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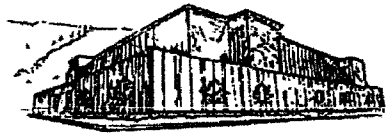
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"It's the other way around."

Sustainability, promotion, and the shaping of identity in nonprofit arts organizations

by

Georgi A. Rausch

B.A. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1997

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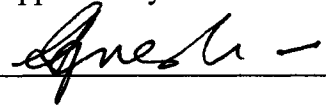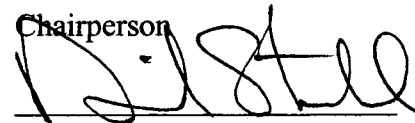
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"It's the other way around": Sustainability, promotion, and the shaping of identity in nonprofit arts organizations

Chairperson: Shiv Ganesh, Ph.D. *Sh* ·

Nonprofit organizations are an important part of the organized world around us. These organizations add significantly to the United States' economy and democracy. However, because of their charitable missions and position between government and private enterprise, they are constantly struggling to remain sustainable and maintain a strong organizational identity. While all nonprofit organizations merit attention, this study focuses on nonprofit arts organizations. It seeks to establish how nonprofit arts organizations define sustainability. Additionally, the role of promotion in sustainability is discussed, with emphasis on how this promotion shapes organizational identity. Fourteen in-depth interviews with key informants were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed in order to extract themes. From this analysis, sustainability was defined by nonprofit arts organizations in three ways: finances, programming, and volunteerism. Nonprofit arts organizations also discussed four major promotional strategies: traditional advertising, fundraising, programming, and public relations. Finally, nonprofit arts organizations did not believe that promotional strategies shaped their organizational identity, but thought that the relationship was the "other way around." Implications on organizational identity theory as well as theory on nonprofit marketization are addressed. Finally, the study addresses practical implications to the development and implementation of nonprofit promotional campaigns.

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"An understanding heart is everything in a teacher, and cannot be esteemed highly enough. One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feeling. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child."
~Carl Jung

Thank you Shiv, for all of your patience, encouragement, and attempts to redirect my stress in positive ways. It has been so much fun taking your courses and working with you as a TA and an advisee. I have also enjoyed your charismatic friends who drop in and out of your office like Kramer, Elaine, and George drop into Jerry Seinfeld's apartment. Finally, thanks for the occasional inspirational speeches – "Sleep less!"

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***

"I feel a very unusual sensation - if it is not indigestion, I think it must be gratitude."
~Benjamin Disraeli

Oh Frank, for all the times I hogged the computer or randomly burst out crying, I am so sorry. You have been my secret weapon throughout graduate school. You'd probably prefer a musical tribute, so I give you an Aretha quote – "you're all I need to get by."

Mom & Kate, you two are characters. "Oh, Georgi, I'll be so glad when it's over!"

Steph, I wanted to compare you to peanut butter, but the simile got a bit sticky, so I'll just say that you have been a true source of comfort and happiness.

Aneta, you have made the best grad rep partner in the world. You are a girl's dream drinking buddy and a world class friend. HVALA TI

Bill & Elaine, thanks for all the healing conversations, fun dinners, and delicious cookies.

Commies, you are the best!! Big hugs and big dreams.

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Rationale

In 2001, Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney and Seibold summarized the key moments, central concerns, and future challenges of organizational communication research. They highlighted that, historically, organizational communication scholars have had a tendency to study for profit American corporations. The authors note that, "...we have not seen many studies of labor unions and nonprofit agencies, let alone neighborhood associations, community movements, and street gangs" (Taylor, Flanagin, Cheney & Seibold, 2001). This trend is changing. Over the past ten years, organizational communication scholars have increasingly turned their gaze upon nonprofit organizations as a fertile ground for research.

The need to investigate nonprofit organizational practice is apparent on a variety of fronts. Nonprofit organizations are an important economic force in the United States. At face value these organizations have commanded 3.8% of the national income, and when an estimate for volunteer contributions is added, that figure rises to 6.8% of the national income (Young & Steinberg 1995). Frumkin (2002) characterizes the nonprofit sector as an economic powerhouse that accounts for a significant portion of the nation's gross domestic product. Nonprofits are also a major employer in the United States, supporting over 15 million Americans (Wolf 1999). Per capita, Americans donate nearly $300 per year to nonprofit organizations, and 50% of the adult population has contributed volunteer hours to causes they support (Wolf 1999).

In addition to being an integral part of our economy and workforce, nonprofits occupy a unique position in our political landscape. Because nonprofits fall between

control of the government and market forces, they allow alternative voices to mainstream

issues and have been credited with encouraging political engagement (Frumkin 2002).

Eikenberry and Kluver (2004) concur, noting that nonprofit organizations are much more

than service providers; they are also important vehicles for creating and maintaining a

strong democratic society. Streeten (1997) notes that interest in nonprofit organizations

is a result of disillusionment with government as well as a reluctance to cede

management of all activities to for profit organizations. Thus, we see that nonprofits

make a considerable contribution to the U.S. economy and occupy a unique position in

the organizational landscape of the United States. For these reasons among others,

nonprofit organizations are appealing cases for study.

This appeal has not escaped the attention of higher education in the United States.

Over 90 U.S. colleges and universities offer formal programs aimed at nonprofit

management, and an additional 240 institutions offer at least one course on the subject

(Joslyn 2004). At the University of Montana just last year, the Board of Regents

approved a minor in Nonprofit Administration on campus, which seeks to graduate

skilled nonprofit employees. This program is in conjunction with the American

Humanics program, whose mission is to educate, prepare, and certify professionals to

strengthen and lead nonprofit organizations. In a report for the American Humanics

program entitled "Recruiting and retaining the next generation of nonprofit sector

leadership," Shelley Cryer (2004) writes that limited resources and increasing

competition in the nonprofit sector calls for the education of increasingly committed and

capable employees. In these examples, we see that more than ever, higher education is

taking serious notice of the viability and desirability of nonprofit careers.

In the field of Communication Studies, organizational communication scholars have also started to seriously address nonprofit organizations. Recently, organizational communication scholars have used nonprofit organizations as data sites to study such topics as emotional labor (Sass, 2000), and feminist organizational practice (Trethewey, 1997, Ashcraft, 2000, Ashcraft & Kedrowicz, 2002). At the 2004 National Communication Association meeting in Chicago, Illinois, several organizational communication scholars held the first-ever panel discussion on organizational communication in the context of nonprofit organizations. However, empirical research in the communication studies field is only beginning to address the operational problems of such organizations (for exceptions, see Lewis , Hamel & Richardson 2001, Ganesh 2003). Empirical research, like this study, that investigates the characteristics and problems of nonprofit organizations would not only afford practical assistance to these organizations, but it would enhance existing communication studies theory. This study hopes to make a step in this direction by investigating nonprofit organizations and the fight for sustainability.

In nonprofit practice, sustainability is a buzzword. This is evident in nonprofit popular press, where many authors have published books aimed at ensuring sustainability. Such books, like Susan Pezzullo's "Growing your organization: A sustainability resource book for NGO's" and John Bryson's "Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement" discuss sustainability as an ideal goal. On the Internet, there are a number of links devoted to helping nonprofit organizations achieve sustainability, such as the Center for Civic Partnership's "Sustainability Tools – 10 Steps

to Maintaining Your Community Improvements". Likewise, conferences, such as a

recent one in September 2004 held at Arizona State University's Center for Nonprofit

Leadership & Management, have chosen to highlight the issue of "Nonprofit

Sustainability." The Foundation Center, an organization whose mission is "to strengthen

the nonprofit sector by advancing knowledge about U.S. philanthropy" publishes a

website called the Philanthropy News Digest (PND). On the PND website is a recurring

advice column for nonprofit practitioners titled "The Sustainable Nonprofit."

However, although there is much attention given to the issue of nonprofit

sustainability, there is little agreement over what the term actually means. For example,

in browsing through the archive of "The Sustainable Nonprofit" advice column online, it

is difficult to locate a consistent definition of sustainability. Additionally, if you were to

follow the advice of the Center for Civic Partnership's "Sustainability Tools – 10 Steps to

Maintaining Your Community Improvements," you would find that step #1 is to "Create

a shared understanding of sustainability." The authors write:

> Sustainability means different things to different people. To some, it's about getting more money. To others, it's about keeping partners and volunteers engaged. It may even get someone thinking about new things for the group to do. These different definitions of sustainability point out the need for a group working on sustainability to come up with a common definition. While there are a number of sustainability definitions in the literature, we have chosen a broad definition, which can include improvements in education, employment, housing and other areas, along with more traditional healthcare and public health improvements.
>
> Sustainability: The continuation of community health or quality of life benefits over time.

In this quote, we see that the term sustainability in nonprofit popular press can be

ambiguous and inconsistent. This inconsistency is also evident in scholarly attention on

the topic. Frumkin (2002) writes that sustainability, "a word that refers to the ability of a

nonprofit to outlast the inevitably close-ended nature of many charitable contributions,"

is of substantial interest to the nonprofit community because of increasing competition

for funding as well as corporate encroachment on typically nonprofit enterprises.

Frumkin (2002) goes on to note that the goal of nonprofit sustainability is closely linked

to the commercial goal of profitability, but warns that a trend toward commercialization

has consequences for the charitable missions that nonprofits seek to fulfill.

However, although Frumkin characterizes sustainability as a predominantly

financial concern, other scholars have problematized this definition. For example,

Altman-Sauer, Henderson and Whitaker (2005) write that sustainability for nonprofit

organizations depends not only on funding, but on staffing, organizing, and "targeting

their work in the particular cultural and legal context that nonprofit status entails (p.30)."

Therefore, in order to remain sustainable, a nonprofit organization must be capable on

many fronts. Robert Gilman (1990) provides an even more philosophical definition by

stating, "While the word is a mouthful, what it refers to is a very old and very simple

concept - the ability to keep going over the long haul. As a value, it refers to giving equal

weight in your decisions to the future as well as the present (p.10)."

Thus, we can see that although sustainability is an important issue for nonprofits,

there are a number of ambiguities and possible tensions over the way the term is defined.

In searching for meaning, is it important to see how the term sustainability is developed

in nonprofit practice by the organizations that struggle with it every day. Therefore, this

study seeks to establish how nonprofit organizations define sustainability.   In particular,

qualitative inquiry of discourse can help examine nonprofit sustainability in regard to

communicative practices that construct and reproduce its meaning.

Although the issue of sustainability is important to all nonprofit organizations, it is most pressing in the nonprofit sector that has seen increasing competition for funding and injurious commercial encroachment. Nonprofit arts organizations fit this description perfectly. These organizations experienced a boom in funding during the 1960s and 70s, but have struggled to maintain charitable contributions ever since (Scheff & Kotler 2000). Therefore, this study asks: *How do nonprofit arts organizations define sustainability?*

In addition to defining sustainability, it is also important to ask how sustainability is achieved. Nonprofit sustainability has been compared to profitability (Frumkin 2000). While we have established that not all definitions of sustainability focus *singularly* on financial success, it is evident that funding plays an integral role in most working definitions. In part, sustainability has become such a buzzword due to increasing competition for funding in the nonprofit sector. Notably, in the nonprofit arts, the financial crisis of the 70s has led to an earnings gap that has these organizations frantically searching for new streams of income (Frumkin 2000).

Income in most nonprofit arts organizations is driven by fundraising, which necessitates the communication of the organization's benefits to multiple external stakeholders. These communicative activities therefore contribute to an organization's sustainability and warrant investigation. However, an examination of "fundraising strategies" or "marketing strategies" or "advertising strategies" might limit the scope of possible communicative practices used. Therefore, in this study, I have chosen to approach communicative strategies with external audiences and stakeholders as "promotional strategies" in order to investigate a broader spectrum.

Wolf (1999) characterizes promotion as part of the classic four P's in a marketing mix – product, *promotion*, price, place (my emphasis). He goes on to note that, "Nonprofit organizations can promote themselves in various ways – through organized word of mouth campaigns involving their volunteers, through paid advertising, or through a carefully organized series of presentations at conferences, service organizations, clubs, churches, and chambers of commerce (p.165)." In this quote, we see that promotion can take on quite a large range of activities. Promotion, in the traditional four P's of marketing, is the crucial communicative link in helping an organization achieve sustainability. Wolf (1999) notes that when nonprofit organizations fail to promote themselves, constituents will not know who they are or what they stand for, and will be reluctant to donate. In this way, sustainability can be reliant on such promotional strategies. Therefore, in order to test this assumption, this study will also ask: *What is the range of promotional strategies used by nonprofit arts organizations to achieve sustainability?*

Promotional strategies require the communication of organizational identity. In order to ensure a steady flow of capital, an organization needs to communicate to existing and potential investors what it stands for, and what it is (Cheney, Christensen, Zorn & Ganesh 2003). In nonprofit organizations, this can be even more important to donors than traditional evaluations of efficacy, such as economic efficiency (Frumkin & Kim 2001). Cheney et al (2003) note that establishing a strong identity can also establish an organization's legitimacy. Because many nonprofit organizations, such as arts organizations, deliver services that are difficult to quantify in terms of outcomes, their legitimacy is often questioned. For example, it is easy to see how participation in a food

bank program could help a member of the community versus participation in community theater. Therefore, nonprofit promotional strategies, and the ways in which they drive sustainability and communicate identity, warrant investigation and description. Examining promotional strategies can also deepen our understanding of communication studies theory on how organizational identity is shaped both by internal and external communication.   And so, this study also asks: *How do promotional efforts to achieve sustainability shape organizational identity?*

Nonprofit organizations are an important part of the organized world around us. These organizations add significantly to the United States' economy and democracy. However, because of their charitable missions and position between government and private enterprise, these organizations are constantly struggling to remain sustainable and maintain a strong organizational identity. Through qualitative inquiry, this study investigates the communication of nonprofit arts organizations as they search for the meaning of sustainability. Furthermore, this study also hopes to describe the range of promotional strategies these organizations are using and offer insight as to how such strategies shape organizational identity. Although all nonprofit organizations merit attention, this study will investigate nonprofit arts organizations because of their financial vulnerability and threat of commercial encroachment. The results endeavor to augment current organizational communication theory in regards to how internal and external communication in nonprofit organizations shapes organizational identity. Finally, the study will discuss practical implications to the development and implementation of nonprofit promotional campaigns.

Literature Review

In order to inform my three research questions, I provide an overview of literature on sustainability and nonprofit identity. Then, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the importance of focusing on nonprofit arts organizations, I discuss the arts and its role in the United States. Finally, I outline my chosen research method.

Nonprofit Sustainability

As I have outlined, sustainability is a buzzword in nonprofit popular press. However, there are inconsistencies and ambiguities in the way sustainability is discussed. Therefore, it is important to examine sustainability in order to define the term as well as determine why it is such a buzzword. Looking at the simplest definition, The American Heritage Dictionary defines sustainability as "to keep in existence, to maintain." For nonprofit organizations, this means a fundamental struggle for survival. And, although the definition of sustainability is on contested terrain, we know that it can be an important issue for nonprofit organizations because they exist in such uncertain funding environments.

