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EXAMINING SOCIAL MISSION IN KENTUCKY SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Bo Milburn

University of Kentucky, bo.milburn@gmail.com

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Bo Milburn, Student

Dr. Ronald J Hustedde, Major Professor

Dr. Patricia Dyk, Director of Graduate Studies

EXAMINING SOCIAL MISSION IN KENTUCKY SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Community and Leadership Development, in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environment at the University of Kentucky

By

Bo Milburn

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Ronald J Hustedde Professor of Community and Leadership Development

Lexington, Kentucky

2022

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Examining Social Mission in Kentucky Social Enterprises

Social Enterprises are business entities that incorporate social value creation into their business operations. This study aims to investigate, explore and share key insights gained through the lived experience of owners or managers of these organizations. The reputational method of sample selection was used to identify informed individuals who participated in interviews to share phenomenological knowledge by telling the stories of their organizations, describing how they manage the balance between profitability and sustainability, sharing observations about the influence of social mission at their firms and other insights. Participants identified stronger relationships between coworkers, increased professional creativity, and greater employee engagement as themes directly related to the inclusion of social mission. Participants also identified the importance and value of the relationship between themselves and those they are working to serve. This exploratory study highlighted the significance and need for more targeted future research to investigate the themes present.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship, Small Business Development, Social Enterprise

Bo Milburn

(Name of Student)

02/01/2022

Date

Examining Social Mission in Kentucky Social Enterprises

By
Bo Milburn

Dr. Ronald J Hustedde

Director of Thesis

Dr. Patricia Dyk

Director of Graduate Studies

February 2022

Date

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LITERATURE REVIEW

“In the past jobs were about muscles, now they're about brains, but in the future they'll be about the heart.” (Elkann & Shafik, 2018)

What exactly is a social enterprise? Answering this question in a clear and concise manner is difficult, due in part to the recent emergence of popular study in the field. A formal definition describes these organizations as “individuals and teams that use a business logic in a novel and entrepreneurial way to improve the situation of segments of the population that are excluded, marginalized, or suffering. (Peredo & McLean, 2006) This is an effective definition, but it lacks clarity. “Improving the situation” is vague. It can be argued that all businesses that pay employees and create access to markets make some beneficial contribution to their community, even if no social goals have been formally identified. It is challenging to define what criteria are most appropriate to build a classification system to determine which organizations belong and which do not. Evaluating through such a binary lens of in-or-out is ineffective when you consider the dynamic variance and diversity of organizations, initiatives, structures, teams, individuals, operations and approaches that exist between small businesses. This is not only true in large cities, but this same heterogeneous variety exists even when comparing commerce in a town with a smaller infrastructure and workforce. The most appropriate way to consider a social enterprise and evaluate this distinction critically is by viewing these organizations on a continuum. There are infinite ways that businesses can attempt to meet social needs. They can address problems actively, passively and all to various levels of impact.

Social entrepreneurship has the potential to be a powerful and constructive tool for communities -- it has been identified as a powerful mechanism to confront poverty, empower women, catalyze social transformation, foster inclusive growth in subsistence marketplaces and bring about institutional change (Saebi et al., 2018) There are infinite ways to create social change because there is an equally ceaseless, unique set of challenges facing our communities.

Connecting businesses that set out to make a positive impact in their communities creates a large umbrella classification. Under it, there is a place for an individual trying to earn a living by selling local produce at a farmer's market as well as a single employee who is part of a community-based enterprise that employs hundreds to offer lending opportunities. Both approaches are very different, but they both seek social and monetary value.

This classification also includes organizations that offer second chance employment opportunities to people who struggle to gain employment because of past circumstances, such as substance abuse issues, incarceration or disabilities. This spectrum of social entrepreneurs includes organizations that give back a percentage of sales as a charitable donation to fund a social mission, encouraging their employees and customers to feel a sense of satisfaction when they purchase or use a product, knowing that good is being yielded somewhere. In evaluating social enterprises, it is more constructive to use critical inquiry and consideration to evaluate the outcomes being generated by this organization. What impact is this work having in the community? What experiences and lessons are employees gleaning? What is unique about the relationships that employees experience that is distinct from more traditional enterprises? What outcomes do the staff

members experience? Have their career experiences influenced other areas of their life outside of work? It can be asserted that this information is more valuable than constructing criteria to determine who does and does not deserve to be considered a social enterprise.

Maintaining the social profile of a social enterprise can be considered as an added dimension of mission to an existing operation and in some cases, the mission is more complex than seeking a singular outcome. The integration of mission and goals can be complex. Jeffrey Hollender, founder of Seventh Generation, a national disinfectant and cleaning product brand described the three missions of his organization. He stated that the first mission is to provide safer and healthier household products to consumers. Equally important to that goal is to both educate people about environmental, social, and health issues as well as inspire them to believe that through their actions they can make a difference. A third mission is to create a working experience for the people at the company that is better and more fulfilling than they have had anywhere else and that allows them an opportunity to grow and develop as human beings. The team hoped to be a model for what was possible in terms of integrating mission with financial objectives.

Generating financial wealth and social value are not always perceptibly different from each other. For the purposes of this research, we are considering all individuals and organizations that formally attempt social value as social enterprises. This liberates us from getting distracted by attempting to determine who belongs and who does not. It allows us to create an inclusive umbrella and frees us to spend more time critically exploring more important components like the transformative impacts these organizations are having within their communities.

