity as well as cultural diversity. And really it's just been by the simple preaching of the Gospel.

Similarly, Callie told me about her first experience at Covenant when Robby's sermon topic was "Hell is Real." Callie was immediately sold on this church and filled out a membership card the very next day. Here, she recalls that experience as well as an instance of church discipline that occurred that same evening and the powerful impact that it had on her decision to join the church:

> The first day I come here—so I go to 'Hell is real,' right?—later that evening, someone says, "Come to our members' meeting." Well later that night they were disciplining someone [laughs], and I was like "What?!" But in that moment, I was like "man, this is good." If we see injustice in the world we want it paid for, we want it taken care of. And when there's injustice in the Church, there's room for church discipline.

For Callie and many of the congregation's disadvantaged members, strict adherence to the conservative message is an appealing competitive strategy. For others, like Courtney, this can be an off-putting culture if every member is held to the same Biblical standard without reflection on the circumstances.

Today, few sociologists of religion embrace the notion that religion is always harmful. Quite the opposite, a growing body of research shows that religion, in most places and for most people, produces positive and measurable rewards (Koenig and Larson 2001), but there is another dimension to the "religion as opiate" argument that continues to gather support and seems to be consistent with zealous congregations like Covenant and Newport. According to Stark and Finke (2000) and other proponents of the religious economies model (e.g., Iannaccone 1994) high cost faiths are generally more appealing to socially disadvantaged groups like women and racial and ethnic minorities. Members of these groups have less to lose via their participation in high cost faiths and significantly more to gain from the promise of otherworldly rewards. Leah and Adam's reflection on the sermons at Newport speaks to this tension that their church's message does not stray from:

> Leah: [They're] not just like happy, feel-good sermons that aren't gonna touch on the things that are hard.

> Adam: That's one thing that drew me was that there was, you know, a Psalm and then a reminder that you are a sinner, but then reminding you that Christ has removed your sins.

For people that are not used to this kind of culture it can be an off-putting environment that serves to limit the wider appeal of these congregations. Not surprisingly, these congregations tend to be insulated bubbles unlike the congregations in the other cells of Table 6.2. Members of both congregations continually shared similar responses when I asked them about the role their congregation plays in their social life:

> I would say they are the majority of my social life. Obviously, the center of my social life. You know, I lead a small group at my church. So, about five different families from the church come to our house twice a month for a meal, and fellowship, and Bible study. And I really enjoy that. And then some of those guys in that group, you know, I'm like e-mailing with, texting, calling throughout the week. (Jeremiah, Newport)

> Newport probably is my social life. (Adam, Newport)

> Oh, yeah. It was most of our social…We just lived right around the corner from the church—the church building. But I taught Sunday School and then we went to all the members meetings—so we went on Sunday night…so really that was a large, probably 80 percent to 90 percent of our free times [were spent] there or with people from the church. (Levi, formerly Newport)

> Covenant is probably about 80 percent of my social life or at least people from Covenant. We define Covenant as—we define it like "am I in the building everyday of the week?" Well, yes, 'cause I'm a pastoral assistant as well. So, I work here 15 to 20 hours a week,

> but like as far as the people go, it's like, yeah. I spend probably 80 percent of my time—social time with people from Covenant and I would say probably the other 10 or 15 percent of my time is, you know, with people who we send from Covenant [to serve in other ministries] or people who used to go to Covenant. (Keaton, Covenant)

At other congregations, however, members did not engage nearly as much with the other members of their church:

> I'm relatively new to being saved. I have quite a few friends who are not in the faith at all and I kinda feel like I don't wanna sever those relationships lest I, you know, not be in their lives, hopefully as a godly example or whatever. But I would say that, you know, I don't really have a ton of friends that go to Endeavor. (Riley, Endeavor)

> We don't have a huge social tie here. (Megan, Avondale Road)

> I have—you know, I have fostered a few relationships here. But it's more—I think, for me—growing up, church wasn't really ever a social thing for us. So, I've just kind of sort of taken that with me. And it kinda goes back to what I said earlier. It's not—I mean it's not—it's just that phase in life or it's kinda like the crossroads. There's so many big decisions that I'm having to make on a daily basis about everything in life that it's kind of like—I mean a lot of people have—they've kind of got their families and they've got their whatever. It's kind of like, "Do I wanna take on another responsibility [of getting to know them]?" (Jamie, Avondale Road)

> I have one really good friend and I indicated that, you know, that's there and that I'm a friendly lad. We go to the same Bible study—the same men's Bible study. And we socialized with that. But other than that, you know, I don't have—I have lots of friends and I have lots of acquaintances, but I don't have really, like really close friends other than this guy. (Dan, Hillview)

These examples are not intended to imply that the members of Covenant and Newport Baptist churches are socially involved in their congregations and the members of the other three congregations are not. On the contrary, congregations play an important role in members' social live across all of the congregations in my sample and most places where people worship on a regular basis (Ammerman 2005). These members' accounts, however, speak to the general social insulation in the zealous congregations versus religious organizations with other types of cultures.

As a result of their social insulation and their appeal to the marginalized groups, congregations in the top right cell of Table 6.2 are expediting the decline of religious authority in the modern world. To the first point, the social insulation of these congregations and their focus on their own sends a message that these are not welcoming places for nonbelievers to "sample" the Christian faith. If all congregations adopted this culture it would serve to maintain a population of unchurched women and men outside the church's walls. To the second point, the focus on otherworldly rewards for high cost payments makes clear that religion is in the Church and not in the world. Marginalized groups routinely put off this-worldly rewards for promises

beyond the current life (Berger 1969, 1970). As these individuals work to serve the Lord, they may miss out on opportunities to serve the world (Wood 1994).

