UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

CONSTRUCTING ORGANIZATIONAL LEGITIMACY TRANSACTIONALLY: THE COMMUNICATIVE CONSTITUTION OF ISIL

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

JACQUELINE S. BRUSCELLA
Norman, Oklahoma
2016

CONSTRUCTING ORGANIZATIONAL LEGITIMACY TRANSACTIONALLY:
THE COMMUNICATIVE CONSTITUTION OF ISIL

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

BY

_____
Dr. Ryan Bisel, Chair

_____
Dr. Maria del Guadalupe Davidson

_____
Dr. Michael Kramer

_____
Dr. Ioana Cionea

_____
Dr. Justin Reedy

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my Dad, Martin Bruscella. His children's education was always his greatest priority. The completion of my doctoral degree serves as a testament to his dedication and devotion to my education. My Dad's sudden and untimely passing a few weeks before our commencement ceremonies has been tremendously difficult to comprehend; but I am confident he knows that I have successfully defended this dissertation and have earned my Ph.D. He would be so proud to know his efforts to instill in me a love and appreciation for learning have finally paid off.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my family. Mom and Dad, since Kindergarten you've supported me and my education. From teaching me how the Earth goes around the Sun while swinging on the backyard swing, to helping me build a replica of an Algonquin village, complete with a fishing net and tiny spears, to wanting to read over my graduate school essays to find any and all typos, your willingness to encourage me every step of the way means more than you'll ever know. From Oyster Bay Co-Op, to Bayville Elementary, LVHS, Lafayette, Hofstra, and finally Oklahoma…I would not be graduating today if it were not for your unyielding support. John, I am certain this will be the last graduation you will have to sit through for me. Thank you. I am so proud of you. You're going to live up to Dad's legacy as a brilliant and amiable engineer, and I couldn't be more proud to be your sister. Thank you for listening to my rants and complaints, and for always being there—no questions asked.

To my cohort! Bobbi, Chris, Eryn, Jan, Kathryn, Mike, Roni, Sachiko, and Stacie…there is no doubt in my mind that I would not have made it through this program without your love and friendships. It has been a great four years, with so many memories! I am so excited to be able to reunite each and every year at NCA. To all of my friends here at OU have made this experience more than just "school," and for that, I can never thank you enough. Especially Bobbi—my first OU friend—I owe you a huge thank you. Without your know-how, I definitely would not be here today. I'd still probably be trying to figure out what IRB is.

To my dissertation committee: thank you for your willingness to invest your time and energy in my career and for your tremendous flexibility at the end of such a

busy semester. I appreciate all of the feedback and support you have given me throughout this process, and I have learned so much from each one of you. Ioana, I want to especially thank you for being so intuitive and perceptive. Thank you for always being there to talk to and knowing just the right advice to give.

I want to also express my sincerest gratitude to my advisor, Ryan. Thank for taking me on as an advisee so late in the game. Although it took me a while to figure out who I was as a scholar, I am so grateful that I *was* able to figure that out, and then have you serve as my chair, mentor, advisor, co-author, and friend. I've learned so much from you this past year that I will be forever grateful for. Because of your mentorship, I will not only be a better researcher and writer, but I will be a better a teacher and advisor as well. There is more to students than just their academic progress, and your ability to understand that will stick with me as I move forward in my career.

And finally…my acknowledgements would not be complete if I did not reach out and thank my dog, Scout. Grad school had its great days, and miserable ones, but good day or bad, Scout was always there to greet me at the door. And now we're off on our new adventures in Oneonta!

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments……..…….…….iv

List of Figures……..……..viii

Abstract……..……..ix

Chapter 1: Introduction……..…….……...1

Preview and Rationale…….……..3

Chapter 2: Literature Review……..……..8

CCO……..…….8

Sociomateriality.……..……17

The Social Construction of Legitimacy.……..……21

Organizational Legitimation.……..…….28

Organizational Image and Identity.……..……...31

Confrontational Rhetoric.……..……..33

Chapter 3: Organizational Context……..……36

Organizational Context: ISIL.……..……...36

The Study of ISIL and Legitimacy: Organizational Exigency……45

Chapter 4: Method…….……..…54

Description of Texts.……..……..…54

Analysis.……..……55

Qualitative rigor and moving beyond “themes”……..62

Chapter 5: Findings.……..……..66

Material Appeals to Institutional Legitimacy……..……67

Religious Appeals to Institutional Legitimacy……86

Confrontational Appeals to Institutional Legitimacy……..…96

Chapter 6: Discussion ……...……109

Chapter 7: Conclusion ……...……...124

Limitations and Further Research……..……...128

References…….132

Appendix A: ISIL's growing Infrastructure and Population (Selected Images)……...145

Appendix B: ISIL's AlHayat Media Center …….146

Appendix C: ISIL's Hospitals and Medical Infrastructure……147

Appendix D: ISIL's Civilian Resources……....148

Appendix E: "The spark has been lit here in Iraq"……149

Appendix F: Endnotes…….……..151

List of Figures

Figure 1. Explanation of the Four Flows Model (McPhee & Zaug, 2000)…….12

Figure 2. Transactional Organizational Identity Narrative……..……66

Abstract

This dissertation explores how organizations attempt to construct their ontology and legitimacy through external messages, known as institutional positioning. Constructing an image of legitimacy is particularly important, yet complicated, for groups thought to be illegitimate, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)—an organization that is emerging as a de facto nation state. Analysis of *Dabiq*, ISIL's recruitment and propaganda magazine series, revealed ISIL's institutional positioning conformed to a communication pattern I define as a *transactional organizational identity narrative*. This pattern is comprised of a set of legitimacy appeals that, together, socially construct the unfolding of a collective's defining characteristics across time, and anticipate and refute other collectives' delegitimation attempts. Across the pages of the magazines, the transactional organizational identity narrative consisted of three broad categories of institutional appeals: material, religious, and confrontational. Implications for communication constitutes organizing (CCO) theory and the social construction of organizations are included.

Keywords: terrorist organizations, CCO, sociomateriality, identity

Chapter 1: Introduction

On February 18th, 2015, President Obama declared, "al Qaeda and ISIL and groups like it are *desperate for legitimacy.* [...] That's why ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] presumes to declare itself the 'Islamic State'" (Office of the Press Secretary, 18 February 2015, n.p.; emphasis added). Legitimacy and, more importantly, *perceptions of* legitimacy, are entirely powerful in not only the formation and maintenance of organizations, but also in their dissolution and destruction. The more legitimate an organization is perceived to be, the more powerful its status becomes within its institutional field (Parsons, 1951). Bitektine (2011) explains issues surrounding the symbolic construction of organizational legitimacy, reputation, and status are *key* to understanding organizational theory and the constitution of organizations.

To be considered a substantial threat on an international stage, terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda and ISIL must construct perceptions of legitimacy if they are to be taken seriously by enemies, allies, members, and potential recruits. Therefore, attempts at legitimation are likely at the forefront of ISIL's organizational agenda. So, how does an organization create perceptions of legitimacy? Organizations model themselves after similar organizations that are perceived to be more legitimate or successful (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). According to a report published by the *Institute for the Study of War* in August of 2014, ISIL has attempted to do just that. Caris and Reynolds (2014) posit, "through the integration of military and political campaigns […] [ISIL] has built a holistic system of governance that includes religious, educational, judicial, security, humanitarian, and infrastructure projects, among others"

(p. 4). As will be discussed throughout this dissertation, ISIL's access to resources and infrastructure mimic what many in the West consider to be modernized nation-states. According to ISIL and its enemies, ISIL is now more than just a terrorist organization; it is an organization emerging as a de facto nation-state. To justify that claim, the *Institute's* report highlights how ISIL built administrative offices responsible for managing religious outreach and religious reinforcement, created courts and systems for punishment, and established educational programming and networks of public relations (Caris & Reynolds, 2014). ISIL constructed offices that manage humanitarian aid, opened bakeries and grocers, and has accessed and gained control of key sites of infrastructure, including water and electricity. Additionally, ISIL has attempted to manage large-scale industrial facilities, such as dams, thermal power plants, sewers, and electrical power lines (Caris & Reynolds, 2014).

Although achieving organizational legitimacy is largely a symbolic undertaking, access to and establishment of *material* resources, such as those mentioned above, are vital to the ongoing process of an organization's institutional positioning. Achieving legitimacy is no easy task, especially for terrorist organizations, such as ISIL. This process is particularly challenging when legitimation attempts are thwarted, both explicitly and consistently, by superpowers that exist outside of the organization—as illustrated by the opening quote offered by President Obama. Therefore, this dissertation investigates the means by which ISIL attempts to position itself as legitimate in a context of nations that seek consistently to "degrade and ultimately destroy" it (Office of the Press Secretary, 10 September 2014, n.p.). Through a comprehensive analysis of *Dabiq*, ISIL's English-language recruitment magazine series,

this dissertation examines the transactional, discursive construction of ISIL's organizational constitution as well as the socio-material configurations that play a role in establishing its credibility, and thus, its legitimacy.

Preview and Rationale

In this dissertation, I define ISIL[i] as *an organization,* which is *emerging as a de facto nation-state*. The third chapter of this dissertation explains this conceptualization of ISIL in more detail. ISIL is now a multi-faceted, massive organizational entity "desperate for legitimacy" (Office of the Press Secretary, 18 February 2015, n.p.). As the previous discussion illuminates, ISIL's access to material resources position it as emerging as more than a loosely-connected terrorist network or organization. Employing Lammers and Barbour's (2006) definition of "institution," ISIL may be regarded as a "[communicatively constituted] constellation of established practices, guided by formalized, rational beliefs that transcend particular organizations and situations" (p. 364). Again, the organization's self-conceptualization as a supra-organizational nation state (i.e., an institution) will be further described in Chapter 3.

The focus of this dissertation is on the attempted social construction of institutional legitimacy. Specifically, I am interested in the constitution of ISIL's legitimacy through the organizational communication process of institutional positioning. Institutional positioning is a "communication flow" (McPhee & Zaug, 2000) that is supra-organizational or inter-organizational, but has organization-constituting features. Institutional positioning messages, thus, are known to help constitute organizations ontologically (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Here, ontology is used in the same spirit that is applied in CCO theory to suggest that organizations' existence

resides within the confluence of communication processes. In other words, in the spirit of CCO theory, these messages construct and help maintain an organization's identity and "place" in inter-organizational settings or larger social systems (McPhee & Zaug, 2000, para. 37). Institutional positioning is, thus, crucial in the symbolic constitution of organizations and institutions. However, institutional positioning tends to assume a sender-oriented perspective of organizing and communicating. Emphasis has traditionally been placed on the messages an organization sends to the outside environment, or external stakeholders essential in evaluating an organization's identity and legitimacy. Yet as observed in the present case of ISIL, it is important to understand institutional positioning as a reflexive process because doing so emphasizes both the transactional and socially-constructed nature of organizational identity and positioning in an organizational field (i.e., the communicative activities occurring within and between ISIL and the West). The study of ISIL directs our attention to the idea that institutional positioning need not be regarded merely as an outward, message-sender-to-audience process. There is always the possibility for messages to be created and perpetuated from outside the organization, which challenge an organization's institutional positioning and thus its legitimacy. And, as aforementioned, material resources will also play into the types of positioning messages that organizations have access to sending on their own behalf.

ISIL is unlike terrorist organizations of the past—it has land, thousands of members, money, and infrastructure. As Davidson and Brooking, writing for the Council on Foreign Relations note, "[ISIL] now controls a volume of resources and territory *unmatched in the history of extremist organizations*" (2014, n.p.; emphasis

added). For example, Cronin (2015) explains exactly how much territory and resources ISIL has at its disposal, citing, "beginning in 2012, [ISIL] gradually took over key oil assets in eastern Syria; it now controls an estimated 60 percent of the country's oil production capacity. Meanwhile, during its push into Iraq last summer, [ISIL] also seized seven oil-producing operations in that country" (n.p.). Put succinctly, Cronin argues, "Holding territory has allowed the group to build a self-sustaining financial model *unthinkable for most terrorist groups*" (n.p.; emphasis added). While other terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah for example, might have access to significant material resources, the scope of ISIL's material gains is unprecedented. Thus, access to and control over such material assets make ISIL different from other terrorist organizations that the United States (US) has dealt with in the past, and undoubtedly plays a role in the types of messaging it can persuasively produce and perpetuate. In this dissertation, I demonstrate that institutional positioning messages can be shaped by the expectation that others in an institutional field will likely challenge an organization's legitimacy claims. For example, given the publication of the English-language version of *Dabiq* calling for the establishment of a Caliphate (e.g., an Islamic State), ISIL's messaging may reflect a preemptive preparedness for the outright rejection by others in its institutional field, including the US. In other words, ISIL explicitly challenges and denies US claims that ISIL "is not Islamic," and "is certainly not a state" (Office of the Press Secretary, 10 September 2014, n.p.). Thus, for ISIL, the exigency into which they produce institutional positioning messages encourages their efforts to be transactional in nature. These messages, therefore, take into account, and are shaped by, a two-sided argument.

So what can the case of ISIL teach us about organizational communication, generally, and institutional positioning, specifically? The significance of this dissertation will lie in its contribution to our understanding of how communication is constitutive of organizing (hereafter referred to as CCO). To do this, I highlight the ways in which the inherent reflexivity of institutional positioning and legitimation attempts shape and alter the constitutive forces of organizing. Bisel (2010) contends that additional CCO theorizing is needed to articulate the "necessary and sufficient conditions" by which organizations are constituted (p. 129). Bitektine (2011) comments that organizational legitimation is a social construction process, based on rhetorical, discursive means, or collective action. Understanding institutional positioning as transactional, therefore, responds to Bisel's call for further articulation of the necessary and sufficient conditions for organizational constitution, and encourages us to view organizational legitimation as a socially constructed phenomenon. Establishing organizational legitimacy implies strategic and calculated symbolic action, especially for institutions perceived by many to be *il*legitimate.

Thus, the purpose of this research is to examine the ways in which seemingly illegitimate organizations—in this case, ISIL—attempt to create and maintain legitimacy in the face of adversarial discourse attempting to prove otherwise. In the next chapter, Chapter 2, I will present a review of the literature regarding theories relating to communication is constitutive of organizing (CCO), sociomateriality, the social construction of reality, legitimacy, organizational identity and image, and confrontational rhetoric. In Chapter 3, I will explain the organizational context for this dissertation—the history and development of ISIL. In Chapter 4, I will detail the

methods, and in Chapter 5, I will present the findings. Chapters 6 and 7 provide a discussion and conclusion, respectively, including limitations and directions for future research. Appendices, including References and selected images from the *Dabiq* texts, will follow.

Although the focus of my analysis will be on the set of texts produced and disseminated by ISIL, (via the *Dabiq* magazine series, which has constitutive force), there will be mention of *de*constitutive discourses presented by the West, vis-à-vis official White House correspondence. Many of these deconstitutive discourses produced by the West are embedded within the pages of *Dabiq*. Thus, I verified such claims from official White House documents (e.g., documents cited from the Office of the Press Secretary) as an additional part of the analysis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I explain the following: (1) how communication is constitutive of organizing, (2) the sociomateriality debate in the CCO literature, and (3) the social construction of institutional legitimacy. I then define how the terms (4) legitimation, (5) organizational identity, and (6) confrontational rhetoric are applied within the context of this dissertation.

(1) McPhee and Zaug's (2000) Four Flows Model of CCO

The notion that communication is constitutive of organizing (CCO) is a complex and contested one (Putnam, Nicotera, & McPhee, 2009). Although CCO is multidisciplinary in nature, where it is often conceptualized as discourse, the theory has gained "considerable attention" in organizational communication research (Putnam et al., 2009; Schoeneborn, Blaschke, Cooren, McPhee, Seidl, & Taylor, 2014). In order to understand the key aspects of CCO theory, two terms must first be explained: *constitutive* and *organization*. I define *constitution* in this dissertation as a process that "highlights the forming, composing, or making of something, in addition to describing the phenomenon that is constituted" (Putnam et al., 2009, p. 3). Thus, this definition follows the work of established CCO theorists, Putnam, Nicotera, and McPhee (2009). In the context of CCO theory, constitution is the process by which organizations are formed or, more simply, called into being (Bisel, 2010). Constitution, therefore, deals with patterns of interactions that "make organizations what they are" (McPhee & Zaug, 2000, para. 12). Drawing on the work of Hacking (1999), defining constitution in this manner emphasizes the significance of *social construction.* From this view,

organizations emerge through "framing, making, and comprising" as accomplished through language use (Putnam et al., 2009, p. 4).

I define *organization* as a deliberately created and maintained social institution, with coordinated behaviors among members aimed at producing intended outcomes, persisting across time and space (Jelinek & Litterner, 1994; McPhee, Corman, & Dooley, 1999; McPhee & Zaug, 2000). McPhee and Zaug (2000) define an organization as, "a social interaction system, influenced by prevailing economic and legal institutional practices, and including coordinated action and interaction within and across a socially constructed system boundary, manifestly directed toward a privileged set of outcomes" (para. 13). Both of these definitions imply that an organization's ontological status is located at the site and surface of communication processes (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Those communication processes include interaction between members, between members and what they perceive to be the organization's identity, and between organizational members and outsiders.

McPhee and Zaug's (2000) CCO model is only one of three dominant theoretical traditions currently applied in organizational communication research (Schoeneborn, Blaschke, Cooren, McPhee, Seidl, & Taylor, 2014). McPhee and Zaug's four flows model was highly influenced by Giddens's structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). Concomitantly, Taylor and Van Every (2000) postulated a CCO theory that described the associations between organizational texts and conversations. Their theorizing also included claims that the semiotic nature of language and language use lends itself, inherently, to organizing processes. These theorists also introduced the concept of co-orientation in which two actors orient towards an object in the ABX

relationship (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). The ABX insight later was used by the Montreal School of CCO theorists to propose the role of non-human agency in the constitution of organizations (Cooren, 2000; Robichaud, Giroux, & Taylor, 2004; Taylor, 1999; Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996). The third, and perhaps least well known of the CCO traditions, is the body of CCO literature inspired by Luhmann's (1995) theory of social systems (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011; Schoeneborn, 2011). Theorists in this tradition explore Luhmann's (1995) model of self-organization, where "organizations are systems that produce themselves *as* systems by distinguishing themselves from their environments" (Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1155).

Importantly, various traditions of CCO theorizing have been applied to the study of clandestine and terrorist organizations (Bean & Buikema, 2015; Schoeneborn & Scherer, 2010, 2012; Stohl & Stohl, 2011). Stohl and Stohl (2011), for example, extend the Montreal School tradition in their analysis of the phenomenon of clandestine (terrorist) organizations, such as al Qaeda. They argue that the existence of such organizations challenges the Montreal school's implicit assumption that visibility is necessary for the communicative constitution of organizations, citing the hidden nature of many of al Qaeda's leadership and governing bodies. However, Schoeneborn and Scherer (2012) respond to Stohl and Stohl's (2011) findings, claiming that their research does not make "full use" of the Montreal School's theoretical potential (p. 964). Schoeneborn and Scherer (2012) draw on both the Montreal School and Luhmann's theory of social systems in their study of al Qaeda, emphasizing that although al Qaeda's governance structures are extremely invisible, (as Stohl and Stohl argued), al Qaeda relies on the extreme visibility of the activities that underlie a terrorist

act to ensure its perpetuation (p. 969). Thus, they argue that it is the "reversion of the relation between invisibility and visibility" that differentiates al Qaeda and ensures its perpetuation (p. 963). This dissertation, however, extends the work of McPhee and Zaug's (2000) four flows model of CCO. In contrast with the other CCO traditions, McPhee and Zaug's theorizing is especially parsimonious and has already been shown to be useful in investigating the role of communication in constituting terrorist organizations (Bean & Buikema, 2015).

McPhee and Zaug (2000) posit that organizations are the result of four interacting communicative exchanges, or what they refer to as "flows" (para. 1). Those flows are activity coordination, self-structuring, membership negotiation, and institutional positioning (See Figure 1). With reference to Grice's (1975) maxims, McPhee and Zaug suggest that, although all communication has constitutive force, not all communication is actually organizational. To explain, the theorists provide an example of a communicative event: a casual conversation between a group of friends. Although the group may be considered a "communication system" in that their perspectives may be coordinated and there might even be some conversational organization occurring as they talk, the friends are usually not considered an "organization," especially in the prima facie meaning of the term (Bisel, 2010).

McPhee and Zaug (2000) explain that the key to understanding CCO, in terms of how communication constitutes *organizing*, is the four flows model. They suggest, "organizations are constituted in four different communicative flows" (para. 48).

Each flow, they explain, "is actually a kind of interactive communication episode, usually amounting to multi-way conversation or text passage, typically involving reproduction of as well as resistance to the rules and resources of the organization" (para. 22). The four flows, described in detail below, summarize the following relationships. The flows explain how an organization is linked to its members through (1) *membership negotiation* and itself, reflexively, through (2) *self-structuring.* The flow of (3) *activity coordination* explains how an organization adapts interdependent activity to specific work situations, and the last flow, (4) *institutional positioning,* explains how the organization is linked to the outside environment. McPhee and Zaug (2000) contend that organization is not simply communication, as clarified via the friend example above, but the result of the associations among these four constitutive flows of communication.

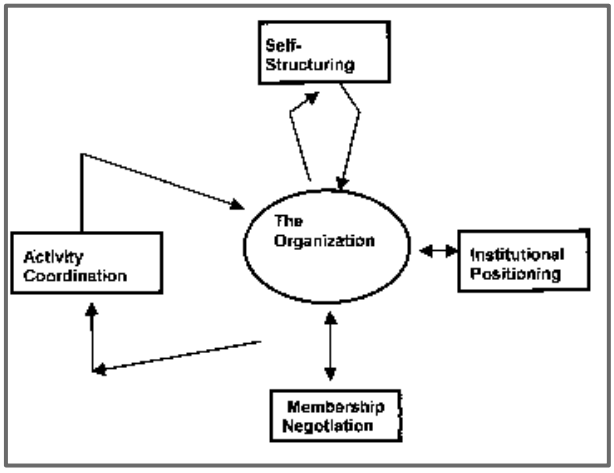


Figure 1. Explanation of the Four Flows Model (McPhee & Zaug, 2000).

The four flows are outlined as follows:

Membership negotiation deals with membership recruitment and socialization into the organization. McPhee and Zaug (2000) explain that this process is vital to CCO

because organizations exist only as a result of human agency. "By many definitions of communication," they note, "only individual humans can communicate" (McPhee & Zaug, 2000, para. 27). Thus, "when communication constitutes organization, the relation of the communicators to the organization is important" (para. 27).

Similarly*, self-structuring,* the second flow of communication imperative to organizing, is important because organizations need individuals, or groups of people, to bring organizations into being. "Organizations do not draw members and coordinate work automatically or as a result of natural tendency," they explain (McPhee & Zaug, 2000, para. 28). Specifically, members of the organization work to "bring the organization into being, make decisions about such matters as member time and resource investment" (para. 28). McPhee and Zaug (2000) cite common examples of self-structuring types of communication, which may include organizational charters, charts, policy and procedure manuals, orders, directives, and even casual announcements such as employee evaluation and feedback, budgeting and accounting forms, and other formalized control processes.

Activity coordination, as referenced earlier, is important for organization, as many common definitions of "organization" involve a process of resources working together. "Organizations, by definition," McPhee and Zaug (2000) posit, "have at least one manifest purpose, and the activity of members and subgroups is partly directed toward it" (para. 33). Thus, they continue, "these activities are coordinated as a result of the organization's self-structuring, which creates a division of labor, a standard task-flow sequence, and a series of policies and plans for work" (para. 33).

Finally, the fourth flow of *institutional positioning*, one of the main focal points of this dissertation, deals with communication outside the organization, or communication "at the macro level" (para. 37). As McPhee and Zaug (2000) suggest, although the term "identity negotiation" could be used to label this type of communication instead of institutional positioning, they chose the latter, "broader term 'positioning,' because the latter includes both identity establishment and development and maintenance of a 'place' in the inter-organizational or larger social system" (para. 37). They argue that:

> This sort of communication is vital for constituting organizations because organizations exist in human societies that already are organized, that already have institutional ways of maintaining order, allocating material resources, regulating trade, and dividing labor—and, of course, that already have ways of communicating about all these practices. (para. 40)

Arguably, what needs to be added to McPhee and Zaug's (2000) discussion of institutional positioning is the idea that institutional positioning messages may be transactional. In other words, the flow of institutional positioning may be considered the result of reflexive communication processes involving messages sent to society from both the organization itself, *as well as* messages sent from non-members or other organizations in the institutional field. Considering institutional positioning messages in this way might be a helpful starting place for tackling Bisel's (2010) suggestion that "future pioneering work in CCO theory will test and articulate the necessary and sufficient conditions under which organization is constituted" (p. 129). As Bisel (2010) contends, "CCO theories patterned after McPhee and Zaug (2000, 2009) seem to begin from the assumption that the four flows are the *necessary* conditions for organizing, whereas their combinations produce the *sufficient* conditions for organizing" (Bisel,

2010, p. 128; emphasis added). Furthermore, if we define this process of organizing to be one that is socially constructed, then the competing messages from entities outside the organizations may, in fact, work to *de*constitute the organization at the same time. In terms of an organization's attempt at establishing legitimacy within the realm of an already-existing institutional field, the messages from both sources (i.e., the organization itself as well as its competition) are important to consider. Thus, an understanding of institutional positioning as transactional may be particularly important when considering how discursive processes can be employed to "degrade and ultimately destroy" organizations such as ISIL (Cronin, 2015, n.p.; Office of the Press Secretary, 10 September, 2014, n.p.)

Bean and Buikema (2015) pioneered this effort, seeking to apply communication theory, specifically CCO theory, to the decline and dissolution of terrorist organizations. They argued that "CCO possesses untapped potential for understanding and accelerating the decline and dissolution of terrorist organizations" (p. 6). Their recent study sought to "advance a perspective on organizing, communicative constitution of organization, as a theoretical intervention that can enable stakeholders to use communication to better understand and accelerate the decline and dissolution of hidden organizations," in their case, al Qaeda (p. 2). Bean and Buikema (2015) explain how organizational leaders "try to coordinate and control" the self-representations of their organizations because those representations are "vital for helping to secure resources and legitimacy" (p. 15). For example, Bean and Buikema analyzed the set of declassified Abbottabad documents captured during the raid of Osama bin Laden's compound and found that, in the case of al Qaeda, organizational leaders (e.g., Osama

bin Laden) attempted to use *texts* to "coordinate and control the communicative flows of membership negotiation, self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positing" (p. 17). Importantly, they concluded, al Qaeda's incapacity to control these flows led to the organization's decline.

However, many theorists argue that it is not simply "communication flows" that lead to the constitution (or dissolution) of organizing; that there are physical, material entities that play a major role in these processes—a role which often gets overlooked by scholars focused on the symbolic aspects of organizational life. Bisel (2010) for example, argues that "the gap between communication's constitution of interpersonal relationships and communication's constitution of organizing should be proving ground for CCO theory to clarify and qualify the mechanisms and processes by which communication comes to constitute organizing" (p. 129). This gap may be bridged, Bisel (2010) continues, by an "evaluation of how communication relates to the *material necessities of organizing*" (p. 129; emphasis added).

One reason why many scholars argue that ISIL surpassed al Qaeda in terms of being the terrorist organization of greatest concern is the fact that ISIL controls more land and has more money and fighters than al Qaeda did on September 11th, 2001 or any other time. Thus, part of this dissertation seeks to address Bisel's (2010) call for an addendum to CCO theorizing: "communication is a *necessary* condition for the constitution of organizing, but it is not *sufficient* to ensure organizing will be called into being" (p. 129; emphasis added). In the following section, I outline the sociomateriality debate that is taking root in CCO theorizing that will shed light on the material necessities of organizing.

(2) Sociomaterial Configurations and Implications for CCO Theorizing

The linguistic turn of the early 20th century focused scholars' attention on recognizing the importance of the role of language and discourse on the constitution of social reality. As Searle (1995) explains in *The Construction of Social Reality*, communication does not merely reflect, but *creates* social reality. As Ashcraft, Kuhn, and Cooren (2009) note, the linguistic turn in organizational communication studies treated language as "a basic ontological condition in that it is actively involved in the production, rather than a mere reflection, of social realities" resulting in an understanding of communication as "the dynamic, interactive negotiation of meaning through symbol use" (p. 6). Considering language as constitutive is clearly the underlying epistemological assumption of CCO as delineated above: organizations are *constituted in communication*. However, recent organizational communication research has called into question the centrality of symbolism and language in the constitution of organizations. As Ashcraft et al. (2009) put it, "communicative explanations [of organizational constitution] *exaggerate the muscle of symbolism*" (p. 24; emphasis added). To be more accepted and reach a wider audience, they contend, CCO theorists must take into account the "symbolic-material relation" (Ashcraft et al., 2009, p. 24).

