

Exploring the Social Entrepreneur: Individual and Organizational Identity Construction

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EXPLORING THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR: INDIVIDUAL AND
ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

by

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ABSTRACT
EXPLORING THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR: INDIVIDUAL AND
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Social entrepreneurs play the role of the “change maker” in society by adopting business practices to create and sustain social value within the social sector. These individuals engage in processes that explore innovation and new opportunities to serve their missions. Social entrepreneurs are continually being described as visionaries, suggesting a defining characteristic of social entrepreneurs that they are relentless in their pursuit of fulfilling their vision.

As social entrepreneurs continue to receive international attention for their goals for social change and innovation, it is important to further analyze social entrepreneurs from a communication perspective because it is believed that it is the entrepreneurs’ personal mission, internal values and motivation that is likely to drive their ventures. Drawing on social constructionist perspective and organizational identity research to provide a theoretical lens, this research explores social entrepreneurs through in-depth interviews to explore the impact visionary leaders have on their social enterprises.

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Colleen C. Moore, B.A.

This thesis is dedicated to all of the ‘change-makers’ in my life.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In 2006, Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank received the Nobel Peace Prize for helping clients overcome poverty in Bangladesh, India by establishing creditworthiness and financial self-sufficiency through the process of micro-credit. Micro-credit had been around in various forms for centuries, but Yunus was the first to challenge its theory by showing how to it could be used as a strategy to alleviate poverty by extending collateral-free loans to poor villagers in cost-efficient, sustainable manner. As the founder of the Grameen Bank, Yunus has 7.1 million borrowers in 77,000 villages (Bornstein, 2007). Yunus belongs to a defined group of individuals called social entrepreneurs, who are recognized as transformative forces: “people with new ideas to address major problems who are relentless in their pursuit of their visions, people who will not take ‘no’ for an answer and who will not give up until they have spread their ideas as far as they possibly can” (Bornstein, 2007, p. 2).

Over the last decade, social entrepreneurship has become increasingly popular, and a number of influential organizations and associations, such as Ashoka and Skoll are consistently promoting the individuals who initiate their social missions to create impactful change. Founded in 1981, Ashoka is one of the world’s largest associations of leading social entrepreneurs. Ashoka defines social entrepreneurs as individuals who create system-changing solutions for the world’s most urgent social problems (Ashoka About Us, 2012). Ashoka views growth in the citizen sector as beginning with the work of these individual social entrepreneurs,

who are responding to new challenges and changing needs. As of 2007, Ashoka has elected 2,000 social entrepreneurs across 63 countries. As an organization, their staff works to identify emerging social entrepreneurs all over the world to invest in and support them (Ashoka About Us, 2012).

Similarly, The Skoll Foundation, has the mission to drive large scale change by investing in, connecting and celebrating social entrepreneurs and the innovators who help them solve the world's most pressing problems. The Skoll Foundation defines social entrepreneurs as society's change agents, creators of innovations that disrupt the status quo and transform our world for the better (Skoll Foundation About Us, 2012). The Skoll Foundation, like Ashoka, spends time identifying people and programs already bringing positive change around the world and empowers them to extend their reach and deepen their impact to improve society. Over the past 12 years, they have awarded more than \$315 million to 91 social entrepreneurs and 74 organizations around the world (Skoll Foundation About Us, 2012). They also invest money into research and academic programs dedicated to social entrepreneurship to understand the issues of social entrepreneurs so they can apply more resources to maximize the collective impact.

Both the Ashoka and the Skoll Foundation predicate their success on the success of these highly recognized individuals who identify as social entrepreneurs. Bill Drayton, the founder of Ashoka, provides a great explanation to the rise in popularity and the importance of the social entrepreneurial movement. He states:

The most significant historical event of our time is the emergence of social entrepreneurs as the dominant force for social change around the world and the newly competitive citizen sector they are creating. These extraordinary individuals solve critical issues on a global scale from every area of need.

They inspire others to adopt and spread their innovations – demonstrating to all citizens that they, too, have the potential to be powerful change makers (Ashoka 2007 Summary of Results, p. 24).

This quote from Drayton provides an example of how the social entrepreneurship movement is defined by the idealized figure of the social entrepreneur who adopts this identity as a ‘change maker’ or ‘change agent’ to solve social issues.

J. Gregory Dees, professor at Duke’s Fuqua School of Business and director for the school’s Center for Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship, provides an “idealized” definition of social entrepreneurs, providing conditions of the characteristics that social leaders will exemplify in different ways and different degrees. Social entrepreneurs are defined as individuals who play the role of change agents in the social sector by, “adopting a mission to create and sustain social value; recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission; engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning; acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand; and exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability to the constituents served and for the outcomes created” (Dees, 1998, p. 4). The closer a person gets to satisfying all these conditions, the more the person fits the model of a social entrepreneur. Dees (1998) goes on to say that these behaviors should be encouraged and rewarded in those who have the capabilities and temperament for this kind of work.

Therefore, social entrepreneurs are a special breed of leaders, and Dees’ (1998) definition preserves this distinctive status. Individuals identified as social entrepreneurs willingly take on the role as the social change maker or change agent, and work to make their missions for social value a reality. These individuals possess

visions and missions to create social change that are central to their individual identity. As Drayton explains it, “the social entrepreneur exists to make his or her vision society’s new pattern. He or she is married to that vision, in sickness or in health, or until it has swept the field” (Drayton, 2002). This strong vision-centered identity becomes the driving factor for their social ventures through the stories they tell and how they communicate their vision to the public.

However, as social entrepreneurs continue to receive funding, recognition and awards for their work within the social sector, the individuals who take on the change maker roles in society deserve more attention. It is of interest to explore social entrepreneurs’ identities because they belong to a particularly individualized group of people who are doing significant work in society and continue to receive public recognition and awards. Issues of image and identity remain largely unexplored in the context of social entrepreneurship research (Dacin et al., 2011). Social entrepreneurs, due to their strong identity, must make a powerful impact on the organizations they create. Therefore, it is important to explore social entrepreneurs relative to their organizations. Communication scholars have long been interested in studying the identity construction process and the identities organizations take on to claim distinctiveness. This thesis seeks to fill this void by exploring the ways in which individuals come to identify themselves as social entrepreneurs and the extent to which they build their organizations’ identities.

Rationale for Study

Though the concept of social entrepreneurship is gaining popularity, it has taken on different meanings for different individuals and has been seen as

confusing. Many associate social entrepreneurship exclusively with non-profit organizations, while others see it as non-profits converting to for-profit models (Dees, 1998). Academic scholars have been slow to explore this concept of social entrepreneurship due to its definitional and conceptual issues (Dacin et al., 2011), where many feel that there is no unified definition, but a variety of many disparate meanings. According to Roper and Cheney (2005), many of the challenges or resistance surrounding social entrepreneurship is because the term is a combination of two concepts that lack a natural fit together. These challenges range from different interpretations of how the term should be used to acknowledging the need and purpose of social entrepreneurship in general. However, the authors argue that language is the key factor toward rationalizing this concept of social entrepreneurship because, “discourse acceptance precedes or runs in parallel with material acceptance” (Roper & Cheney, 2005, p. 102). Therefore, the more situated and comfortable the term social entrepreneurship becomes in social discourse, the more the public will begin to accept and understand its practice.

It is important to further analyze social entrepreneurs from a communication perspective because it is believed that it is the entrepreneurs’ personal mission, internal values and motivation that is likely to drive their ventures (Dees, 2001). Lerpold, Ravasi, van Rekom and Soenen (2007) argue that research has yet to explain fully how individuals in organizations develop identity beliefs and aspirations, and how these individuals’ beliefs about their organizations’ identities are negotiated with or imposed onto others.

Communication scholars explore these concepts when trying to understand individual and organizational identity. Identity is a social construct that individuals use to distinguish themselves from other individuals (Allen, 2011), and is a product of or an effect of competing, fragmentary, and contradictory discourses (Tracy & Trethewey 2005). Just as individuals use multiple and competing discourses to shape their identity, modern organizations construct identities to gain attention in the marketplace and differentiate themselves from competitors.

However, there is a gap in research that clearly explores the relationships between identities of founders and the identities of their organizations. This gap indicates the need for research that provides new understanding of the impact founders, specifically social entrepreneurs, have on imposing their individual identity onto their organizations. It is appropriate to explore this relationship within the context of social entrepreneurship because the ventures are rooted in a personal social mission of the founding social entrepreneur. Social entrepreneurs have agendas and are very results oriented, coming up with new visions to create change; communicate their visions clearly and effectively to persuade others to become committed to these new directions as well. Therefore, it is relevant to look at the personal experiences that have shaped the social entrepreneurs' individual identities to further understand their motives to create social enterprises and negotiate and inform their organizations identities.

This thesis seeks to expand the current research on social entrepreneurship by providing insight in the role of entrepreneurial identity and organizational identity formation. Utilizing social construction of identity and organizational

identity as theoretical lenses, this research explores the connection between an entrepreneur's identity and the venture he or she creates. Through analysis of social entrepreneurs' personal accounts of founding social ventures, this research explore the layers and linkages of identity-related discourses, investigating how these discourses conflict or agree with one another as social entrepreneurs respond to them and make decisions. The analysis draws from literature on identity construction discourses (Berger & Luckman, 1967; Kondo, 1990; Trethewey, 1997; Allen, 2011).

As a result, this research also answers the call for further research into social entrepreneurship and identity construction. Roper and Chaney (2006) argue that, as social entrepreneurship gains increasing popularity and institutional support, there is a need for more of an assessment of the persuasive uses of the term and their practices. Cetro and Miller (2008) call for further research into understanding the importance of the social motive and the influence on the strategy of social innovation and Dacin et al. (2011) call for greater focus on issues of image and identity, which are largely neglected in existing social entrepreneurship literature.

Preview of the Thesis

The following chapters introduce the theoretical framework, key concepts and methodology that will guide this study. First I explore the theoretical framework surrounding the social construction of individual and organizational identity. The literature review unpacks the idea of social entrepreneurship and the salient characteristics of the social entrepreneurs, such as visionary and personal branding. Next, I describe the data gathering process of in-depth interviews and the

constant comparative approach to data analysis. Then I discuss the results of the social entrepreneurs and their personal experiences founding and constructing their social ventures' identities. Specifically, I explore the discourses surrounding their individual identity and how these discourses translate onto the organizations they create. Finally, I present the implications of this identity translation process and offer suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

There is a parallel between entrepreneurs' identities relative to the ventures they create within the context of the social entrepreneurship movement. However, minimal research has looked at the manner individuals come to identify themselves as social entrepreneurs as well as the impact individuals have on the identities of the organizations they create (Dacin et al., 2011). Social entrepreneurs have been defined as visionary leaders who establish change-making organizations. They engage in the process of personal branding through powerful narratives and related discourses to develop the identity of their organization. Therefore, it is salient to understand personal identities of social entrepreneurs and explore the relationship their personal identities have within their organizations' identities. Social entrepreneurs see it as their purpose to create organizations that are driven by a social mission and moved by their strong vision.