Nonprofit organizations not only exist in an uncertain funding environment, but the competition for funding has increased (Frumkin 2002). Wolf (1999) writes that nonprofit organizations are concerned with sustainability because of increased competition for funding and other pressures such as higher expectations, increasing costs, and declining support. Because of this increasing competition, Frumkin (2002) writes that over the past two decades, there has been a major shift toward achieving sustainability from earned income as opposed to contributed income. In this way, he compares sustainability to profitability (Frumkin 2002).

Although nonprofits are taking steps to become sustainable through earned income, this pressure to be self-sufficient is not always internally driven. Many funding agencies encourage nonprofit organizations to become financially sustainable, only funding nonprofit organizations for short periods of time given that they make strides toward supporting themselves and cultivating multiple sources of income. For example, in the funding requirements of the privately run Fidelity Foundation, they note, "We see an organization's ability to attract a broad range of support as a key sign of its strength and sustainability (www.fidelityfoundation.org)." Likewise, in order to qualify for a government grant from the U.S. Department of State, "Proposed programs should address long-term institution building with an emphasis on moving towards sustainability, garnering other donor support, or demonstrating capacity-building results (http://www.state.gov/g/drl/c9078.htm)."

Nonprofit organizations are adapting to the sustainability trend in funding. For example, in a short online course based on the *Foundation Center's Guide to Proposal Writing,* Jane Geever (2001) writes:

> A clear message from grantmakers today is that grantseekers will be expected to demonstrate in very concrete ways the long-term financial viability of the project to be funded and of the nonprofit organization itself. It stands to reason that most grantmakers will not want to take on a permanent funding commitment to a particular agency. Rather, funders will want you to prove either that your project is finite (with start-up and ending dates); or that it is capacity-building (that it will contribute to the future self-sufficiency of your agency and/or enable it to expand services that might be revenue generating); or that it will make your organization attractive to other funders in the future. With the new trend toward adopting some of the investment principles of venture capital groups to the practice of philanthropy, *evidence of fiscal sustainability becomes a highly sought-after characteristic of the successful grant proposal* (http://fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html, my emphasis).

In this quote, we see that the trend toward achieving sustainability has worked its way into nonprofit discourse, becoming a new requirement that needs to be properly

addressed. It is also notable in the above quote that Geever argues that sustainability requirements evolved from discourse from the world of business and venture capitalism.

Although the discussion of sustainability can be seen as a trend in funding requirements sparked by venture capitalists, it also could have ties to the rise of sustainable development discourse. "Sustainable development" became a United Nations priority in the late 1980s. The U.N. defines sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev)." The idea of sustainable development bears similarity to that the movement toward sustainability in nonprofit organizations. Furthermore, sustainable development discourse in general emphasizes the importance of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in achieving sustainability. For example, Ganesh (2005) found that, amidst pressure from the government to engage in "sustainable development" practices, an Indian NGO adopted "sustainable development" as a core value. However, although the roots of sustainability in nonprofit organizations could be traced back to sustainable development discourse, at this point little research has fully addressed this evolution or the possible ties between these two movements.

We have seen that sustainability is an ambiguous term, yet it is a growing trend amongst funding agencies and could have ties to venture capitalism and sustainable development discourse. However, even though the definition and evolution of sustainability can be contested, it is clear that the reasons *for achieving sustainability* are conceptualized differently in for profit and nonprofit organizations. The private sector wants to remain sustainable in order to continue generating profit for business owners.

Therefore, for profit organizations will typically seek to lower costs and maximize profit to remain sustainable. However, nonprofit organizations want to remain sustainable in order to maximize service to their communities. Kanter and Summers (1987) argue that success in nonprofit organizations is measured by the delivery of services to the community and fulfillment of their mission as opposed to financial success.

Unfortunately, although nonprofit organizations seek to remain sustainable so that they can continue to give service to their communities, they are not excluded from the vagaries of market forces. The nonprofit sector must also compete for financial resources, which fosters aggressive campaigning to attract funding from a common pool of philanthropic contributions. This competition for financial resources in the free market could be detrimental to nonprofit organizations. Competition could cause mission drift and it could threaten the closure of an organization that provides the community with important resources.

Mission drift in a nonprofit organization can occur when, in order to attract funding and remain sustainable, an organization changes its direction away from serving the needs of the community to serving the needs perceived by its donors. Indeed, mission drift has long been a problem for nonprofit organizations. Young (2002) states that nonprofit executives sometimes inadvertently compromise their missions as a result of tremendous pressure to be financially successful. This situation speaks to a crisis of identity, and has recently been examined in the context of "organizational narcissism" wherein nonprofit organizations privilege their own legitimacy over being accountable to the community they serve (Ganesh 2003).

If nonprofit organizations are not accountable to the communities they are serving, if their missions drift, then it is important to ask it they warrant the granting of tax-exempt status. For example, in justifying the receipt of grants, many nonprofit organizations are forced to report on accountability in language mandated by grantees, which have increasingly strict rules on fund allocation and fiscal responsibility. If grantees are calling the shots to such a specific degree, do the nonprofit organizations themselves become simply intermediaries? Do nonprofit executives increasingly become less visionary? This trend has been examined by Feldman (1997), who concluded that when nonprofit executives discussed accountability, they inevitably reverted to quantitative terms such as beneficiaries, resources allocated to community members, and organizational growth. These quantitative terms could be alarming if the local and flexible nature of nonprofit organizations was compromised in favor of a more businesslike approach. In this way, the unique position and mission of nonprofit organizations could be jeopardized, and the boundaries between sectors blurred.

In addition to the perils of mission drift, communities served by nonprofits are also marginalized by competition for funds when organizations are forced to close. Closure of nonprofit organizations can greatly affect those who may depend on them to provide basic services or enhance the quality of life in their community. While some citizens are directly affected by assistance from nonprofit organizations, many are unaware of how the nonprofit sector affects their lives. For example, although a food bank can point to a quantifiable delivery of services, some nonprofit organizations work toward fulfilling less tangible missions. The nonprofit arts community is one such

example. How can one quantify how participation in a community chorus has changed their life, or improved the city?

Regardless of the definition of sustainability, it is clear that nonprofit organizations attempt to remain sustainable in order to fulfill their mission as opposed to achieving financial success. However, because nonprofits are vulnerable to market forces and need to compete for funding, they must be heard in our communications saturated market. If they are unsuccessful, nonprofit organizations risk mission drift and closure. This predicament means that nonprofit organizations and for profit organizations have a common need: to establish and cultivate a strong organizational identity.

Organizational Identity

Albert and Whetten (1985) define organizational identity as the collective, shared understandings of an organization's distinctive, central, and enduring characteristics. The concept of organizational identity is often discussed together with the process of identification. Identification is the communicative process through which organizational members link themselves to an organization's identity. In other words, this process of identification is seen as the appropriation of identity (Cheney and Tompkins, 1987). Identities are expressed through language, and so this discourse needs to be researched and understood (Larson & Pepper, 2003).

Organizational identity and identification have received much attention from communication scholars. There are two significant traditions in this research. Many communication scholars have explored how employees identify with an organization (Dutton et. al, 1994, Elsback and Kramer, 1996), multiple targets of identification (Barker and Tompkins, 1994, Scott, 1997, Larson and Pepper, 2003), how identification

effects decision making within organizations (Cheney 1983), and how internal

publications such as newsletters effect organizational identification (Cheney, 1983,

DiSanza and Bullis, 1999). In this tradition, there is a focus on identity and the

identification process *within* organizations.

Although examining identity and identification processes within the container of

the organization is important, several scholars have pointed to the fact that identity is also

derived from external discourses. In this new tradition, Cheney & Christensen (2001)

stress the importance of examining the linkages between internal and external

communication and the formation of organizational identity. These linkages are

important not only in the private sector, but in the nonprofit realm. Ganesh (2003) writes,

"Just how external discourses as well as an NGO's own conception of its constituents and

audiences affect its identity, therefore, merits careful consideration" (p.567). In this

quote, we again see the need to consider the role of both internal *and external*

communication in shaping organizational identity.

In a comprehensive review of organizational identity literature, Gioia, Schultz,

and Corley (1999) note that organizational scholars tend to focus on the centrality and

durability of identity and the internal communication of that identity. However, the

authors advocate that organizational scholars take a further step and investigate the

communication of identity to external audiences, which has typically been studied in

marketing and public relations. The authors argue that this cross-disciplinary line of

investigation would produce, "a richer dialogue implied by bringing these multiple lenses

to bear on organizational identity in its own right (Gioia, Schultz, and Corley, 1999, p.

147)." Likewise, Rindova & Schultz (1998) write that although organizational scholars

have focused on the level of beliefs while marketing and design practitioners emphasize symbols and artifacts, identity encompasses all levels, and the simultaneous application of the two approaches is necessary to understand the construct of organizational identity. Unfortunately, although scholars repeatedly call for the study of external communication and identity, few have answered.

This study hopes to address the need for empirical research on how external communication shapes organizational identity. This line of inquiry is particularly useful to nonprofit organizations. Indeed, identity is a central concern of the entire nonprofit community for a number of reasons. First, because of its position between government and for profit enterprise, it is often difficult to characterize exactly what a nonprofit organization is. Additionally, because nonprofit organizations compete for resources in the free market, and this market has become more competitive in recent years, there has been a trend toward nonprofit marketization. As nonprofit organizations become increasingly more market oriented, many have voiced concern over the blurring boundary between nonprofit and for profit organizational identity. In order to clarify these issues, a brief review of nonprofit identity and marketization issues follows.

Nonprofit Identity

Nonprofit organizations in the United States are commonly categorized as 501 c(3) status, which pertains to the U.S. Internal Revenue Code that reads as follows:

> Corporations, and any community chest, fund, or foundation, organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, testing for public safety, literary, or educational purposes, or to foster national or international amateur sports competition (but only if no part of its activities involve the provision of athletic facilities or equipment), or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals, no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual, no substantial part of the activities of which is carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation (except as otherwise provided in subsection (h)), and which does not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of

statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.

In this definition, we see that 501 c(3) organizations are a diverse community, ranging from small environmental advocacy organizations to hospitals and University systems. Salamon and Anheier (1994) assign four major characteristics to nonprofits: (1) existence of a formal constitution, (2) a system of self-governance, (3) a mission that does not include seeking a profit, and (4) use of a volunteer workforce. Frumkin (2002), characterizes nonprofits by underscoring three connecting features: (1) they do not coerce participation, (2) they operate without distributing profits to stakeholders, and (3) they exist without simple and clear lines of ownership and accountability.

However, although these authors have made attempts at formalizing the definition of "nonprofit," these definitions have been the source of much debate. For example, after Frumkin (2002) gives us three connecting features of nonprofits, he goes on to detail how each of these features has been challenged. First, the noncoercive nature of nonprofit organizations is problematized through mandatory service requirements. For example, welfare recipients in some cases are now required to perform community service in exchange for benefits. Secondly, the nondistribution feature has been challenged in regards to the growing salary levels of nonprofit executives and the accumulation of endowments. In Missoula, this was recently illustrated when the Missoulian exposed the exorbitant salary of CEO and President of the Blue Cross, Peter Babin (Johnson 2005). Finally, the ownerless nature of nonprofit organizations has been challenged due to the growing importance of trustees and their unique legal ties to the organization. For example, if the actions of a nonprofit are called into question, courts have held that only

trustees or directors, the attorney general, and members (in membership organizations) have legal standing to contest the claim (Frumkin 2002).

Therefore, we have seen that defining a nonprofit organization is problematic, and certainly not as simple as its name implies. Wolf (1999) notes that the term "nonprofit," which describes something that is not something else, tells us very little about the essential characteristics of these organizations. Another common name for nonprofits, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), yields a similar problem (Vakil 2000). In the United States, NGO can be construed as inaccurate due to growing dependence on government grants in certain nonprofit organizations. Ganesh (2003) proposes that the uncertain status of NGOs vis a vis the government has led to an identity crisis.

As we have seen, nonprofits in the United States occupy a third space between the enormous influence of government and for profit enterprises. In this position, they are constantly facing the struggle of being an organizational minority and avoiding convergence and the subsequent loss of identity. Therefore, identity concerns are particularly germane to the study of organizational communication and nonprofit organizations. However, Cheney and Christensen (2001) note that identity concerns have surpassed minor importance to become organizational preoccupations, leading to at least two difficulties. First, there is the problem that organizations face in distinguishing between themselves and the outside world. This is particularly salient for nonprofit organizations, which as we see have always existed in a third space of contested definition, between government and private enterprise.

Secondly, the preoccupation with identity concerns point to the problem of "...being heard in a communication environment saturated with corporate messages

(Cheney & Christensen 2001)." This quote is interesting because the rush to keep up with the market or be heard in the market of heavily funded corporate messaging can be exasperating and detrimental for nonprofit organizations. However, like it or not, this predicament is slowly transforming nonprofit practice. In addition to corporations, nonprofit groups have also become preoccupied with their identities and images. Cheney, Christensen, Zorn and Ganesh (2003) note that that the emphasis on nonprofit identity in "corporate communications" (marketing, advertising and public relations) has been a noticeable trend. Therefore, a brief review of nonprofit promotion follows.

Promoting Nonprofit Organizations

We have discussed that in order to receive a steady flow of income, organizations need to communicate to their audiences who they are and what they do. Such communication plays a critical role in keeping an organization sustainable. However, although both for profit and nonprofit organizations engage in many forms of promotional strategies, the goals of these strategies are different for each sector. For example, the main difference in marketing between sectors is that for profit marketing works toward maximizing profits for shareholders and nonprofit marketing works towards maximizing sum-of-benefits to society (Gupta & Kohli 1990). For this reason, nonprofit organizations can be reluctant to engage in promotion or marketing activities at all, believing that the money spent on such activities is unjustified. In advocating that nonprofits should adopt a marketing orientation, Smith, Buklin, and Associates (2000) note that, "For years, nonprofits did not engage in marketing, because they equated the term with the "hard sell," something that was viewed as unprofessional and inappropriate

(p.56)." However, with increasing competition for resources, promotion is critical for nonprofits.

Because the goals of nonprofit promotion are different than for profit promotion, it follows that the strategies used by nonprofit organizations should be different as well. It is tempting to apply the traditional "4 P's" (product, price, place, and promotion) of marketing to nonprofit practice. However, Burton (1999) writes that marketing in the nonprofit sector is critically different than marketing for the private sector for a number of reasons including different types of customers, different nature of the "product," and the use of price as a rationing tool. Price is often not an issue to the nonprofit customer, who may not pay anything for services received. She notes that promotion in the private sector is typically more focused at the purchaser of the product or service, whereas promotion in the nonprofit sector typically needs to be aimed at multiple stakeholders (Burton 1999). Finally, the nature of a nonprofit product (or service) is not always tangible and is frequently difficult to measure. This can be seen in nonprofit arts organizations, which produce services such as concerts or art installations or community dances.

