Identity capital: an exploration in the context of youth social entrepreneurship

Kate V. Lewis

school of management & new Zealand social innovation & Entrepreneurship research Centre, massey university, palmerston north, new Zealand

ABSTRACT

Côté's model of 'identity capital' is said to comprise a set of strengths and psycho-social skills that are deployed by individuals to both define themselves and represent how others define them. Identity capital is multi-dimensional by nature, both tangible and intangible in character and acquired through the application of resources in identity exchanges. The identity capital framework is built around the youth experience and is, therefore, germane to an exploration of the meaning, motivation and value of youth engagement with socially entrepreneurial endeavours. The young are described as an increasingly important cohort in terms of the creation of socially innovative solutions to the world's 'wicked problems' – and as leaders, not merely followers. In this paper, the model is applied to a single case study of a young New Zealand social entrepreneur using multiple sources of both primary and secondary data (with a longitudinal orientation). Particular emphasis is given to probing how identity capital in this example is accumulated, deployed and exchanged in relation to the lived experience of being a young social entrepreneur, and through a socially entrepreneurial cultural frame of reference.

Introduction

As the breadth and depth of understanding of entrepreneurship has increased, so too has appreciation of its capacity to change lives (individually and collectively) and bring about empowerment, emancipation and evolution of personhood (Al-Dajani and Marlow 2013; Jennings, Jennings, and Sharifian 2014; Verduijn et al. 2014). The sociological turn in entrepreneurship research validated the need for inquiry rooted in constructs such as identity, power and voice and legitimized the need for the type of postpositivist approaches most suited for addressing such dimensions of questioning (Karatas-Ozkan et al. 2014). It also created, through a niche but developing body of work, a desire to develop a more nuanced understanding of who the entrepreneur is. But rather than describing a fixed state or ascribing a set of objective traits, knowledge development has transitioned to modes of inquiry that privilege identity. More specifically, the entrepreneurial identity as embedded, socially

constructed, and ultimately, fluid (Downing 2005); therefore rendering pertinent the need for questions and methodologies that seek to understand and articulate the process of

'becoming' rather than the state of 'being' in relation to entrepreneurship (Rae 2004). That is, entrepreneurship can be construed as fuelling processes of both social and personal emergence, and that the ventures formed as part of those processes are, in many respects, reflections of that self-identity (Ireland and webb 2007).

Identity has been shown to be dynamic and evolving, and not located within an individual per se. It is not a fixed construct; instead, it is constituted via interactions between a person and the society and culture within which that individual is embedded (Jones, Latham, and Betta 2008). It is a cyclical, iterative process of construction and deconstruction that is grounded in the activity situated at the nexus of narration and action (Bjursell and Melin 2011). The identity, or identities, emerging from such dialogic processes then hold varying levels of centrality, salience and stability (Murnieks, Mosakowski, and Cardon 2014) and are often affected by the characteristics of the phases of formulation, and so the symbiosis of identity formulation and identity emergence (and re-emergence) is established (Hoang and Gimeno 2010). Hence, the fluidity and potential of discontinuities of an entrepreneurial identity (relative to process, perception and person) are

established.

Operationalized in research terms, the 'entrepreneurial identity' can comprise the set of descriptive attributes or traits ascribed to it; the level of perceived fit with the envisaged type of activity; the centrality of the adopted identity; and a positive or negative identity regard response (Hoang and Gimeno 2005). whilst the agentic origins of entrepreneurial identity enactment (and desire for objectively driven forms of 'measurement') are indisput- able, there is increasing recognition of the criticality of post-structuralist conceptions of identity as social constructionist and relational in character (Nadin 2007; watson 2008). A constructionist approach acknowledges that neither agency (self-determination) nor the determination imposed by others via structural means is an entirely free choice in terms of either identity or discourse (essers and Benschop 2007; watson 2013). Discursive resources are therefore critical to the creation and maintenance of identity and have stimulated entre- preneurial identity research on the narrative and linguistic turn, both internally and externally (i.e. how 'self-stories' are influenced by the discourses of the social and cultural milieu and vice versa) (Down and Reveley 2004; Down and warren 2008; Phillips, Tracey, and Karra 2013; watson 2009).