LeBaron (2013) summarizes the debate at hand, explaining that although organizational scholars (i.e., organizational communication scholars, particularly those contributing to CCO literature) have traditionally privileged language use and discourse as the empirical basis for their analysis, "a growing number are turning their attention towards the artifacts and bodies that become unavoidably entangled with discourse" (para. 2). To provide an example, albeit brief, a discussion of the constitution of ISIL

would be incomplete, if not misleading, if it were to not address the role of objects (such as flags), sites (such as the actual land accrued by the State), or the number of members the State has attracted (the thousands of individuals emigrating to Syria and Iraq). Thus, the following section outlines the current sociomateriality debate, and highlights some of the key arguments inherent in this discussion.

A good point of departure for this discussion is Reed's (2004) assertion that if we are to "get real" about the role and power of organizational discourse, we must recognize the material conditions and social structures that aid in the constitution of organizations. He explains that "language does not exhaust our interest in social reality; it merely provides the primary communicative mechanism and medium through which social reality can be assessed and described" (Reed, 2004, p. 415). There is more to the constitution of organizations than just discourse, although talk and text are a large component (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996). As Ashcraft et al. (2009) contend,

> Clearly organizations exist not only when people invoke them in communication, but also in tangible architecture, artifacts, and technologies; the conduct of tasks by actual bodies and machines; and so forth. However seductive, reducing the constitution of organization to communication as defined here runs the risk of naive constructivism. After all, organizations are more than what we say they are. (p. 23)

This is where the notion of the sociomaterial comes into play. Leonardi (2013) explained that the simplest response to the question, "What does it mean to say something is sociomaterial" is to respond that the phenomena in question are *simultaneously* social and material (p. 60). This notion needs to be unpacked. The following paragraphs, then, attempt to define and relate the importance of the

sociomaterial to the communicative constitution of organizations as employed throughout this dissertation.

Ashcraft and colleagues (2009) claim that there are three aspects of "materiality" that must be considered if we are to, in the words of Reed (2004), "get real" about the constitution of organizations. In short, materiality matters to organization theorists as they try to explore the boundaries of organizations' social construction. In other words, materiality is a means of critiquing the belief that organizations are nothing more than symbolic and communication processes. So what kinds of materials might help constitute organizations? Ashcraft et al. (2009) suggest that materiality can take three forms: objects, sites, and bodies, defined as follows: First, materiality is experienced through the artifacts and technologies with which we interact, or, in other words *objects* (Ashcraft et al., 2009). Artifacts, in particular, are the organizational objects that "come to influence individual behavior and attitudes towards organizations" (Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004, p. 681). Organizational objects can include memos, checklists, work orders, meeting minutes, testing instruments, and other similar documents.

The physical location, be it territory, buildings, or otherwise, is also important to understanding the constitution of organization. Sociomateriality scholars refer to these locations as *sites*. As Ashcraft et al. (2009) iterate, "what lies 'inside' and 'outside' organization is a longstanding concern for management scholars" (p. 31). Importantly, they argue, the material place and space of an organization influences the resources available to that organization. As Ashcraft et al. (2009) further, site-friendly CCO

models "probe the dynamics of this mutual constitution [of discourse and site] in specific movements" thus creating organizational place in interaction (p. 31).

The third and final element of sociomaterial configurations important to incorporate into the discussion of organizational constitution is *bodies*. We work through our human bodies. As Ashcraft et al. (2009) explain, "communication has material force not only because 'speech acts', but also because (a) it is an embodied process situated in space and time; and (b) the physical body can be transformed […] as a result of communication" (p. 33). Bodies, they claim, are more than "brute facts" (p. 34). "In this sense," they continue, "communication is constrained by the body: performances of identity are limited by physical capacities; and all available options are not available to all people" (p. 34).

Leonardi (2012) contends that while the most recent applications of sociomaterial resources focus on non-physical information technology artifacts, *other* physical technological artifacts (for example, "hammers and bicycles") can also be studied (p. 26). Leonardi (2012) reminds us that the term "sociomaterial" is derived from the fusion of two words: "social" and "material." Drawing from a developed line of literature in sociolinguistics, the fusion of these two words makes sense: that, which is social, has material aspects (de Saussure, 1983). For example, material configurations are always open to interpretation, as material is created through social processes and interpreted within social contexts. As Leonardi (2012) explains, "all social action is possible because of some materiality" (p. 32). In short, sociomateriality is the "enactment of a particular set of activities that meld materiality with institutions,

norms, discourses, and all other phenomena we typically define as social" (Leonardi, 2012, p. 42).

What is important to note is that the term "sociomateriality" used in this context, was coined relatively recently (Jones, 2014). Although many published papers referenced the term, the "sociomaterial" was used primarily as a call for greater attention to be paid to sociomateriality in organizational research (Jones, 2014). As Ashcraft et al. (2009) contend, early CCO literature takes seriously the importance of discourse and language in understanding the constitution of organization. However, with the acknowledgment of the importance of materiality, they argue that researchers must now "consider how taking materiality seriously challenges communicational explanations" (p. 35). Furthermore, they note that earlier versions of CCO theory are not entirely wrong, but they are "just not entirely right" (p. 35). In this dissertation, then, I attempt to contribute to the CCO literatures as I incorporate the notion of sociomateriality into the discussion of the communicative constitution of ISIL as observed through its attempts to claim institutional legitimacy.

(3) The Social Construction of Legitimacy: Application of Institutional Theory

According to Aldrich (1979), when considering the development of any organization, "the major factors that organizations must take into account are other organizations" (p. 265). These "other organizations" are what make up an institutional field. Again, this dissertation attempts to extend CCO literature by emphasizing the reflexive, transactional processes of institutional positioning. Conceptualizing institutional positioning in such a way calls our attention to the importance of recognizing both the messaging of an organization itself, as well as the messaging

produced by other organizations in the institutional field. For example, when considering ISIL's positioning, importance lies in both the messages produced by ISIL and in the counter-messaging produced by its enemy, the US, as well. Put in another way, how ISIL is positioned by the US and the West is an important consideration when analyzing the discursive construction of ISIL's positioning. Due to the reflexive, transactional nature of this process, organizations must compete not only for resources and customers, (or in this case, members), but for political power, institutional legitimacy, social, and economic fit (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). ISIL's need for these resources is clearly implied through the words of President Obama in the opening quote of this dissertation—that ISIL is "desperate for legitimacy."

The term "institution" can be defined in many ways. As Lammers and Barbour (2006) explain, *institution*, in everyday language, can be defined as reference to: (1) a specific church, school, college, mission; (2) supraorganizational entities or governing bodies such as the economy, state, or religion; (3) traditional professions, such as medicine, law, clergy; (4) specific customs and practices (i.e., marriage) or laws (i.e., criminal justice); (5) as an adjective, referring to arrangements that are fixed, established, or enduring; or (6) institutionalized individuals (i.e., inmates, patients, or soldiers) under some compulsory rule (p. 358). Scott (2001) summarizes these references, explaining that institutions are social structures that have attained high degrees of resilience in society. He notes how institutions are composed of "cultured-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements," that together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life (p. 48). These culture-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements will be discussed later in this chapter.

Lammers and Barbour (2006) further explain that institutions can be thought of in terms of six interrelated aspects: institutions (1) are manifested in practice (i.e., observable routines); (2) are manifested in beliefs (i.e., they are cognitive and emotional elements in decisions and choices that individuals make); (3) involve individuals as actors and carriers of aforementioned beliefs; (4) are characterized by low rates of change (i.e., they endure); (5) are relevant to organizational communication are often formalized (i.e., written and achieved); and finally, (6) reflect a rational purpose (i.e., they involve prescriptions for how to get tasks done).

In summary, I apply Lammers and Barbour (2006) definition of institutions as "constellations of established practices guided by formalized, rational beliefs that transcend particular organizations and situations" (p. 364). This definition calls attention to specific features of ISIL's construction of organizational identity through *Dabiq*. Further, this conceptualization emphasizes how ISIL wants to position its actions institutionally (i.e., transcending particular organizations and situations). For example, ISIL's decision to call itself a "Caliphate" suggests an appeal to historic grandeur—a proposed nation-state comprised of all "real" Muslims, unified once again. Additionally, *Dabiq* provides its audience with both the rational purpose behind the reestablishment of a Caliphate, as well as the glory that will come with that establishment.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) identified *institutionalization* as a core process in the creation and perpetuation of enduring social groups. This conceptualization of institutionalization is important as we consider the role of ISIL and its subsequent attempts at legitimation in a contemporary, globalized society. To reiterate, the more

legitimate an organization is perceived to be, the more powerful its status becomes within its institutional field (Parsons, 1951). If ISIL is deemed legitimate by society at large, its access to members and resources, and thus, its permanency, may endure. Thus, understanding the communicative processes that enable and constrain the development of legitimacy is important in terms of the creation of organizations as well as their destruction.

Foundational to this discussion is Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work on the social construction of reality. To understand legitimation as a social construction, it is important to understand their conceptualization of identity, and subsequently, identity negotiation. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue, "identity is formed by social processes" (p. 173). Thus, identity stands in a "dialectical relationship with society" (p. 173). Transferring this understanding of identity from an emphasis on individuals to the context of organizations, allows for an understanding of *organizational* identity as "maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 173). Further discussion of organizational identity will be delineated in the next section of this chapter.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) further argue that the social processes involved in the formation and maintenance of [an organization's] identity may be determined by the social structures at play. Especially important, then, are the discourses produced by such organizations. As Phillips, Lawrence, and Hardy (2004) explain, "institutionalization occurs as actors interact and come to accept *shared definitions of reality*, and it is through linguistic process that definitions of reality are constituted" (p. 635; emphasis added). They argue that the concept of institutions has, for a long time,

been defined in terms of patterns of action. However, Phillips and colleagues reason that institutions are *constituted through discourse*. They argue, "it is not action per se that provides the basis for institutionalization but, rather, the texts that describe and communicate those actions" (p. 635; emphasis added).

Viewing institutions through this lens is precisely why organizational texts, such as *Dabiq*, are so imperative to our understanding of this phenomenon. In fact, Taylor et al. (1996) put forth a theory of CCO by focusing on this very connection—what they label as a "discourse theory of organization" (p. 7). They argue the key to creating effective organizations is, in a sense, to organize illocutionary force. "It is the force of an act that produces its illocutionary, and then its perlocutionary effect, and hence makes directed coordinated action possible" (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 22). Organizations, as Taylor et al. (1996) contend, are more than just getting people to do what they are told to do. The social structures at play (i.e., factors which characterize large, complex organizations) must always be grounded in the everyday talk of members if those structures are to be assumed meaningful at all. "It always comes back to the conversation" (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 5). The making of that conversation involves the translation of texts into everyday conversation, which again emphasizes the socially constructed nature of institutions. "Institutions are not just social constructions," Phillips et al. (2004) note, "but social constructions constituted through discourse" (p. 638). Put simply, institutionalization is the "social process by which individuals come to accept a shared definition of social reality" (Scott, 1987, p. 496). A discursive approach to understanding institutionalization emphasizes the production,

interpretation, and subsequent conversation around texts in the construction of institutions (Phillips et al., 2004).

Important to this understanding of institutions, is their inherently communicative nature. The aforementioned definitions of institution emphasize their capacity to control and constrain behavior (Scott, 2001). Thinking about the communicative nature of institutions is essential to the discussion at hand, as, Scott (2001) explains, "institutions impose restrictions by defining legal, moral, and cultural boundaries setting off legitimate from illegitimate activities" (p. 50). Further, he claims, "it is essential to recognize that institutions also support and empower activities and actors. Institutions provide guidelines and resources for acting as well as prohibitions and constraints on actions" (Scott, 2001, p. 50). Scott (2001) emphasizes Berger and Luckmann's claim that institutions are "dead" if they are only represented in verbal designations and in physical objects; they need to be "brought to life" through human communication and interaction (p. 75). Again, we can see why the legitimation efforts of groups such as ISIL are so important. And at the same time, we can see why the Obama administration attempts to delegitimize such groups through its counter-discourse. As Scott et al. (2000) explain, "organizations require more than material resources and technical information if they are to survive and thrive in their social environments. They also need social acceptability and credibility" (p. 327). Scott (2001) provides a framework for understanding how institutions may be "brought to life" via human communicative action, through his explanation of the three pillars of institutionalism. The pillars are as follows:

The first pillar is the *regulative pillar*. Scott (2001) describes the regulative pillar as an approach to understanding how institutions regularize and constrain human behavior. Through explicit regulatory processes, such as rule-setting, monitoring, and sanctioning activities, force, fear, and expedience are central ingredients of the regulatory pillar (Scott, 2001). He quotes Weber (1924), explaining that few, if any, leaders are content to base their regime on force alone, but all attempt to cultivate a belief in their legitimacy. Therefore, the most common way to control behavior involves the use of authority "in which coercive power is legitimated by a normative framework that both supports and constrains the exercise of power" (Scott, 2001, p. 53).

The second pillar is the *normative pillar*, which Scott (2001) explains as the normative rules that introduce a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life. This aspect of institutionalism includes an evaluation and adoption of the values and norms of the social milieu. By values, Scott refers to the "conceptions of the preferred or desirable, together with the construction of standards to which existing structures of behavior can be compared and assessed" (Scott, 2001, p. 54). By norms, he is referring to "how things should be done; define legitimate means to pursue valued ends" (Scott, 2001, p. 55). In defining how things *should be done,* the normative pillar speaks to the ways in which "individuals come to accept a shared definition of social reality" (Scott, 1987, p. 496). Selznick (1957) notes that one of the most significant meanings of institutionalization is to "infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand" (p. 17). Importantly, he claims that institutionalism promotes stability by instilling values.

The final pillar is the *cultural-cognitive pillar*, which stresses the "shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made" (Scott, 2001, p. 57). This pillar draws on the historical work of anthropologists (e.g., Geertz, 1973) as well as sociologists (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Goffman, 1959) in pointing to the importance of socially constructed "frameworks of meaning" (Scott, 2001, p. 58). The cultural-cognitive pillar highlights behavior regulation in the sense that compliance occurs because acting in any other way would be "inconceivable" (Scott, 2001, p. 58). Routines are followed because "that's the way we do things" (p. 58). Institutionalization, here, can therefore be viewed as the social process by which individuals come to accept a shared definition of reality, independent of the individual's own views or action, but become taken for granted as *the way things are* and *the way things ought to be* (Scott, 1987, p. 496).

Thinking about the processes of institutionalization in this way calls attention to both the aims and actions of an organization, as well as the effects of those aims and actions on society at large (i.e., the institutional field). In thinking about the current case of ISIL, it becomes ever more apparent why their legitimation efforts are so important to their organizational agenda. Likewise, the reasons why the Obama administration would attempt to delegitimize such groups become evident as well. Reiterating Scott et al.'s (2000) assertion, "organizations require more than material resources and technical information if they are to survive and thrive in their social environments" (p. 327). Importantly, such organizations also need to establish their social legitimacy.

(4) Organizational Legitimacy: Definitions and Application

According to Suchman (1995), many researchers use the term "legitimacy," but few actually define it. Because the term is so fundamental to the discussions in this dissertation, it is imperative that it is defined rather than simply "evoked"—a complaint Suchman (1995) puts forth in his analysis of contemporary organizational theory (p. 573). I apply Suchman's (1995) definition of legitimacy within this dissertation: "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" (p. 574). Furthermore,

> Legitimacy is socially constructed in that it reflects a congruence between the behaviors of the legitimated entity and the shared (or assumedly shared) beliefs of some social group; thus, legitimacy is dependent on a collective audience, yet independent of particular observers. (Suchman, 1995, p. 574)

Perceptions of legitimacy are important to organizations because *legitimate organizations have access to the symbolic resources that legitimacy affords*. Likewise, illegitimate organizations do not have access to such resources.

Recognizing that institutional positioning can unfold as a process implicating more than text and conversation is essential to our understanding of the ways in which ISIL positions itself in the social milieu. Suchman (1995) alludes to Parsons' (1960) contention that one of the fundamental aspects as to why legitimacy is so important is that "legitimacy leads to persistence because audiences are most likely to supply resources to organizations that appear desirable, proper, or appropriate" (p. 574). Thus, Suchman argues legitimacy affects both how people act toward organizations and also how they understand them. "Audiences perceive the legitimate organization not only as

more worthy," Suchman (1995) argues, "but also as more meaningful, more predictable, and more trustworthy" (p. 575).

Suchman (1995) further explains that there are three broad types of legitimacy; all of which abide by the assumption that organizational activities are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions. The first type of legitimacy he explains is *pragmatic legitimacy*, which "rests on the self-interested calculations of an organization's most immediate audiences" (Suchman, 1995, p. 578). In other words, do the actions of the organization benefit its constituencies? Are their interests being attended to? The second major type of legitimacy is *moral legitimacy,* which "reflects a positive normative evaluation of the organization and its activities" (Suchman, 1995, p. 579). Unlike pragmatic legitimacy, Suchman explains that moral legitimacy is "sociotropic;" or, in other words, "it rests not on judgments about whether a given activity benefits the evaluator, but rather on judgments about whether the activity is 'the right thing to do'" (p. 579). This aspect of legitimacy is important as it relates to ISIL because ISIL employs moral and religious justification to persuade audience's judgments about their militaristic activities and organization's being. (Despite the author's and many reader's convictions about the immorality of ISIL's actions.) Finally, there is *cognitive legitimacy*, which Suchman (1995) explains is based on cognition rather than on interest or evaluation. If an organization is "cognitively legitimate," Suchman explains, audiences (or society) accept it as necessary or even inevitable.

To be perceived as legitimate is important to an organization's position in its institutional field. Perceptions of legitimacy afford an organization access to resources

that organizations deemed illegitimate are not able to ensure. As Cheney and Christensen (2000) argue, "to secure and maintain a legitimate and recognizable place in material and symbolic markets, many organizations of today pursue a variety of complex communicative activities" (p. 232). These communicative activities are often complex due to the varied nature of an organization's audience. Organizations have to communicate with both the organizational members, as well as external audiences. Cheney and Christiansen (2000) contend that organizations have to therefore develop ways to communicate consistently to their many audiences. Without such consistency, they argue, it is difficult for organizations to "sustain and confirm a coherent sense of 'self'" (p. 232). Thus, many organizational communicative activities become integrated around one overall concern: organizational identity (Cheney & Christiansen, 2000). In the next section, I explain how the construction of organizational identity and image is important to understanding the social construction of organizational legitimacy.

(5) Organizational Image and Identity

People experience organizations as having an identity, or a set of defining characteristics that help to create a sense of oneness and coherence within a group (Dutten & Dukerich, 1991). As Scott (2007) summarizes, it is through communication that individuals express their belonging to various collectives and assess the reputation and image of those collectives. An organization's identity, as defined by Albert and Whetten (1985), is what organizational members believe to be an organization's central, enduring, and distinctive character. This sense of identity is created and maintained in communication. Specifically, the development of unifying symbols (e.g., logos and slogans) and language use (e.g., jargon) helps define who or what the organization's

defining features are, who is part of the group, and likewise, who is not (Cheney, 1983; DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). As Alvesson (2002) explains, an organization's identity deals with the "essence or core" of an organization (p. 177). Organizational identity is coherent over time and space, and marks one organization as distinct from other organizations (Alvesson, 2001).

However, organizational identity is "usually counterposed to [organizational] image, with the latter seen as a less stable or reliable projection, but one that is nevertheless very important in public settings" (Cheney, Christensen, & Daily, 2014, p. 698). Organizational image has to do with the way organizational members believe others (e.g., outsiders) see the organization, and is used to gauge how those outside the organization are judging the organization and its members (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). As observed in the case of ISIL, for example, *Dabiq* is the editors' (and, by extension, the State's) attempt to create and maintain a certain image. In order to do so, the editors combat messages that are trying to foster a different image explicitly. The images that members hold of their respective organizations, then, are unique to each member and may or may not match the collective organizational identity espoused by the organization itself in terms of what members define as distinctive, central and enduring about their organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994).

Important to the establishment of institutional legitimacy are the means by which organizational actors work to define their image, and, consequently, how organizational members identify with that image. Dutton et al. (1994) define organizational identification as a cognitive connection between a person's self-concept

and the attributes he or she associates with his or her organization's identity. In other words, organizational identification is "the degree to which a member defines him- or herself by the same attributes he or she believes define the organization" (Dutton et al., 1994, p. 239). These defining characteristics make up, in part, the organization's identity.

There is thus a recursive relationship between an organization's image and organizational members' identification, such that when external publics think highly of an organization, it can encourage members to define themselves in terms of that identity, and vise versa; if an organizational image is negative, members tend to dissociate with that particular organization. For example, Dutton et al. (1994) suggest that outsiders actively judge organizational members by the characteristics attributed to the organization through its public reputation. They present the case of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PA), explaining how PA workers often have to come to terms with PA's image as being dirty, inhumane, and dangerous due to the homelessness problems. Members of an organization, then, have to "interpret and infer the reputation of their organization and react to the external image they construe of their organization," particularly focusing on how the organization is portrayed in the media (p. 241).

However, the case of ISIL is unique. Usually, organizational members increasingly identify with organizations with a positive image and disassociate with those portrayed as negative. This pattern appears to be more complicated in the case of ISIL. ISIL is a militant organization that desires confrontation and actively works to construct an image with a dangerous connotation—an organizational identity that is in

stark contrast to the West. Here, to be thought ill of may actually be seen as desirable, and thus may enhance the identification of certain members or potential members.

(6) Confrontational Rhetoric

Part of what makes ISIL so unique in terms of its purported organizational identity is the notion that its raison d'être is a confrontation with the West. As will be illustrated in the findings chapter of this dissertation, the language employed within the pages of *Dabiq* emphasizes this sense of confrontation. Importantly, Scott and Smith (1969) argue that part of the attraction of confrontation generally, and confrontational rhetoric specifically, is the strong sense of success that can be shared by those who think of themselves as outsiders. This sense of success is "so strong, that it may be a can't-lose strategy" (Scott & Smith, 1969, p. 5). Further, confrontational sentimentality espouses the belief that there is nowhere to go but up, especially after having suffered being down for so long. As Scott and Smith (1969) explain, "confrontation," as used here, deals with a radical, dramatic, and revolutionary sense of division or separation; this sense of division is very much apparent within the texts of *Dabiq*.

Interestingly, Short (1991) analyzes the confrontational rhetoric of the *Earth First!* movement of the early 1980s. Members of this movement stressed the necessity of confrontational action to save the environment from over-development. According to Short (1991), "by supporting agitation and condoning sabotage in public forums, *Earth Firsters!* help construct an extremist image that is an important part of the group's self-identity and mission" (p. 176). Short concludes that although agitative rhetoric is generated for audiences outside the movement, it is received and interpreted by members within the movement. Thus, he claimed, "agitation may serve dual

purposes in creating a counter-response inside as well as outside the social movement" (p. 185). Specifically, Short provides an example of the movement taking on the counter-positioning rhetoric:

> After Senator McClure assailed *Earth First!* on the floor of the United States senate, calling the group's tactics "no more noble than those of hostage-takers and kidnappers," Foreman [one of the founders of the *Earth First!* movement] tells one reporter, "For someone like Jim McClure to acknowledge our existence and then condemn it, he couldn't give us a nicer compliment." ("McClure blasts," 1987, p. C7; as cited in Short, 1991, p. 185)

Short concluded that *Earth First's!* use of confrontational rhetoric was successful in helping shape public attention and attitudes toward it. Furthermore, he concluded that "the group which probably lacks respect in most quarters of that mainstream environmental movement […] certainly has the attention of movement leaders" (p. 185). Thus, confrontational rhetoric functions to raise awareness and bring attention to an otherwise ignored issue or concern. The attention raised gives group members a sense of power and efficacy, and strengthens the organization's identity—even if, or perhaps because, powerful outsiders disparage that identity. ISIL's use of confrontational rhetoric may function similarly. Organizational members strongly identify with ISIL. Yet, at the same time, that identity is constantly being threatened by powerful others—in this case, the US and West.

Chapter 3: Organizational Context

This chapter outlines the rise of ISIL in the Islamic community and the world, as well as how and why it has become such a contentious organization "desperate for legitimacy" (Office of the Press Secretary, 18 February 2015, n.p.). I first explain the controversy surrounding its name. Then, I will justify why I chose to refer to ISIL as such, as opposed to the many other names the media, political correspondents, and Western leaders invoke. I then describe ISIL's organizational background, and explain why its efforts towards organizational legitimacy are so essential to its existence.

Organizational Naming: ISIL, ISIS, The Islamic State, and Daesh

Lynn Berg argues in her 2008 paper titled, *The Importance of Names and Naming in Religion, Literature, and Librarianship*, that "language, culture, and religion are the context within which our identities are established" (p. 195). Therefore, she claims, language, culture, and religion "are naturally the prime source for names and naming practice, and the key to understanding and using them" (p. 195). Furthermore, Berg contends naming is an "act of power" because of its role in "creation, order, and control" (p. 202). The importance of naming is clearly evident in the wrangle over names used to refer to the terrorist organization that is the subject of this dissertation. On the one hand, there is a set of labels used by Western audiences to refer to the terrorist organization, and on the other, there is the name by which the organization refers to itself. There are two key issues associated with ISIL that will be discussed in this chapter: (1) the labeling of the group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the US Secretary of State and (2) the naming of the group (e.g., ISIL, ISIS, and the Islamic State) by the US, Western nations, and the group itself.

The US Secretary of State designated the Islamic State as an FTO officially on December 17, 2004 (US Department of State, n.d.). Labeling it as such was important, because, according to the Bureau of Counter Terrorism, "FTO designations play a critical role in our fight against terrorism and are an effective means of curtailing support for terrorist activities and pressuring groups to get out of the terrorism business" (US Department of State, n.d., n.p.). Before the rise of the Islamic State, al Qaeda was the jihadist group thought by most Americans to be the largest threat to international peace and security. Yet, although al Qaeda still remains dangerous to present, the Islamic State now represents the largest "post-al Qaeda jihadist threat" (Cronin, 2015, para. 3). By the summer of 2014, the Islamic State had expanded from a relatively little-known, obscure terrorist group, to one that controls between 12,000 and 35,000 square miles of territory formerly held by Syria and Iraq (Cordall, 2014). The atrocities conducted at the hands of this terrorist organization have surpassed what was ever expected. They are no longer considered a "jayvee" squad of terrorists (Sinha, 2015).

The events of November 13th, 2015 serve as the point of departure for the remainder of this chapter. On November 13th, 2015, the Islamic State launched a series of terrorist attacks on civilians in Paris, France. Many, including the French President Francois Hollande, considered the attacks as an "act of war" (Dalton, Horobin, Varela, & Landauro, 2015). Prior to the Paris attacks, the terrorist group had been referred to in one of two ways: as "ISIS," by US news and media correspondents, and as "ISIL," by the US President, his staff, and many military officials. However, the attacks on Paris on November 13th seemed to usher a new term into the mouths of world leaders and news broadcasters: "Daesh." One of the first utterances of this name was by French

President Hollande shortly after the attacks: "It is an act of war that was waged by a terrorist army, a jihadist army, *by Daesh*, against France," (Dalton et al., 2015; emphasis added). Although the name *Daesh* had been used for quite some time, particularly by military leaders, it was not used either in the media or by world leaders until after these attacks on Paris. The following pages outline the history of the various names and labels associated with the terrorist group that has declared itself The Islamic State.

"ISIS," "ISIL," and the "Islamic State"

A brief perusal of the major news headlines throughout the period of 2014-2015 suggests scholars, politicians, and news broadcasters alike were not in agreement over how to refer to this group. Further, they were not in agreement as to what the group actually is: Is "ISIS" a terrorist organization? Is "ISIL" a nation-state? The Islamic State? A Caliphate? As Bruscella (2015) contends, "we call organizations, terrorist groups included, 'into being' by naming them as organizations and by paying homage to the names we give to them" (p. 5). What we name and label organizations matters, as it shapes the way we conceptualize and come to understand them and their actions. In the pages that follow, I provide some context in terms of delineating when and where the different names (specifically, ISIL, ISIS, and the Islamic State) have been used, and the reasons why. Following that discussion, I introduce the latest of names, *Daesh*, and explain the controversy over its use.

The jihadist group refers to itself as the "Islamic State," or, *al-Dawla al-Islamiya* in Arabic. Sometimes, the name is truncated, and they refer to themselves as just "the State," or *al-Dawla*. This particular name most accurately reflects their

aspirations of creating a global caliphate across national borders, not just in Syria and Iraq (Sanchez, 23 January 2015). It is for this reason that the Western world tends to steer clear of that particular naming practice.