We have seen that nonprofit organizations can be reluctant to engage in promotion. And, when they do engage in promotion, the strategies and goals can be very different than those employed in for profit organizations. However, although nonprofit organizations may be reluctant to promote themselves, in a competitive marketplace, they too need to be able to effectively articulate who they are and what they stand for. The emphasis on nonprofit identity in "corporate communications" (marketing, advertising and public relations) has been a noticeable trend (Christensen, Zorn and Ganesh , 2003).

Therefore, it is important to investigate the trend toward marketization of nonprofit

organizations, and how the use of promotional strategies in turn effects their

organizational identity.

Nonprofit Marketization

For some scholars, the trend toward marketizing identity in nonprofit

organizations is alarming. With a marketized approach to identity, organizations shape

who they are and what they do by heavily weighing the consumer's needs. In this way,

the internal affairs of organizations are tied to external affairs and market context, even in

the public and tertiary sectors (Cheney 1998). Christensen (1997) writes that, in this

way, organizations become preoccupied with the outside world and the consumer, and

that communication with the market becomes the raison d'etre of the marketing

organization. For example, Fairclough (1993) investigated marketization and

"promotional culture" in British universities, noting that these organizations, although

public institutions, were giving more attention to marketing and were beginning to treat

students as customers. He writes, "These changes have been seen as requiring new

qualities and skills from academics and indeed a transformation in their sense of

professional identity (Fairclough 1993, p. 143)."

Nonprofit marketization has become a lightning rod issue because of the

detrimental effects that may result. Scholars have repeatedly warned of the blurring of

nonprofit and for profit boundaries. Alexander and Weiner (1998) note that as nonprofits

encounter more financial and competitive pressure there have been increasing calls for

the adoption of for-profit management and governance practices. One major concern of

what Eikenberry and Kluver (2004) call "the marketization of the nonprofit sector" is

that, in becoming more businesslike, nonprofit organizations run the risk of harming

democracy and citizenship and the creation and maintenance of a strong civil society.

This marginalization of citizenship and democracy can be seen in the formation of

organizational identity itself. Cheney and Christensen (2000) found that in large

corporations, stakeholder involvement and employee consideration in the formation of

identity is often downplayed in favor of crafted and univocal expressions.

Although there have been many warning signals concerning the marketization of

nonprofit organizations, other scholars take a more optimistic view. Ryan (1999) writes,

"The point is not whether nonprofit organizations can survive opposition from for-profits.

In fact, many are adjusting to the new competitive environment quite well. The real issue

is whether nonprofits can adapt *without* compromising the qualities that distinguish them

from for-profit organizations (p. 128, author's emphasis)." That issue has yet to be

decided. A number of positions have emerged concerning the trend toward nonprofit

marketization. This controversy makes the marketization of nonprofit identity an

appealing and important trend to study. While some scholars like Eikenberry and Kluver

(2004) firmly discourage this businesslike and marketing orientation, others take a more

flexible view.

A tension-centered approach to nonprofit identity

Rather than polarize the debate over nonprofit and for-profit tactics, Skloot (1999)

advocates accepting the trend of competition and encourages nonprofits to rise to the

challenge. Likewise, Ryan (1999) writes that nonprofits have no choice but to reckon

with market forces that continue to be shaped not only by the private sector but by

government itself. Some scholars have noted that nonprofits can reckon with such forces and maintain their missions.

Young (1998) found that although nonprofit organizations engaged in commercial ventures, they still took pains to avoid activities that would damage their missions, and therefore were able to negotiate a beneficial balance. Christensen (1997) discussed how a marketing orientation can even be thought of as self-referential or "auto-communication" wherein an organization is only marketing to confirm its own images, values and assumptions. Instead of changing its very culture or identity through a marketing orientation, an organization could be confirming their original conception of culture. These situations point to the possibility that nonprofit organizations are able to manage the tension between nonprofit and for-profit practices and still maintain a strong organizational identity. Therefore, while some may sound alarm at the marketized tendencies of nonprofit organizations, others take a more nuanced view. In this way, Desmond (1995) notes that critical views of marketing that seek the truth are trapped in ambivalence.

Therefore, rather than adhere to Albert and Whetten's (1985) "distinctive, central, and enduring" traits of organizational identity, a number of organizational communication scholars have started to adopt a more flexible, tension-centered approach to identity issues. Scott and Lane (1999) write that, "Researchers have questioned the endurance, centrality, and distinctiveness of 'organizational identity' since Albert and Whetten first wrote the words in 1985 (p.143)." In this spirit, a new vein of research has emerged that investigates the tensions surrounding the original conceptualization of organizational identity. This new research tradition suggests that organizational identity

is much more fluid and adaptively unstable (Gioia, Schultz, and Corley, 1999).

Christensen (1995) argues that a marketing orientation can be an important management

practice through which organizations can simultaneously display flexible capabilities as

well as distinct identities.

Viewing identity as fluid and unstable necessitates a tension-centered approach.

Trethewey and Ashcraft (2004) note that organizational scholarship that denies the

powerful presence of tensions does a disservice to the field because it neglects the basic

character of organizational life. When taking a tension-centered approach to research,

communication is an important site where organizational members struggle for the

primacy of different meanings of truth and identity (Trethewey & Ashcraft 2004).

Identity is at issue in this study. Because examination of external communication

strategies has been historically underemphasized by organizational communication

scholars, and because examination of these strategies can provide a richer understanding

of the shaping of organizational identity, this study gives particular attention to nonprofit

promotional strategies. It is important to discover the range of promotional strategies that

nonprofit organizations are using in order to stand out in our increasingly marketized

nation. Therefore, a brief review of nonprofit promotion follows.

The role of the arts

We have discussed the contested definition of nonprofit, but the arguments over

that term are eclipsed by the arguments over the definition of art. In 1965, with the

newly established National Endowment for the arts (NEA), Congress set forth the

following definition of "the arts":

> 20 U.S.C. 952 (b) The term "the arts" includes, but is not limited to, music (instrumental
> and vocal), dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields,
> painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and

fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, film, video, tape and sound recording, the arts related to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of such major art forms, all those traditional arts practiced by the diverse peoples of this country. (sic) and the study and application of the arts to the human environment.

This definition speaks to the many forms of expression included in the arts, and has been the subject of debate since its debut. Subsequently, the NEA has gone on to modify this definition to include the many other forms of artistic expression that individuals can enact.

Many value art simply for personal expression and enjoyment. However, the arts are also valued for a variety of other reasons. This is most evident in the arguments for arts education in U.S. schools. The Arts Education Partnership (AEP), a national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations, demonstrates and promotes the essential role of the arts in learning and development. In their keystone report, "Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development," they establish that the arts can assist students in developing critical thinking skills and they also establish connections between arts learning and achievement in such topics as reading and math (Deasy 2002).

Outside of education, the arts continue to play an important role for every member in our society as a way to provide political commentary and promote civic dialogue. Yankelovich (1999) defines civic dialogue as a public dialogue where people discuss civic issues, policies or decisions of consequence to their lives, communities and society. He further goes on to note that, in arts-based civic dialogue, the artistic process provides a key focus or catalyst for public dialogue on important issues.

The concept of art and the arts continues to be elusive. Carley (1999) says it best when she writes, "Years ago, a Justice of the United States Supreme Court was said to

have explained, 'I don't know how to define it, but I know it when I see it.' He was

talking about obscenity. He might as well have been talking about art." However, like

the term nonprofit, we do not need a strict definition of art or the arts to understand the

important role they play in our society. And specifically, nonprofit arts organizations are

critical in that role because of their unique position between government and the free

market. Indeed, for profit arts have been heavily criticized, most notably by Adorno

(1991) who argues that the application of capitalism to creative activity has the effect of

anti-enlightenment. Thus, it is important to investigate the state of funding for nonprofit

arts organizations.

Funding for the arts: a brief history

Funding for the arts is punctuated by a boom period in the 1960s, with the

establishment of the NEA as well as aggressive grant making programs from institutions

like the Ford, Rockerfeller, and Carnegie Foundations (Chong 2002). From the mid 60s

until the 80s, contributions from foundations and corporations grew from $15 million to

nearly $700 million, the number of professional orchestras went from 58 to over 1,000

and theater companies increased from 12 to over 400 (Scheff & Kotler, 2000). In

reaction to this largesse, many arts organizations made infrastructure changes and

improvements which reflected optimism in audiences and a continued stream of

contributions.

Unfortunately, it has been a narrowing stream. Today, many administrators decry

a crisis in nonprofit arts funding. Scheff and Kotler (2000) write that cuts in government

funding have been severe, and corporate, foundation, and business support is often

provided on the condition that arts organizations become leaner, more business oriented

and supportive of the donor's marketing objectives. Additionally, they argue that

cutbacks in arts education in schools are having a detrimental effect on the audiences of

tomorrow (Scheff & Kotler 2000). More than ever, policymakers are contemplating the

relevance of the arts to people's daily lives, and arts managers are increasingly concerned

with their organization's visibility and sustainability (McClellan, Rebello-Rao, &

Wyszomirski, 1999).

This uncertain funding situation means increased competition in nonprofit arts

organizations of today. This competition is taking its toll. Frank Hodsoll, Chairman of

the NEA, once told U.S. News & World Report in 1983,

> "The way things stand now, there is not much room for innovation. The increasing
> difficulty in getting funds, especially for large productions in the performing arts, has
> resulted in less risk taking. Because it costs so much to put on a new production, it is a
> lot easier to get an orchestra to play Beethoven, which everybody knows, rather than do
> something brand new. Even theaters find they must stick to the tried and true to remain
> commercially viable."

Therefore, in order to react to this competition, nonprofit organizations have become less

controversial or willing to take chances on innovations. Another reaction to competition

has been the emergence of specific training programs in Arts Administration across the

United States in order to professionalize the sector and its staff, as well as promote

partnerships with business interests. However, Chong (2002) notes that examining the

interdependence between the arts and business raises issues concerning artistic integrity

and the role of artists and arts organizations in contemporary society.

Therefore, we have seen that although nonprofit arts organizations experienced a

few decades of growth, they are at a critical point in regards to sustainability and

maintaining their unique missions. Central to achieving this sustainability is the need for

these organizations to cultivate a strong identity. Branding in arts organizations has

assumed a mythic importance (Chong 2002). Rentschler and Potter (1996) discuss this situation in terms of two distinct issues: viability and visibility. Viability concerns the sustainability of a nonprofit arts organization and the relevance of its mission, and visibility concerns, "... the competitiveness, identity, and distinctiveness of the museum or performing arts organization as it interacts with the outside world (Rentschler & Potter 1996). Both issues are inextricably connected.

Thus far, we have discussed the importance of the nonprofit sector and have identified that understanding sustainability is critical to nonprofit practice and organizational communication theory. Additionally, it is appealing to investigate what types of promotional strategies arts organizations are using, and how these promotional strategies drive sustainability and create and maintain identity. I will now outline the research method I used to answer the three research questions in this study.

Research Methods

Overview

To investigate my research questions, I conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with the leaders of local nonprofit arts organizations. These leaders included Executive Directors, Board Presidents, and top administrative positions. All interviews were audio taped with the consent of the informant, and the average interview lasted 60 minutes. In addition to semi-structured interviews, I collected a sampling of each organization's promotional materials. These artifacts were infrequently used as supplementary information to complement the interview data.

Informants

I interviewed 14 leaders, 8 women and 6 men, who are currently running nonprofit arts organizations in Missoula, Montana. To recruit informants, I sorted information from two search engines. First, I perused the GuideStar database online, which describes itself as "The Best Reference Resource in American Philanthropy" and is highly regarded by nonprofit administrators. This database listed 45 organizations in Missoula that were considered, "Arts, Culture, and Humanities" (Appendix B). However, as a resident of Missoula, I had not heard of many organizations on this list. Therefore, I consulted an online list of arts organizations compiled by the Missoula Cultural Council (Appendix C), which had links to many of the organizations websites. Because many of these organizations were for profit arts organizations, I used my own knowledge of the local arts community to guide my choices. Finally, I chose fourteen nonprofit arts organizations that stood out on the list because of their prominence in local activities calendars and advertisements in the local newspapers such as the Missoulian and the Independent.

Whenever possible, I first made contact with the informants by email (Appendix D) in order to fully explain my study and ask for their participation. When approaching organizations, my first preference was to talk with the Executive Director. Wolf (1999) equates the Executive Director to a "chief executive" and explains:

> The character of almost every nonprofit organization is set in large measure by its chief executive. This is because the chief executive not only speaks for the organization publicly but he or she also hires the staff that deals on a day-to-day basis with the organization's constituency. Thus, the public's impression of the organization is very much in the chief executive's hands (p.59).

In this quote, we see that the Executive Director manages and sets the character of an organization, and is therefore able to easily speak to questions of organizational concern and organizational identity. When the organization did not have an Executive Director or

the Executive Director was unavailable, I chose the Board President or head of the administrative staff. It was important that the person interviewed was in a position of authority in the organization, well educated on the organization's activities, and comfortable speaking as an organizational representative. I conducted the interviews either at offices or local coffee shops, according to each informant's preference.

Before the interview began, I let the informants know that their names would not be used in connection with the interview data, in order to provide confidentiality. To provide further confidentiality, any mention of a program specific to an informant's organization has been removed from the quotes in this paper and replaced with a generic reference such as "[program]". Finally, the informants have been given aliases in this paper. Any name mentioned has been given by me, is purely fictional, and has no connection to the informant who was interviewed.

Because of their privileged positions, and involvement in daily decision-making processes for the organizations, I viewed these informants as *key informants* who would be able to provide a deeply situated view of the organization and be able to speak as organizational representatives. I chose to interview a variety of key informants because of the descriptive nature of my first and second research questions and the complex nature of the third research question. Since the third research question addresses organizational identity issues, which are difficult to describe and hard to observe, qualitative interviews were particularly helpful (Lindlof, 1995). Additionally, no survey instruments exist that tackle the relationship between internal and external communication and organizational identity. A face to face interview approach of these fourteen organizations gave breadth to this study and allowed me to be present in order to

clarify any unfamiliar concepts. While a close analysis of one organization could have

given me a deeper insight into my third research question concerning the shaping of

identity, my chosen research method allowed me to get a broader range of answers to

address all of my research questions and provide a richer and more descriptive thematic

analysis to the study.

Methodology

Each face-to-face interview I conducted was approximately 60 minutes long. For

these interviews, I used the attached question interview instrument (Appendix A), which

was semi-structured to encourage additional probing for specific examples. The

instrument addressed five general areas: (1) General Opening Questions (2)

Purpose/Roles of the informant's organization (3) Description of promotional strategies

(4) Definitions of sustainability and (5) Definitions of Cultural Tourism. Because of the

inconsistent nature of the data on cultural tourism, this information was eventually

dropped from my analysis. After the interviews, I asked a few questions about the

organization's size and annual budget (See Table 1 below).