In order to develop a deep understanding of the impact social entrepreneurs' identities have on the organizations they create, it is important to explore the theoretical links between individual identity construction, organizational identity construction, and the identification process. In the following section, I review these issues and present the theoretical relationships between these three concepts.

Individual Identity & Social Constructionist Perspective

Communication scholars have been interested in how particular identities are constructed in ways that are preferred by the organization or the broader society. Social identity refers to, "the ways in which individuals and collectives are

distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectives,” (Allen, 2011). Once identity is created, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations (Berger & Luckman, 1967). Therefore, identity is relational and humans develop identities primarily through communicating, or the dynamic nature of processes that humans use to produce, interpret and share meaning (Allen, 2011). It is a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic between individual and society (Berger & Luckman, 1967). Identity is shaped by the stories individuals tell about who they are, the ongoing narrative they create through the negotiations they have with the multiple and competing discourses surrounding them (Kondo, 1990; Trethewey, 1997). These processes are complex, continuous and contextual and help individuals construct their social reality.

Identity construction has been explored and expanded by organizational communication researchers. In her research on Japanese work life, Kondo (1990) defines identity as, “not a fixed ‘thing,’ it is negotiated, open, shifting and ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings in everyday situations” (p. 24). Kondo argues that identity and context are inseparable, and issues of power and discourse are important in understanding identity construction. Trethewey (1997) explored clients of a social service organization from a feminist standpoint and argued how organizational discourse, practices and relationships position clients as marginalized. Carroll and Levy (2010) employed Holmer-Nadeson’s (1996) concept of space of action to explore where identity work is visible within leadership development seminars. The previous scholarly work into the identity construction

provides a basis for this study since it seeks to explore how social entrepreneurs construct their identities.

This study takes a social constructionist perspective of identity, which provides researchers with a framework to understand the connection between individual identity and organizational identity because it looks at discourses as a means to construct a worldview. Social constructionists contend that the self is socially constructed through various relational and linguistic processes (Allen, 2011). Tracy and Trethewey (2005) make the argument that identity is socially constructed and that it is the understanding that identity is “neither fixed nor essential, but instead identity is a product of or an effect of competing, fragmentary, and contradictory discourses.” Discourse refers to, “systems of texts and talk that range from public to private and from naturally occurring to mediated forms (Allen, 2011, 10).

Individuals learn to assign themselves socially constructed labels through personal and symbolic interactions with others (Gioia, 1998). In other words, our identity arises out of interactions with others and is based on language. People use language to categorize and give meaning to their worlds in countless ways (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Holmer-Nadeson (1996) argues that while all meaning is discursive, “it is impossible for any particular discourse to exhaust the meaning of a particular social practice” (51). Therefore, individuals construct meaning from the interpretations of multiple, competing social discourses. This sense-making process develops out of people’s cultural, social and interpersonal experiences. Identities are in a constant state of creation and maintenance, experiencing influence from several

institutions, such as society, the media, the organizations individuals work for, or simply the conversations people have with others (Gioia, 1998).

Since individuals often identify themselves based on their organizational relationships and roles, scholars have looked to understand the ways in which individuals' construct, negotiate and manage identities that are only partially constructed by organizational influences (Gioia, 1998). Individuals develop a sense of self by drawing from an organization's culture and discourses. As members perform their roles within the organization, they begin to determine their identity by structures of discourse negotiated by the power figures of the organization (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). Power dynamics drive the communication processes that constitute the organization and societies, as different groups strive to serve their own interests and to control various resources (Allen, 2011). Founders, organizational leaders and the organizations' members all add to the power dynamics and how they play out within the organization.

Similar to the way individuals construct identity, organizations construct identity through the discourses surrounding and within the organization. By invoking a collective identity as a means for maintaining a sense of organizational coherence and cooperativeness, founders give their organization a sense of purpose and build affiliation among its members (Gioia, 1998). Their creation of organizational identity stems from their personal beliefs, values and missions that they impose on the organization to create shared meaning. This framework allows for researchers to consider the ways that individuals come to identify themselves as social entrepreneurs and reconstructs how these constructions play out within their

ventures' identities. The following section explains the concept of organizational identity and its relationship with individual identity construction.

Organizational Identity

Modern organizations use identities and images to gain attention in the marketplace and to differentiate themselves from competitors. Though individuals are faced with hundreds of identities each day, it is important to consider how communication scholars have defined the term organizational identity. Kuhn (1997) argues that identity is "the central, enduring character projected by an organization, as perceived and interpreted by others" (p. 199). Identity is a self-reflective question that organizations use to characterize aspects of and provide the answer to the question: "who am I?" or "who are we?" (Ashforth, Harrison & Corley, 2008). These definitions relied on the ideas introduced by Albert and Whetten (1985) who argued that an organization's identity focuses on the interpretation of an organization's external message. To build on this concept further, Whetten (2006) proposed a set of guidelines aimed at identifying those features of an organization that can be used as referents for identity claims. Organizational identity is based on three elements: the central character of the organization, the claimed distinctiveness of the organization from other organizations, and a consistency of these elements over time.

The central character of the organization describes the features that are seen as the essence of the organization that distinguish it from others (Albert & Whetten, 1985). These are the practices, values, and products that are at the core of who the organization is (Hoffman & Ford, 2010). Central character can be understood as the

formal identity claims an organization uses to communicate who it is as an organization (Lerpold et al., 2007). Central character identity claims are the tangible features that are central for survival, or considered essential knowledge for those expected to speak for or act on behalf of the organization (Whetten, 2006). Examples can include the formal statements such as mission statements and organizational values. Regardless of the medium, any official definition of what the organization is can be considered an identity claim (Lerpold et al., 2007). These features help the organization make consistent strategic decisions since it reflects what is required or ideal for the organization (Whetten, 2006).

Claimed distinctions are the features that distinguish the organization from others with which it is compared (Albert & Whetten, 1985). This differentiates an organization and its products from other organizations to ensure uniqueness (Aust, 2004). As Hoffman and Ford (2010) explain, “an organization’s identity is composed in part by what makes it different from other, similar organizations” (p. 121). These differentiating characteristics can be described by the distinctive elements of an organization, such as colors, logos, and slogans (Hoffman & Ford, 2010). These identity claims reflect the organization’s distinctive strategic preferences and competences, providing a source of competitive advantage (Whetten 2006).

Identity beliefs fall in line with claimed distinctions since it includes the organizational member’s collective beliefs about the distinguishing features of the organization that are presumed to be central and enduring (Lerpold et al, 2007).

Finally, consistency over time refers to the features that exhibit some degree of sameness or continuity over time (Albert & Whetten, 1985) or the organization’s

ability to reflect a sense of permanence while experiencing variability (Aust, 2004). The time and energy involved in creating an organization's identity speaks to the organization's need to be consistent and lasting over the years (Hoffman & Ford, 2010). Whetten (2006) explains that these identity claims can be seen as the core programs, policies, and procedures, reflecting the organization's highest priorities. These features are celebrated in the organization's tradition, and if they are lost, changed or violated, members would react with heated emotions (Whetten, 2006). Therefore, organizational identity can be understood as to how the organization wishes to be seen, and also how the public or understands its identity. This creates a tension between how the organization wants to be perceived versus how the public perceives it. As a result, identity messages attempt to persuade members about who an organization is, what it does, and what it stands for.

Identity versus Identification

It is important to make the distinction between organizational identity and organizational identification, and explain the relationship between the two. Identification generally describes the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of another individuals, relationships or groups (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998) apply the structurational theory of identification to explain the duality of identity and identification. From this perspective, identity and identification are not comparable, but separate entities in a dual process. Identity provides the necessary resources needed for an individual to help identify with and interact with others (Scott et al., 1998). For example, a structural form of identity is the social construct of "mother." Identity "represents a type of knowledge

about a part of our self that helps to produce and to reproduce behaviors in specific social situations” (Scott et al., 1998, p. 303).

In other words, identities are, “both the sources of and targets for, identification” (Kuhn & Nelson, 2002, p. 7). Identification, within this theoretical context, represents the behavior produced of emerging identity (Scott et al., 1998), or “the discursive process of implicating, shaping, expressing, and transforming identity structures that occur in coordinated activity” (Kuhn & Nelson, 2002, p. 7). Therefore, organizational identification is the process of shaping the organizational identity structures to which members attach (Kuhn & Nelson, 2002). The process of identification by individuals evolves and makes changes to the identity construct overtime.

The opportunity to explore the relationship between individuals’ identities and their organizations’ identities becomes relevant when exploring social enterprises. The social constructionist view of individual and organizational identity construction provides the framework for exploring the connection of an individual’s identity and the identity of the venture he or she creates.

Understanding how individuals come to identify themselves as social entrepreneurs and the extent to which these individuals undergo the process of building a personal brand through powerful narratives to construct their social ventures’ identities is vital in understanding social entrepreneurship. This research seeks to explore the parallel of the identity of the social entrepreneur and the identity of their venture. However, it is important to first explore what is know about the social

entrepreneurship movement and the characteristics associated with social entrepreneurs.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

This thesis explores the impact founding social entrepreneurs have in informing the identities of the organizations they create. From the social constructionist perspective, individuals and organizations construct identities by drawing on conflicting and competition discourses. It is important to explore who social entrepreneurs are and how they do their work. The following section reviews the relevant literature on social entrepreneurship and characteristics of social entrepreneurs.

Social Entrepreneurship

Ashoka founder, Bill Drayton, first used the term “social entrepreneurship” in the early 1980s as a term to inspire images of social change by confronting old approaches to solving social problems, such as disease, hunger and poverty (Light, 2009). Social entrepreneurship involves the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to capitalize on social change or address a social need (Marir & Marti, 2006). Social entrepreneurship refers to a process of catering to locally existing basic needs that are not addressed by traditional organizations (Mair, 2010). In their analysis of the multiple popular and academic definitions of social entrepreneurship, Brouard and Larivet (2010) define social entrepreneurship as, “a concept that represents a variety of activities and processes to create and sustain social value by using more entrepreneurial innovative approaches and constrained by external environment” (p.50). Social entrepreneurship attracts attention for its emphasis on the ways in which organizations can create social value

(Dempsey & Sanders, 2010). Instead of being focused on profits as business values, social values involve the fulfillment of basic and long-standing needs such as providing food, water, shelter, education and medical services to those members of society who are in need (Cetro & Mill, 2008).

The defining goal of social entrepreneurship, regardless of the financial model, is to effect social change by altering social, economic, and political day-to-day realities on a local level (Mair, 2010). Social entrepreneurship encompasses the activities undertaken to discover, define and develop opportunities to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations (Fayolle & Matlay, 2010). Social entrepreneurship is seen as special because the ideas associated with it have impacted several different industries. This can be seen in conventional global firms like General Electric, General Motors and Office Depot who are pursuing business opportunities that decrease their environmental impact with help from sustainable strategy social venture firms, like GreenOrder, an organization that helps companies gain competitive advantage through environmental innovation (Borgman, 2007). While at present these trends seem to be occurring in their separate realms (public, private, or citizen) the potential exists for social entrepreneurship to blur the established boundaries between these sectors (Mair 2010). Soon elected public officials will be inviting corporate CEO's, policy makers and social entrepreneurs to the table to better address problems at the local, state and national levels.

