ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF SHARED ORGANIZATIONAL VISION AND MISSION ON ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

By

Willem Paul Houts

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(Human Ecology: Civil Society and Community Research)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – MADISON

2022

Date of final oral examination: 04/27/22

This dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Brian D. McInnes, Associate Professor, Department of Civil Society and Community Studies
Jennifer Gaddis, Associate Professor, Department of Civil Society and Community Studies
Randy Stoecker, Professor, Community and Environmental Sociology
Lyn Van Swol, Professor, Department of Communication Studies
Mary Beth Collins, Executive Director, Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies

Contents

Tables and Figures

Dedication

This project is dedicated to the people of North Lima Presbyterian Church in gratitude for their willingness to support a new pastor, teach him how to be effective in his role, and explore new ideas about how to be the church together.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the support and assistance of many people that contributed to this dissertation and the journey that has led to this point.

First, the support and help of my life partner and wife, Traci S. Houts has been invaluable. Without your support over these seven years, none of this would be possible. The sacrifices that you have made to help this happen have been seen and are deeply appreciated. I look forward to our continued journey that ties together all of our lives: mind, heart, and soul. To our children, Grace, Lauren, and Evan, I also want to extend my gratitude for putting up with a dad who was at times distracted and didn't always have the time and energy to be fully present.

I also wish to thank the committee that has assisted me along the way with your encouragement and wisdom. Brian McInnes, thank you for stepping into this process when it was already halfway done. Your encouragement has been deeply appreciated, especially in those really difficult times. Your attention to detail and thoughtful comments have made this dissertation much better than when it was first conceived. Jen Gaddis, thank you for being the constant over the past seven years in the CSCR program. Being paired with you as a teaching assistant the first year of my program was one of the best things that could have happened to me. The continued connections have only reaffirmed that blessing. Randy Stoecker, thank you for saying yes to being on the committee the minute I suggested it. Having your expertise in bringing together the two methods was invaluable and I hope that this work will help others explore organizations in new and interesting ways in the years to come. Lyn Van Swol, thank you for adding wisdom about the process of organizational communication. Your suggestion of shared mental models provided an essential tool for explaining how vision and mission create the basis for action and organizational effectiveness. Mary Beth Collins, thank you for helping me keep the focus of this research on results that will help not-for-profit organizations. Your passion for grounding scholarship in practice has been a guiding principle in this project.

I also want to thank Christine Whelan for all of the encouragement over the years. Teaching with you for 12 semesters has made me a better teacher. You have shown me new ways to share information and encourage engagement, allowed me to experiment with different teaching modes and strategies, and helped me think in deeper ways about how to relate material back to the lives of those in the classroom. Your encouragement when graduate school and life were feeling overwhelming made a huge difference.

To Christian Boyd, JP Kastner, and Andy Holmes, I could not have made this journey without your comradery, accountability, and humor. The ability to share with you the frustrations and joys of life helped me to keep more balance in a life which does not encourage it. Thank you for being friends and collogues in ministry.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the assistance of those who participated in the ethnographic research phase of this project. To the good people working with Mr. Bob Under the Bridge, The Shelter Space, and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness, thank you for your time and willingness to share your experiences helping some of our society's most vulnerable people. The dedication, passion, and integrity that you all displayed is inspiring. It is very clear that each of your organizations are highly successful and your dedication to and passion for your vision and mission are the main reasons for your success. May you all continue

to live out your vision and mission, find blessing in your work, and receive as you have given of yourselves.

Abstract

This study explores how vision and mission impact organizational effectiveness. This was accomplished through an exploration of the literature around vision and mission, vision and mission statements, and the measurement of organizational effectiveness. Methods for exploring this topic were examined and a research design was created based on that review. Three organizations were recruited for this study, interviews were conducted within the organizations, and profiles were created for each organization. A multiple case study was conducted using the profiles that explored themes that were relevant to this project. The case study results were then connected to the literature and expected outcomes from the study design. Limitations to this research, possible topics for further research, and recommendations for organizations were also presented.

According to the literature, vision and mission statements created as institutional exercises do not seem particularly helpful. In corporations, the agreement rate on the vision and mission between employees' perceptions and the official written statements is very low. The ways that vision and mission help coordinate the work of individuals within an organization, however, should make a difference. Organizational effectiveness in not-for-profits is hard to define because there is a lack of consensus about what constitutes effectiveness when financial gain is not the primary concern. Not-for-profits have to be judged as effective based on how well they are engaging their vision and mission. The connections between vision and mission statements and organizational effectiveness theoretically should be present. Empirical studies of this relationship are limited, and more investigation is necessary.

Undertaking this qualitative study about how shared vision and mission affect organizational effectiveness employed several different research tools. Institutional ethnography was used as a primary lens for understanding different organizations. Multiple case study was used to analyze the similarities and differences between the organizations. A research study design was created based on the use of institutional ethnography within multiple case study. This design settled on exploring three successful

not-for-profit organizations located in the Milwaukee metropolitan area that engage the issues of homelessness. Steps to be used in selecting the organizations, conducting the interviews, creating the institutional ethnographies, and analyzing the case studies were discussed.

The institutional ethnographies and the multiple case study analysis provided a thick description of how three highly effective organizations are working to improve the lives of people struggling with homelessness in the Milwaukee metropolitan area. These three organizations are approaching different parts of the issues those dealing with homelessness face. The case study identified themes by analyzing the similarities and differences in their organizational structures, methods, and conceptualizations.

By looking at three highly effective organizations and how shared vision and mission impact their overall effectiveness, several important insights have been gained.

- Effective organizations create an alignment of vision and mission between participants that assists in working towards overall organizational goals. Part of that alignment included understanding what was within the organization’s scope and what was not.
- Vision and mission in these organizations are shown through shared ways of thinking about the organization's work rather than actual statements that were known verbatim. This shared understanding seems to be a function of a clear, concise central idea and sustained contact between participants.
- The coordination of vision and mission seems to be most effectively mediated by relationships, especially between participants and those in leadership roles.
- Most variations in organizational demographics seem to have little impact on the degree of vision and mission alignment present. The two exceptions seem to be the degree of vision and mission abstraction and frequency of contact.

Through this process, it appears that mission or vision statements, in and of themselves, are of limited value. However, the alignment that can be created by having a meaningful shared vision and mission is of significant value. Relationships play a key role in having that vision and mission understood throughout the organization. This dissertation described some aspects of how vision and mission influence organizational effectiveness through many iterations. It has also raised more lines of inquiry along the way that are needed to further our comprehension of organizational effectiveness.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Project Origin

In November of 2004, I began working as a pastoral leader in a congregation. Sometime during the first couple of years there, I heard a speaker say that if an organization had a strong vision statement that everyone knew and understood, the group would be successful. During my time working with that organization, I tried to get the congregation to adopt a vision statement that would guide the work they were doing and help them decide what to add or subtract from the activities and issues with which they were involved. Unfortunately, getting the congregation to do this was an uphill battle and when I left eight years later, they had not embraced a vision statement. Even so, the congregation was still engaged with one another and doing valuable mission for its members and the broader community. This experience left me wondering whether vision and mission statements help an organization be more effective.

