Founded by Faith:
Social Entrepreneurship as a Bridge between Religion and Work

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ABSTRACT

Social entrepreneurship is an increasingly prevalent subcategory of entrepreneurship that is being used to tackle some of society's most intractable problems. However, it is unclear what motivates individuals to become social entrepreneurs. In a partially-inductive, exploratory study, we examine what drives entrepreneurs to found social ventures. We find that social entrepreneurs often express a common motivation: an aspiration to integrate their religious beliefs and work. Our findings are used to construct a process model that describes how entrepreneurs progressed through five phases: desire, disenchantment, epiphany, bridging, and enlightenment. In doing so, entrepreneurs created social ventures, which served to unite their faith and work.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial motivations; religion and work; qualitative methods

FOUNDED BY FAITH: SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN RELIGION AND WORK

Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a unique and thriving subcategory of entrepreneurial activity (Choi & Majumdar, 2014; Tracey & Phillips, in press; Zahra, Newey, & Li, 2014) distinguished by creating ventures that harness the power of the market to address conditions that are harmful to society (e.g. Dees, 1998; Miller, Grimes, McMullen, & Vogus, 2012). Social entrepreneurs found for-profit, nonprofit, or hybrid organizations that utilize innovative, business-oriented methods to address social problems, such as homelessness, hunger, or lack of access to medical care (Peterson, 2015). An example of this type of enterprise is TOMS, a for-profit apparel company that initiated a “buy-one-give-one” model, where for every item sold an item is provided for free to someone in need. Over the past three decades, social entrepreneurship has become a phenomenon that has attracted significant scholarly, university, and practitioner attention (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014).

Despite the increasing prominence and prevalence of social entrepreneurship, much remains to be learned. One critical topic that has yet to be fully explored is what motivates individuals to become social entrepreneurs and to found social ventures. The lack of research addressing the motivations of social entrepreneurs represents an important omission in the literature because understanding the motivations that undergird social entrepreneurship may help to explain why some entrepreneurs decide to create social, rather than traditional, new ventures. Moreover, since social entrepreneurs are making inroads in addressing pressing socio-economic and environmental problems, governments and other institutions increasingly seek to encourage social entrepreneurship (Shockley & Frank, 2011). A deep understanding of the motivations of social entrepreneurs may be necessary in order to spur individuals to engage in this type of

entrepreneurship (e.g. through public policy). Finally, social entrepreneurs differ from traditional entrepreneurs in a variety of ways, including the types of opportunities they pursue, the centrality of their social mission, the business models they utilize, and the expectations of stakeholders (e.g. Austin, Stevenson, Wei-Skillern, 2006; Short, Moss, & Lumpkin, 2009). Important differences between social and traditional entrepreneurs suggest that it would be unwise to assume that theory derived from studying the motivations of traditional entrepreneurs is directly (or at all) applicable to the motivations of social entrepreneurs.

Since prior theories of entrepreneurial motivations (cf. Shane, Locke, & Collins, 2003) may not serve as an appropriate starting point for understanding the motivations of social entrepreneurs, our study used an exploratory, inductive methodology (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As is common in inductive work, early data collection led to refinements in the focus of the study. Specifically, preliminary interviews focusing on the general topic of entrepreneurial motivations revealed that, for a subset of social entrepreneurs, their religion, defined as the organized system of faith, beliefs, and practice that facilitates interactions with the divine or supernatural (Clark, 1958; Platvoet, 1990), played a key role in their motivations to create social ventures. With these findings as a starting point, this study set out to address the following question: *How do social entrepreneurs' religious beliefs motivate the founding of social ventures?*

To address this question, an inductive, theory-building study based on 50 interviews was conducted. A narrative analysis of interviews (Riessman, 1994) produced a process model, an explanatory model that summarizes a series of cognitive and behavioral steps or outcomes (cf. Langley, 1999), which elucidates how social entrepreneurs' religious beliefs can inform their decision to create social ventures. To preview the main results, this study finds that entrepreneurs

who are driven by religious motivations, hereafter referred to as faith-based social entrepreneurs (FBSEs), undergo a common process through which they become social entrepreneurs and found social ventures. Specifically, entrepreneurs' narratives suggest that FBSEs generally pass through five phases in becoming a social entrepreneur: desire, disenchantment, epiphany, bridging, and enlightenment. Through this process, FBSEs are able to integrate their religious beliefs into their work, which provides a motivation for the founding of a social venture. These findings produce insights that have implications for several literatures including social entrepreneurship, institutional logics and "hybrid" (i.e., multi-logic) organizations, and research at the intersection of religion, ethics, and work. In addition, the evidence produces concrete implications for social entrepreneurs and policy makers.

The sections that follow begin with a review of the relevant literature on religion and work. The study's research design and methodology is then explained. Finally, after describing the findings, the paper concludes with a discussion of the implications, limitations, and future directions of this work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religion and Work

Work and religion represent two of the dominant spheres of influence on modern lives (Chan-Serafin, Brief, & George, 2013; Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Hill & Smith, 2003). For instance, religious beliefs can play a powerful role in shaping personal attitudes and behaviors (e.g. Hardesty, Westerman, Beekun, Bergman, & Westerman, 2010); while occupations can influence individuals' identities and self-image (e.g. Watson, 2008). Moreover, a large percentage of the global population is both a member of the workforce and in possession of formal religious affiliations and/or private religious beliefs (Hill & Smith, 2003; Morgan, 2005). However, despite the prominence of the two institutions, relatively little is

known about how religion and work intersect (Lynn, Naughton, & VanderVeen, 2011). The lack of research on the intersection of religion and work has led to repeated clarion calls, by both religious studies and organizational scholars, to devote more attention to understanding how religion and work can influence one another (e.g. King, 2008; Lambert, 2009; Tracey, 2012). Indeed, as Lynn and colleagues (2011: 676) state, “religion can powerfully shape attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors [...] yet little is known.”