Location and place are critically important to all enterprises, and especially relevant to small businesses. Small businesses have more interaction between the agents of the organization and the customers being served. This interaction builds lasting connections and relationships that contribute to the strength and sustainability of organizations. Location often determines the populations and markets served as well as the potential employees who will make up the team. Different communities have access to various unique assets that benefit them and contribute to their collective identity, and these factors can be measured through the process of Community Asset Mapping.

Asset mapping involves documenting the tangible and intangible resources of a community, viewing it as a place with assets to be preserved and enhanced, not deficits to be remedied. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) are credited with developing the concept of asset-based community development (ABCD), which draws on appreciative inquiry; recognizes the important of social capital (relationships that foster trust and reciprocity) ; participatory approaches to development, which are based on principles of empowerment and ownership; collaborative economic development models that place priority on making the best use of a community's resource base; and efforts to strengthen civil society by engaging people as citizens rather than clients. Assets may be persons, physical structures, natural resources, institutions, businesses, or informal organizations. The ABCD process involves the community in making an inventory of assets and capacity, building relationships, developing a vision of the future, and leveraging internal and external resources to support actions to achieve it. Asset mapping is positive and realistic because it starts with a community's strength and is inclusive. (Kerka, 2003, pg 3)

Enterprises are built from components of their communities, supporting that they are fundamentally bound to their place of origin. These individual citizens, collaborating and sharing ideas to meet the specific needs within their communities create business opportunities tailored to their unique needs. Communities experience dynamic and changing problems but they possess dynamic, evolving assets to meet these needs.

Small businesses, especially mom-and-pop operations and retail stores where employees interact with customers, consist of individuals who are all experiencing the

unique attributes and assets that tether them to a certain place. The significance of setting is so relevant that the theories of embeddedness and structuration are integral to the field of social entrepreneurship. The embeddedness theory supports that

Economic environments are embedded in social and structural relationships that modify neoclassical predictions of atomistic economic behavior. We believe that social entrepreneurship, like entrepreneurship in the business sector, cannot be understood in a purely economic sense but needs to be examined in light of the social context, and the local environment. Thus, we see the concept of embeddedness as the nexus between the ideas and theoretical perspectives introduced in the following sections: structuration theory, institutional entrepreneurship, social capital, and social movements. (Mair & Marti Lanuza, 2005, p.40)

The interdependence between businesses and their communities supports the difficulty of their separation. A business without the context of setting and the specific variables influencing it is not the same organization. This is supported by the Theory of Structuration, which suggests that it is impossible to detach the agent (social entrepreneur) from the structure (community, society, setting, location). In essence, the values and behaviors of entrepreneurs influence structure and structure influences entrepreneurial values and behavior. There is an interconnection between community agency and its structure (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1979, 1984).

Social enterprises with strong community bonds have also been referred to as community-based enterprises (CBE). Peredo and Chrisman (2006) describe these organizations and emphasize the need for strong rootedness and cooperation between enterprise and location. They define the CBE as a community acting corporately as both entrepreneurs and as an enterprise in pursuit of the common good. Therefore, CBE is the result of a process, in which the community acts entrepreneurially, to create and operate a

new enterprise embedded in its existing social structure working to pursue the economic and social goals of the community. The CBE concept treats the community as completely endogenous to the enterprise and the entrepreneurial process meaning that in a CBE the community is simultaneously both the enterprise and the entrepreneur.

This concept of rootedness supports a prerequisite of healthy social capital to create an environment conducive to the sustainability of community-based enterprises. Social capital exists between individuals and organizations within a community. It is a measurement of their connections and interdependence. Most people recognize social capital as being the connections and trusting contacts that people make while living their lives. These contacts can then be used on a mutual and reciprocal basis to further the development of a community. (Kay, 2005) Social capital has been defined in a number of different ways. The initial concise definition of social capital has tried to encapsulate the key parts of the previous definitions. Social capital consists of resources within communities which are created through the presence of high levels of trust, reciprocity and mutuality, shared norms of behavior, shared commitment and belonging, and effective communication channels which are used to facilitate actions to benefit individuals, groups and the community. Most people can recognize social capital as being the connections and trusting contacts that people share while going about their daily business. These contacts can then be used on a mutual and reciprocal basis to further the development of a community. (Kay, 2005)

Two relevant components of social capital are bonding and bridging social capital.

Communities with strong bonding capital are characterized by great intensity of neighborly relations, a socially shared sense of strong bonds and trust, mutually recognized norms and strong informal social control, but at the same time, there

can occur closing to people outside the community / the network (external organizations and institutions with lack of trust to projects implemented by it). Communities with strong bridging capital are communities in which their function strong well-organized groups and associations acting largely based on willingness to pursue a common goal rather than being bound by a sense of strong emotional bonds or a need of affiliation, but also well connected with other networks whether outside a given community or referring to other dimensions of its functioning, e.g. administrative or economic. Mutual trust of members of a given group or community increases their possibilities of developing through reducing a sense of insecurity which accompanies cooperation with strangers, and thus a sense of a bigger inclination to take joint actions. (Mandrysz, 2020, p.85)

Active networks of connection within our communities create an environment that supports the growth, longevity and sustainability of small businesses. After establishing how businesses fit into our communities, it is important to investigate the role of the individual in the context of an enterprise.