The need then is for focused attention on the environment in which the agent exists and the context(s) in which the identity is shaped and lived (Anderson and warren 2011). However, this emphasis is recognized as needing to extend beyond merely capturing the characteristics of place or space (Gill and Larson 2014) to interrogating the complexity of the embeddedness occurring within the context (Pitt 2004) and for the potential of both the individual and collective to consciously or sub-consciously, tangibly or intangibly affect identity formation and enactment (Nielsen and Lassen 2012). This is especially germane when also taking account of the various demographic factors (including age, sex and eth- nicity) that shape the nature of identity assumption and the identity work that is subse- quently undertaken (Garcia and welter 2013; Hytti 2005; MacNabb et al. 1993). Therefore, situating explorations of entrepreneurial identity within hitherto unexplored contexts has considerable potential value both in terms of novelty and the opportunity to add additional layers of either understanding or complexity (or both) to the notion of what an entrepreneurial identity is and how it is both formed and sustained. Two specific gaps in understanding that

stimulated the research reported in this paper are a lack of understanding of (a) how identities are 'built' as opposed to how they are perceived (either by the individual concerned or others) and (b) how the 'building blocks' of an identity are collected and arranged (either opportun- istically or deliberately) within a particular context.

Social entrepreneurship is a context in which little work has been attempted in terms of identity – two exceptions being work by Jones, Latham and Betta (2008) and Simms and Robinson (2009). This is in part perhaps due to the relative immaturity of the topic in terms of research inquiry (Nicholls 2010) or related to the belief that the entrepreneurial identity is an all-encompassing descriptor within which the social entrepreneur may simply be under- stood as a sub-set. 'The social entrepreneur can be broadly defined as an individual whose main objective is not to make profits but to create social value for which he/she will adopt an entrepreneurial behaviour' (Bacq and Janssen 2011, 381) and frequently via novel resource combinations (Mair and Martí 2006). Given the established discrepancies in motivations, intent and, frequently, antecedent pathways present between 'for-profit' and 'not-for-profit' entrepreneurial behaviour (Germak and Robinson 2014; Shumate et al. 2014), it would not be unreasonable to posit that the social entrepreneur identity may be sufficiently distinct as to warrant a separate categorization rather than the subsuming approach (Mason 2014). either way, knowledge around identity in relation to social entrepreneurship is sufficiently under-developed as to warrant any form of focus, however modest, as a contribution to, or stimulus of, dialogue about the nature of entrepreneurial identity in that particular domain. Given the link between social entrepreneur and context is frequently acute and/or atypical, this type of lens to understanding the socially entrepreneurial identity provides an oppor- tunity for insight that may not emerge from a for-profit perspective.

This paper, therefore, has as its foundation data that resulted from a methodological design predicated on identity as the dominant framework of investigation; in the domain of social entrepreneurship; and in relation to an atypical context. The result is a case study of the entrepreneurial identity of a young social entrepreneur named Sam Johnson (SJ) whose creation of the Student Volunteer Army (SVA) occurred in the aftermath of a natural disaster (the earthquakes of 2010–2011 in Christchurch, New Zealand). The theoretical lens brought to bear on the case is that of identity capital (Côté 1996) which has not been applied in the domain of entrepreneurship previously or from a specific component-driven perspec- tive. The objective of the paper is to explore the nature of SJ's identity capital prior to and during his socially entrepreneurial response to a time of crisis. Further, the paper

seeks to not only describe how his particular identity capital was accumulated but also how it was deployed and exchanged in the context of launching and sustaining the work of the SVA. The paper proceeds with coverage of the chosen theoretical framework of identity capital and justification of the methodological design. The case data and context are then elaborated upon and discussed specifically in relation to the componentry and parameters of the identity capital framework (Côté 1996). Conclusions are presented and the implications of the identity capital framework for understanding the nature of entrepreneurial identity are teased out, as are the limitations of the work and potential future areas for investigation.

Theoretical framework

Côté's (1996) identity capital model was devised in part as a response to his concern over ever-increasing demands on individuals to cope with identity transitions in the context of late modernity, particularly at a time when individualism (be it real or imagined) exerts ever more pressure and there is a perceived deficiency of institutional supports available to indi- viduals to assist them in making transitions through the life course. Grounded in develop- mental and social psychological approaches, the model seeks to give greater explanatory power to the interrelationship between social context and identity formation (Côté 2002). It is suggested that the higher the level (or more expansive the portfolio) of identity capital held by an individual, the greater their capacity for achieving fulfilment across the spectrum of place and space, the issue being not only the shape and form of the identity capital itself, but how it is nurtured and developed in order to progress not only the process of 'becoming', but also that of 'fitting in' (or not) (Côté 2002). warin described identity capital as 'the advan- tage gained through the reflexive capacity to articulate a narrative of self' (2015, 1).