Since the group began to receive global attention, however, the most common way to refer it has been with the label: "ISIS." This was the term most frequently used by the media, and thus, ISIS was the term most widely recognized by the general public. The President of the United States, however, consistently referred to this same group by the name ISIL (at least, prior to the November 13th Paris attacks). This inconsistency in what to call the terrorist organization undoubtedly sparked confusion for many in the lay public.

"ISIS" is actually an acronym for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. "ISIL," then, is an acronym for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Jamie Fuller (2015), writing for the Washington Post, notes that many politicians and media organizations have chosen the label ISIL over ISIS have done so as a paean to grammar. As Stern and Berger (2015) explain, the differences between ISIS and ISIL stem from "issues of technical transliteration and geography" (p. 8). When you translate the Arabic name for the group of insurgents, "Al-Dawla Al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham" into English, using "the Levant" (a.k.a. ISIL), as opposed to "Syria" (a.k.a. ISIS) to describe the region is most accurate (Fuller, 20 January 2015). CNN Global Affairs Correspondent, Elise Labott further explains that we should use the acronym ISIL because the group appears to have to set it sights *beyond* Iraq and Syria (Sanchez, 2015). The "Levant" thus accurately reflects the group's aspirations to rule over a broader region of the Middle East (Sanchez, 2015).

Additionally, many argue that using ISIL acknowledges Washington's decision not to recognize ISIL's plans for a caliphate, by not referring to them as an "Islamic State" in Iraq and Syria, or elsewhere (Sanchez, 2015). For this reason, President Obama has used the term ISIL when referring to the group at hand. Washington Post reporter Jaime Fuller, in an early 2015 article titled *'ISIS' vs. 'ISIL' vs. 'Islamic State': The Political Importance of a Much-Debated Acronym,* highlights the importance of this naming debate. She explains, "the ISIL-ISIS debate continues in large part because the Islamic State is not internationally recognized, and officials wouldn't want to recognize the existence of a state that remains an ambition of a group they hope to extinguish" (Fuller, 2015, n.p.). Put simply, referring to the Islamic State by its self-appointed name, the Islamic State, "legitimizes its declaration of a Caliphate" (Stern & Berger, 2015, p. 8).

There are other cited reasons for the switch to using the acronym ISIL, over ISIS or the Islamic State. The name "Isis" had first been used to refer to an Egyptian goddess, and many women go by Isis as a first name. One case that had gained considerable attention is that of a female scientist, Isis Anchalee, who had been blocked by the social media site Facebook because of her name. She tweeted, "Facebook thinks I'm a terrorist" (Kircher, 2015, n.p.). Prior to this tweet, Anchalee had gained social media stardom when she started the hashtag #ILookLikeAnEngineer, promoting women in the sciences, but as a result of the growing attention that the terrorist group ISIS had been receiving in the media, her page was blocked by Facebook administrators. Other women made similar complaints. According to *ThePetitionSite*, thousands of users

have supported the petition to have the media to stop using the acronym ISIS (Care2Petitions, 2015).

Not only are individuals affected by the naming dilemma, but organizations, too, have been forced to take action. Isis Gifts and Books in Denver, Colorado, has been in business for over 35 years. Recently, however, the bookstore has been the target of threats and vandalism. The owner of the store, Karen Charboneau-Harrison, explained that she had named her store after the Egyptian goddess Isis, who represents women, healing, and magic. Instead of changing the store's name, though, Charboneau-Harrison hopes everyone would just change the way they refer to the terrorist organization, so as not to conflate terrorists with an Egyptian goddess (Erdahl, 2015). Another organization, however, Isis Pharmaceuticals, founded nearly 25 years ago, is seriously considering changing its name. D. Wade Walke, the company's Vice President for Corporate Communications and Investor Relations, says that the company regularly finds emails from the public requesting a name change (Weintraub, 2015). But Walke said the change would not be easy. "We've had the name Isis for 27 years. She's an Egyptian goddess of health. We're attached to this name" (Weintraub, 2015, n.p.).

For the reasons stated above, I have chosen to use the term "ISIL" when referring to the organization referenced within this dissertation. Namely, because "ISIL" is the label used most often by the US President and the government. As the discussion thus far indicates, naming and identity go hand-in-hand. The ISIS-ISIL-IS debate has not yet been solved—at the time of this writing in March of 2016, news

sources still refer to the group as ISIS. However, a fourth term, "Daesh," may provide a solution for the organizational naming dilemma.

"Daesh"

Although only gaining traction in media and political discourses after the November 13th Paris attacks, the term "Daesh" has been used for quite some time as a derogatory way to refer to the terrorist organization at hand. Army Lt. Gen. James Terry, commander of the US war effort in Iraq and Syria, explains the West should be employing the use of the term *Daesh* because it is a term "that our partners in the Gulf use" (Tilghman, 2014, n.p.). Terry claims that Western allies in the Gulf "ask us to use that [term], because they feel that if you use ISIL, that you legitimize a self-declared caliphate. [...] They feel pretty strongly that we should not be doing that" (Tilghman, 2014, n.p.). Furthermore, as Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius notes, "this is a terrorist group and not a state," and "I do not recommend using the term Islamic State because it blurs the lines between Islam, Muslims and Islamists. The Arabs call it 'Daesh' and I will be calling them the 'Daesh cutthroats'" (Tilghman, 2014, n.p.). Kahn, writing for the Boston Globe (prior to the Paris attacks) pointedly declared: "The Obama Administration should switch to this nomenclature, too, because how we talk about this group is central to defeating them" (Kahn, 2014, n.p.).

So what does Daesh mean? According to Alice Guthrie, an Arabic translator, "D.A.E.S.H. is a transliteration of the Arabic acronym formed of the same words that make up I.S.I.S in English: 'Islamic State in Iraq and Syria,' or '*al-dowla al-islaamiyya fii-il-i'raaq wa-ash-shaam*'" (Garrity, 2015, n.p.). But the term, which, at first seems pretty mundane, is actually extremely insulting to the group. Depending

on how it is used in Arabic, the term "daesh" in Arabic can mean, "to trample down and crush" or also, "a bigot." Obviously, it is not a term well liked by the terrorist group. It is disliked so strongly that ISIL has threatened to cut the tongues out of anyone using the term (Garrity, 2015).

Evan Hohlman, a national security analyst, explains that government officials have chosen to use the term "Daesh" to avoid using other, more common, names for the group (e.g., ISIS and ISIL). As previously discussed, using words such as "Islamic" and "State" should be cautioned against for two reasons: first, due to the conflation of the ideals of Islam, as a religion, and the terrorist organization, and second, due to the legitimacy offered to the group's desire for an actual "state," i.e., a Caliphate. As the translator, Guthrie, mentioned, she believes that the group hates being referred to as Daesh because "they hear it, quite rightly, as a challenge to their legitimacy" (Garrity, 2015, n.p.). The use of the term is quite overtly "a dismissal of their aspirations to define Islamic practice, to be 'a state for all Muslims' and – crucially—as a refusal to acknowledge and address them as such" (Garrity, 2015, n.p.).

Finally, Kahn (2015) argues that the term "Daesh" is strategically a better choice than ISIS, ISIL, or IS for two reasons thus far elucidated: First, "it is still accurate in that it spells out the acronym of the group's full Arabic name, al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham" and second, as aforementioned, "Daesh" is both a play on words and an insult (n.p.). Importantly, propaganda is central to the group's growth and spread. Kahn (2015) argues that "whether hijacking popular Twitter hashtags or using little known distribution channels to post videos to YouTube, their leadership knows

that the war of words online is just as key to increasing its power and influence as the actual gruesome acts they commit on the ground" (n.p.). Importantly, she contends, "By using the militants' preferred names, the US government implicitly gives them legitimacy. But referring to the group as Daesh doesn't just withhold validity. It also might help the United States craft better policy" (Kahn, 2015, n.p.).

The discussion thus far suggests that organizational naming and labeling practices have implications for not only policy implementation, but also for the construction of organizational identity and legitimacy. Attending to these various names and the socio-historic reasoning behind their use is important as we attempt to discredit and delegitimize organizations such as ISIL. As Kahn (2015) contends, "changing what the United States calls this band of militants is not going to make them go away. Yet we also know from over a decade of war that military tactics do not stamp out extremism either" (n.p.). And as Corman, Trethewey, and Goodall (2008) advocate, there seems to be a disconnect—both theoretically as well as practically—in terms of the government's and military's understanding of the role of communication and media in extremist recruitment and development. Specifically, they label the war on terrorism as a "war of ideas" which is, in their view, primarily a communication struggle. Expounding Khan's claim mentioned previously, Corman, et al. (2008) argue that this war,

> cannot be won militarily on the battlefield, but must be won rhetorically and narratively in the heart and in the minds of those on all sides of this ideological front who can—who must—come to believe that finding a better way of respectfully exchanging views is preferable to finding better ways of destroying each other. (p. x)

The ways in which we talk about and discuss terrorism and counter-terrorism measures, are inherently communicative. "Words," and as argued here, specifically, names, "are weapons in the struggle against violent extremism" (Goodall et al., 2008, p. 19).

Organizational Exigency: The study of ISIL and Legitimacy

As Turner (2014) notes, "legitimacy to rule the Islamic world has historically been highly contentious" (p. 3). Since the time of Muhammad, there has been a strong desire for the unity of the Islamic community—a single Muslim state. However, there has also been constant competition over who should lead that theocratic nation. The struggle for power of authority remained solely in the Islamic world until the latter part of the twentieth century. At that time, the contemporary international power system that "privileges state sovereignty" began to interrupt their internal politics (Tuner, 2014, p. 3). This interruption made a politically unified Muslim community, legitimized by God's will, a distant possibility for Muslims (Tuner, 2014). "The creation of artificial modern states by outside powers and the consolidation of the international system," Tuner (2014) explains, "brought political struggles indigenous to the Middle East into the international sphere" (p. 3).

These struggles, however, influenced the rise of contemporary Salafi Jihadism[ii] and what is now referred to as Islamic extremism. The terms Islamic extremism and Islamism, however, are not one and the same. Saltman and Winter (2014) explain that the term "Islamism" refers to a broad rage of political ideologies that have roots dating back to the 19th century. Again, it was at this time that many Muslim intellectuals sought to right the wrongs they believed Muslims suffered because of imperialism (Saltman & Winter, 2014). At first, this movement was not violent; however, over the

years, more extremist Islamist trends began to take form (Saltman & Winter, 2014). Today, many of the Islamist trends "tend to repudiate, rather than embrace, modernity" (Saltman & Winter, 2014, p. 13). Thus, Jihadism, a form of religiously sanctioned militancy, began to emerge from this "loose spectrum of [Islamist] ideologies" (Saltman & Winter, 2014, p. 13).

Despite their current enmity, al Qaeda and ISIL are linked through their similar jihadist ideology and violent interpretation of Islam (Saltman & Winter, 2014). According to the Quilliam Foundation, Islamist extremism may be defined as "the belief that Islam is a totalitarian political ideology" (as cited in Saltman & Winter, 2014, p. 6). This ideology claims that, "political sovereignty belongs to God rather than people. Islamists believe that their reading of Shariah should be state law and that it is the religious duty of all Muslims to create and pledge allegiance to an Islamic state that reflects these principles" (Saltman & Winter, 2014, p. 6). What all jihadists have in common, then, is a rigid worldview:

> Sanctions political violence, pitting Muslims ("Good") against non-Muslims ("Evil") and necessitating the reestablishment of the caliphate as a solution to injustice and Muslim disempowerment. Jihadist groups and their sympathizer networks view their political programs, whatever form they take, as part of a 'struggle for God's sovereignty on earth that eliminates the middle ground and sets the stage for a millennial, eschatological battle between good and evil. (Saltman & Winter, 2014, p. 13)

ISIL is no different. ISIL's adherents hold that "they are merely practicing Islam fully, pronouncing those who disagree with them *takfir* [heretics]" (Clarion Project, November 2014, p. 5). ISIL favors a "direct approach" to the building of an Islamic State, "seeking to seize territory, build a state and enforce Sharia immediately" (p. 9). And with the online posting of the beheading of journalist James Foley in August of

2014, ISIL entered the world stage as a known terrorist organization associated with feelings of extreme fear, distrust, and barbarity. As Stern and Berger (2015) contend, ISIL has used public beheadings and other highly publicized, symbolic acts of violence as "a form of marketing, manipulation, and recruitment, determined to bring the public display of savagery into our lives, trying to instill in us a state of terror" (p. 3). For this reason, ISIL continues to be at the forefront of socio-political and military discussions, in an ever-changing world and a growing "war on terror.[iii]"

ISIL is "a movement and an organization that sits at the nexus of a rapidly changing region and world" (Stern & Berger, 2015, p. 11). Stern and Berger's book, published early in 2015, is one of the first texts to be written about this group. The authors point out that, at the time of their writing, ISIL was "fully emerged in the world, but before its ultimate fate ha[d] become clear" (Stern & Berger, 2015, p. 6). A similar situation is the case for this dissertation which is why the organizational context provides such an important site of exigency. Understanding the ways in which ISIL positions itself to claim legitimacy may, in fact, help our ability to delegitimize, and thus, destroy it.

In a nationally televised speech in September of 2014, President Obama drew a straight line between ISIL and al Qaeda, as he explained his plan to "degrade and ultimately destroy" the organization (Cronin, 2015, para. 4). Again, up until that point, al Qaeda had been the better known and more intensely feared terrorist group. (Interestingly, Osama bin Laden disassociated with ISIL due to ISIL's excessive brutality and ruthlessness; see Cronin, 2015). In his speech, President Obama claimed that ISIL is "a terrorist organization, pure and simple" (Cronin, 2015, para. 4). But this

assessment was mistaken. ISIL does not fit the traditional description of a terrorist organization (Cronin, 2015). Although ISIL uses terrorism as a tactic, it is not "simply" a terrorist organization. If ISIL is *simply* anything, "it is a pseudo-state led by a conventional army" (Cronin, 2015, para. 4; emphasis added). As Stern and Berger (2015) contend, the group is "a hybrid of terrorism and insurgency" (p. 6) and is "a movement *and* an organization" (p. 11; emphasis added).

Cronin (2015) explains that terrorist networks, such as al Qaeda for example, "generally have only dozens or hundreds of members, attack civilians, do not hold territory, and cannot directly confront military forces" (para. 4). ISIL, however, "boasts some 30,000 fighters, holds territory in both Iraq and Syria, maintains extensive military capabilities, controls lines of communication, commands infrastructure, funds itself, and engages in sophisticated military operations" (Cronin, 2015, para. 4). Put simply, ISIL is more than a terrorist group. ISIL is an organization, emerging as a de facto state "led by a conventional army" (Cronin, 2015, para. 4). Cronin goes on to argue that as ISIL has grown, its goals and intentions have become more clearly articulated. In turn, ISIL's identity claims and attempts at legitimacy have also become more clearly articulated. She explains how the group,

> seeks to control territory and create a 'pure' Sunni Islamist state governed by a brutal interpretation of sharia; to immediately obliterate the political borders of the Middle East that were created by Western powers in the twentieth century; and to *position itself* as the sole political, religious, and military authority over all of the world's Muslims. (Cronin, 2015, para. 10; emphasis added)

In June of 2014, ISIL made their intentions more obvious: they declared themselves a Caliphate, with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the Caliph.

Interpretations surrounding the definition and motivations for the reestablishment of a caliphate differ. Liebl (2009) quotes a "caliphate specialist," Ali Abd al-Raziq, who stated that there was actually no basis for the caliphate in the Qur'an or the Hadith, concluding that, "while there may not be anything un-Islamic about having a caliphate, there also was nothing un-Islamic about not having one either" (p. 374). However, as Furlow, Fleisher, and Corman (2014) note, calls for a restoration of the caliphate are a "regular feature of Islamist extremist communication" (p. 2). According to Furlow et al., "extremists construct a narrative of an ideal system of government that will unite all Muslims under God's just rule," (i.e., a Caliphate, p. 2). The narratives romanticize previous Caliphates, which extremists claim were undermined by Westerners determined to destroy Islam. Furlow et al. (2014) argue that these narratives rely on three important devices in order to appeal to their audience: the narratives stress the importance of (1) the "imagined community" of Muslims, united across the world; (2) "unified diversity" in which the idea of the Caliphate is presented in a general way to which everyone agrees; and (3) a "romanticized history" of the Caliphate (p. 2). This romanticized history is one in which the Caliphate is portrayed as a "glorious, shining kingdom on a hill" while leaving out actual historical details of fighting, civil wars, territorial losses, and assassination (p. 2).

With the declaration of a Caliphate, ISIL embarked on the construction of a narrative and called for the immediate loyalty of all Muslims throughout the world (Clarion Project, November 2014). In an audio recording by ISIL's chief spokesman, Abu Muhammad al Adnani, ISIL declared that the new Caliphate would "simply be known as the Islamic State, dropping 'Iraq and Syria' from the organization's name to

reflect its global claim of dominion" (Stern & Berger, 2015, pp. 46-47). Again, referring to itself as "The Islamic State," as opposed to ISIL or ISIS, is significantly symbolic. "While most observers view [ISIL's] 'state' as a dystopia, [ISIL] claims to have formed as a refuge from an impure world, a place where believers can be secure in the knowledge that they are living in accordance with Islam, at least as interpreted by [ISIL]" (Stern & Berger, 2015, p. 6). The group itself regards themselves as a Caliphate, regardless of how outside observers view it.

Immediately following the declaration of the new Caliphate, a humanitarian crisis ensued. Beheadings, institutionalized slavery of women and children, sexual abuse of captured women, and public displays of aggression aside, ISIL continued to take over land that was home to a large populations of ethnic and religious minorities, who, because they were not Sunni Muslims, were seen as "devil worshipers" and exterminated (Stern & Berger, 2015, p. 48). As a result, President Barack Obama announced that the US would take military action against ISIL in Iraq. Faced with US air strikes and military force, ISIL began to implement a strategy called "paying the price," whereby they responded to any and all aggression with extreme violence (Stern & Berger, 2015, p. 48). Much of these acts were filmed and subsequently posted online for the world to see.

In September of 2014, an international coalition was formed to fight ISIL, with participants coming from the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands (Stern & Berger, 2015). Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, and The United Arab Emirates also joined, Sunni-majority countries that have "the most to lose from ISIL's imperial ambitions and efforts to recruit in the region"

(Stern & Berger, 2015, p. 49). However, ISIL still stands strong. Stern and Berger (2015), at the time of their writing, note that ISIL had "approximately 25,000 fighters, including terrorist and insurgent divisions, as well as a force more resembling a traditional army's infantry" (p. 51). This number has continued to increase. ISIL controls territory from the Aleppo region of Syria, to the Salah ad Din province in Iraq (Stern & Berger, 2015). They rule their land using a structure of *wilayat*, or provinces, each with their own governor and local government beneath it (Stern & Berger, 2015). Stern and Berger (2015) also note that "the structure [of ISIL] is designed to survive the death of Baghdadi [the current Caliph]" (p. 51). Importantly, however, even if ISIL's current leadership were removed, it would be by no means certain that ISIL would be crippled (Stern & Berger, 2015).

Finally, it is important to note ISIL's rapid growth and spread of publicity (Stern & Berger, 2015). "Through a media strategy as aggressive as its military tactics," ISIL "seeks to extend its influence around the world" (Stern & Berger, 2015, p. 51). Part of this media strategy serves as the object of study in this dissertation. Thus, the potential is strong for important theoretical lessons to be learned from the case study of ISIL. As aforementioned, ISIL does not fit most traditional conceptualizations of a terrorist organization (Cronin, 2015). Conventional terrorist organizations, such as al Qaeda, generally only have dozens or hundreds of members, do not hold territory, and do not often confront military forces. ISIL, on the other hand, "boasts some 30,000 fighters, holds territory in both Iraq and Syria, maintains extensive military capabilities, controls lines of communications, commands infrastructure, funds itself, and engages in sophisticated military operations" (Cronin, 2015, para. 4). With access to such

resources and socio-material configurations, ISIL poses "a great threat to America and its allies" (President Obama, 10 September 2014, n.p.). ISIL has "no vision or goal than to slaughter all who stand in its way" (President Obama, 10 September 2014, n.p.). Aside from this obvious organizational exigency, ISIL's propaganda magazine, *Dabiq,* provides a comprehensive and multifaceted account of ISIL's self-promotion.

Understanding the ways in which ISIL attempts to position itself on the international stage and to English speaking audiences is important, particularly in terms of counter-terrorism efforts. Publishing the magazine in English allows ISIL to reach out to potential recruits who may have citizenship in English-speaking countries. As Cronin (2015) argues, ISIL has been successful in offering "short-term, primitive gratification" (para. 25) as demonstrated by the thousands of individuals migrating to Syria to join the fight, including recruits from Western Europe as well as the US. In other words, ISIL's efforts to recruit new members and attract foreign fighters to Syria from English speaking countries have been effective and useful for their organizational constitution efforts.[iv] Richard Barrett, Senior Vice President of the Soufan Group—a strategic security intelligence service headquartered in New York—remarks that the continual rise in the number of foreign fighters entering Syria have been the cause for increasing international concern. He contends, "given the potential scale of [this] problem and the limited resources available to deal with it," policies must be based on as "full an understanding of the phenomenon as possible" (Barrett, 2014, p. 3). Thus, this dissertation is an attempt to contribute to that end: a full[er] understanding of ISIL's ontological status and legitimacy. In addition, reflecting on the rising socio-materiality debate in CCO literature, the unique case of ISIL provides us with an attractive context

to begin understanding the ways in which organizational constitution and institutional positioning unfold. Therefore, the research question that this dissertation seeks to answer is as follows:

> *RQ: What strategies does ISIL employ in an effort to construct its ontological status and legitimacy as an organization amongst an English-speaking audience?*

Chapter 4: Method

Description of Texts

To answer the aforementioned research question, I analyzed the first set of eleven digitally produced and circulated propaganda magazines, titled *Dabiq*, published by the Islamic State. Subsequent issues have been distributed since the time of this writing (e.g., Issue 12, titled *Just Terror*).

The introductory pages of the first issue outline the purpose of the magazine: "a periodical magazine focusing on the issues of *tawhid* [unity], *manhaj* [truth-seeking], *hijrah* [migration], *jihad* [holy war], and *jama'ah* [community]," five fundamental concerns of the new self-declared Islamic Caliphate (Issue 1, p. 3). According to the editorial staff of the magazine, *Dabiq* "will also contain photo reports, current events, and informative articles on matters relating to the Islamic State" (p. 3). Importantly, as researchers for the Clarion Project explain, the series "portrays the Islamic State as they see themselves: boasting of their victories and painting a romantic image of the restoration of an Islamic golden age and the heralding of a 'glorious' new caliphate based on holy war" (Clarion Project, September 2014, n.p.). The series functions, therefore, as a set of crucial organizational texts through which the emerging state attempts to position itself as legitimate to external entities across the globe.

The first issue of *Dabiq* was published on July 5th, 2014, a month after the shocking fall of Mosul (Cronin, 2015; Gambhir, 2014). Subsequent issues were not published at regular intervals; the first two issues were published in July of 2015, and monthly thereafter until December of 2014. Then, the subsequent six issues were published in February, March, May, July, August, and November of 2015. There was a

clear impetus to get the magazine out to the public; the initial publications correspond to the official declaration of the State and its subsequent rally for territorial gains. This particular collection of documents, comprised of the first 11 issues in the series, totals 646 pages, complete with in-depth articles, interviews, news briefs, and gruesome frontline images alongside professional-quality photographs of daily life in the State. *Dabiq* is published simultaneously in English and Arabic, but each issue has also been translated and later published in additional languages. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, I analyzed the English-language series.

Within the pages of *Dabiq,* the editors usually include English-language translation(s) where phrases or concepts are left in Arabic. Gambhir (2014) suggests that because the series is, in fact, crafted in conventional, standard written English, it is likely that the magazine aims to communicate both to Arabic-speaking supporters and sympathizers in the West and world-wide, as well as to their enemies, including the United States and Western nations. Compared to the well-known al Qaeda equivalent, *Inspire,* the intended audience of *Dabiq* is much more extensive. Whereas *Inspire* served as a "how-to" guide for "lone-wolf Western-based terrorists" whose aim is to harm Westerners, the *Dabiq* series is much "farther-reaching," as it attempts lay out the social, political, and religious warrants for a Caliphate, as well as encourage all believing Muslims to support and emigrate to the new State (Gambhir, 2014, p. 2).

Analysis

The analytic method used in this dissertation can be best described as an iterative, problem-based approach to qualitative data analysis as advocated by the organizational communication scholar and qualitative methodologist Sarah Jane Tracy

(2013). Different from traditional grounded methods of constant comparative data analysis (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), an iterative, problem-based approach "alternates between emic, or emergent, readings of the data, and etic use of existing models, explanations, and theories" (Tracy, 2013, p. 184). "Rather than *grounding* the meaning solely in the emerging data," Tracy explains, "an iterative approach encourages reflection upon the active interests, current literature, priorities, and theories the researcher brings to the data" (p. 184; emphasis added). As applied to the research at hand, previous work in organizational communication (e.g., CCO theory and institutional theory), research on terrorist and clandestine organizations (e.g., Bean & Buikema, 2015; Stohl & Stohl, 2007), as well as emerging news regarding ISIL and its adherents were read prior to and concurrent with analysis.

Using Bean and Buikema's (2015) paper as an exemplary model for this research, I chose the aforementioned *Dabiq* texts to serve as representative organizational documents by which ISIL attempts to position its organizational image to the world. Other organizational communication scholars have conducted similar case studies successfully by using the CCO four-flows model to investigate the constitutive force of organizational documents (e.g., Browning, Greene, Sitkin, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2009; Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008). Bean and Buikema (2015) selected and analyzed a key collection of al Qaeda's organizational texts—the 17 Abbottabad documents acquired during the raid on Bin Laden's compound. Their analysis examined how clandestine terrorist organizations' production of organizational texts can contribute to organizational constitution and CCO theorizing. The authors

noted that the documents they chose for their analysis were significant because they "provide a rare glimpse of communication among members of a hidden organization" (p. 7). Although ISIL is by no means a "hidden organization," many comparisons have been made between ISIL and al Qaeda in efforts to study the communication within and amongst terrorist networks and organizations, as well as in applying the CCO four flows model to understanding communication within large terrorist organizations (e.g., Bean & Buikema, 2015). Thus, previous research suggests that this particular approach to data collection and subsequent analysis is appropriate for the aims of this dissertation.

Cochran and Dolan (1984) allege that scholars have become increasingly concerned about the fact that much research conducted appears to be "dominated by a concern for methodology rather than a concern for the means and consequences of research" (p. 25). Thus, the method proposed for the present research attempts to analyze the texts both comprehensively and rigorously while keeping the end result of the research in mind. The goal of this research was to learn more about the discursive means through which ISIL attempts to position itself and subsequently legitimize its existence on a global scale. Such insight might help to develop possible communicative strategies for challenging those claims to institutional positioning and legitimacy. Although interpreting qualitative data is often an "indescribably ambiguous process," researchers have the responsibility and obligation to describe their analysis paths as transparently as possible (Tracy, 2013, p. 10). This, as Tracy notes, is particularly true for credibility and pedagogical reasons.

To begin, I read through the first three issues of *Dabiq* to immerse myself in the nature of the documents. As Tracy (2013) puts it, the goal of the data immersion

process is to "absorb and marinate in the data, jotting down reflections and hunches, but reserving judgment" (p. 188). Here, my goal was to determine what was "going on" in the data (Carbaugh, 2007). Unlike traditional grounded theory practices, throughout this analytic process I continued to read news stories involving ISIL, as well as related scholarly work. Thinking about these materials as I immersed myself in the texts aided in my sensemaking processes, allowing me to think about potential directions that the ensuing research could follow (Tracy, 2013, p. 188). Tracy (2013) cites the importance of asking Weik's infamous question, i.e., "What is *a* story here" (Weick, 2001, p. 461) in order to ensure the analyst remains open to multiple meanings (p. 188). As I read, I took notes related to this question to refer back to when coding and further analyzing the texts.

Next, a PDF version of each *Dabiq* magazine was uploaded to NVivo, a computer software program designed to aid in data management. NVivo is particularly helpful for organizing large amounts of qualitative data. NVivo, itself, does not proscribe a method; Bazeley (2007) argues that software, such as NVivo, supports a wide range of analytic approaches to qualitative data. "The use of a computer [program] is not intended to supplant time-honored ways of learning from the data" Bazeley contends (p. 2). Rather, the use of such programs is intended "to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of such learning" (Bazeley, 2007, p. 2). Bazeley further argues that using computer programs, such as NVivo, helps to certify rigor in the analysis process, as the use aids the researcher in working more "methodically, more thoroughly, and more attentively" than she would be able to work if she was working through the analysis manually (p. 3).