Although much remains to be learned about the intersection between religion and work, one topic that is generating increasing interest is religion (or “faith”) and work *integration*. Recent surveys suggest that a growing number of employees seek to integrate their religious and work identities (e.g. Miller, 2006) and there is a growing trend for employees to attempt to remove the barriers between their religious and work lives (Morgan, 2005). Despite these desires, as Walker describes, “many individuals perceive themselves as living largely bifurcated lives, with a near total separation between their faith and work” (Walker, 2013: 454). This lack of integration can produce negative personal and work outcomes, such as tension and stress (Nash and McLennan, 2001). In contrast, integration of one’s religious beliefs and work can positively impact job satisfaction, commitment, and performance, while lowering the likelihood of employee turnover (Walker, 2013). The effects of religious beliefs on work outcomes are primarily explained using values theories (King & Williamson, 2005), which suggest that religious beliefs become part of one’s values system. Individuals then seek opportunities to integrate their values into their work in order to reduce dissonance associated with value incongruity (Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004). The managerial and personal implications of work-religion integration suggest that it is important to explore how and why some individuals are able to successfully unite the two spheres of influence.

Indeed, a specific topic, about which we know “remarkably little,” is how people practice religion through their work (Bender, 2003). Although a growing stream of research is attempting to shed light on this topic, these studies follow the foundational works on the topic by focusing on the impact of religious beliefs on workers in large, mature, and established organizations (e.g., Mazereeuw-van der Duijn Schouten, Graafland, & Kaptein, 2014). Very little is known about the intersection between religious beliefs and work in young organizations and, particularly, in the context of entrepreneurship.

To summarize the state of the religion and work literature, despite increasing interest in issues of work and faith integration, and despite a growing segment of the workforce that claims to seek integration, it is not clear how integration is achieved, particularly in the realm of new ventures. The present study explores this issue in the context of a specific type of entrepreneurship, *social* entrepreneurship.

METHODS

Research Design

In order to explore individuals’ experiences with religion and work in the context of social entrepreneurship, an inductive methodology was used. Inductive reasoning is characterized by immersion in the research context and the search for emerging patterns from observations, rather than by drawing on existing theory that preconditions researchers for expected outcomes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). An inductive approach was appropriate because, as highlighted in the previous section, there is not a reservoir of existing theory in entrepreneurship and religion that can be drawn upon to help explain this phenomenon. Thus, an inductive approach, where the aim is to uncover novel theoretical insights, was needed (Eisenhardt, 1989).

An inductive approach is coupled with qualitative methodology for several reasons. First, one goal of the study is to capture entrepreneurs' perceptions and lived experiences related to their religion and work, qualitative methods are particularly well-suited for capturing such personal interpretations (Graebner, Martin, & Roundy, 2012). Moreover, one of the most effective methods for capturing entrepreneurs' first-hand accounts of their experiences is collecting their narratives (Cortazzi, 2014), that is the discourse used to shape one's own understanding (i.e. sensemaking) or influence others' understanding (i.e. sensegiving) of actions, events, or experiences (Humphreys, Ucbasaran, & Lockett, 2012). Such narratives can reveal how entrepreneurs process and make sense of events. Finally, if there is indeed a process by which entrepreneurs integrate their religion and their work, it will likely be complex. The structure of qualitative data (e.g. open-ended interviews) can capture and tease apart complex temporal dynamics and causal mechanisms (Graebner et al., 2012).

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted with 50 individuals in the social entrepreneurship sector. To increase the generalizability of the findings, informants were chosen to represent a wide range of perspectives (e.g. for-profit, nonprofit, hybrid) and a diverse collection of industries. However, the primary inclusion criteria for the study is that informants had to be the lead entrepreneur or co-founder of an organization that satisfied the three primary characteristics of a "social venture" – that is, addressing a social problem, innovatively, using business methods. The study's initial informants were located in a large, metropolitan area in the Southwestern United States. These informants were identified by searching local media articles and websites for phrases such as "social entrepreneur," "social venture," and "social enterprise" and from the first author's contacts in the local entrepreneurship community. Subsequent social entrepreneurs were

identified through “snowball” sampling methods based on recommendations and introductions made by other informants. The final sample was comprised of informants representing multiple states and regions (e.g. Northeast; West Coast) in the United States; however, the majority of informants were located in the Southwestern U.S.

During the interview, informants were provided a very general description of the topic of the study (e.g. “understanding the process by which social ventures are created”). Informants were offered confidentiality and the option for pseudonyms to be used to ensure their anonymity and the anonymity of their ventures (all names and organizations used below are pseudonyms). Finally, informants were assured that the information they provided would not be communicated between interviews to other informants.