Comprising effective behavioural repertoires, psycho-social development and associa- tions grounded in appropriate social and occupational networks, an individual's identity capital, according to Côté (1996), is their 'net assets' in terms of their investment (or intended investment) in 'who they are' at a given point in the life course (as well as fuelling future identity-related transitions across the life course), that is the set of strengths and psycho-so- cial skills that are deployed to define them and represent how others define them. Identity capital is, therefore, multi-factorial, both tangible and intangible in character, and acquired through the application of resources in identity exchanges. Notably, it has personality, lan- guage and performative elements (Ho and Bauder 2012).

The framework attempts to describe both tangible (e.g. behaviour) and

intangible (e.g. personality) dimensions of identity capital resource acquisition and spans a diverse range of resources bases (e.g. educational, social and psychological) (Côté and Schwartz 2002). The two dominant categories of assets underpinning the model are psychological and sociological. These are then further divided according to tangibility and intangibility. Socially visible (and primarily behaviourally driven) assets include: financial resources (including those of parents); educational credentials; memberships of groups; and personal deportment. Côté (1996) suggests that these assets act as a form of 'passport' into other spheres and are a critical factor in the micro-politics of identity formation and management (including negotiations with the gatekeepers of these new intended participatory domains). Intangible assets (mainly constituting personal attributes) include: self-esteem; locus of control; sense of pur- pose; cognitive flexibility; moral reasoning; agentic personality tendencies; and the capacity for self-monitoring. In sum, these identity capital attributes are said to enable an individual to understand and negotiate both obstacles and opportunities related to identity formation. Collectively, they can be described as the 'wherewithal' necessary to thrive in terms of identity devisement and maintenance. Further, they have a performative element via exchanges and mutual acceptance in terms of such interactions that leads to identity capital gains. 'The process of identity capital acquisition describes how the individual invests in a certain identity (or identities) and engages in a series of exchanges with others in a variety of contexts' (Côté
2005, 225), once identity capital assets are 'accepted' in whatever context they can be exchanged (either symbolically, emotionally or pragmatically) (Côté 1997).

Côté (1997) suggested that identity capital can fuel active adaptation in terms of identity formation (as opposed to passive acceptance). Similarly, the 'classes' of assets are conceptu- alized as being interrelated both in terms of how they are accumulated and how they are deployed (in terms of either, or both, concrete or abstract utilization). The perceived level of 'fit' between person and context can result in a number of effects pertaining to identity capital realization. These can be compensatory in nature (making up for past lags) or stimulate an acceleration effect. Côté (1997) has suggested that in the context of higher education, a form of moratorium effect may also exist (either constructed or amplified) for young people, whereby a form of societal permission exists for the postponement of certain forms or facets of maturation pertinent to identity formation and evolution.

The identity capital framework has not previously been applied to describe or explain the phenomenon of entrepreneurship. empirically, it has most often been applied in the context of youth and few studies have tested it beyond

that focus – one exception being the work of Ho and Bauder (2012) who applied it in the context of a multi-cultural workplace. However, age (and/or youthfulness), in and of itself, has not been conceptualized to date as a form of capital (wohlmann 2012), whilst identity capital has at its core the youth experience (Côté
1997). Therefore, identity capital appears germane when seeking to explore the meaning, motivation and value of youth engagement with socially entrepreneurial endeavours. An increasing number of studies are drawing attention to the way in which the young can be a vital part of building socially innovative solutions to the world's wicked problems – and, as leaders, not merely followers (Ho, Clarke, and Dougherty 2015; Kourilsky and walstad 2007; Lewis 2013). Additionally, the body of knowledge around youth entrepreneurship has estab- lished that the young enact, interpret and value their entrepreneurial activities in a way that is distinct from their older counterparts (Hickie 2011; Lewis and Massey 2003). However, whilst having potential explanatory power within such a context, the identity capital frame- work may also be limiting in that it was conceived of in response to other phenomena and to identity concerns of a particular time period and character. The choice to attempt to apply it within the context of a social entrepreneurship as a distinct type of entrepreneurship could also mean that it is perceived of as less relevant to other forms of entrepreneurship until a broader application is attempted (which may overcome concerns around the specificity of its focus). Greater insight might also then be gained as to how the framework relates to other approaches to understanding entrepreneurial identity (accepting that they tend to focus on issues of enactment and perception rather than componentry per se). Then, conclusions may be drawn as to how, in the future, broader application and interrogation (beyond an explor- atory paper such as this) might reconcile it with more typical approaches and add additional dimensions to existing portrayals of the entrepreneurial identity.