As Roper and Cheney (2005) note, social entrepreneurs fall into three categories (a) newly emergent CEOs who style themselves and their organizations

as innovative and socially responsible; (b) administrators of non-profits or social advocacy groups who import business and market-based models to improve organizational performance and enhance longevity; and (c) at-large philanthropists who see themselves as catalysts for organizational and society change. The consistent characteristic across various definitions is the focus on social value (Cetro & Miller, 2008). These similarities underlie Dees' (2001, p.2) statement that, "social entrepreneurs are one species in the genus of entrepreneurship." There is an importance to further investigate the individual social entrepreneur whose skills and values are those that drive the organizations to which they found.

The Social Entrepreneur

The social entrepreneur has been defined as any individual who, with his or her entrepreneurial spirit and personality, will act as a change agent and leader to tackle social problems by recognizing new opportunities and finding innovative solutions, and is more concerned with creating social value than financial value (Brouard & Larviet, 2010, p. 40). Ashoka, an organization founded by Bill Drayton that seeks to support social entrepreneurs to successfully found their ventures, defines the job of the social entrepreneur is to: "recognize when part of society is stuck and to provide new ways to get it unstuck. He or she finds what is not working and solves the problem by changing they system, speeding the solution and persuading entire societies to take new steps," (Grenier, 2006, p. 120). These so-called "change makers" are gaining widespread attention and support, such as Nobel Peace Prize awards, establishing courses in business schools, scholarship and

speaking series, events, papers, books, journals and associations, now all reflecting a growing interest in social enterprise (Parkinson & Howorth, 2008).

When defining social entrepreneurs, it is important to explain who they are and what they do. They have been characterized as individual change agents and leaders with a vision for change, possessing an entrepreneurial spirit and personality to recognize new opportunities to tackle social problems to achieve social value creation and sustainability (Brouard & Larivet, 2010; Dees 2001). They adopt a social mission to engage in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning while acting boldly without being limited by the resources currently at hand and exhibiting heightened accountability to constituencies served and for the outcomes created (Brouard & Larivet, 2010; Dees 2001). Social entrepreneurs have the willingness to self-correct, share credit, to break free of established structures, to cross-disciplinary boundaries, to work quietly, and hold a strong ethical drive (Borgman, 2007). For a social entrepreneur, the social mission is fundamental to his or her identity and is what distinguishes him or her from business entrepreneurs. Making a profit, creating wealth, or service the desires of customers may be just part of their businesses mode, but creating social improvement is at the forefront of their mission (Dees, 2001).

Social entrepreneurs are consistently described as visionaries, suggesting that their defining characteristic is that they have a vision, which they pursue relentlessly until that vision has been enacted fulfilled (Grenier, 2010). Bornstein (2010) defined social entrepreneurs as, “people with new ideas to address major problems who are relentless in their pursuit of their visions, people who simply will

not take 'no' for an answer, who will not give up until they have spread their ideas as far as possible," (p. 1). Drayton (2002) states that a social entrepreneur, "exists to make his or her vision society's new pattern. He or she is married to that vision, in sickness or in health, until it has swept the field," (p. 123). The further exploration of visionary leadership as it relates to social entrepreneurs will provide insight into how their personal identity impacts his or her organization.

Visionary Leadership

An organization's identity is often created when leaders set social processes in motion to achieve their vision of what their organization should be like and what they should try and accomplish (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Such leaders may emerge from society to found new organizations that will help carry out their mission, or they may be appointed by others to found and head an organization. Leadership involves influencing people's attitudes and actions to achieve goals or to produce change (Cheney et al., 2011). Hambrick and Mason (1984) were the first to note that organizational strategies reflect the values of top managers. Scott and Lane (2000) argue that organizational identities and managers' identities are more likely to overlap because of their higher visibility, their public promotion of the organization, and their higher level of interaction.

Visionary leadership suggests that leaders are entrepreneurial and that they are involved in setting up new organizations or changing existing organizations. Visionary leadership is a dynamic and interactive process that involves interactions between the leader and his or her followers (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989). Using a theatrical metaphor, Westley & Mintzberg (1998) explain their theory in three

stages: rehearsal, the initial stage where the leader becomes familiar with the field and develops the preliminary idea or vision; performance, where the leader communicates the vision; and audience, the ongoing stage of creating the vision between the leader and the active participants.

Vision is therefore dynamic in that it is constantly being redefined and rearticulated, and is co-created between the leader and his or her members (Westley & Mintzberg, 1998). It is this process of vision as it plays out within social entrepreneurial organizations that is important to study from a communication perspective. In a study exploring the relationship between the vision and actions of a social entrepreneur, Grenier (2010) found that social entrepreneurs behave in ways that were active in pursuing their vision. Social entrepreneurs tended to have a set of values or principles that guided what they did and how they did it (Grenier, 2010). This dynamic nature of vision as it relates to the leader is important when considering how the personal identity of a leader impacts the identity of the organizations of which they lead. The following section explores literature on the impact entrepreneurs make on their organizations' identity.

Founder's Impact on Organizational Identity

Schein (1999) stated that the most salient cultural characteristics of young organizations is that they are created by founders. The personal beliefs, assumptions, and values of the entrepreneur are imposed on the people he or she hires, and if they are successful, they come to a shared vision. The shared beliefs, values and assumptions function as the glue that holds the organization together and become the main source for the organization's identity and a major way of

distinguishing itself from competitors (Schein, 1999). Founders of organizations seek to create their organizational identity to give their firm a sense of purpose and build affiliation among its members.

The impact of an organization's founder on the livelihood of their firm has received very minimal research. An organization's identity is communicated in multiple ways, including the organization's mission statement, goals, values and the statements of organizational members. Scott and Lane (2000) argue that the founder's expression of core organizational values, as well as the actions taken to disseminate these values, influence identity construction. This view of organizational identity portrays entrepreneurs and organizational leaders as the people who make sense of the organization's mission and values and also give sense to its members through strategic communication that distinguishes the organization from others and characterizes the organization overtime (Gioia, Price, Hamilton & Thomas, 2010).

Much of the current research on a founder's impact on his or her organization has focused on family owned businesses. Kelly, Athanassiou, Crittenden (2000) explored the concept of founder centrality and founder legacy centrality and found that the more central the founder is within an organization or the greater the founder's legacy centrality among a firms top management, the greater the influence of the founder will have on the strategic behavior of the firm.

Research Question

Most studies that have looked at the impact that entrepreneurial founders have on their organizations deal mainly with family firms and generational

leadership teams (Kelly et al, 2000; Eddleston, 2008; Zahra, Hayton & Salvato, 2004; Zahra, Hayton, Neubaum, Dirbrell & Craig; 2008). However, little research has been done looking at social entrepreneurs and the identity construction process. Scholars have called for future research on how social entrepreneurs create and manage their ventures to achieve social change. It is evident that social entrepreneurs are becoming a dominant force in the corporate world, changing the ways in which organizations' create profit by establishing the missions of social change. However, research has not yet looked at how these individuals come to identify themselves as social entrepreneurs and how their identity impacts their organization's identity and possibly the identities of their members.

Based on the literature reviewed, the personal vision of a social entrepreneur is rooted into his or her individual identity. It is this vision that drives the identity of an organization. As the field of social entrepreneurship becomes increasingly important, there is a need to understand this under-explored relationship between the entrepreneurs' and organizations' identities. This thesis seeks to understand how individual identity is constructed through socially constructed means and how the personal identity of a social entrepreneur is reflected in his or her organization's identity. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis project is to provide better understanding into how social entrepreneurs are creating organizational identities. Looking through the lens of organizational identity from a communication perspective, this thesis seeks to answer the following research question:

How does the identity of a social entrepreneur inform the identity of his or her organization?

Chapter Four: Methodology

To understand the ways in which social entrepreneurs construct their personal identities and how their identities inform their organizations' identities, it is important to examine the ways in which social entrepreneurs think, recollect, and talk about their experience of founding a social venture. I conducted in-depth interviews of self-defined social entrepreneurs to understand how social entrepreneurs shape their organizations' identities based on their personal identities.

Specifically, I sought to 1.) understand the social entrepreneurs' vision of their organizations, 2.) explore how participants' personally constructed and communicated the identities of their organizations, and 3.) understand how social entrepreneurs believe their identities transformed their organizations and the impact, if any, this may have on the organizations members.

In this section, I explain my rationale for in-depth interviews, introduce the participants and context of this study, describe the procedure for using in-depth interviews, and finally, explain my method of analysis and how my study fits within the broader context of organizational identity.

In-Depth Interview

As a qualitative researcher, I seek to understand the visions and personal experiences of social entrepreneurs from their point of view. Interviews were especially suited to helping me understand the social entrepreneur's own perspective (Lindlof, 1995). Interviews allowed the social entrepreneurs to talk

about their personal identities and how their identities unfold within their organization. As Lidlof and Taylor (2002) note, “qualitative interviews are storytelling zone par excellence in which people are given complete license to craft their selves in language” (p. 173). Gubrium and Holstein (2002) consider the interview to be a contextually based, mutually accomplished story that is reached through collaboration between the researcher and the respondent. Therefore, just to tell what happened is not enough because what happened depends on the negotiations and the other interactive elements that took place between the researcher and the respondent, or how what happened was explained (Fontana & Frey, 2008). The collaboration between the researcher and the participant helps construct an understanding based on the topic at hand.

Specifically, I incorporated in-depth interviews as my methodology to explore the proposed research question because in-depth interviews allow for participants to talk about this process of identity construction as it unfolds within the organizations. I asked open-ended questions, which allowed the interviewees to provide knowledge and personal accounts of their experience. In-depth interviews are a vital method at understanding identity construction because interviews attempt to understand that identity arises out of our interactions with others and is based on language (Allen, 2011). Open-ended interviews also reveal how participants apply their expertise in certain areas of their lives, how they negotiate sensitive issues or impasses, how they have made transitions into different situations in life, and what media they use to build meaning (Lindlof, 1995). By asking social entrepreneurs how they interpret the identities of their

organizations or how their personal identities informs the essence of their organizations, we can understand how the participants create meaning from their everyday experiences of communicating.

Participants and Context

In this study, ten participants were selected using the snowball sampling technique, where participants were accessed, “through referrals made among people who know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 124). The snowball technique is ideal for locating subsequent participants who are different from the first, which helps to increase the samples’ diversity (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). For this research, the sample started with a key participant who met the study’s criteria and was willing to participate and recommend other social entrepreneurs as potential participants. The potential participants initially were contacted by email with a written summary of the purpose of the study and participant information.

All participants were self-identified social entrepreneurs who had previously founded an organization. Table 1 (Appendix B) provides the basic demographic information about each of the interviewee. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, the participants were given the option of having their identity and their organization’s identifying information used in the research. However, if requested, confidentiality was applied to the data (See “Agreement of Consent for Research Participants” form, Appendix A). All ten of the interviewees gave informed consent to participate and to use their identities and their organizations’ identifying information.