Once all the texts were uploaded to NVivo, I began primary cycle coding (Tracy, 2013), similar to what grounded theorists refer to as "open coding" (Charmaz, 2006). Tracy (2013) explains the process of coding as the "active process of identifying data as belonging to, or representing, some type of phenomenon"—be it a concept, belief, action, theme, cultural practice, or relationship (p. 189). Code labels capture the essence of the data, and primary-cycle coding consists of creating first-level codes, focusing on summarizing what is present in the data (Tracy, 2013). Importantly, coding is not a passive, repetitive, mechanical task; rather, the process is reflexive, as the researcher reads through and revisits the data throughout the analysis (Tracy, 2013).

As I progressed through the primary cycle coding, I returned to re-read previously-coded issues of *Dabiq* to re-examine and re-code the content, if needed, as my understanding of the patterns within the texts evolved. Referred to as a "constant comparative" method of analysis (Charmaz, 2006), this iterative process of going back through the data is reflexive and circular. Analyzing the data in this manner allowed me to compare and sort the data applicable to each code, modify code definitions and explanations, and add new codes as I progressed through the analysis and read through new data (Tracy, 2013). To remain focused on the research questions at hand, as I read through the *Dabiq* documents I asked myself an analytic question: "How is ISIL attempting to legitimize itself here?" With this question in mind, as new codes emerged, I was able to go back and re-read the magazines to cross check examples and anecdotes. As Bisel, Barge, Dougherty, Lucas, and Tracy (2014) contend, when dealing with "big" qualitative data, (i.e., data that is large in sheer number, is highly complex, or is analyzed via a complex process that provides unique and deep insight), cross

checking the analysis is important, particularly when the researcher cannot member check their analysis or go back to collect more data (p. 636).

The next stage of the analysis process was secondary cycle coding, where I "critically examine[d] the codes already identified in primary codes and [began] to organize, synthesize, and categorize them into interpretive concepts" (Tracy, 2013, p. 194). As I read through the data, codes, and themes, I kept the following analytic question in mind: "In what ways do these legitimacy claims indicate a sense of recognition, on the part of ISIL, that their claims of legitimacy will be contested?" Thinking about this question as I read through the *Dabiq* dataset helped me reflect on the transactional nature of institutional positioning, one of the central considerations of this research. Secondary cycle coding is similar to what Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to as "axial coding," or, the process of bringing the data back together into a coherent whole after it had been fractured into codes. This process is also referred to as "focused coding" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). Focused coding, or as used in this dissertation, secondary cycle coding, aims to link codes with subcategories, and asks, "How are they related?" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 61). Importantly, however, my analytic process differs from that of traditional grounded methods of analysis in that I drew from outside disciplinary concepts; in other words, concepts that would only emerge and be understood with knowledge of associated outside literature (Tracy, 2013). For example, as I read through my primary codes, I readily identified instances of "materiality," which enabled me to draw on the socio-materiality literature relevant to my analysis. This understanding of the literature on materiality helped parse out examples of materiality apparent in the *Dabiq* texts and bring different examples into the category.

In other words, reading relevant literature helped me remain sensitive to what was known and unknown about the codes that were being identified in the texts as I analyzed them.

Important to this secondary coding phase was the identification of "poignant examples" that illustrated the complexity of the data and analysis (Tracy, 2013, p. 207). Tracy (2013) describes *exemplars* ("significant and multi-faceted examples") and *vignettes* ("focused description of a series of events taken to be representative, typical, or emblematic"), which serve as "embodiments" of inductive constructs or claims (pp. 207-208). I noted these examples on my notepad, as well as in NVivo, to ensure that I would return to them when finalizing my analysis.

The final stages of analysis consisted of theorizing about the interrelationships amongst the legitimacy appeals that constituted the thematic categories. My goal in this stage of analysis was to uncover a "sensitizing concept" (Blumer, 1969) to bring the analysis together, providing a theoretical contribution for the overall analysis. As Christians and Carey (1989) explain, the development of concepts is important for formulating categories that are both meaningful and sufficiently powerful to explain large domains of social experience. Sensitized concepts are defined by Christians and Carey as "taxonomical systems that discover an integrating scheme within the data themselves," and refer to an orientation "short of formal definition, yet apropos enough to help us cultivate facts vigorously" (p. 370). Finally, sensitizing concepts are the "building blocks of qualitative research," which help to capture meaning at different levels and label them accordingly (p. 371).

Qualitative Rigor and Moving Beyond "Themes"

Both Creswell (2007) and Howe and Eisenhart (1990) provide a set of standards and strategies to enhance the rigor and credibility of qualitative research—what Creswell labels "validation strategies." Creswell (2007) suggests that at least two of his eight strategies be employed; I incorporated four into the research design of this dissertation, namely: triangulation, transferability, peer review, and researcher reflexivity.

Similar to what Creswell (2007) and other qualitative scholars refer to as "triangulation" (p. 208), or multiple bases of evidence, I balanced my analysis and rendering of results with "broader knowledge bases from other bodies of knowledge," (Tucker, Powell, & Meyer, 1995, p. 388). Given the complexity and relevancy of the topic at hand, I found it necessary to employ a research method that did not limit my access and ability to incorporate extant literature and varied sources of knowledge on the subject. As Howe and Eisenhart (1990) contend, simply linking research questions with data collection and analysis techniques "do[es] not ensure that a study will render warranted conclusions, for studies must be judged against a background of existent knowledge" (p. 7). Taking their recommendation, I remained attentive and willing to employ insights from outside the particular perspective and tradition within which I was working throughout my analysis.

Second, the ability of my research to be transferable to similar contexts was essential as I designed the method adhered to within this dissertation. Thus, throughout my analysis, I incorporated "rich, thick description" to allow readers to determine, for themselves, how the findings of my research may be transferrable to other

organizational contexts (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). To this end, I attempted to answer the "so what?" question, focusing both on creating new knowledge and contributing to theory building in specific ways. My goal was always to "provide a cogent assessment of the *value* of research findings" (Tucker et al., 1995, p. 388). To accomplish this, I "move[d] beyond the themes" throughout the various stages of analysis, keeping in mind an end goal of a contribution to theory building (Lucas & D'Enbeau, 2013, p. 214). Although the establishment of themes are a staple of qualitative research, Lucas and D'Enbeau (2013) urge scholars to perform deeper analysis and interpretation that requires "extensive engagement with [the texts], emerging theory, and the contexts in which they are all embedded" (p. 214) and subsequent synthesis with the literature. Thus, as my method section outlines, I completed multiple levels of coding and analysis before reaching any conclusions advocated in this dissertation.

The third strategy I integrated into my research design was incorporating peer review and expert consultation. In terms of peer review as defined by Creswell (2007), I worked closely with my faculty advisor, Dr. Ryan Bisel, throughout the analysis process. Bisel played the role of "devil's advocate," asking hard questions about the methods used and the meanings and interpretations of the data (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). I also consulted with two scholars from outside my department: Dr. Charles Kimball and Dr. Joshua Landis. Neither Kimball nor Landis had specific connections to the research project, but both are experts in their particular fields relating to topics discussed within this dissertation. Kimball is an expert on religion, and wrote one of the books on Islam and extremism used as a resource in this research. Landis is an expert on the Middle East and Syria, as well as the Director of the Center for Middle

East Studies at the University of Oklahoma. Landis provided me with resources regarding the socio-political climate and growing tensions in Syria.

Finally, Creswell (2007) recommends researchers clarify and indicate any researcher bias that might influence their analysis from the onset of the work. Creswell (2007) notes that the researcher should "comment on any past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study" (p. 208). While I limited any outside influences that may affect my ability to analyze the text(s) for what it is, it is difficult, if not impossible, to approach a value-laden topic objectively. I bore witness to the terrorist attacks in Paris, France and San Bernardino, California by ISIL members and sympathizers, respectively. Further, my apprehension shrouding such organizations existed for years; I was a middle school student living in the suburbs of New York City during the World Trade Center attacks on September 11th. Further, the most optimistic end goal of my research is to help bring an end to the organization serving as the subject for this dissertation. Given those aims, however, I have done my best to remain faithful to the text, and avoid unwarranted conjectures.

To conclude, Lucas and D'Enbeau (2013) identify several "harmful habits" that result in surface-level analyses, which I avoided specifically throughout this endeavor. First, they warn that qualitative analysis is inherently slow; so I paced my analysis in an attempt to avoid rushing and moving too quickly in order to meet deadlines. Similarly, they also warn scholars not to "privilege the product" and "marginalize the process" of analysis; data analysis is a "messy, circuitous, and iterative process" and does not result in a "tidy, linear, and straightforward product" (p. 217). Thus, paying attention to

ensure my method was rigorous and my findings were rich was at the forefront of my research agenda. The results should be intricate, detail-oriented, and context-rich. Third, Lucas and D'Enbeau (2013) call for qualitative researchers to strike a balance between technique and artistry. In other words, it is important for researchers not to get caught in a method's strictness so as to blind themselves to the data and theory-building opportunities present within it. Tracy's (2013) description of an iterative analysis recognizes, at the same time, the limitations of following a strict, rigid method, as well as the importance of a rigorous analysis. I chose Tracy's iterative method of analysis for this reason.

Chapter 5: Findings

Analysis of the *Dabiq* series revealed ISIL's institutional positioning conformed to a communication pattern I define as a *transactional organizational identity narrative* (see Figure 2). The transactional organizational identity narrative is comprised of a set of legitimacy appeals that, together, socially construct the unfolding of a collective's defining characteristics across time, and anticipate and refute other collectives' delegitimation attempts. Across the pages of the magazines, the transactional organizational identity narrative consisted of three broad categories of institutional appeals: material, religious, and confrontational.

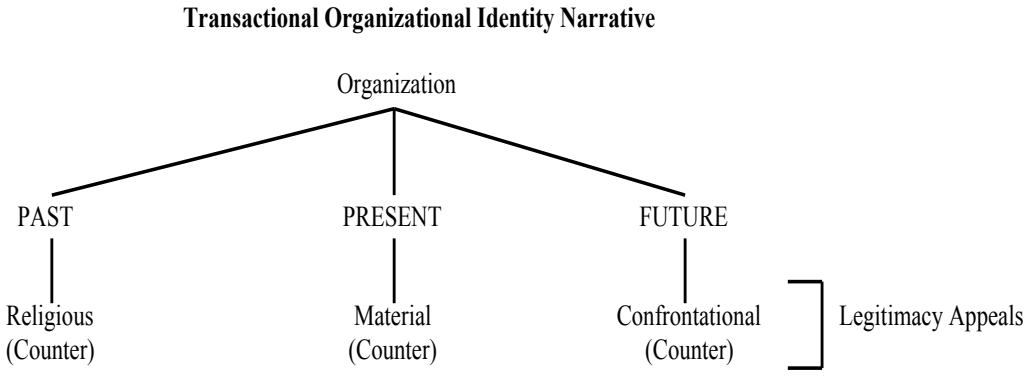


Figure 2. Transactional Organizational Identity Narrative

Material appeals to legitimacy are organizational messages that symbolically associate organizational constitution with physical objects, assets and resources; religious appeals to legitimacy are those organizational messages that associate organizational constitution with a shared sense of a sacred, ideological history; confrontational appeals to legitimacy are messages that orient organizational

constitution with a antagonistic reason for being. These three appeals, together, communicate a narrative that positions ISIL's organizational image as unfolding across time and in constant competition with the West (e.g., ISIL's present, past, and future). In other words, the appeals together tell the transactional organizational identity narrative that symbolically constructs the organization's ontology. In constructing its image in this way, ISIL is able to employ the power of narrative to position its organizational image as temporally distributed and therefore more permanent, thus establishing its "place" in the larger social system (McPhee & Zaug, 2000).

In the pages that follow, I explain the three types of institutional legitimacy appeals used by ISIL in the pages of *Dabiq,* and illustrate how those appeals function together to form a transactional organizational identity narrative. I begin, first, by discussing how ISIL constructs its narrative in the present. It is through the construction of this present narrative that ISIL establishes a framework by which to situate their past and project into its future, symbolically demonstrating their organization's enduring sense of ontological recalcitrance and the legitimacy that image creates.

Material Appeals to Institutional Legitimacy: Providing credibility to ISIL's Organizational Identity Narrative in the Present

ISIL is unlike any other terrorist organization that the West has had to deal with to date (Cronin, 2015). ISIL managed to amass a large swath of land, harvest natural and energy resources, and gain financial security. Additionally, ISIL secured social services for its members and has built civilian infrastructure. These material assets provide a set of brute facts that serve as the context for ISIL's current organizational

attempts to claim legitimacy. ISIL's control over material resources has resulted in two discursive considerations: (1) in influencing the means by which ISIL is able to legitimize itself globally and (2) in shifting the ways in which the West positions ISIL. In other words, ISIL's access to material resources influences both the ways ISIL is able to position its own organizational image, and the ways ISIL gets positioned by [outsider] superpowers.

In what follows, I present the appeals the editors of *Dabiq* use in their attempts to position ISIL's organizational image as legitimate based on their present status as an emerging de facto nation state. Important for establishing its ontological constitution, ISIL's main emphasis in the present is on its use of organizational and material appeals. That is, it is important for ISIL to first position itself *as* a State in its institutional field, in order to then position itself as a legitimate one that has a place in the larger social system and international politics of the world stage.

ISIL and its Emergence as a De Facto Nation-State

Current Western rhetoric surrounding the emergence of ISIL on a global scale centered on President Obama's initial assessment of the group: that the terrorist organization emerging in Iraq and Syria is "certainly not a state" (Office of the Press Secretary, 10 September 2014, n.p.). However, since the President's initial statement a year and a half ago, there has been much discussion as to how to label and name the group that calls itself the Islamic State (see the discussion on the importance of naming in the previous chapter). ISIL, however, has been aware of Obama's assessment from the beginning, and worked explicitly to counter claims made by the West, which denounce their Statehood. While unfortunate for Western nations, ISIL has in fact been

successful in its attempts to challenge Obama's initial assessment. As more intelligence about ISIL is gathered, and as its devastating influence on the global socio-political stage increases, Western scholars and policy makers alike altered those initial assessments of the organization. Although many warn against this terminology (Furlow et al., 2014), there is now wide recognition that ISIL, in many ways, is emerging as de facto nation state (Cronin, 2015). As a result of its recent social and material gains, not only has ISIL countered President Obama's preliminary assessments, but it has also begun to change the ways in which the West positions the organization.

One common method ISIL employed to counter Western claims discrediting their statehood is by quoting Western officials who themselves indicate how their positioning of ISIL had changed. In terms of building ISIL's legitimacy based on organizational and material assets, much of the work has already been done for them through their reappropriation of Western discourses. In every issue of *Dabiq*, there is a section titled "*In the Words of the Enemy*," where editors insert direct quotations from Western politicians, leaders, military strategists, and journalists. *Dabiq* editors chose to channel extremely poignant excerpts from Western leaders' remarks which tend to focus on one of two main issues: (1) recent successes of ISIL (particularly in terms of their material gains) and (2) failures of the US and the West in response to advances made by ISIL. As explained in the pages that follow, this "*In the Words of the Enemy*" section included in each issue of the magazine reminds readers of the strength of the Islamic State's material assets. Those reminders provide credibility to their subsequent claims to institutional legitimacy. One of the most alarming examples of this reappropriation comes from Issue 9, where the *Dabiq* team quotes Jonah Blank, from

the RAND Corporation, and Gary Bernsten, a former CIA intelligence officer, "on an interview with Fox News on the 9th March" (Issue 9, p. 74). The excerpt is as follows:

> Say one group is very good at bomb making and the other group is very good at propaganda," says Jonah Blank from the US "think-tank" RAND Corporation. "If you put the right bomb in the right place for the right propaganda effect, that can be far more important than either of these things on their own." "This isn't just propaganda," said Gary Bernsten, a former CIA intelligence officer on an interview with Fox News on 9th March. "ISIS has billions of dollars. They have a network of communications for reaching out to these groups. And it shows you how deadly and effective ISIS is. They are truly the most successful Sunni terrorist group in history because they've carved out a space for a nation state, and these other groups recognize that. It shows Obama's statement that 'this isn't Islam' is a false narrative. ISIS has been brilliant at selling itself to the hundreds of millions of people out there looking for a message. What's happening now is a pooling of skills and experience that poses the greatest danger the West has seen in modern times. When you have that amount of battle-hardened mujāhidīn all cooperating and exchanging information for the first time under one flag, the potential for operations on a previously unseen level rises exponentially. (p. 75)

Although long, this excerpt is particularly important in terms of summarizing the way ISIL positions itself within the pages of *Dabiq*. The appeal uses a Westerner's assessment to position ISIL as "deadly," "effective," and, most of all, resource rich. The Westerner evaluates the organization in terms of its successful propaganda and communication strategies, its wealth, its training, and its perpetuation and spread of a violent ideology used to frame itself as legitimate.

Another example of using "*In the Words of the Enemy*" to bolster ISIL's legitimacy comes from the first issue of *Dabiq,* titled "The Return of the Khilafah [Caliphate]." The editors quote Douglas Ollivant, former director for Iraq at the US National Security Council, and Brian Fishman, former Director of Research for the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point. The *Dabiq* team provides several excerpts from an article the two coauthored shortly before ISIL's surprising "liberation of Mosul

as well as other important cities and towns in Iraq" (Issue 1, p. 32). The quotes the *Dabiq* editorial team chose to include are as follows:

> Out of the crucible of the Syrian civil war and the discontent in Iraq's Sunni regions, *something new is emerging*. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) *is no longer a state in name only. It is a physical, if extra-legal, reality on the ground*. Unacknowledged by the world community, *ISIS has carved a de facto state* in the borderlands of Syria and Iraq. […] this former Al Qaeda affiliate *holds territory, provides limited services, dispenses a form of justice (loosely defined), most definitely has an army, and flies its own flag.* (Issue 1, p. 32; emphasis added)

ISIL reminds us of their resource rich status by continuing to use Ollivant and Fishman's words:

> This new reality *presents a challenge that rises above a mere counter-terrorism problem*. ISIS no longer exists in small cells that can be neutralized by missiles or small groups of commandos. *It is now a real, if nascent and unrecognized, state actor*—more akin in organization and power to the Taliban of the late 1990s than Al Qaeda. (Issue 1, p. 32; emphasis added)

The two conclude, noting: "The group does not have a safe haven within a state. It is a de facto state that is a safe haven" (Issue 1, p. 32). Interestingly, the *Dabiq* team provides no further commentary about these excerpts; there is not much explanation needed, as the text, in the words of [ISIL's] enemy itself, conveys the incipient challenge the West faces when presented with ISIL's material accomplishments. Although ISIL was once considered a "jayvee squad of terrorists" (Sinha, 2015, n.p.), they are no longer a "mere counter-terrorism problem," but a territory holding, service providing, and army training, de facto nation-state (Issue 1, p. 32). As will next be made even more explicit, the language used in Ollivant and Fishman's message seems to communicate a clear shift in the ways the West constructed the Islamic State discursively (e.g., "new reality," "it is now," "it is no longer"). Again, this unique method of reminding readers about the State's material assets suggests that those

material gains have been recognized and acknowledged by the West. Additionally, this recognition has resulted in a shift in the level of credibility the West affords to the Islamic State. The implication is that the reader should follow suit.

This shift in the West's construction of ISIL is most explicitly supported in John Cantlie's[v] article in Issue 8 of *Dabiq*, an article he titled: "Paradigm Shift." In that issue, the *Dabiq* team continues to emphasize ISIL's status as a "new," yet powerful, state actor, again doing so in the words of Westerners themselves. The subheading of Cantlie's article here reads as follows: "…there appears now a grudging acceptance by many Western politicians that the Islamic State is different to anything they've seen before. Their response, by necessity, has to be different too" (Issue 8, p. 64). In the article that follows, Cantlie outlines several of the major material assets that ISIL secured, emphasizing that in many ways, ISIL developed into what Westerners would normally consider a "country" (Issue 8, p. 64). For example, he explains how ISIL "produce[s] their own currency, primary schools for the young, and [has] a functioning court system" (Issue 8, p. 64). ISIL, using Cantlie's words, reminds readers that these civic innovations are "surely":

> Hallmarks of (whisper it if you dare) a country. […] Ah, the C-word. It's being used sporadically by the media, slowly at first, but its use is gather[ing] pace. Could the Islamic State, the Caliphate that was only announced in June, really be a country? As uncomfortable as it may be for many in the West, there's little reason why the State shouldn't be considered a country. Countries can be born in days, in hours during a coup, or in minutes at the signing of a paper, they have been for centuries. So there's no reason this one shouldn't have been born the way it was. (Issue 8, p. 64)

In this excerpt, ISIL uses Cantlie's—a Westerner—words to attempt to legitimate ISIL's "birth" by first acknowledging how ISIL emerged in much the same way as other countries have before it. Cantlie goes on to explain the effects of this developing

"paradigm shift," in that the West must begin to acknowledge that "at some stage [it will] have to face the Islamic State as a country" (Issue 8, p. 66). "Although the West might never admit such a thing," the article continues,

> There *are* Western politicians who are beginning to realize this fact and thus, little by little, we're seeing a changing of vernacular, *a paradigm shift* in how those leaders talk about the State, because if it is a country – whether recognized by anyone or not (and the Islamic State doesn't care either way) – then that changes things, dramatically. (p. 66; emphasis added)

These excerpts from Cantlie's article accomplish three simultaneous functions related to advocating for ISIL's present, organizational reality and thus legitimacy. First, Cantlie's narrative provides a powerful example of the transactional nature of ISIL's institutional positioning attempts: The Islamic State declares itself a Caliphate, a label that the US, at first, rejected openly. This rejection, however, is contested by ISIL through their material advances and territorial gains, resulting in their legitimacy positioning being challenged by the US discursively. This observation illustrates how institutional positioning can be transactional.

Second, ISIL, in using Cantlie's article, directs the reader's attention to his conclusion that ISIL is more than just a "terrorist organization" and more importantly, that there is no reason why ISIL should not be labeled as a country. Significant to this point is Cantlie's statement regarding the West's hesitation to refer to the organization as such. The importance of naming and labeling organizations is important to be reiterated, here; the mere label of a "state" might in and of itself serve to legitimize the existence of a Caliphate. Interestingly, however, Cantlie's article also adds that the Islamic State does not care whether or not the West refers to it as a "State"—the very fact that this topic is contested is justification *enough* that it is gaining traction. Again,

it is important to recognize that ISIL is effectively speaking through Cantlie here. In terms of ISIL's attempts to be perceived as a legitimate threat to the West and its assets, the mere fact that this discussion is taking place there, in the West, is a step forward for ISIL.

Finally, ISIL, in using Cantlie's article, explains that the paradigm shift of conceptualizing ISIL as a "State" would not only result in a change in vernacular, but would also affect policies aimed at defeating the group as well as efforts aimed at influencing public perception. "You can't just conveniently write it off as merely 'a terrorist organization,'" Cantlie's article expresses, "because [that] doesn't wash with the public" (p. 66). To refer to ISIL as just a terrorist organization does not do justice to its amassing influence and power, but, at the same time, for the West to refer to it as a nation, would be equating it with what the West holds to be true of modern-nation states, thus giving ISIL some measure of symbolic legitimacy.

The *Dabiq* editorial team, too, works to position ISIL as a powerful emerging nation-state, as supported by the discursive choices and narrative structure used throughout the magazine. The team rejects the given label of "just" another terrorist group, or as noted below, "guerillas or gangsters," and promotes ISIL's advances by reminding readers of material gains as a way to reconcile its attempts at gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the West. For example, the *Dabiq* editors write, "The Islamic State is not some bunch of guerillas or gangsters. They have 32,000 fighters, tanks, missile system, law courts, a police force, and they control the second largest city in Iraq. Surely they must be considered large enough and serious enough for any politician to deal with" (Issue 4, p. 55). Again, the *Dabiq* team performs multiple

functions with this one excerpt: First, *Dabiq* recited and then counters the Western labels given to ISIL: they are not "guerillas or gangsters." Second, they again highlight the material assets of the State, including courts of law and a police force—suggesting to many Westerners a semblance of structure, order, and stability. And finally, as evidenced by the latter part of the statement (i.e., "surely they must…") the editors emphasize that ISIL's material *size* and *strength* should be large enough for the organization to be taken seriously. The linguistic choice of the word "surely," here, may also be read as sarcasm—the *Dabiq* team is once again calling attention to the West's initial assessment of ISIL explicitly, resulting in their refusal to see the group as a threat from the beginning. Thus, by reminding readers of ISIL's material assets in the present, the *Dabiq* team carves out a present context from which it can simultaneously build its own credibility as an emerging de facto nation-state and, as detailed next, challenge Western claims that deride their ontological status as a state.

Therefore, another way the Islamic State attempts to position itself as legitimate is by responding explicitly to the West's *de*legitimizing efforts. In doing so, the potentially transactional nature of institutional positioning is made apparent in ISIL's construction of their organizational identity narrative. In the following excerpt, for example, the *Dabiq* editors comment on the West's use of the term "Daesh," a labeling practice employed by Western leaders and the media in their attempts to delegitimize the group.[vi] In the passage that follows, the editorial team attempts to thwart the institutional delegitimizing efforts of the United States. In a feature article of Issue 4, titled "Reflections on the Final Crusade," *Dabiq* editors write:

> Since the beginning of this crusade on the media frontline, self-styled jihadist ideologues and quasi-mujāhidīn have tried to position themselves in an area that

> is neither Islamic State nor Sahwah [US funded Iraqi militia]… only to be sucked into the trenches of the apostate media and religious scholarship of the Arab tawāghīt [rulers of the Arab States]. *They even imitated the nusayriyyah and secularist opposition by labeling the Islamic State as "Daesh" and "Tandhīm ad-Dawlah," in a manner precisely mimicking the satellite channels and palace scholars of Āl Salūl and Qata*r. One of the top "jihadist ideologues" presented a verdict entailing ways to confront the "extremism and takfīr" of "Jamā'at ad-Dawlah" matching those expressed by Obama, Chuck Hagel, Dempsey, and the US State Department. *His suggestions included preventing financial and human resources from reaching the Islamic State as well as religiously delegitimizing the State in a manner US officials said "Muslim" scholars must do.* (Issue 4, p. 43; emphasis added)

In this passage, ISIL references the antagonistic label of "Daesh" used by Western powers to disparage and delegitimize the organization and decrease its religious legitimacy. Additionally, they put the term Muslim in quotes (i.e., "in a manner US officials said 'Muslim' scholars must do") to remind their readers that these "scholars" are not true Muslims, but instead, are associated with apostate media and religious scholarship of the West. Furthermore, they cite Western policies aimed at weakening ISIL, such as preventing financial and human resources from getting to Iraq and Syria. In doing so, the *Dabiq* team again acknowledges the importance of securing the "material" assets needed in order for the West to consider ISIL a state; assets that the present narrative being constructed privileges.

Building Credibility Through Material Assets

The notion of materiality (e.g., access to land and resources) is essential in ISIL's attempts at institutional positioning. Land ownership, an army, and financial security provide ISIL's communicative constitution (i.e., declaring themselves a Caliphate) with significant interpretive benefits. However, it is not only that ISIL has, or claims to have, these material assets; rather, it is that ISIL leverages the symbolic value of these assets to enhance the credibility of their claims to organizational

constitution and existence. Thus, throughout the pages of *Dabiq*, the editors go to great lengths to remind readers of ISIL's state building efforts by presenting photographs and establishing their present narrative involving the material conditions they have secured. The physical existence and distribution of the magazine, itself, serves as a testament to these material accomplishments. The glossy pages of *Dabiq* are full of high-resolution photographs depicting ISIL's growing infrastructure and population. For example, the *Dabiq* editors provide images of their new currency and children at play in the Caliphate (See Appendix A). Furthermore, the "paradigm shift," as previously discussed, emphasized ISIL's amassing of material gains. Importantly, the resultant image of a wealthy, secure, and material-possessing State is presented in an attempt to legitimize ISIL to the West as well as to an audience of potential foreign fighter recruits. For ISIL to encourage people to perform *hijrah* [migration] would be difficult if they did not have any resources or security to offer. Thus, in the pages that follow, I highlight the ways in which the *Dabiq* team constructed ISIL's organizational identity narrative in the present based on the credibility provided by the acquisition of material assets.