Methods

Increasing traction is being gained in terms of the acceptance of, and advocacy for, the merits of post-positivist approaches to entrepreneurship scholarship (e.g. Drakopoulou- Dodd et al. 2014). Social entrepreneurship is, in essence, social constructionism in action. It is constructed in, within and through social processes that articulate, challenge and break established patterns (Lindgren and Packendorff 2009). The narratives that underpin such processes are therefore fertile ground for the exploration of the development of both social entrepreneurship and its manifestations in the

identity development of the individual(s) concerned (Larty and Hamilton 2011). Further, social entrepreneurship has been described as a 'grand narrative' (Dey and Steyaert 2010). Therefore, multiple in-depth interviews were selected as a means of data collection most consistent with this interpretation.

The case study of SJ and the SVA is an 'entrepreneurial personal story explanation' (situated at the entrepreneur boundary and from the subjective perspective) (Perren and Ram 2004) using a holistic single case study design that sufficed Yin's (2003) longitudinal, critical and revelatory rationales. This theoretical sampling approach reflected the need for the selected case to be 'particularly suitable for illuminating and extending relationships and logic among constructs' (eisenhardt and Graebner 2007, 27). Despite the obvious lack of opportunity for subsequent generalizability, the findings can still contribute to 'the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society' (Flyvbjerg 2006, 227). The interviews with SJ were largely unstructured in character in order to facilitate the capture of intact narratives and place the emphasis on SJ's voice and interpretation. In addition to numerous informal dialogues with SJ, six 'formal' interviews occurred across a three-year period (2011–

2013). each was typically 60–90 min in length with three occurring in person and the other three via telephone or Skype. Data were collected either via digital recordings where possible or through extensive note taking. The content of the documented narratives was reviewed by SJ for accuracy.

The primary interview data were supplemented by the collection of secondary data via SJ's virtual presence (e.g. his website, blogging and tweeting and the SVA Facebook page). Further, narratives by and about him were gathered from a variety of media sources via his online footprint (e.g. newspaper and magazine articles, television coverage and radio inter- views). SJ also supplemented this data with the provision of a timeline of key milestones, events and people in his life course that he considered influential to his identity development (and in particular to his socially entrepreneurial inclinations). each key entry in his timeline was supplemented by a micro-narrative in which SJ explains his perception of the influence and/or outcome of each. It offers important insights from a transitions perspective, the nature of which are proposed to be especially pertinent to the establishment and maintenance of an entrepreneurial identity (Snyder 2004). whilst the data are a central foundation of the case study, at SJ's request, his specific reflexive accompanying notations have not been directly quoted in this paper (but have of course informed the analysis that is presented).

In presenting the data, SJ's voice is privileged, unless the material is attributed to a sec- ondary source. As well as acting as a proxy for

authenticity, this approach allowed SJ to bring his own social entrepreneurship story to life and to narrate his own actions (Henderson et al. 2012). The subsequent embedded subjective reflexivity enhances the meaningfulness of the narrative from a dual perspective: as both lived experience and 'insider account' (ekanem

2007). The primacy of narrative voice has also been established as critical to research focused on the construction of entrepreneurial identities (Johansson 2004). Narratives have been presented in as intact a form as is possible. where necessary, they have been fragmented for the sake of both the written form of the paper and its focal intent. They have also been factually scaffolded where possible to enhance their scope and aid cohesion. Obviously, time elapsed both between the earthquakes and the interviews so the data emerged at different chronological points. The advantage of this is the longitudinal tinge it gives the data in terms of the evolution of SJ's sense-making (Nicholson and Anderson 2005), both in terms of impression and action; it was also a means of highlighting (in)consistencies.

Results and discussion

The case of SJ and the context within which it is embedded are presented first and two sections follow it which are labelled 'asset accrual' and 'performance and deployment' (both derived from the chosen theoretical framework). The first focuses on classes of assets (according to Côté (1997)) and how they are accumulated by SJ, and the second discusses how he utilizes those assets and performs his identity as social entrepreneur.