This situation is not unique in the world of congregations or not-for-profit organizations. It seems that many not-for-profits operate by doing what they have always done without clearly understanding what they are doing or why. This is not because they are doing a bad job or do not care about what they are doing, but because actively reviewing, engaging, and communicating a cohesive vision and mission is hard work. Investigating an organization's purpose and considering how the activities align with that purpose takes patience and dedication. At the same time, regularly reassessing and realigning the purpose with the needs of the community served is difficult when resources are limited and time is scarce. This difficulty was seen in the congregation through several attempts to identify a vision and mission. As the time spent on the statement dragged on, those involved got bored and were ready to move into action, even if it was not part of a coherent vision.

Understanding how vision and mission can help an organization be successful is crucial to know if the investment of time into the process of crafting statements and disseminating them is worth the effort. If vision and mission help an organization be more effective, there is also the question of how it happens. Over the past fifteen years, these issues have lingered with me, and I still find myself with less than satisfactory answers. In the process of trying to unravel this problem, this dissertation arose.

Statement of Problem

This project seeks to address the relationship between vision and mission and the overall success of not-for-profit organizations. As illustrated with the aforementioned example, it is not clear whether there is a direct connection between vision and mission and organizational effectiveness. In order to investigate this connection, it is necessary to understand vision and mission, vision statements and mission statements, organizational effectiveness, and how these relate to one another. The research question at the core of this project is as follows:

- How do shared vision and mission impact the effectiveness of a not-for-profit organization?

This primary question then spurs several related questions that are of interest for this study:

- How is alignment of vision and mission present within different organizations? What helps to demonstrate the alignment?
- How do different organizations approach this task of coordination of vision and mission between participants? How are different approaches effective in different contexts?
- How do different characteristics of organizations influence the way they approach the task of coordination toward larger goals?

In considering these questions, it is important to identify the fields to engage. While this investigation will focus on not-for-profit organizations, material from business scholarship will be of interest. Engaging the business literature is important because not-for-profits often adapt material originally produced for business, especially in the area of popular literature. Many of the leadership and management core concepts used by not-for-profit organizations are the same as those in corporations. Therefore, focusing only on the not-for-profit literature would miss much of what is being practiced. Additionally, the literature on vision and mission statements in the not-for-profit field is limited, so engagement with the business literature is necessary.

Some limits must be placed on the fields explored. The literature on organizational vision and mission has significant connections with organizational communication and leadership. Exploring these significant fields requires extensive resources and research. To make this investigation manageable, questions about organizational leadership and communication were excluded. Some scholars might argue that the literature surrounding organizational leadership and communication is vital for understanding vision and mission. While these fields are connected to this topic, including these bodies of literature in this study would dilute the focus on vision and mission and make an already complex subject more unwieldy.

Methods for examining these questions require social science research tools. The questions involved in this study revolve around “hows,” which lend themselves to qualitative methods. Institutional ethnography and case study research methods are the primary methodologies used in this study.

Core Definitions

In the world of not-for-profits, most people have a concept of what vision and mission mean. Unfortunately, their concepts may not be commonly shared. The literature surrounding vision and mission does not show standard definitions for these ideas (Foster & Akdere, 2007; Zaccaro & Banks, 2001a). The statements that organizations use to articulate these ideas also display this same confusion, with the words vision and mission often used interchangeably and, at times, used in combination.

For this study, vision and mission will be used as a combined term that refers to how an organization conceptualizes its purpose and how it acts to accomplish that purpose. This decision does not align with many scholars' views where vision and mission are two separate ideas. For many, vision is a future-oriented concept of what the world would look like when an organization has accomplished its goals. Mission is often seen as the reason an organization exists and may also include the methods it will use to accomplish that purpose (Foster & Akdere, 2007). The overlap in these definitions and the way that these terms are used synonymously make the distinction of little practical value in this study. This decision is discussed in more depth in Chapter 2 as part of the literature review.

Organizational effectiveness is another term that has multiple definitions. The typical understanding of an effective not-for-profit organization is one that is making a positive impact in its community. However, there is significant disagreement about what constitutes accomplishing vision and mission and what impact is actually effective. In the literature, the tools suggested for measuring effectiveness vary widely and can, at times, conflict with each other. Additionally, how organizational effectiveness is measured makes a significant difference in how impact is assessed (Herman & Renz, 1997). The contested nature of this concept makes it difficult to determine one strategy for judging a not-for-profit organization's effectiveness.

In this study, organizational effectiveness will be understood as the situation where an organization is making a significant positive impact in its community by fulfilling its vision and mission. This definition recognizes that effectiveness can be assessed while leaving the exact measurement subjective. While this definition does not capture everything that can be contained in this concept, it is sufficient for this purpose. The methods for determining effectiveness in organizations are discussed at length in Chapter 2.

Significance

This study's primary and secondary questions are important for the broader knowledge of organizations, specifically not-for-profit organizations. There is a significant gap in the literature concerning the relationship between vision and mission and success in for-profit and not-for-profit worlds. While many authors speak of the connection between the two, very few empirical studies look at this area in either field. Two studies working with corporations have identified a relatively low agreement between official statements and employee reported understanding of vision and mission. New research will help illustrate the connections between these two areas that researchers believe are related.

This area of study is also important for not-for-profit organizations in their daily work. Vision and mission are ideally central to the work of not-for-profits. Their work helps people and communities every day, making life better for millions. By providing insights into how successful organizations use vision and mission, other organizations may gain tools to make them more likely to align their work towards effectiveness. Helping not-for-profits to do their work better is the ultimate goal of this project.

Implications

This study presents results that are beneficial for both scholarship and the broader world. Based on the research questions, there are several hoped-for outcomes for the academy. Exploring how the work of participants is aligned to reach broader organizational goals will provide more information about the ways vision and mission are enacted within organizations. A deeper understanding of how different organizations help participants conceptualize their work in light of broader organizational goals is another key outcome of this study. By analyzing the context and attributes of the organizations participating in the study, there is the expectation that information will be gained about how vision and mission are shared in particular situations. The expectation is that a deeper understanding of how vision and mission and organizational effectiveness are related in not-for-profits will be formed.

Benefits for not-for-profit organizations are the most desired outcomes of this study. Identifying the common elements that allow a not-for-profit organization to use vision and mission to be effective is the goal of this research. This goal will not be achieved with just this study because the nature of organizations and the relationships of these concepts are too complex to fully comprehend in one study. Even so, preliminary suggestions can point towards better ways for organizations to use shared vision and mission to promote effectiveness. Another goal of this research is to discover ways that the organizations involved in the study help participants internalize the organizations' shared vision and mission. The methods that the participating organizations use can suggest how others can grow vision and mission alignment in their particular settings. Finally, as with all research, more questions are generated from the insights uncovered. Hopefully, these insights will generate further studies to better understand the world of not-for-profits.