First, the façade ISIL built through its sophisticated and multifaceted media campaigns perpetuates its image as a seemingly legitimate nation state to both potential recruits as well as enemies.[vii] Specifically, ISIL's successful media campaigns were established and broadcasted by the Al Hayat ("Life") Media Center—what could be considered a department of the Islamic State organization (See Appendix B). In the first issue of *Dabiq*, the editors explain one of the main reasons for the magazine's creation: "After a review of some of the comments received on the first issues of

Islamic State News and Islamic State Report, Al Hayat Media Center decided to carry on the effort – in sha'allah [God willing]– into a periodical magazine focusing on issues of *tawhid* [unity], *manhaj* [truth-seeking], *hijrah* [migration], *jihad* [holy war], and *jama'ah* [community]" (Issue 1, p. 3; translations from Clarion Project, September 2014). Therefore, the *Dabiq* magazine, in and of itself, serves as an artifact through which ISIL is able to position itself in the eyes of its enemies as well as its supporters, constructing its image as stable and permanent enough to produce such professional communiqués.

As will be noted in the excerpt to follow, the combination of ultraviolence, a sense of civil order, and successful media messaging has been noted by Westerners to be a potentially dangerous combination. In the sixth issue's "*In the Words of the Enemy*" chapter, *Dabiq* editors quote former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel's synthesis of this dangerous combination:

> I think our capacity is different because the threats and the challenges are far more diffuse and varied. I talked about asymmetric threats. I mean the sophistication of ISIL – just take that for a moment. We've never seen an organization like ISIL that is so well-organized, so well-trained, so well-funded, so strategic, so brutal, so completely ruthless. We've never seen anything quite like that in one institution. Then they blend in ideology which will eventually lose*, we get that, and social media. The sophistication of their social media program is something that we've never seen before. You blend all of that together, that is an incredibly powerful new threat. So we're adjusting to this and we're trying to – we can't do it alone. (Issue 6, p. 57)

Here, Hagel addresses ISIL's sophisticated social media platform, its well-trained and ruthless army, and its well-funded and strategic organizational strategies. Additionally, ISIL uses his words to present itself as a new and powerful organizational threat—one that the US will need to adjust to. Similar to the Cantlie excerpt presented earlier, the *Dabiq* team once again underscores the fact that ISIL is different from organizations

that the US has had to deal with in the past, suggesting also, that maybe the US has not recognized the potential threat ISIL poses. The repetition of the phrase "so well" in regards to ISIL's training and funding, coupled with words such as "sophisticated," and "incredibly powerful" perpetuate this emergent image of ISIL both as an institution unlike anything the West has seen before, but also, as extremely advanced. Further, ISIL uses Hagel words to reinforce for readers that the group is an incredibly well organized organization. ISIL's discursive choice here to re-employ the words of the US that take for granted its organization's existence, reinforce the substance and legitimacy of its organizational image.

Moreover, this particular excerpt is important in terms of understanding ISIL's response to Western rhetoric as it presents, for the first time in the series, *Dabiq's* direct response to the "words of the enemy." Interestingly, the *Dabiq* team challenges a portion of Hagel's assertions, which is offset by a footnote (as denoted in the excerpt above with the "*"). After Hagel's declaration that, in the end, ISIL's ideology will lose, the *Dabiq* team writes, "Allah said, 'It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, even if the mushrikīn despise such' [At-Tawbah: 33]." Although Hagel is steadfast in his assessment that ISIL's ideology is inherently going to lose, the *Dabiq* team evokes God's will (a trope used throughout the series, as seen in the next section,) to reject and counter Hagel's claims. In this way, the *Dabiq* editors are able to reappropriate portions of Western voices for the legitimation appeals, while also discounting portions of those voices.

One of the most shocking examples of ISIL's appeal to their material acquisitions appeared in *Dabiq*'s ninth issue. In this issue, the editors lay out the plan

for the State's medical and scientific infrastructure—two institutions Westerners would associate with nation-building, not mere terrorist networks. Alongside images of pristine and technologically-equipped hospitals, the *Dabiq* team describes the developing healthcare system and various preparations being considered for the future of the State (See Appendix C). Taking the tone of an informational brochure about the Islamic State, the editors write:

> The Islamic State provides the Muslims with extensive healthcare by running a host of medical facilities including hospitals and clinics in all major cities through which it is offering a wide range of medical services, from various types of complicated surgery to simpler services such as hijāmah [cupping]. This infrastructure is aided by a widespread network of pharmacies run by qualified pharmacists and managed under the supervision and control of the Health Dīwān [department]. Just as the medical staff in the hospitals and clinics are made up of qualified, trained professionals, the pharmacies are likewise only run by qualified and certified pharmacists. (Issue 9, p. 25)

Additionally,

> In order to ensure a steady supply of qualified medical personnel in the future as well as expanding and enhancing the current medical services from a professional as well as Islamic point of view, the Islamic State recently opened the Medical College in ar-Raqqah as well as the College for Medical Studies in Mosul. (Issue 9, p. 25)

Thus, the Islamic State touts its supposed present access to medical infrastructure intended for its citizenry. Additionally, the pages of *Dabiq* present ISIL's preparations for the future through their establishment of teaching hospitals to train the next generation of medical service professionals in the Islamic tradition. According to *Dabiq*, this school is open to both women and men who seek a medical career with the eventual goal of helping Muslims in the Caliphate. These ideas work to perpetuate the notion of inclusion that the editorial staff is attempting to establish, as well as position ISIL as materially significant enough to be able to provide for its constituents in the

present and future. Finally, this excerpt emphasizes the preparedness of all the professionals working in the state—the pharmacists are well qualified and there is what appears to be a Health Department (e.g., in Islamic societies, the term "Dīwān" is similar to a department; a chief administrative office or regional governing body). Reminding readers of these advances in the medical sciences (whether actually real or not) provides further evidence that the state is establishing itself in the present and preparing for the future. In constructing ISIL's existence in the present discursively, as well as their preparations for the future, the pages of *Dabiq* serve to reinforce ISIL's organizational image as more credible and more permanent.

The positioning of the State as able to provide for their inhabitants right now, as well as in the future, is an obvious persuasive legitimacy appeal for ISIL. The editors of *Dabiq* make a convincing case to all potential recruits that their needs will be met once arriving in the State; medical, financial, security, religious, and educational needs are each discussed. Although the thought of hijrah [migration to the Islamic State] might be daunting to many, especially to those traveling from afar, the *Dabiq* team makes it clear that the Islamic State will provide for those willing to make the journey. For example, "Do not worry about money or accommodations for yourself and your family," the team writes, "There are plenty of homes and resources to cover you and your family" (Issue 3, p. 33). Although the editors acknowledge the warzone surrounding them, they attempt to dissipate the potential apprehension of prospective recruits. As the editors explain, "in the midst of a raging war with multiple fronts and numerous enemies, life goes on in the Islamic State" (Issue 4, p. 27). They go on to portray a narrative of daily life, explaining that those living in the Caliphate are taken

care of and their needs met: "The soldiers of Allah do not liberate a village, town or city, only to abandon its residents and ignore their needs" (Issue 4, p. 27). This appeal is then followed by a series of images, portraying the amenities and provisions offered, including: "Restoring electricity in the city of Ar-Raqqah," "Cancer treatment for children in Ninawa," "Street cleaning services," "A care home for the elderly in Ninawa" (Issue 4, pp. 27-29; See Appendix D). The *Dabiq* editors make the call to perform hijrah [migration] overtly, asserting: "The Islamic State offers everything that you need to live and work here, so what are you waiting for?" (Issue 9, p. 26).

The "shocking swiftness" by which ISIL was able to capture cities in Iraq and Syria was frequently discussed by the West in regards to ISIL's emergence as a global threat (Saltman & Winter, 2014, p. 7). Their military advances were unprecedented and unexpected. One final way ISIL uses its material assets to position itself institutionally is through presenting its history of military successes; ISIL frames itself as a powerful and influential military stronghold that can no longer be ignored, or demoted to the level of a "jayvee squad" of terrorists (Sinha, 2015). ISIL's dedication to military jihad is supported by its sudden and successful military seizes of cities across the region and also in its strategic planning and organizational strategies as described in *Dabiq*. As the *Dabiq* team implores, all Muslims are encouraged to "perform *jihad* in the path of Allah in order to terrorize His enemies" (Issue 6, p. 26). The preparation for this jihad, they explain, covers all areas, including "physical preparation, tactical and strategic preparation, resource and logistics preparation, and most importantly religious preparation" (p. 26). Some of this preparation can be completed in one's hometown, the team explains, but it is imperative that all Muslims come to the State where they can

be properly trained. As the editors further rationalize, "the Islamic State has established numerous training camps dedicated to providing an essential level of training to its mujāhidīn [i.e, Muslim who engages in (armed) jihad], including physical, tactical, weapons, and shar'ī training, before sending them into battle or assigning them to specific units for more specialized training" (Issue 6, p. 26). All mujāhidīn, then, will be properly trained and prepared for battle.

The *Dabiq* series touts its violent successes. The first issue of *Dabiq*, for example, highlights ISIL's military advances, positioning the State as battle-ready and destined to win. Directly following two "Breaking News" articles, titled "The World is Divided into Two Camps" (Issue 1, p. 10) and "A Call to Hijrah [migration]" (Issue 1, p. 11), the *Dabiq* editors put together a detailed report describing the successes of the State thus far. They first explain how ISIL has an "extensive history" of building relations with the tribes within its borders in an effort to strengthen the unity of all Muslims. ISIL's Head of Tribal Affairs, the team reports, explained the State's successes, promoted the unity of all Muslims, and stressed the importance of implementing Shari'ah. "He also spoke about the recent victories in Iraq," the editors explained,

> Including the liberation of Wilayat Ninawa, the freeing of the prisoners of Ahlus Sunnah, taking control of Mosul airport and Maliki's army bases, the demolition of the Sykes-Picot borders thus opening the way between Iraq and Sham, and much more. In this regard, he stated: "We announce a new legacy of victories, further construction of the Islamic State and expansion of its territory. (Issue 1, p. 13)

Again, the *Dabiq* editors make it clear that the most recent victories are only a sign of what else is to come, as the Islamic State expands with its "new legacy of victories." Interestingly, we see the importance of the narrative structure at play here: ISIL draws

chronological ties to the past (a "history of successes") and present (the "liberation of Wilayat Ninawa" and the "freeing of prisoners," etc.), which help to explain ISIL's "new legacy" of current victories.

This "new legacy of victories" is flaunted throughout the magazine, as, for example, the editors write, "despite what the Islamic State faces of economic, military, political, and media war, and despite all the different parties unified against it […] it advances from victory to victory" (Issue 2, p. 26). They then dictate all of the State's numerous victories:

- It liberated all the eastern region of Syria from the sahwāt.
- It liberated the wilāyāt of Nīnawā and al-Anbār as well as vast regions of other wilāyāt.
- It caused the safawi army to disband, disperse, and disappear.
- It killed rāfidah ("Muslims" according to the new al-Qā'idah leadership) by the thousands.
- It kept to its promise and destroyed the border obstacles that formerly separated the lands of Iraq from Shām.
- Its numbers continue to grow.
- It announced the Khilāfah and people have begun to pledge allegiance to it in Algeria, Sudan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Waziristan, and other places. (Issue 2, p. 26)

The fact that the Islamic State, in their terms, "liberated" so many regions and killed so many of their enemies serves as a crucial component in their ongoing legitimacy-building narrative. ISIL's demonstrated military achievements function as yet another example of the sociomaterial resources they have at their disposal to be used as legitimacy-building appeals. Additional examples can be noted from the 11th issue of *Dabiq*, where the editors continue to espouse to readers ISIL's advances. They share the events occurring in various wilāyats [territories] in the Caliphate:

> This month, the soldiers of the Khilāfah made a steady and persistent advance through the Qadam neighborhood of Dimashq over the course of several days. They assaulted a number of Sahwah bases and took control of several buildings

> in which Sahwah fighters were entrenched, killing and wounding dozens of them and forcing the rest to flee in defeat. The mujāhidīn continue to advance against the Sahwah forces in Qadam in a bid to capture the entire area, which would place the Islamic State just a stone's throw from the heart of Dimashq. (Issue 11, p. 30)

And,

> The past month has seen a major advance by the Islamic State in the Halab countryside towards the Sahwah stronghold of Māri'. In a campaign dubbed "The Battle to Free the Prisoners," the soldiers of the Khilāfah succeeded in capturing a number of villages in the region surrounding Māri', including the villages of Harbal, Harjalah, Umm Hawsh, al-Wahshiyyah, Tallālayn, Shaykh 'Īsā, Kaljabrayn, and Sandaf, as well as the Māri' grain silos. With the city of Māri' surrounded on three sides, the soldiers of the Khilāfah have tightened the noose on the Sahwah factions allied to the crusaders and tawāghīt. (Issue 11, p. 30)

As these excerpts suggest, the editorial staff does not limit itself to generating only sweeping generalizations of ISIL's victories. Rather, the *Dabiq* team discusses specific battle details and victories throughout the pages of the magazines, overly exaggerating ISIL's success as the consequence of Western failures.

The last example to be provided, below, comes from the eighth issue's "*In the Words of the Enemy*" section. The *Dabiq* editors quote "the Catholic crusader and American politician Rick Santorum" (Issue 8, p. 57). Santorum's words sum up the importance of recognizing the symbolic power that material assets have in building the credibility of the Islamic State. Santorum said the following, as quoted by the *Dabiq* team:

> This is a caliphate that has been established and that means they are calling people from all over the world to come and fight this battle. As long as they hold ground and continue to expand that ground, more and more will come. The fact that we are delaying means that the Caliphate continues to exist. They are not losing ground. They are not being discredited in the eyes of the Muslim world. They will get stronger. […] This is really important to understand. The reason the West had a thousand year war with Islam is that Islam was ever expanding. When Islam began to contract, it collapsed, and the caliphate was

> eliminated. Now they have established a caliphate. They are dead serious about expanding it. Unless we begin to take back that ground and make this caliphate just irrelevant in the eyes of the radical Muslim world, we are going to have a bigger and bigger problem. (Issue 8, p. 57)

The inclusion of this excerpt from Rick Santorum is important for two reasons, especially in light of ISIL's military successes in various territories of Iraq and Syria. First, the Islamic State does not need to boast of its own achievements in terms of its messaging to potential recruits. As is the case here, the "words of the enemy" seems to do this for them, as noted in the lines "they are not losing ground" and "they will get stronger. This is really important to understand" (Issue 8, p. 57). Santorum's insistence on emphasizing ISIL's expansion and material acquisitions contributes to this sense of legitimacy. Second, this excerpt seems to position the West as inferior, having to catch up to the advances of the Caliphate. Santorum's tone, here, is urgent. The seriousness by which the Islamic State is taking its objective to create and expand its Caliphate is evident: as Santorum warns, the Caliphate is holding ground and it will continue to expand so long as the West delays. In this way, the pages of *Dabiq* contain appeals to institutional legitimacy that are characterized by a transactional nature. Using the words of the enemy provides a strong basis of evidence to support their claim regarding a present context in which organizational and material accomplishments reveal ISIL's existence in the present.

Religious Appeals to Institutional Legitimacy: Stretching ISIL's Organizational Identity Narrative into the Past

Because the Islamic State is able to establish its present-day legitimacy through the use of appeals to materiality, it is able to create a position from which to narrate its existence as arising from well within the distant past. In doing so, ISIL is able to extend

its symbolic constitution and legitimacy into the historical past, thereby strengthening and lengthening its ontological claim to constitution. In other words, *Dabiq* presents the Islamic State's emergence today as the newest chapter in Islam's enduring identity narrative. Through the evocation of a history imbued with one particular (and in their view, *only*) interpretation of Islamic traditions and divine reinforcement, ISIL attempts to legitimize its present organizational identity (e.g., members of the Islamic State are Allah's holy warriors) within an ongoing historical narrative of establishing a global Islamic Caliphate.

However, while ISIL continues to construct its organizational identity as one evolving out of a deeply rooted religious foundation, the West works simultaneously to challenge that narrative. "No religion condones the killing of innocents," President Obama declared after ISIL's initial declaration of the Caliphate in the summer of 2104 (Office of the Press Secretary, 10 September 2014, n.p.). Importantly, it is this recurring response that served as part of the foundation by which Western leaders and the media attempted to challenge ISIL's legitimacy claims. Yet, regardless of the West's consistent assertion that while "this group may call itself the 'Islamic State,'" and that it is certainly "not 'Islamic'," (President Obama, 10 September 2014, n.p.), ISIL continued to evoke its interpretation of Islamic doctrine as one of the most prevalent grounds it uses to construct both its organizational identity and institutional legitimacy.[viii] Thus, in this next section, I explain how ISIL constructs its identity based on a historical, and particularly sacred foundation, in its attempts to legitimize a symbolic reality of its existence as connected to the distant past.

ISIL integrates sacred appeals into the pages of *Dabiq* in primarily three ways: First, the editorial team challenges present-day Western counter-positioning explicitly. Namely, since Islam is a religion of peace, ISIL cannot, therefore, be Islamic. Second, ISIL emphasizes how the West underestimates and undervalues the role Allah has, and will continue to have, in ISIL's ultimate future triumph over the West. Third, the incorporation of Islamic doctrine into the magazine and the foundation by which ISIL has been constituted perpetuates the organizational identity narrative of an us-versus-them dichotomy, or as the *Dabiq* team presents it: "the kufr and īmān" (i.e., the non-believers and the believers).

To begin, an overarching theme across the many examples of religious-based appeals is ISIL's rejection of the Western narrative that Islam is a religion of peace. Throughout the pages of *Dabiq*, the editorial staff rejects this counter-positioning both implicitly and explicitly. One of the most obvious examples of this rejection comes through *Dabiq*'s direct inclusion of the "verse of the sword," the fifth verse of the ninth sura of the Quran.[ix] Although previous examinations of extremist rhetoric suggest that Islamists tend to omit this passage from their stories, or at least, employ it very rarely, just a cursory glance through the *Dabiq* magazines indicate that references to this verse are profuse.[x] As the following examples suggest, the verse, and references to it, are employed by the editorial team to justify violence in the name of Islam, and thus, the violent actions of ISIL. For example, in Issue 4, the *Dabiq* team writes:

> Upon conquering the region of Sinjar in Wilāyat Nīnawā, the Islamic State faced a population of Yazidis, a pagan minority existent for ages in regions of Iraq and Shām. Their continual existence to this day is a matter that Muslims should question as they will be asked about it on Judgment Day, considering that *Allah had revealed Āyat as-Sayf (the verse of the sword) over 1400 years ago. He […] said, {And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the mushrikīn*

> *wherever you find them, and capture them, and besiege them, and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.} [At-Tawbah: 5*]. (p. 14; emphasis added)

Here, the *Dabiq* team condones the destruction of the Yazidis population as merely one example of the mushrikīn (polytheists; enemies of Islam) who, according to ISIL, need to be destroyed. The passage quoted above suggests that Allah will question the Yazidis' existence on judgment day; thus, they need to be destroyed today. While this excerpt mentions the verse of the sword explicitly, additional implicit references to the verse are included throughout the pages of *Dabiq*. For example: "Everyone who opposes this goal or stands in the path of this goal is an enemy for us and a target for our swords, whatever his name may be and whatever his lineage may be," (Issue 8, p. 3). The constant reference to this verse delivers ISIL's obvious call to arms and their sense of justification for inflicting death on the mushrikīn.

Another explicit example comes from Issue 7, in which there is an entire chapter titled, "Islam is the Religion of the Sword, Not Pacifism." Although the title of this chapter, alone, serves to counter Western interpretations of Islam as a religion of peace, the institutional legitimacy appeals to religion presented within this chapter further challenge those Western discourses. The *Dabiq* editorial team contends, for example, that,

> There is a slogan repeated continuously by apologetic "du'āt" [preachers] when flirting with the West and that is their statement: 'Islam is the religion of peace' […] They have repeated this slogan so much to the extent that some of them alleged that Islam calls to permanent peace with kufr and the kāfirīn. *How far is their claim from the truth*, for *Allah has revealed Islam to be the religion of the sword*, and *the evidence for this is so profuse that only a zindīq (heretic) would argue otherwise.* (Issue 7, p. 20; emphasis added)

As observed in this example, the writers argue that Allah demonstrated, quite exhaustively, that Islam is the religion of the sword and "only heretics would argue otherwise." The editors also suggest that Islamic preachers (i.e., the du'āt) in the West, as well as those sympathetic towards Western objectives, tolerate this interpretation of Islam as a religion of peace. ISIL, on the other hand, claims this interpretation "so far from the truth." Importantly, however, this passage serves as another poignant example of the transactional nature of ISIL's positioning: this excerpt challenges the West's interpretation of Islam explicitly and suggests that Western sympathizers are misguided in their understanding of Islam as Allah revealed. Furthermore, there is a degree of sarcasm and certainty evoked associated with their assertions here that Islam is the religion of the sword. The sarcasm is indicated through ISIL's discursive choices, including word choice such as "profuse evidence," and "how far is their claim from the truth." For readers, the certainty evoked through the editors' diction as exemplified here serves to reaffirm that ISIL's interpretation of Islam, as portrayed throughout *Dabiq*, is authoritative, definitive, and true.

Throughout the magazine, the *Dabiq* team provides additional references to the verse of the sword and other calls to arms. For example, in Issue 7, the team writes, "Alī Ibn Abī Tālib said, 'Allah's Messenger […] was sent with four swords: a sword for the mushrikīn [polytheists; enemies of Islam], {And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the mushrikīn [polytheists; enemies of Islam], wherever you find them}'" (p. 20). The killing of the mushrikīn is a recurring coda throughout the magazine, further intensifying ISIL's violent interpretation of the religious texts and thus their attempts at justifying their ultraviolent acts. Another example is noted below:

> There is no place for the mushrikīn in the peninsula of Muhammad […] Draw your swords. Deal with the Rāfidah [those who reject] first, wherever you find them, then Āl Salūl and their soldiers before the crusaders and their bases. Deal with the Rāfidah, Āl Salūl, and their soldiers. Dismember their limbs. Snatch them as groups and individuals. Embitter their lives and make them occupied with themselves instead of us. Be patient and do not hasten. Soon […] the vanguards of the Islamic State will reach you. (Issue 5, p. 27)

This excerpt, especially when delivered alongside the previous examples, highlights the gruesome, yet fundamentally imperative, call to action for religiously-devoted *Muslims* to "draw their swords," and that "every Muslim should get out of his house, find a crusader, and kill him" (Issue 4, p. 44). In these two examples, the team again makes it clear that Allah mandated all *Dabiq* readers (as indicated by the second person pronoun "you," here) should kill the mushrikīn and Rāfidah (i.e., "rejecters") wherever they are found. The graphic detail by which readers are asked to "dismember," "snatch," and "embitter" the lives of these crusaders, may be read at the same time as revolting to Western readers and powerfully motivating for ISIL sympathizers. Furthermore, the obligation to "kill the mushrikīn wherever you find them" (Issue 7, p. 20) has been quoted by many Westerners as the proof needed to declare ISIL "a terrorist organization, pure and simple," specifically, one with "no vision other than the slaughter of all who stand in its way" (President Obama, 10 September 2014). President Obama's assessment of ISIL's vision here is particularly narrow, based on what has thus far been described. However, this understanding of ISIL's vision may have influenced the West's initial labeling of ISIL as a "pure and simple terrorist organization," as opposed to an emerging nation-state.

The narrative crafted by the *Dabiq* editorial team here serves to both counter the West's (mis)interpretation of Islam explicitly—that Islam is not a religion of peace—

while, at the same time, legitimize ISIL's extreme violence by quoting the Quranic verse of the sword. But another way the *Dabiq* team attempts to position itself as legitimate is by drawing on an extensive history of performing Allah's will and acting on His behalf.

Throughout the pages of *Dabiq*, the rally for military mobilization, and the subsequent mandate to act on behalf of the Islamic State in the name of Allah, is often couched in the language of doing so in accordance with Allah's "permission and grace." The phrase, "by Allah's permission" can be thought of as a coda that performs a sense of devoutness and faith that might resonate with many of the magazine's intended readers. For example, the following quote appears on the first page of every issue of *Dabiq*: "The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify – by Allah's permission – until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq." Albeit brief, this message serves at least two functions: First, the message attempts to position the extreme actions undertaken by the Islamic State as justified: the battle between the Muslims and the crusaders is permitted by the Divine. Thus, the Islamic State is guaranteed victory, since it is the Divine's will that they will succeed. Second, the message serves as yet another example of the ways ISIL evokes its organizational identity narrative: the "brothers" of the Islamic State are Allah's holy warriors, again, acting in accordance with Allah's will (e.g., "Allah brought their hearts together, and thus, they became brothers by His grace, loving each other for the sake of Allah, standing in a single trench, defending and guarding each other, and sacrificing themselves for one another" [Issue 1, p. 7]). Moreover, the choice of the word "permission" in this opening message is interesting, as it helps to frame the purpose of

not only the magazine series, but of the Islamic State itself. The word in context suggests the long history of a quest for an Islamic Caliphate entreated by Allah; ISIL is the first and so far only attempt at resurrecting a Caliphate (Clarion Project, November 2015). Thus, the quote symbolizes a major appeal to legitimacy for the Islamic State—that of religious authority. To ask permission is to acquiesce to a higher power; therefore ISIL's use of the term "permission" here conveys to *Dabiq* readers that ISIL has the approval to act and is acting through Allah's guidance and support. In other words, ISIL's motivations come from a higher being; one that is, presumably, already believed to be legitimate.

The *Dabiq* team uses this notion of acting in accordance with Allah's will in their descriptions of the military successes achieved by the Islamic State. For example, they describe the conquering of the Tabaqah military Airbase as an "achievement Allah saved for the Islamic State by His grace" (Issue 3, p. 21). The magazine series is full of this type of language, conveying Allah's support for military advances and sociomaterial gains. The following are excerpts from various issues of *Dabiq*:

> The advances made by the Islamic State in al-Anbār and Hims*, by Allah's grace*, demonstrate the mujāhidīn's *resilience* towards crusader coalition airstrikes, and their determination to punish the enemies of Allah wherever they find them no matter how many obstacles they must pass through to reach them – and this without the need to declare a "storm of resolve." The crusaders heavily underestimated the firmness and strength of the mujāhidīn, and their plans – *by Allah's permission* – will soon crumble. (Issue 9, p. 32; emphasis added)

And,

> On Wednesday 2 Rabī' al-Awwal 1436, an apostate pilot flying for the crusader alliance was captured by the Islamic State after his plane was shot down with a heat-seeking anti-aircraft missile. The successful hitting of the target and subsequent crash *was by Allah's permission. All praise and thanks is due to Him alone.*" (Issue 6, p. 34; emphasis added)

These excerpts suggest that the success of the Islamic State is divinely mandated, supported, (e.g., *"advances made by the Islamic State…by Allah's grace*" and "*their [the crusaders] plans—by Allah's permission—will soon crumble*"), and achieved (e.g., "*resilience towards crusader coalition airstrikes*" and "*the successful hitting of the target and subsequent crash*"). The *Dabiq* team further constructs the ongoing contest between the Islamic State and the West, emphasizing that (a) Allah supports ISIL in their efforts, thus facilitating their eventual triumph, and (b) that the West has not prepared for ISIL's success, and does not seem to realize the strength Allah has given ISIL. Therefore, the US is engaging in a blinded and futile battle against the Divine.