Businesses are collections of people – employees. Each person’s work is a fundamental component of his or her identity. “As members of a social species, we don’t derive strength from our rugged individualism, but rather from our collective ability to plan, communicate and work together. Our neural, hormonal and genetic makeup supports interdependence over independence. To grow to adulthood as a social species, is not to become autonomous in solitary, it’s to become the one on whom others can depend. Whether we know it or not, our brain and our biology have been shaped to favor this outcome” (Brown, 2019, p.54). We all need belonging. We are not designed to exist in isolation and a large portion of most of our lives is spent at work. While we strive to grow and develop our various organizations and work departments, it is important to not lose sight of our own personal need for belonging, our well-being and our development.

We all want to find a sense of meaning in the work we do each day. This should be particularly relevant to those working in social enterprise, contributing to a social

mission. Meaning is not a universal entity with clear criteria to determine if it is present or not; it is negotiated and is a product of culturally related influences (Wenger, 2008). Finding meaning in work is a unique exploration for all of us, because we each have different lived experiences that inform how we see the work we do. The negotiation of the meaningfulness that employees experience involves a constant, ongoing process with a multitude of influences. Employees' experience is not the same path for each individual.

A person, through the lens of their lived experience, confers meaning on an object or an event, not something enshrined in that object or event. It is born in the act of interpretation. (Barth, 1993) It is our own lived experience that informs our ability to see meaning and value in work. This supports the prerequisite for an employee's connectedness, or at least awareness of a social issue in order to find meaning in the work to address it. In order to find value in the solution, we have to be connected to the problem.

Not only are employees influenced by the social constructions and connectedness of social enterprises, but also engaged and participatory employees influence the organizations themselves. Individual negotiations around meaning are determined by cultural expressions in social enterprises. They are shaped by the shared cultural and social background and common experience of working in these organizations, or what may be seen as "an ethnographically ascertained degree of common reality." (Barth, 1993 p.96)

Developing a distinctive practice and engaging with the world implies an "active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning" (Wenger, 2008, pg.173) and

a sense of meaningfulness, understood to support ‘doing what needs to be done’, is a major cultural and motivational incentive for employees. Wenger argues pragmatically that people are motivated in any field to do what needs to be done. A shared sense of meaningfulness will often increase engagement and activity within an enterprise (Wenger 2008)

Employees can gain the experience of meaningfulness by working together and creating social value, pursuing a need and collaborating together as a united entity connected in solidarity seeking positive change.

In a professional setting, a business culture that gives back is beneficial. Many leaders suggest management and operational styles more similar to a non-profit, rather than a for-profit enterprise. Ehrenkrantz (2014), an organizational consultant, suggests that it is beneficial to treat employees as volunteers and customers as donors. When this shift takes place, it allows the business leader to view employees through a refreshed perspective. It is important to accept that employees have options and make the choice to participate in the operations of the organization. Ehrenkrantz is asking employees and owners to reframe something fundamental about their business approach. Viewing employees as volunteers has the potential to turn typical power dynamics on their heads.

Donors are often asked to give money to organizations and causes without expecting anything in return. They give because of an attachment and loyalty to the cause. This cause could be a brand and the feeling of attachment on a relationship foundation.

Ehrenkrantz outlines the importance of employees focusing on a mission rather than income. He suggests that with fast-diminishing customer and employee loyalty, for-profits can learn substantial lessons from nonprofits by identifying and serving an irresistible mission that emphasizes a higher purpose; cultivating passionate employees; and keeping customers engaged and loyal. This helps prevent business owners from taking employees for granted.

Non-profits also do a better job at managing intangible employee benefits that transcend a paycheck. Financial income is not the only income employees experience. This point was supported in a 2013 Gallup study, which showed a direct link between employee engagement and shareholder return; companies where 90% of employees felt engaged had 147% higher earnings per share than their competitors in 2010 and 2011. (Sorenson, 2021)

In our professional lives money is a motivator, but that autonomy, mastery, and purpose are at least as powerful. (Pink, 2018) Autonomy gives people a great deal of latitude in determining how they will complete their tasks. Mastery allows them to continue to refine skills doing something meaningful and purpose gives people value in work beyond self-interest.

A culture of giving is beneficial on an organizational scale, but it can also be helpful for each individual. Having a sense of contribution to a community's well-being, in any capacity contributes to fulfillment. The ability to make a contribution to the larger community system is part of community development principles.

In business, taking the primary focus off of making money is not traditional. Outdated business practices that attempted to squeeze as much work and productivity out of employees had negative consequences. Burnout (Schaufeli, 2013) first emerged in the 1970s as an American social construct before it became an academic one. Early data looks critically at the issue through a pragmatic lens. Maslach (2015) defined it clearly: “Burnout is a negative state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that is the end result of a gradual process of disillusionment.” Initial data was gleaned from individuals who spent long hours doing repetitive, often monotonous tasks. Burnout plagued those who worked long shifts in factories, offices or hospitals, with little variation in their daily routine. It is important to note that levels of education and pay did not influence prevalence of burnout. It is easy to associate burnout with factory-based, blue-collar labor. However, American surgeons are identified as one specific career path that exhibits higher levels of burnout than the rest of the population. In 2009 it was found that over thirty six percent of American surgeons in a representative and random sample struggled with burnout so severely that they identified it as a cause of depression.

Burnout takes place when life seems to fall short of our preconceived expectations. (Burnett, 2017) It is not related to an objective failure but rather the feeling that one’s efforts are insignificant and meaningless. Similarly, it is not objective success that prevents burnout but rather the subjective experience of doing something meaningful and being connected to a community. New research supports potential remedies to the long-existing struggle of burnout. Exercises in emotional intelligence measurably reduce burnout symptoms. These symptoms can be mediated through practices that contribute to our resilience.