For the participating organizations, there are several hoped-for outcomes. First, the organizations and their participants will gain a deeper understanding of how their vision and mission flow through the organization. This will allow them to celebrate where they are doing an outstanding job and where they may have room for some improvements. Additionally, by having access to the final reports of this study, the organizations may also develop new insights on how to increase the alignment of participants' work towards the core vision and mission and become even better at their work.

Structure of Dissertation

In this study, the literature on vision and mission statements will be examined to understand how to measure organizational effectiveness and look at the relationship between them. This is addressed in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 explores the methods for investigating the research questions proposed. These will focus on the methodologies of institutional ethnography and multiple case study. The third chapter will also create a study design based on the methods explored. In Chapter 4, the institutional ethnographies created based on the interviews will be shared, followed by the case study results that emerge from the comparison of the institutional ethnographies. Finally, Chapter 5 will look at the results from Chapter 4 and relate them to the literature and expected outcomes from the study design. Chapter 5 will also discuss limitations, propose further research, and provide recommendations for organizations to use these findings to integrate their vision and mission more fully into lived experiences that encourage positive results.

Chapter 2: Background and Literature Review

The literature involving vision, mission, and organizational effectiveness is broad and varied. Not-for-profits have a distinct set of concepts that relate to these topics, but a great majority of the work deals with for-profit businesses. Therefore, looking at both of these fields is essential.

In both not-for-profit and business, vision, mission, and organizational effectiveness have contested definitions that require closer examination. Exploring the differences between vision and mission is necessary, but an operational understanding of these concepts is even more critical. What is theorized has to relate to what is lived in organizations. Organizational effectiveness is also challenging to define when considering not-for-profits, so variations in the literature will be explored. Finally, probing the state of the field about the expected relationship between vision and mission and organizational effectiveness is crucial.

Vision and Mission Statements Defined

Jim Collins and Jerry Porras from the Stanford University Graduate School of Business are prominent in popular business literature, with titles such as *Built to Last* (1994) and *Good to Great* (2001) on the list of bestselling business books. In their pamphlet published by the Harvard Business Review, they claimed that a good vision would put an organization on the path to success (Collins & Porras, 1994). This assertion, taken up by many companies, has made its way into not-for-profits' operational models. Vision and mission statements demand the resources of an organization. The process of developing mission and vision statements to guide the work of the organization requires a great deal of time and effort. Support has to be gained from various constituencies such as employees, clients, community members, and donors. The final product is then copy-edited repeatedly to make sure everyone is happy with it, or at least not offended.

Vision and mission statements are important for the work of any organization because they provide clarity about the goals that people are aiming toward (Kantabutra, 2009). In an ideal world, vision and mission statements provide guidance that helps everyone involved understand what they are doing in a broader view. They suggest what actions are inside and outside the organization's purview. They allow people to make decisions in their daily activities that support the larger goals. A cohesive vision and mission, that is clearly stated and understood, gives an organization an advantage over others because everyone knows the work they are supposed to be about (Ireland & Hitt, 1992; Kantabutra, 2009).

Vision and mission are even more important for not-for-profit organizations. Corporations aim to maximize profit for shareholders even if they do not have a clear vision and mission. Not-for-profit organizations, by definition, do not have this goal since none of the resources collected or produced by the organization can be passed on to shareholders. Instead, not-for-profits only have their mission as guidance for what they do and how they do it. Without a sense of shared purpose, a not-for-profit will be rudderless. There is no practical way to evaluate if the work it is undertaking is good, bad, or indifferent (Meehan & Jonker, 2018).

In the world of business and not-for-profits, vision and mission are keywords that are unfortunately used interchangeably and have multiple definitions, depending upon the source. How these terms are used has implications for understanding what concepts scholars are engaging and what meanings they are associating with the concepts. The way the concepts of vision and mission overlap may mean the distinctions are of limited importance in applied situations. Even so, it is helpful to have some idea of the definitions and distinctions present within the field of vision statements and mission statements.

A vision statement is usually considered to be what an organization would look like in the future and what would happen if its goals were completely achieved (Foster & Akdere, 2007). Usually, a vision statement should be brief, clear, future-oriented, flexible, challenging, general, and attractive (Kantabutra, 2009). Typically included in the vision statement are guiding beliefs and principles of the organization, a purpose that comes from these beliefs, and a mission that is in line with the purpose that also pushes the organization towards a desired future (Collins & Porras, 1994; Foster & Akdere, 2007). For example, a vision statement for an organization working in the area of homelessness might proclaim its ultimate goal is to create a future where everyone has stable housing that is safe, comfortable, and affordable. This statement creates a vision of what the future would be like and pushes the organization to use its resources to reach this goal.

A mission statement is often understood as the reason or purpose that an organization exists as opposed to the future-oriented vision statement (Foster & Akdere, 2007). Bartkus, Glassman, & McAffee (2000) claimed that there are four main arguments for having a mission statement. These reasons are: to communicate the direction and purpose of an organization, to keep the organization “on track” towards its goals, to make day-to-day decisions easier by limiting the range of “correct” answers, and to inspire and motivate employees. Based on their systematic literature review, Alegre et al. (2018) bought to light three different schemas that suggest anywhere between eight and eleven different components of a mission statement. Some representative parts of these different schemas include purpose, target customers and markets, products and services, geographic area served, organizational growth and survival, concern for shareholders, concern for employees, and public image.

Comparing the definitions and purposes of vision and mission statements shows they often overlap and can be indistinct. Several reviews of the literature suggest that there are no standard definitions for both vision and mission (Foster & Akdere, 2007; Zaccaro & Banks, 2001). Additionally, vision and mission statements are not consistently used across the field and can even be used interchangeably. There are even disagreements if the terms used in the literature, like mission, goals, values, strategy, and vision, mean different things or are just different words for the same idea (Bartkus et al., 2000; Foster & Akdere, 2007; Kantabutra, 2009).

Making the situation more complicated, how organizations use vision and mission statements can blur lines between the two. Additionally, the statements may not reflect what the organizations are actually doing. More than one organization has eliminated the distinctions between vision and mission statements and adopted a vision/mission statement as a way to deal with the ambiguity. Additionally, some research has suggested that vision and mission statements are not always grounded in reality. A survey of 294 middle and senior managers found that 60% of respondents did not believe that their company's mission statements fully reflected actual practice (Wright, 2002). Vision and mission statements might also be created for public relations rather than organizational use. Publicly stated goals may not be the actual goals an organization is working towards (Helmig, Ingerfurth, & Pinz, 2013).