Interviews were, on average, one hour in duration, were semi-structured, and consisted of primarily open-ended questions. To avoid priming informants, at the outset entrepreneurs were not asked explicit questions about connections between religion and work. Also, specific religious faiths (e.g. Christian, Muslim, Hindu) were not targeted. Instead, entrepreneurs’ motivations were explored with more general questions, such as “is there any connection between your venture and your personal values?” Only when entrepreneurs responded with statements referencing religious beliefs were these beliefs probed with further questions that focused specifically on religion, thereby avoiding the possibility of introducing a social desirability bias (Presser & Stinson, 1998; i.e., respondents claiming that religion plays a greater (or lesser) role in their motivations than is actually the case because of a belief that this will make the interviewer view them more positively). Finally, all interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using common procedures for inductive theory-building research (e.g. Miles & Huberman, 1994). ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis program, was used to increase the ease of organizing, sorting, and retrieving the data. After completing the interviews, within- and across-informant analysis was conducted.

The goal of within-informant analysis was to understand the perceptions and experiences of each individual and to begin to develop generalized codes, themes, and constructs. In contrast, across-informant analysis was used to “triangulate and substantiate” emerging findings (Ravasi & Phillips, 2011). The narratives of each informant served to either confirm or disconfirm insights gained from other informants. Emerging patterns, processes, and themes were examined to determine if they were present across multiple informants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process model that emerged was refined using the replication logic (Yin, 1994); that is, each informant was treated as a separate “test” that either confirmed or disconfirmed the generalizability of the insights of other informants. Furthermore, while constructing the process model that is described in the next section, the data from each interview was used to challenge or extend the working theory (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Baker & Nelson, 2005).

FINDINGS

The findings revealed that one motivation for becoming a social entrepreneur is that founding a social venture allowed for the integration of entrepreneurs’ religious beliefs and their work. Since scholars have not examined this topic, an important first step in understanding this phenomenon is to develop a process model (cf. Langley, 1999). The process model that emerged from our findings entails five phases. The model begins with entrepreneurs’ *desire* to unite their religious beliefs and work. *Disenchantment* follows whereby individuals feel dissonance between their current work status and their unfilled desire. Phase three is an *epiphany* insight into the merits of social entrepreneurship. The *bridging* phase is the realization that a social venture is

a viable faith-work integrating mechanism. Lastly, FBSE's experience *enlightenment* in their understanding of how their work and religious beliefs relate to one another. We next review these findings in detail and describe how social entrepreneurship can tie together one's religious beliefs and work.

Desire

In agreement with the general trend towards seeking to combine personal religious beliefs with their employment, faith-based social entrepreneurs (FBSEs) explained that their entry into social entrepreneurship began with a common sentiment: the *desire* to integrate their religious and work lives. This growing desire to find coherence between faith-based beliefs and values and work was expressed in several ways. For instance, Michael, a first time entrepreneur who founded a social venture in the apparel industry, described that before he desired an integration between his faith and work, he first came to the realization that he had been pursuing work as an end in of itself, at the expense of his religious beliefs.

I had done [various jobs] ever since college. [I] was then finding myself in a place where I thought, 'I'm no longer necessarily defined by my work.' And my faith really started to bubble up as something that had been neglected and something I didn't want to ignore.

He first resolved this tension by engaging in volunteer work while continuing to work at his pre-social venture (unintegrated) job. Volunteering served as an activity that allowed him to express his religious beliefs. However, the desire for a more holistic integration between religion and work soon surfaced.

I [realized] I was compartmentalized. I was using my energy, time, network, and drive to do this one job that pays the bills and then doing the volunteer thing. Now, you can't rag on folks for wanting to do volunteer work – but I was trying to find a little bit more 'unified theory.'

Michael had realized that rather than integrate his religious beliefs and work, he had in fact further compartmentalized his life. The dichotomy had simply shifted from "work" and

“religion” to “work” and “volunteering/religion.” Thus, his work and religious beliefs remained separate domains. However, Michael sought an activity that would provide true unification.

Other entrepreneurs described this same desire for integration. For example, Jacob, also a first time entrepreneur, who founded a for-profit, technology social venture that helps nonprofits get the resources they need through the use of social media, explains his desire:

I wanted to apply and integrate my work with my faith. [...] We spend the majority of our days at work, so if there's not a faith component to the work that you're doing, then you're kind of missing out. [...] I feel like it's so important not only from your career walk, but also in terms of your faith walk.

As Jacob's statement suggests, being able to integrate one's faith and work can impact both domains (a point that will receive further elaboration in a later section). Another entrepreneur, Thomas, echoes Jacob's sentiment. His social venture is in a similar industry space as Jacob's. The venture, a for-profit, increases the ease with which individuals can donate to a nonprofit or social cause each time they engage in a social media action (e.g. “liking” a posting on Facebook). He states,

I have this faith, I would like to do something associated with it. But faith should always be more than just on Sundays.

Finally, entrepreneurs were clear that although they desired to integrate their religious beliefs and work, this yearning was not synonymous with wanting to enter formal ministry. Rebecca, the founder of a nonprofit social venture that provides employment for at-risk youth by providing them with culinary experience, is clear about this distinction.

I never really wanted to do evangelism. [Interviewer: so you never felt a call to become a minister?] No, I just wanted to come from a faith-based platform.

To summarize, FBSEs often started on the path of founding a social venture by acknowledging a desire to integrate, or find resonance between, their religious beliefs and work lives. However, merely acknowledging this desire was not enough to spur an entrepreneur to

create a social venture. The next step in the process of founding a social venture for faith-based reasons was for the entrepreneur to move from a general desire for work-faith synergy to a disenchantment with their current, non-integrated jobs.