Resilience training was found to be effective in minimizing burnout, (Bakker et al., 2005) Engagement and the existence of meaningful relationships were found to be the most effective remedy. Engagement is a positive motivational state of vigor, dedication, and absorption. We can contribute to higher levels of professional engagement by setting goals and making progress toward them. This process contributes to a developmental work environment. Companies that turn employees' struggles into growth opportunities are discovering a new kind of competitive advantage. Focusing on the development of an individual increases job satisfaction and performance. It contributes to a more successful work environment. (Kegan & Lahey, 2009) Social enterprises are uniquely equipped to become environments that minimize burnout and increase job satisfaction because employees experience a combination of outcomes when seeking progress toward their business goals and their goals of social wealth creation.

Having meaningful relationships also reduces burnout, and the previously discussed importance of strong social capital supports the symbiotic relationship present between organizations and their human-to-human connections. Petrik (2021) argues that relationships that small businesses have with their customers is their most valuable strength compared to their large corporate competition. Small businesses nurture relationships, and in doing so, they create bonding social capital within their own community. Relationships build friendships, which can create trust. These connections are mutually beneficial among customers, employees and organizations. More relationships contribute to a larger customer population, which means more security for the business. These principles have many connections to social capital theories. If small businesses are built on relationships between employees and customers, they are

contributing to the network of relationships within a community that are essential for solidarity and agency building. Possessing a connection to others and acknowledging connections of interdependence within our communities highlights our collective abilities, solidarity, or shared identity that connects the concept in a distinctive manner. and agency, or the ability and capacity to produce an effect, which are key components of community development. According to Bhattacharyya's parsimonious definition, "the purpose of community development is the pursuit of solidarity and agency by adhering to the principles of self-help, felt needs and participation."(Bhattacharyya, 1995, pg.6)

METHODOLOGY

The past ten years have witnessed a significant surge in research that focuses on social entrepreneurship. This has resulted in important insights concerning the role of social enterprises in fostering inclusive growth and changes within communities (Saebi, Foss & Linder, 2018). Their effectiveness in addressing social needs and generating impact has been supported in the literature review. Taking a critical exploratory inquiry of these organizations is relevant now because government funding has become less predictable for nonprofits, philanthropic priorities are shifting, and markets are changing rapidly. Nonprofits must simultaneously become more sustainable and address dynamic needs that are quickly growing. (Mosher-Williams, 2018) Social enterprise gives entrepreneurs and philanthropic visionaries the freedom to address community needs in the manner and at the scale that is unique and offers many opportunities, helping position themselves as change-makers in their communities. When effective, social enterprise allows organizations to focus on providing quality services to market-driven customers while integrating positive social influence (Mosher-Williams, 2018). There is an absence

of research inquiry about these organizations in Kentucky and also an absence of first-hand accounts of the experiences within these organizations. Research in this field has not focused on exploring the role played by employees of social enterprises as actors on systemic approaches that stress organizational, financial or beneficial themes (Amin, 2009) With such rapid growth taking place in this sector, it is an appropriate time to gain insights from these emerging organizations with transformative potential.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The key research questions derived from the literature review include:

1. How do entrepreneurs manage the balance between sustainability of their organizations and their social mission?
2. What led these individuals to the field of social entrepreneurship?
3. Has the formal inclusion of a social mission influenced these individuals and their organizations?
4. What insights can we learn from interview participants that can inform future research?

RECRUITMENT METHODOLOGY

The reputational method requires the investigator to select “knowledgeables” in the community and request that they identify key leaders in a given sector. (Abu-Laban 1965) These knowledgeable participants are informants from various institutional sectors in the community who hold positions in work or other organizations that support their familiarity, intelligence and well-informed knowledge, making them a good resource and

gatekeeper for researchers investigating this field.

The reputational method acknowledges that power is present and involved in all social relationships and reputation is an indicator of a power actor's potential to affect community issues. The reputation among informed individuals can be seen as a measure of the resources that a power actor controls. (Tait et al., 1988)

Knowledgeable informants were identified and asked to recommend informed participants for this research. Together they consisted of a diverse and thorough list of contacts from resources at The University of Kentucky, Commerce Lexington, and the Kentucky Secretary of State's office, and representatives from private organizations, community organizations and educational institutions. These individuals – due to their positions and individual networks – are likely to be connected to and informed of the current landscape of social entrepreneurship in Kentucky, they are representatives of people from the region and may not include everyone that could be identified as a knowledgeable.

As previously stated, to ensure a broad reach for this call for interviews and to support sample validity, I asked participants to share the invitation among their contacts and encouraged them to invite participants to join the interviews. Doing so allowed the invitation to ripple through the community and allowed me to gain access to the current innovators and visionaries in Kentucky social enterprises. The nature of their positions, careers, their social networks and the diverse fields in which they work all prove these individuals to be credible, informed and able to provide valuable insight into the exploration of the research questions.

The reputational method is the most appropriate means of identifying leaders in Kentucky social entrepreneurship because of its ability to access a wide scope of community participants. It revealed individuals who hold formal, visible positions as well as those who operate behind the scenes without publicity or recognition. The list was assembled from participants who had information publicly available online.