Local Visibility as Separate Spheres

Unlike the zealous congregations described above, congregations that engage in Local Visibility create cultures that reach out to the larger community and broaden the appeal of their generally conservative base. The organizational cultures of these congregations are geared toward reaching the unchurched population; to do this, though, congregations often have to engage in a secularization of their own. Earlier, I discussed Steve McMullin's (2013) characterization of "successful churches" as those congregations that embrace their secular surroundings. Similarly, Ellingson's (2007) study of nine Lutheran congregations in California also demonstrates the tension between traditional religion and contemporary appeal. According to Ellingson, modern Lutheran congregations are abandoning their traditions and adopting the practices of the contemporary megachurch or at least creating hybrids of traditional Lutheranism and more evangelical worship styles. By conforming to changes in the secular world, the successful congregations in both of these studies – and the congregations in the bottom left cell of Table 6.2 – are stalling the macro level religious decline while simultaneously conceding their religious authority to the secular world.

Part of the secularization of these congregations is their engagement with the non-religious world. A classic example of this is Riley's (see quote above) desire to remain in the lives of his non-Christian friends. For Riley, the point is not to hound his unbelieving friends until they concede to Christian morals. The point is to be a "godly example" and hope that they find Truth (capital T) on their own. This was echoed in Pastor Craig's (Endeavor) explanation of

the congregation's local trash pick-up as simply "picking up trash" and Pastor Cary's (Avondale Road) desire to get people out of the building and engaging with the rest of the world. In both of these congregations there is a desire to present the Church to the rest of the world in a non-threatening, all-are-welcome kind of way. To do this, though, means adopting a more moderate view that limits religion to specific times, specific places, and specific functions (Stark and Finke 2000).

Perhaps more problematic for the general triumph of religion over secular authority, though, is that these congregations (and those in the bottom right cell of Table 6.2) serve as direct competition for other congregations in the area. In general, the formal structures of religious organizations are built around the institutional myth that like-minded congregations share a common goal and are not direct competitors in the sense that car dealerships, restaurants, or hair salons compete. Nevertheless, I showed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 that religious competition is a real phenomenon, albeit in different ways than the sociology of religion's new paradigm predicts. When congregations make changes that concede to secular authority, they put pressure on other congregations to do the same in order to maximize their appeal. Pastor Cary acknowledged this phenomenon:

> In my mind, the competitor is Satan and anybody that's on God's side is on my side. In reality…you tend to feel competition from other churches. Now we preach against that and I say it all of the time in Sermons. If Central Christian baptizes somebody, it's made Avondale Road stronger. I've said that several times, and in sermons, and things like that. But in reality, when it comes to people visiting and people going out there is a sense of competition mindset and so there are a couple of churches we gauge ourselves by in this

area. One is Central because they are the largest church in this area, 3- or 4,000. And so we gauge a lot of what we do by them. And there's even been times in staff meetings that someone's said "I got this flier from Central. We've been talking about this for three months and they did it." And we go, "Oh crap. Why didn't we pull the gun on that six months ago?"

For the new paradigm, this sort of competition is good because it will lead to more efficient congregations, offering better products to meet the unique demands of potential participants. As a result, it makes sense to hypothesize that religious competition is good for religious vitality. In reality, though, successful congregations are those that regress toward to the middle of the bell curve (Figure 4.5), and I have already explained how this alone is evidence of religion's waning authority.

Local visibility, in particular, is a strategy that builds a congregational culture based on the balance between the sacred and profane. Consider this exchange with Mark, a 33-year-old former (nominal) Catholic who found his way to Endeavor shortly after a bar-fight landed him in jail:

Why do you think there are so many 18 to 40 year olds in this congregation?

Music.

The music?

Yeah. It's rock and roll—I guess you can call it rock and roll. Loud. Loud singing, hands raised.

Do you think that's more appealing to people that didn't grow up in the Church?

Yeah. I had about 40 friends of mine come to my baptism and over half of them were just like I'd go back just to hear the music. You know? And that might—that was a little part in keeping me coming back. You know, I thought I was getting a free concert every Sunday.

Mark eventually came around to the embracing the message too, but in a congregation full of people like Mark, the members help to reproduce a culture that is decidedly moderate.

As I explained in the previous chapter, Local Visibility serves to confer congregations with consequential legitimacy because they do real, measurable good within their communities. This strategy also serves to attract a more moderate group of followers, though. Since members play a vital role in the creation of congregations' organizational cultures and moderate practices help these congregations build their flock, the congregations in this grouping are fighting against macro-level declines while simultaneously conceding to the spread of secular authority. In the following section I will show that there are significant similarities between the congregations in this grouping and the charismatic congregations in the bottom right cell of Table 6.2. That said, though, there are also some unique characteristics that I will address as well.

Charismatic Conservativism as Misplaced Authority

Charismatic Conservatism creates an organizational culture with outcomes similar to Local Visibility. Their difference, however, rests in the underlying mechanisms that serve to create their distinctive cultures. As I described above, Local Visibility is primarily rooted in moderate theology and serves to attract a base that is not particularly interested in expanding the

reach of religious authority. Charismatic Conservativism, on the other hand, attracts a moderate (and even liberal) base despite the religious conservativism of the congregation's leaders and some of their flock. The reasons for this difference include the problem of free-riding, members' mixed (or misplaced) motivations, and the bureaucratic nature of these organizations.

In general, charismatic congregations are large, and large organizations are subject to free-riding (Olson 1965). According to Tom, a 53-year-old high school teacher and member of Hillview Christian Church, Hillview is a classic example of the 80-20 rule. In Tom's words, "20 percent of the group does 80 percent of the work." According to Stark and Finke (2000), large congregations make it difficult to build dense social networks and monitor members' behavior. This makes free-riding possible. In terms of secular authority, the problem is clearly articulated in the following proposition: "Lacking class ties within their congregation, members of large congregations will tend to be linked to outsiders…Not only are outsiders unable to reinforce commitment, they often express some degree of skepticism" (Stark and Finke 2000: 161-2).