Disenchantment

Entrepreneurs reached a point where they experienced *disenchantment* with their pre-social venture jobs. One entrepreneur, Aaron, describes in general terms the growing disenchantment felt by many in the workforce:

There's a lot of people that have done well, made money, but [now] they are empty inside. They're like, 'What good am I doing here?' A lot of them lost their families and everything else [because of overworking] and they want to restart and make a difference in life.

Mark, an entrepreneur in the apparel industry who created a for-profit social venture based on TOMS Shoes' "buy-one-give-one" model explains the malaise he experienced.

I was working consistently [in the advertising field], but I was never quite ... emotionally satisfied. I really liked it. I thought it was a fun job. But you know, working those 60 hour work weeks, you're killing yourself for nothing. And then when you take a step back, and have that 20,000 foot view of what you did, you're like 'who's gonna care about this?' I wanted more and she [the entrepreneur's spouse] did too.

Mark's statements illustrate that entrepreneurs did not necessarily find their pre-social venture work to be unpleasant; but rather, they communicate that it was in some way lacking and left them wanting more.

Another entrepreneur, Thomas, describes the disenchantment he felt at his pre-social venture job at a Fortune 500 company.

You can die tomorrow and take none of the money with you. What have you impacted and left behind in the world to make it a better place? So that's really what I'm focused on. Yes, I need to pay bills, yes I need to feed my family. But in the process, what are you doing to build towards [something] better. So my [social venture] started when I was sitting in a cubicle at [Fortune 500 company]. [...] I just had too much energy to sit here and do this routine thing every day. [...] And so what I was thinking was, 'if I die tomorrow,' I got all morbid with myself, 'if I die tomorrow what is it all going to amount to? Will I have been part of the problem or solution? [...] [I] haven't done anything to help people.'

These statements highlight several themes that are common to entrepreneurs' disenchantment narratives. First, Thomas describes seeking work that satisfies his financial needs (i.e., “pay[ing] the bills.”) but provides more than monetary rewards. Second, he expresses an aspiration common among social entrepreneurs to leave a legacy – that is, to produce something that survives and continues to create value beyond their lives. Moreover, he communicates a sense of his own mortality, which is encapsulated by his statement, “if I die tomorrow [...]”

Overall, disenchantment represented a transitional phase for prospective FBSEs. Specifically, it forced entrepreneurs to either find a resolution for their angst or to continue with the status quo and remain unsatisfied with their work. In this way, it serves as a potential catalyst for the next phase, epiphany.

Epiphany

The disenchantment entrepreneurs experienced from unfulfilled desires to integrate their faith and work existed for varying amounts of time. However, eventually entrepreneurs experienced an *epiphany*, which often involved two parts. They realized that they could no longer continue working at their non-integrated job and that creating a social venture might be the path to satisfy their desire for integration, thus resolving their disenchantment. Michael, who created a social venture in the apparel industry that works with low income farmers in the developing world, described his epiphany moment.

It was very much these different areas of thinking and [...] they were little separate compartments. And it finally dawned on me that there might be a different way – there might be a better way to do it. And as that was happening, I started seeing all of these opportunities for connecting work and belief. So [I became] very much, like, an accidental entrepreneur.

Michael's statements suggest that he realized that creating a social venture would allow him to collapse all the “compartments” of his life (work, faith, volunteering). He describes his epiphany as occurring suddenly; however, other entrepreneurs claimed to more gradually come to the

conclusion that founding a social venture might be the means of integrating their faith and work.

Rebecca describes a more gradual epiphany.

I mean I like to cook. But I wasn't a baker. And I kind of realized I had a gift for it. And so I should just go ahead and bake for people. But as the years went by, I realized I needed to do it. [...] I felt like God wouldn't give me this random gift if I didn't need to do something with it.

As in other areas of life, work and religion epiphanies can be sudden or gradual and are often the result of experiences that open an individual's eyes to social entrepreneurship's integrating potential. For instance, Tim describes a very specific experience that triggered his epiphany, which led to the creation of a series of micro-enterprises for the homeless.

My background up until three years ago was in business. I owned electronic home security companies. Three years ago I went into the Greenbelt [nature preserve] with my kids hiking and looking for a homeless camp, to build relationships with people that maybe live a little bit differently than me. And I found out that they were just like me. They were created in the image of God and that He's given all of us talents and that they had great talents and great gifts. But they just lacked opportunity. So we left our jobs and for the last three years we worked on creating a workshop and different things based on our friends' [the homeless] talents.

Subsequently, Tim created a woodworking shop that targets those who are homeless. Time in the shop and materials are free, and participating individuals are encouraged to use their skills to make products that they can then sell for income.

Another entrepreneur, Joel, describes achieving his epiphany through a similar experience.

I was walking down by the lake, and I felt like I heard a phrase spoken into my mind, and I feel like the Lord spoke it: "the power plant of prayer," it was just that phrase, "power plant of prayer." And I thought, "What in the world does that mean?" I – I've never thought anything like that before. But I was actually right next to a power plant, and it was the middle of the night, and it was churning away.

After considering this experience, and then realizing "electricity has to be generated as it's consumed" and then wondering "if there's a power missing from the church because there's not day and night prayer – because power plants go day and night," Joel created a hybrid social venture. The venture consisted of a nonprofit 24-hour prayer center and, building on the analogy

of the power plant, the center was funded by a for-profit water distribution company. The company served as a clear connector between Joel's faith (and faith-oriented goals) and his business acumen and experiences.