Collins and Porras, avid supports of vision and mission statements, provided an even more complicated view of the connection of such statements to reality:

> Even more problematic, seldom do these statements directly link to the fundamental dynamic of visionary companies: preserve the core and stimulate progress. That dynamic, not vision or mission statements, is the primary engine of enduring companies. Vision simply provides the context for bringing this dynamic to life. Building a visionary company requires 1% vision and 99% alignment. When you have superb alignment, a visitor could drop in from outer space and infer your vision from the operations and activities of the company without ever reading it on paper or meeting a single senior executive. (1994, p. 77)

When considering how vision and mission statements can be confused with one another, how they may not reflect reality for several reasons, and how alignment of various people's understanding of the goals and function of an organization is likely more important than the statements themselves, several conclusions can be made. First, when looking at vision and mission statements, they should be considered as a whole and not as separate pieces. The way that their purposes overlap and intertwine makes the distinctions of little concrete value. Instead, the overall picture the statements are making about the organization's goals should help reveal information about the organization. Second, when looking at vision and mission statements together, care must be taken to look at the actions of the participants in the organization. Because a disjuncture can occur between what the statements say and how the organization acts, the stated vision and mission should be compared with the vision and mission evident in actions. Through observation and interviews with participants and broader stakeholders, the validity of the statements can and should be evaluated for congruence. Third, the real value of these statements is probably not in the written words themselves but in the affirmations and aspirations they represent. As Collins and Porras (1994) suggested, an effective organization relies on the ability of the participants in the organization, the leaders, the employees, the volunteers, and the clients, to have a common understanding and coordinate their efforts toward the shared vision and mission.

The dynamic of participant engagement can be seen in not-for-profit organizations. People who choose to work with not-for-profits, whether through volunteering or employment, often identify strongly with the vision and mission of the organization. They may even forgo positions and opportunities that will allow them to make more money in other venues because of this identification (Helmig, Ingerfurth, & Pinz, 2013). This identification with the vision and mission of the organization can lead to more motivation, commitment, and satisfaction on the part of the participants and contribute to organizational success (Helmig, Ingerfurth, & Pinz, 2013). Even so, if vision and mission are not clear to everyone involved and there are divergent views about what they and the organization are doing, the benefits of identification may be lost.

One study on the link between espoused values and practiced values at a company in India has suggested that a relationship between the two is present, but it is not easily understood. In this study, 50 percent of the 90 executives surveyed were not aware of or could not state the company's values listed in its vision statement (Khandelwal & Mohendra, 2010). Khadelwal and Mohendra also noted that in their study, there is a gap between espoused and practiced values within the corporation based on qualitative analysis of the company's documents and the transcripts of 20 in-depth interviews that followed up on the initial 90 surveys. Results from those interviews suggested that only 60% of the espoused values were actually being practiced in the life of middle management respondents. This phenomenon is likely present in vision and mission statements for both for-profit corporations and not-for-profit organizations.

Another study by Kopaneva and Sias (2015) looked at how employees at a number of different companies understood their particular company's vision statements and mission statements. Through semi-structured interviews, the researchers investigated how the employees, all in middle management positions, constructed their understanding of their company's purpose and goals. They then compared the themes presented in the interviews with the themes present in the respective company's web pages around corporate identity, culture, and mission and vision. The results suggested that employees' understanding of the written documents that express corporate vision and mission is very low. In terms of vision themes, the average alignment of the themes the employees expressed was congruent with the company's themes only 17.9% of the time. The highest alignment observed was one interview where the responses matched 50% of the themes expressed in company documents. The corporate mission alignment between employee interviews and corporate statements was slightly better, with an average agreement of 35% (Kopaneva & Sias, 2015).

These studies, occurring within for-profit corporations, showed that the goal of aligning vision and mission between the organization and employees was surprisingly low. Ideally, not-for-profits would have more substantial alignment due to the centrality of mission for these organizations. Additionally, the idea that participants in not-for-profits more closely identify with the mission would also suggest a higher degree of alignment. However, studies that explore this phenomenon within not-for-profit organizations are not present in the literature. If these studies did exist, it is anticipated that the alignment of employee to organizational themes regarding vision and mission would be higher than for-profits, but not substantially higher.

In reviewing the literature and theory about vision and mission statements of organizations, it is clear that there is no consensus about what they should include, how they make a difference, and whether people even know and understand what they are supposed to communicate. Even so, there is broad agreement that these statements should make a difference in the life of organizations and help them be more effective. However, the literature does not describe the ways an organization effectively lives out its vision and mission. Understanding this requires an investigation of organizational effectiveness and how it is measured.

Organizational Effectiveness in Not-for-Profit Organizations

Evaluating effectiveness in not-for-profit organizations is challenging. There are significant questions about how not-for-profits' effectiveness can be measured. These questions seem to revolve around several factors. The first is the inherent differences between the not-for-profit and the for-profit market, with monetary considerations being a defining distinction. A second factor is the variety present within the not-for-profit field. A third potential factor is how assessment can sometimes be a detriment to the mission of not-for-profit organizations. This section will examine these factors to understand ways that effectiveness can be measured and organizations can be identified as effective.

One of the main ways corporations measure effectiveness is based on financial results. Net profits, profit-per-unit, and stock prices are all used to gauge whether a company is doing well or not.

However, monetary systems are not helpful in not-for-profit organizations since making money is not the goal. Even so, some organizations try to monetize the services they provide through social return on investment and cost-benefit analysis (Cordery & Sinclair, 2013). Through these processes, they hope to provide information about the impact they are making with the resources at their disposal. This method, however, requires expertise and resources that most not-for-profits do not have. This time-intensive evaluation across many different levels of the organization can detract from the organization's central mission (Cordery & Sinclair, 2013; Drucker, 1992).

Another issue with using monetary systems is that they can be misleading. Because of the unique nature of not-for-profits, they may be doing a poor job fulfilling their visions and mission and still be financially viable. Additionally, it may be expedient for governments to support these organizations because of political considerations even though the hoped-for impact is not present. Conversely, a not-for-profit may be doing poorly financially and still be making extremely beneficial contributions to the community, fulfilling its mission (Helmig, Ingerfurth, & Pinz, 2013). Without monetary considerations as a straightforward measure, other methods are required.

Within the literature on not-for-profit performance, a wide range of methods are used to assess and measure organizational effectiveness. These include economic and financial measurements to assess the solvency and economic impact of the organization, the use of program theory to illuminate how the organization’s outputs and impacts are making a difference, accountability for strategies and the way that they are addressing stated goals, and participatory evaluation to explore the feelings of those affected by the organization and its efforts (Cordery & Sinclair, 2013). Many authors suggest that combining these different approaches would be best to obtain a complete picture of organizational effectiveness. As previously noted, the more measurement is undertaken, the more resources must be diverted from mission to the evaluation process, potentially reducing the organization’s effectiveness.