Table 1

Participant organizations

Organization Name	Service	Employees	Annual Budget
Missoula Cultural Council / First Night Missoula	Networking	2	$200,000
International Wildlife Film Festival	Visual Arts / Education	4	$250,000
MoTrans	Performing Arts/ Education	2	$90,000
A Carousel for Missoula	Visual Arts / Education	14-26	$275,000
String Orchestra of the Rockies	Performing Arts/ Education	0	$30,000
Committee for the Humanities	Speakers Bureau/ Book Festival/ Traveling Exhibits/ Education	5	$600,000
International Choral Festival	Performing Arts/ Community outreach	1	$80,000
Young Audiences of Montana/VSA Montana	Performing Arts/ Education	2	$24,000/ $65,000
Missoula Community Chorus	Performing Arts / Education	2	$24,000

Missoula Folklore Society	Performing Arts / Education	0	$10,000
Garden City Ballet	Performing Arts / Education	2	$25,000
Missoula Symphony Association	Performing Arts / Education	3	$300,000
Missoula Children's Theatre	Performing Arts / Education	46	$4,000,000
Missoula Art Museum	Visual Arts / Education	8	$400,000

Orthographic transcriptions followed the interviews (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). After all the interviews were transcribed, I closely examined all of the interview data with a special focus on those comments regarding identity, sustainability, and promotion. I followed a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). First, I jotted down notes in the margins of an interview in an open coding process (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Then, with each subsequent interview, I employed a constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After reviewing all of the transcripts many times, I created original categories of recurring themes based on the margin notes. Because my goal was to extract meanings of sustainability, I used the theme as a unit of analysis (DiSanza & Bullis 1999). The data for my first two research questions fell into place, however, the third research question prompted a deeper analysis. For the third research question, I went back to my data and deeply reviewed the comments for contradictions and further explanations.

When my analysis was complete, I used additional data collected by an undergraduate assistant, Deidre Haggerty, to test my themes. Again, in this process, I used a constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Deidre conducted four interviews of her own using the exact same questionnaire I used. She met with the Missoula Blues and Jazz Society, Art Associates, Missoula Writing Collaborative, and the Missoula Community Band. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) note that the presence of multiple researchers is the optimum guard against threats to internal reliability. Deidre's

interview data confirmed my analysis and enhanced the reliability of the themes in this study.

Chapter Preview

The subsequent chapters in this thesis address the answers to my research questions. In chapter two, I discuss how the key informants in this study discuss sustainability. There are three themes explained in chapter two. The first theme discusses financial concerns. The second theme involves the continuation of programming, including a discussion of the quality ideal and sustainability versus growth. Finally, the third theme explores volunteerism, with a discussion of network and individual volunteerism. This theme also discusses the perils of volunteer burnout.

Chapter three addresses the range of promotional strategies used by the participating arts organizations. In this chapter, I first discuss the use of traditional advertising. Then, I discuss the use of fundraising collateral as a promotional strategy. The third promotional strategy involves the use of programming as a promotional strategy, and finally, I talk about public relations as a promotional strategy. Additionally, in this chapter, I explain the effects that promotional strategies for sustainability have on organizational identity. This cannot be fully explained without a discussion of keeping the integrity of the mission and the liberal use of the community metaphor.

Finally, in chapter four, I provide a summary of results for all three research questions. Then, I discuss the implications of this study's results on organizational communication theory and nonprofit practice.

CHAPTER TWO: DEFINITIONS AND PRACTICES OF SUSTAINABILITY

The first research question I asked in this study was, "How do nonprofit arts organizations define sustainability?" In order to answer this question during my 14 interviews, I asked each informant if they had heard of the term "sustainability." Without exception, they had all heard the term. Indeed, the response to this question was often an emphatic yes or intensified yes. For example, George responded, "Oh yeah, oh yeah." and Audrey laughed and said, "Oh god, yes!" This supports the characterization of sustainability as a buzzword that nonprofit practitioners are concerned with. I was pleased that the informants all seemed very familiar with the term sustainability, and I did not have to provide my own definition to any of them. Upon agreeing that they had heard of the term sustainability, I asked each informant what it meant to them. Three themes emerged: financial concerns, programming, and volunteerism. One theme, financial concerns, was sometimes qualified in terms used only in nonprofit practice, such as donors or grantees. However, the remaining two out of three themes, programming and volunteerism, were distinctly described in terms of nonprofit practice. Therefore, this chapter is devoted to the description and exploration of each of these three themes and how they are communicatively framed in terms of nonprofit practice.

The first theme that I will address is that of financial concerns. In discussing financial concerns, I will address how informants talked about funding issues in terms of nonprofit practice as well as funding issues that were more generalized. The link between funding and programming will also be explored. The second theme I will cover concerns the definition of sustainability as programming. In this theme, I will discuss the recurrence of what I call, "the quality ideal." Also, in this theme, I explore the tension

between maintaining programs and growing them. Nonprofit programming is then explored as a communicatively framed nonprofit practice. Finally, I will discuss the theme of volunteerism. In this theme, I will discuss network and individual volunteer importance and fear of volunteer burnout, which will be explored as a communicatively framed nonprofit practice. These three themes are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2		
Definitions of Sustainability		
Sustainability as Financial Concerns	Sustainability as Programming	Sustainability as Volunteerism
Nonprofit funding sources	Programming and "The quality ideal"	Networks of volunteers vs. individual volunteers
Generalized funding	Programming and the need to maintain vs. grow	Volunteer burnout

Financial Concerns

Financial concerns were specifically addressed by ten informants: Arlene, Jack Greg, Lily, Joyce, Jennifer, George, Crystal, James and Daniel. In discussing financial concerns, informants often qualified finances in terms of nonprofit practice, but some answers were more generalized. Answers that were qualified in nonprofit terms included discussion of funding sources and ties between funding and programs. On the other hand, some responses concerning revenue were more straightforward, and informants were succinct about the need for income.

Nonprofit Funding Sources

When discussing funding, informants would often speak in terms of nonprofit income generators such as grants and individual donations. For example, when asked to define sustainability, Lily states:

> I guess I think of sustainability as the ability to sustain, oh you shouldn't use the word you are defining in a sentence but, to be able to sustain and continue the funding resources over time so that you can continue to have them and to build. I think sustainability is an important part of nonprofit management because so much of the funding is short term and a lot of our grants are one or two year grants and then you have to reapply, and if you don't get them again, then you've lost a whole project or a whole area.

In this answer, Lily talks specifically about going through the grant writing process and its challenges. This process is unique to nonprofit organizations, who have little choice other than to comply with the rules of grant makers in order to receive funding for their charitable missions. Nonprofit organizations must also solicit donations from individual donors in order to drive income.

This circumstance was also mentioned in the interviews. In terms of individual donors, Arlene explains, "Unless you have one benefactor with a bottomless or unlimited checkbook, all nonprofits will face the same issues [with sustainability] at one time or another and some to lesser or greater degrees." In this quote, we see the often-individualized connection between donors and sustainability in nonprofits. Similarly, Greg answers, "[Sustainability is] the ability for an organization to gather enough continual support that it will thrive without having to nickel and dime people at (*Laughs*) every single moment."

In these responses, we see that although sustainability is seen in terms of financial resources, these financial resources are often qualified by specific nonprofit terms, such as grants and individual benefactors. This conceptualization is not surprising considering

that nonprofit organizations are often heavily involved in fundraising. This involvement

necessitates keen awareness of opportunities and funding sources ranging from large

corporate grants to small individual contributions. Therefore, it is not surprising that

nonprofit organizations would frame sustainability in terms of the fundraising process

they deal with every day. Crystal sums up a variety of sources when she states:

> We need support from government, we need support from foundations, we need support
> from wealthy individuals, we need to do annual fundraisers, all of that is what makes it
> work, so I think that we have to be concerned with the sustainability of each one of those
> income sources.

Some informants took this one step further and linked the discussion of sustainability and

funding sources directly to their programs.

Funding and Programming

Of the nine informants who mentioned funding as key to sustainability, Lily,

George, James, Arlene and Joyce linked this funding directly to delivery of programs.

This is an important link, because it shows the importance that nonprofit organizations

place upon service delivery as opposed to financial gain. George explains:

> I'm concerned with the sustainability of some of our programs, for example [one of our
> programs] is to a very large extent self-supporting. If we don't raise grants and get
> foundations every year for it, then we won't do it and we just simply can't. Any resource
> that goes into it is at the expense of something else, so the sustainability of individual
> programs, I mean, most of the things that we are doing are very low cost, high impact...
> so I guess most of the sustainability concerns that we've had have to do with individual
> programs and projects and that sort of thing.

In this quote, we see that George recognizes the direct link between funding and service

delivery, and views sustainability as a connection between the two. Likewise, Joyce

states, "Being able to continue each year as far as our organization is concerned -

sustainability is to be able to have the funds to continue [our program], to support it."

James also describes sustainability as a link between programs and funding:

> I guess my perception of it would be continuing to be able to do what you do without having to worry if you can pay the bills next fiscal year. That's one side of it because the other side of it is within your own community is there a need that you are meeting and does the community believe that you are meeting that need and then that will continue to be a need that you'll continue to serve and they'll need you around.

Again, funding is viewed as a means to programming, as a necessity for service delivery.

This is an important link to make, because it supports the current characterization

of nonprofit success as the maximization of sum-of-benefits to society. Framing

sustainability as not only funding, but funding tied to programs, shows that nonprofit

organizations are concerned with sustainability of their missions while simultaneously

concerned with the sustainability of their funding. However, although some informants

clearly made this link, others were more general when discussing income.

Generalized Funding

While many informants spoke of funding in terms of fundraising activities and

donors, and others linked funding directly to programs, Jack, Jennifer and Daniel spoke

of sustainability as the need for funding in a more generalized way. For example, in

answering what sustainability meant to him, Jack said, "It's a way of staying, primarily

financially, healthy and strong and viable." In a similar vein, Jennifer explains,

"Sustainability is the ability I think from a financial standpoint of being able to put

together a working budget and be able to fund it, is sustainability. And, to be able to fund

that year after year. So, from a financial point of view, that's what sustainability is."

And finally, Daniel answers, "There are two ways [to define sustainability], one is

money, that is obvious."

In these quotes, we see that sustainability is defined in more general economic

terms. However, the above informants rarely stopped at defining sustainability only in

this way. They went on to discuss other factors involved in sustainability. For example,

Jennifer and Daniel also discussed sustainability as volunteerism. Therefore, while general financial concerns were one theme concerning the definitions of sustainability, these financial concerns were also seen in tandem with other themes.

Programming

In my interviews, ten informants (Lily, George, Clark, Arlene, Sandy, Joyce, Audrey, Dana, Greg, James) defined sustainability in terms of programming. Because of the varied nature of the arts organizations that participated, programming meant anything from putting on various types of shows (theater, dance, music, art) to delivering educational outreach programs. In this section, I will cover a few areas in regards to programming. First, when speaking of programming, many informants used the term "quality" to describe their programs - this is discussed in this section in terms of "the quality ideal." Also, in this section, I explore the tension between maintaining programs and growing programs.

The Quality Ideal

While some informants felt that sustainability meant just keeping their programming alive, Audrey spoke about sustainability and programming in terms of quality:

> Well, sustainability is being able to maintain the quality of programming and the quality of services that you provide in your organization. I think it's more important than quantity because even if you have budget cutbacks, which every organization has had over the years, if you can maintain quality and continue to do the work that is the very best you will be able to keep people involved in the organization and build support in that way, and building community support when you know national funding or government funding or state funding goes down, it is really what keeps your programs alive, it keeps the services alive, it keeps your mission alive, and that's what I think sustainability is about.

In this description, we see that it is not only important for Audrey to deliver programming, but to deliver the best programming possible. The passion in Audrey's response was engaging, and it reminded me that various informants had repeatedly mentioned quality in connection to programming throughout the interviews.

For example, eight out of the ten informants that defined sustainability in terms of programming also discussed the quality ideal concerning the core values and importance of their organizations. George, Lily, Sandy, Arlene, Joyce, Dana, Audrey, and James spoke of how important it was that their programming was of high quality. It was clear that these leaders were concerned with the level of service that they were providing to the community. For example, Dana states:

> Every time we had a choice, we chose quality [for our program]. It's important for us that all of our marketing, all of our publicity, whatever goes out there about [us] is quality, so we wouldn't want to be used to promote something that we didn't feel like was a quality service or offering. Wholesomeness, health, quality, good things, we want to be good (Laughs).

In describing the evolution of her organization's programming, Joyce says, "The reason [our program] was done was to open it up to a broader exposure for the kids and it also enhances the ability to have a big spectacular production OF QUALITY (Vocal emphasis) Emphasis on quality! (*Laughs*)."

Jennifer and Daniel also discussed quality of programming in regards to the mission and core values of their organizations. For example, when asked about the core values of her organization, Jennifer says, "Community and commitment and mutual respect for one another and then really wanting to reach out to the community at large and provide quality [programming], and I think we accomplish those goals." In discussing the quality ideal in his organization, Daniel carefully explained to me that the individuals that delivered the programming for his organization were extremely talented

and oftentimes had impressive credentials. He characterized the programming as being at

a "high level" at multiple points during the interview. Therefore, we see that this focus

on quality was a recurring theme. Furthermore, while some informants were happy to

continue at their current level of quality service, many spoke of the need to take their

programs to a new level of growth.

Sustainability vs. Growth

In my interviews, when some informants defined sustainability in terms of

programming, they also spoke of growth. In these responses, there was a tension

between defining sustainability in terms of maintaining programs and explaining the need

to grow programs. For example, Joyce notes:

> To me sustainability is kind of status quo, that's not an enhanced term. It's not to
> consistently improve and grow [our program], sustainability is this (*Joyce makes a
> gesture like a flat line*), that flat line, you just keep going where I think that our emphasis
> over the last couple of years has been to improve more than just sustain.

Sandy says, "By making a lot of hard decisions, business decisions, we've been able to

continue and be sustainable in what we do and we also have grown because people have

wanted [our program] to grow..." Finally, Crystal says:

> Growth is a really complicated question for nonprofits because I think on one hand you
> know it's sort of an unbridled and never ending growth is unrealistic, you know, you
> can't just keep quadrupling and doubling your audience...I mean you do strive to grow
> your audience, grow your budget all the time, so it's got to be sustainable, and how do
> you promote that growth?

In these definitions, we see that sustainability is seen as separate from growth and

that there is a tension between achieving sustainability and maintaining programs as

opposed to wanting to grow programs. This differentiation is interesting, because it

suggests that, although it is a buzzword and organizational concern, sustainability may

not assume primary importance to all nonprofit arts organizations. While many

informants are concerned with sustainability, we see that some are also concerned with the growth that follows. In this regard, the general desirability of organizational sustainability is called into question.