REPUTATIONAL METHOD KNOWLEDGEABLES

- UK Extension Specialist for Substance Abuse and Prevention.
- Senior Vice President
Community & Minority Business Development
Commerce Lexington
www.commercelexington.com
- President and CEO of Commerce Lexington
www.commercelexington.com
- Communications Director
Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky,
University of Kentucky
cedik.ca.uky.edu
- Board President
Local First Lexington
<https://www.localfirstlexington.com/>
- Gatton Honors Pathway Director

Social Entrepreneurship Scholars Program

University of Kentucky

<https://www.uky.edu/honors/social-entrepreneurship-scholars>

- Founder

Soulful Enterprise Foundation

dv8kitchen.com

- Representative

Kentucky Social Enterprise Alliance -

socialenterprise.uk/chapter/kentucky

- William and Kay Moore Entrepreneurship and Management Chair; Director of the Entrepreneurship for the Public Good Program; Professor of General Studies

Berea College

<https://www.uky.edu/honors/social-entrepreneurship-scholars>

These knowledgeable individuals were each contacted separately via email. I shared that they were identified as a knowledgeable community member in this sector and requested help connecting with owners or managers of social enterprises in Kentucky.

I asked that they connect me to an owner or manager of a small business that considers the generation of a positive social impact as one of their organization's core business objectives. They were informed of the goals to learn from lived-experience inside organizations. It was shared that I hoped to gain insight about the challenges and obstacles faced as well as solutions implemented in order to inform recommendations

that will be beneficial to entrepreneurs in the future, especially those trying to make a beneficial social impact.

Further specificity in participant detail would require each knowledgeable informant to undergo human subject protection training as advised by the Institutional Review Board. For full transcript, see Appendix A.

All listed Knowledgeables were contacted and responses were received from eight of the nine individuals. There was repetition observed in their recommendations for social entrepreneur interview participants, but every recommended individual was invited to participate in an interview. In total, eight individuals were recommended as interview participants and six people agreed to participate in the interview portion of this study.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

The recommendation and invitation process allowed interview participants to self-select to join the project. I conducted interviews via Zoom, that averaged one hour with six owners or managers of social enterprises that operate in Kentucky and are classified as small businesses by the Small Business Administration definition with fewer than 250 employees for most industries. (sba.gov) These interviews consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions that were intended to elicit views, opinions and story-based lived experiences from the participants.

The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent, meaning the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and some or all phases of the process may change or shift after researchers enter the field and begin data collection. (Creswell, 2010) For example, the questions may shift, the forms of data collection may transform,

and the individuals studied and the sites visited may be modified. These shifts signal that the researchers delved deeper into the topic or the phenomenon of study. The key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information. This means of data collection allowed me to learn historical information about the organization, and as new topics came up in the interviews, I was able to ask more in-depth questions and gain more complete insight in real-time. Holistic accounts develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

When learning from the lived experience of human participants, research projects should rigorously follow ethical considerations. Interviews are considered an intrusion into respondents' private lives with regard to time allotted and level of sensitivity of questions asked; a high standard of ethical considerations should be maintained. Therefore, ethical issues should be considered at all stages of the interview process. To support research ethics, participants provided informed consent before sharing through the interview process. (Cohen et al. 2007)

To protect the participants' rights and to avoid causing them any harm, the researcher assured participants that the collected data will remain confidential and anonymous. More importantly, however, participants were told that their participation in the interview was entirely voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time.

Appropriate consent forms were designed and distributed among the participants and the

nature of the self-selection process that researchers followed to assemble an interview sample supports participation consent.

These consent documents were reviewed before each interview took place.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Can you tell me the story of how your business got started?

A- what are your goals?

B- who are your customers?

2. Is making a social impact formally part of your mission?

A- can you tell me the story of how this came to be?

3. What experience did you have before working with this organization?

A- how would you describe differences that exist between working at a social enterprise and traditional enterprise?

B- what outcomes have you experienced or observed from an employee after doing this work? Are there any that exist outside of the workplace?

4. Do you think a relationship exists between profitability and sustainability?

5. Any other stories or information that you would like to share?

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

An external hard drive was used for qualitative software for data storage, coding, and theme development. Steps in the qualitative analysis included: preliminary exploration of

the data by reading through the transcripts and writing memos; coding the data by segmenting and labeling the text; verifying themes by aggregating similar content and patterns together; connecting and interrelated themes; constructing a case study narrative composed of descriptions and themes; and cross-case thematic analysis. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The analysis was performed at two levels: within each case and across the cases. (Creswell et al., 2010)

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This portion of the document includes a summary of the research findings gained from participant interviews. Their responses have been sorted based on the order of the research questions into sections of relevant summaries. Each interview summary coincides with the order of participants found below in Table 1. Descriptions, locations and identifiable information have been changed.

Six of the eight recommended participants agreed to take part in the interview portion of this study. The individuals serve organizations who are all doing business in Kentucky. Collectively they represent a diverse sample and span a broad range of industries.

| Table 1 – Interview Participants | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| | Participant’s Role | Industry | Number of Employees |
| Organization 1 | Founder/ Co-owner | Tattoo studio | 14 |
| Organization 2 | Founder/Owner | Restaurant | 21 |
| Organization 3 | President/CEO | Health Care | 140 |
| Organization 4 | Founder | Social Enterprise Coach | 8 |

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|---|-----|
| Organization 5 | Development Director | Investment Corporation | 85 |
| Organization 6 | Co-founder Board Member | Management Consulting, storytellers. | 240 |

ORGANIZATION 1

How do entrepreneurs manage the balance between sustainability of their organizations and their social mission?