I have already outlined the general lack of social ties in congregations like Hillview, but the prevalence of free-riding is also worth noting. Wade, a former Hillview member described his first few months in the church:

> It was the perfect environment contrary to a lot of my friends' experience—because most of my friends come from small—small churches, small areas. It was perfect for me because it was like a university environment. And I can literally hide. You know, I could disappear into the crowd and that's exactly what I wanted it to be. I didn't really want anybody to know me and my guard was completely up.

Pastor Doug also acknowledged that there are individuals in his congregation that are using the church for personal gain: "Do we have people who come here because other people come here [and they want to be seen]? I'm sure that's the case." As a large congregation, free-riding is also a problem at Endeavor. Unlike Hillview, though, Endeavor combats this problem with multiple smaller campuses, four Sunday services at their main campus, and community groups of 10-12 members that meet weekly outside of the church. At Hillview, even the satellite campuses attract more than 3,000 people each week and only a small portion of the church – the congregation's most committed members – participate in the church's smaller groups.

Beyond free-riding, the attachment that Hillview's members have to the congregation's leaders makes for a unique organizational culture as well. Recall from Chapter 6, Lisa's acknowledgement that she would not attend the congregation's satellite campus if she was not able to get the same sermon (from the same ministers) that visitors to the main campus get each week. This serves to create an organizational culture based on a shallow commitment to the leader's personal qualities rather than the message they are trying to share. Callie (Covenant Baptist) described her former congregation, a charismatic megachurch on the east coast, as "a mile wide and an inch deep." Most conservative Christians, like Callie, are looking for a deeper and more challenging culture. Similarly, Troy, a member of Hillview Christian Church, lamented that the congregation's leaders tend to choose accessibility over depth when it comes to their sermons. For people from more liberal or moderate religious backgrounds like Dan (quoted in the previous chapter), Hillview's message does not appear "watered down." For members that are used to going through the Bible verse-by-verse, though, the preaching at Hillview is sometimes too board and seldom very deep.

In terms of the congregation's culture and its relationship to declining religious authority, the problems described above are similar to the problems of Local Visibility. Both free-riding and authority based on personal charisma create a membership base that generally does not expect that the lines between the religious and the secular worlds will ever become blurred. There are members of Hillview that demand a higher tension faith, and these members often find it in the smaller groups that meet in the church outside of the corporate worship service. As a result, the organizational culture of these charismatic congregations is a bit more fragmented (Trice and Beyer 1992) than the cultures of other congregations. This fragmentation is also apparent in the problems of bureaucracy that trouble the congregations with loose ties to the seminary but a formal structure that is still rooted in conservative theology.

Large bureaucracies are plagued with problems like inefficiency and lots of red tape. As congregations grow, they face similar obstacles. Jack, a 78-year-old retired school teacher discussed some of the problems he sees with Hillview's bureaucratic nature:

> There are lots of teachers—and we've sat in on their classes—who were teaching that—their Biblical knowledge is quite limited to say the least. Not that they're heart and their intentions aren't good, but the level of their understanding and teaching is—it just keeps the church in a pretty shallow level…I think with the leadership of churches the size of Hillview—Our current [minister] and his staff, they're pretty far removed from understanding what's going on.

Jack's concerns highlight two problems in the church. One is some members' desire for a deeper, more challenging theology as I described above. The second is the many bureaucratic channels

between the congregation's senior leadership and some of the church's lower ranking staff. This is a problem of communication, and it is a problem that exists in all large congregations. Erica's response to my question about changes that she would like to see in her congregation highlights the communication issue that manifests itself at Endeavor as well:

> I guess with anything I feel like—and this is not the church side of it, but more of the business side of it—is communication between departments. I'm not certain if that fits into what you're asking about…but just having—I've worked with the Connect Team that helps setup services—for several years and they're just—the only issues I ever have are when, you know, like somebody's taken our supplies and not returned [them] where they were, so like that type of thing…which is minor in the big scheme of things, but at the same time it's so repetitive that it's a big headache. So just if there were a better organizational sense to filter down. Like I'm sure that the main pastors communicate with each other, but it doesn't always—between departments of like the elders and downward like just the members, I don't know that there's always the best form of communication.

Similarly, Jack's wife Carol highlights another take on the communication issues at Hillview:

> I think it's—for me, I feel totally detached from them [the church's leaders]. I mean I don't have anything to do with them. When problems have come up…we've had no regrets…It's just nowhere to go. We just say okay. There's nothing more we can do about that and that's that and you drop it.

Like a bad game of telephone, communication between too many different groups leads to no communication at all. In these congregations, the top does not always know what the bottom is doing even though their organizational structures are intended to maximize efficiency. Similarly, these congregations are also beset by the problem of misplaced goals (Merton 1938, Whyte 1956).

Organizations are created to meet goals (Aldrich and Ruef 2006), but sometimes those goals become displaced (Merton 1938, Whyte 1956). In congregations, the goal of "saving souls" can be replaced by the goal of growing the church. In some ways, this might explain the concession to secular authority in congregations like Avondale Road and Endeavor Community Church. In other organizations, congregations included, the goals become lost in the process of doing things the way they have always been done.

Carol and Jack's story paints a cautionary tale about the different ways that goal displacement can have a negative effect on the congregation. Carol, like her husband Jack, is retired from her career as a social worker. Since her retirement, the two of them have become heavily involved in overseas missions work through Hillview Christian Church. Several years ago, they went through a difficult process to help bring a young Somali refugee back to the states after doing missions work in Kenya. Recently it came to their attention, though, that the church's primary missions partner in East Africa is a persistent violator of human rights. In their attempts to bring this to the attention of the church, Carol, Jack, and their adopted Somali daughter were continually denied a voice:

> I'm done with them, you know. I'm just done with them after the way they've treated Himaya and treated us and—not so much how they've treated us but, you know, it was

> just wrong. They never talked to her [Himaya]. They've branded her a troublemaker. They actually had her removed from the campus [via the congregation's security workers] when she went in and asked somebody to pray [with her].