After reviewing many scholars' views on organizational effectiveness, Daniel Forbes may be correct. He concluded, along with many researchers who have come before him, "that it is impossible to conduct a large-scale synthesis of the finding on effectiveness" (Forbes, 1998, p. 185). Further, Herman and Renz (2008) suggested that it is unlikely there are best practices that can be applied to all not-for-profits. Evaluating all not-for-profits with a standard measurement of organizational effectiveness is not possible because of the vast differences in organizational size, structure, and purpose (Herman & Renz, 2008). There are frameworks that help describe how an organization is effective, which can be adapted for each organization.

The most important piece needed in measuring a not-for-profit's effectiveness may come from setting the mission. Peter Drucker, a scholar of not-for-profits, has suggested that without a mission as the organization's focus, measurement parameters cannot be set, and without parameters, goals that the organization is going to work towards cannot be defined (Drucker, 1992). Therefore, as Meehan and Jonker (2018) suggested, mission is central to the work of not-for-profits, even if it is not written down in a vision or mission statement.

While Cordery and Sinclair (2013) showed that there are a number of different types of measurement, Forbes suggested that these techniques can be categorized into three major approaches. Forbes (1998) proposed that goal attainment, resource procurement, and reputational approaches are the broad categories for evaluations of not-for-profits. Goal attainment uses the benchmarks set from the mission to tell if the organization is effective in meeting those goals. Resource procurement focuses on how well an organization gains access to the people, things, and money needed to carry out its mission. Reputational approaches focus on how an organization is perceived in its environment by various stakeholders, including those within the organization. Like Cordery and Sinclair's techniques, these three approaches can be used together or separately to gain a broader or more focused view of organizational effectiveness.

Herman and Renz, in their 2008 extension of their original 1999 "Theses on nonprofit organizational effectiveness," posited nine conclusions that they made from their continuing research on the literature surrounding organizational effectiveness. They suggested that effectiveness in“NPOs,” non-profit organizations, includes many aspects:

> (1) always comparative, (2) multidimensional, (3) related to board effectiveness (but how is not clear), (4) related to the use of correct management practices but not in any simple “best practices” way, and (5) a social construction. Furthermore, (6) it is unlikely that there are any universally applicable best practices that can be prescribed for all NPO boards and management, (7) organizational responsiveness is a useful organizational-level effectiveness measure, (8) distinguishing among types of NPOs is important and useful, and (9) level of analysis makes a difference in researching and understanding effectiveness (Herman & Renz, 2008, p. 399)

These theses further support the position that measuring organizational effectiveness is not an interchangeable process that can be used for all not-for-profits. Further, the affirmation that organizational effectiveness is a social construct reveals the subjective nature of the process and the need for clear goals, or vision and mission, to provide meaningful information that can be used for evaluation and improvement.

One of the theses that needs further exploration is the assertion that organizational responsiveness has the possibility of being used as an indicator of organizational effectiveness. In their 2008 study, Herman and Renz tried to find a way to gather information that avoided the imposition of the researchers’ constructs about what was important in the study of particular organizations’ effectiveness. Adapting an instrument from Tsui (1984), they allowed respondents to assess how well their organization responded to what the respondent deemed important for the organization. Through correlation, they found that this measure is an effective proxy for other ways of assessing organizational effectiveness. It also provides an easier way for the respondents to assess the organization's success (Herman & Renz, 2008). This insight can be useful for assessing organizational effectiveness when considering the many different interpretations of what a particular organization's vision and mission may be.

In the literature, there are concerns about the process of measuring organizational effectiveness that go beyond issues of determining what and how to measure. Forbes (1998) suggested that one of the major concerns with determining organizational effectiveness is how particular components of an organization's program and structure are examined, and correlations are made about how the component is responsible for the outcomes observed. Forbes cautioned that making these correlations runs the risk of overgeneralization in these complex systems where clear lines of correlation are impossible. Additionally, due to the multiple ways to measure effectiveness, generalizing the findings from one organization to another is even more problematic.

Measuring effectiveness can also cause issues through the performance goals that are set. This is especially the case when considering measurements required by donors. Mandates to measure specific inputs, outputs, and outcomes can create a situation where the requirements will become an end unto themselves. Additionally, funding streams can create situations where organizations have to make a choice. Organizations can be presented with changes to their vision and mission that meet donors' goals but do not meet community needs, or they can carry out their vision and mission but without certain funding streams (Evans, Richmond, & Shields, 2005; Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012; Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007). In these scenarios, measurement and funding tied to measurement can actually be detrimental to an organization's effectiveness.

A few main ideas stand out when trying to synthesize these various thoughts about organizational effectiveness in not-for-profit organizations. First, measuring organizational effectiveness in not-for-profits should be highly contextual. Doing otherwise can miss the importance of vision and mission within these organizations. Second, understanding organizational effectiveness within not-for-profits will always involve trade-offs in terms of resource allocation, information desired, and usefulness of the information for particular purposes. Third, a holistic view that keeps the articulated vision and mission central is vital for understanding organizational effectiveness. It is easy to slip into the measurement of donors' goals, metrics needed for reporting to various constituencies, or even those that are easiest to describe. Doing so, however, can miss the most critical part of not-for-profits' vision and mission. Community and stakeholders' needs must be considered so partial measures do not drive goals. It is essential to consider these points about measuring organizational effectiveness as the connections between organizational vision and mission statements and organizational effectiveness are explored.

Relationship of Vision and Mission Statements and Organizational Effectiveness

The natural response to the question of whether vision and mission statements make an organization more effective is "yes." Ingrained in people who have thought, written, and worked on and in organizations is the expectation that clear vision and mission statements will make an organization better able to carry out its work by having participants clear about what work they are doing and why they are doing it. The components and the purpose of these statements are not always the same. The goals that they put forth are not always connected with reality. The understanding of these statements by participants in for-profit companies is marginal. Additionally, organizational effectiveness is not easily defined or measured. A comparative measurement of the work an organization is doing to what it has stated as its vision and mission is often the most productive outcome that can be achieved. These, taken together, require a reevaluation of that natural "yes" and suggest more conditions and caveats about how vision and mission statements improve an organization's effectiveness.

In a chapter of the book *The Nature of Organizational Leadership: Understanding the Performance Imperatives Confronting Today's Leaders*, Zaccaro & Banks (2001) provided three ways that vision influences organizational effectiveness. They have suggested that an effective vision provides a frame of reference for all involved in the organization, a source of impassioned empowerment as motivation, and a platform for leaders to galvanize support, build trust, engage and empower followers, and foster a collective identity. These points are the goals of vision and mission statements. Underlying this statement is another implication: the amount of alignment within an organization will improve how well it functions in its mission. From a theoretical standpoint, better organizational alignment improves functionality. People who have similar goals and conceptualizations of the processes they will use to reach those goals are more likely to coordinate and adjust their actions to achieve the desired outcomes. Further, if effectiveness is predicated on mission impact and achievement, knowing the desired outcomes helps achieve this goal.