The case and context

Christchurch, New Zealand's second most populated city and located in the South Island, suffered a magnitude 6.3 earthquake, at a depth of only 5 m, at 12.51 pm on 22 February

2011 killing 185 people. It followed a 7.1-magnitude earthquake on 4 September 2010 which caused significant damage but no fatalities. Immediately after the 2011 quake, a national state of emergency was declared as tens of thousands of residents required evacuation; 50% of households in the city were without water; 40% without electricity; and approximately

50% without waste water services (Stevenson et al. 2011). Liquefaction in the eastern suburbs of the city produced 400,000 tonnes of silt and 50% of the buildings within the city centre were designated for demolition. Over 11,000 aftershocks have affected the region since the

2010 event and the cost of the earthquakes has been estimated by the New Zealand Treasury to be NZ$15 billion.

A number of socially entrepreneurial responses emerged in the aftermath of the earth- quakes. One such initiative was the founding of the SVA by SJ. He was a student at the university of Canterbury at the time of the first earthquake (studying law and political science). At its strongest, the SVA had a membership of 13,000 and was active in the aftermath of both the major earthquakes and the significant aftershocks that followed. In measurable outcomes, the SVA assisted with the clearance of 260,000 tonnes of silt, delivered 21,000 chemical toilets to residents, dropped off over 500,000 informational pamphlets on behalf of key agencies and participated in numerous other activities (e.g. the laying of sand-bags).

SJ narrates his 'spark notion' (Corner and Ho 2010)
for the SVA:

I created a Facebook page on the evening of the first earthquake. At first I invited some selected people: the good networkers, the clubs, popular people and people I knew who would naturally be willing to assume leadership positions in this context …. Like so many others I just wanted to help. I was absolutely fine. My room got shaken apart but my family was okay …. The job that looked so obvious to be done was helping residents in their homes …. Just everyday people going and helping their neighbours. I went to help my neighbours after the earthquake. They didn't need help, but it quickly became clear that so many people in Christchurch did. And, so many people were willing and able to help them. Social media was a very strong energy source following the earthquake with self-journalism proving to be more up to date than mainstream media in many respects. There was a groundswell of my peers attending earthquake after-parties and from my limited experience on the Community Board I easily foresaw how this minority group of students would make headlines for their anti-social behaviour …. I was invited to three earthquake after-parties and met a guy making T-shirts emblazoned with 'I Survived the Christchurch earthquake' and I thought, 'we can probably do better than that really' …. This is the one time when the student community could really be exceptionally useful – we're young and fit and able to go and help out those who are most affected.

This media derived 'micro narrative' outlines the response to SJ's first SVA-related Facebook posting:

He went home and posted the meeting point address on the Facebook page with instructions to 'bring a spade and a wheelbarrow if you've got one; otherwise be prepared to door knock and ask for one'. Johnson arrived at the meeting point the next day to find 100–150 people

waiting

.... More and more people kept arriving. 'And we ran out of work by 12 o'clock. we finished this little suburb, these five streets that we were in. And it became the challenge: "Right, where are we going next?"'The residents who had been cool beforehand were changing their minds about his student army. 'Really genuinely thankful, almost unbelieving that strangers, people they'd never met before, nothing in common, were coming out there and helping and not wanting anything in return'. (wilson 2011, 22, 24).

Asset accrual

At the time of his socially entrepreneurial response immediately after the first Christchurch earthquake, SJ had already accumulated a number of forms of resource that cumulatively can be considered his identity capital in terms of Côté's (1996) framework. Despite his youth (he was aged 21 at the time of launching the SVA), SJ already possessed a number of tangible sociological assets that he brought to bear on the endeavour. He had existing educational credentials in that based on his secondary school achievements, he had been admitted to Law School at the university of Canterbury and had progressed to his second year of study by the commencement of the SVA. Financial resources are posited to be a source of identity capital by Côté (1996) – both those of the individual and their parents. whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to critique the componentry of the framework, it is reasonable to suggest that if identity capital is considered relative to a specific context, then some forms of identity assets are likely to be more or less relevant accordingly. Particularly, as in this paper, consideration of identity capital is being given to a particular identity (or facet of identity); in this case, 'the social entrepreneur'. Therefore, the financial resources element of the framework could arguably be less relevant in this context depending on how it informs identity capital accumulation (and/or exchange). Similarly, the financial resources of parents may be more or less germane in certain contexts. In this case, the resources of SJ's parents are likely attributable as the cause of SJ's quality secondary education (at a private school: Christ's College) and his subsequent ability to attend university (implying a certain socio-eco- nomic status) – although the student loan system in New Zealand may neutralize the assump- tion of that type of causality between socio-economic status and university attendance. SJ's personal financial resources in the context of social entrepreneurship are also potentially less relevant compared to his ability to leverage or exchange other specific sociological assets to attract financial resources.