This organization sees their ability to do philanthropic work in Kenya as a privilege that results from their profit-focused operations. The owner stated that the business feels like it was founded in Kenya, then brought back to Kentucky with them when they returned from a trip. Before he was an artist, he became familiar with the severe and dangerous gang violence in Kenya through mission trips. Young Kenyans, often in their late teens or early twenties, felt such strong commitments to their gangs that they would tattoo imagery that affiliated them with these organizations. Constant conflict between organizations made it dangerous to be marked with an affiliation in such an obvious way. The owner of this organization worked to create opportunities to have gang tattoos covered with other imagery that was not gang affiliated. This allowed these people to reduce the risk of potential violence and more easily reintegrate into society and the workforce.

Formally, they set aside fifteen percent of profits to fund these missions and they also supplemented these funds by hosting fundraisers known as flash events that can raise as much as sixteen thousand dollars in one day.

What led these individuals to the field of social entrepreneurship?

The owner worked in ministry and with nonprofits for years. He mentioned that he grew tired of being obligated to spend so much of his time and efforts on fundraising. He knew he could create a more effective impact if he built a model that funded itself.

Has the formal inclusion of a social mission influenced these individuals and their organizations?

This organization experiences little employee turnover, when employees move on in their careers, they often still return to participate in the philanthropic work and missions. The owner mentioned that after experiencing the trips to Kenya, the artists typically feel a sense of bonding and connection even after their careers change course. He described a sense of connection that was forged through this work. It supported the development of lasting solidarity between coworkers.

What insights can we learn from interview participants' lived-experiences that can inform future research?

The interview participant spoke of the importance of self-care in philanthropic work. Through his extensive experience, he has seen many examples of individuals and organizations who have forgotten to identify their own needs because they lose themselves in their mission. He also stated that in business making decisions, he is guided by a sense of abundance rather than scarcity in the business world. He stated that he thinks many businesses struggle because they see other organizations solely as competitors working to access a finite and insufficient market, but with his organization, he sees abundant markets that require creativity to adapt and gain access to. He

mentioned the importance of the relationships they have built with the citizens they serve in Kenya, and how those connections impact their work when they return.

ORGANIZATION 2

How do entrepreneurs manage the balance between sustainability of their organizations and their social mission?

This restaurant owner outlined the slim profit margins that exist in the food industry. As a consequence, many restaurants struggle and often close in their first few years in business. She stated that it is necessary to prioritize your own financial stability. She mentioned the importance of diligent, detailed accounting and market forecasting in combination with a close eye on operational costs. Restaurants survive on thin profit margins, and a close eye on cash flow is a prerequisite for longevity. Their profitability allows her employees to earn a high wage while still affording the organization the ability to contribute meaningful and impactful change to a different non-profit each year. Each year, the employees select a new non-profit organization to partner with. They provide that organization with a year-round, professional, in-store information display highlighting the nonprofit's mission and current needs to educate the community. They offer customers the opportunity to support the designated cause, monthly complimentary meeting space for the organization to hold their meetings, hosting and sponsorship of one special fundraiser and a percentage of proceeds one day each month for a 12-month period.

What led this individual to the field of social entrepreneurship?

She worked as the executive of a sexual violence resource center for several years. She told a story of a moment in her career where she gained a new perspective after spending weeks planning an event that raised sixty dollars. She and many employees lost sight of the beneficial work that attracted them to initially seek employment in this field. This realization motivated her to open a business and create an impactful contribution to her community.

Has the formal inclusion of a social mission influenced these individuals and their organizations?

The first year, the restaurant was able to donate \$32,000 to a local nonprofit. The owner spoke of the impact of the relationships between her employees and the need they're raising money for. The employees spend a year developing relationships with the members of the nonprofit and the connection that comes from those relationships supports their desire to raise money and help the nonprofit.

What insights can we learn from interview participants' lived-experiences that can inform future research?

She spoke of the value of the connection that is forged between her employees and the mission. Employees work together to select the nonprofit to partner with each year, their interests and opinions are considered, and together they develop solidarity working toward a cause. Their involvement in the social mission is transformative for their organization. This connection, understanding and empathy, creates an environment where the employees are eager to work to raise money rather than feeling like a portion of their income is being taken away.

ORGANIZATION 3

How do entrepreneurs manage the balance between sustainability of their organizations and their social mission?

The founder of this organization witnessed a pattern where elderly people were moved to nursing homes because their families were not equipped to provide adequate care and he described this move as being premature. While nursing home facilities are a valuable, necessary, appropriate and important resource serving families, they remove elderly from their homes and often isolate them from their families. They are also not available in all areas of Kentucky, especially the poorest and most underserved. The founder wanted to create an option for care that would allow elderly individuals to age in place as long as it was feasible and possible, in their homes and in their communities. He wanted to bring an alternative, or option to delay nursing home residency to those who did not previously have another choice. When asked how he manages this business, the owner stated that he neither prioritizes organization sustainability or profits, but that he focuses solely on the people that make up his enterprise; his employees and his customers. They have been in business for over 25 years.

What led these individuals to the field of social entrepreneurship?

He began his career as a psychologist working with elderly and patients who had suffered a stroke. He found himself sending the majority of his patients to rehab, knowing that after reaching the twenty-two day limit of their stay, they and their families would be forced to decide between bringing their loved ones home or moving them into a nursing home. He stated that the concept of in-home care for inexperienced families can feel daunting and overwhelming and seem like they would require full-time support, causing

fear, panic and uncertainty. The lack of an alternative in this choice encouraged him to see an opportunity and create one.