In this section, we have seen that many informants define sustainability in distinctly nonprofit ways in regards to continuation of programming. When talking about their programming, the quality ideal is repeated across organizations. Another factor in discussing sustainability and programming is the desire to maintain programs versus the desire to grow. These definitions provided a glimpse of how informants frame their communication in distinctly nonprofit ways. Now, the final theme in this chapter moves from programming to focus on the people behind the programs - the volunteers.

Volunteerism

All of the informants in this study noted that volunteerism was important to their organizations. Of the 14 organizations in this study, only four had more than two full time employees. Eight organizations had only one or two full time employees, and two had none. Therefore it should not have been surprising that when asked to define sustainability, Clark, Jennifer, Sandy, Arlene, Greg, Audrey, and Daniel explained the term in regard to volunteerism. They were eager to name and describe all of the volunteers that keep their organizations alive. Although networks of individuals were mentioned, oftentimes a key person in the organization was of crucial importance. Also, while these informants were extremely grateful for what their volunteers had already accomplished, they were also extremely concerned with sustainability in terms of maintaining volunteer interest and avoiding volunteer burnout.

Networks and Individuals

Every nonprofit organization involves a Board of Trustees or Directors who ensure that the organization is meeting their mission. While some Boards are largely in name only, other Boards are working Boards that have a great deal to do with the organization's every day activities. In defining sustainability, some informants pointed to their Board or a similar type of central network that helped their organization survive. For example, Arlene explains:

> I don't think that sustainability is something that has a beginning and an end; I think it's a constant. To be sustainable for a nonprofit, you have to always be focusing on that. Our sustainability is based on a strong Board Of Directors, a competent staff that can develop and make the programs that we've developed effective, a diversified funding strategy so that you are never reliant on just one revenue stream, and so I think that those are the several main things, and a plan, a strategy for how the organization is going to evolve and implement its programs.

In Arlene's quote, we can see a typical nonprofit structure led by a Board of Directors. While many informants also spoke of similar Boards, some spoke of a crucial central network that is active in the organization but not necessarily a Board. An example of a central network outside the Board is best described by Clark:

> To me, I think what has ensured [sustainability] thus far is how close the core group has become, somehow that generates more energy within themselves, it's generated a sense of community there, a pretty strong sense of community, so I think that's been a big impetus in keeping it together and it had just enough new people coming in to keep it going. It isn't like, it's funny, redefine core somehow. I would say that in the core right now there are people who have been there throughout and there are some additions to it, and actually it has been an issue in discussing how to get more people into, and that's kind of the roles I was talking about earlier about what we need to be to ensure sustainability is getting more people into that more active group and a lot of questions around that right now, so... I really am not sure we need to do about that, to be honest. We are struggling with that a little bit. I'm not sure if I really answered that question or not, because it seems like you are asking me what has made us sustainable. I say that it's that core group being close knit and having the belief to continue doing it, put forth their effort.

In this quote, we can see that Clark is describing a network of people like a Board who have a central or "core" role in the sustainability of the organization.

Therefore, we see that networks are important to an organization's sustainability, but so too were individuals. Jennifer, a Board President, is quick to highlight the work of her organization's Executive Director in addition to the work of her Board:

> I think also sustainability, there is a certain aspect that if you don't have a really good Board, a working Board is important to be able to have a sustainable organization, you have to have people that are committed and dedicated to doing all the work, and again, without [our ED], we would have fallen apart a long time ago, [our ED] is what keeps us organized. The rest of the Board does do actual work, we each have our little parts, but [our ED] is kind of the person that has the flowchart and makes sure that everybody is doing their job so [our ED] picks up a lot of loose ends, because there are loose ends (*Laughs*). So, sustainability too then is also just making sure that you've got people that are really willing to step up to the plate and perform.

In this quote, we see that Jennifer talks about sustainability not only in terms of a network like her Board, but also in terms of a key individual who has taken on an enormous amount of work. One organization that I interviewed that identified themselves as unsustainable cited the loss of a key individual as the reason for the organization's need for radical restructuring. Therefore, we can see that there are major benefits to having engaged and involved volunteers and also unfortunate consequences for organizations that cannot maintain strong volunteer involvement.

Volunteer Interest and Burnout

Volunteers are a fickle workforce. With an abundance of nonprofit organizations needing assistance with an endless supply of work, volunteers are valuable but not always reliable. Therefore, cultivating reliable and committed volunteers is an important part of nonprofit work and four informants noted that it is crucial to sustainability. Greg, Audrey, Daniel and Clark explained this challenge in detail. When I asked him if he was concerned with sustainability, Greg told me:

> Part of our issue, and, well, there are several reasons I can think of off the top of may head, first of all, some of the people who founded the organization are quite a bit older

than they were when they first started the organization, so sustainability in terms of renewing interest and enthusiasm and keeping a youthful vitality to the whole organization, I think that's pretty important right now.

Greg's quote highlights the importance of continuing to renew volunteer commitment and interest. This challenge of maintaining volunteer commitment and interest is also described by Audrey:

> I think that getting the message out about what we do is and why we do it is really tantamount to keeping us alive and I grab every glimmer like the two phone calls from past Board members this morning who still care about what do as an organization. Building that kind of network and making that happen but it takes an incredible amount of energy and it takes a lot of commitment just not on my part but on the Board and all of the people who are involved and we have [volunteers] in our programs that are incredible, they really do magnificent work, they are really dedicated to what they do. Being able to keep that energy is a challenge and especially as I get older and older and I keep trying to get more and more people involved in thinking about taking positions that really matter and not looking at salary as a bottom line, not looking at longterm retirement, those kinds of things, but thinking about what you can do in the world that's really of value.

In this quote, we see the challenge not only of renewing volunteer interest and commitment but also of recruiting a volunteer workforce with value claims and no monetary compensation. Then, once leaders have succeeded at that challenge of recruiting committed volunteers, after members do become a working or core member of the organization, there is always the threat of burnout.

Maslach (1982) defines burnout as having three dimensions: depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion. Burnout has been examined as a serious threat to service organizations (Miller, Stiff and Ellis, 1988) . During our interview, Daniel was quite concerned about the issue of burnout. Because of the enormous amount of work that his Board needed to accomplish, he stated:

> For Board members, the thing I really worry about is burnout because of the volunteer nature of our organization. There is a lot of work that's involved, and there is a lot of good will, but people that join the Board and if they are retired and in good health, there are some weeks that Board members will put in as much as ten, sometimes even 20 hours of their time... I am very partial to those Board members who do volunteer. But, at the

same time, it is difficult to sustain that level of volunteering, and it's not just the volunteers, it's just too much work.

Avoiding volunteer burnout was important to Clark as well. For example, when asked if his organization was concerned with sustainability, Clark noted that:

> I think right now in particular we are because I feel like we are going through a period where finding people to be really involved and active in the organization and take on some of the leadership and leadership roles that require some effort and work are becoming more difficult. We continue to track people to our [programs] but not necessarily into our organization and once you are in you become even more active and kind of like there is a core group and a lot of them have been doing a lot of the work for those 20 years plus that I've talked about it. You can definitely burn people out if you don't get other people to handle things so that's a good... It's definitely an issue for us right now. It's not a crisis or anything, but it certainly is... yeah... it makes me think about it affecting our ability to be able to continue to do this stuff we've been doing.

In this quote we see that Clark recognizes the need to get people increasingly involved and identified with his organization in order for them to become committed. However, he is also aware that, once people are committed and working a great deal, there is the threat of burnout. When the informants were discussing these issues, it was clear from their responses as well as their nonverbal reactions (furrowed brows, wringing hands, long pauses and sighs) that volunteers were valuable to their organization's sustainability and burnout was a serious concern. Daniel even noted that when it came to an important person in his organization that:

> He's a remarkable person, so to come back to your question of sustainability, as President of the Board, I have a responsibility to do whatever is necessary to keep him from feeling burned out and discouraged, ok, so I want to take his burden. I'm not trying to interfere or control him, but I want to absorb his burden, make it more fun for him.

Through Daniel's explanation, we can again see the importance of individual volunteer contributions to the organization's sustainability and also the heartfelt desire to thwart burnout in these important organizational members.

<p align="center">Chapter Two: Summary</p>

In this chapter, I described how the informants in this study defined the term sustainability. These definitions fell under three major themes: financial concerns, programming, and volunteerism. First, when discussing financial concerns, definitions of sustainability were framed by nonprofit terminology and frequently linked to programming. However, funding was also discussed in more generalized terms. Secondly, the programming theme explored the recurrence of the quality ideal as well as the tension between maintaining programs and growing programs. The discussion of programming was specific to nonprofit practice. Third and finally, sustainability was defined in terms of volunteerism. The definitions concerning volunteerism involved discussion of volunteer networks and individuals as well as the threat of volunteer burnout. This theme was also communicatively framed in terms of nonprofit practice.

Therefore, in this chapter, we see that sustainability is a multi-layered concept, and is often defined in terms of nonprofit practice. It is interesting to note these unique dimensions to such a frequently used concept. The reasons for this characterization and its implications for theory are further explored in Chapter Four.

In addition to definitions of sustainability, I asked my informants a number of questions about how they promoted their nonprofit arts organizations. Then, I asked if the organizations felt that this promotion was tied to sustainability. In the next chapter, I will address their responses concerning the range of promotional strategies used to remain sustainable. Then, I will discuss how these promotional strategies used for sustainability affect organizational identity.

CHAPTER THREE: SUSTAINABILITY AND PROMOTION

The second research question of this study was, "What is the range of promotional strategies used by nonprofit arts organizations to achieve sustainability?" Therefore, although the definition of sustainability was a central concern of my interview schedule, it was also important for me to determine how nonprofit arts organizations were achieving sustainability. I questioned whether sustainability was tied to promotion. If so, it would be important to describe the range of promotional strategies currently in use by nonprofit arts organizations. Furthermore, in addition to achieving sustainability, I also wondered if my informants felt that this promotion was important in shaping organizational identity. That led to my third and final research question, "How do promotional efforts to achieve sustainability shape organizational identity?"

To address the second research question, I asked a few general questions about the importance of promotion to my informants. Without exception, all informants stated that promotion was important to their organization. Some informants put additional stress on this importance, such as Lily, who said, "It's about all we've got! (*Laughs)* So yes." Arlene stated, "Promotion is critical, vital." James similarly states, "It's critical." Upon establishing the importance of promotion, I also asked if informants thought that promotion was linked to sustainability. With only one qualified response, all informants answered yes. Because one organization relied heavily on federal support, the informant's initial response was that promotion had nothing to do with federal support, but later stated that if lobbying was considered promotion, that lobbying did affect sustainability.

Therefore, all of the informants I interviewed agreed that their sustainability –

previously defined as the ability to get funding, execute programming, and recruit and

maintain volunteers – depended on promotion, and that promotion was important to their

organization. Then, organizations described a wide range of promotional strategies they

were using to achieve sustainability. After reviewing informant responses, I concluded

that these promotional strategies were characterized in four main ways. Some

organizations viewed promotion as what I call "traditional advertising", some as

fundraising, some as programming. All organizations viewed promotion as public

relations. Frequently, organizations viewed promotion as a blend of these four strategies.

In this chapter, I will discuss the characterization of promotion in these four ways, and

then explore the implications promotion has on organizational identity. These

implications include discussion of the struggle to keep mission central and the liberal use

of the community metaphor.

Promotion as Traditional Advertising

Thirteen out of fourteen informants explained that they engaged in some form of

traditional advertising. I define traditional advertising as promotion that is paid for,

including print, radio, television, web, outdoor, and guerilla advertising. Guerilla

advertising is any type of paid advertisement that is a unique concept, such as bar

coasters or coffee sleeves or bookmarks. Many informants discussed traditional

advertising with hesitation. For example, when I asked Jennifer if promotion was

important to her organization, she replied:

> It's really more though a budget thing, you know, how much money do you spend on a
> Missoulian ad? How much should you spend in the Independent, those kind of things.
> So, yeah, I think it is, I think we would get a wider community participation [in our
> program] if we promoted it a little bit better. Again, that's a learning curve thing too I
> think.

In this we see the struggle to spend money on promotion with a limited budget. This struggle is articulated by Sandy as well when she says: "Financially we can't spend as much money on promotion as we would like to sometimes. I'd love to be able to do a huge ad in the NY Times for [our program], but we don't have the money...I don't have the budget."

Also, when discussing traditional advertising, some informants felt unsure of the impact of their paid efforts. Again, due to a limited budget, it was difficult for informants to spend time and money tracking the effectiveness of their ad campaigns and so some admitted that they questioned the efficacy of this type of promotion. For example, when I asked Lily about the effects of her organization's traditional advertising campaign, she said, "I'm not sure that I know. If you pay $900 for a billboard, it is hard to know when the audience comes to [the program] whether they are there because they saw the billboard or they saw the newspaper ad or they got the postcard you mailed them, so I just don't know." Also, when asked about the success of his organization's ad campaign, Greg answers, "You know, we haven't really done a good job of tracking all of those things so I'm not sure if I can answer that for you. It's hard to say, I mean, we use radio and TV also, but I don't know how... what works and what doesn't necessarily."

Therefore, we see that although almost all of the informants promoted their organization using traditional advertising, some grappled with budget constraints or determination of the advertising's value. This hesitation to put money into traditional advertising was not surprising. Nonprofit organization's budgets are typically heavily scrutinized by organizational members as well as by potential funders and are judged in terms of service delivery. Drucker (1990) notes that if a for-profit business spends

resources on non-results, it loses its own money, but if a non-profit wastes resources, it is

wasting the donor's money. In this way, budget decisions are crucial. If a nonprofit

leader is uncertain how to justify the expense of traditional advertising, if they are unable

to tie such promotional dollars to service delivery, then it will be more difficult to have

such an expense approved of by the Board or potential funders. Joyce explains:

> I think it can also, there's a lot of mistakes that are made when people put a lot of money into the promotion unnecessarily. It's that fine line of walking just enough polished look, because you are presenting yourself as a nonprofit organization, so if you come off with this majorly flashy stuff, anybody with half a brain who has done any marketing is going to see that a lot of your money is going into that instead of into the [programming]. So, we sort of make it clear that the money that we try to put together is really about the [programming], not about giving some fat piece of slick material to you, but polished enough so that it's not embarrassing. We still look a little grassroots and so it's really finding that happy medium because I'm really offended when some organization is calling themselves nonprofit and they've got some high falutin slick paper expensive mass mailing, and you go, "Oh yeah right, they are hurting really bad, they don't need my money." So, it's walking a fine line.

Here, we see the reluctance to spend money on promotion at the risk of public scrutiny.