Having experienced the treatment of the church's mission partners first hand, Himaya did not want her own baby left in Kenya with the group that helped bring her out of Somalia; her attempts to do something about the situation were continually dismissed, though. According to Carol, she was labeled a troublemaker for pointing out that the church's money was going into the pockets of the church's Kenyan contact and not for shoes, diapers, and other supplies that the money was intended to buy. Eventually the family managed to secure a meeting with a group of the church's elders but ultimately no changes came about and Himaya was repeatedly denied any further attention from the church's missionary staff.

The story of Carol, Jack, and Himaya is an extreme example, but it highlights another problem that arises in bureaucracies when the organization insists that the right way to do things is the way they have always been done. Hillview continues to work with the same missionary group in Kenya and continues to sweep Himaya's story under the rug. Since less committed members will never see behind the curtain, though, bureaucratic red tape serves to keep these people (the less committed) in the pews.

The fragmented nature of Charismatic Conservativism means that most members are not conservative at all. Instead, religious free-riders, shallow believers, and the problems of communication and displaced goals maintain a steady supply of religious moderates (and even liberals) who tend to leave their religion at the door when they exit the church. Unlike the cultures at Avondale Road and Endeavor Community Church, this process is less intentional and

more the result of large bureaucracies and legitimacy that is based on the personal rather than the consequential. Nevertheless, both strategies promote the advancement of secular authority even if they challenge the classic perspective of macro religious decline.

Discussion and Conclusion

In many ways, the congregations in this study support Stark and Finke's (2000) propositions about religious groups in a market context. High tension faiths produce more committed members (Stark and Finke 2000: 155). Larger congregations make free-riding possible (Stark and Finke 2000: 161). Higher tension faiths tend to appeal to women and disadvantaged racial and ethnic minorities (Stark and Finke 2000: 208). The list goes on. Where my analysis differs from the new paradigm's dismissal of the secularization thesis, though, is my understanding of each of these principles as evidence that religious authority is diminishing in kind.

By focusing on the role that members play in the creation of congregations' organizational cultures, I have shown how the competitive strategies that attract these members become the organizational cultures that members and leaders continually recreate over time. With the exception of large church bureaucracies, the organizational cultures of religious congregations are generally integrated, consistent, and steeped in consensus (Trice and Beyer 1992). Nevertheless, as Berger (1969, 1970) predicted I have shown that these cultures serve to advance the secularization process in a number of important ways.

As an organizational culture, Zealous Advocacy is an opiate that attracts marginalized groups and separates them from the social world. The appeal of these congregations is small, but their members are highly committed and generally focused on themselves (the congregation) and

their own salvation. The congregations in this cell (Table 6.2) are reminiscent of the congregations in Rich Wood's (1994) study of religion and political action that are unable to serve the world because of their focus on otherworldly rewards. As a result, these congregations do not advance the secularization process so much as they do very little to stall it. While worship is going on inside these congregations' walls, religious authority is declining outside of them.

Local Visibility, on the other hand, rests solely on the congregations' engagement with the secular community. For these congregations, sharing their faith means doing well by others. As I explained above, this serves an important function in limiting the type of macro level secularization that the old paradigm foresaw and the new paradigm put to rest. Nevertheless, I also demonstrated that the appeal of these congregations is rooted in the maintenance of unique religious and secular spheres (Casanova 1994).

The problem of Charismatic Conservativism is much the same. Appeal rooted in personal legitimacy causes congregations to attract membership bases that permit free-riding, moderate theology, and poor-communication across their fragmented organizational cultures (Trice and Beyer 1992). Like the cultures of congregations in the bottom left cell (Table 6.2), Charismatic Conservative cultures make it possible for there to be a continued distinction between the sacred and profane.

In sum, this chapter highlights a number of important considerations for sociologists of religion and the study of organizations much like the results of my previous empirical chapters. First, there is more to the classical perspective in the sociology of religion than macro religious decline, and these important insights must be considered alongside our more recently formed understandings dubbed the neo-secularization thesis (Yamane 1997). Second, not all congregations play an equal role in the secularization process and some attempts to combat

macro-level religious decline serve to perpetuate the declining authority of the religious sphere. Finally, competitive strategies and organizational cultures can be one in the same when organizational strategies serve to attract voluntary members that will ultimately play a vital role in the recreation of these cultures.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Unlike many other types of organizations, congregations generally lack financial, coercive, or utilitarian goals (Nelson 1993). Nevertheless, this dissertation shows that we can understand organizational processes within this unique organizational form using the same methods we use to understand different organizational processes among more typical organizational forms. My dissertation is not the first empirical study to make this assumption (e.g., Douglas 1986), but it is among the first to use organizational theories to explain the formation and mortality of religious congregations (see Dougherty et al. (2008) and Scheitle and Dougherty (2008) for other examples). Unlike other research that focuses on congregations and their institutional environments (e.g., Becker 1999, Edgell 2006, Ellingson 2007), this dissertation is the first to do so for the purpose of improving our understanding of congregations' competitive processes.[12]

The majority of research on religious competition focuses on the (de)regulation of religion (Froese 2004) and the plurality of religious options (Finke and Stark 1988, 1989, Finke et al. 1996) available to religious consumers in different religious markets. A few more recent studies focus on the religious market share of individual denominations (Hull and Lipford 2010, Stark and Finke 2004). None of these studies, however, provides an accurate articulation of

[12] Ellingson (2007) also engages the different theories of religious competition in the sociology of religion, but his purpose is to explain how the modern congregation can build communities of solidarity when tradition comes up short.

religious competition given the stability of individuals' religious preferences in the United States (Sherkat and Wilson 1995, Sherkat 1998). In contrast, this dissertation uses a definition of competition that is based on what we already know about religious capital and religious conversion (Iannaccone 1990, Sherkat and Wilson 1995), clergy's responses to variations in the religious market (Hill and Olson 2009) and the de facto congregationalism of the United States (Chaves 2004).