From an empirical standpoint, these assertions are less well defined. When examining empirical studies on how vision and mission affect an organization, indirect or mediating influences are often posited. Research on this topic suggested several different constructs, including organizational commitment, employee mission engagement, or organizational mission fulfillment (Macedo, Pinho, & Silva, 2016; Mas-Machuca & Marimon, 2019; Patel, Booker, Ramos, & Bart, 2015; Zaccaro & Banks, 2001). Based on their findings, these various studies support the theoretical assertions that Zaccaro & Banks make, clear shared goals, motivation, and engagement allow vision and mission to lead to effectiveness.

Some quantitative studies that were reviewed suggest a link between good mission statements and for-profit corporations' performance. One study by Sidhu (2003) focused on one part of the multi-media market in the Netherlands. Using written surveys and quantitative methods, he showed a relationship between mission statements and performance is present. However, limitations in the number of respondents and the narrow field examined make the results tentative and not fully generalizable (Sidhu, 2003). This research suggested there is likely a connection. However, what that connection is and how it works is not fully understood. Since vision and mission are even more critical in not-for-profit organizations (Meehan & Jonker, 2018), these connections between mission statements and performance are likely more prevalent in not-for-profits.

A study by Siciliano (1997) looked at how formal planning processes were related to organizational performance in not-for-profits. These formal planning processes are similar to those involved in crafting and disseminating vision and mission statements. Through surveys, data was collected on 240 different YMCA organizations with questions about their steps in their planning process, their self-report of their social mission impact, financial performance information, and demographic data that could help to determine other factors present in the organizations' success or failure (Siciliano, 1997). The results found that the more formal the planning process for the organization, the more likely it was that they would report better performance in their social mission and financial performance. While this is not a direct example of vision and mission statements correlating to organizational effectiveness, the similarities between the formal planning process and the goals of vision and mission are enough to suggest a similar relationship.

Another exploratory study, however, showed limited relationships between focused mission statements and financial performance in not-for-profits. In looking at how mission statements focused on specific clients, geography, or program areas, Kirk & Nolan (2010) found little support for a strong correlation between more focus and better financial performance. While this study was very specific in what it was looking at, it still demonstrates that direct connections are difficult to prove.

Three quantitative studies are the extent of the literature regarding the connections between vision and mission statements and organizational effectiveness. They show possible, albeit weak, connections but are not definitive. In doing an extensive literature review, no studies that specifically looked at the explicit connection between vision and mission statements and not-for-profit organizational effectiveness could be found. Further study is warranted because there is the theoretical expectation that these two concepts should be inextricably linked.

Summary

According to the literature, vision and mission statements created as institutional exercises do not seem particularly helpful. In corporations, the agreement rate on the vision and mission between employees' perceptions and the official written statements is very low. The ways that vision and mission help coordinate the work of individuals within an organization, however, should make a difference. Organizational effectiveness in not-for-profits is hard to define because there is a lack of consensus about what constitutes effectiveness when financial gain is not the primary concern. Not-for-profits have to be judged as effective based on how well they are engaging their vision and mission. The connections between vision and mission statements and organizational effectiveness theoretically should be present. Empirical studies of this relationship are limited, and more investigation is necessary.

Chapter 3: Methods and Research Design

Introduction to Methodological Questions

When trying to understand how not-for-profit organizations coordinate their work towards their vision and mission, there are multiple ways to undertake this task. Quantitative tools are helpful in some applications where there is a desire to understand a generalized view of organizations. However, quantitative research tools are not sufficient for investigating the "how" of this question nor providing insights into the ways that different organizations accomplish their unique ends and why. Measuring organizational effectiveness requires the vision and mission of each organization to be explored and then analyzed in relation to its individualized goals (Sawhill & Williamson, 2001), which can be more challenging to do with quantitative methods.

Qualitative methods are the tools of choice for this study. There are many possibilities for exploring the question of how organizations effectively coordinate the work of the participants to achieve the vision and mission of the organization. Case study is one methodology that can explain how an item of interest occurs by examining an item in its context. The variation of multiple case study is able to compare and contrast how an item of interest happens in different situations. Ethnography is another applicable methodology for explaining how a particular organization functions and what occurs through the interactions of those within the organization. The primary advantage of ethnography is the ability to describe in detail what is happening in a particular situation. This thick description allows for obscured details to be explored and a greater depth of understanding of the item in question to be gained (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Case study can be undertaken with either a single case or multiple cases. A single case study presents an example in-depth, highlighting key aspects to show what is important to know about the described situation. Multiple case study designs compare examples to highlight the configurations that are present and make suggestions about why things occur differently in each situation (Yin, 2018). The multiple paths and complexity involved in the ways organizations successfully approach the coordination of people's work in achieving their overall goals make multiple case study methods preferred for this study. However, in case study, determining what factors to consider when examining cases is up to the researcher and can be nebulous. Additional frameworks can guide what factors to consider in the case study.

Ethnography focuses on an in-depth description of how a particular group behaves through the use of participant observations. Within this field are multiple variations and permutations of the general methods. Some methodologies within the field of ethnography focus on the observation of a specific group over an extended time, others look at broad societal changes over decades that trace the transformations of nations, and others examine particular aspects of people's lives to see how broader societal forces are influencing their actions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Institutional ethnography looks at how organizations coordinate participants' work towards larger goals. Institutional ethnography is particularly concerned with how relationships are leveraged to guide people's actions toward particular ends with or without the participants even knowing they are being influenced. By examining these relationships, institutional ethnography engages participants in detailed descriptions of what they are doing, why they are doing it, and the connections and conflicts between participants' values and actions (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). This description provides a way to understand how an organization's function and influence appear in participants' lives. However, it does not necessarily provide insights into how organizations can do a better job of reaching institutional goals through coordination. Finding the ways that effective organizations achieve their goals requires comparison with other groups to see the similarities and differences that lead to success.

Using multiple case study and institutional ethnography as complementary methodologies facilitates the examination of relationships within organizations and how they coordinate participants’ work towards the organization's aims. Exploring both methodologies individually and examining how they might complement one another provides insight into the ways case study and institutional ethnography might be used together.

Case Study

Robert Yin's work, *Case Study Research and Applications* (2018), has been one of the most cited works on case study methodology. Through six editions, Yin has continued developing and refining his articulation of what case study is, how it is implemented, and what variations are present within the field. The basic definition of case study from Yin is "an empirical method that investigates contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (2018, p. 15). Further, Yin clarifies how both the phenomenon and context are involved:

> A case study copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis, and as another result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion. (2018, p. 15)

Case study does not focus on events that happened in the past, nor does it focus on an overly broad read of society as a whole. The case study must define the limits it will investigate in terms of a current time frame and what aspects of a particular event or confluence of behaviors will be investigated. The time frame limits placed on case study could be simply a given number of months or years, or it could reach back into recent memory of participants, but generally does not examine cases based on historical records. The type of events and behaviors considered can vary based on the phenomenon and context being studied. Discrete limits that are already present, like the boundaries of a particular organization, are often used to focus what is examined in a case study. Other limits, like behaviors or policy areas, may also be identified as part of the case to be examined based on relevance to the topic being studied.