Has the formal inclusion of a social mission influenced these individuals and their organizations?

The owner stated that one common thread through this project is how noticeably happier people are at work when they focus on purpose fulfillment rather than profits. Their goal is to provide care to individuals in the most underserved counties in Kentucky, where in-home care was not previously available. He stated that the employees he works with learn the stories of the lives of the people they work with and they build strong and loving relationships which he thinks are the key to what keeps employees at the organization motivated and engaged.

What insights can we learn from interview participants' lived-experiences that can inform future research?

He described the work as physically demanding, but that employees see the impact that it makes and the mission energizes them because they are so intimately connected with these individuals' lives. They provide attendant care services in the most underserved, hardest population in the most difficult geographical area, but most of the staff has been with the company for fifteen years or more. They see the impact they make and it gives their work purpose. They are bonded to their clients, and seeing the freedom their clients receive is meaningful.

ORGANIZATION 4

How do entrepreneurs manage the balance between sustainability of their organizations and their social mission?

This founder created an organization that he hoped would offer support and guidance to those wanting to open a social enterprise. He stated that financial stability has to be prioritized in all organizations. Without a market to access and a margin to gain, there can be no mission. He believes that you have to prioritize creating value, delivering value, monetizing the value before you can even consider a social mission. He offers coaching and training services to social entrepreneurs at a discounted rate and works to connect social entrepreneurs so that they are able to network and share resources.

What led these individuals to the field of social entrepreneurship?

He started in the for-profit sector, worked as a consultant and had opportunities to engage with a diverse set of organizations who represented many various industries. He had an experience where he learned about microfinance opportunities that were creating job opportunities in India. He credits this experience with snowballing his interest and creating a gateway to his continued interest in social enterprise.

Has the formal inclusion of a social mission influenced these individuals and their organizations?

He stated that the path to getting off the ground is the same in organizations, but stated that in social enterprises the process has the potential to be much more rewarding and engaging.

What insights can we learn from interview participants' lived-experiences that can inform future research?

He identified the importance of the relationship between those who are suffering and those who are not experiencing the vulnerability the social enterprise is working to address. He stated that merely donating a percentage of profits to a cause can make someone feel good, but cultivating empathy and being able to walk with someone in their darkness is transformative, it is something completely different and it creates a lasting impact.

ORGANIZATION 5

How do entrepreneurs manage the balance between sustainability of their organizations and their social mission?

Their mission is to provide and retain employment opportunities in Southeastern Kentucky. They offer sound financial investments and managerial assistance to coordinate, devise, implement, and promote community, economic, and social development efforts within twenty-two distressed counties. With a long history of profitability, this firm exists on a strong and secure financial foundation, allowing them to focus almost exclusively on social missions and needs in the counties they serve.

What led these change makers to the field of social entrepreneurship?

Before becoming the Development Director at this organization, he was a grant-writer. He wrote grant and loan applications that funded business lending and entrepreneurial development. He started at this organization in 1998, and now works at the managerial level as the Director of Development.

Has the formal inclusion of a social mission influenced these individuals and their organizations?

He spoke of the importance and benefits of project-based work, and described most of their social enterprise missions as project-based. He spoke of the developmental benefits of identifying problems together with teammates, working together to devise creative solutions, and the connections that are created when they rely on one another. These creative projects made coworkers more trusting and appreciative of each other's gifts.

What insights can we learn from interview participants' lived-experiences that can inform future research?

He spoke of the beneficial outcomes of project-based work. A specific example he gave told the story of an attempt to modify a houseboat production facility and outfit it to produce affordable housing units. The 2007 housing market crash and subsequent financial crisis motivated the firm to this. While they did not meet the goals, the team did learn valuable skills, create important relationships, and build valuable bridges between their organization and allies.

ORGANIZATION 6

How do entrepreneurs manage the balance between sustainability of their organizations and their social mission?

This firm is a business performance and strategy consult group and had 150 million dollars in sales in 2020. Like several organizations previously mentioned, they have a secure foundation that allows them to focus on generating social value without worrying day to day about the financial sustainability of their operations. He stated that the most

significant impact they can make is through the contribution of their talents, so the organization formally developed a Social Impact Program. The projects can receive up to 500 hours of work to reach impactful deliverables, and a grant for up to 50 percent of the project's funding. Deliverables have included volunteer engagement strategy, non-profit workforce training solutions, or communication strategy programming. The options are vast.

What led these change makers to the field of social entrepreneurship?

He has over thirty years experience as an entrepreneur. During this time, he was witness to the ability small businesses have to generate creative solutions to problems being faced. This served as inspiration for him to see the potential that organizations have to transform the communities where they exist.

Has the formal inclusion of a social mission influenced these individuals and their organizations?

He stated that his organization observed a measurable difference when they started investing more time in their social impact program. They felt a sense of obligation to their community and thought they had a moral responsibility to give back.

What insights can we learn from interview participants' lived-experiences that can inform future research?

He spoke of the beneficial outcomes observed by the social impact program. These programs created opportunities for his team to not only use their professional skills in new and creative ways, but also built stronger connections between his organization and

the community. It made his employees more aware of social issues that were impacting the lives of vulnerable members of their communities.

THEMES:

Relationships between coworkers: The interview responses challenged my perceptions about relationships at work. Before this study, I believed the connections we share with coworkers have professional boundaries that are distinct from family and friends. I believed we rely on our personal relationships to experience genuine connection and authentic belonging, while leaving work relationships to more surface-level professionalism.