Procedures

The social entrepreneurs participated in one in-depth interview, either in-person, or via telephone or Skype, which lasted approximately 1 hour. Ideally, I hoped to have the majority of the interviews in-person, since in-person interviews are known for having more accurate responses from participants, more interaction with the participants, and more thoughtful responses (Shuy, 2002). However, because many of my participants were working social entrepreneurs from around the country, it was difficult to find a time and place that was suitable for both of us. Telephone and Skype interviews were helpful in resolving the issue of location altogether (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

If the interview was conducted in-person, I asked the participants' advice on where we should meet, asking for settings that combined convenience and privacy, such as their offices or homes. Since the interviews were being recorded, it was important to find a place that would be quiet enough so the recording could be listened to again. The personal settings of the participant added value to the research since it allowed me to observe artifacts and mannerisms, or meet people who are mentioned in the interview stories.

The telephone and Skype interviews were conducted using a voice recorder and having the phone call on speaker. The informed consent procedure was discussed on the phone and recorded before the interview began. Telephone interviews, though convenient, had the absence of visual cues that could have benefited the interview.

It was important to allow the participants to build their responses to a rich account of their individual experiences. In order to ensure that the important topics of this study were explored, I created an interview protocol (See Appendix A), or a series of topics and questions to explore during the interview. An interview protocol was suitable for exploring a phenomenon through interviews because little is known on the topic (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). As participants shared their stories, I actively listened to their responses and probed deeper with follow-up questions from the interview protocol. Throughout the process of interviewing, the focus was to obtain information about the individual's vision and how the individual's identity and vision translates into his or her organization. Therefore, discussions surrounding these themes were continually encouraged and explored throughout the process.

After conducting the interviews, the recorded audio was listened to, attending closely to the conversations to pick up certain themes, issues or contradictions. Extensive notes were taken during and after the interview on the topics, themes and points made. Notes were made after the initial notes as themes emerged. Finally, selective clips were transcribed regarding organizational identity, social entrepreneurship, vision and identity construction.

Data Analysis

A textual analysis was conducted on the partial transcripts of the interviews, looking for key themes that were salient to the research questions proposed. Qualitative textual analysis seeks to understand the nature of the communication and "describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages" in order to

better understand the phenomenon of interest (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000). To best get at the meaning of the data acquired, I used the constant comparative method to provide a systematic way to categorize and analyze similar units of meaning to emerge from the research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). I began my data analysis early on in the data collection process as a way to sort, synthesize and understand my data.

Data analysis occurred in several steps of listening to the data, note taking and note-on-note taking on, across and within the data. This is a process I called “notes-on-notes,” because I continuously took notes on the individual interviews, exploring relationships across each interview, and within the notes themselves. This process of note taking is similar to memos, which have been defined as a specialized type of living written record that contains the products for analysis (Straus & Corbin, 2008). Memo writing provides the researcher with an outlet to think about the data throughout the research process. As Straus and Corbin (2008) explain, “memos begin as rather rudimentary representations of thought and grow in complex density, clarity, and accuracy as the research processes” (p. 118). Similar to the memo process, my notes-on-notes process gave me a channel to analyze and re-analyze the interviews and string together thoughts within and across the data. Here, I will present this process in steps.

First, I listened and re-listened to each of the interview recordings from beginning to end, taking notes and writing down initial impressions, interesting points or questions. After each interview I made notes on the notes previously taken, looking for patterns, reoccurring words and ideas that fell in line with the

research questions. Next I analyzed the notes on the data as a whole, taking notes on my overall understanding of what was being communicated. I then asked questions of this holistic understanding to help create the initial categories. By asking questions as they related to individual and organizational identity construction, I was able to identify relationships and patterns within the themes. Passages that supported the initial ideas were transcribed for further analysis.

After I went through the post-interview analysis process with each interview, I began the coding process of the data. Through the “notes-on-notes” process of each interview, I generated a list of 36 initial categories. I then returned to the selective interview transcriptions and identified passages that supported the initial categories. I compared the passages against one another, looking for relationships, similarities and dissimilarities. After this process, I was able to collapse the initial 36 categories into 10 themes. I next looked at the relationships among the condensed themes, looking again for further similarities and dissimilarities until I was able to refine them into six major themes fall into two broad categories which address the research question.

The following sections are the results of the emergent ideas, categories, and themes, revealing the ongoing process of individual identity construction and organizational identity as it plays out in social entrepreneurial enterprises.

Chapter Five: Results

Based on the results from the interviews, I decided to break the results section into two sub-questions to provide a more thorough answer to the research question: “how do social entrepreneurs impact their organizations’ identities?” First, I looked at how the participants defined social entrepreneurship as a way of understanding how the participants used their definitions to construct their personal identities. Next, I looked at the ways the participants impacted their organization’s identities through the management of their organizations’ cultures. The participants’ accounts fell in line with the functional use of culture by leaders as a way to manage an organization. The following sections explore these two sub-questions further.

Part One: Social Entrepreneur Identity Construction

In order to first understand how the social entrepreneurs’ construct their individual identities, it is important to understand how they define and talk about social entrepreneurship and use these discourses to construct and negotiate their personal identities. From my analysis, I found two primary sources of identity construction: the way participants defined social entrepreneurship and the characteristics they associated with social entrepreneurs.

Theme One: Defining Social Entrepreneurship

From the interviews, two primary themes emerged from how participants’ defined social entrepreneurship. First, the participants described the process of social entrepreneurship as a balancing act, teetering between both social and

business outcomes. Second, the participants defined social entrepreneurship as a new organizational form that transcends the current social/non profit and business/for profit dichotomies to create more suitable organization for impactful change. This transcendent view of social entrepreneurship provides a strong source of identity construction for social entrepreneurs to provide a framework for social enterprise and a better understanding to who social entrepreneurs are and what they do. The following sections explore these themes in more detail.

The Relationship between Economic and Social Outcomes

First, participants' definitions suggest that understanding that social entrepreneurship is the process of creating an enterprise that incorporates both social and economic objectives. Deanna describes social entrepreneurship as "having two bottom lines." Here we see an example of the social and profit centered ideals intersecting in meaningful ways for Deanna. Recognizing the presence of "two bottom lines" requires an organization to not only be fiscally responsible and viable, but also to create a social benefit that is critically aligned and connected to the mission of the organization.

David develops this idea of balance between the social and the business models in his definition:

What it means to be a social entrepreneur or what it means to achieve social enterprise is, for me, means that you have achieved a balance between business and service and you have done so in a way that you have created a net asset to the community in the form of a product or a service that is helping individuals that need that help and you are leveraging a business to achieve that end.

David references to it as a balancing act, where the social enterprise's purpose is to fulfill both a social and business mission, provides an example of the how dynamic and complex these discourses are when they meet and intersect. Here, the description of "balance" between service and business falls in line with Roper and Cheney's (2005) challenge with social entrepreneurship because it is a term that combines two concepts that do not naturally fit together: social and entrepreneurship. From these accounts, it is apparent that social entrepreneurship is multilayered, making it difficult to easily define.

However, David's description of balance is different from current academic research, which refers to social entrepreneurship as the opportunity to "blur the established boundaries between public, private, or citizen sectors" (Mair, 2010). While blurring provides the imagery of mixing both all sectors together; 'balancing', as described by David, gives the participants the language to create social value by utilizing both business and non-profit models. This reference to the language of 'social entrepreneurship' is similar to Dees' (1998) essay, which explains that, "the new language helps broaden the playing field" (p. 1). For Dees (1998), the language of social entrepreneurship implies a hybrid approach to finding the most effective methods of serving social missions. Therefore, the language of social entrepreneurship grants permission to individuals who identify as social entrepreneurs to go ahead and create hybrid forms of organizations that will help them achieve their mission.

Another way participants defined social entrepreneurship was defining it as a process where the central focus is the social mission, and the economic mission being a means to an end. John refers to this idea when he says:

An entrepreneur who wants to start an organization that has a focus on solving a social problem, a problem that society faces, as opposed to starting an organization to make money... starting an organization to do something else. It's about changing a society.

Here, we can see how John is focused on the social mission rather than the economic outcomes. To John, it's more than just starting an organization with 'two bottom lines' like Deanna or 'balancing between business and service' like David, but it is about 'changing a society.' John's definition, and the definitions of other participants, suggest that social entrepreneurs are society's problem solvers who create organizations with intentions other than only creating profit. These accounts provided insight that social entrepreneurship is more than just a balancing act between the social/non-profit sector and the business/for-profit sector, but that it transcends this dichotomy to create an organizational form that allows for more impactful change. It is clear that when defining social entrepreneurship, it was important to participants to discuss the mission to create social value as a key to starting a social venture. This theme is an example to how social entrepreneurs draw upon discourses to define their profession and construct their identities. Since the participants involved in this research are self-defined social entrepreneurs, the process of communicating their definition of social entrepreneurship and its role within society helped the participants construct their identities. Participants' definitions of social entrepreneurship revealed their understanding of the definitional issues of their field.

Stemming from this notion of balance, the participants' accounts provided a framework to understanding social entrepreneurship not as an extension or several of the current for-profit or non-profit business models, but as a new organizational form. Combining social and economic approaches for social value creation poses a unique set of management opportunities and challenges for social entrepreneurs. For example, the tension for the social entrepreneur to draw on both for-profit and non-profit organizational skills and demonstrate his or her competence and passion for both could be exhausting and frustrating. However, instead of situating social entrepreneurship as both of these organizational forms, participants defined social entrepreneurship as a new organizational form that takes specific aspects from for-profit and non-profit organizational forms to create social value. Participants' interviews revealed this transcended view of social entrepreneurship, where instead of fitting within the predetermined molds of for-profit or non-profit, social entrepreneurship transcends above these structures in a new organizational form, which they believe to be much more suitable for creating social value.

This theme provides the first part of the definition of social entrepreneurship: that it transcends current organizational forms to create a new form of enterprise. The second part of the definition explains how this new organizational form is better at creating change and impacting society than what our current structures are doing.

Transcendent View to Create Impactful Change

Emerging from the interviews was this conscious understanding that social entrepreneurship was neither a non-profit and for-profit structure, but beyond

existing structures. Some respondents referred to social enterprises as the next extension of non-profit's work in finding means to solving society's largest issues. Many participants discussed their skepticisms about the ability of governments and businesses to meaningfully address the pressing social problems, such as poverty, education and environment. From this concern stemmed the need for newer models and organizational forms that can more appropriately address these issues.

For example, Raj stated, "I think its kind of the next iteration of things about solution building... Its just an extension overtime as people think about solving problems more expansively or find scalable solutions." Raj's is referring to the fact that society's current systems have become outdated and that social change needs to take place outside of the non profit, business and government sectors and thrive in a new institution transcends above all three of the established system. Therefore, social entrepreneurship here is the 'next extension' of social systems. As we move through time, a new model may fill social entrepreneurs' shoes, but for now, it is the way solution building should be viewed.