The rhetoric of the Islamic State seems to perpetuate its organizational identity narrative by emphasizing its connection with a religion across a long stretch of history. *Dabiq* demands readers choose between one of "two camps," as "no third camp [is] present" (Issue 1, p. 10). First, there is the "camp of Islam and faith," and second, there is the "camp of the kufr (disbelief and hypocrisy—the camp of the Muslims and the mujahidin everywhere, and the camp of the [J]ews, the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions of kufr, all being led by America and Russia, and being mobilized by the [J]ews)" (Issue 1, p. 10). Inevitably, passages such as this work to create and preserve the false dichotomy of us-verse-them. In other words, if the reader is not a believer doing the work of Allah, then he or she is obviously working against the Divine and, by extension, ISIL. Using a false dichotomy, ISIL further legitimizes their organization by creating this sense of limited options for its readers' beliefs about ISIL. For example, the *Dabiq* team explains how the West, including the United States and its allies, is positioned as the clear and obvious organized enemy that

seeks to undermine the goals of the Islamic State. "The best thing you can do is to strive to your best and kill *any* disbeliever, whether he be French, American, or from any of their allies" (Issue 4, p. 9). Additional examples of the enforcement and perpetuation of this dichotomy and presentation of a limited set of options include:

- "And upon them is to understand that The Islamic State – on account of what Allah has blessed it with of victory, consolidation and establishing the religion – is regarded as an unquestionable imamah [i.e., Shia doctrine]. As such, anyone who rebels against its authority inside its territory is considered a renegade, and it is permissible to fight him after establishing the hujjah against him [i.e., clarifying his error to him with proof]." (Issue 1, p. 27)

- "[…] If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the spiteful and filthy French – or an Australian, or a Canadian, or any other disbeliever from the disbelievers waging war, including the citizens of the countries that entered into a coalition against the Islamic State, then rely upon Allah, and kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone's advice and do not seek anyone's verdict. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military, for they have the same ruling." (Issue 4, p. 9)

- "This bay'ah [i.e., oath of allegiance] comes at a time when the Islamic State is facing a growing list of enemies, and it further underscores the fact that the lines are being drawn and the camps of īmān [i.e., believers] and kufr [i.e., non-believers] are both being cleansed. This will eventually lead to a camp of kufr with no trace of īmān, and a camp of īmān with no trace of hypocrisy, as per the statement of the Prophet (sallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) [i.e., "peace be upon him"]. There will be no room to sit on the fence, and all parties will soon be forced to make a choice between the two." (Issue 4, p. 21)

- "The Muslims in the West will quickly find themselves between one of two choices, they either apostatize and adopt the kufrī [i.e., non-believer] religion propagated by Bush, Obama, Blair, Cameron, Sarkozy, and Hollande in the name of Islam so as to live amongst the kuffār without hardship, or they perform hijrah [i.e., migration] to the Islamic State and thereby escape persecution from the crusader governments and citizens." (Issue 7, p. 62)

- "Everyone who opposes this goal or stands in the path of this goal is an enemy for us and a target for our swords, whatever his name may be and whatever his lineage may be." (Issue 8, p. 3)

Interestingly, the messaging presented in these examples from various issues of *Dabiq* echo popular appeals that have been used by American leaders in the past, in the fight

against [Islamic] terrorists. For example, there is a chapter in Issue 4 of *Dabiq*, titled, "Reflections on the Final Crusade," in which the *Dabiq* team again stresses the case for an us-versus-them dichotomy by presenting quotations from American political figures. The chapter begins similar to most feature sections in the magazines, asking for the grace of God, (i.e., "All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. May blessings and peace be upon His messenger, Muhammad, and upon his family and companions. As to what follows…" [Issue 4, p. 32]). The *Dabiq* team, however, then explains explicitly that "there is no gray zone in this crusade against the Islamic State, and that the world has split into two encampments, one for the people of faith, the other for the people of kufr" (Issue 4, p. 44). Then, using the language of President Bush, the writers of *Dabiq* actually echo his logic, reasoning:

> This crusade against the Islamic State is the greatest testimony from Allah for the proper manhaj of this Khilāfah. Anyone who says otherwise now should review his faith before death suddenly takes him while he stands with one foot in the trench of the crusaders and the other in the trench of the hypocrites whilst claiming he is in the grayzone! The mujāhid knows no grayzone. As the liar Bush truthfully said, "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists."
>
> Shaykh Usāmah Ibn Lādin commented, "So the world today is divided into two camps. Bush spoke the truth when he said, 'Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.' I.e. either you are with the crusade or you are with Islam. Bush today is in the frontline carrying a huge cross and treading. I swear by Allah the Great that everyone who treads behind Bush in his plan has apostatized from the religion of Muhammad."
>
> One with sincerity will realize that there is no grayzone in this crusade against the Islamic State, and that the world has split into two encampments, one for the people of faith, the other for the people of kufr, all in preparation for the final malhamah. (Issue 4, pp. 43-44)

The language used within this excerpt constructs Islam—and the Islamic State, by extension—as competition of a global superpower, specifically, the United States. ISIL's organizational construction as competition to a global superpower may be read as another appeal to legitimacy: insofar as ISIL established itself as a threat to the US, it

can no longer be ignored by global superpowers. The growing schism between the US and "the terrorists," here, has been socially constructed in preparation for the final battle—the battle which, according to ISIL's organizational identity narrative, is sure to be won by the Islamic State.

Thus far, I explained how the *Dabiq* team has worked to position ISIL institutionally as a credible, legitimate nation-state in the present, through reminding readers about their material assets and resources. The editors did so transactionally—as they both challenged existing counter-positions and anticipated future rebuttals by the West, specifically, the United States. In establishing themselves as credible in the present, the *Dabiq* team then extends their organizational identity narrative into the past, connecting with religion and further increasing their legitimacy construction attempts based on their appropriation of a sacred set of texts and Islamic doctrine. However, their narrative and the communication constitution it suggests does not end in the present. As will be explained in the following section, ISIL positions itself to exist far into the future, as well. Further, the transactional organizational identity narrative the *Dabiq* team has constructed envisions an intensifying clash between ISIL and the West, resulting in the final battle at the site of Dabiq where the West, according to ISIL's narrative, will finally be defeated, and their own organizational identity will be forever transcendent.

Confrontational Appeals to Institutional Legitimacy: Pushing ISIL's Identity Narrative into the Future

Finally, the editors of *Dabiq* and, by extension, the Islamic State, construct a future in which the organization leads its members into a final battle, at the city of

Dabiq, where the unbelieving West will be defeated. With the construction of this future clash between the Islamic State and all true Muslims[xi], and the Western world, ISIL's organizational identity narrative positions the Caliphate as a threat to the West long into the future. Ultimately, this cataclysmic clash between the West and the Caliphate is ISIL's espoused reason for its organizational existence: To make a way for perfected Muslim existence once the destruction of the sinful West is accomplished. Therefore, the organizational identity narrative that the editors of *Dabiq* have thus far constructed acknowledges two so-called truths. First, as I explain the paragraphs that follow, the editors of *Dabiq* attempt to portray the US and the West as entirely oriented towards materially defeating ISIL. Second, the West has thus far failed in those attempts (again, ISIL's defeat is impossible given the Divine is on their side). Muslims have been preparing since the days of Muhammad for this final battle at Dabiq, in order to complete their long-awaited Caliphate. The fact that ISIL exists, materially, in the present lends credence to their efforts towards defeating the US (and the West) in the future: they exist and they matter, especially in so far as the West has recognized them as a legitimate threat.

As has thus far been described, however, ISIL positioned itself as a de facto nation-state in the present, emerging from a long religious history. The final set of appeals used by ISIL in its attempts to build their legitimacy is confrontational in nature: ISIL constructs its organizational future as one that involves a clash with the West, which will herald eventual victory over the unbelieving nations.

"Dabiq" as the Title of Choice for a Constitutive Text

The final confrontation between the West and the Caliphate is ISIL's espoused reason for its organizational existence: To make a way for perfected Muslim existence once the destruction of the West is accomplished. The very title of the magazine series, "Dabiq," is an obvious signifier of this goal. "Dabiq" is not just the name of a city in Syria; it is the supposed location where the final battle between the West and the Muslims will take place according to Islamic apocalyptic writing (Clarion Project, September 2014). Readers' recognition of this end-time confrontational discourse is crucial for their understanding ISIL's organizational raison d'etre. Every issue of the magazine opens up with the following quote: "The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify—by Allah's permission—until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq" (Issue 1, p. 2; see appendix D). This quote was evidently uttered by Abu Mus'ab az-Zarqawi, a "nationless freelance terrorist," killed by American forces in 2006 (Teslik, 2006). As will be elaborated upon in the following paragraphs, this quote illustrates the coming confrontation between the West and Islam and signifies a Muslim victory at Dabiq.

The very first pages of the first issue of the series explain the connection between the magazine's title and the historical *and future* significance of the city of Dabiq. The editors write,

> As for the name of the magazine, then it is taken from the area named Dabiq in the northern countryside of Halab (Aleppo) in Sham. This place was mentioned in a hadith describing some of the events of the Malahim (what is sometimes referred to as Armageddon in English). One of the greatest battles between the Muslims and the crusaders will take place near Dabiq. (Issue 1, p. 3)

The editors then provide the hadith referencing Dabiq, and continue explaining the connection, citing:

> Shaykh Aby Mus'ab az-Zarqaqi anticipated the expansion of the blessed jihad from Iraq into Sham and linked it to this hadith saying, "The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify—by Allah's permission—until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq" […] According to the hadith, the area will play a historical role in the battles leading up to the conquests of Constantinople, then Rome. Presently, Dabiq is under the control of crusader-backed sahwat [US sponsored security forces], close to the warfront between them and the Khilafah [Caliphate]. May Allah purify Dabiq from this treachery of the sawah and raise the flag of the Khilafah over its land. Amin. (Issue 1, p. 5)

These two passages serve to inform readers about the symbolically constructed final confrontation between the Muslims and the West, again, which will take place at Dabiq. Immediately following these passages, the editors compose a "breaking news" article, titled: "*Khilafah Declared*." In this article, the editors provide excerpts from the "most important" speeches recited during the establishment of the Caliphate (Issue 1, p. 7). The subheading reads: "glad tidings for the Muslim Ummah" [i.e., whole community of Muslims]). Specifically, the editors provide "the first official speech" of Amirul-Mu'minin Abu Bakr al-Husayni al-Qurashi al-Baghdadi [i.e., the leader of ISIL], which was said to have "filled the streets of the Islamic State with faithful joy" (Issue 1, p. 7). The editors also quote Abu Muhammad al-'Adnani (i.e., the spokesman for the Islamic State) who was said to have declared, "the time has come for the Ummah of Muhammad to wake up from its sleep, remove the garments of dishonor, and shake off the dust of humiliation and disgrace, for the era of lamenting and moaning has gone, and the dawn of honor has emerged anew" (p. 9). He continues, "The sun of jihad has risen. The glad tidings of good are shining. Triumph looms on the horizon. The signs of victory have appeared" (p. 9).

Together, these opening passages create rich imagery for the reader as a future vision that the battle at Dabiq is imminent, and the Ummah of Muhammad is destined to come out victorious. Given the location of these passages in the overall context of the magazine, the editors presumably set the stage for the rest of the series. Similarly, these opening stories help to make explicit ISIL's espoused reason for organizational existence, which is then built upon and detailed in the subsequent issues of the magazine. Particularly important to the construction of this part of their organizational identity narrative are the *Dabiq* team's discursive choices, which attempt to both intensify the confrontation between the West and the Islamic State, and, at the same time, emphasize the inevitable victory of the Divine, and the organization by extension. Importantly, scholars have noted similar future-oriented discursive strategies of other end-time religious groups inspired by Christianity and are therefore not only associated with religious perversions of Islam (Bisel & Ford, 2008).

Fighting Words: Constructing the Organization and Other

The editors of *Dabiq* reinforce their organizational vision for future conflict with the West through subtle language choices throughout the pages of their magazine. The language choices invite the reader into an alternate world in which the US is weak and impotent and ISIL is strong, exacerbating the weaknesses of Western nations. Together, these language choices prepare the reader to align with a view of the future as a coming clash between ISIL and Western nations in which the Divine will assist the Muslim Ummah in their victory. The word choices integrated into the pages of *Dabiq* are subtle, yet rhetorical; for example, throughout the pages of *Dabiq*, there is consistent use of illustrative action verbs (e.g., "scurry," "arrogantly ignore," "anxiously await") to

describe the actions of both the US and ISIL. Furthermore, the editors deprecate the US consistently, and differentiate between the West and the Caliphate, bolstering themselves by comparison. Many of the examples included below convey the transactional nature of ISIL's endeavor to position itself as righteous, moral, and victorious, and the US as immoral, deceitful, and unsuccessful. But what is arguably even more important is the fact that the editors *presume* this future in which the clash between the infidels of the West and the Caliphate is inevitable. And as the following examples help to convey, the growing confrontation between the West and the Caliphate is discursively constructed: power is located in material resources as well as centered on control over discourse.

There are a few examples of the editors' use of illustrative action verbs that are made apparent through their narration of current events. For example, the *Dabiq* team indicates that the US failed to respond to ISIL's initial threats, and tried to hide evidence that ISIL warned them about Foley's pending execution. This again constructs the US undesirably; this time as deceitful. The editors write,

> Upon receiving the threat and prior to the execution, Obama *scurried* to prevent knowledge of the affair from reaching his citizenry. His administration immediately ordered a number of online social networks to shut down all Islamic State media accounts, including accounts of Islamic State supporters. (Issue 3, p. 4; emphasis added)

The language used within this excerpt is especially powerful. The image created by indicating that Obama "scurried" to prevent these events from reaching the people of the US is degrading; world leaders do not, typically, "scurry." Scurrying is most often used to describe the actions of rodents, moving rapidly and confusedly as they try to find cover. Thus, the US is positioned as immoral and deceitful, hiding information and

failing to protect its citizens. The US is also positioned as weaker, intimidated by the rapidly growing threat presented by the Islamic State. Importantly, this excerpt emphasizes the transactional nature of this confrontational appeal: ISIL is now such a significant threat, they affect US action and policy, causing the US to respond to ISIL's increasing influence.

The *Dabiq* editorial team also employs figurative language that aids in making it seem like the confrontation between the West and the emerging State is intensifying. The linguistic and writing style choices used throughout the *Dabiq* series emphasize ISIL's successes while denigrating the US and their allies. In what follows, I direct attention to some of the uses of figurative language pertaining to the transactional construction of ISIL's organizational identity narrative.

First, the *Dabiq* team often uses popular American military jargon, and re-appropriates the meanings of those words to fit ISIL's aims. For example, in discussing ISIL's overarching goals, the editors of *Dabiq* dictate that ISIL will employ "*boots* that *will* trample the idol of nationalism, destroy the idol of democracy, and uncover its deviant nature" (Issue 1, p. 8; emphasis added). The imagery resulting from the use of this metaphor presents ISIL's future success at the complete destruction of US forces. The imminent confrontation is conveyed through the editors' word choice, including words such as "trample," "destroy," and "deviant." The "boots" metaphor is used again in Issue 10:

> The fall of American Kurdistan is therefore inevitable, and the crusaders will soon have no choice but to either pursue a truce or *place their own boots on the ground*. The result, either way, will see the crusader coalition – *in America's words – degraded and ultimately defeated.* (Issue 10, p. 34; emphasis added)

This particular quotation is significant in a few ways. The commonly articulated American metaphor, "boots on the ground," is an idiomatic phrase often used to denote American ground forces engaged in military conflict.[xii] Yet, for ISIL to use this common and quite often patriotic American phrase is biting and incongruous to an American or Western reader. Furthermore, this excerpt explicitly emphasizes the transactional nature of institutional positioning. The *Dabiq* team reappropriates President Obama's coined expression—to degrade and destroy [ISIL]—using it ironically in opposition to American aims: the defeat of the West (i.e., the "crusader coalition"). Finally, these lines also indicate the final, "inevitable" defeat of the West, yet another example of this pending confrontation. As evidenced within these excerpts, the *Dabiq* team reappropriates the meaning of various discursive strategies used by the West to delegitimize ISIL in an attempt to promote their own agenda: that of the intensifying clash between themselves and the West.

The Imminent Battle at Dabiq: Writing in the Future Tense

Thus far, I have provided examples of how the *Dabiq* team structured their magazine linguistically to suggest the confrontational nature of ISIL's organizational mission and therefore existence. Significant, too, however, is the future-orientated nature of the editorial team's writing—and by extension, of ISIL itself. In the paragraphs to follow, I provide several excerpts from the magazine series that emphasize how pronounced this future-orientation is within the pages of *Dabiq*. To put it in perspective, in the fourth issue alone, the future tense (as denoted through the use of the word, "will") was noted over 220 times. On average, this use of explicit future tense (again, denoted through the word "will") is used over 175 times per issue.

The use of the future tense signals both the imminent confrontation between the West and the Caliphate, as well as a semi-concealed threat. In the following excerpt, the *Dabiq* team provides examples of a few "successful" ISIL campaigns of the past and indicates that there will be more "successful" campaigns to come. This passage serves dual purposes. First, the language used by the editorial staff poses an explicit threat to the West: e.g., there *will* be others to follow in the example [of past terrorists] and the Muslims *will* continue to defy the kāfir [war machine]. Second, to ISIL sympathizers reading *Dabiq*, the editors suggest that the West will not retaliate against advances by the Islamic State, but will instead, await the next attack:

> *There will be others* who follow the examples set by Man Haron Monis and Numan Haider in Australia, Martin Couture-Rouleau and Michael Zehaf-Bibeau in Canada, Zale Thompson in America, and Bertrand Nzohabonayo in France, and all that the West will be able to do is to anxiously await the next round of slaughter and then issue the same tired, cliché statements in condemnation of it when it occurs. *The Muslims will continue to defy the kāfir war machine*, flanking the crusaders on their own streets and bringing the war back to their own soil. (Issue 6, p. 4; emphasis added)

The idea that the West "anxiously awaits" the next round of attacks again positions them as powerless and impotent in the matter, expecting the next round of attacks without being able to do much to prevent or counter them. This sentiment is advanced by the claim that after the attacks occur, the reaction of the US will be to issue yet another round of overused statements of condemnation. ISIL is again anticipating the others' (e.g., the West's) response to the appeal, and is therefore another example of transactionality in their institutional positioning.

The following excerpts are from Issue 5 of *Dabiq*, and are found within a chapter titled, "If I were the US President Today," written by John Cantlie. Cantlie[xiii], often speaks of the US' and West's actions and decisions sarcastically. Cantlie is a

British war journalist who was captured in 2012, along with James Foley, who was later executed. "If I were the US President today," Cantlie writes, "I'd probably switch off my cellphone, lock the oval office doors, and go play golf instead. The war against the Islamic State just isn't going to plan at all" (Issue 5, p. 36). He continues,

> The governments are like a robot that is stuck on a loop, continually performing the wrong sequence despite repeated instructions by its master to the contrary. Master to robot: You have to find a different way of *addressing the danger the mujāhidīn pose to the west*. "Cannot… compute…" Military action doesn't work, what about negotiations? "Must… obey… programming…" Everything you've done since 9/11 has put us in more danger, not less. "Zzzzz… syntax… error…" Of course, Robo-Obama doesn't listen to voices of reason and thus programs himself with the same corrupted old data, *making the same mistakes over and over again.* James Comey described the Islamic State mujāhidīn as "savages" in September (a classic example of prideful and conventionalist thinking that will progress absolutely nothing) while Nick Paton-Walsh described their tactics in CNN as "eerily sophisticated," which is a much more educated comment and closer to the truth, except Nick's just a journalist while James Comey is director of the FBI. (Issue 5, p. 39)

ISIL, using John Cantlie's words, argues that President Obama should just give up his fight. Importantly, the assumption here is that a fight is present…and will continue to persist. The defeat of the West is framed as inevitable, as America's chosen methods to deal with the Islamic State, thus far, have not been successful and will continue to be unsuccessful.

A third example comes from the fourth issue of *Dabiq*. In this passage, the editors discuss the inherent danger ISIL poses and the inevitability of a Muslim victory. Additionally, this passage ties together their distant past of struggle with their championed future of victory. The editors write:

> O America, O allies of America, and O crusaders, know that the matter is *more dangerous than you have imagined and greater than you have envisioned.* We have warned you that today we are in a new era, an era where the State, its soldiers, and its sons are leaders not slaves. They are a people who through the ages have not known defeat. The outcome of their battles is concluded before

> they begin. They have not prepared for a battle since the time of Noah except *with absolute conviction of victory*. Being killed – according to their account – is a victory. This is where the secret lies. You fight a people who can never be defeated. (Issue 4, p. 7)

A consideration of audience is important in understanding the effects of this writing. Speaking to a Western (i.e., American) audience, this excerpt can be read as another warning or threat: the Islamic State will not be defeated: "you fight a people who can never be defeated". American efforts are therefore in vain. To a potential ISIL sympathizer, however, this passage does more. The passage speaks to the absolute conviction of victory—a rallying cry to those who are drawn to the fight on behalf of Allah and who will reap the benefits of inevitable success.

One final example that summarizes these aforementioned appeals comes from the fifth issue of *Dabiq*. The editors write:

> The true religion – embodied by the Jamā'ah [prayer] of the Muslims (the Khilāfah) and their Imām (the Khalīfah) – will be manifest over all false religions, with proof and evidence and by the sword and spear, even if the kāfirīn and mushrikīn [non-Muslims] despise such, and despite all the military, economic, intelligence, political, and media opposition to the Islamic State from the coalition of the cross. […] The flag of Khilāfah [Caliphate] will rise over Makkah and al-Madīnah, even if the apostates and hypocrites despise such. The flag of Khilāfah will rise over Baytul-Maqdis and Rome, even if the Jews and Crusaders despise such. The shade of this blessed flag will expand until it covers all eastern and western extents of the Earth, filling the world with the truth and justice of Islam and putting an end to the falsehood and tyranny of jāhiliyyah [impetuousness or ignorance], even if America and its coalition despise such...(Issue 5, p. 3)

This passage serves as a comprehensive statement of ISIL's plans for the future. Furthermore, it seems to call attention to many aspects of the organizational identity narrative that ISIL has constructed. First, in keeping with the present discussion, the editors again suggest the imminent victory of the Caliphate (e.g., "the true religion […] will be manifest over all false religions"; "the shade of this blessed flag will expand

until it covers all eastern and Western extents of the Earth…"). This victory comes as a result of a final [armed] confrontation with the West (e.g., "by sword and spear"). Here, too, the editors draw on the historical appeals to their past (e.g., "putting an end to the falsehood and tyranny" of the West [which has been in power for so long]). And finally, these gains are achieved military (e.g., as evidenced by the sword and the spear).

Accordingly, this third and final component of ISIL's organizational identity narrative constructs a future in which the infidel West will be defeated. With the construction of this future clash between the Islamic State and the Western world, ISIL's organizational identity narrative positions the Caliphate as a threat to the West long into the future. As the excerpts from *Dabiq* provided in this section suggest, Muslims have been preparing since the days of Muhammad for this final battle at Dabiq in order to complete their long-awaited Caliphate. As ISIL sees it, the fact that they exist, materially, in the present legitimizes their efforts towards defeating the US in the future. This eventual defeat, again, is ISIL's espoused raison d'etre: to construct a global Islamic State.

Chapter 6: Discussion

There were two main objectives in writing this dissertation. First, this dissertation investigated the social construction of organizational legitimacy, particularly through the theoretical framework of CCO and the constitution of ISIL's institutional positioning. Second, in the field of organizational communication, a burgeoning interest in the role of sociomaterial resources in organizational constitution led to a close examination of how material assets may affect the types of messages that an organization, such as ISIL, is able to propagate.

A close analysis of the *Dabiq* magazines revealed that ISIL's institutional positioning conformed to a communication pattern I defined as *a transactional organizational identity narrative*—a set of legitimacy appeals that together, socially construct the unfolding of ISIL's defining characteristics across time. Furthermore, this narrative both anticipated and refuted the other's (e.g., the West's) delegitimizing attempts and is therefore transactional in nature. For example, *Dabiq* editors reappropriated the words of the West to emphasize ISIL's emerging organizational status. ISIL is different from other terrorist organizations for the variety of reasons aforementioned. However, one important consideration is the material assets of which it has been able to secure. Importantly, this dissertation serves to highlight the ways in which ISIL garners credibility in the present as a result of reminding audiences of their procurement of material assets (e.g., organizational structure, access to money and infrastructure, propaganda, and municipal provisions provided for its members). In the following paragraphs, I explain how these findings contribute to CCO (McPhee &

Zaug, 2000) and institutional theory, as well as the organizational identity and confrontational rhetoric literatures.

(1) Institutional Positioning Can be Transactional

First, these findings contribute to the CCO literature (McPhee & Zaug, 2000) by illustrating how the constitutive force of institutional positioning can be transactional in nature, and not just transmissional. Bean and Buikema (2015) suggest that, to date, organizational communication researchers may not realize CCO's potential in "shattering the container metaphor that continues to buttress organizational theorizing" (p. 17). Specifically, they note, the CCO four-flows model usually depicts membership negotiation and institutional positioning as occurring in relation to outside audiences, publics, and entities, while self-structuring and activity coordination occur within organizational boundaries, thus, portraying organizations as containers for communication. Bean and Buikema, therefore, illustrate how researchers can begin to dissolve "illusory and arbitrary internal and external boundaries" and radically rethink organizational constitution (p. 17). "Persuading counterterrorism authorities to reject the container metaphor," they argue, "remains only on the horizon of possibilities" (p. 17). Similarly, the findings within this dissertation, through recognizing that institutional positioning may, in fact, be transactional, contributes to McPhee and Zaug's (2000) four-flows model of CCO theory in two central ways.

These findings highlight the possibility that institutional positioning, in general, can buttress the social construction of an organization's identity in ways that emphasize transactional communication, thus beginning to reimagine the container metaphor. Organizational leaders, in this case, the editors of *Dabiq*, must respond and anticipate

identity-threatening messages that may be employed by external entities when they craft their own institutional positioning messages. As Bean and Buikema (2015) note, "organizational leaders try to coordinate and control the self-representations of the organization because they are vital for helping to secure resources and legitimacy" (p. 15). Thus, the transactional nature of an organization's institutional positioning transcends the organizational container itself by considering the ecology of messages circulating about the organization.

The finding that institutional positioning can be transactional and not just transmissional, further contributes to CCO literature in that counter-institutional positioning messages *also* have constitutive force, albeit in an unintended way. As aforementioned, my analysis of the *Dabiq* series revealed that even when the US tried to counter the institutional positioning messages of ISIL, they were actually providing them with fodder for supporting legitimacy claims. A close analysis of the *Dabiq* series revealed that the editors reappropriated the use of Western superpowers' own words in their magazines frequently, as observed with the "In the Words of the Enemy" section of every issue of the magazine. While the West attempted to employ discourse to delegitimize ISIL, the editors of *Dabiq* used those attempts as a means of reinforcing impressions of their own legitimacy, and thus relevance in the eyes of superpowers. Future studies may then explore other instances of anticipatory and reactive institutional positioning by organizations as they respond to real or imagined audiences, publics, and outside entities. Additionally, investigations into organizations' uptake of external or competitors' positioning messages would be an interesting avenue to explore.

(2) Organizational Identity Construction Attempts Can Involve the Cooptation of External Communication

Similarly, a second contribution of this research is to the literature on organizational identity construction. Following its declaration of an Islamic Caliphate, ISIL attempted to establish itself as a credible and legitimate organizational threat to the West. Importantly, however, analysis of the *Dabiq* series revealed the editors employed the words of Western officials in their attempts to promote such an organizational image. In other words, the *Dabiq* editors were skillful enough to use and reappropriate the words of their enemies in an attempt to craft a credible and legitimate organizational image. Therefore, these findings suggest that an organization's attempts at constructing its identity can involve the cooptation of external entities' communication.

Alvesson (2002) explains that an organization's identity deals with the "essence or core" of its organizational agenda, including its "coherence over time and space and its distinctiveness from other organizations or units" (p. 177). As illustrated by the present case, the *Dabiq* team inserted the words of the West into their magazine, appropriating them as their own and facilitating the construction ISIL's organizational identity. For example, the *Dabiq* team quotes former US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, who comments on the "sophistication" of ISIL, noting how it is "so well organized," "so well-trained," "so well-funded," resulting in an "incredibly powerful new threat" (Issue 6, p. 57). Thus, while ISIL's use of Hagel's assessment is yet another example of transactional communication processes, this type of messaging additionally helps to construct ISIL's organizational identity. In terms of future research, investigating how organizational identities are constructed and shaped by

external stakeholders' messaging could be interesting to explore. Investigating such processes could be particularly important for understanding identity construction relationships in non-terrorist organizations or less extreme cases.

(3) Considering Sociomaterial Assets in Organizational Communication Research

Third, these findings contribute to the burgeoning literature in organizational science regarding the importance of sociomaterial configurations. These findings are some of the first of their kind to document, empirically, how organizational message crafters leverage material accomplishments, garnering credibility for their ontological status claims. Further, the socio-configurations explored within this dissertation are unique, in that they consist not just of technology (e.g., hardware and software). In other words, discussions of the socio-material are often found in relation to information systems and technological advancements, but the *Dabiq* magazine provides a different form of sociomaterial configuration, where money, land, and infrastructure are called on to create credibility.

As Leonardi (2013) reminds us, the term "sociomaterial" comes from the joining of two words: social and materiality, the latter of which refers to the properties intrinsic to technological artifacts (p. 32). More importantly, however, the "social" embedded in this term reminds researchers that all materiality is, in fact, social, in that it is created, interpreted, and used in social contexts, but also that social action is possible because of materiality. In sum, sociomateriality is the "enactment of a particular set of activities that meld materiality with institutions, norms, discourses, and all other phenomena we typically define as 'social'" (p. 42). Thus, recent research in organizational communication has investigated how material assets may interact with the

communicative functions of constitution (e.g., symbolism) in ways not previously recognized. For example, Orlikowski (2007), in a statement about sociomateriality, explains that the social and the material are constitutively entangled in everyday life: "the social and the material are considered to be inextricably related—there is no social that is not also material, and no material that is not only social" (p. 1437; as cited in Leonardi, 2012, p. 33). As Leonardi (2013) contends, to say that an organization, or a technology or practice, is sociomaterial, is to say that the "organization is simultaneously social and material" (p. 61). However, discussions of sociomateriality have remained "highly philosophical" (Leonardi, 2013, p. 73). Referencing Sutton (2010), Leonardi contends that the current tendency to be "so ontologically-focused about the most practical of topics has led some critics to suggest that there is little practical value in a sociomaterial approach, and even less value in the language used to describe it" (p. 73).