Finally, epiphany experiences can be so vivid that they are communicated and retold even by non-entrepreneurs. For instance, an investor in the social entrepreneurship sector (who participated in an initial round of pilot interviews) recounts the epiphany moment of a FBSE he had recently encountered.

[The entrepreneur] was a really successful engineer at a high-tech company and had been for 10 years, making a ton of money. But he was feeling, you know, 'this is not for me.' Then, no joke, he just quit his job and said 'I don't know what I'm going to do next.' Then he just took a year and talked to everybody. He said, 'look I don't know where this is leading me, but I feel that I need to do something social enterprise-wise. And that's what he's doing now, some sort of start-up social enterprise work'

As these examples illustrate, FBSEs often describe coming to a sort of "breaking point," where they realize that they no longer find their un-integrated job to be meaningful, no longer want to continue their employment in that job (or industry), and decide that social entrepreneurship represents one way to bridge their faith and work.

Bridging

The culmination of FBSE's epiphany moment is often the realization that founding a social venture – an organization aimed at addressing a social problem through the use of market mechanisms (i.e., by selling a product or serve) – can act as a *bridge* between their faith and work lives.

One entrepreneur, Ruth, founded a nonprofit social venture that employs recently displaced refugees. She succinctly describes what creating the venture has accomplished: "[It] kind of integrates the work week and weekend and what you care about – it's all integrated." Michael provides a more nuanced description of the integration that his social venture creates.

I can have all of the parts of me, the energy, time, network, resources, creativity, imagination – I can put all that into trying to make a business that actually is going to move the needle for people who are in extreme poverty, or who have been disadvantaged, and trying to somehow get at, what Jesus is talking about, “Good News to the poor” – dignity through honest work and being able to pay their own bills and put food on the table and pay rent or pay the mortgage”

In describing how his venture allows him to incorporate his faith and passions into his work, Michael’s statements contain a common feature of FBSE narratives: the entrepreneur makes sense of the venture and the social problem addressed, in part, through the lens of religious works, in this case, scriptural references from the Christian Bible. That is, the entrepreneur explains features of the business through religious teachings. Other founders engage in this same practice; for instance, Tim also draws on Scripture as a sensemaking tool. In particular, he uses it to describe his relationship with the venture’s beneficiaries, homeless individuals.

It’s based on Psalm 107:7 which basically says that ‘he led them to a city where they could dwell in’ and it says that ‘they were in the wilderness and they couldn’t find a place to dwell.’ And we think, those are our friends [the homeless] – they’re living out in the woods and they can’t find a place to settle in the city.

In this case, the scripture quoted has a metaphorical and literal application (i.e., the homeless were in the “wilderness” outside of society and they were also literally residing in a wooded area outside the city). Furthermore, in describing the social good that the venture produces, Tim also uses scriptural reference.

We’re helping them [the homeless] to be their own business owner – it’s not really charity. The closest word to it would be like the kind of mercy that they talk about in the Good Samaritan story. It’s a Greek word called, “Eleos,” and it’s mercy that takes you past justice. It’s the kind of mercy that Christ had for us.

These uses of Scripture serve as more than an indication, or manifestation, of the entrepreneur’s faith; they also demonstrate that the entrepreneur now views his work through the lens of Scripture, which signifies that his faith and work are increasingly integrated.

Beyond general statements about how entrepreneurs perceive that they have achieved work-faith integration, entrepreneurs also describe precisely *how* the activities of their ventures create this integration. Rebecca explains:

I was like, ‘well, I always wanted to start a community development corporation. So why don’t I pair the two of these things [i.e. cooking and community development] together in some way.’ So I started to think about how I could serve the poor with this company. When I felt like I was mature enough and ready to start the community development corporation, I decided I could do a job training program with a pie kitchen. And so I kind of fleshed out the training program and decided which population I wanted to serve.

This statement casts light on the process by which she arrived at the focus of her venture. The venture allowed Rebecca to merge her passion, and what she viewed as a gift from God (cooking ability), with her social service-oriented goal (starting a community development corporation), thereby integrating her faith and work. Her faith also informed her decision to focus on the specific beneficiary group (homeless individuals with criminal backgrounds) targeted by her venture.

I was in university and [...] we read this book. It’s called ‘Theirs is the Kingdom’ and it was about community development and about serving the poor. [...] To me, the population I had worked with the most was the homeless. And the population that had the most barriers to it was the folks that are homeless and have criminal histories, have limited education, have disabilities. And they can’t get jobs because of those issues.

The entrepreneur perceived that her faith permeated the venture – from the source of the talents she employed to the focus of the enterprise.

In describing his social venture, Tim also emphasizes the unification that now exists between his religious beliefs and work. The venture is organized based on a model where the homeless individuals that take part in the venture’s micro-enterprises keep 100% of the proceeds from any product or service they sell. When asked if he ever considered a revenue sharing model where a percentage of sales was reinvested in the business to help it scale, he replied as follows.

I think that for us it’s more of a faith issue. We believe that the community and Kingdom [of God] is large enough to provide for our organization and to provide for our salaries and the funding of the organization so that we can let these guys [the homeless] soar – so I don’t think we

need to consider something like that. What we're doing isn't social justice, in the sense that 'justice' is [based on] what you deserve. But our beliefs state that, when we trust Jesus, we don't get what we deserve – we get *more* than what we deserve. So we're just reflecting that theory and that love into our micro-enterprises and so we're not making people 'employees.'