John expanded on this definition by describing his views on the society's current state:

I think that one of our real motivations for social entrepreneurship... is just the acknowledgement that we have all these social problems that are reaching a crisis point and we don't seem to be making a lot of progress towards solving them... so people want to dive in and figure out what they can do to help and I think entrepreneurship is just one of the avenues that people can use to try and make big changes.

For John, what is happening is that people from all walks of life and in different life situations (business people, college students, the newly employed) are facing a reality that tried-and-true ways of solving social problems (public education,

healthcare) are not allowing society to ‘make a lot of progress toward solving them.’ David echoed John’s sentiments as well when he stated, “I think people are starting to realize that we need a new approach to how we take care of our society... and social enterprise, since it has sustainability built into it... is providing a tangible path.” This skepticism of the current social structures and the perspective that there is a need for a ‘new approach to how we take care of our society’ adds legitimacy and momentum to the social enterprise movement. Therefore, social entrepreneurship is being appropriated as a mechanism to impact change and allow people to ‘dive in and figure out what they can do to help.’ Here, social enterprise transcends the balance between the social and economic missions because it the new answer to solving social issues.

This result is similar to the research done by Tracey, Phillips and Jarvis (2011) on institutional entrepreneurship, which explored how an entrepreneur combines aspects of already established institutions to create a new type of organization, “underpinned by a new, hybrid logic” (p. 60). Here, social entrepreneurs create new organizational formations through the process of bridging aspects of current institutions. This idea of institutional entrepreneurship provides an understanding to how social entrepreneurs combine aspects of for-profit and non-profits that they believe are most the suitable to create a new organization that is a fundamentally new approach to solving social issues, transcending what the current systems are already doing.

Participants also incorporated differentiation strategies in their definitions when they compared social entrepreneurship to non-profits. These strategies

allowed for participants to articulate what social enterprise was by explaining what it was not. Deanna recollected on her personal experience working in the non-profit sector and her frustrations with the “lax” attitude many people in that field have toward impacting change, which she feels is the largest difference between social entrepreneurship and non-profit. She stated:

And I get immensely frustrated with that being the way that people come into this [non-profit] work. So to just be thinking about “lets just bandage it up a little bit” as opposed to, “no lets actually get at the crucial components of what makes this and why this is not working.” It’s just a different way of looking at things.

Here we can see how Deanna defines social enterprise by how it does what non-profit work does not. To her, social enterprise explores the ‘crucial components’ of social issues to find solutions, where non-profit work just ‘bandages it up.’ John echoed Deanna’s comments when he talked about his experience starting his social enterprise, Rocketship Education. John came from the for-profit sector prior to founding his organization. He stated:

Rocketship is set up to be very scalable and ambitious in impact to have on a lot of kids... and I feel that the non-profit world is not actually conducive to that... it is not set up too well for people to want to grow because most of the people on the list have failed versus the impact they may have had.

John differentiated his social enterprise from non-profits by the scalable business model he uses, which he felt non-profits are not conducive to. Many of the participants talked about their personal frustrations with the social systems such as education or poverty, and made it their mission to solve these issues by creating social value. In order to sustain the mission of the organization, social enterprises must produce financial resources in the form of economic outcomes. These

processes, which many of the participants referred to as ‘scalable models’ makes social enterprise distinct from other organizational forms.

However it is interesting to note that when defining social entrepreneurship, none of the participants took the time to describe how social enterprise differs from contemporary business. This may be due to the fact that social entrepreneurs and non-profit practitioners both seek the same outcome to create social value.

However, social entrepreneurs see profits as a means to an end, while businesses see it as an outcome (Dees, 1998). Dey (2006) explores these differences in an essay exploring the popular rhetoric surrounding social entrepreneurship and explains that profit takes on an altruistic, positive connotation when it is explained in social enterprises. He explains that in social enterprises, profit gets, “envisioned as a device for achieving particular moral ends” (133). As long as the social entrepreneur “resists the temptation of using it for selfish ends,” profit can be seen as social an outcome versus an economic outcome (Dey, 2006, 133). This distinction between social entrepreneurship and for-profit businesses is interesting because it, “suggests a superiority of social entrepreneurs that makes us so effectively believe that their work... gets to serve higher purposes” (Dey, 2006, 133). It could be argued that this transcendent view of social entrepreneurship that emerged from the interviews also creates a superiority complex. They are neither a non-profit organization or for-profit, but are able to do similar work but and create the same outcomes.

These results provide an understanding to the way social entrepreneurs use their definitions of social entrepreneurship to construct an identity that fits within

this movement. Participants defined social entrepreneurship and social enterprise as the balance between business and social sectors, where both sides lean on each other to create impactful social change. However, many of the accounts alluded to the view that social enterprise transcended this relationship between non-profit and for-profit work, creating its own organizational form to work within. Here, social enterprise has a very dynamic and difficult definition to explicate because of its many intersecting parts. Participants were able to provide definitions by differentiating social enterprise from what it was not. The accounts referenced that social entrepreneurship did not belong in the non-profit sector because it has the ability impact to change versus 'bandaging' social issues. Social entrepreneurship also allows for a model for which entrepreneurs have the incentive to grow in a sustainable way, furthering their impactful on changing society.

It is important to understand the ways the participants define social entrepreneurship because all of the interviewees personally identify as social entrepreneurs. As the participants construct their definition of social enterprise, they are situating themselves within this field, providing a basis for identity construction. This reflects the social constructionists' view of identity construction because it looks at discourse and talk as a means to construct a worldview and that the self is constructed through various relational and linguistic processes (Allen, 2011). Therefore, the participants work out their own definitions of social entrepreneurship from their personal experiences and the broader discourse and then apply them to their identities.

The next section explores the characteristics and personality traits that participants use to describe social entrepreneurs.

Theme Two: Traits & Characteristics of the Social Entrepreneur

Beyond the enterprise of social entrepreneurship, the participants also provided accounts and personal descriptions that referred to the traits and characteristics that claim distinctiveness of the social entrepreneur. One of the ways participants defined themselves was as entrepreneurial. The participants' saw it as just who they are so they do not have to think about their intentions in creating a social enterprise. For example, Deanna describes herself as a chronic founder because her professional background of starting up many different non-profit and social enterprises. She defined a chronic founder as:

I think a lot of people will just see problems, where I really see them as opportunities. As a result, I end up founding a lot of really different things... so, just the email I got on the elevator down was about doing something here about Autism, and I know nothing about Autism... but I am going to be doing an Autism Awareness Day at the firm... so, again it's a very small example but its that chronic founder syndrome thing I have... where other people I think would just say, "oh, I'll just Google it" ... no, I am like "lets make a whole 500 people program about it in three weeks from now."

Here, Deanna reiterates the 'don't think, just do' mentality, where there is no real thought process that goes into creating something, as large as a social enterprise or as little as an Autism Awareness Day. Deanna's comment also draws on this idea of repetitively founding organizations that impact change. Here, Deanna thinks of the rewards of impact over the risk involved in starting an enterprise, a trait that she felt differentiates her from others. These social entrepreneurs in this study also

view themselves as ‘chronic founders,’ where their inhibited views of risk give them the confidence to establish organizations that can increase change.

The second character trait to emerge from the interviews was the visionary aspect of social entrepreneurs. It became very apparent throughout the interviews that the participants were passionate about their work, establishing enterprises that were driven by their mission to create change. Just by explaining their organizations goals, “To eliminate the achievement gap in our lifetimes” (John), “To support the food system and hopefully make an impact nationally and internationally, building one institution at a time” (Will), “to start a number of college prep urban public boarding schools for at risk children,” (Raj), and “to eradicate poverty,” (Deanna), the participants’ provide an example of how their overall goal for their organization was larger than the organization itself. Here we can see how the mission to impact change is in all aspects of the organization, especially the organization’s goals.

When I asked the participants to describe themselves, many used visionary adjectives. However, it is evident that there is a tension between wanting to be recognized as a visionary and to not wanting to be recognized. For example, David explained how others have described him:

I have for better or worse been described as visionary... you know, kind of figuring things out as I go along – and I think that that can be attributed to the initial success of this effort is that I had a larger vision that was shared by other members of the community, so I had some support, and I was comfortable taking it and running with it without being entirely sure what I was going and how I was going to get there. And I think that is the definition, to a certain extent, of entrepreneurship.

Here David begins his answer with ‘for better or worse,’ suggesting that he does not know if being defined as a visionary is a positive or negative quality about himself.

Deanna also suggests this tension of being labeled as a visionary where she justifies using the term as an adjective:

I think one of the things, and I again, I feel that is a true blessing, is that I am able to see some things that don't exist, so I don't know what you would call that. This again, sounds really boastful, but a visionary is how you would encapsulate that... because I can often see things that others can't... and I think it wasn't until the last couple of years that I realized that this was a trait that a lot of others didn't have, or that's not what everybody else does.

These feelings of justifying using terms like 'visionary' is interesting because social entrepreneurs defined as visionary leaders in popular discourse, such as being here to, "make his or her vision society's new pattern" (Drayton, 2002, p. 123). However, David and Deanna's humble accounts of feeling visionary give the impression that they do not see their work to be as profound as others may.

The final character trait to emerge from the interviews was this idea that social entrepreneurs are ambitious and admit about their goals, portraying an ambitious personality. In many of the interviews, participants explained their motivation to pursue their social enterprise. For example, Will, who established an urban farming system with the goal to end world hunger, explained what motivates him to stay committed to his goal, is, "if someone tells me 'you can't do this,' I get energized. That is what energizes me, the challenges that are presented when you are trying to grow food. I have to repeat that fact over and over and over again to keep me going." Will, like many of the other accounts, explains this shared need to prove the naysayers wrong. Raj's reiterates this idea of doing what others think cannot happen when he said:

I am passionate about college basketball, the Green Bay Packers football, my wife, my daughter, changing the world, doing things that people tell me can't

be done, and educating children because it is the loan lever that has gotten more people out of poverty than any other mechanism in our world.

Here Raj describes his go-getter personality as one of his passions and equates this passion of doing things that people say cannot be done up closely to his passion for his family. These accounts are examples of how closely this work is aligned with social entrepreneurs personality, that it is rooted to their being.

These accounts paint a picture of a highly specialized group of heroic individuals who use innovation to create social change. Participants' in this study characterized social entrepreneurs as entrepreneurial, visionary and ambitious. Similarly, much of the social entrepreneurship literature focuses on these characteristics of the individual social entrepreneurs (Bornstein, 2007; Drayton, 2002; Dey, 2006; Dees, 2001; Light, 2009; Brouard & Larivet, 2010, Thompson et al., 2000). This finding is similar to Dey (2006) who found that, "social entrepreneurship is largely envisioned through a single person, respectively his/her particularities" (134). Stories about individuals identified as social entrepreneurs are promoted by a number of influential organizations, such as Ashoka, the Skoll Foundation, and the Schwab Foundation, furthering the altruistic and passionate characteristics associated with social entrepreneurs. For example, in his book *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*, Bornstein (2004) describes everyone having the potential to, "change the world" and this "change-maker" rhetoric has been re-appropriated by organizations, like Ashoka, to help describe social entrepreneurs. This discourse is what individuals identified as social entrepreneurs draw from when they are constructing their identity.