In terms of what Côté (1996) termed deportment, and at the risk of objectifying SJ, he is tall, well-spoken, well-groomed and conservative in appearance. This coupled with his capacity for, and comfort with, public speaking (due to his participation in activities and membership of groups that foster this type of skill set such as drama, etc.) meant that his identity was 'acceptable' to the public and to gatekeepers of domains that were beneficial for him to enter in terms of his social entrepreneur identity. This resulted in a significant media profile:

> Other than trying to speak a bit more clearly I'm the same Sam talking to the media as I am any other day. I just report exactly what's going on – in a way that's my downfall – I'm a bit nice and bit too honest …. Sure I have this media profile now and that's fine – but I don't need it. we'll use it though to some extent.

These were aspects of existing identity capital that were useful and transferable to the con- text in which he found himself. These aspects of his existing identity capital allowed him to attract and exchange other assets both for himself and the SVA and such benefits occurred by virtue of his existing portfolio of assets in this respect. This is, therefore, an example of how existing identity capital stocks that are naturally occurring can be beneficial in terms of attracting other forms of identity capital (either from the perspective of accumulation or exchange), facilitating the transfer of one form of identity capital to another, and to leverage other non-identity forms of resource acquisition (in this instance to benefit the activities of the SVA).

SJ's membership of networks and groups (virtual or otherwise) was a key identity capital asset for him. At secondary school, SJ was a member of numerous collectives which were crucial not only for identity development at the time but were also indicative of his inclinations in terms of volunteering and demonstrated potential in terms of his 'leader identity'. At uni- versity, his memberships included the Law Student's Association and Musical Theatre Group. His examples in this regard also illustrate the ability for identity capital assets to be realized into behaviourally driven skill sets that may in turn reinforce or evolve the nature of the asso- ciated identity (a facet of identity resource realization not currently accounted for in Côté's framework). In accumulating this form of asset, SJ also, as a corollary, developed a related behaviourally and sociologically oriented skill set that would subsequently be refined, and deployed, in the context of the SVA formation and his social entrepreneur identity. It is not unreasonable to suggest, or certainly to question, the link between identity capital asset acqui- sition and the underlying skills that are acquired as a result. For example, in activating the SVA, he drew heavily upon his existing identity capital within those collectives and that limited the level of exchange and acceptance required and, therefore, circumvented

or shortened the length of that process. He depended on people he already had high identity capital acceptance with, which further reinforced his identity regard in those domains and arguably enhanced his identity capital stocks further as a result.

> Yes, I relied on people who I already had a very good relationship with. And that was really key because I'd ring up and say can you do this. And they're such incredible people themselves that they just do it. They just didn't even hesitate.

In terms of SJ's psychological portfolio of identity capital assets (i.e. personal attributes) as derived from the Côté (1996) framework, his most dominant resources in this regard appear to be: high internal locus of control leading to the development of other agentic personality traits; developing levels of self-esteem; strong sense of purpose coupled with a propensity for moral reasoning; and the exhibition of an ability to be reflexive. These attributes are evidenced in various ways both behaviourally and attitudinally by SJ via the data stream collected for this paper and so are necessarily subjective reflections.

At the end of the most intense periods of involvement with the SVA, SJ narrated how it had had 'a huge personal impact on me' and there had been 'a need for a lot of reflection'. His descriptors and willingness to participate in research are also indicators of the space he gives to, and value he places upon, reflection in terms of contemplating how his experiences, actions and choices impact his life (and ultimately the development of his identity, be it as social entrepreneur or other). SJ attributes his socially entrepreneurial orientation to being taught to 'muck in' and his belief and interest in the importance of the construct of commu- nity from a young age. Brought up on a farm in a small rural community, his parents instilled in him a 'can do' attitude which was further reinforced by them (and his grandparents) in their commitment to the family helping others within their local environment. whilst attending primary school, SJ recalls enjoying working bees and the community days as a child (he was also Sports Captain).

I'm from a farm about an hour south of Christchurch so I've always had that practical back- ground. My parents were always about 'if you see something get on and get it done' …. from growing up in a small community (Mayfield) it's all very much about volunteering – right back to my grandparents who had a huge involvement in Lions and that type of community activity.

SJ describes how various events and choices across his life course have increased his confi- dence (a proxy for self-esteem). He took a gap year between finishing secondary school and university (working as a teacher assistant at a school in wales) and upon returning lived as openly gay. He describes how during this time he made the 'discovery that perception is everything. I was not a teacher, but it was assumed I was because I had a suit on and came from a different country'. During his own secondary schooling, he had engaged in a broad variety of leadership roles (e.g. as a Prefect, Head of Chapel and Drama, Deputy Head of Music and leadership roles in his college house – Rolleston).