These statements illustrate that the entrepreneur's business decisions are being influenced by his faith and religious beliefs and further signifies that there is now an integration between his faith and work. Although it could be argued that religious beliefs can influence a person's decision making in any occupation (regarding, for instance, ethical decisions), it will generally not influence the structural properties of an organization. As Tim's decision process shows, however, in his venture his faith beliefs are interwoven into the very fabric of the business model of the organization. Another entrepreneur, Luke, relates a similar quality in his social venture.

My Christian faith is a major driver [in how he approaches social entrepreneurship]. I just see Christ as – when he was on earth he focused on the poor, enabling the poor. And I just say, 'well, maybe there's a new twist on the theme [of traditional charity], where it's not just giving to the poor, but it's enabling the poor to create wealth for themselves [...] certainly my faith informed me in these decisions.

In founding this venture, Luke was faced with either creating an organization that gave clean water to those in need or founding a business-focused organization that helped individuals in developing countries to become clean water entrepreneurs, providing clean water for themselves and others while at the same time earning an income. Creating a social venture provided Luke with the discretion, or decision-making agency (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987), to be able to develop an organizational model that more closely matched his religious beliefs.

Overall, as the statements of entrepreneurs suggest, creating a social venture helped to address FBSEs' desires to integrate their faith and work and resolve the disenchantment they experienced from their previous employment. Social entrepreneurship thereby served as a bridge uniting entrepreneurs' religious and work spheres. However, entrepreneurs communicated that the creation of a social venture did more than simply combine their religious beliefs and their

work; the activity also resulted in entrepreneurs developing a more enlightened view of both faith and work, which transcended their previous beliefs.

Enlightenment

The process by which social entrepreneurs describe integrating their faith and work lives did not end when entrepreneurs realized that social entrepreneurship could serve as a bridge between religious beliefs and work. FBSEs described reaching a point where their conception of their work changed when realizing that work could represent more than an income or a career and that it could, in fact, be an outlet for and an extension of their faith. Entrepreneurs moved beyond their initial assumptions and developed a broader view of what work could represent. However, FBSEs' descriptions of their post-integration views of faith also suggest that the process of founding and operating a social venture led to an enlightened view not only of their work but also their religious beliefs. Michael's description of his faith after operating his social venture, captures this change.

“...my faith also started to broaden to include not such a myopic view of faith, but a broader, Good News to the poor [mentality]. Seeing Good News to the poor as part of the Gospel story. You know, when Jesus was talking about, in Luke, saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, bring Good news to the poor, freedom to the captives, sight to the blind, healing to the sick,” and it was like that's kind of his coming out party. I mean that's his announcement to the world, “Hey, this is what I'm about.” And I had definitely missed that growing up. [I had focused on] me and Jesus and how to manage my sin and that kind of stuff. But I missed justice. I missed Good News to the poor.

Michael's comments suggest that in seeking to understand how his faith and work might be better integrated, he came to develop a better understanding of both. That is, in the process of coming to see his work in a different light, and in uniting this religion and work, his views of both domains deepened.

Another example of an entrepreneur experiencing a similar transformation in one's faith beliefs is Luke. He describes the point he reached after operating at the intersection between faith

and work. He also explains how these beliefs have even carried over into ventures that are not explicitly social enterprises.

...my faith is [now] so integrated into my world view and what I do, I just see it as normal and natural that it [his business] would create social good. [...] I mean, the last business I came out with was a satellite company and we were working with the government for highly secure systems and those types of things. But I still saw that as a social enterprise because, as I saw it, I really took care of my employees and I really took very seriously making the world a better place through what I did. [...] So for me it's more integrated than with other people. To me, I can't think of doing business just for money. I just can't think that way, it's a holistic perspective.

Luke's quotation suggests an interesting outcome: entrepreneurs can reach a point where their religious beliefs and work are so integrated that they view all work as having the capacity to generate social value and, thereby, to be of service to their faith. That is, this entrepreneur raises the possibility that there are other paths to uniting work and faith that extend beyond social entrepreneurship. Although this point is not shared by all social entrepreneurs, it suggests that one outcome of the process of integrating faith and work can be ending up back in the realm of traditional employment but with a new view that sees all work as capable of producing faith and work integration. However, even if entrepreneurs did not reach this outcome, they came to have a more nuanced view of their faith and work.

DISCUSSION

This study finds that one motivation for founding a social venture is that some entrepreneurs are seeking to unite their religious beliefs and their work. Specifically, a common five-phase process emerged by which entrepreneurs integrated their religious beliefs into their businesses. Entrepreneurs first experienced a *desire* for greater synergy between work and faith. They then grew *disenchanted* by the inability of their current, non-social venture employment to provide them with the unification they sought. After struggling to rectify this issue for varying amounts of time, entrepreneurs experienced an *epiphany* in which they realized that social entrepreneurship might represent an avenue for uniting their religious beliefs and work. In doing

so, a social venture could serve as a *bridge* between their religion and work, which allowed entrepreneurs to integrate their faith-oriented goals (e.g. serving the poor) with the business employment that provided their livelihood. Finally, social entrepreneurs described that creating a social venture resulted in an *enlightened* view of not only their work but also an expanded and more nuanced conception of their religious beliefs. These results suggest a process model representing one pathway by which a person becomes a social entrepreneur.