Many of the same theories used to explain organizational competition among other populations of organizations appear to account for changes in the organizational landscape of Southern Baptist congregations as well. Population ecology predicts that legitimacy and competition play a vital role in the selection and retention of certain organizational forms (Hannan and Freeman 1989, Hannan and Carroll 1992). Neo-institutionalism predicts that institutionalized pressures stemming from coercion, professionalization, or uncertainty cause organizations to share certain qualities with other organizations in their field (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Meyer and Rowan 1977). The organizational culture metaphor, finally, highlights the different ways that strong and effective cultures tie members to their organization (Ouchi and Wilkins 1985). Each of these theories is supported to greater and lesser degrees by the empirical analyses of this dissertation.

Like other types of organizations, congregations require legitimacy and the legitimacy of Southern Baptist congregations appears to stem, in part, from the presence of other Southern Baptist congregations. The positive relationship between the density of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County and the emergence of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County between 1784 and 2011 supports population ecologists' expectation that the presence of an organizational form will give that form legitimacy (Hannan and Freeman 1989). Legitimacy

also stems from other organizations within an organization's field (DiMaggio 1991). Indeed, the conservativism of the SBC and the SBTS are associated with significant increases in the number of new Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County likely due to conservatives' emphasis on "growing the church" (Ammerman 1990).

Too many organizations of the same type are also indicative of competition, though. Competition limits the number of new organizations entering the field (Hannan and Freeman 1989). Like other types of organizations, there is a carrying capacity for Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County. When the number of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County exceeds this carrying capacity, the rate of Southern Baptist congregations entering the population decreases (at an increasing rate) for every additional congregation in the county.

Legitimacy and competition also have an impact on the failure of organizational forms. The lack of legitimacy for a new organizational form serves to increase the rate of failure in a population (Hannan and Freeman 1989). The negative relationship between density and the risk of failure among Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County demonstrates the importance of legitimacy for new organizational forms. Likewise, the positive and significant effect of density squared on the mortality of Southern Baptist churches is indicative of competitive processes that force some congregations to close. When it comes to the failure of religious organizations, though, theories of selection get the most support from the effect of age.

Structurally inert organizations are presumed to be reflective of stability and less likely to close (Hannan and Freeman 1984). Newness is a liability that threatens organizations of all types (Stinchcombe 1965), and it is a clear predictor of mortality among Southern Baptist congregations as well. Although size is also considered to generally be an asset reflective of an organization's inert nature, the insignificant effect of members on mortality when finances are

included in my models suggests that members are more reflective of resources than they are of size. Indeed, annual church receipts are negatively related to church failure as resource dependency theory would predict. Along with the positive and significant effects of the conservativism of the SBC and the SBTS on the mortality of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County, these findings point to the greater explanatory power of theories of adaptation over theories of selection in populations of congregations like the one under study here. As a result, it makes sense that I use neo-institutionalism to examine the internal workings of Southern Baptist congregations as well.

Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County form competitive strategies based on their relationship to the complex networks of professionals in their organizational field and the loosely coupled nature of their formal structures and their actual activities (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Weick 1976). Each congregation's competitive strategy serves the purpose of increasing its moral legitimacy (Suchman 1995). For some congregations, strong ties to the local seminary and the other professional organizations make it difficult, even impossible, to not actively adhere to the institutional myths of their organizational environment. In Chapter 6, I showed how this strategy, which I call Zealous Advocacy, is used to build congregations' procedural and structural legitimacy (Suchman 1995). Southern Baptist congregations and like-minded organizations with weaker ties to the agents of professionalization in their field are able to adopt their field's institutional myths ceremonially (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Not all congregations do this, though.

Southern Baptist congregations with weak ties to their field's agents of professionalization and formal structures that are loosely coupled from their actual activities utilize the strategy that I call Local Visibility. As I explained in Chapter 6, these congregations'

moral legitimacy is the product of consequential legitimacy based on the amount of measurable good that they do in their communities (Suchman 1995). Finally, congregations that are not strongly tied to the local Southern Baptist seminary and whose formal structures and actual activities coincide with the institutionalized myths of the local environment rely on a strategy that I call Charismatic Conservativism. When successful, this strategy increases a congregations' personal legitimacy (Suchman 1995), but this type of legitimacy is the most difficult to sustain.

Congregations also play an important role in the secularization process (Berger 1969). The competitive strategies that Southern Baptist congregations develop create distinct organizational cultures that combat macro level religious decline. These cultures also contribute to declines in religious authority by making it acceptable to be both religious and not. The moderate religious niche is populated by individuals that "generally wish to limit their 'religiousness' to specific times, places, and functions" (Stark and Finke 2000: 211). As a result, Southern Baptist congregations that engage this crowd contribute to the continued weakening of religious authority in the modern world.

Empirical Limitations

My dissertation uses quantitative and qualitative data on a population of Southern Baptist congregations in a single county in America's "Bible Belt." The quantitative data is longitudinal and allows me to observe important trends in this population of congregations over time. Additionally, the qualitative data is limited to five congregations with clear relationships to one another. Accordingly, these data allow me to focus more specifically on the question of competition amongst a unique organizational form. Since this is not a representative sample of congregations, however, my findings are not generalizable to most populations of religious

bodies except for other large cities in the Southeastern United States. Like any study that aims to build theory where previous theories fail to accurately explain the social phenomena, though, these limitations do not exceed this project's merit.

