

THE FORMATIVE ROLE OF FOUNDING NARRATIVES
IN COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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Conference of Researchers and Practitioners - April 22-23, 2009

ABSTRACT

Narrative accounts of the founding of community service organizations have the capacity to guide as well as constrain the ongoing planning and decision-making processes typically undertaken by boards of directors. As organizations confront change and adapt to varying circumstances over time, a founding myth or story may continue to have surprising potency. A study that explored the community housing-related services of 23 organizations in three U.S. cities revealed the potential impact of founding narratives on key tasks related to organizational development: the discernment of organizational values, the conception of an organization's societal role, and the transition following the departure of a founder. Appreciation of the potential power of such stories may help to enhance board governance. However, such narratives may go undetected in conventional research that explores collective action in the service of others.

This paper begins, appropriately, with a story. As I was launching a new research project on housing a few years ago, I attended a conference sponsored by the Fannie Mae corporation in the nation's capitol. At lunch beneath the towering interior columns of the National Building Museum, a fellow conferee sat down in the seat next to mine and, after introductions, asked about my research. I told her I was studying the process that religious congregations go through when they create new service organizations, particularly those that provide housing-related services. "That's interesting," she responded politely, adding that her own church had started such an organization. Then she hesitated for a moment and became somewhat reflective. "You know," she began, "something unusual happened that led our church to get involved in services for homeless people." She then proceeded to tell me a brief and touching story about a particular experience with a homeless individual that compelled members of her congregation to undertake new efforts to serve the poor.

This lunchtime conversation would have remained just a friendly exchange except that, as my research project proceeded, I encountered repeated instances of similar stories describing a critical incident that prompted the formation of a new service entity. Such "founding narratives" were not the focus of my research project at the time; I was investigating more formal processes in the creation of so-called spin-off organizations. However, as I gathered a wide array of data from almost two dozen cases involving organizational nativity, a pattern began to emerge from such unsolicited stories that pointed to the power of narrative to guide, direct and even constrain

the formation and development of a nonprofit organization, particularly its understanding of mission and purpose.

An organization's governing board typically plays the leading role in the ongoing determination of mission, hence the reason for offering these findings at this conference. As part of its governance functions, the board often undertakes formal planning efforts to help clarify and pursue an organization's unique mission. In many ways, the board is considered the "keeper of the vision" for an organization. For largely voluntary organizations with a mission to serve vulnerable members of society (like those that were the subjects in my study), the ability to remain "true" to a particular set of ideals and goals is often contingent upon fidelity to a shared story about a group's founding mission and purpose.

The narratives related here emerged unsolicited as a by-product of a larger multiple case study that examined the process of new entity formation. The study involved twenty-three low-income housing organizations in three U.S. cities (Cleveland, OH; Pittsburgh, PA; St. Louis, MO) and analyzed evidence from agency records, public documents and media reports in addition to first-hand accounts of each entity's founding by key informants. The organizations varied in age from the oldest at 36 years since the time of its founding to include even an emerging organization; one organization had ceased operation by the time the study was conducted, although the description of its founding remained relevant. The research focused on organizations created by established religious groups because of continuing interest in the ability of faith-based organizations to respond to troubling social problems like housing for low-income persons. The purpose of the original study was to identify key stages in the development of such spin-off organizations, and concepts from the business literature on incubators and new entity creation were utilized to frame the analysis.

However, as the following examples show, there were repeated instances where the goal orientation of these organizations would not fit neatly into the expected categories of conventional planning models utilized by governing boards. Although many aspects of the organizations' efforts corresponded to planning and development of the service or product development as found in the literature, the recurrence of these unexpected stories became an unavoidable and rather puzzling feature of the research.

These stories, and the functions they serve in the development of a community service organization's understanding of its mission, are the focus of this paper. Most of the brief narratives describe a critical incident in these communities that had a profound formative role on the organizations as they were created. Recent research by Schwabenland (2006) provided a valuable framework for considering narrative in voluntary organizations and complemented work on organizational change by Ebrahim (2003) and organizational culture by Morgan (1986). By examining the importance of narrative in constructing an identity for a fledgling organization, we gain an alternative perspective on mission formation that seems to fly in the face of rational, goal-oriented models of organizational planning.