In walking that "fine line" nonprofit leaders have to promote without appearing too

professional or successful. A similar balancing act is described by Clark:

> Sometimes I feel like we need to look a little more... I don't want to use the word professional... Yeah, perhaps, but I'm not sure that would really make that much of a difference in our promotions actually because I think different kind of advertisements appeal to different kinds of people. Sometimes I think ours definitely seem... oh... I cannot think of the term... homegrown – which is good, I mean, and it could be just my own personal bias. Really, I am a little bit leery of saying anything about us.

In this quote, we can see that Clark cannot determine if it is better to have professional

looking advertising in favor of looking more grassroots.

Promotion as Fundraising

When asked about the promotional strategies of their organizations, eight

informants (Lily, George, Jennifer, Sandy, Greg, Crystal, James and Joyce) discussed

promotion as fundraising activities. While some spoke of fundraising collateral such as

direct mail letters or newsletters, others spoke of various types of events. When asked

what she feels has been the most successful promotion, Lily says:

> Maybe benefit events that we've invited people to come to as fundraisers and they pay
> money and we have some dance happening and have a party or food or dinner or
> whatever and that has served to raise visibility because we will target someone and say
> bring some friends. We have also done direct mail kinds of things, which has been useful
> for fundraising as well.

Here we can see that Lily incorporates both fundraising events and direct mail pieces as

successful types of promotion for her organization. George also notes that his

organization engages in promotion through fundraising. He states:

> We are always trying to raise funds. I don't think that we are spectacularly successful,
> for unrestricted donations we do pretty well for this kind of organizations. We have done
> fairly well with out of state grants for specific projects. You can get grant money for
> events and for shorter term projects for ongoing operations and regranting and all that, it
> is very difficult to do, and fortunately [a major funding source] takes care of that. A lot
> of promotion.

Here, we see the recognition that through applying for grants and trying to raise funds,

his organization was engaging in promotional activity. Likewise, Jennifer describes how

fundraising is a promotional opportunity for her organization. When I asked what types

of promotional efforts were the most successful, she replied:

> Now we are talking just advertising, talking advertising the [program] and not what we
> do as fundraisers?
> *Georgi: What do you mean by fundraisers?*
> Well, promotionally, there are a couple things we always do... Raising money is difficult
> and trying to get people to actually give us large chunks of money has not necessarily
> been successful.

Then, after describing many of their fundraising efforts, Jennifer says, "...so all of those

have actually been pretty successful fundraisers, promotional raisers."

In these examples, we see that many informants felt that their organization was

getting good promotional coverage through fundraising collateral and events. Next, I will

explore promotion as organizational programming.

Promotion as Programming

When speaking of promotional strategies, six informants (Jennifer, Sandy,

George, James, Arlene and Audrey) noted that their programming was promotion in and

of itself. The programming of these informants varied from performing arts to local

events. George described an event program through his organization that runs once a

year, and explained that the program was good promotion for his organization. He

summarized by saying, "So, particularly if it's an ongoing event that people get used to,

those sorts of things, it's very good promotion." Another example of this strategy was

explained by Sandy:

> One of the things that we addressed in 1991 for improvement is that we want to get more
> children involved in our programs... So, internally we worked on that, we just improved
> our programs, we didn't change our marketing, we just improved our programs, and the
> kids started coming and coming and we have gotten bigger.

In this quote, we see that, as a promotional strategy, Sandy's organization made their

programs better. By improving the quality of their programs, their organization was able

to be more successful in delivering their services. When asked about his organization's

promotional success, James also discusses this relationship:

> Recently, that have been the most successful for us, it's kind of two-fold. It's not simply
> how you promote; it's what you are promoting. So, we can sell the heck out of our
> program, but if it's not really something that people are interested in coming to see, it
> doesn't matter how we promote it. I mean that sounds obvious, but it is not as obvious as
> you would think.

In this quote, we see again the characterization of quality programming as a crucial part

of promotion.

This characterization of programming as promotion in and of itself is a distinctly

nonprofit way of discussing this topic. Because of the central importance of

programming and service delivery, most organizations are striving toward what we have

already discussed as a "quality ideal." Informants recognize that if the organization's

programming is reaching that quality ideal, it can essentially promote itself. The focus on

programming as promotion also makes sense due to the reluctance of informants to spend

funds on traditional advertising. Therefore, it is clear that finding inexpensive and

creative ways to increase promotion is key to nonprofit organizations. One such method

is public relations.

Promotion as Public Relations

When asking about promotional strategies, all of my informants mentioned public

relations, making it the most frequently mentioned form of promotion in the study.

Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1999) define public relations as, "The management function

that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an

organization and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends (pg. 6)."

Typical public relations activities that were mentioned by the informants included word

of mouth, networking at events and conferences, public speaking opportunities, and

establishing relationships with the local media such as newspaper reporters and television

reporters. Many of the informants talked about issuing press releases and the challenge

to get stories covered in the local media.

Public relations was not only the most frequently mentioned promotional strategy;

it was often described as the most effective. For example, when asked about his

organization's most successful promotional effort, James states:

> But, we really worked hard to get the word out so I think historically what has been
> successful for us is, it's all a package, your paid advertising, your marketing campaign
> that you run in the paper and in your billboards and radio ads, all of that has to support
> everything else you do, but that alone doesn't do the job. It's PR PR PR that has worked
> for us and that is hiring professionals to get the word out and get the quote unquote free
> advertising, get the media interested in the story of what we are doing so we get the big
> story in the Missoulian and a couple things on the TV and a couple of live interviews on

the radio where it's always out there and it's buzz rather than just our promotional materials. PR is the key, has been the key for us recently.

This is also seen in Dana's response to the same question:

> Public relations more than marketing, more than paying for radio or TV or print media, we do better putting out press releases, because we are a nonprofit and the media in this community is so supportive of [our programming], usually if I put out a press release, we get mentioned everywhere. And I believe that people are more likely to listen to things that appear to be news articles or informational than they do to advertising, probably because that is what I respond to. I know that other people, certainly there are other people that respond more to advertising, but because it is not what I think of as effective, I would probably go the other way a little bit more.

In these quotes, we see that public relations is a frequently used and important tool for nonprofit promotion. This is not surprising considering the aforementioned hesitation of many informants to spend their highly scrutinized budgets on paid advertising.

<div align="center">Promotion and Organizational Identity</div>

After identifying the four predominant promotional strategies of the informant organizations, I asked informants, "Do promotional strategies shape this organization's identity?" Many informants had a difficult time with this question, a few asked me to repeat it, and many took long pauses before answering. George, Audrey and Daniel all denied a relationship. Greg and Audrey said no to the question, and Daniel answered, "I don't think so, I wouldn't say yes." Jennifer and Joyce spoke of a slight relationship. Jennifer noted that the promotional strategies might shape the organization's identity in terms of affecting its membership. Joyce was hesitant about the question and answered, "I certainly think [promotion] plays a part. I don't think it's a major part." Crystal was the only informant who agreed that there was a relationship.

While some informants denied a relationship altogether, some qualified one, and only one agreed, most informants quickly responded that the relationship was the other way around. Lily, Clark, Jack, Sandy, Arlene, Dana, and James all explained that the

promotional strategies should not shape organizational identity but *organizational*

identity should shape the promotional strategies. For example, Jack responded, "Not

necessarily. *Why not?* I wasn't thinking of... well, hmm, do our promotional strategies

shape our identity... I think it kind of goes the other way around. You have an identity

and you want to promote based on the identity not create an identity based on the

promotion." Dana echoed this response when she explained, "No, I think it is the other

way around, that the organization shapes the promotional strategies."

Upon investigating this relationship, it was clear that in their responses, the

informants were dealing with two main tensions. First, they wanted to establish the

integrity of their programs and emphasize that their missions were central to the

organization and were not affected by promotion. Secondly, they wanted to assert that in

promotion, they were still appealing to everyone in the community as opposed to

engaging in strategic promotion to certain audiences in order to generate income. In this

section, I discuss these two tensions and their implications.

Integrity and Centrality of Mission

As we have discussed, when asked if promotional strategies shape organizational

identity, many informants denied a relationship and many plainly stated that the

relationship was the other way around. However, when discussing the reverse effect –

identity shaping promotion, some informants discussed a tension between promotion and

integrity in their answers. For example, Lily answered:

> I personally think it should be the other way around, that your identity should shape your
> promotion. I thought about that when we had bar coasters, because there is nothing about
> who we are that is about bars, or for that matter, coffee shops. Although I think that the
> coffee sleeves we consider more our audience than bar patrons maybe. So, I don't know,
> that's an interesting question. I think we still are who we are, I think that we have
> struggled quite a lot to come up with an image or package that reflects that to the world.

I feel that I still don't know a lot about that even though I have been doing this for a long time. That is hard for me. It's hard.

James also discussed a struggle in this characterization:

The goal would be the other way around. What's the best way to word it... If the promotional strategy is exactly right, and it hits the mark, it can inspire your organizational identity to better itself or take an approach that works better. But, I wouldn't say that your promotional strategy, at least for us, I think that our promotional strategy would be a failure if it changed our identity. Is that what it was? Identity? Is that the word you used? *Yes*. I think they work hand in hand. I mean, internally, I think we know who we are, but externally, I think we need to educate our community on who we are, so maybe externally your promotional strategy can change the perception of your identity, but I don't know, our identity can change and it should... you should change a little and adapt with the times, but I hope that would drive how you promote yourself rather than the other way around. Yeah, definitely hand in hand.

These two responses show a sensemaking process where the informants struggle with maintaining the integrity of the organization and its mission in discussing promotion.

This struggle was very interesting and I discovered that in the interviewing process, it seemed as if informants viewed this question about promotional strategies shaping identity as a trick question or a question of integrity. Because they were so quick to flip my question back the other way around, I realized how important it was for the informants to keep their mission central and keep their integrity intact by disallowing their promotional strategies to have a large effect on their organizational identity. For example, George is quick to reaffirm his organization's mission and integrity when he explains:

I would say that we are oriented more towards the view, and this is very inclusive, but I think most people would say who are associated, "Here is [our programming] and our job is to take [it] to the public" and we are not asking the public what it wants, we are saying that we have something here that is valuable and you need to have more of it. You are always thinking in terms of market interest and needs and demands and looking for opportunities and all that, but by and large we are not very market driven and frankly I don't want to be market driven, everything else out there is, maybe there are a few things that don't have to be, particularly if they are good things.

In this quote, we see that George does not think much of promotion shaping identity. He characterizes this process as a market driven strategy, which he doesn't want to be a part of. This differentiation is quite important because it again shows a struggle to keep mission and integrity central to the organization. The unease with outside forces shaping identity points to a need for informants to keep the mission in the forefront. Additionally, it was important for many informants to keep community central.

Promotion and the Community

In addition to the tension between promotion and integrity of the mission, there was also a tension between promotion and service delivery to the whole community. Dana, Jack, Greg, James, Jennifer, Crystal, Clark and George stressed that their organizations were in place to serve the entire community. When I asked who their organizations were most trying to assist, these informants were unable to answer the question in specific terms. Instead, there was a predominance of the term "community" in characterizing their audiences. When asked who his organization most assists, Jack states, "I would say generally the community of Missoula as a whole." Jennifer describes who her organization assists as "the community at large." Similarly, Clark answers, "Definitely I would say in the end like I said we consider ourselves a kind of all-inclusive organization, so our target definitely covers the whole demographic spectrum, and it's hard for us, we fault narrowing it down, hopefully we are pretty inclusive." When asked why, Clark continues:

> I think it just evolved out of that wanting to build a sense of community in the early hours of the organization. It only made sense, that if we were trying to foster that sense of community we want to bring all people of all demographics together and have them at our events.

In addition to the repetition of the term community, there was also a recurrence of the term "everybody" or "everyone." For example, when asked about who his organization is trying to assist, James says, "I would say anyone and everyone. We don't discriminate. I think there's a place for all economic levels, all backgrounds, everybody, so I can't really answer that question as far as a specific type of person or age or any of that." Likewise, Crystal states:

> You know, um, that's... we don't...I mean I think part of the problem with all of your questions is that they represent a hierarchy and, you know, an organization like ours doesn't really...you know we have a really broad mission because we are [a program] that serves the community... So we have a really broad constituency.

Because these informants viewed their organizations as assisting the whole community, or everyone, when asked who the target for their promotional messages was, their answers were similarly broad and again stressed inclusivity. For example, when asked who was the target for his organization's promotional messages, Jack states,"[Our programming] targets everybody; it's supposed to be something for everybody, so it targets everybody, so we try to throw it against the bigger wall." Dana answered, "In general, probably, well, I'd have to go with everybody again" and Clark responded, "Again, we are kind of a (*Laughs*) shotgun target area. We're all demographics and ages basically."

In these responses, we see that many informants felt uncomfortable in giving specific answers to questions regarding who they were serving and who they were targeting with promotional messages. Instead, these informants stressed the community at large and the importance of reaching everybody. At times, I again felt that informants viewed my question as a trick question or a question of their integrity. For example, when asking, "Who is the target for your promotional messages?" James and Crystal

balked at the question and went as far as calling such a practice discriminatory. This discussion of audiences and targets for promotion was uniquely nonprofit, because in for profit contexts, it is crucial to have a branding focus or target market. In most corporate media plans, extensive market research is done on target audiences, and such audiences are meticulously broken down by age, gender, ethnicity, income, education level, etc. (www.admedia.org). The idea of promoting without a target appears to be a uniquely nonprofit way of framing promotional activities.

Chapter Three: Summary

In this chapter, I discussed how informants characterized promotion in four main ways: as traditional advertising, fundraising, programming and public relations. Traditional advertising was mainly seen as paid advertising placement, and was approached with apprehension due to highly scrutinized budgets. Fundraising was also considered to be promotion, and ranged in approach from direct mail pieces to events. Many informants cited programming in and of itself as a way to promote the organization. Finally, I discussed promotion as public relations, the most frequently used strategy. These four promotional strategies were discussed with a nonprofit lens.

In addition to discussing promotional strategies, I also discussed the implications that promotion has on organizational identity. These implications included discussion of the struggle to keep mission central and the liberal use of the term community. In my final chapter, I will discuss the implications of these results on communication theory and nonprofit practice.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

Sustainability is an important term for nonprofit organizations, and all of my

informants were eager to discuss this issue. After most of my interviews, informants

thanked me for asking them about sustainability. During the interview process, they were

able to take time away from their busy day-to-day schedules in order to make some sense

of this widely used concept. They were also able to think through their promotional

strategies and ponder their importance. In this chapter, I will provide a closer

examination of the answers to this study's three research questions. Finally, I will

provide implications for theory and practice.

RQ1: How do nonprofit arts organizations define sustainability?

From the data I gathered, sustainability was defined by nonprofit arts

organizations in three ways. First, nonprofit arts organizations view sustainability as

funding, both in terms of nonprofit practice and service delivery as well as in more

generalized terms. Secondly, nonprofit arts organizations view sustainability as the need

to maintain programming. While this was of utmost important to many, a few

organizations felt that growing programs was also important. Finally, nonprofit arts

organizations view sustainability as volunteerism, and stress the benefits of network and

individual volunteers. These volunteers are so important to sustainability that burnout

was of concern.