The significant variations within the field of case study are between single and multiple case study. A single case study is best when testing an existing theory, describing an unusual or extreme situation, using a common case to show something new or different, or demonstrating the development of a situation over time (Yin, 2018). Multiple case study designs offer strengths in showing similarities or differences in outcomes based on the conditions present in the context of the different cases (Yin, 2018). For the purposes of looking at organizational coordination towards high-level goals, a multiple case study format is the preferred option. The variations between organizations and the differences in organizational context provide data that can be explored for patterns that help to describe how coordination towards shared goals occurs. Additionally, multiple case study inherently has within it a triangulating effect that improves the validity of the findings (Stake, 2006).

Case study research presents options for improvisation in how data is identified and analyzed, the methods that it is used in conjunction with, and the theoretical perspectives employed. Since case study describes complex situations within context, there is no one defined way data must be gathered. Yin (2018) advocates for using mixed methods of research to help illuminate the case study, allowing the study to more robustly describe the situation. The flexibility present in case study allows other methods to either bring data into a case study or case study to be used in other methods as illustration. A researcher could use a separate method to generate data that is then analyzed within the particular case without violating the form or spirit of case study. Using other methods can create a clear framework that informs the collection of consistent data. Institutional ethnography can act as a guide for case study. The previously developed and tested frameworks of institutional ethnography can add rigor to a study and provide definition to some of the decisions about how to focus the research. Case study also has flexibility in its theoretical perspectives because it is used in diverse fields. This allows case study to be adapted to fit other methodologies' needs.

One variation within case study research is the Success Case Method. Yin (2018) would describe this type of case study as using an unusual or extreme example to illustrate a point. Brinkerhoff (2003) proposes this as a way to adapt case study for situations where faster and more practical turnarounds are needed than traditional case study methods. By examining places where initiatives are successful, something useful for further implementation in other locations can be learned (Brinkerhoff, 2003). In this study, the Success Case Method provides insights into which organizations to examine and how these organizations are successfully coordinating the work of their participants towards the main organizational goals.

A limitation of case study, and many qualitative methods, is generalizability. Case study focuses on particular situations as a way to examine and describe phenomena. This focus means the information gathered in the study may or may not be applicable beyond the situation at hand. For this study concerning how an organization's vision and mission are coordinated among participants and how it connects to organizational effectiveness, generalizability is important but not of the highest importance. Every not-for-profit organization is unique due to its mission and environment. Therefore, trying to generalize from multiple case study results about not-for-profit organizations, even if they have very similar visions and missions, will not yield information that can be directly applied to other situations. Instead, using successful cases as examples and exploring the similarities and differences can help uncover information suggestive of practices that can help improve organizational effectiveness. Any insights gained from these examples would need to be adapted to address the context of the organization trying to use them. Even so, using case study for this research generated empirical data suggestive of successful practices adding to what is currently present in the literature.

Institutional Ethnography

Institutional ethnography is a type of ethnomethodology that is especially interested in how the work people do is influenced by institutions and the power structures inherent in those institutions. Institutional ethnography was founded by Dorothy E. Smith in her 1987 work, *The Everyday World as Problematic,* using a feminist critique of traditional ethnography. This framework has a particular commitment that allows for a robust view of institutional life and how it affects people's everyday life. Institutional ethnography recognizes the power of organizational structures to influence behavior and thoughts but approaches this research through lived experiences rather than theoretical analysis.

A critical difference between traditional ethnography and institutional ethnography is how the research is focused. In ethnography, the focus is on people and how their interactions are structured. In institutional ethnography, the focus is on the institutions and how the work and interactions of people involved in the institution are organized. There is also a significant focus on the ways power is expressed within the system, referred to as "ruling relations." These ruling relations are vital to understanding how people's view of their work, the organization, and their place in the organization are shaped by the institution (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). Another critical concept of institutional ethnography is how "texts," both literally and figuratively interpreted, coordinate people's work across time and space to guide actions and thought processes (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). A final tenet of institutional ethnography is that the research must be grounded in people's everyday lives, not some abstraction of the world (Campbell & Gregor, 2004).

According to Dorothy Smith, ruling relations are "the extraordinary, yet ordinary complex of relations that are textually mediated, that connect us across space and time and organize our everyday lives" (2005, p. 10). Ruling relations are necessary in complex cultures and societies where personal relationships are not the only way people work together. However, as Smith points out, these ruling relations have often subjugated people, particularly women, by privileging voices that work in theory and abstractions. These privileged voices are prioritized as ones that understand what the world is like and how things should be ordered (Smith, 2005). Ruling relations cannot be removed from society, although they are modified as societies and institutions change. Ruling relations mediate meaning through many different channels in our society, helping us learn what is expected of our actions and how to expect others to act in response to us. Institutional ethnography is particularly interested in seeing how these ruling relations are present within organizations and how they are enacted through the work of people interacting with the texts that coordinate these relations.

The subject of texts is another central idea to institutional ethnography. Texts can be as simple as a sign on a door going into a store indicating people are expected to wear a shirt and shoes or as complex as a script given to healthcare workers doing patient intake interviews. In these texts, there are indications of how people are expected to behave and even think. The sign on the door indicating shirts and shoes are required has people either avoid the premises or comply with the request. The script for healthcare workers influences what symptoms they look for in a patient and even what diagnoses they provide by guiding their thought process and encouraging or discouraging certain observations.

Through examining texts and people's use of them, institutional ethnography examines the ways groups of people work together and have their actions coordinated to contribute to a larger goal. That goal is present even if it is not known or shared by all who are participating. A vision or mission statement can be considered a text because, ideally, it indicates what people in the organization should be working towards. The vision or mission statement also guides the roles and actions of participants in service of this larger goal. As indicated in the previous chapter, the official statements are not always a clear indication of an organization's actual vision and mission. Texts, however, do not need to be an actual physical piece of paper but do need to be transferable across time and space (Smith, 2005). Electronic forms are often considered texts for the purposes of institutional ethnography. It can also be argued that individuals can be the source for a shared meaning that governs how people act and understand their work, meeting the definition of a text. This is particularly the case when a significant number of people regularly consult an individual or small group to interpret roles and responsibilities.

Institutional ethnography's commitment to research grounded in people's lived experience comes from its feminist roots. Institutional ethnography contends that emphasizing theory and abstraction as the preferred way to understand the world privileges the perspectives of academics and mutes the voices of those who are marginalized. In response to this, institutional ethnography intentionally grounds the work of research in studying people's work and lives as they actually live it. This grounding in lived experience means that research begins with observing and interviewing people as they work or go about their daily tasks, trying to understand from their perspective what they are doing and what meaning they give those actions (Devault & McCoy, 2011). The research then looks for texts that govern the work or tasks those interviewed are doing to see how ruling relations are activated through those texts. If needed, more interviews and observations can occur to triangulate the researcher's hypotheses about how the texts are acting. This process can become iterative, with additional observations and interviews being compared in conjunction with the identified texts until a description of the item being studied becomes clear (Campbell & Gregor, 2004; Smith, 2005).