The primacy of mission for community service organizations

The development of a mission is considered a critical task for a new nonprofit organization. A sense of mission may very often precedes the formal establishment of an organization, perhaps in the imagination of a founder or in the cause taken up by a small band of activists (Block & Rosenberg, 2002; Polletta, 1998). As a collective effort begins to take on tasks of formalizing its existence (for example, to seek funding, earn public recognition, or obtain favorable tax status), a succinct statement or proclamation of mission begins to galvanize

the involvement of group actors. Familiarity with basic principles of the planning process leads many fledgling organizations through a series of intentional steps toward, first, identifying the aspirations and goals of group members and then, second, articulating their collective ambitions in a formal statement of mission.

The development of a mission is also a complicated and potentially risky task that has unique implications for the nonprofit. It is also considered a task that sets nonprofits apart from other organizations. Due to their orientation toward a public purpose, the mission-orientation of nonprofit organizations differentiates them from profit-driven firms (Anheier, 2005; Bryce, 2000; Bryson, 1988).

At stages throughout an organization's development, a governing board may use formal planning processes to identify, clarify and operationalize their understanding of mission. An established mission provides "social justification" for an organization and reflects the group's intention to serve the public interest (Bryson, 2005). A well-conceived mission establishes an organization's legitimacy in a particular field of endeavor, as well as provides guidance about the path an organization should take to fulfill its perceived role in society (Bryson, 1988; Wolf, 1999). Unless an organization has a clearly defined mission, some argue, it may never make the "right choices" about how to proceed (Light, 2002). Furthermore, an organization's mission plays a role in inspiring new involvement by others, an essential function if an organization is going to grow or thrive (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003).

In some instances, however, the formal planning efforts of a nonprofit organization may be augmented with—and perhaps complicated by—a narrative or story about the organization's founding that can have surprising longevity and potency. Smaller organizations in early stages of development may be more prone to sustain such narratives, especially in the absence of

planning efforts undertaken by a governing board. The founding narratives of larger, more established organizations may be thought of as “lost” to organizational memory, only to be revived later on with surprising efficacy at a critical juncture (Barthel, 1997).

The link between mission and organizational narratives

There are obvious parallels between developing a mission and crafting a story that tells about the purpose or goals of an organization. An organization may rely on a particular myth or narrative to establish legitimacy and to gain recognition much as it would a statement of mission (Selznick, 1957). Narrative storytelling helps to construct an identity for an organization (Ochs, 1997). The unique tale that an organization has to tell about its purpose or goals helps to set it apart from other organizations, in much the same way that a clearly defined mission may differentiate one organization from another. In addition, a mission helps to “generate moral allegiance” to a particular cause or purpose by galvanizing the support of group members (Barthel, 1997). In the same way, organizational narrative often includes a “judgement” or “moral” outcome in the resolution of a particular dilemma or set of events (Ochs, 1997, p. 201).

Organizations may have both a clearly defined mission and an inspirational founding story that strikes a resonant chord in its members. The two are not mutually exclusive. However, it is conceivable that organizations—especially nonprofits engaged in particularly demanding causes--might at times rely more heavily on the emotional power of narrative than on rationally generated mission statements to guide actions and decisions. Understanding the influence of organizational narrative offers important insight into the sometimes perplexing logic displayed by groups that serve so-called “lost” or particularly idealistic causes (Olson, 1965).

The organizations involved in this study were engaged in services that responded to some of society's most intractable problems: homelessness and the instability of housing for low-income families. All of the organizations had at one time been connected to a religious congregation, either for financial or other material support or, importantly, as a base from which to draw volunteers. Small, under-resourced congregations helped to launch these nonprofits as did large, well-funded congregations. In many instances, coldly rational evaluation would suggest that such groups were ill-prepared to respond in an adequate way to social problems of such magnitude. With impressive regularity, however, these groups turned to stories of their founding for inspiration and guidance, leading them to persevere in adversity or to alter course when the logic of mission planning might have directed them otherwise.

To understand the role these founding narratives serve in the originating goals and purposes of a community service organization, three facets of narrative elements are examined in the stories told by informants in the pages that follow: what a founding story says about the organization's conception of society and its role in it; the importance of values and the potentially risky shift from motive-driven to performance outcome-driven governance; the limits of a narrative's controlling influence on governance and board decision-making. There are many other aspects of narrative analysis that could be considered, especially in regard to the influence on the work and effectiveness of governing boards. However, the three outlined elements recurred with sufficient frequency, especially in interviews with board members and founders, that these became the basis for the paper.