The findings of this dissertation, however, provide an empirical example of how social and material configurations matter to an organization's communicative constitution attempts. Sociomaterial assets were noted to be one of the three major appeals used by ISIL to render itself organizationally credible in the "present." Specifically, the editors of *Dabiq* countered the West's delegitimizing attempts by touting their symbolic credibility afforded by their access to material resources. Further, the extent to which ISIL utilized technology—including its momentous social media campaign and the magazine, *Dabiq*, itself—may serve to extend the literature on sociomateriality insofar as these artifacts are "unavoidably entangled with discourse" (LeBaron, 2013, n.p.). The messaging in *Dabiq* results in the construction of an

organizational identity narrative, situating ISIL in the present, but also extending its legitimacy symbolically across a past and a future. The notion that the social and the material are inherently entwined, then, ties into a fourth contribution of this research: the idea that material resources can be used strategically in institutional positioning to garner credibility, which is discussed next. Future research into materiality, however, should investigate how non-technological material assets influence organizational credibility, extending organizational communication research into understandings of interplay between the symbolic and the material.

(4) Considering Material Resources in Studies of Organizational Constitution

Developing out of the nascent interest of the sociomaterial in organizational science is the consideration of material assets in CCO theory (Reed, 2004; 2010). Reed's (2004) assertion—that if we are to "get real" about discourse, we must recognize the material conditions and social structures that aid in the constitution of organizations—is important to this discussion. Reed (2004) explains, "language does not exhaust our interest in social reality; it merely provides the primary communicative mechanism and medium through which social reality can be assessed and described" (p. 415). Specifically, he challenges how the CCO tradition/framework deals with materiality, as well as temporality, spatiality, and sociality of organizations (Reed, 2010). As Ashcraft et al. (2009) put it, "communicative explanations *exaggerate the muscle of symbolism*" (p. 24; emphasis added). Thus, they argue, to be more accepted and reach a wider audience, CCO theorists must take into account the symbolic-material relation. "After all, organizations are more than what we say they are" (Ashcraft et al., 2009, p. 23).

This dissertation suggests that there is, in fact, more to the constitution of organizations than just the communication itself, although talk and text are a large component and are inherently connected to the material (Taylor et al., 1996). Thus, communication about the sociomaterial lends itself to the establishment of an organization's ontological presence. These findings suggest that material assets played a critical role in the constitution and, therefore, credibility of ISIL in the present (see Bisel, 2010). As defined earlier, material appeals to organizational legitimacy are those messages that symbolically associate organizational constitution with physical objects, assets, and resources. Between ISIL's organizational structure, its access to money and infrastructure, its propaganda and recruitment strategies, and the municipal provisions that have been established for its members, ISIL's material resources serve as a critical factor both in terms of influencing the means by which ISIL worked to legitimize itself globally, as well as shifting the ways in which the West positions ISIL. In other words, these material assets amassed by the organization provided a set of brute facts that serve as the context for ISIL's current organizational attempts to be projected as legitimate.

Further extending this line of CCO research is encouraged. As Bean and Buikema (2015) conclude, more attention to the shape and influence of the four-flows model of communication in organizational communication is warranted to help "authorities, citizens, and scholars enhance their understanding of the constitution, maintenance, and deconsititution of [hidden] organizations" (p. 24). Although ISIL is not necessarily considered to be a "hidden" organization, extending this research is still important, as *all organizations* are dependent upon these flows of communication for their continued existence (Bean & Buikema, 2015).

(5) Organizational Identity Narratives Can Function to Stretch or Extend the Social Construction of Organizational Identity Across Time

The fifth contribution of this research attends to the construction of organizational identity narratives. The importance of narrative is emphasized insofar as an emerging "de facto nation-state" was able to construct its current identity as stemming from a centuries-long past, and project that identity well into the future. Importantly, Berger and Luckmann's (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality* reminds us that "identity is formed by social processes" (p. 173). Through language use, they argue, "various motivational and interpretive schemes are internalized as institutionally defined" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 135). Once formed, identity "is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations" and "the social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure" (p. 173). ISIL constructs its organizational image as temporally-distributed across time, thus establishing its "place" in the larger social system (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). The "Islamic State," as it had declared itself in the summer of 2014, did not exist in the past, nor, does it physically exist in the future—as the future has yet to be determined.

However, the *Dabiq* team worked to construct ISIL's organizational identity as existing in the present, as well as from a shared, sacred, ideological past, and extending into the future. As Dailey and Browning (2014) note, narratives are distinct from other communicative forms in that they employ the "story" format, (e.g., a series of events that, together, have a beginning, middle, and end), and are thus situated in time and space and serve as a mode of reasoning (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Importantly, as

Weick and Browning (1986) elucidate, narratives "help people comprehend complex environments," while effective narratives may be used to socialize newcomers, process data, convey values, and change [corporate] culture (p. 255). In this way, the *Dabiq* editors constructed such a narrative to help readers "make sense" of the Islamic State's identity as unfolding over large swaths of time. Following the work of Daily and Browning (2014), Bruner (2005), and Boje (2001), this dissertation supports the notion that organizations are narratively constructed, and stories help to constitute organizations. Specifically, the narrative approach to organizational constitution and, and thus legitimacy, is one example of how the social construction of an organization's identity calls on the power of narrative to claim existence in a distant past, and project its identity into the future; thus, iterating how it is constructed and maintained across time.

Considering the connections between the flow of institutional positioning and identity narratives is important for future CCO theorizing. As Bean and Buikema (2015) conclude, their analysis of the Abbottabad documents suggest that the communicative processes of organizational decline and dissolution are neither simple nor straightforward because both organizational members and nonmembers "generate, control, or thwart constitutive communication in complex ways" (p. 17). Schoeneborn and Scherer (2010) suggest organizational destruction occurs when constitutive communication about an organization ceases; thus, understanding the ways in which organizations (and their enemies) talk about and construct their identities is important.

(6) Organizational Mimicry May be used in the Symbolic Establishment of Organizational Constitution

Additionally, this study maintains DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) assertion referenced earlier, that organizations seeking legitimacy will tend to model themselves after similar organizations in their field, perceived to be more legitimate or successful. Although it may seem surprising, ISIL has attempted to gain legitimacy by mimicking bureaucratic styles of organizations. This observation resonates with Bean and Buikema's (2015) finding that al Qaeda, despite being thought of as a new form of networked organizing as far as terrorist organizations are concerned, was producing bureaucratic infrastructure through the creation of policies and organizational texts. Their analysis of the Abbottabad documents revealed the "stunningly mundane forms of organizational communication, for example letters, statements, memoranda, orders, directives, reports, and media releases" which Bean and Buikema (2015) found as "striking" in their revelation of the "mimetic character" and "imitative qualities" (p. 18).

Thus, the sixth contribution of this research into the communicative constitution of ISIL is significant in that it both lends support for Bean and Buikema's (2015) findings, as well as seems to pull together many of the aforementioned claims: ISIL worked to establish itself as credible in the present, by drawing on material assets that—to the West—constitute organizations, and nations, as legitimate. This can be observed in Cantlie's article in Issue 8, where he notes that ISIL "produce[s] their own currency, primary schools for the young, and [has] a functioning court system" (Issue 8, p. 64). These civic innovations, Cantlie continues, are "surely hallmarks of (whisper it if you dare) a country. […] Could the Islamic State, the Caliphate that was only announced in

June, really be a country?" (p. 64). Even President Obama references this notion, stating, "and *terrorist groups* are all too happy to step into a void. They offer salaries to their foot soldiers so they can support their families. Sometimes they offer social services -- schools, health clinics -- to do what local governments cannot or will not do […] (Office of the Press Secretary, 18 February 2015, n.p.; emphasis added). As these two excerpts suggest, the debate as to whether or not ISIL should be considered "a country" is largely concerned with its material assets normally associated, by the West, with nation-states, including schools, hospitals, and court systems. Even the magazine itself, and ISIL's poignant social media campaign, serves to replicate the successes and modern advances of Western nation-states. With its glossy pages, in-depth interviews, and high-resolution photographs, even satire columnists have gone so far as to say that *Dabiq* is the "'town and country' of the bloodthirsty would-be caliphate" (Biddle, 2016).

Thus, the notion of mimicry, or modeling oneself after similar organizations in the field perceived to be legitimate, can be considered a successful strategy for gaining organizational constitution and legitimacy. Future researchers should extend CCO theorizing by taking on Bean and Buikema's (2015) charge to consider the mimetic and imitative qualities of organizations such as al Qaeda or ISIL.

(7) Confrontational Rhetoric Can Have Constitutive Force for an Organization

As Cathcart (1983) suggests, many rhetorical scholars maintain that rhetoric is a way of knowing; that our understanding of rhetorical strategies is "our only means of constructing social reality and maintaining social control" (p. 70). Thus, rhetoric is both constitutive and regulative. He continues, taking the position that rhetorical forms and

language strategies create consciousness of social movements. The findings presented in this dissertation suggest a similar process: confrontational rhetoric may help *constitute an organization's being* by projecting a [confrontational] reason for existence into the future. This projection presents a perceptible goal, around which members can identify and organize.

Additionally, Cathcart (1983) argues that social movements are directly related to confrontational rhetoric. As it relates to this dissertation, he explains: "to fully understand what produces awareness of social movements, we must "analyze movement messages and systemic counter messages" as well as attempt to understand how the public responds to those messages (p. 71). Furthermore, he contends, "the symbolic interactions among activists, counter-rhetors, and publics provide the ground wherein social movements become unique change collectives" (p. 71). This is certainly the case for the organizational identity narrative produced by ISIL: their identity is a composite of both the rhetor (in this case, the editors of the *Dabiq* magazine) and the counter-rhetors (here, the US and West). Again, confrontational rhetoric has constitutive force in the construction of an organization's identity.

As Short (1991) has suggested in his analysis of the *Earth First!* movement, confrontation draws public attention to many concerns of the rhetor. With an organization such as ISIL, whose existence is contingent upon the complete destruction of its adversary, language choices inherent in confrontational rhetoric become even more poignant. Scott and Smith (1969) argue that confrontation is a tactic for gaining attention, "and an importance not readily attainable through decorum" (p. 7). Thus, Western audiences, in particular, have regarded *Dabiq* as controversial for two main

reasons: (1) its technical and aesthetic appeal and (2) the editors' discursive choices that illuminate and construct this sense of urgent confrontation.

(8) The Language of Theory: A Reflection on Ethics

Finally, study of ISIL's attempts at creating organizational legitimacy provides an opportunity to reflect on the vocabulary of institutional and CCO theories. To see the word "legitimate" in association with a terrorist group, specifically, ISIL, is both jarring and somewhat discomforting to a reader. This feeling is especially true for many contemporary readers, as ISIL's organizational presence is ongoing and without resolution. The use of the term "legitimate" in everyday discourse is often associated with what is ethical, moral, and right. No doubt, some uses of the term "legitimacy," even in institutional theory, is meant to capitalize on this connotation (see Scott, 2001). However, as is illustrated in the present case, the word "legitimate" can be both morally inaccurate and inappropriate to describe what ISIL is doing. In other words, my use of the technical jargon associated with institutional theory, here, is divorced from my ethical condemnation of the organization.

The term "legitimacy," as used in the spirit of CCO and institutional theory, is concerned with ISIL's attempts to be perceived as *a legitimate threat* to Western audiences. The use of the term "legitimacy" in reference to ISIL means something more akin to the organization exists and matters. To convince audiences an organization matters is a social and material process enmeshed with ethical choices and implications, not all of which are ethical (Conrad, 2011). Thus, the language of CCO and institutional theory may benefit from distinguishing ethical legitimacy from ethics-based legitimacy. Ethical legitimacy might refer to those organizational communication

appeals which the analyst deems ethical. Ethics-based legitimacy attempts can be used to describe organizational communication appeals that may involve allusions to ideals, philosophy, or religion, but which the analyst deems unethical. Future theorizing should equip analysts with more nuanced vocabulary to deal with ethical critique of external organizational communication.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The findings of this present analysis suggest that institutional positioning messages may be constructed through a cooptation of messaging, by the organization itself, as well as counter positioning messages purported by an organization's competition. Additionally, socio-material configurations lend increased credibility to an organization's attempts at positioning itself as legitimate. However, organizations *desperate for legitimacy,* organizations such as ISIL, can rely on the power of identity narratives that position themselves as legitimate in the present and arising from an arduous past as well as extending into the future. These findings lend themselves to several practical communicative implications, some of which extend recommendations of previous organizational communication research on countering violent extremism through applications of CCO. While military strategy is undoubtedly important to consider in the fight against violent extremism, specifically against ISIL, my particular scholarly background and the subject matter discussed within this dissertation do not lend themselves to contributing to those specific strategic discussions. Thus, the focus of the recommendations presented here will be on communicative strategies that may aid in the process of dismantling extremist terrorist organizations.

First, the US has control over the language it uses to discuss its relationship with ISIL. While the US cannot control the discourses propagated by ISIL, the findings of this dissertation suggest that the words the West uses to frame and respond to the growing threat of ISIL have been taken up by that organization and used to enhance its credibility and perceptions of success. Communication scholars recognize that discursive choices are important. Thus, as Saltman and Winter (2014) writing for the

Quilliam Foundation (a counter-extremism think tank) contend, "while rejuvenating counter-extremism efforts the world over is, without a doubt, imperative, one must also consider how best to go about removing one of [ISIL's] greatest attractions, its success" (p. 57). "Somehow," they continue, ISIL must be "rolled back" (p. 57). Saltman and Winter (2014) conclude that a military strategy is not enough. While we cannot necessarily speak to religious or political interventions, as communication scholars, we can offer a set of communication strategies. For, as observed within the publication of this magazine, ISIL has been successful in transmitting its organizational identity narrative and garnering the support of foreign fighters and potential recruits in and through social media and its messaging. As Saltman and Winter (2014) claim:

> We should not discount the medium and long-term evolution of [ISIL] to brand itself as the icon of global jihadism […] The new online frontline of the current crisis needs to be better defended. Censoring unwanted extremist content and propaganda materials is not only ineffective, but often counter productive […] The online space must be better contested. (p. 52)

The question that logically results, then, is what are the types of words the West should be using to undermine and contest ISIL's attempts at legitimacy? My findings suggest that ISIL has used the words of the West as a source of legitimacy—so, what do discourses that attempt to challenge those legitimation attempts sound like? Perhaps the US needs to use ISIL's words against ISIL...

Goodall, Jr., Trethewey, and McDonald (2008) suggest that the US government's inability to prepare for, or respond to, the sophisticated jihadi media strategies is because for the past fifty years, "the dominant US approach to communicating with people living in regions of the world where we have strategic and economic interests has been informed by what communication theorists refer to as the

'one way model'" (p. 30). Unsurprisingly, this one-way model implies that audiences are passive in their interpretation of a message's meaning; a one-way transmission model of communication does not lend itself to successful diplomacy (p. 31). Thus, Goodall Jr. et al. advocate for a communication strategy that takes seriously the notion that perceptions of meaning and message clarity are a result of relationships, not just word usage. Deeper understandings of cultures, languages, and religions are thus extremely important in terms of countering extremist threats.

One recommendation here would be to incorporate "the absurd" into Western discourses when referencing ISIL. When their name and identity is on our lips, we need to make them out to be absurd. The West needs to undermine their legitimacy in the present, and their construction of their past and future to minimize their constitution across time. Corman and Schiefelbein (2008) ague that a key problem for Islamists is "legitimating what they do" and thus an important way to compete with them is to "identify those contradictions" and then "make or encourage efforts to draw attention to them" (p. 90). To do this, however, requires a deep knowledge of Islam. The West should continue to have Muslims, who have very deep understandings of Islam, help undermine these messages to make groups, such as ISIL, out to sound absurd. Shanker and Schmitt (2004) argue that our job is not perception management, but "to counter the enemy's perception management," especially in a world where the enemy is clearly using media to help manage their image to the general public (p. 1). Thus, countering that image perception through drawing attention to contradictions and framing ISIL's messaging as absurd is one suggestion.

Similarly, Corman and Schiefelbein (2008) advocate for a Western deconstruction of Islamist concepts of history and audience, and to identify and draw attention to Islamist actions that contradict Islam. The findings of this present research lend strong support for these recommendations, even eight years after Corman and Schiefelbein's initial recommendation. They argue that Islamist ideology depends "on a very particular construction of history" (Corman & Schiefelbein, 2008, p. 91). This construction maintains that Islam was at its height during the golden age of the Caliphs and has only declined since then; the plight of the Muslims will only get worse if they do not attempt change in the future (Corman & Schiefelbein, 2008). Corman and Schiefelbein argue that this Islamist narrative provides a "built in logic for rejecting anything in the present associated with the decline," e.g., Western influence (p. 91). Furthermore, orienting to this idealized past "simultaneously helps solidify identity [and] create a sense of legitimacy" (p. 91). The present findings indicate that the organizational identity narrative that ISIL produced has accomplished just that. ISIL attempted to legitimize itself in the present by constructing a narrative that draws on a long history and extends into the future, always in severe confrontation with the West. Corman and Schiefelbein advocate for additional research into the crafting of this counter narrative and what this counter-legitimacy narrative sounds like. The findings of this dissertation could provide this next step.

Similarly, a third implication of this research shows the importance of the need to explore US and Western rhetoric in terms of whether or not we are actually listening to how ISIL is constructing its organizational identity. For a long time, the US discourse surrounding the emergence of ISIL implored that ISIL was not a state, not

Islamic, and not a threat to be taken seriously (e.g., "the jayvee squad of terrorists" commentary). However, this rhetoric did not last, and several months after ISIL declared itself a State, US officials changed their discourse. The editors of *Dabiq* picked up on this change. Cantlie, as quoted in *Dabiq*, points out,

> The language change in the West is undeniably there. Just eight months into their campaign and already some of the most senior political figures in the US are admitting the Islamic State is unlike any opponent they have faced before and that a military solution by itself is impossible. That speaks volumes by itself. (Issue 8, p. 67)

Cantlie's remark once again calls our attention to the transactional nature of US discourse; or, more appropriately, whether or not the US construction of ISIL's image takes into consideration its own purported identity. Goodall Jr. et al. (2008) advocate that US and Western leaders should "not repeat the same message in the same channels with the same spokespersons and expect new or different results" (p. 34). Similarly, the findings of this dissertation lend support to Goodall Jr. et al.'s recommendations. The fact that ISIL included an "In the Words of the Enemy" section in each magazine, as well as incorporated the sentiments of John Cantlie, are indicative of the influence of Western rhetoric on the construction of ISIL's narrative.

Limitations and Further Research

This study, like all studies, is subject to limitations. The first set of limitations comes as a result of analyzing publicly accessible documents. I did not speak with editors of *Dabiq* themselves, so I do not know what legitimacy strategies they *intended* to create. Rather, I can only comment on what strategies I was able to recognize in their writing. Although I cannot talk about what they intended to do, I can speak to what is apparent in their product. However, the strategies I have recognized within this series

of magazines extend farther than the authors' intentions. While evaluating intent is not often a goal of communication studies, future research on the topic could explore various other sources (e.g., letters and other correspondence, and/or communication with ISIL leadership) for further inquiry into some of the intent of these magazines.

Similarly, I did not measure or evaluate message effects. Although I can comment on the appeals used the *Dabiq* editorial team to position ISIL as legitimate, I cannot speak to whether or not they have been successful in those attempts. I do not know how persuasive these appeals have been to various audiences or publics; I can only tell readers how I've interpreted what was written in the documents. However, given research outside the scope of this study on the relative success of ISIL in terms of recruitment, one could argue that these attempts have, in fact, been successful to some extent. Future research into the effects of these magazines on various populations (e.g., Muslims living in the US and abroad, religious radicals, etc.) would be both interesting and fruitful.

Third, CCO theory is unfriendly to empirical challenge. Because the theory is stated at such a high level of abstraction, operationalization is difficult. The abstract nature of the theory means that attempts to operationalize it can quickly descend into unproductive arguments over definitions. "Constitution" is about what is, and thus, CCO theorists need make decisions *about* what is. In other words, CCO is a safe theory that is difficult to challenge with empirical observations. The observations presented here fall short of challenging CCO theory, but do extend the theory to include the transactional nature of institutional positioning and the role of sociomaterial configurations in generating credibility for constitutive messaging.

Finally, additional case studies investigating the application of CCO and the construction of organizational identity narratives could potentially shed light onto the transactional nature of institutional positioning and the extension of CCO theorizing. While the use of ISIL as an extreme case serves as an exemplar and enables a thick description of the existence of a phenomenon, multiple-case studies may provide a stronger basis for theory building (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Identity narratives are important in the constitution of any organization, so further research into how these narratives may be constructed from transactional communication between organizations and their competitors is important. Although observing such phenomenon in extreme cases, such as the present example of ISIL, heightens the researcher's ability to observe such phenomenon, investigating such findings in less extreme contexts is important for understanding the transferability and application of findings to like-contexts.

To conclude, this dissertation explored how organizations attempt to construct their ontology and legitimacy through external messaging, known as institutional positioning. The analysis of the *Dabiq* magazines, an example of constitutive texts, revealed that ISIL's institutional positioning conformed to a communication pattern I defined as a *transactional organizational identity narrative*. My findings suggest that institutional positioning messages can be transactional, constructed through a cooptation of messaging: those of the organization itself, as well as counter positioning messages purported by an organization's competition. Additionally, this research extends current CCO theorizing by emphasizing how socio-material configurations may lend increased credibility to an organization's attempts at positioning itself as legitimate. Future research extending this line of theorizing is warranted to explore how terrorist

organizations' use of transactional organizational identity narratives can be attacked, symbolically, as a means of undermining their organizational constitution attempts.

References

Albert, S., & Whetten, D. A. (1985) Organizational identity. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 7,* 263-295. doi: 10.1234/12345678

Aldrich, H. E. (1979). *Organizations and environments.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Alvesson, M. (2001). Knowledge work: Ambiguity, image, and identity. *Human Relations, 54*(7), 863-886. doi: 10.1177/0018726701547004

Alvesson, M. (2002). *Understanding organizational culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ashcraft, K. L., Kuhn, T. R., & Cooren, F. (2009). Constitutional amendments: "Materializing" organizational communication. *Academy of Management Annals, 3*(1), 1-64. doi: 10.1080/19416520903047186

Barrett, R. (2014). Foreign fighters in Syria. *The Soufan Group*. Retrieved from http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/TSG-Foreign-Fighters-in-Syria.pdf

Bazeley, P. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis with NVivo.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bean, H., & Buikema, R. J. (2015). Deconstituting al-Qa'ida: CCO theory and the decline and dissolution of hidden organizations. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 1-27. doi: 10.1177/0893318915597300

Bennis, P. (2015). *Understanding ISIS and the new global war on terror: A primer.* Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press.

Berg, L. (2008). The importance of names and naming in religion, literature, and librarianship. *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings, 62*, 194-208.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966; 1967). *The social construction of reality.* New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Biddle, S. (2016, January 19). ISIS magazine confirms death of "Jihadi John." *The Gawker*. Retrieved from http://gawker.com/isis-magazine-confirms-death-of-jihadi-john-1753849439

Bisel, R. S. (2010). A communicative ontology of organization? A description, history, and critique of CCO theories for organizational science. *Management Communication Quarterly, 24*(1), 124-131. doi: 10.1177/0893318909351582

Bisel, R. S., Barge, J. K., Dougherty, D. S., Lucas, K., & Tracy, S. J. (2014). A roundtable discussion of "big" data in qualitative organizational communication research. *Management Communication Quarterly, 28*(4), 625-649, doi: 10.1177/0893318914549952

Bisel, R. S., & Ford, D. J. (2008). Diagnosing pathogenic eschatology. *Communication Studies, 59*, 340-354. doi: 10.1080/10510970802467395

Bitektine, A. (2011). Towards a theory of social judgments of organizations: The case of legitimacy, reputation, and status. *Academy of Management, 36*(1), 151-179. doi: 10.5465/amr.2011.55662572

Blumer, H. G. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Boje, D. (2001). *Narrative methods for organizational and communication research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Browning, L. D., Greene, R. W., Sitkin, S. B., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2009). Constitutive complexity: Military entrepreneurs and the synthetic character of communication flows. In L. L. Putnam & A. M. Nicotera (Eds.), *Building theories of organization: The constitutive role of communication* (pp. 89-116). New York, NY: Routledge.

Bruner, J. (2005). Past and present as narrative constructions. In J. Straub (Ed.), *Narration, identity, and historical consciousness* (pp. 23–43). New York, NY: Berghahn Books.

Bruscella, J. S. (2015). "It's more than just a name": A theoretical approach to eradicating terrorism through propositions of organizational naming. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 1-17. doi: 10.1080/1057610X.2015.1038107

Carbaugh, D. (2007). Cultural discourse analysis: Communication practices and cultural encounters. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research, 36*(3), 167-182. doi: 10.1080/17475750701737090

Care2Petitions (2015). Thousands of women and girls named Isis, please petition media to stop calling the terrorists by our name. *ThePetitionSite.com*. Online, available at: http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/767/932/805/

Caris, C. C., & Reynolds, S. (2014, July). ISIS governance in Syria: Middle East security report 22. *The Institute for the Study of War.* Retrieved from www.understandingwar.org

Cathcart, R. S. (1972). New approaches to the study of movements: Defining movements rhetorically. *Western Speech, 36*, 82-88. doi: 10.1080/10570317209373733

Cathcart, R. S. (1983). A confrontation perspective on the study of social movements. *Central States Speech Journal, 34*(1), 69-74. doi: 10.1080/10510978309368116

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cheney, G. (1983). The rhetoric of identification and the study of organizational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 69*(2), 143-158. doi:10.1080/00335638309383643

Cheney, G., & Christiansen, L. T. (2000). Organizational identity: Linkages between internal and external communication. In F. M. Jablin, & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (p. 231-269). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cheney, G., Christensen, L. T., & Dailey, S. L. (2014). Communicating identity and identification in and around organizations. In L. L. Putnam & D. K. Mumby (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods, 3rd Edition,* (pp. 695-716). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Christians, C. G., & Carey, J. W. (1989). The logic and aims of qualitative research. In G. H. I. Stempel & B. H. Westley (Eds.), *Research methods in mass communication* (pp. 354-374). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Clarion Project. (2014, November). *Special report: The Islamic State.* Retrieved from http://www.clarionproject.org/

Clarion Project. (2014, September). *The Islamic State's (ISIS, ISIL) Magazine*. Retrieved from http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq

Cochran, D. S. & Dolan, J. A. (1984). Qualitative research: An alternative to quantitative research in communication. *The Journal of Business Communication, 21*(4), 25-32. doi: 10.1177/002194368402100403

Conrad, C. (2011). *Organizational rhetoric.* Cambridge, MA: Polity Press

Cooren, F. (2000). *The organizing property of communication.* Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

Cooren, F., Kuhn, T., Cornelissen, J. P., & Clark, T. (2011). Communication, organizing, and organization: An overview and introduction to the special issue. *Organization Studies, 32*(9), 1149-1170. doi: 10.1177/0170840611410836

Cordall, S. S. (2014, December 12). How ISIS governs its caliphate. *Newsweek,* 22-24. Retrieved from http://www.newsweek.com/2014/12/12/how-isis-governs-its-caliphate-288517.html

Corman, S. R., & Schiefelbein, J. S. (2008). Communication and media strategy in the Islamist war of ideas. In S. R. Corman, A. Tretheway, & H. L. Goodall, Jr. (Eds.). *Weapons of mass persuasion: Strategic commination to combat violent extremism* (pp. 69-96). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Corman, S. R., Trethewey, A., & Goodall, H. L. (2008). Preface. In S. R. Corman, A. Trethewey, and H.L Goodall (Eds.) *Weapons of mass persuasion: Strategic communication to combat violent extremism* (pp. v-xii). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing amongst five approaches, 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cronin, A. K. (2015). ISIS is not a terrorist group: Why counterterrorism won't stop the latest jihadist threat. *Foreign Affairs, 94*(2), 87-98.