These issues demonstrate that sustainability in nonprofit arts organizations is

predominantly seen as financial. However, the financial characterizations that informants

used were often framed in terms of nonprofit practice – invoking donors and grant

makers and reinforcing the link between that funding and their programs. In this way, we

can see that earlier conceptions of sustainability as a general financial term may be limiting. Sustainability in nonprofit arts organizations is not merely financial, but more nuanced. Even though nonprofit arts organizations are facing increasing competition for funding and commercial encroachment on their activities, they still define sustainability in a uniquely nonprofit way. The three informants that spoke of generalized funding instead of nonprofit funding went on to incorporate other themes in their answers. In this way, the funding was not just seen as the means, but the means to the end result of programs.

In addition to defining sustainability in financial terms, nonprofit arts organizations also defined sustainability in terms of continuation of programming and engagement of volunteers. In this way, we can see that the service function of informants' organizations is kept in the forefront. These organizations wish to keep programs alive that are not generating revenue and are difficult to continue. For example, the Symphony may want to tour around the state of Montana to play for small communities, which means a considerable expense. These are programs that require a lot of help from people who will agree to work for free. By defining sustainability as the continuation of programming and volunteerism, informants gave a uniquely nonprofit characterization to the term sustainability. Sustainability may have something to do with finances, but it is not just income.

When talking about programming, nonprofit arts organizations describe sustainability as the ability to continue to provide programs, but not just any programs. Informants focused on the "quality" work they produce. In this way, we see that sustainability for these organizations meant providing not only a program, but the best

program they could muster, the most quality work possible. By repeating the quality ideal over and over, it was clear that nonprofit arts organizations constantly have to justify their existence. Additionally, some nonprofit arts organizations strained for improvement. This move toward improvement, and growth for some, challenges the desirability of sustainability. Some of my informants did not want to just produce and sustain programming, they wanted to provide the best programming possible, and eventually grow programs. Sustainability in this regard can be seen as confining. By framing a nonprofit arts organization's goal as sustainability, some organizations could be stunting their own growth.

Such strain upon growth was also evident in the way that nonprofit arts organizations spoke of sustainability and volunteerism. While my informants view networks and individual volunteers as important to sustainability, many also hoped to grow their volunteer base. By only focusing on sustaining current volunteer involvement, some nonprofit arts organizations feared the possibility of burning out their current volunteer base. A few informants were extremely concerned with recruiting more people to work for their organizations. In this theme, we see again that sustainability in terms of volunteerism could be viewed as confining and problematic to a nonprofit arts organization, and detrimental to its growth.

Through the three themes in this answer, we see that sustainability is a multi-layered concept in nonprofit arts organizations. It not only includes the need for funding, but is inextricably linked to the ability to provide quality programming and maintain and recruit volunteers. However, although nonprofit arts organizations struggle with the need to remain sustainable, some also have the desire to grow. In this way, promoting

sustainability as a goal for these organizations could be confining and inhibit growth or creativity. This points to the need to further investigate the desirability of sustainability and its possible limitations on nonprofit practice.

RQ2: What is the range of promotional strategies used by nonprofit arts organizations to achieve sustainability?

The discussion of sustainability went hand in hand with the discussion of promotional strategies. By leaving the realm of promotion open to interpretation, I discovered that nonprofit arts organizations view promotional strategies in four main ways. The first way that nonprofit arts organizations characterized promotional strategies was as traditional advertising. Such paid advertising was discussed in a hesitant fashion, because organizations were reluctant to spend money and were often unsure of the efficacy of traditional advertising. Thus, although many scholars are concerned with the marketization of the nonprofit sector, we can see in this theme that nonprofit arts organizations still grapple with the appropriate use of paid media. There is a reluctance to spend money in this area – money on implementation of commercial advertising as well as the evaluation of that advertisings' impact on revenue.

The second way that nonprofit arts organizations characterized promotional strategies was as fundraising, which included events and direct mail pieces to potential donors. The need to raise funds, and the use of fundraising strategies as promotion, makes it easier to understand the quality ideal. In justifying their existence to potential donors and granters, there is the constant need to keep programs at a consistent level of quality. In this strategy, articulating who you are and what you stand for is of utmost importance.

Third, nonprofit arts organizations characterized their own programming as a promotional strategy. This theme was the most unexpected. However, the process of focusing on programs to make them better so that the programs promote themselves makes sense in a sector that is so strapped for funding. While studies have considered the "dark side" of nonprofit competition and increasing marketization, few have shed light on a possible benefit such as the one described in this theme. Because of increasing competition, instead of becoming more commercialized, some nonprofits may become better and better at their programming. This is an appealing area for further study

Finally, and most emphatically, nonprofit arts organizations characterized public relations as an important promotional strategy. This should not come as a surprise due to the limited financial resources of nonprofit arts organizations and the characteristically low cost of public relations strategies. However, this strategy has its own challenges. Although informants spoke of the overwhelming benefit of public relations activities, many spoke of problems encountered with miscommunication. With less control over the finished product in public relations versus paid advertising, many organizations find themselves occasionally misrepresented. Both Arlene and Sandy explain this frustration. When asked how she feels about how her organization is portrayed in promotional efforts, Arlene states:

> I think it is portrayed quite accurately or quite well, the only time or place that I feel, where I kind of go "uh" is when a journalist who is experienced may miss the main points of an interview and may convey inaccurate information. That is very frustrating, but that would be true for any organization. I know a lot of arts organizations have said that getting publicity and getting promotion of what they do is very difficult, but that is always the case... getting coverage. But I think that my pet peeve is when information about an organization is inaccurate or incomplete.

Similarly, after explaining several mistakes made in the local newspaper, Sandy says, "I've thought many times that we should go over to the Missoulian, have a staff day.

Invite all of them over here, have a quick tour and say, this is what we do." Therefore, it is interesting to note that the most favored form of promotion is the one in which nonprofit organizations expressed the least control.

In these findings, we see that promotional strategies encompass a wide variety of activities for nonprofit arts organizations. Traditional advertising and public relations were important strategies used. However, by keeping the term "promotional strategies" vague and not confining its use to advertising or marketing, we see that, in nonprofit organizations, fundraising and programming are two additional areas where promotion or external communication is critical. This suggests that the examination of communication with external audiences is extremely pertinent to nonprofit arts organizations, who have such a wide variety of promotional activities.

RQ3: How do promotional efforts to achieve sustainability shape organizational identity?

Nonprofit arts organizations recognize that the promotional strategies of traditional advertising, fundraising, programming, and public relations are all tied to the sustainability of their organizations. However, most of the arts organizations in this study denied that these promotional strategies shape organizational identity. Any answer that hinted at a relationship was very qualified and hesitant. Many informants seemed to react to the questions intended to answer this research question in a negative way, and voiced concern with organizational integrity. In the end, most of the participants noted that the relationship was the other way around: that organizational identity shaped the promotional strategies and NOT vice versa.

The answer to this question is fascinating. Because of the overwhelming theme of "the other way around," this points to the fact that nonprofit organizations are very

mission focused. However, in order to interrogate the notion of being mission centered, I

questioned all the informants about the trend toward nonprofits becoming more

businesslike. Even though their definitions of sustainability and use of promotional

strategies were discussed in a distinctly nonprofit way, most organizations favored the

advice that nonprofits should run more like businesses. Clark was the only informant that

disagreed, stating:

> Maybe businesses need to run more like nonprofits. It would be a happier world!
> (Laughs) It's kind of like the government. Everybody say that government should run
> more like business but I think business should run more like government and be beholden
> to the people so... I don't see business models as a panacea.

Aside from Clark, everyone else agreed to a certain extent that nonprofits should

run like businesses. When answering, informants stressed a few areas in particular. Lily,

Jennifer, Sandy, Arlene, Joyce, James, Crystal and Audrey stressed fiscal responsibility

issues. George, Jack, Sandy, Audrey, and Daniel discussed accountability, or

scrutinizing costs and benefits. Greg, James and Daniel mentioned the establishment of

procedures, and Joyce, James and Dana spoke of removing emotion and avoiding feelings

of entitlement. However, no one spoke of maximizing profits or increasing commercial

activity, areas that have been singled out as problems in nonprofit literature.

<center>Implications for Theory and Practice</center>

This study makes a contribution to the study of both organizational identity theory

and theory on nonprofit marketization. In addition, this study suggests several

implications for nonprofit practice. In this section, I outline these findings and their

suggestions for future research and practice.

This study augments the discussion of organizational identity in two main ways.

In Chapter One, I traced the evolution of identity scholarship and noted a historical

emphasis on studying identity and identification within the container of the organization itself. By journeying beyond organizational boundaries, this study makes an important contribution to scholarship on how organizational identity is shaped by external communication. Although organizational members in this study may deny that external communication shapes identity, this study encourages the continued interrogation of these messages. Clearly there are a number of powerful external discourses that come to bear on nonprofit arts organizations, including discussions of sustainability and businesslike practices. Also, from this data, we see that the community is the standpoint from which marketization itself takes on a unique character. The focus on community could effect not only how promotion is carried out, but who should take part in developing promotional strategies.

Because the community focus is so strong in nonprofit arts organizations, we can see that this affects the way promotion is carried out. The dimensions of promotion are very different – with nonprofit arts organizations attempting to promote to everyone and anyone in the community. This "promotion without targets" illustrates that promotion is taking on a different character in the nonprofit arts, and could change from one arena to the next. In the business world, promotion without targets would be unimaginable. This is quite a remarkable difference, and warrants further study. While nonprofit arts organizations feel that promoting without targets is the most ethical way to approach the community, there are pros and cons to this type of strategy. The benefit of promoting without targets is that a nonprofit arts organization can feel like they are ethically upholding the ideals of an institution that is meant for public enjoyment. With this strategy, there can be no doubt that the organization is a community resource. If a

nonprofit arts organization were to selectively promote their programs, this would call

into question their collective function and possibly even their nonprofit status. However,

in promoting without targets, a nonprofit arts organization could be diluting their

message or scope in order to maintain broad appeal, which could be detrimental to

creativity or provocative civic dialogue. Practically speaking, promoting without targets

could also require a larger budget and staff and/or volunteer time commitment.

Promoting without targets highlights the overwhelming importance of community

to the nonprofit arts organizations in this study. However, if the community is so

important, as evidenced in the data, perhaps the community should assist in shaping an

organization's identity. This would mean that a major factor in shaping identity would

come from an external source. However, most informants denied such a link. With the

repetition of "It's the other way around", most informants discussed that their

organizations were shaping their own identity and creating messages to send out to the

community. However, why isn't it important to involve the community in shaping the

organization's identity? Must the organization itself always be the sole voice in

articulating what an organization is and what it stands for? This struggle was evident in a

quote from Crystal:

> Now this has to do with, to some degree, I think it really always returns to the mission
> and who we are trying to serve and, you know, what, um... it's easy for an arts
> organization, people who run an arts organization, to feel a lot of ownership over it. You
> know it's always a labor of love to some degree, varying degrees, but usually a pretty
> healthy degree and I think from my past experience what I have come to understand is
> that a lot of times there's a certain myopic quality that can develop with that ownership
> because you're working so hard, you work so hard for artists and you work so hard to
> present this great product and it's sort of an altruistic venture in a lot of ways and that you
> can feel saintly doing it and forget that you need your audience to understand what it is
> your offering and have ownership over it to, because if they don't, they're not going to
> become members, they're not going to support you. You're going to have a real dilemma
> on your hands in terms of audience response and so I think that that's kind of one of the
> lessons I've learned... I've come to understand that it's important that the identity... that
> we don't have such a personal connection to that identity, that we help the city and the

> people of the city own [it]. I mean that's the best case scenario is if everybody really ends up feeling ownership over it.

In this quote, we see that the concept of organizational identity might best be arrived at through a partnership between internal organizational members and external constituents such as "the community." In this way, the ultimate goals of the organization are best achieved, and the anti-discriminatory stance becomes less lip service and more real.

Secondly, this research supports the recent trend of identity research that characterizes organizational identity as a site of constantly negotiated organizational tension. While past research on the topic of organizational identity attempts to understand this phenomena in specific terms, such as Albert and Whetten's (1985) three central qualities of organizational identity, this study supports the view that organizational identity is continually contested and negotiated, and can only be understood through close examination of discourses that reproduce its meaning. For example, in this study, while all nonprofit arts organizations felt that sustainability was crucial to them, the definition of sustainability is multi-layered and somewhat ambiguous.

In addition to its contribution to organizational communication theory, this study also adds to current research on the perils of nonprofit marketization. While the nonprofit arts organizations in this study have taken steps to deal with the increasing competition in their sector, these steps do not always indicate movement down the slippery slope of commercialization. In a study on the nature of commercialization, Young (1998) notes that pains are taken by the associations he studied to avoid activities that would damage their ability to pursue their missions. This study supports Young's characterization in that the informants discussed in this study take care in relating any sustainability-driven activity back to programming and mission. In fact, this study also

points to the need to investigate not only the perils of competition in the nonprofit sector, but also the benefits. In other words, we may not only be getting more marketized nonprofit organizations, but more efficient, quality programming.

This study points to the need to investigate the benefits of competition. From this study, I cannot attempt to make conclusions regarding such benefits. However, from informant responses, I can see that the challenge to remain sustainable might not be entirely negative. With increased competition, some arts organizations are becoming savvier in approaching problems and finding solutions. Because of the qualitative research method used in this study, face-to-face interviews, it is possible that some informants wanted to showcase the best of what they had to offer. Therefore, further research on competition on nonprofit organizations is needed to fully understand the complete spectrum of effects.

In addition to its theoretical suggestions, this study suggests several practical recommendations for nonprofit arts organizations, including the need for effective public relations, better media relationships, and the need to seriously investigate the notion of community. Because all of the organizations in this study stressed the importance of public relations activities, it is important that these activities are carefully implemented. This suggests the need for public relations education in nonprofit arts organizations, and also suggests that these organizations need to develop stronger relationships with the local media. In order to achieve this, and as one informant suggested herself, it would be helpful for my informants to have regular meetings with media representatives in order to fully educate them on their work in the community. At these meetings, it would also benefit nonprofit organizations to hear from media representatives about the preferred

methods of communication regarding activities and events. While some larger

organizations in this study may already be doing this, many are not. Through

establishing stronger media relationships, the time and effort so precious to nonprofit

organizations could be more efficiently managed. Because of the importance of

nonprofit organizations to our quality of life and democracy, these meetings should not

be considered an advantage over for profit organizations, but rather an equalizer.

Finally, in addition to public relations education and advocacy, nonprofit arts

organizations need to seriously address the notion of community in their organizations.