The Stories Nonprofits Tell About their Founding and Mission

At root, storytelling is a social activity; it is purposive behavior that serves a larger function than simply providing an historical account or chronicle of events (Ochs, 1997).

Furthermore, organizational leaders and group members are complicit in the construction or, more accurately, the “construal” of elements of a founding narrative and, like the proverbial fish tale, details may vary with each telling (Ochs, 1997). The principal plot is likely to stay the same, however, as it is the structure that conveys the moral content of the narrative. For example, several former board members from one organization volunteered a similar story about the role played by two Catholic nuns in the founding of a service center for low-income and homeless persons. The dedication and persistence of these two women in their efforts to serve a depressed neighborhood were repeatedly mentioned in interviews conducted almost 20 years after the sisters’ direct involvement had ended. In the present-day operation of the center, their example of self-giving and faithfulness continued to influence the actions of staff, volunteers and board members.

In each retelling, however, the details were slightly changed, with the narrators struggling to recall the precise facts or chronology of events (i.e., Was the service center located in the old mortuary before or after inheriting the tavern?). The insertion of these details as part of a founding story was far more mutable than the core message: that two very dedicated individuals relentlessly tried to ease the material hardship of residents in a neighborhood in serious economic decline. Such stories can be the repository of core values for an organization. For example, the values of frugality and hard work modeled by these two women religious were deeply embedded in the organization. It was obvious through the retelling of such stories, despite the discrepancies of certain facts, that the service center preserved the goals and ethic of the two sisters. In describing the mission and purpose of the organization, informants offered very little from any formal planning process; deliberate probing was required to identify the strategies in place to achieve the organization’s goals.

Narratives that perhaps best capture the imagination are those that engage our faculties to “fill the gap” in a plot line or to provide missing information. Listeners are “drawn in” to such stories (Polletta, p. 422) and their participation completes the narrative, especially as they are moved to respond in new or more demanding ways. Surprise was another recurring element in the founding narratives uncovered in the study, often retold as an unexpected encounter with a population of need. As an important element in a narrative’s plot, surprise represents the kind of upset that “disturbs the equilibrium” for a group (Ochs, p. 193). A group’s routine functions are interrupted by a unexpected event. In a particularly moving narrative, the pastor of a church in an upscale urban neighborhood virtually stumbles one morning upon the lifeless body of a young man, slumped in a stairwell at a rear entry to the building. Likely the casualty of a drug overdose, the young man’s death elicited an activist response from church members, some with concerns about their own lost or aimless children. In response, the congregation launched a community outreach program to link similarly troubled men and women with support and assistance. The congregation’s encounter with this young man, and their mindfulness of his tragic story, helped them to withstand withering criticism from area residents who resented the establishment of such service activities in the neighborhood.

Conceptions of an organization’s role in society

For many organizations in the study, the social act of collective storytelling helped to reinforce a particular view of an organization’s role in various struggles at the societal level: civil rights and housing desegregation, neighborhood restoration, deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, even religious ecumenism. Participation in these “larger” stories implied a good deal about an organization’s conceptions of society and just how far their collective activity could change or redress troubling or unjust circumstances.

Against the backdrop of these grand societal narratives, bold or inspired individuals would take action that subsequently inspired group mobilization. The action of a lone moral agent was routinely the catalyst for an organization's emergence. Many of the narratives featured a solitary main character, often the founder, who alone faced an important decision about whether or not to act to rectify a troubling social situation. In one instance, for example, the pastor of an historic church in a depressed urban center was confronted by a group of homeless men begging to be allowed into the church after the conclusion of Sunday services on a wintry day. "For the love of God," the men pleaded, "take us in." At first, the pastor resisted, concerned about the wisdom of such a decision for the security and protection of the facility. A week later, the story goes, he relented and the church opened its doors. The prominence of such a lone actor underscores the moral tone of the founding narrative; their decision to act—rather than ignore—a crisis or dilemma was upheld as a model for the actions of those who followed after them. Thus, the plot of the founding narrative emerges not so much as a problem to be solved (i.e., homeless person is rescued and restored to full participation in society), as of morally upright individuals taking steps to respond to human need.