Interview participants 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 spoke of how the inclusion of a social mission contributed to stronger networks of relationships among coworkers. Working together to address problems and vulnerabilities in their communities and strived to increase solidarity and trust. They described the close connections that they feel with their coworkers and attributed the social component of their work for these more authentic relationships. Three interview participants described their organizations as being less lonely because of their social mission.

Organizational Outcomes: Participants 1, 2, 3 and 6 credited the inclusion of a social mission with making their firm operate more effectively. Participants stated their organization's social mission increased the sense of meaning found in their work. Having a social goal at work contributed to an increase in importance and value in their jobs. A greater sense of purposeful engagement helped reduce employee burnout and increase employee tenure and engagement.

Creativity: Participants representing organizations 2, 4, 5, and 6 described the benefit of creative problem solving that comes from social enterprise work. These leaders described a beneficial opportunity that allowed them to utilize their skills and abilities in new ways to face challenges. They spoke of the developmental outcomes gained from experiences and described task-oriented or project-based creative projects that contributed to increased professional creativity. Having an opportunity to utilize a firm's skills and abilities in new ways was seen as developmental for the organization.

Relationship to social need: The final theme that emerged from this research was the significance of the connection between those at the firm and the social need they are working to address. Participants 1, 2, 3 and 6 described the informed awareness of the problem and a genuine connection to those who are vulnerable to it as a necessity for effectively engaging in this work. Genuine impact cannot be made without a foundation of empathy and connection to those experiencing the problem.

In some cases, these bonds were a result of the social mission work being done by the enterprise. This supports that it is not necessarily a prerequisite that individuals are required to have a connection to the issues their social mission is working to address, but by engaging in these practices, connections rooted in empathy are often formed.

CONCLUSION:

When I began this research project, I wanted to collect and share hard-earned insights from social enterprises. I wanted to see what lessons social entrepreneurs had learned and see how that value could be made available to other entrepreneurs. The

majority of interview participants had experience working in non-profits. There was a pattern where many of them grew tired of the fundraising component of their work and felt they could create a greater impact through an enterprise that prioritized profits and incorporated their social mission into their operations.

I found a pattern of positive and developmental outcomes consistently observed when social mission was incorporated into business operations. These positive impacts were observed in the relationships between coworkers, the experience that employees have at work and in the operations of the organization. These themes supported that businesses tend to operate more efficiently and effectively when they are connected to a mission within their communities. Entrepreneurs each identified their social mission as being a constructive asset to their organization and to their operations. Each organization felt like their firm was made better by the inclusion of their mission.

A common point that connected these participants was that they were not attributing these positive outcomes solely to their socially focused work, but most gave the credit to the relationships that were built from doing the work with vulnerable individuals. Many participants felt like the connections built from the mission yielded measurable benefits within their firms. This supports that it is not performing the mission-focused work that yields these benefits for the firm, but its source is the empathy forged with those in need of support. The connections between a social enterprise and those experiencing the problems the organization is working to address are vital and this highlights the need to further exploration in future research.

LIMITATIONS:

A limitation of this research was caused by the sampling method used. The reputational method of sampling identified leaders of successful, sustainable organizations. These organizations were not burdened by worries of their financial sustainability and their success allowed them to engage in a social mission and not make profit-focused work their sole priority. It would have been beneficial to have participants in this study who did not have the same secure financial footing who could share their experiences.

I made no specific request to be connected to owners and managers of highly profitable businesses, but those who have achieved financial success often become the most obvious examples for informants to recommend.

This research was also limited by the absence of a comparison control group from organizations who are not social enterprises, with both for-profit and non-profit representation. Participants spoke of how their organizations benefited from their social mission, but this argument suffers from the absence of a comparison group to provide clarity to this argument.

The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible to meet with and conduct interviews in person. It prevented me from visiting many organizations that were featured in this project. I believe that visiting these locations could have offered greater clarity into their operations and a more nuance in the data collection.

The list of knowledgeable yielded participants concentrated in the Lexington, Louisville and Northern Kentucky areas. A more thorough list of knowledgeable could have connected me with more entrepreneurs from more diverse settings and added complexity to the stories shared.

The final limitation for this study is how I am informed by my own small business experience. I manage a small sporting goods store in Lexington, KY that my grandparents opened nearly fifty years ago. In many ways, it operates in the same manner it did the year it opened. It is a low-tech organization that relies highly on the relationships we have built with customers in our community. This experience informs my personal views of small businesses, and may have prevented me from spending time exploring organizations that look much different from my own.

I believe there is a growing collective desire, especially among individuals entering the workforce or changing career paths, to do work that generates a positive impact. After conducting these interviews, that belief has been reinforced. When considering jobs or career paths, many young professionals examine the meaning and fulfillment they will gain and the social contribution they will be making within their communities. We are no longer focusing primarily on income and are becoming more aware of how the inclusion of a social mission can be transformative at work. I believe and hope this trend will continue. I also see how uniquely equipped small businesses and entrepreneurs are to do this work, because of the intimate connections to the populations where they exist. I feel fortunate to have been given the opportunity to learn from these business leaders the experience has motivated me and deepened my curiosity to gain greater insight into how small businesses can be change makers for the public good.

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VITA

Bo Milburn was born in Lexington, Kentucky. He graduated from the University of Kentucky in 2012 and he received his Bachelor's of Science in Communication. He manages The Locker Room Sporting Goods, a family-owned small business.