Right through school I tried to be a leader and always wanted to work with people and try to get them to get involved and do things to help people. I've always had leadership roles and enjoyed that.

He followed these roles on with the assumption of a number of elected roles at university including cultural captain of his residential house and treasurer of the Musical Theatre Society. As well as providing him with a skill base and opportunity to advance a variety of identity-related capabilities, these investment choices also reinforced his self-knowledge of the fulfilment, meaning and motivation he derived from these forms of voluntary, collectivist, frequently social benefit-driven commitments. He attributes his engagement in various leadership roles early in his life as spurring him to stand for election for a local government position. In July 2010, at age 22, he successfully stood as a candidate for the wigram-Riccarton Community Board on a platform of promoting stronger intergenerational relationships, and establishing a volunteering culture within the university student community.

I was sick of being stereotyped as a good-for-nothing 'student' and decided to get out there and find out what happens in our communities …. I'm content to have changed one person's perspective….helping young people realise that if they get involved with their communities it is going to give them a far greater and richer life.

Performance and deployment

The interrelated nature of the various forms of identity capital asset (Côté 1997)

is highlighted in SJ's case. It also points to the possibility of greater consideration being given to the potential addition of another facet of understanding in terms of the factors Côté (1996) described in terms of asset realization (i.e. beyond those already articulated in the earlier theoretical framework section: moratorium, acceleration and compensatory). The findings in relation to SJ's sociologically oriented identity capital assets would suggest that there may be an amplification affect that has not been considered to date. That is, the intensity of the presence of one form of asset may be amplified in such a way as to address a deficit in another asset category. Or, put another way, the absence of one form of asset may exaggerate the importance of another and give cause for it to substitute an effect, exchange or performance and that substitution may be more effective and relevant to the individual and context in question (in terms of both the balance of identity assets and the performance of the identity-related outcomes that ensue). Taking the case of SJ and SVA, the absence of financial resources was a negligible deficit, given the intensity of his accumulation of another form of capital and the amplification of its effect that spilled over as a benefit and created an additional asset base from which he could negotiate and attract financial resources. That form of capital was more relevant to SJ in the current context and he achieved the accrual via the substitute deployment of a capital he could more easily realize, but one that he did not have to exchange per se. The breadth, depth and intensity of his network architecture (both real and virtual) were such that what he was able to leverage from those memberships was revelatory in terms of the social entre- preneurial identity he was formulating at the time. His ability to generate resources (financial and other), coalesce a group of willing volunteers around a shared vision and sustain the motivation and intent of the SVA both drew upon and reinforced his fledgling social entre- preneur identity and its associated assets. His social entrepreneur identity being tied to his ability not just to trade on his identity capital in general, but to specifically identify and realize facets of his portfolio that were most germane to his identity as social entrepreneur (be he self-labelled or not) and cultivate those in order to enhance his identity and, therefore, the effectiveness of his activities.

The intertwining, and sometime symbiosis of the identity capital assets within SJ's control, is worthy of emphasis. The stable, and not insubstantial, stocks of identity capital he pos- sessed (or ways in which he had positively and actively invested in the development of his own identity capital) were critical in terms of his ability to launch, manage and sustain the activities of the SVA. It is arguable that a student without those particular identity capital assets would have been able to achieve the same outcome; or, that in a 'non-disaster' context, it would have been possible within such a compressed

timeframe or attracted quite the same level of attention and profile (which had implications for both SJ's personal identity capital stocks and those of the SVA from the perspective of organizational identity). It is also evident that his particular portfolio of investments in this regard rendered him 'ripe' for just the sort of response that he made, not only because he had the identity capital to do so but that it was just the sort of behaviour he had been investing in himself to make (whether he knew it or not). SJ clearly demonstrated a pathway of identity investment rooted in activities based in the benefit of the collective (cf. benefiting only him) that he achieved through his contribution (voluntarily) via a range of leadership and service roles. This investment was entirely congruent, if not prescient, of his subsequent inclinations in the social entrepre- neurship space.

whilst capability-driven resources are not currently conceptualized as central to Côté's (1996) framework, given its emphasis on the social and development aspects of identity, it is worth noting that the parallel skill emergence or development that may occur with asset acquisition may have implications in terms of not only those capabilities but for identity stability and sustainability, again, pointing to the under-explored but highly relevant inter- relatedness of asset forms and types. For example, the skills acquired by SJ as a by-product of his group and network membership capital spring from the roles he took as part of that collectively oriented pattern of activity. when examined, they can also be tied, from a moti- vational perspective, to his subsequent community-oriented activities (and are, therefore, both indicative as well as an investment).