However, it is interesting to look the consequences of characterizing social entrepreneurs in the way popular discourse has. Dey (2006) explains that through the use of language, it implies that social entrepreneurship is only possible for an individual who possesses these characteristics. Therefore, using descriptions that make social entrepreneurs 'heroic' may marginalize individuals who may not feel they possess the same qualities. Light (2006) described the process of focusing only on individual social entrepreneurs' success as detrimental because it limits the ability for us to learn from the processes of entrepreneurial failure. This is interesting because there is more emphasis on the person instead of the organization or model when we talk about solving social issues. There is the possibility to lose sight of the mission to change versus the recognition of being a "change maker."

Mirroring academic literature, the definitions of social entrepreneurship focused more on the individual characteristics of the social entrepreneur than the organization and its processes. This concept is further explored in the next section when participants' explain how they personally became the identity of their organization, or synonymous with the identities of their organization.

Theme Three: Becoming the 'Face of the Organization'

During the interviews, many of the participants talked about their role as the founder and the impact it has had on their organization's identity. Specifically, participants talked about how their identities became synonymous with their organization's identities, regardless if they wanted that to happen or not. For some, it was strategic in the way they wanted to brand their organization. For example,

Will stated, "I am the face of Growing Power... I will talk to all people around the country. That's what I do and that's how I spread the word... and [Growing Power] needs to leverage me until they cannot leverage me anymore." For Growing Power, it is strategic to use Will as the recognizable social entrepreneur and spokesperson for the organization to maintain their brand. This is interesting because Will is strategically remaining the recognizable face of his social enterprise and he understands his influence and how he can be leveraged in a way for his organization to receive resources, such as grants or media exposure. However, it is important to question this strategy and what could happen to the organization if and when Will is no longer a part of it.

Steve talked about a similar experience when he saw himself becoming the brand for his organization. Steve's accounts of the early years of founding Sprinklr, a student-talent training program, speaks to Will's feelings of being synonymous with the organization. He stated:

I mean people were calling me Steve Sprinklr; it certainly became my last name. So it wasn't really even a role, it was like I was the identity. And when you are launching a company you are ideally out there pitching everywhere, so you are the face that people equate to the organization and especially at the time that we were launching, I was being asked to speak at a lot of different events... and so it was almost like we [the organization and I] were one in the same... I represented it. So I realized early on in my career that the number one thing that I needed to do was get out of the way of it so that people could really see it was an organization.

Here we can see how Steve and his organization were synonymous, so much so that others changed his name to reflect this connection. As 'Steve Sprinklr,' Steve was the recognizable face of his organization and the spokesperson of its social value. Steve's account represents the idea of personal branding, which suggests that

individuals can employ this concept of self-packaging as a means to succeed (Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005). During the start-up process, Steve used his identity to pitch to potential partners or speak at different events as a way to get the word out. Dacin et al. (2011) explain this process of telling and retelling the initial story of success as an important tactic in maintaining brand equity with the social entrepreneurial community.

Steve's accounts are also interesting because he was aware of his identity's impact on Sprinklr and made a conscious decision to 'get out of the way' so that the organization's brand could grow independently from his personal brand. Melissa also shared this knowledge of how her identity was impacting her organization. She too made conscious and strategic efforts to make sure that her identity did not stay the organization's identity for long:

Part of what I worked on doing in terms of creating an organization that would be sustainable was dissecting myself from the identity somewhat and being able to make the identity big enough to include other people and also to exist without me present day-to-day on the staff. And a lot of founders don't ever make that transition... so when they leave, their organization dies because the identity of the organization is so wholly wrapped up in the founder.

Here we can see how Melissa made the conscious decision to "dissect" herself from her organization's identity in order to benefit her organization. To Melissa, it was important that her organization's identity was larger than her so that others could identify with its message. She also touches on the issue of a founder's transition and the impact that can have on an organization.

These results provide an understanding that during the start-up phase of their social enterprise, participants used their personal identities and visions to

construct their organizations' identities. Through the process of telling the story of the organization, talking to potential funders, customers, or members, participants spoke about how their identities and vision for social change became one and the same with the goals of their organizations. These results are similar to personal branding research where people and their careers are marketed and become appropriated concepts of products, which are used to gain entry into a market (Lair et al., 2005). However, these results add to research on social entrepreneurship and personal branding because a few of the participants were conscious of this process of becoming their organizations' identities. This is interesting because regardless if they put emphasis on correcting this phenomenon, the equivalence was still there. The social entrepreneurs utilized their visions of social change that were inherent in their identities to create organizations to make their visions are reality.

Therefore, the identities of the participants impacted their organizations' identities by becoming intertwined as one. As previous research explains, much of the focus on social entrepreneurship is on the altruistic individuals who sustain their social mission despite the obstacles. These results also offered insight into the impact these participants had on their organizations' cultures and identities. The next section explores the way the participants' intentionally built and managed their organizations' cultures to reflect their identities.

Part Two: Managing the Culture and Identity

This section looks at how the personal identities of social entrepreneurs impacted their organizations' identities. Based on the personal accounts from the interviews, it is clear that participants managed the culture of their organizations in

strategic ways to reflect their individual identities. This process of culture management helps build a strong identity for the social enterprise and crystallizes a shared meaning among organizational members. From the participant's personal accounts, three primary themes emerged: ideology; language, rites, rituals and ceremonies; and storytelling.

Theme One: Managing Culture through Personal Ideology

The social entrepreneurs who were involved in this study saw it as their role to create a culture that would help them share their strong social missions with others. Since many of these entrepreneurs were in the process of creating new organizational forms to impact change, they felt strongly about bringing people onboard who shared this same worldview. John talked about this shared ideology when he stated:

One, I built an organization not just to close the achievement gap for a school or two, but for thousands of schools. That was a unique perspective in this industry that you could do that, people thought that it was really crazy. Once you take that perspective, it causes the entire organization to have to plan for that. You want people who think differently; you recruit a different person who wants that. It shapes the culture of the organization to kind of have a growth and a scale mindset. I think the second thing that was a pretty unique contribution was this idea that you could think differently about what a school was for kids differently and for teachers differently through this use of this learning lab idea. And if that had some academic and financial advances. That structural innovation was incredibly important and allowed these things to happen."

To John, he found it extremely important to find organizational members who shared his same 'crazy' vision to create change in the public education sector. What John is really doing is finding people who share his same ideology, or the shared and emotionally charged belief system (Trice and Beyers, 1993). Since his organization was using a model that was innovative and different from what others have used, it

was important for John to find the right people who shared his same passions to create social change is very. This process is called socialization, where members learn the norms, values, and skills needed to perform a certain role and perform a certain function within an organization (Cheney et al., 2011). However, this view of socialization ignores that organizational members are active in creating, interpreting and making sense of their world, where they are instrumental in creating and re-creating cultures overtime (Cheney et al., 2011).

John's accounts mirror the functionalist perspective of culture, which assumes that culture is something that an organization has as a tool to accomplish objectives, emphasizing the instrumentality of culture and ignoring the practical utility that culture could have (Cheney et al., 2011). From this perspective, the leader's or founder's vision provides the substance for the organizational culture. Good leaders create and shape their organizations' cultures by embedding their assumptions in missions, goals, structures, and work procedures (Cheney et al., 2011). Here we can see John's impact on how his organization defines and solves social problems, including the restructuring of the educational model by incorporating the learning lab idea, to how he recruits members who "think differently." By using these strategic processes, John's personal mission to create social value is therefore embedded in the culture of his organization.

This functionalist view of culture was also seen when participants' talked about integrating the social mission within the organization. Desiree, the co-founder of Give Forward, a social enterprise that provides personal websites to friends and family who are looking for a way to help a loved one in need, talked a lot about how

the mission to create social value impacts all levels of her organization. She explained:

We have an internal mantra that is ‘create unexpected joy.’ And that really permeates every single little thing that we do. From how we treat our users and the people on our site to really what Give Forward does in practice... and we keep that in the back of our minds when we think of new products, new features, new ways of interacting with our users when we are determining whether or not to run ads on our site, and I think this is really the compose for which we direct our decisions.

Here we can see how Desiree incorporates her ideology to ‘create unexpected joy’ in all aspects of her organization. Desiree’s ideology goes beyond just her organization and its members, and also reaches her users and the beneficiaries of Give Forward.

Theme Two: Managing Culture and Identity through Rituals & Ceremonies

Another important impact that the participants had on their organizations were the rites, rituals, and ceremonies they established. Rites and ceremonies convey who the organization is, where it belongs, where it came from, and where the organization is heading (Cheney et al., 2011). Participants spoke about the multiple ways they used rituals to reinforce the organization’s history and their mission to impact change, such as annual award ceremonies (John), monthly meetings with organizational members (Steve), and fun, internal recognition awards (Desiree). Raj, who co-founded The Seed Foundation, a new education model incorporating boarding schools within inner-city neighborhoods, talked about Founder’s Day within his organization:

We have this thing called Founder’s Day in each of the schools, which is a day that we celebrate, not as much the founders, but rather it’s a day that we celebrate the adults on campus. Everyone who has worked there [the schools] for at least four years gets a chair- it’s literally a really nice chair with the logo on it. And on that day you are recognized in front of the whole

faculty, staff, and students by one of your colleagues or your boss, and they tell a couple of stories about you... that day also happens to be the day that both Eric and I speak and we are able to once again to convey the story about SEED. I joke around every year, I say, 'for those of you who have been around here for a long time, I bet you can recite this whole story with me.' That's the point. I mean, for everyone to understand the vision, they have to understand the underlying myth... myth is really a shared set of stories and beliefs. And that is really what we are trying to do and convey, one-on-one, one-on-two, one-on-two hundred.

Here we see an example of how ceremonies and rites can be used to enhance the status and identities of social entrepreneurs (Trice and Beyer, 1993). Founder's Day within the SEED Foundation was designed to celebrate the achievements of the success of the founder's through the rites of passage ceremony of the 'adults on campus.' The process of awarding those legacy members of Seed and then telling the organization's founding story is a way for Raj and his co-founder to bind his organization together around what is special and unique to SEED.

In this study the participants are explaining strategic ways to foster employee identification through the use of rituals, rites and mythology. Organizational identification occurs, "when members identify with their workplace, define themselves in terms of the organization; they internalize its mission, ideology, and values, and they adopt its contemporary way of doing things" (Cheney et al., 2011).

Theme Three: Managing Culture & Identity through Storytelling

The final theme that came through in the interviews was the emphasis social entrepreneurs placed on telling their organizations stories as a tool to communicate the social mission. A storytelling organization has been defined as, "a collective system in which the performance of stories is a key part of members' sense making

and a means to allow them to supplement individuals memories with institutional memory” (Boje, 2008, p. 1). These stories simultaneously convey information about heroes and villains, projects and goals, successes and failures (Cheney et al., 2011). These results show how social entrepreneurs use storytelling as a tactic to communicate their social mission and share it with their members.