Before examining the study's implications it is important to note several qualifying points. First, although the process by which entrepreneurs come to unite their religious beliefs with their work is largely linear (e.g. the epiphany phase precedes the enlightenment phase both logically and empirically), not every entrepreneur necessarily passed through each of the five phases. That is, there is variance among FBSEs in how they progress through the process. Thus, the process model presented here represents an archetype, which captures the path most commonly taken by the entrepreneurs in this study's sample; however, it is not an all-inclusive representation of the progression (e.g. it may be possible for an entrepreneur to experience disenchantment simultaneously with desire). Moreover, if an entrepreneur does not possess the desire to unite their religious beliefs with their work, then it is unlikely that they will embark on the set of phases described. Finally, this process model represents only one path – based on motivations tied to religious beliefs – to founding a social venture. There are likely to be other paths taken by those that become social entrepreneurs, which are based on other motivations. These boundary conditions notwithstanding, the findings from this study stand to contribute to several literatures.

Implications for Theory

Social Entrepreneurship

Research has begun to examine several steps in the social entrepreneurship process, including how social entrepreneurs pursue opportunities (Zahra, Rawhouser, Bhawe, Neubaum, & Hayton), communicate with and acquire resources from investors (Roundy, 2014), and create novel business models (e.g. Yunus, Moingeon, & Lehmann-Ortega, 2010; Mair, & Shoen, 2007). However, there is a dearth of research on, arguably, one of the most fundamental stages in the social entrepreneurship process: what motivates individuals to become social entrepreneurs. Thus the findings of this study represent a step towards understanding the psychological drivers of social entrepreneurship. Specifically, the findings indicate that one motivation for founding a social, rather than conventional, venture is rooted in entrepreneurs' religious beliefs. The findings suggest that there are motivational factors that influence social entrepreneurs beyond the commonly expressed desire to "do good, while doing well."

Moreover, there is a growing stream of research examining what motivates individuals to become traditional entrepreneurs (e.g. Carsrud & Brännback, 2011). Key motivations studied include the desire to be one's own boss, to pursue the development of one's own ideas, or to achieve financial rewards (e.g. Rindova, Barry, & Ketchen, 2009). Although social entrepreneurs can conceivably be driven by the same motivations (although they are unlikely to be driven by a pure profit motive; Santos, 2012), the findings in this study uncover a motivation that seems unique to social entrepreneurship. This is an important contribution because, following other work on the differences between social and traditional entrepreneurship (e.g. Austin et al., 2006), this motivation represents another critical distinction between the two types of entrepreneurship.

Hybrid (Multi-Logic) Organizations

An institutional logic is a "socially constructed, historical pattern of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals [...] provide meaning to their social reality" (Thornton, 2004: 69). Social ventures represent a hybrid organizational form because

they possess two separate governing logics: a commercial logic (associated with their business orientation) and a social welfare logic (associated with their desire to create social value; Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2012; Nicholls, 2010). It can be argued that faith-based social ventures must incorporate a *third* logic associated with their religious orientation. That is, such organizations will be driven by a third pattern of thinking, which is rooted in religious practices and teachings. Thus, FBSEs may be faced with a more difficult task than other entrepreneurs in that they must juggle and achieve co-existence between a more complex set of logics.

However, the findings of this study suggest that the presence of multiple logics may be what allows for the integration between a FBSE's religious beliefs and work. Indeed, it is the social welfare logic that allows entrepreneurs to connect their religious beliefs to work outcomes. In this way, the social welfare logic provides an outlet for entrepreneurs' faith-based values. In contrast, the business logic provides a FBSE with the market discipline necessary to create an organization that is self-sustaining and provides a point of connection to the entrepreneurs' past business experiences. Thus, all three logics are interwoven and play a critical role in allowing the venture to serve as a bridge between religious beliefs and work. However, understanding how FBSEs are able to navigate the tensions that exist between these logics stands to produce insights into how other organizational actors that must balance multiple logics can do so.

Work and Religion

This study stands to contribute to the growing literature examining work and religion in several ways. First, although a new ventures' orientation and culture are typically grounded in the values of the founder (e.g. Lumpkin & Dess, 1996), very little research at the intersection of faith and work has focused on the phenomenon of entrepreneurship. Moreover, even though religions value the practice of entrepreneurship to varying degrees and, in many cases, do not

necessarily promote or prohibit entrepreneurship (Dana, 2010), as this study indicates the value systems transmitted by religion can influence the entrepreneurial process.

Furthermore, much of the prior research on the intersection of faith and work focuses on how the implications of religious beliefs differ across religious denominations (e.g. Lynn et al., 2011). Past work emphasizes how denominational differences correspond to variations in doctrines and practices (Noffke & McFadden, 2001). For instance, Lynn and colleagues find that denominational strictness (i.e., the extent of demands and expectations placed on church members) leads members to demonstrate stronger work-faith integration. However, our study took a more granular approach and focused on the religious beliefs of the individual (and on their idiosyncratic belief systems) rather than starting at the denomination level. Surprisingly, very few informants introduced denominational details into their explanations of how they integrated their faith and work. Instead, they focused on the general tenets of their faith suggesting that perhaps denominational differences are not as salient in FBSE's process of integrating their religion and work as they are in other domains. By focusing on denominational differences, studies may be missing important nuances that exist at a more fine-grained level of analysis.