Dalton, M., Horobin, W., Varela, T., & Landauro, I. (2015, November 14). Seven militants led deadly Paris attacks. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.wsj.com/articles/paris-attacks-were-an-act-of-war-by-islamic-state-french-president-francois-hollande-says-1447498080?alg=y

Dailey, S. L., & Browning, L. (2014). Retelling stories in organizations: Understanding the functions of narrative repetition. *Academy of Management Review, 39*(1), 22-43. doi: 10.5465/amr.2011.0329

Davidson, J., & Brooking, E. (2014, June 24). ISIS hasn't gone anywhere—and it's getting stronger. *Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from http://blogs.cfr.org/davidson/2014/07/24/isis-hasnt-gone-anywhere-and-its-getting-stronger/

de Saussure, F. (1983). *Course in general linguistics*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Desilver, D. (2013). World's Muslim population more widespread than you might think. *Pew Research Center.* Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/06/07/worlds-muslim-population-more-widespread-than-you-might-think/

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review, 48*(2), 147-160. doi: 10.2307/2095101

DiSanza, J. R., & Bullis, C. (1999). "Everybody identifies with Smokey the bear": Employee responses to newsletter identification inducements at the U.S. Forest Service. *Management Communication Quarterly, 12*(3), 347-399. doi:10.1177/0893318999123001

Dutton, J. E., & Dukerich, J. M. (1991). Keeping and eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organizational adaptation. *Academy of Management Journal, 34*(3), 515-554. doi: 10.2307/256405

Dutton, J. E., Dukerich, J. M., & Harquail, C. V. (1994). Organizational images and member identification. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 39*(2), 239-263. doi: 10.2307/2393235

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of Management Journal, 50*(1), 25-32. doi: 10.5465/AMJ.2007.24160888

Erdahl, K. (2015, November 17). Bookstore named 'Isis' becomes target of vandalism. *Fox 31, Denver*. Retrieved from http://kdvr.com/2015/11/17/book-store-named-isis-becomes-target-of-vandalism/

Fairhurst, G. T., & Putnam, L. (2004). Organizations as discursive constructions. *Communication Theory, 14*(1), 5-26. doi: 10.1111/comt.12074

Fuller, J. (2014, September 9). 'ISIS' vs. 'ISIL' vs. 'Islamic State': The political importance of a much-debated acronym. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2014/09/09/isis-vs-isil-vs-islamic-state-the-political-importance-of-a-much-debated-acronym/

Fuller, J. (2015, January 20). 'ISIS' vs. 'ISIL' vs. 'Islamic State': The political importance of a much-debated acronym. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2015/01/20/isis-vs-isil-vs-islamic-state-the-political-importance-of-a-much-debated-acronym-2/

Furlow, R. B., Fleischer, K., & Corman, S. R. (2014). De-romanticizing the Islamic State's vision of the Caliphate. *Arizona State University Center for Strategic Communication.* Report No. 1402. Retrieved from http://csc.asu.edu/2014/10/28/de-romanticizing-the-islamic-states-vision-of-the-caliphate-2/

Gambhir, H. K. (2014, August 15). Dabiq: The strategic messaging of the Islamic State. *The Institute for the Study of War.* Retrieved from www.understandingwar.org

Garrity, P. (2015, November 14). Paris attacks: What does 'Daesh' mean and why does ISIS hate it? *NBC News.* Retrieved from http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/paris-attacks-what-does-daesh-mean-why-does-isis-hate-n463551

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of culture: Selected essays.* New York, NY: Perseus Book Group.

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* New York, NY: Doubleday.

Goodall, Jr., H. L., Trethewey, A., Corman, S. R. (2008). "Strategery": Missed opportunities and the consequences of obsolete strategic communication theory. In S. R. Corman, A. Trethewey, & H. L. Goodall, Jr. (Eds.), *Weapons of mass persuasion: Strategic communication to combat violent extremism* (pp. 3-26). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Goodall, Jr., H. L., Trethewey, A., McDonald, K. (2008). Strategic ambiguity, Communication, and public diplomacy in an uncertain world: Principles and practices. In S. R. Corman, A. Trethewey, & H. L. Goodall, Jr. (Eds.), *Weapons of mass persuasion: Strategic communication to combat violent extremism* (pp. 26-38). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.) *Syntax and semantics, Vol. 3., Speech acts* (pp. 41-58). New York, NY: Academic Press.

Hacking, I. (1999). *The social construction of what?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Haleem, A. (2010). *The Qur'an: A new translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Heck, G. W. (2007). *When worlds collide: Exploring the ideological and political foundations of the clash of civilizations*. New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield.

Hoffman, M. F., & Ford, D. J. (2010). *Organizational rhetoric: Situations and strategies.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Howe, K., & Eisenhart, M. (1990). Standards for qualitative (and quantitative) research: A prolegomenon. *Educational Researcher, 19*(2), 2-9. doi: 10.3102/0013189X 019004002

Jelinek, M., & Litterer, J. A. (1994). Toward a cognitive theory of organizations. In C. Stubbar, J. R. Meindl, & J. F. Porac (Eds.), *Advances in Managerial Cognition and organizational information processing*, *Vol. 5* (pp. 3-41). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Jones, M. (2014). A matter of life and death: Exploring conceptualizations of sociomateriality in the context of critical care. *MIS Quarterly, 38*(3), 895-925.

Kahn, Z. (2014, October 9). Words matter in 'ISIS' war, so use 'Daesh'. *BostonGlobe.com*. Retrieved from https://www.bostonglobe.com /opinion/2014/10/09/words-matter-isis-war-usedaesh/V85GYEuasEEJgrUun0d MUP/story.html

Khatab, S. (2011). *Understanding Islamic fundamentalism: The theological and ideological basis of al-Qa 'ida's political tactics.* New York, NY: The American University in Cairo Press.

Kimball, C. (2011). *When religion becomes lethal: The explosive mix of politics and religion in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Kircher, M. M. (2015, November 17). A woman named Isis claims she's been blocked from signing into Facebook. *TechInsider.io.* Retrieved from http://www.techinsider.io/woman-named-isis-blocked-facebook-2015-11

Lammers, J. C. (2011). How institutions communicate: Institutional messages, institutional logics, and organizational communication. *Management Communication Quarterly, 25* (1), 154-182. doi: 10.1177/0893318910389280

Lammers, J. C., & Barbour, J. B. (2006). An institutional theory of organizational communication. *Communication Theory, 16*, 356-477. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2885.2006.00274.x

Lawrence, T. B., Suddaby, R., & Leca, B. (Eds.). (2009). *Institutional work: Actors and agency in institutional studies of organizations*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Lawrence, T. B., Suddaby, R., & Leca, B. (2009). Introduction: Theorizing and studying institutional work. In T. B. Lawrence, R. Suddaby, & B. Leca (Eds.), *Institutional work: Actors and agency in institutional studies of organizations* (pp. 1-27). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

LeBaron, C. (2013, August 29). Sociomateriality: Does it matter? *Strategizing, Activities, and Practices.* Retrieved from http://strategizingblog.com/2013/08/29/sociomateriality-does-it-matter/

Leonardi, P. M. (2012). Materiality, sociomateriality, and socio-technical systems; What do these terms mean? How are they different? Do we need them? In P. M. Leonardi, B. A. Nardi, & J. Kallinikos (Eds.), *Materiality and organizing: Social interaction in a technological world* (pp. 25-48). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Leonardi, P. M. (2013). Theoretical foundations for the study of sociomateriality. *Information and Organization, 23*, 59-76. doi: 10.1016/j.infoandorg.2013.02.002

Liebl, V. (2009). The Caliphate. *Middle Eastern Studies, 45*(3), 373-391. doi: 10.1080/00263200902853355

Lindloff, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods*, *3rd Edition.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lucas, K., & D'Enbeau, S. (2013). Moving beyond themes: Reimagining the qualitative analysis curriculum. *Qualitative Communication Research, 2*(2), 213-227. doi: 10.1525/qcr.2013.2.2.213

Luhmann, N. (1995). *Social systems.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lutgen-Sandvik, P., & McDermott, V. (2008). The constitution of employee-abusive organizations: A communication flows theory. *Communication Theory, 18*, 304-333. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2885.2008.00324.x

Matusitz, J. (2013). *Terrorism and communication: A critical introduction.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

McKee, A. (2003). *Textual analysis: A beginners guide.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McPhee, R. D., Corman, S. R., & Dooley, K. (1999). Theoretical and methodological axioms for the study of organizational knowledge and communication. In *49th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association,* San Francisco, CA.

McPhee, R. D., & Zaug, P. (2000). The communicative constitution of organizations: A framework for explanation. *The Electronic Journal of Communication, 10* (1 and 2).

Moghadam, A. (2008). The Salafi-Jihad as a religious ideology. *Combatting Terrorism Center Sentinel, 1*(3), 1-3.

Office of the Press Secretary. (2014, September 10). *Statement by the President on ISIL.* Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1

Office of the Press Secretary. (2015, February 18). *Remarks by the President in closing of the Summit on Countering Violent Extremism.* Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/18/remarks-president-closing-summit-countering-violent-extremism

Orlikowski, W. J. (2007). Sociomaterial practices: Exploring technology at work. *Organization Studies, 28*(9), 1435-48. doi: 10.1177/0170840607081138

Pankhurst, R. (2013). *The inevitable caliphate? A history of the struggle for global Islamic union, 1924 to the present.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Parsons, T. (1951). *The social system.* New York, NY: The Free Press.

Parsons, T. (1960; 1963). *Structure and process in modern societies.* New York, NY: The Free Press.

Peek, L. (24 August 2014). Obama's use of ISIL, not ISIS, tells another story. *FoxNews.com.* Retrieved from http://nation.foxnews.com/2014/08/24/obamas-use-isil-not-isis-tells-another-story

Phillips, N., Lawrence, T. B., & Hardy, C. (2004). Discourse and institutions. *The Academy of Management Review, 29*(4), 635-652. doi: 10.2307/20159075

President Obama (2014, September 10). How we're responding to the ISIL threat. *The White House.* Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/09/10/president-obama-how-were-responding-isil-threat

Putnam, L. L., & Nicotera, A. M. (2009). *Building theories of organization: The constitutive role of communication.* New York, NY: Routledge

Putnam, L. L., Nicotera, A. M., & McPhee, R. D. (2009). Introduction: Communication constitutes organization. In L. L. Putnam & A. M. Nicotera (Eds.), *Building theories of organization: The constitutive role of communication* (pp. 1-20). New York, NY: Routledge.

Rafaeli, A., & Vilnai-Yavetz, I. (2004). Emotion as a connection of physical artifacts and organizations. *Organization Science, 15*(6), 671-686. doi: 10.1287/orsc.1040.0053

Reed, M. (2004). Getting real about organizational discourse. In D. Grant, C. Hardy, C. Oswick, & L. Putnam (Eds.) *The Sage handbook of organizational discourse* (pp. 413-420). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Reed, M. (2010). Is communication *constitutive* of organization? *Management Communication Quarterly, 24*(1), 151-157. doi.10.1177/0893318909351583

Rippin, A., & Knappert, J. (1986). *Textual sources for the study of Islam*. Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books.

Robichaud, D., Giroux, H., & Taylor, J. R. (2004). The meta-conversation: The recursive property of language as the key to organizing. *Academy of Management Review, 29*, 617-634. doi: 10.2307/20159074

Saltman, E. M., & Winter, C. (2014). Islamic State: The changing face of modern Jihadism. *Quilliam Foundation.* Retrieved from www.quilliamfoundation.org.

Sanchez, R. (2015, January 23). ISIS, ISIL, or the Islamic State? *CNN.com*. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/09/world/meast/isis-isil-islamic-state/

Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership.* San Francisco, CA: Wiley.

Schoeneborn, D. (2011). Organization as communication: A Luhmannian perspective. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *25*(4), 663-689. doi: 0893318911405622.

Schoeneborn, D., Blaschke, S., Cooren, F., McPhee, R. D., Seidl, D., & Taylor, J. R. (2014). The three schools of CCO thinking: Interactive dialogue and systematic comparison. *Management Communication Quarterly, 28*(2), 285-316. doi: 10.1177/0893318914527000

Schoeneborn, D., & Scherer, A. G. (2010, August). Communication as constitutive of terrorist organizations. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2010, No. 1, pp. 1-6). Academy of Management.

Schoeneborn, D., & Scherer, A. G. (2012). Clandestine organizations, al Qaeda, and the paradox of (in)visibility: A response to Stohl and Stohl. *Organization Studies, (33)*7, 963-971. doi: 10.1177/0170840612448031

Scott, C. R. (2007). Communication and social identity theory: Existing and potential connections in organizational identification research. *Communication Studies, 58*(2), 123-138. doi: 10.1080/10510970701341063

Scott, R. L., & Smith, D. K. (1969). The rhetoric of confrontation. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 55*(1), 1-8. doi: 10.1080/00335636909382922

Scott, W. R. (1987). The adolescence of institutional theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 32*, 493-511. doi: 10.2307/2392880

Scott, W. R. (2001). *Institutions and organizations, 2nd Edition.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Searle, J. R. (1995). *The construction of social reality.* New York, NY: The Free Press.

Selznick, P. (1957). *Leadership in administration.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Shanker, T., & Schmitt, E. (2004, December 13). Pentagon weighs use of deception in a broad arena. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/13/politics/pentagon-weighs-use-of-deception-in-a-broad-arena.html?_r=0

Short, B. (1991). Earth First! and the rhetoric of moral confrontation. *Communication Studies, 42*(2), 172-188. doi: 10.1080/10510979109368331

Simon, J. D. (1994). *The terrorist trap.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Sinha, S. (2015, June 9). Obama's evolution on ISIS. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/09/world/middleeast/obama-isis-strategy.html?_r=0

Stern, J., & Berger, J. M. (2015). *ISIS: The state of terror*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Stohl, C., & Stohl, M. (2011). Secret agencies: The communicative constitution of a clandestine organization. *Organizational Studies, 3*(9), 1197-1215, doi: 10.1177/0170840611410839

Stohl, M. (1983). Myths and realities of terrorism. In M. Stohl (Ed.), *The politics of terrorism* (pp. 1–19). New York, NY: Marcel Dekker.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. *The Academy of Management Review, 20*(3), 571-610. doi: 10.2307/258788

Taylor, J. R. (1999). What is 'organizational communication'? Communication as a dialogic of text and conversation. *Communication Review, 3*, 21-63. doi: 10.1080/10714429909368573

Taylor, J. R., Cooren, F., Giroux, N., & Robichaud, D. (1996). The communicational basis of organization: Between the conversation and the text. *Communication Theory, 6*(1), 1-39. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2885.1996.tb00118.x

Taylor, J. R., & Van Every, E. J. (2000). *The emergent organization: Communication as its site and surface*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Teslick, L. H. (2006, June 8). Profile: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. *Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from http://www.cfr.org/iraq/profile-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/p9866

Tilghman, A. (2014). Official: Don't comfort enemy by calling them ISIS, ISIL. *The Military Times*. Retrieved from http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2014/12/19/daesh-not-isil/20600351/

Tolbert, P. S., & Zucker, L. G (1996). The institutionalization of institutional theory. In S. R. Clegg, C. Hardy, & W. R. Nord, (Eds.), *Handbook of organization studies* (pp. 174-190). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Malden, MA: Wiley.

Tucker, M. L., Powell, K. S., & Meyer, G. D. (1995). Qualitative research in business communication: A review and analysis. *The Journal of Business Communication, 32*(4), 383-399. doi: 10.1177/002194369503200405

Turner, J. A. (2014). *Religious ideology and the roots of the global jihad: Salafi jihadism and the international order.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

US Department of State. (n.d.). *Foreign terrorist organizations.* Bureau of Counterterrorism. Retrieved from http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm

Venkatraman, A. (2007). Religious basis for Islamic terrorism: The Quran and its interpretations. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 30*(3), 229-248. doi: 10.1080/10576100600781612

Waines, D. (2003). *An introduction to Islam, 2nd edition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Weber, M. (1924, 1968). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Weick, K. E. (2001). *Making sense of the organization.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Business.

Weick, K. E., & Browning, L. D. (1986). Argument and narration in organizational communication. *1986 Yearly Review of Management of the Journal of Management, 12*(2), 243-259. doi: 10.1177/014920638601200207

Weintraub, A. (2015, November 18). What's in a name? Nothing good for Isis pharmaceuticals. *Forbes.com.* Retrieved from http://www.forbes.com/sites/arleneweintraub/2015/11/18/whats-in-a-name-nothing-good-for-isis-pharmaceuticals/

Zelin, A. Y. (2015). The Islamic State: A video introduction. *The Washington Institute.* Retrieved from http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-islamic-state-a-video-introduction

Appendix A: ISIL's Growing Infrastructure and Population (Selected Images)

Above: ISIL purported to have minted their own currency, based on the "intrinsic values of gold silver and copper" (Issue 5, p. 17)

Below: Children at play in the newly declared Caliphate (Issue 1, p. 26)

Appendix B: ISIL's AlHayat Media Center

Above: Description of ISIL's Media Center, AlHayat (Issue 1, p. 43).

Appendix C: ISIL's Hospitals and Medical Infrastructure

The Current Health Infrastructure

The Islamic State provides the Muslims with extensive healthcare by running a host of medical facilities including hospitals and clinics in all major cities through which it is offering a wide range of medical services, from various types of complicated surgery to simpler services such as hijāmah. This infrastructure is aided by a widespread network of pharmacies run by qualified pharmacists and managed under the supervision and control of the Health Dīwān. Just as the medical staff in the hospitals and clinics are made up of qualified, trained professionals, the pharmacies are likewise only run by qualified and certified pharmacists.

Preparing for the Future

In order to ensure a steady supply of qualified medical personnel in the future as well as expanding and enhancing the current medical services from a professional as well as Islamic point of view, the Islamic State recently opened the Medical College in ar-Raqqah as well as the College for Medical Studies in Mosul.

Category	Amount
Outpatients	6711
Emergency Patients	4289
Lab Tests	15688
Minor X-Rays	2384
Kidney Dialysis Sessions	442
Physiotherapy Sessions	233
Children Admitted	170
Blood Donors	1151
General Surgeries	140
Bone Surgeries	261
Urinary Surgeries	18
Nerve Surgeries	15
Ear Surgeries	3
Gynecological Surgeries	47
Emergency Surgeries	16
Births	576
Audiometric Tests	45
Brain Stem Scans	11
Ultrasound Exams	400

ONE-MONTH COMBINED STATISTICS FOR AL-FĀRŪQ AND 'Ā'ISHAH HOSPITALS (WILĀYAT HALAB)

The pediatric wing of ar-Raqqah's main hospital

Above: Sample page from chapter in Issue 9, titled: "Healthcare in the Khilafah [Caliphate], (p. 25).

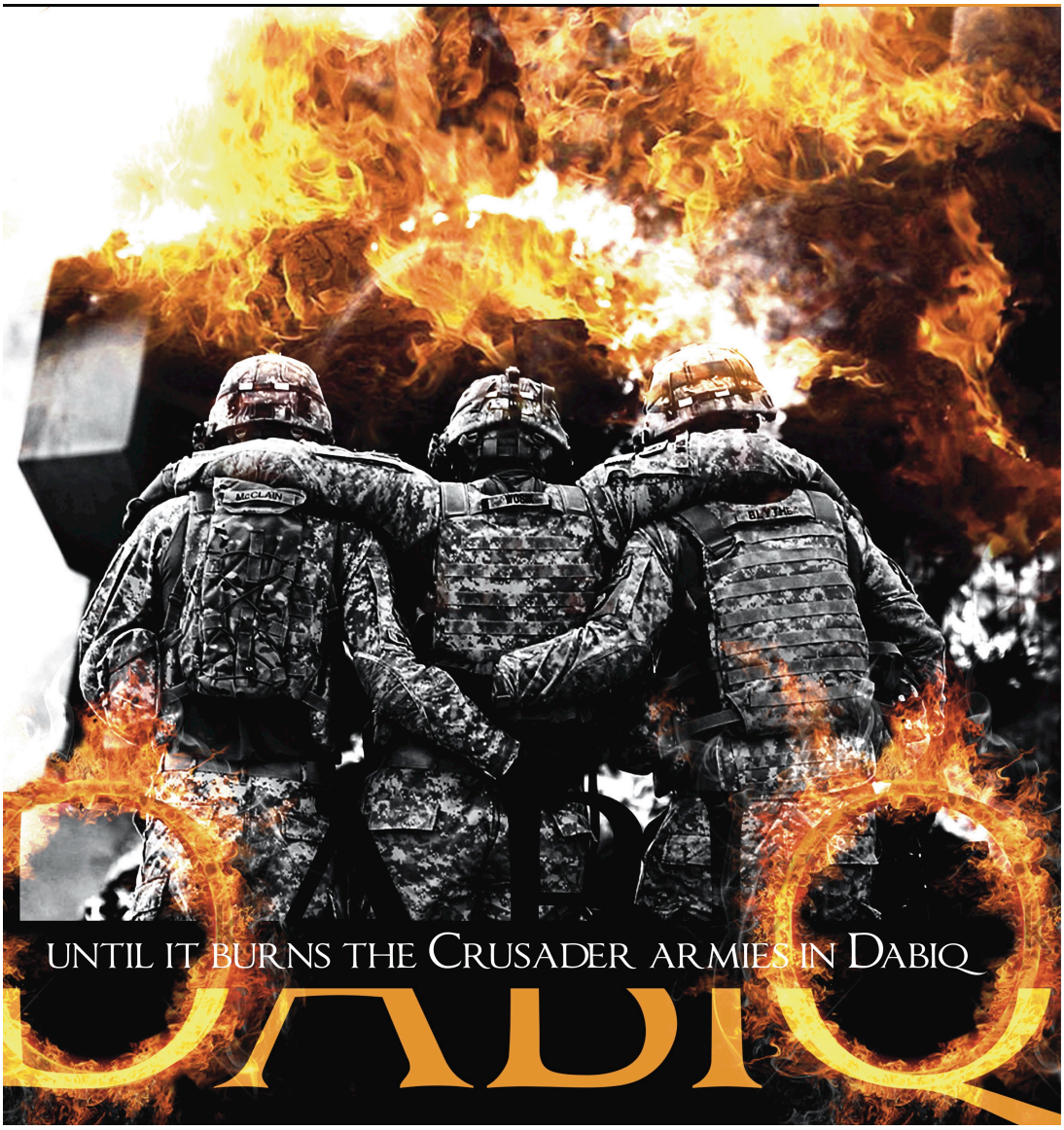
Appendix D: ISIL's Civilian Resources

Above: Images of "restoring electricity," "cancer treatment center for children" "street cleaning services," and "care home for the elderly" (Issue 4, p. 28).

Appendix E: “The spark has been lit here in Iraq”

Below: The contents page of the first issue (Issue 1, p. 2). The quote, “The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heat will continue to intensify—by Allah’s permission—until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq” appears on the contents page of every issue of the magazine.

Below: Inside cover spread (Issue 1, page 3).



Appendix F: Endnotes

[i] A discussion of terminology chosen to refer to ISIL is covered in Chapter 3. However, for the purposes for the discussion thus far, I refer to the group as "ISIL" when used in the context of American discourse, as that is how the White House refers to the organization. When I am discussing how the group positions and refers to itself, I use the term the "Islamic State," as that is how the organization self-identifies.

[ii] Salafist thought is based on the concept of returning to the supposedly "pure" form of Islam as practiced by the early successors of Muhammed. As Stern and Berger (2015) explain, "it is an ideology based on the principle that any government that does not rule through a strict interpretation of Shariah is an infidel regime that must be violently opposed" (p. 15). According to Moghadam (2008), there are three aspects of salafi-jihadist thought: (1) their goal is to "raise awareness among Muslims that their religion has been on the wane […] Salafi-jihadists urge Muslims to understand that the tide has turned, and that Islam is in a constant state of decline in religious, political, military, economic and cultural terms." (2) The Salafi-jihadist "identifies the alleged source of Islam's conundrum in the persistent attacks and humiliation of Muslims on the part of an anti-Islamic alliance of what it terms 'crusaders,' 'Zionists' and 'apostates.'" And finally, (3) Salafi-jihadists attempt to instill into Muslims the idea that "the only identity that truly matters is that of membership in the *umma*, the global Islamic community that bestows comfort, dignity, security and honor upon the downtrodden Muslims."

[iii] The term, "global war on terror" stems from the days after the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, when then-President G.W. Bush

announced that the US response to the crime would be to "lead a global war on terror" to "bring those responsible to justice" (Bennis, 2015, p. 6). For more information, please read Bennis' (2015) book titled, *Understanding ISIS and the New Global War on Terror.*

[iv] As of June 2014, academic and intelligence experts estimate that over 12,000 foreign fighters have gone to Syria from at least 81 countries; about 2,500 are from Western countries (including the European Union, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) (Barrett, 2014).

[v] John Cantlie is a British war journalist who was captured in 2012 along with American James Foley, who was later executed. At the time of this writing, Cantlie still remains a hostage. His voice is channeled through numerous exposés throughout the *Dabiq* series, as well as in other ISIL propaganda videos. It has not yet been made clear whether or not these are truly Cantlie's sentiments, or if he has become a victim of Stockholm syndrome, or if he has been fed these lines. Regardless, "his" words are included in *Dabiq*, and thus, ISIL sees it as significant to quote a Westerner.

[vi] Today, many Western leaders refuse to refer to the group as the "Islamic State." Instead, they have chosen to refer to the group either as "ISIL," or later, as "Daesh," again, a derogatory label that ISIL abhors. See discussion about organizational naming in previous chapter.

[vii] As Berger and Stern (2015) have argued, ISIL has exploited new technologies and changing social dynamics, to appeal and recruit, albeit successfully, potential foreign fighters. "By mid-2014," Berger and Stern (2015) note, ISIL's messaging campaign was "well oiled and effective. […] Despite the occasional dud, the overall

storytelling and production quality of ISIS video was often incredible, the likes of which had been rarely seen in propaganda of any kind, and certainly leaps and bounds ahead of its predecessor's often sophisticated attempts" (p. 72). Berger and Stern further note how ISIL's messaging has been distinctly different from that of al Qaeda. "ISIS [is] offering something novel," they explain, "dispensing with religious argumentation and generalized exhortation and emphasizing two seemingly disparate themes—ultraviolence and civil society. They were unexpectedly potent when combined and alternated" (p. 72). Based on the conclusions discussed in the previous chapter, ISIL's ultraviolence may be perceived as justified when it is positioned alongside this appearance of a modern nation-state.

[viii] It is important to point out that in my analysis, I do not evaluate whether or not the Islamic State has accurately interpreted or depicted passages from the Quran in its publication of *Dabiq*. Rather, my goal in this section is to explain *how* the Islamic State uses religion as a source of legitimacy; i.e., the ways in which religion is evoked in their narratives.

[ix] The following is the verse of the sword, the fifth verse of the ninth surah of the Quran. It is often cited by critics of Islam, suggesting that it promotes violence against non-Muslims: "But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful."

[x] As has been made evident thus far, ISIL is different from any other Islamist or religious extremist organization that the West has had to deal with in the past. Part of

this is difference is due to their interpretation and inclusion of readings from the Quran. In 2012, Halverson, Furlow, and Corman conducted a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which Islamist extremists quoted the Quran, citing texts from 1998-2011. Although obviously prior to the introduction of the Islamic State to the global stage, Halverson and colleagues were able to confirm several common assumptions about extremist readings of Qur'an. The authors concluded that "verses extremists cite from the Qur'an do not suggest an aggressive offensive foe seeking domination and conquest of unbelievers, as is commonly assumed" (2012, p. 2). "Instead," they contend, Islamists "deal with themes of victimization, dishonor, and retribution. This shows close integration with the rhetorical vision of Islamist extremists" (2012, p. 2). One of their findings, in particular, however, was surprising: the oft-cited "verse of the sword" passage from the Qur'an, which many argue is most consistent with the violent spread of Islam, was nearly absent from the set of extremist rhetoric they examined. In fact, their analysis revealed only 3 references to the "verse of the sword," amongst the set of over 2,000 coded extremist texts. However, just a cursory glance of the *Dabiq* series suggests that ISIL frames their historical and religious foundation quite differently.

[xi] "The true religion – embodied by the Jamā'ah of the Muslims (the Khilāfah) and their Imām (the Khalīfah) – will be manifest over all false religions, with proof and evidence and by the sword and spear, even if the kāfirīn and mushrikīn despise such, and despite all the military, economic, intelligence, political, and media opposition to the Islamic State from the coalition of the cross." (Issue 5, p. 3).

[xii] The use of the phrase "boots on the ground" has been the subject of much debate in the US. Many argue that the metonym, "boots on the ground," may

desensitize people from distinguishing between American citizens—people—with machine-like infantry in war zones.

[xiii] Cantlie still remains a hostage, and his voice is channeled through numerous exposés throughout the Dabiq series, as well as in other ISIL propaganda videos. See endnote 1.