My quantitative data depicts a pattern of organizational formation and mortality that is consistent with studies of other organizational forms (Carroll and Wade 1991, Hannan and Freeman 1987, Hannan and Freeman 1988, Renzulli 2005). Among religious denominations, though, the congregations of the Southern Baptist Convention are unique in many ways. First, the Baptistic model is based on the autonomy of the local the church. Unlike other religious denominations, the SBC is not a governing body so much as it is a collective for the purpose of sharing resources between congregations of different sizes with different member needs. As a result, this dissertation does not speak to the different ways these other types of religious denominations experience competition. Although all congregations are a unique organizational form, the differences between Southern Baptist congregations and breweries, for example, are less than the differences between Roman Catholic congregations and other secular organizational forms.

Second, the Southern Baptist Convention is the second largest denomination – and the largest Protestant body – in the United States. As such, Southern Baptist congregations do not experience many of the same trials and tribulations as other types of religious organizations. In the American South, especially, there is a consistent supply of believers with a religious preference for conservative Christian faiths. The implications of this are twofold: 1) Southern Baptist congregations control a greater share of the religious market than many other religious groups, and 2) these congregations do not have to work for cognitive legitimacy to the same extent as less traditional organizational forms.

In a country founded by religious refugees whose Puritan beliefs still closely align with the values of many Southern Baptist congregations today, it is quite possible that Baptist congregations already enjoyed some degree of cognitive legitimacy in 1784. This is not the case, however, for many new religious movements and the majority of non-Christian faiths. The rise of Mormon groups in the United States, for example, sparked much controversy resulting in their exile to Utah and the assassination of their charismatic leader, Joseph Smith (Roberts and Yamane 2012). Similarly, plans to construct an Islamic center in Murfreesboro, TN encountered significant backlash from local Christian groups (Smietana 2014). New religious movements like Mormons in the 1840s and non-Christian faiths at any point in U.S. history do not enjoy the same degree of cognitive legitimacy afforded to conservative Protestant groups. Therefore, it is likely that the relationship between legitimacy and foundings and the relationship between legitimacy and mortality will not fit in precisely the same way for all of these groups.

Adams County also has several unique qualities that must be considered. First, Adams County's urban population includes 140 Southern Baptist churches, a number of like-minded organizations like the Independent Christian megachurch in my qualitative sample, a large Catholic population, and countless immigrant groups with non-Christian faiths. Thus, Adams County makes an excellent place to study religious competition, but it is certainly not representative of most counties in the United States. Southern Baptist congregations in counties with few other Southern Baptist congregations will undoubtedly take longer to build their cognitive legitimacy. Similarly, in counties where Southern Baptist congregations are the monopoly faith as is the case in many rural counties in the South, the cognitive legitimacy of Southern Baptist congregations will rarely be challenged. It is worth noting, however, that across the entire quantitative sample in this dissertation (1784-2011), Southern Baptist congregations do

fit the expected relationships between legitimacy and the emergence and failure of a new organizational form.

Second, Adams County is home to just one of the few Southern Baptist seminaries in the United States. This makes Adams County an excellent place to gauge the fallout from normative pressures in a population of religious congregations, but it also changes the nature of religious participation in Adams County in several meaningful ways. Since Southern Baptists come from all over the United States to attend the local Baptist seminary, this means there is a steady, but transient, supply of Southern Baptists regardless of broader changes in the religious landscape of Adams County at large. Individuals that attend seminary and other religious colleges and universities also share a unique conservative idea of the relationships between religion and everyday life. As a result, the organizational cultures of Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County are continually being negotiated by men and women with religious preferences that are slightly right of center in most cases and to the far right of center in some.

The individual women and men that participated in the current study are also unique in several ways. My method of selecting cases for the qualitative portion of this dissertation started with a sample of local churchgoers that completed a survey distributed by their congregation in one of several ways. Individuals that took the time to read an email from their church or visit their congregations' social media page display a level of commitment to their organization that only a small percentage of people actually share. On the one hand, this makes the current study better because these are the individuals that get involved and help (re)create their congregation's organizational cultures. In large congregations like Hillview Christian and Endeavor Community Church, though, there are many more "free-riders" than there are committed and highly-involved participants.

Finally, two other important limitations of this study are a product of time. Since the late 1990s, conservativism in the Southern Baptist Convention is the norm and moderates are the minority (Wills 2009). This means that congregations that are closely aligned with Adams County's Southern Baptist seminary and other organizations related to the SBC cannot maintain a moderate theological position and expect these relationships to last. As a result, there is no competitive strategy to describe congregations that are in the top left cell of Table 6.1. This was not always the case, though, and a study of the same population in the 1970s or early 1980s would tell a very different tale about the relationships between Southern Baptist congregations and their larger organizational field. In the absence of time-travel, studies of denominations with moderate or liberal leadership can rectify this important oversight.

Time also places restrictions on the quantitative data used to explain the emergence and mortality of Southern Baptist congregations. Baptist congregations in Adam County did not begin to report any data until the formation of the area's first Baptist association in 1803. Furthermore, minutes of those early meetings are limited to membership totals, baptisms, and members lost to dismissal or death. Southern Baptist congregations in Adams County did not provide reports on all of the variables I included in these models until 1875. As a result, all of the complete models in this dissertation are left-censored at this point. Likewise, other variables with potential explanatory power like average weekly attendance (a better measure of size than membership totals), pastors' full- or part-time status (a measure of resources), and the formal training of each congregation's leadership (a measure of normative pressures) were simply unavailable or only reported in a limited number of years.