Raj reflected on this idea of storytelling when he stated, “there is power of stories and the power of the individual one-on-one or one-on-ten conversations that is much more powerful than any other media to convey a mission.” He went on further to explain the storytelling power:

I find that the most significant way to communicate is really by us walking around, by us talking to everyone, by us making sure that people understand what our intentions were in setting up these schools, in setting up these programs. We try as much as possible that people can actually talk to us, learn from us, learn from the founding story what were our assumptions, what we thought our principles were behind what we need every school to operate and so on.

For Raj, the process of storytelling is a means for him to express the intentions and social goals of his organization in a way that others will understand and learn from his experience. For Raj’s organization, they depend on storytelling as a way to communicate their social vision because it seems to be much more impactful than traditional media.

Social entrepreneurs’ strategic use of storytelling in this study provides an example of the way they communicate their significance within their organization. The personal accounts from this study mirror Dacin et al. (2011) and Dey’s (2006) beliefs that through the telling and re-telling of stories about social entrepreneurs and their creation of social value, social entrepreneurs perpetuate a certain

ideology. From the personal accounts, it is clear that the participants used storytelling as a way to explain who they are why they matter within their organization. This is interesting because social entrepreneurs are characterized as altruistic in their activities, placing social values above profit (Dees, 2001) but still look to be recognized by their organizations' members and others. This tension for doing work altruistically while also seeking recognition is one that deems further investigation.

While Raj saw it as the founder's role to communicate the mission of the organization, James talked about how there are many storytellers within his organization, Sweet Water:

My role is a storyteller... I didn't say I was the storyteller; I am a storyteller, that is a very important distinction. ... and there are different levels of storytelling, with different sizes of audiences and different information. So I am an elder storyteller who has been given the privilege because of my social security and my pension to spend most of my days learning about what is going on at Sweet Water and sharing the story. Now someone who has two children and a job and volunteers at Sweet Water three times a week is not going to be a storyteller like I am.

For James, storytelling is a shared job among Sweet Water's members. It is interesting that James makes this distinction very clear in his explanation, showing how important storytelling is on all levels at Sweet Water. However, James distinguishes the degrees of storytellers by the experience they have within Sweet Water. Since James is the founder of Sweet Water he is able to tell a more well rounded story than a volunteer may be able to tell. This aspect of storytelling is interesting within a social enterprise because of the degrees or 'levels' of members. Due to their models, social enterprises tend to have full-time, part-time and volunteer members, who each impact the organization and its success. However,

from James' perspective, the more socialized an individual is with the organization, the better he or she will be at telling that organizations story.

Another form of storytelling that came through in the participants' accounts was the oral history passed down within the organizations. For example, Deanna told a story about her visiting the organization she had founded but had transitioned out of to move onto a new project. While she was visiting family in New York City, she wanted to make an impromptu visit to see what had changed. While she was walking the hall, a student turned the corner and stopped in her tracks. She exclaimed:

'You're Deanna!' and I was like, 'Yes, I am sorry, have we met before?' and she was like, 'No, no, no. You are Deanna Sign, you are blah blah blah'... and she went through this whole litany of things that she knew about me and about my time there... then she took me upstairs [to the offices] and they had a picture of me up in the office, and all of them had these stories that I didn't even remember, that had been passed down in some of the oral history of the organization... I just thought that was cool.

Here we can see an example of how through the telling and retelling of stories within the organization, the organizations begin to perpetuate a particular set of beliefs about the nature of their founders and the particular ideology for the organizations. These accounts provide examples of a powerful way storytelling is used by social entrepreneurs to share the mission of the organization and the process of social value creation. Communicating the organization's mission in story form is a strategic way social entrepreneurs strengthen ties within the organization and reinforce a feeling of community among members (Cheney et al., 2011).

Stories function to manage meaning within the social enterprises and build identification among members. From the interviews we can see how stories

function to frame events in terms of the organizations values and expectations (Brown, 1990). Within social enterprises, social entrepreneurs use stories as a way to convey the importance of social value creation over profit outcomes. Stories function as points of identification for members because they point out the reasons an organization and its members are special and unique (Brown, 1990). As new organizational forms, social enterprises are special and unique because of their processes of combining social and profit outcomes to create social value. Sharing these characteristics through story helps differentiate it from the other and to increase commitment of members toward the organization (Brown, 1990). The stories shared in the participants' accounts provide insight regarding their importance in starting and developing a social enterprise and communicating the values and beliefs associated with it.

In summary, social entrepreneurs individual identities do have a large impact on their organizations' identities. First, social entrepreneurs become the focus of their organization, of sustaining their mission by applying business models to social issues. Due to this phenomenon, the social entrepreneurs become synonymous with their organizations' identities. Their impact is also seen in their strategic management of their organizations' culture through the process of employee identification and storytelling. These results fill the voids in social entrepreneurship research, identity construction research within new organizational forms, and organizational identity and culture management. The next section explores the ways this study holds implications for theories of social construction of identity, organizational identity and culture.

Chapter Six: Discussion of Findings & Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to understand the ways social entrepreneurs' identities inform their organizations' identities. Specifically, this study examined the way participants' constructed their identities as social entrepreneurs and how their individual identities informed their organizations' identities. Through reviewing the literature for this thesis, it is clear there is more research needed to understand the parallel between the construction of individual identities and the construction of organizations' identities within social enterprises. Individuals use competing, fragmented and contradictory discourses to socially construct their identities to distinguish themselves from other individuals (Allen, 2011; Tracy & Trethewey, 2005). Similarly, modern organizations construct identities to gain attention in the marketplace and differentiate themselves from their competitors (Whetten, 2006; Kuhn, 1997). While most research looking at the impact founders have on their organizations deals mainly with family firms (Kelly et al., 2000; Eddleson, 2008; Zahra et al., 2008; Schein, 1999), researchers have yet to explore how social entrepreneurs' missions and visions inform their organizations' mission. This study examined how various discourses impact how participants constructed their social entrepreneur identities and how they personally impacted their organizations' identities through the creation and management of culture. In the interviews, several key insights were identified that enrich the understanding of an entrepreneurs' impact on their organizations' cultures and identities.

In this last chapter, I review the findings of this study, emphasizing the significant ways in which this study contributes to the understanding of the social construction of identity, organizational culture, and organizational identity. First, I provide a summary of findings, which helps answer the research question: “how does the identity of a social entrepreneur inform the identity of his or her organization?” After summarizing my findings, I examine the ways in which the findings contribute to our theoretical understanding of individual and organizational identity construction and managing organizational culture. Next, I suggest ways the results of this study could be pragmatically applied to organizational processes by social entrepreneurs. Finally, to conclude the chapter, I offer the implications of this study and suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

Since social entrepreneurs have been characterized for their strong vision to change social ills, it was important to explore how their personal visions and identities were transformed onto their organizations. From the interviews, I found that social entrepreneurs construct their identities based on their personal definitions of social entrepreneurship, which they situate themselves within.

However, exploring the ways the identity construction process of social entrepreneurs’ impacts the institution of social entrepreneurship warrants further discussion. Many of the participants interviewed explained their irritation and aggravation with the efforts of the government and social sectors, which they view as inefficient and ineffective or falling short of expectations. Therefore, social entrepreneurs see themselves as the risk takers who defy the odds by creating a

new models and new organizations to create social value. Social entrepreneurs and the associations that help fund them, such as Ashoka and Skoll, are seen as creating a hierarchy within the social sector, where social entrepreneurs, because of the way they described themselves (visionary, ambitious, entrepreneurial), and non profit organizations as band aids to social issues. This perspective creates an interesting tension within the social sector that can be viewed as counterproductive since both are working toward the same goals.

By this positioning social entrepreneurship as a higher, more sophisticated organizational form in the social sector, individuals who identify as social entrepreneurs take on a heroic self-image where they are acknowledged as rare breeds of leaders (Dees, 1998) who are “changing the world” (Bornstein, 2007). By characterizing social entrepreneurs as entrepreneurial, ambitious and visionary, and situating themselves within this narrowly defined group of individuals, the participants in this study recreate a cult of personality traits that focus on individual traits that are less about their ability to create change in society and more about their branding ability. This process also marginalizes those who may not fit this specific mold but may be motivated to create change as well. Light’s (2006) essay on reshaping social entrepreneurship advocates for a new approach to understanding social entrepreneurship, arguing that by focusing too much attention on the individual social entrepreneur, “society neglects to recognize and support the thousands of other individuals, groups, and organizations that are crafting solutions to troubles around the globe” (p.47). Therefore, by creating such exclusive definition of what it means to be an entrepreneur and do social entrepreneurship, a

very limited amount of people are encouraged to think about solving social problems since they may never be recognized or receive financial support.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this study offer many theoretical contributions to the understanding of identity construction within social enterprise and the impacts social entrepreneurs' identities have on their organizations' identities. First, I argue that the participants' accounts provide an example of the relationship between individual identity and organizational identity within social enterprises. Second, the results shed new light on the functionalist perspective of culture and the relationship between identity and culture within organizations.

Individuals' impact on Organizational Identities

The results of this study indicated that social entrepreneurs have strong visions to solve social issues that are rooted in their identities. As Drayton explained, social entrepreneurs are, "married to that vision, in sickness or in health, until it has swept the field" (Drayton, 2002, p. 123). At the core of this study is the assumption that social entrepreneurs, due to their highly visionary and altruistic personalities, impact the organizations that they create with their strong identities. Given the assumption that individuals use multiple and competing discourses to shape their identities (Allen, 2011), modern organizations construct identities to also gain attention and differentiate themselves from competitors (Albert and Whetten, 1985), the results of this study suggest that social entrepreneurs impact their organizations' identities by taking their own identities and imposing them onto their organizations in the form of the organizations' central characteristics,

claimed distinctions and consistency overtime. As such, it is critical to revisit the theory of organizational identity and determine the ways in which founders or organizations impact their organizations' identities.

This research helps bridge together individual identity and organizational identity by exploring the ways members of an organization try to make sense of who they are as an organization. Albert and Whetten (1985) explained that organizations construct their identities based on three elements: what the central characters are, the claimed distinctiveness from other organizations, and the consistency of these elements over time. In this study, the founding social entrepreneur tends to take on all three of these elements. As a strong, visionary leader, the social entrepreneur establishes the essential identity claims, such as the organization's values, based on their mission to create social value. Therefore, the central character of the organization takes on the character traits of the social entrepreneur. Social enterprises claim distinctiveness based on their transcendent definition of social entrepreneurship, as new organizational forms that fundamentally changes the way organizations handle social issues. At their essence, social entrepreneurs differ from other organizations because they apply new models to current systems in hopes to solving social issues. Finally, what is central and enduring about social enterprises is the mission to create social change, which reflect the organizations' highest priorities.