Similarly, the roles developed a sub-set of skills that could also subsequently influence not only the enactment of identity but also the conscious choices made about future identity capital development and specifically the accumulation, deployment and realization of other

forms of asset not yet known to him. That is, over time, other sub-sets of identity capital asset types could emerge and their skill corollaries have not yet been conceptualized or known to be germane to subsequent identity evolution. In the case of SJ, and the context of social entrepreneurship and the social entrepreneur identity, this may be pertinent, given the intrinsic link between morals, values and activities – and the reciprocity of those symbi- otic loops in terms of reinforcing identity (which is posited then to stimulate action and either deny or enforce the identity that is being enacted). The degree of success of the socially entrepreneurial initiative (in this case, the SVA) therefore becomes relevant to the traction and stability of the social entrepreneur identity, as success can be translated to be a proxy for effectiveness. This is turn can be perceived as an indicator of skill and the demonstration of skills an indicator of aptitude. Thereby, establishing a cycle based on an asset, action, identity helix.

Conclusions

The central idea of the identity capital framework is that individuals invest in themselves in ways that affect the identities that they form (Côté 1996) – and young people in particular. To date, the framework has considered social identity in general (and holistically) rather than the nature of identity capital assets in relation to either a particular type of identity in its entirety or a specific facet of identity (e.g. in this instance, the entrepreneurial identity, and specifically that of a social entrepreneur). In an exploratory fashion, this paper sought to take the identity capital framework (Côté 1996) and tease out its potential utility in under- standing the entrepreneurial identity development of a student responsible for a socially innovative response to a natural disaster. This focus extended the application of the identity capital framework into a novel domain and attempted to make a modest contribution to extending understanding of the nature of the under-investigated social entrepreneur iden- tity. The findings point to the potential of the framework to be applied further in this regard and/or to be applied to other aspects of the entrepreneurial identity (particularly as it affords a degree of granularity of analysis that is sometimes overlooked in favour of holistic approaches to understanding identity).

SJ was found to possess extensive stocks of existing identity capital assets that were germane to his socially entrepreneurial activities with the SVA. He also demonstrated a pattern of historic identity capital investment that was also entirely consistent with the socially entrepreneurial response he made. That is, he exhibited an existing ideological com- mitment to the forms of activity that were congruent with the identity of social entrepreneur he assumed and then enacted. His morals, behaviours and resulting identity capital asset portfolio were all inherently egosyntonic. This enabled not only the effective leveraging of those assets for his own identity capital and identity embodiment, but also the benefit of the SVA and its collective membership (highlighting the role of synthesis in creating, sus- taining and amplifying the dual individual–organizational aspects of identity). Therefore, both the historic and contemporaneous contexts for SJ's identity capital acquisition and deployment were consistent from a number of perspectives (and the implications of a lack of consistency could not, therefore, be elaborated on). The moral and ethical components to the accumulation of identity capital resources (involving reciprocity and obligation) (Côté 2005) were found especially pertinent to the broader domain of social entrepreneurship and in understanding how a social entrepreneur identity develops. Aspects of the data also suggested that the potential for the merging and/or spill over of identity capital asset benefit

and leverage may be higher in a domain that is rooted in such ethos-driven imperatives and possesses a collectivist orientation – and, further, where high congruence between internal value systems (and interrelated constructs) and external identity manifestations exists.

The limitations of the paper are linked to its small-scale and heavily contextualized nature, that is a close reading of a single longitudinal case, grounded in an atypical scenario, embedded in a novel domain relative to existing applications of the chosen theoretical framework. In addition, there is the necessarily subjective orientation of the data which is both strength and a weakness. Future work could seek to apply the identity capital framework (Côté 1996) to a broader spectrum of the social entrepreneurship experience (including in age groups other than the young), and to attempt to unbundle the nature of the complex relationship between the efficacies of identity capital asset relative to realization within such a distinct context. The intertwining of social entrepreneur identity and social enterprise identity (i.e. juxtaposing the individual identity against that of the enterprise) may also present an opportunity to further address the question of what constitutes meaningful identity capital, specifically in the context of social entrepreneurship.

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