Methodological Contributions

In general, studies of the density dependence of different organizational forms are limited by problems of left censoring due to a lack of reliable information before a certain point in time. Studies with full population data tend to be those that focus on relatively new organizational forms (e.g., Paino et al. 2014, Renzulli 2005). The quantitative data used to examine the density dependence of Southern Baptist congregations in this dissertation, however, spans 228 years and begins with the population's first congregation in 1784. Few studies span longer time periods (see Scheitle and Dougherty (2008) for an exception) making the current study an important contribution to the research on ecological phenomena and the density dependence of organizations over time.

To my knowledge, this dissertation is the only mixed methods study of organizational competition among a population of congregations. Studies of religious competition are typically quantitative and tend to ignore the behind-the-scenes aspects that contribute to the formation of congregations' competitive strategies (e.g., Finke and Stark 1988, 1989, 1998, Froese 2004, Olson 1998, 1999, Stark and Finke 2004). Similarly, qualitative studies of congregations are generally snapshots of congregations and their environments at a single point in time (e.g., Ammerman 1997, 2005, Becker 1999, Edgell 2006, Eiesland 2000). By blending the two in an embedded mixed methods design, my dissertation provides new insights about the strategies that contribute to the emergence of new congregations and the mortality of existing ones.

The concurrent nature of the data collection and analysis in the embedded mixed methods design (Greene 2007) allowed me to improve my quantitative models based on insights learned during the qualitative data collection phase. Specifically, my original models of organizational foundings and organizational mortality did not include measures of the religious conservativism

of the SBTS or the SBC. Consequently, my original models failed to account for two of the significant predictors of foundings and closures in my population of Southern Baptist congregations. My conversations with the leaders and members of several local churches within the same population, though, tipped me off to the importance of these organizations to the local church. These important findings speak to the value of mixed methods studies in religious and organizational research.

Theoretical Contributions

My dissertation uses a theoretical framework based on several organizational theories and the current understanding of religious competition and secularization in the sociology of religion. Specifically, I use the theories of population ecology and neo-institutionalism as well as the organizational culture metaphor to create a model of religious competition in the contemporary United States. There are several important theoretical contributions to the sociology of religion and the study of organizations to be gleaned from the current results.

Sociologists of religion studying religious competition will do well to focus on intra-denominational competition rather than competition between different organizational forms. Individuals that switch religious denominations are rarely motivated by factors indicative of religious competition (Sherkat and Wilson 1995). This dissertation demonstrates that populations of congregations are influenced by the presence of other congregations of the same form – that is, within their same denomination – as well as institutional pressures that are unique to their denomination like their professional training centers and denomination's cultural norms.

My dissertation also speaks to the role that congregations play in the secularization process. The neo-secularization thesis in the sociology of religion does not get the attention it

deserves as the new paradigm continues to dominate the sub-discipline. This is unfortunate, though, since many of our classic theorists offered more to the sociology of religion than a theory of religious decline. Indeed, Peter Berger (1969) predicted that religious organizations might contribute to the secularization of the modern world. When secularization is articulated as the decline of religious authority in the modern world, this dissertation makes clear that this is precisely the case. Thus, future studies in the sociology of religion must continue to focus on the details of our most classic works and not their general mischaracterizations as failed predictions about the modern world.

Finally, my contributions to the study of organizations are twofold. First, my examination of congregations and their institutional environment provides a valuable addendum to the prevailing wisdom about normative pressures and organizational forms. Normative pressures are not something to be taken as a given and assumed to affect all organizations equally. This dissertation demonstrates that certain organizations experience the normative pressures of their organizational fields more strongly than others. This, in turn, has important implications for the way these organizations negotiate the separation of their daily activities from their field's prevailing myths. My findings suggest that congregations whose formal structures do not match their actual activities are those whose relationship to the different organizations that influence or constrain the organizations in their field is weak (DiMaggio 1991).

This dissertation's other contribution to the study of organizations stems from my focus on the organizational cultures of a unique organizational form. Congregations are unique because their "customers" play an integral role in the formation and maintenance of their organizational cultures. My findings suggest that the competitive strategies used to acquire legitimacy and secure a stable membership base are essentially the same as the stable and consistent

organizational cultures that these congregations maintain over time. Studies of organizational cultures in other voluntary organizations will benefit from recognizing that something about the organization's culture keeps volunteers coming back. Likewise, fragmentation in these organizations is rare because unhappy members will do their talking with their feet.

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Appendix A. Qualitative Interview Participants

Name	Congregation	Status	Sex	Age	Race	Marital Status	Children under 6
Bonnie	Avondale Road	Member	F	57	White	Married	0
Cary	Avondale Road	Clergy	M	55	White	Married	0
Jamie	Avondale Road	Member	F	30	White	Single	0
Lori	Avondale Road	Member	F	63	African American	Divorced	0
Megan	Avondale Road	Member	F	30	White	Married	3
Mitch	Avondale Road	Former Member	M	43	White	Married	0
Rhonda	Avondale Road	Member	F	56	White	Married	0
Sam	Avondale Road	Member	M	65	White	Widowed	0
Shelia	Avondale Road	Member	F	48	White	Married	0
Stan	Avondale Road	Member	M	83	White	Married	0
Terri	Avondale Road	Member	F	52	White	Married	0
Todd	Avondale Road	Member	M	61	White	Married	0
Brad	Convenant	Clergy	M	33	White	Married	3
Callie	Convenant	Member	F	25	White	Single	0
Courtney	Convenant	Former Member	F	29	White	Single	0
Keaton	Convenant	Member	M	27	White	Single	0
Leslie	Convenant	Former Member	F	32	White	Married	0
Robbie	Convenant	Clergy	M	40	White	Married	0
Amy	Endeavor	Former Member	F	33	White	Married	1
Craig	Endeavor	Clergy	M	40	White	Married	1
Erica	Endeavor	Member	F	27	White	Single	0
Jessica	Endeavor	Member	F	31	White	Single	0
Karen	Endeavor	Member	F	59	White	Divorced	0
Katrina	Endeavor	Member	F	26	White	Married	0
Kayla	Endeavor	Member	F	27	White	Married	0
Mark	Endeavor	Member	M	33	White	Single	0
Nate	Endeavor	Member	M	29	White	Married	0
Patrick	Endeavor	Member	M	28	White	Married	0
Riley	Endeavor	Member	M	26	White	Married	0
Sandra	Endeavor	Member	F	42	White	Married	0
Wesley	Endeavor	Member	M	39	White	Single	0
Betsy	Hillview Christian	Member	F	51	White	Married	0
Bruce	Hillview Christian	Former Member	M	77	White	Widowed	0
Carol	Hillview Christian	Member	F	67	White	Married	0
Dan	Hillview Christian	Member	M	56	White	Married	0
Doug	Hillview Christian	Leadership	M	72	White	Married	0
Jack	Hillview Christian	Member	M	78	White	Married	0