Due to the ubiquitous nature of this term, it appears that "the community" has taken on

the status of a "god term". This circumstance has not escaped attention of

communication scholars. For example, Della-Piana and Anderson (1995) write that,

"The mysteriousness and positive ambivalence of the term 'community' hold both

traditions of social commitment and expressive individualism together loosely yet

productively (p.197)." However, although the invocation of "community" may be

helpful in inspiring community service, as in Della-Piana and Anderson's study, it is

uncertain whether it is productive when considering promotion. When "community"

refers to a target for promotional messages, when "everyone" needs to be reached,

promotion becomes a gargantuan task. Therefore, further research is needed in order to

investigate whether a more specific characterization of "community" could maximize

promotional resources.

Conclusion

During my thesis research, it was exciting to meet and talk with my14 informants.

These leaders of nonprofit arts organizations helped me to understand that sustainability

is an important and multi-layered concept. It was fascinating to hear about all the
different methods of promotion being used to achieve sustainability. With small
workforces and heavily scrutinized expenses, these informants still talked about the
importance of traditional advertising, fundraising collateral, programming, and public
relations activities. These activities were seen as the product of an internally driven
organizational identity, although most organizations stressed the importance of ownership
by "the community." It was interesting to hear the informants attempt to make sense of
the relationship between identity and external communication. Their responses mark an
important step in problematizing the boundaries between an organization and the outside
world. They show that organizational identity is a site of constantly negotiated tensions
that are reproduced through organizational discourse. I value the time that I was able to
spend with every informant, and view this research as a christening of my future research
agenda.

Appendix A

Implications for Personal Growth

Many researchers like us are accustomed to writing about theoretical and practical implications of their studies. So, in keeping with tradition, I provided you with the theoretical and practical implications of my thesis research. However, I am left thinking that there is much more to this research than a ream of paper written in a professional manner. Ghost sentences haunt the double spaced pages with the things I didn't and couldn't say. So bear with me. It has been difficult for me to remain so professional for so many pages and so many months. In my heart, I feel there should be more room to talk about the mess, the stress, the growth that I have been through. So I'll do it here. I call this appendix my "Implications for Personal Growth."

It hardly seems appropriate or encouraged to discuss how your study has affected your life. In most studies, even qualitative studies such as mine, you never hear much about the researcher – before or after the study. We chronicle the research for history, never really thinking much about how our little lives make a difference. However, I think of my friend Dr. Melanie Trost who, before leaving our department, stood in front of her classes and told us all that we do make a difference. She stressed how small changes lead to bigger ones, how every social movement starts with a conversation. I have taken that idea to heart, and am more excited about the conversations in my future than I am excited that someone will find my paper, read the whole thing, and be moved. I know that this rarely happens. All of us hear the jokes about hiding ten dollar bills in your thesis and going back to the library years later to collect them because no one has even taken your work off the shelf.

I don't mean to sound ungracious. I am glad that I conducted this research and wrote this paper. It is a source of pride, as gauche as that may seem. However, I am more proud of enduring the project and my personal growth. The growing has been sporadic, sometimes in reverse, sometimes painful. I consider the interview process, schlepping around Missoula, needy for time with my informants, eager to hear and record their responses to my (were they good enough?) questions. Sometimes, I left the experience elated and happy, sometimes I was reaching for my migraine medicine, and other times, my own personal memories haunted the informants' responses.

I know that I will always have a strong connection to nonprofit organizations, and I am incredibly proud of the work that is happening in this community. My optimistic attitude made it difficult to cast a critical eye on my informants - it seemed almost sacrilegious to think that their motives weren't pure. However, none of them probably realized my connection to their responses. For example, most of my informants did not know about my background working in nonprofits. In fact, most *did not really care to find out very much about me.* Sure, this should not have been surprising, I was interviewing them not vice versa, but at times the assumptions I faced were incredible. After one particularly trying interview, I vowed not to underestimate people's knowledge. I teach my students not to underestimate audience knowledge. Now I was at the receiving end. I wondered how many times I had done this to others, and was sickened by the thought.

So, I have grown through this research to further appreciate the work of nonprofit organizations and the dedication of their employees. I have learned not to underestimate people, something I think happens more often than we know. Finally, I have learned more about how to work independently. When this study began, I was nervous about working by myself for such a big project. Although I knew I would have help along the way from Shiv and Andrea and Greg, I have never been very good at self-motivating. I'm sure that I was in Shiv's office more than necessary (sorry Shiv). Many times I considered proposing some type of course to help graduate students get through the thesis, a course to help them create benchmarks and goals. I suppose, in my own way, I created my own weekly course with Steph Durnford, because at our usually fun meetings for coffee every week, I turned into an obsessive compulsive, constantly compelled to list my thesis accomplishments. Thank god she was going through the same thing and was sympathetic to my ramblings. It changed my perspective on independent projects - we probably never really do work alone. If I have to work "alone" again, I am more confident now. I'm getting the hang of it. Do I have to like it?

I suppose that I don't have to like it, and you don't have to like reading this appendix. Perhaps the reason that people do not write implications for personal growth is because it is personal and no one else really cares. If that is your position, then don't take me seriously (I try not to take myself seriously) and consider this a symbolic act. Upon reading this paper, know that it is not just a contribution to communication studies theory and nonprofit practice, but a contribution to the personal growth of a student. And, if you want to have a conversation, you can find me around Missoula on some evening attending a show by a local nonprofit arts organization.

Appendix B

Interview Instrument

"I would like to start with some general questions about you and your organization."

General Opening Questions
1. Can you please state your name and your job title?
2. Can you please describe your organization's mission? Has your mission ever changed?
3. What are your organization's core values?
4. Why is your organization's work important?
5. What is one of your organization's most proud accomplishments?
6. Who is your organization most trying to assist?
7. How did you determine this(these) audience(s)?

"Now I'd like to ask some questions about how you promote your organization."

Description of promotional strategies
8. Is promotion important to your organization? Why?
9. What kind of messages do you use to promote your organization? Why?
10. Who is the target for your promotional messages?
11. What promotional efforts are the most successful? Why?
12. What promotional efforts are the least successful? Why?
13. Is there anything else you would like to do to promote your organization?
14. How do you feel about how your organization is portrayed in promotion efforts?
15. Do promotional strategies shape this organization's identity? How?
16. Do you feel like you have to make compromises about how you promote your organization? Why? How do you feel about this?
17. Do people outside the organization view it differently than those inside? In what ways?

"I'd like to talk a little bit about the issue of sustainability."

Perceptions of sustainability
18. Have you heard of the term sustainability?
    a. If yes, Can you define it for me? Where does your definition come from?
    b. If no, introduce the definition – "ability to outlast uncertain nature of charitable contributions". Does that sound familiar? Do you discuss this in other terms?
19. Is your organization concerned with the issue of sustainability? Why?
20. Do you believe that, right now, your organization is sustainable?
    c. If yes, What have you done to achieve sustainability? Did you face any problems in this process? Can you describe one?

        d.   If no, Why not? What problems do you face? Can you describe one?
                  What do you think you need to do to become sustainable?

21.   Is there a relationship between sustainability and your promotional efforts?

22.   Has pursuing sustainability challenged the mission of this organization?

23.   Have you ever had to abandon a program or project because it was too difficult to Sustain? Can you describe that experience?

24.   What do you think of the advice that "nonprofits need to run more like businesses?"

25.   Have you heard of cultural tourism? What is your understanding of it?

26.   Are you a part of the cultural tourism initiative in Missoula?
        e.   If yes, has it benefited your organization? In what ways?
        f.   If no, why not?

27.   Does cultural tourism affect your organization's sustainability?

28.   Does cultural tourism affect your organization's identity?

I would like to know a bit about your organization's size, history, activities and budget. Where is the best place to get this information? An annual report or on Guidestar?

Is it possible for me to have a copy of your organization's promotional materials?

"Thank you very much for your participation! I would like to leave behind this contact sheet. Please feel free to contact me or my faculty advisor should you have any further questions. I will be in touch, and will send you a copy of my final report."

Appendix C

Guidestar List of "Arts, Culture, and Humanities" nonprofits in Missoula, Montana, with highlighted informants

1) CMS Charitable Fund   Missoula, MT 59802
2) INSTITUTES FOR JOURNALISM & NATURAL RESOURCES   Missoula, MT 59802
3) INTERNATIONAL CHORAL FESTIVAL INC   Missoula, MT 59807
4) Montana Natural History Center, Inc.   Missoula, MT 59801
5) National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution   Missoula, MT 59803
6) Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Inc.   Missoula, MT 59807
7) ART MUSEUM OF MISSOULA   MISSOULA , MT 59802
8) BALLET ARTS ACADEMY INC MISSOULA , MT 59802
9) Ecology Center, Inc. dba High Plains Films   Missoula, MT 59807
10) FIRST NIGHT MISSOULA   Missoula, MT 59807
11) FIRST SPECIAL SERVICE FORCE MEMORIAL TR   MISSOULA, MT 59802
12) Garnet Preservation Association, Inc.
13) MCT INC   Missoula, MT 59802
14) MISSOULA CIVIC SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION   MISSOULA, MT 59802
15) MISSOULA COMMUNITY ACCESS TELEVISION INC MISSOULA, MT 59802
16) MISSOULA CULTURAL COUNCIL   MISSOULA , MT 59806
17) MISSOULA WRITING COLLABORATIVE   MISSOULA, MT 59807
18) MONTANA GAELIC CULTURAL SOCIETY   MISSOULA, MT 59807
19) MUSEUM OF MOUNTAIN FLYING   MISSOULA, MT 59801
20) NEW CRYSTAL THEATRE INC
21) ROCKY MOUNTAIN BALLET THEATRE   MISSOULA, MT 59801
22) SIGMA CHI BUILDING FOUNDATION   MISSOULA , MT 59808
23) WESTERN MONTANA RADIO READING SERVICE   MISSOULA , MT 59806
24) YOUNG AUDIENCES OF WESTERN MONTANA   Missoula, MT 59807
25) ARS NOVA PRESS INC MISSOULA , MT 59803
26) BIG SKY CONSERVATION INSTITUTE MISSOULA , MT 59807
27) BIG SKY FILM INSTITUTE   MISSOULA , MT 59807
28) CENTER FOR MUSIC BY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MISSOULA , MT 59801
29) FORT CONNAH RESTORATION SOCIETY C/O GEORGE KNAPP MISSOULA, MT 59804
30) HEADWATERS DANCE CO MISSOULA , MT 59807
31) HELLGATE WRITERS INC   MISSOULA, MT 59801
32) Mendelssohn Club of Missoula Missoula, MT 59802
33) MISSOULA COMMUNITY CHORUS INC MISSOULA, MT 59802
34) MISSOULA INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP PROGRAM MISSOULA , MT 59803
35) Missoula Museum of the Arts Foundation Missoula, MT 59802
36) MONTANA ASIAN AMERICAN CENTER   MISSOULA , MT 59801
37) MONTANA HMONG CULTURE & ARTS MISSOULA , MT 59808
38) Montana Korean War Memorial, Inc. Missoula, MT 59801
39) Montanans for Due Process Missoula, MT 59802
40) MONTANANS FOR QUALITY TELEVISION IN   Missoula, MT 59807
41) Music in Montana Summer Festival Missoula, MT 59806
42) National Association of Miniature Enthusiasts Missoula, MT 59804
43) THE MISSOULA COMMUNITY CONCERT BAND   MISSOULA, MT 59806
44) Western Montana Chapter National Railway Historical Society Missoula, MT 59802
45) Western Montana Fair Foundation Missoula, MT 59801

Appendix D

Missoula Cultural Council List with highlighted informants
Cultural Resources Compiled by MCC

A Carousel for Missoula
Art Associates of Missoula
Art Museum of Missoula
Blue Beggar Players
Center for Rocky Mountain West
Dance Collective
Discovering Lewis and Clark
Dragon Tales Puppet Theater
First Night Missoula
Five Rivers Film Festival
Five Valley Ceramic Association
Five Valley Accordion Association
Friends of the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library
Gallery Association for Greater Art (GAGA)
Garden City Ballet
Garnet Ghost Town
Goatsilk Gallery
Hellgate Writers, Inc.
Historical Museum at Fort Missoula
Institute for Medicine & Humanities
International Wildlife Film Festival
International Choral Festival
Japan Club
Living Art
M is for Missoula Montana
Mainstreet Artists
Mansfield Library
Missoula Blues and Jazz Society
Missoula Children's Theatre
Missoula City Band
Missoula Civic Chorale
Missoula Community Chorus, Inc.
Missoula Colony
Missoula Community Concert Band
Missoula Crafters Cooperative
Missoula Convention and Visitors Bureau
Missoula Cultural Council
Missoula Dance Academy
Missoula Demonstration Project
Missoula Folklore Society

Missoula Historic Preservation Office
Missoula Mendelssohn Club
Missoula Music Teachers' Association
Missoula Public Art Committee
Missoula Public Library
Missoula Science Fiction Convention
Missoula Symphony Association
Missoula Teen Theater
Missoula Writing Collaborative
Missoula Youth Symphony
Montana Artists Directory
Montana Center for the Book
Montana Arts Council
Montana Committee for the Humanities
Montana Festival of the Book
Montana Film
Montana Museum of Art and Culture
Montana Players Inc.
Montana Repertory Theater
Montanans for Quality Television
Museum of Mountain Flying
National Forest Service Museum
Northern Lights Institute
Northern Rockies Heritage Center
Out to Lunch Series - Caras Park
Powwow Country
Rocky Mountainaires
Rocky Mountain Ballet Theatre School
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Rocky Mountain Museum of Military History
Rocky Mountain School of Photography
Society for Glass Art
String Orchestra of the Rockies
Sweet Adelines
Travel Montana
Very Special Arts Montana
Western Montana Porcelain Artists
Wilma Theater
Women's Writers Guild
Young Audiences of Western Montana

Appendix E

Email to Informants

Dear _____,

As the leader of (local non-profit organization name), your views and insights concerning nonprofit arts organizations are extremely valuable. I am sending you this email in the hope that you would be willing to share those views with me.

My name is Georgi Rausch, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Montana. My thesis research involves organizational communication in the context of nonprofit arts organizations. Would you have an hour to spare to talk with me about your organization? As a informant, you will be helping me to investigate and detail the important challenges and successes you face as a member of the nonprofit arts. When I have completed my project, I will gladly share and discuss the findings with you.

The interview should take approximately one hour, and will be tape recorded. As a informant, you will be guaranteed confidentiality. During the interview, you will have the right to ask any question or halt the interview at any time. I am working under the direction of Dr. Shiv Ganesh, my faculty advisor, and have received Institutional Research Board clearance for the project.

I look forward to your reply! I will be happy to accommodate the interview time and location to your schedule.

Should you have any further questions, I welcome any calls or emails.
Thank You,

Georgi Rausch
Department of Communication Studies
University of Montana
LA 339
Missoula, MT 59812-1028
T(406) 243-6604
F(406) 243-6136

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