In some instances, the moral conduct of a lone actor in the organizational narratives provided the impetus for entrepreneurial behavior. A founder of one organization was an accomplished mental health clinician who began to encounter groups of men huddled against the cold along the sidewalk outside his office. Finally, he asked some of them why they were out in the cold, to which they responded with a question of their own: "Where should we go?" In reaction, so the story is told, the founder realized that a vacant parochial school building nearby could be used to provide shelter. He used his ties to area service agencies and secured both a facility and financial support. The homeless men's question lingered in his memory, more than

two decades later, and in the memory of the organization that was begun on his initiative that eventually developed a particularly extensive array of services for homeless men and women.

Both of these founding narratives highlight the bold and innovative steps taken by a key individual in the formation of a new organizational entity. However, the importance of individual action is inarguably exaggerated when compared to the enormity of the social problem at hand (homelessness, housing discrimination, etc.). The founding stories describe individuals taking action within a societal system where the possibility of truly bold steps is remarkably limited. Neither of these actors stormed the local mayor's office to demand humane services or shelter for destitute men, for example. Their responses were constrained by the opportunities presented them and the extent to which their personal and professional resources enabled them to act. As Schwabenland (2006) discovered in her comparison of founding stories of organizations in a developing country with those in an industrialized context, the ambition of leaders seems to be conditioned by social circumstance. In western society with an established welfare state, the ambitions of organizational founders are much more constrained than those in under-developed countries who envisioned dramatic structural change as an outcome of a voluntary collective effort.

From this perspective, the mantra of "staying close" to the mission or original mandate reiterated by many board members and founders in the present study seems to reinforce the perceived importance of minimizing risk or over-reaching. In this way, a founding story circumscribing the mission of an organization can become a group's "prison," perhaps because the view of society is so immutable.

In a number of the organizations, the focus of a founding narrative's critique was not generally the government but instead other voluntary organizations that were perceived as

indifferent to the plight of homeless, discriminated, abused or otherwise marginalized people. The spinoff organizations in the study were formed out of other existing religious groups (congregations), and in several instances a new entity was fashioned as a result of dissatisfaction with the parent group. As one informant put it, the “vision of the board” of one spinoff housing development organization was impaired by the “controls placed on it by the church.” This led to an eventual break between the two. In another, a parallel (almost competing) voluntary group was formed within a single congregation in order to serve homeless men.

Conveying values and enshrining motives

Despite the prominent role frequently given to a lone moral actor, the founding narratives that emerged in the study were not intended to valorize the actions of specific individuals. Instead, these stories were intended to serve as instructive and motivational examples for a certain group of listeners. By pointing to the effective action of one exemplar, the founding stories helped to “strengthen [the] collective identity” of a group, an impact that has been noted in social movement narratives (Polletta, 1998, p. 422). Even when the organizational mission was yet unclear, the founding narrative was used to “sort out” the identity of the organization. For example, in the early formation stages of a residence for pregnant teens, an “uncomfortable” decision to avoid merger with another organization was bolstered by reference to seminal events and experiences. Board members eventually resisted the merger because of their shared personal involvement with the founding of the residence. Several of the organizations—whether tackling problems of homelessness, racial segregation or religious division—employed a degree of utopian thinking about their mission and purpose. The group that undertook formation of the residence concept was extremely diverse socioeconomically, but they shared a number of

spiritual experiences in common. They preserved a sense of purpose through retelling their founding story and, with their identity thus strengthened, they were able to weather a difficult time of negotiation with another nonprofit organization.

Religious organizations may be particularly inclined to focus on the importance of values in the formation and development process, and a founding story is an efficient way of transmitting those values to future activists. In some instances, a founding story may hold such importance that it finds a way to be enshrined (almost indelibly) in the minds of governing leaders. In one founding narrative, a particularly devout individual received a “call from God” to start an inner-city housing initiative. This individual served on the governing board of the organization, but did not ever hold an executive position with the housing initiative. However, the divine message she perceived held such significance as a guiding force for the organization that her personal account, committed to paper and bound in an imposing handsome folio, was given a place of prominence in the office of the executive director.