Appendix A. Cont'd

Name	Congregation	Status	Sex	Age	Race	Marital Status	Children under 6
Lisa	Hillview Christian	Member	F	39	White	Married	2
Tom	Hillview Christian	Member	M	53	White	Married	0
Troy	Hillview Christian	Member	M	50	White	Married	0
Wade	Hillview Christian	Former Member	M	43	Asian	Single	0
Adam	Newport	Member	M	33	White	Married	2
Jason	Newport	Clergy	M	37	White	Married	2
Jeremiah	Newport	Member	M	31	White	Married	2
Jeff	Newport	Former Member	M	32	White	Married	0
Josiah	Newport	Member	M	21	White	Single	0
Leah	Newport	Member	F	34	White	Married	2
Levi	Newport	Former Member	M	39	White	Married	0

Senior Minister Protocol

Minister's Personal Biography

1. Tell me about your religious background.
2. How did you come to be the (senior/associate) minister of (name of church)?
   Probe: Do you see yourself continuing to serve at (name of church) well into the future?

The Culture of the Congregation

1. Tell me about the history of (name of church).
   Probe: What is your role in this history?
2. Describe the mission of (name of church)?
3. How would you describe the personality of (name of church)?
   Probe: How is (name of church) different from other congregations you've been a part of?
4. Would you describe this congregation as liberal, conservative, or moderate?
   Probe: What do these distinctions mean to you?
5. How are decisions made in this congregation?
   Probe: Does anyone ever express displeasure with the decisions that are made?
   Probe: What impact does this have on the congregation?
6. What role do you play in leading this congregation?
7. How does this congregation play into the social lives of its members?
8. Where does this congregation get the resources it needs to serve its members?

The Institutional Environment

1. How would you describe the religious climate of the United States in 2012?
2. How do you see (name of church) fitting into this religious climate?
3. What responsibilities does this congregation have to the larger community?
4. Tell me about the relationship between (name of church) and other congregations in the area?
   Probe: What types of collaborative efforts have you been involved in with the pastors of other congregations?
   Probe: What types of collaborative efforts have there been between (name of church) and other congregations?
   Probe: Why do you think there is tension between (name of church) and (name of other religious organization)?
5. Why is it important for you congregation to retain membership in the Long Run Baptist Association?
   Probe: What types of constraints does membership in the LRBA place on your congregation?
6. Who are the main competitors for this congregation?

Probe: What type of relationship does (name of church) have with these organizations?

Competitive Strategy of the Congregation

1. What are your goals for this congregation?
   Probe: Would you consider changing these goals in order to increase participation?
   Probe: How much would you change these goals to increase participation?
2. Who are you targeting with your message?
   Probe: How successful are you in reaching these people?
3. Why are you confident that people will continue to fill the pews of this congregation?
4. What is your vision for the future of (name of church)?

Church Member Protocol

Member's Personal Biography

1. Tell me about yourself?
   - Probe: Where did you grow up?
   - Probe: What do you do for a living?
   - Probe: Where did you get your degree?
2. What types of congregations have you been a part of in the past?
3. Why do you attend (name of church) instead of another church in the area?
   - *Probe:* Why did you leave (name of former church)?
   - *Probe:* What keeps you coming back to (name of church)?
4. How do you see religion fitting into your life?
5. When you don't make it to church on Sunday morning, what keeps you away?

The Culture of the Congregation

1. What can you tell me about the history of (name of church)?
   - *Probe:* Has anyone ever tried to share this history of (name of church) with you?
   - *Probe:* Where do you and you family fit into this history?
2. How would you describe the mission of (name of church)?
3. How would you describe the personality of (name of church)?
   a. How is (name of church) different from other congregations you've been a part of?
4. Would you describe this congregation as liberal, conservative, or moderate?
   - *Probe:* What do these distinctions mean to you?
5. How do you think decisions are made in this congregation?
   - *Probe:* How does this make you feel?
6. Where does this congregation fit into your social life?
7. Where do you think this congregation gets the resources it needs to serve its members?

The Institutional Environment

1. How would you describe the religious climate of the United States in 2012?
2. How do you see (name of church) fitting into this climate?
3. What responsibilities do you think (name of church) has to the larger community?
4. Do you ever participate in collaborations with other congregations?
   - *Probe:* Tell me about those experiences.
5. Do you feel like (name of church) is competing with other churches in the area?
6. Do you feel like (name of church) is competing with nonreligious organizations?

Competitive Strategy of the Congregation

1. How important is it for you to attend a Baptist church?
   - *Probe:* Why is it (not very) important to you?
2. Who do you think this congregation is targeting with their message?
   - *Probe:* How does this congregation go about targeting this group?

Probe: How successful do you think this congregation is in reaching this audience?

3. What would you like to change about this congregation?
4. How do you envision the future of (name of church)?