Implications for Practice

Social entrepreneurs are making progress in solving some of the most challenging and entrenched global problems (Bornstein, 2007). In doing so, they are filling an important gap between business, traditional charity, and government (i.e., they operate at the intersection of the private, nonprofit, and public sectors). Thus it is important for policy makers to understand what motivates someone to become a social entrepreneur. At the same time, surveys indicate that an increasing percentage of the population seeks to unite their faith and work (e.g. Miller, 2006), thereby suggesting a growing segment of the workforce that is unsatisfied with their current

work. Since job satisfaction can influence a host of important organizational behaviors and attitudes (Williams & Anderson, 1991), this motivates the importance of understanding this phenomenon.

Second, FBSEs were quick to note that their ventures must be just as profitable, and constructed on just as solid of a business model, as non-faith based social and traditional ventures. As one informant stated:

You only get a seat at the table if you can make money, if you can turn a profit. But if you don't have that one really essential "P" in the triple [bottom line] – if you don't have the *profit* part of profit, people, and planet – if you don't have it, I mean you're a little bit of a resounding gong, full of sound and fury – you know, resembling nothing.

Faith-based entrepreneurs should not assume that they get a "pass" on creating a sound business that delivers a quality product or service and that addresses a clear customer need simply because they are operating a social venture that is motivated by religious beliefs. Indeed, in fostering the social-good and faith-based elements of the venture, FBSEs should not lose sight of the primacy of developing a strong business.

Finally, although this study has focused on a generally positive aspect of founding a faith-based social venture (i.e., its ability to serve as a bridge between religion and work), prospective FBSEs should recognize that they may face a unique set of challenges. For instance, although there is beginning to be work on this topic (e.g. Taylor, Halstead, & Haynes, 2010; Halstead, Haynes, & Taylor, 2009), it is not clear what the optimal way to market a faith-based venture is. Should the organization explicitly market itself as "Christian" or as "Faith-based"? If so, what are the implications for the evaluations of stakeholders such as customers, prospective investors, and the media? An executive director of a faith-based social venture described the challenge she has faced with this issue. She states, "I would say that one of our biggest challenges is figuring out what the right message is for marketing, what is the best way to

approach the messaging on the business as a whole, really understanding the business mission as well as the social mission at the same time.” In sum, FBSEs should approach issues associated with the marketing of their ventures deliberately and with caution.

Limitations

This study represents a first-cut at understanding how a driving motivation for some social entrepreneurs is to find greater coherence between their religious beliefs and their work. However, the study is not without limitations. Although it was not the intention when the sample was constructed, the vast majority of informants were of the Christian faith. Entrepreneurs were selected for inclusion in the study based on their participation in the social entrepreneurship sector, not on their particular religious (or a-religious) beliefs. As described, the only inclusion criterion was that an entrepreneur had to have created an organization that satisfied the conceptual definition of a social venture. There are multiple, in some cases complementary, explanations for the preponderance of Christian viewpoints. For instance, the study utilized a limited sample size ($n=50$ entrepreneurs) and was conducted in the U.S. where Christianity is the largest belief system as a percentage of the population. Additionally, tenets of Christian theology (e.g. the Protestant Work Ethic; Weber, 1905/2002) may also lend themselves to pursuing a career as a social entrepreneur. Future work, that includes a broader sample of religions, is necessary to understand the nuances of the phenomenon and what aspects (if any) of the process model are generalizable across religious faiths.

Directions for future research

As noted in the previous section, the most obvious extension of this study is to consider an expanded sample specifically constructed to address the limitations of the present research. Most notably, future work is necessary to understand the extent to which the dynamics and mechanisms uncovered by studying Christian entrepreneurs apply to individuals of other

religious faiths. To explore if our findings can be used to explain the motivations of non-Christian social entrepreneurs, future research could either focus specifically on non-Christian, U.S. communities or on international communities from regions that are predominantly non-Christian.

Work is also needed to understand the relationship between FBSEs and other faith-based organizations. For instance, one entrepreneur explains that there is a close relationship between her social venture and the church in which she is a member.

“[...] our church has been the one that has paid for [...] all the supplies, all of that stuff [raw materials the venture uses] like that. Some faith-based organizations are filling in the gap financially that nonprofits and foundations may not be addressing – which is interesting – and there are not a lot of churches doing this either. But that has been a source for our funding and [...] as a fairly liberal not always in the Christian world person, that’s been a little bit uncomfortable for me. But we are not going to turn down something if it can help us do something good.

This entrepreneur’s statement suggests that there may be a complex interplay between FBSEs and religious organizations. For instance, such organizations may help FBSEs overcome unique challenges associated with access to capital. However, future work is needed to tease apart precisely how these relationships operate and what may be the accompanying advantages and disadvantages of such alliances.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that there is a growing segment of the (entrepreneurial) workforce that seeks integration between their personal value systems and their work. Indeed, as one respondent, expressed: “I think there is something happening with the generation coming through [college] now that they almost look at the world and say, ‘Well if I’m going to work, it has to have some sort of social good aspect to it’,” while another commented that “work and personal and professional development and community are all [becoming] one in the same.” These statements suggest that scholars interested in the intersection of organization

studies, entrepreneurship, and religion may be presented with a ripe opportunity to study a phenomenon that is increasingly prevalent and that may have a growing impact on the workforce of the future.

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