In terms of values that prompt individuals to act, religious groups may also be more concerned than secular organizations with the motives of individuals seeking to serve. This may explain why board composition was a recurring concern among the organizations in the study. In fact, over the course of a spinoff’s founding and its subsequent evolution as an autonomous organization, the number of board positions allocated to church members was a way to continue the originating mission and retain commitment to a particular set of values. For several of the organizations, a definitive “break” occurred between the governance of a board concerned with the values and motives of the original vision and the emergence of a more broadly constituted board focused on performance and outcomes.

The clearest example of this transition was expressed in the founding story of a safe shelter for victims of domestic violence. A religious congregation was formed with the intent purpose of pursuing an active social justice agenda. Within a short while, the church had engaged in creation of a shelter for female victims of abuse and their children. Church leaders believed that the congregation's "chosen" mission was intended by God and the effort became a primary organizational focus. Several years passed, however, and the congregation began to tire of the intensive and demanding ministry, and members started to drift away. On the advice of the local United Way, the board of the fledgling organization called for broader representation than church members alone and eventually became a "community" board. This seemed in keeping with the organization's cause of community-wide importance. Soon after, the founding church leader stepped down and the congregation dissolved. "They had lost their vision," the leader concluded and the faith-based mission was no longer sustainable. For the founding group responsible for governing the organization, the adherence to certain values had dissipated and board members and congregants no longer shared the same motives.

The domestic violence organization, however, continued and thrived. Such a "pass off" to another group of leaders would have been considered unthinkable to some of the organizations in the spinoff study. Incorporating others into the story that may be viewed as the "icon of creativity" (Schwabenland, p. 104) can be rife with problems. For one thing, community people may be "put off" by church people, as one former board member (married to a clergy person) commented. However, board members interviewed frequently mentioned the need for professional expertise (legal, accounting, etc.) among their ranks. Such expertise was highly desired, even considered essential for "successful, divergent thinking." A board member of an

ecumenical homeless shelter organization, for example, saw community membership as “spreading the responsibility” for caring about the problems of homelessness.

Managing the balance between the right motives of participants and the desired outcomes presented a serious challenge for others, however. In religious or faith-based organizations that provide community service, the need to maintain control through board membership can run head-long into the need for competent governance. As one clergy person put it, church members too often “confuse inefficiency with grace.” The extent to which a founding narrative guides or constrains participation in the vision may determine whether an organization will pursue an orientation toward performance and outcomes-based governance.

The controlling function of founding narratives

To be sure, founding narratives are “used” by organizations for a variety of governance purposes. For many, the founding story provided a source of legitimacy for the organization’s existence. Despite limited resources and apparently unreachable goals, the organizations found assurance of their purpose in the stories told about their founding. Even individuals from organizations that eventually underwent dissolution referred to a founding narrative that justified their collective hopes and aspirations.

Several of the narratives uncovered in the course of the research served as a measure or a sort of “plumbline” of the organization’s success in achieving its mission. The persistence of a founding story as a yardstick of organizational achievement was particularly strong in the case of an after-care program for women released from a city jail. For a number of years, a group of women activists conducted weekly Bible studies at the correctional facility, providing support and encouragement for female offenders. Over time, concern began to grow about the fate of the

women once they were released, how they would support themselves and rebuild ties with their children and families.

Then an event took place that would remain at the forefront of organizers' efforts for some time. During an organizational meeting outside the correctional facility, a recently released inmate recognized and approached the Bible study leaders, pleading for their help to find a stable place to live. The study leaders referred the woman to several area shelters and service agencies, but she left clearly troubled by the insecurity of her circumstances. A few days later, the study group was shocked to learn that the woman had been found dead, a victim of a violent attack. From that point onward, the leaders committed to establishing an organization that would provide supportive services for women as they were released from the city's correctional facilities. Chief among their goals was a desire to establish a residence or half-way house that would provide safe transitional housing.

Almost 20 years later, however, housing remains an elusive goal although the organization provides an array of re-entry programs for women trying to put their lives back together after incarceration. Instead, the achievements of this group have since been measured according to their founding purpose that no woman would be released without some effort to help her find stable housing and a job. According to some members of the original founding group, however, the organization's aims have not been reached because their goal to establish a transitional residence has never materialized.

For some members of the organization's board, the founding narrative lingers as a reminder that providing shelter is the group's paramount aim. During interviews for the housing study, some recalled this woman's story as a sort of indictment that their efforts over two decades had fallen short. Furthermore, they saw little opportunity for future success in providing

housing for recently released female offenders. In the intervening years, the organization has steadily built an array of services and programs, added staff and established an office.