This research then provides an example of the strong overlap of a founder's individual identity and their organization's identity. Within social enterprises, the social entrepreneur becomes a very prominent figure within their organization,

since it is his or her commitment to the mission to create social value. This represents a functionalist view of identity, where social entrepreneurs are building organizations from scratch based on their visions. From a theoretical point of view, scholars should consider the role of the founder when they construct their organizations' identities and ways they may inform the elements of organizational identity as defined by Albert and Whetten (1989). This instrumental view of identity was also seen in the social entrepreneurs strategic use of culture to communicate their mission.

The Instrumental Use of Culture

The second key finding of this study is the extent to which social entrepreneurs strategically construct the identities of their organizations based on their personal missions, beliefs and visionary goals for the organization. In other words, the social entrepreneurs largely construct their organizations' identities based on their personal identities. In this study social entrepreneurs take on an instrumental view of culture, where the participants used culture in strategic ways to impact their organizations' identities (Cheney et al., 2011). Cultural forms, such as stories, rituals, language, mythology and symbols provide organizational members with a core set of values and beliefs, strongly influenced by the leaders (Shein, 1989). Within newly founded firms, organizational leaders must put forward explicit claims about who they are and what they want to be in order to secure the resources they need to carry on (Lerpold et al., 2007). By their nature, cultural forms reflect the distinctiveness of an organization and provide members with the identity claims needed to express their perceived uniqueness (Ravasi & Shultz,

1997). This study provides evidence that suggests that founders of social enterprises translate their personal missions and visions for social change on their organizations through their strategic use of culture. From this functionalist perspective, culture is understood as an organizational feature, that managers can leverage to create more effective organizations (Eisenberg, Goodall Jr., & Trethewey, 2010).

However, this practical use of a functionalist view of culture is a perspective that many organizational scholars have been considered outdated. The functionalist perspective of culture first became popular in the early 1980's with the publication of Deal and Kennedy's (1982) "Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life," which discussed the elements of a strong corporate culture; and Peters and Waterman Jr.'s (1982) "In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies," which explored the eight common characteristics of large corporations. Scholars began to feel that this view of culture was too controlling and viewed organizational members as passive in their organizations (Eisenberg et al., 2010). Since then, organizational scholars shifted their perspective toward interpretive views of culture, which treated cultures as a process that is socially constructed from the everyday communicative behaviors among members of the organization (Eisenberg et al., 2010); or critical and postmodern views of cultures, which focuses on challenges to power relationships and the status quo within organizations (Eisenberg et al., 2010).

The results of this study do reflect an outdated perspective to culture, however where the social entrepreneurs engaged in the visible and tangible

expressions of organizational culture as a source to make sense of the core and distinctive features of their organizations. This can be seen in their processes of socializing a specific ideology among their members, creating rituals and ceremonies to honor their mission, and telling stories that solidify their visions to create social change. These cultural forms provide members with a sense of community and help them to understand what makes their organization unique. From the results, organizational culture supplies members with cues for making sense of what the social enterprise stands for through its unique values and beliefs.

From a theoretical standpoint, scholars have moved beyond the functional perspective of culture because it assumes that culture can simply be imposed from above or engineered by managers (Eisenberg et al., 2010). However, scholars need to retain the idea of the strategic use of culture since it still gains significant traction from organizational leaders, especially social entrepreneurs. Scholars should question what it means when entrepreneurs and organizations view culture in a strategic, functional way and the implications of this view.

Pragmatic Applications

In addition to providing theoretical implications for organizational scholars, this study also contributes to our understanding of how individuals who identify as social entrepreneurs create organizations to create social value. First, social entrepreneurs should be cognizant of the fact that there is a strong connection between their individual identities and their organization's identities. This study provides insight into how, regardless of if the social entrepreneur is aware of his or her impact on the organization or not, the two will become synonymous regardless.

By becoming aware of this phenomenon, social entrepreneurs will be able to be better leaders and make more sound decisions based on the welfare of their organization.

As they move within their organizations, or consider leaving their role as the organizations' leaders, social entrepreneurs should think about the processes and structures they need to instill into their organization that will help move the organizations' identities away from their individual identities in an attempt to stabilize the organization. Processes such as including other leaders within the stories told within the organization, or including members in the decision making processes, may be ways to bring a more united identity around the organization.

Finally, non-profit organizations should have a heightened sense of awareness toward the way social entrepreneurs are positioning themselves within the social sector. Since the way social entrepreneurs are talking about their endeavors as a way to gain traction, non-profits may be able to piggyback their tactics and frame their organizations in similar ways.

Limitations

This study contains three notable limitations. First, this study is limited because it focused specifically on the founding social entrepreneur and not other members from the organization. Therefore, how the personal identities of social entrepreneurs informs the identities of their organizations can only be understood from the founders who created their organizations and who were strategic and instrumental in constructing their organizations identities. Also, the participants were all from different social enterprises. Facets of the organization, such as the

size, structure and values, and length of establishment could have also impacted the results. And finally, some of the participants were no longer associated with the organizations that they helped establish, so that could have impacted their feelings toward their role within the organization. Finally, this study is limited by the fact that only three of the twelve interviews were conducted in person. Instead, the majority of the interviews were conducted by telephone, which may have lead to discussions that differed from those in the face-to-face interview, resulting in different data.

Future Directions & Concluding Thoughts

Future researchers should continue with this research by exploring the identification process of members within a social entrepreneurship to further understand how they come to identify with the vision or mission of the founder. It would be interesting to look at the ways in which social enterprises deal with organizational change when the founding social entrepreneur is no longer the day-to-day leader within the organization, being the face of the vision for social change. Research in the transition period or how the organization's identity changes once the social entrepreneur's presence is no longer leading them could provide clearer insight into the extent of impact their identities really have. In addition, the results of this study show just a partial potential for the power narrative has to showcase the creation of social value. However, further study of narratives told within social enterprises, by the social entrepreneur, members, stakeholders or outside of the organization by media accounts, could provide insight into the impact social enterprises have on society. Finally, scholars should continue to consider the

relationship between a strong individual's identity and the impact on their organization's identity, not only within social enterprises, but also in other types of organizations where the leader emerges as synonymous with the organization.

This study emerged out of my personal experience working within a social enterprise and my curiosity about the impact the founder and owner had on our organization and its identity. As social entrepreneurship becomes an increasingly important role in culture, this study looked to fill the gaps in research. Social entrepreneurs impacted their organizations by becoming synonymous as the brand of their organization, recognized as the face and motivation behind the organizations; work, and creating cultural forms that help members understand the identity of the organization. This study enriches organizational scholars and parishioners' understanding of individuals' ability to inform the organizations that they create.

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APPENDIX A: Agreement of Consent for Research Participants

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY AGREEMENT OF CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS “Exploring the Entrepreneur’s Impact on Constructing Organizational Identity”

Colleen Moore, Graduate Student – Communication Studies Department

You have been invited to participate in this research study. Before you agree to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following information. Participation is completely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research is to investigate the ways in which social entrepreneurs construct the identity of their organization. Specifically, how a social entrepreneur’s vision, mission and identity of their organization informs the organization’s identity. You will be one of approximately 10 participants in this research study.

PROCEDURES: You will participate in one interview that will be audio recorded ensure accuracy. The recording will later be transcribed and destroyed after one year beyond the completion of the study. For confidentiality purposes, your name will not be recorded unless you provide consent to be identified below.

DURATION: Your participation will consist of one interview that will last no more than two hours in length.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study, as your participation is voluntary and no personally identifiable information will be collected unless consent has been provided. The risks associated with participation in this study include no more than what the participant may encounter in everyday life.

BENEFITS: While you will receive no immediate and direct benefit from this study, it is hoped that in the long run this understanding will contribute to an understanding of social entrepreneurship. These findings will lead to greater understanding of how social entrepreneurs construct the identities of their organization.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All information you reveal in this study will be kept confidential. Audio recordings will be kept in a Marquette University office in a locked desk during the study. These recordings will be destroyed one year after the completion of this study. You are given the option to have your identity and organization’s identity known below. If you request for your identity to remain confidential, written notes will not contain any identifying information such as your name and personal information and pseudonyms will be used in all transcriptions and any

resulting presentations and/or publications. Your research records will be maintained indefinitely and may be used for future research purposes.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION: Participating in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to withdraw any data collected will not be used for research purposes unless you instruct the researcher otherwise.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Colleen Moore at 248-895-8003. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Marquette University's Office of Research Compliance at (414) 288-7570.

CONSENT FOR USE OF IDENTITY: By checking YES in the box below, you are providing the researcher with consent to have your identity used in this research project.

I wish to be identified in this research project ☐ Yes ☐ No

BY PARTICIPATING IN THIS INTERVIEW I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS CONSENT FORM, ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT AND I AM PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT.

Participant's Signature

Date

Participant's Name

Researcher's Signature

APPENDIX B: Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW GUIDE

“Exploring the Social Entrepreneur’s Impact on Constructing Organizational Identity”

Colleen Moore, Graduate Student
 Marquette University
 Communication Studies Department

1. Individual Background
 - a. Tell me about yourself
 - b. Where are you from? What do you do?
 - i. Family?
 - ii. School?
 - iii. Job?
 - iv. Activities?
 - c. How would you describe yourself to other people?
 - i. 3 adjectives that come to mind
 - d. How would others describe you?
2. Understanding of Social Entrepreneurship
 - a. What is social entrepreneurship?
 - b. Why is social entrepreneurship important?
 - c. What would be another way of talking about social entrepreneurship?
3. Individual’s Organization
 - a. Tell me about your organization, what do you do?
 - i. How did it start?
 - ii. What is your organization’s goal?
 - iii. What was your vision for the organization?
 - iv. How would you describe your organization’s mission?
 - v. What is the structure of your organization?
 1. Who are the people who work for you?
 2. What criteria did you use to hire/bring them onboard?
 - b. What do you hope for the future of your organization?
4. Constructing Identity
 - a. How would you describe the identity of your organization?
 - b. How do you feel that you have impacted the identity of your organization?
 - c. How did is your personal vision of your organization present in its identity?
 - d. What does the identity of your organization mean to you?

- e. In what way does the identity of your organization impact your role at your organization?

5. Communicating Identity

- a. How does your organization communicate its identity?
- b. How do your employees or stakeholders learn of this identity?
- c. How could your organization better communicate its identity?
- d. In what ways does the identity of your organization create a particular culture?
- e. What would you like to add about your understanding of the identity and the ways that it has been communicated?
- f. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

APPENDIX C: Participant Overview

Table 1: Participants Chart with Job Descriptions

Name	Gender	Position	Organization	Industry
Will	M	Founder, Chief Executive Officer	Growing Power	Agriculture
Melissa	F	Founder, Board Member	Midwest Environmental Advocates	Environmental
James	M	Co-Founder	Sweetwater Organics, Inc.	Agriculture
Steve	M	Founder	Sprenkler	Creative Talent Development
Deanna	F	Co-Founder, Board Member	LIFT	Non-profit
Raj	M	Co-Founder	The Seed Foundation	Education
Desiree	F	Founder	GiveForward	Non-profit
John	M	Founder	Rocketship Education	Education
David	M	Founder	Catalyst Kitchen	Non-profit