According to informants, however, the prospects have dimmed considerably for attracting sufficient funding for acquisition of a residential facility. Despite the apparent progress made by the organization, the founding narrative serves as a reminder of the group's failure to realize its ultimate mission. The organization's planning efforts are continually haunted by this shortcoming. Furthermore, there appears to be little interest in letting go of that original vision, as several long-time leaders see their role as "keepers" of the organization's founding mission. As these leaders retire from their prominent roles, it is uncertain whether the housing imperative will persist.

Discussion

The set of founding stories--unexpectedly told as part of a housing research project--provides limited but evocative evidence of their role in the shaping of organizational mission. At the very least, we are reminded of the staying power of narrative in the consciousness of those who govern organizations. More substantively, some stories have the potential to become a durable and controlling influence on the trajectory of organizational action and purpose.

Although the findings shared here are not generalizable due to the small number of cases, the surprising persistence of founding narratives suggests that they may be a factor in the formation of many nonprofit organizations, especially those that draw heavily upon volunteer initiative to address public problems of a relatively intractable character. As scholarship continues to develop about the nonprofit universe of organizations, the role and function of narrative should not be underestimated.

What can be learned from such stories of origination? Efforts to conduct empirical inquiry on the formation of nonprofit organizations may easily overlook the resonance of these simple tales and the extent to which they influence, or even pre-determine, the scope of activities in an organization's repertoire. Organizations like those in the present study may use founding narratives or "myths" as a way to create a unique identity and establish legitimacy. Without taking these stories into account, researchers may neglect an important source of organizational initiative, innovation and entrepreneurial activity. Furthermore, the degree of potential dissonance between formal mission planning processes and the identity crafted by a group's shared storytelling may have profound implications for the survival, effectiveness or creativity of fledgling organizations, in particular.

Formal planning is routinely considered the normative standard for nonprofits, although organizations in the early stages of development may rely more heavily on the imperfectly conceived visions of success inherent in founding narratives. Like many of the organizations described here, a sense of common purpose may outweigh (although not necessarily displace) the persuasiveness of a rationally developed plan for future action.

The rather cryptic findings shared from this study may provide another fruitful avenue for exploring the logic of, specifically, religiously motivated collective behavior. Given the increased attention paid to faith-based organizations in the implementation of various social policies, insight about a group's mission and purpose might be usefully explored through the context of organizational narrative. Based on the brief examples summarized here, the self-understanding provided by a founding narrative may outline constraints perceived by an organization that may seriously limit its ability to improvise new development strategies or establish productive alliances. The capacity of organizations to collaborate effectively with other

nonprofits or with government may be indicated in their stories of formation. The founding narrative may impose a set of values on possible arrangements with other groups that successful collaboration is rendered impossible.

Implications for further research

Despite the mere handful of stories gleaned from interviews and presented here, several directions for further research are presented. The obvious implication, of course, is that researchers should anticipate the possibility that myth and storymaking may factor into many dimensions of an organization's entrepreneurial activity, especially at the formation stages. For example, questions about the actors in organizational narratives raise interesting possibilities for further research. Are founders themselves always the central figure in formation narratives? What parts are played by other individuals? Does the use of storytelling for legitimacy and mission decline as founders relinquish their control? It is also not clear whether narrative has a particularly prominent role in the emergence of a new entity but then fades as formal organizational processes are put in place.

The focus here has been on founding narratives, but other junctures in organizational development may be opportunities for the construction of narrative: a crisis in leadership, for example, or the decision to close an agency. As organizations undergo important transitions, narrative construction may serve as a tool for making sense of such situations and creating a bridge of meaning to the next phase or stage of organizational growth. Barthel's (1997) interesting description of a major shift in mission purpose is an excellent example of how narrative can be used to thoroughly redirect an organization.

Finally, the stories unearthed in this study might not have surfaced if other approaches to research might have been used. Conducting qualitative research that utilizes open-ended

questions, for instance, invites the kind of free-association by informants often produces such unexpected results. These stories would likely have gone undetected if a more limited quantitative approach had been used. Further advances in identifying themes and plots of founding narratives, in particular, will certainly aid the development of more consistent, generalizable explanations. In the meantime, narrative analysis provides a promising tool for studying the development of nonprofit missions.

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