The feminist roots of institutional ethnography also provide significant guidance for some of the commitments of the field. There is an explicit preference for seeing how texts, through ruling relations, exert power and control over people's actions and thought processes. Biases and oppression in their many forms are of interest in examining what people do and how their actions are influenced by the institutions in which they are participating (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). This examination leads to one of the commitments of institutional ethnography: helping to liberate people from some of the more oppressive forms of control that institutions exert (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). This liberation is most often accomplished through education and raising awareness of the participants.

Institutional ethnography is utilized as a research method in a number of different fields involving human services and education. Many of the published studies that use institutional ethnography are in nursing and community health because the nature of the work often has practitioners engaging texts to complete their assigned tasks (Campbell & Gregor, 2004; Norstedt & Breimo, 2016). Education and social services are other areas where institutional ethnography is commonly practiced. These fields often focus on marginalized populations and how the systems are not working for the well-being of those they are designed to serve (Arnd-Caddigan & Pozzuto, 2008; Nichols, 2016). Institutional ethnography's epistemological commitment to social constructivism also supports its use in human services. Central to institutional ethnography is an understanding that the social world is created through the interactions of individuals and their previously created meanings. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on the researcher being a central part of the project. They are not an outside, detached observer but a participant in the process, further emphasizing the constructivist nature of institutional ethnography.

In this study, institutional ethnography illuminates key aspects of organizational life by focusing on how organizations coordinate participants' work toward organizational goals. The emphasis on the interactions between people, their actions, and texts also aligns with the study's goals of seeing how vision and mission statements influence an organization's effectiveness. The constructivist epistemology provides a lens for examining how the organization is constituted through social agreements and commonly held meanings. In this study, a potential tension could be perceived from institutional ethnography's emphasis on liberation from oppressive systems. While creating equitable organizations is of great importance, this study centers on how coordination acts positively, bringing about outcomes that help people and organizations become successful. Dorothy Smith's 2005 work, *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*, acknowledges that coordination of people's actions is necessary and beneficial. However, the broader literature around institutional ethnography seems to be focused on how these ruling relations create injustice and discount the informant's personal experience and wisdom. This tension does not present a significant issue for this study, provided the results are not allowed to be "captured" by the systems to the detriment of the autonomy and experiences of those involved (Norstedt & Breimo, 2016).

Potential Models for Using Case Study and Institutional Ethnography

The basic premises of case study and institutional ethnography are very similar since both try to illustrate and explain phenomena. Case study and institutional ethnography both use detailed descriptions to understand the dynamics of what is being examined. In both methods, lived experience is used to comprehend examples encountered outside a research setting.

Each methodology allows for differing levels of flexibility when used with other methods. Case study has been used extensively in various fields in conjunction with a number of methods such as survey research and historical inquiries. It has been adapted to be compatible with other methods in these contexts while still being recognizable as case study. Institutional ethnography seems to have a narrower range of flexibility while remaining faithful to its commitments. The requirements that research be focused on the actual lives of people, the interest in ruling relations, and the examination of texts put restrictions on how institutional ethnography is undertaken (Campbell & Gregor, 2004). The constraints of institutional ethnography mean that the case study form will need to be adapted to institutional ethnography to preserve both methodologies' integrity.

Using a mixed qualitative research design can be beneficial to a project. Using two or more methods can address some of the limitations present in a particular method. Together the different methods can produce more convincing evidence than one method alone. Finally, there is also the potential for different worldviews to be engaged in the process. Different worldviews provide multiple perspectives on the item being studied, opening new interpretations and insights that would be missed if only one method were used (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). When case study is used with survey research, the combination of worldviews creates multiple perspectives that reveal more than just one method. Survey research can provide generalizable knowledge about people's opinions. Case study can provide insights about particular situations that illustrate points. Both the general and the particular can be understood when using these two together. While using two or more methods can provide greater detail, there are drawbacks. Mixed method research requires more time, energy, and resources to complete than one method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Yin, 2018). However, doing so will provide better results.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) provided several frameworks for designing mixed qualitative methods studies. An embedded design is the most applicable for this study's use of case study and institutional ethnography. In this model, one particular method is used to be the framework for the study, with the other method or methods being used to bring additional information to the project. The secondary method's findings are incorporated into the format of the primary. This design is particularly appropriate when one particular method, on its own, cannot easily answer the research question that is of interest.

The practice of using case study and institutional ethnography in a mixed qualitative method research project is rare. An extensive literature search on case study and institutional ethnography being used together found only two examples. One of these examples uses institutional ethnography techniques within a single case study framework. The other claims to use institutional ethnography within a multiple case study framework.

Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto (2008) present a case study examining an extreme case using institutional ethnography methods. Institutional ethnography methods were used to analyze different portions of the case. While studying how social workers use theory in their practice, the researchers found a participant whose responses were outside the expected range, an extreme case in Yin's terminology (2018). This instance suggested that a case study would be appropriate to understand what was different about this person's responses from others. In order to analyze the case, Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto used some of the theoretical framework of institutional ethnography to explain what they saw in the responses from the participant. This use, however, seems somewhat limited. There is an analysis of texts, but not how the texts activate the work of the person being interviewed. Nor is there an examination of the ruling relations present in the situation described. Further, the institution is not clearly defined in this study. In short, while this case study uses an institutional ethnography framework in a single case study, it does not seem to use it in a way consistent with the method's roots.

A second example case study used with institutional ethnography is found in a dissertation (2011) and subsequent article (2013) by Rolando Herts. In his study of land-grant universities' involvement with tourism, Herts is particularly interested in how different institutions justify and implement tourism planning as part of their outreach to the states they serve. The project undertaken was a multi-phase investigation using grounded theory in the first two phases. The third phase states that a mix of case study and institutional ethnography was used. However, the discussion of the methods has limited engagement with some of the core theoretical concepts, such as ruling relations and texts, that institutional ethnography employs. Herts stated that he was primarily attracted to the title of the methodology since he is examining institutions using some ethnographic methods and iteratively undertaking participant observation with textual review (Herts, 2011, 2013). None of the foundational components of ruling relations, textual coordination, or lived experience seem to be present.

Neither of these studies can provide an example for a comparative study of how organizations coordinate participants' work toward organizational goals. Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto had limited use of institutional ethnography tools in their single case study. Arnd-Caddigan and Pozzuto’s example is also difficult to adapt to this study because it uses only a single case. The limited scope of institutional ethnography elements in Hertz’s research makes it an insufficient example on which to base this study.

With an embedded design of case study and institutional ethnography, there are several ways the methods could be used together. The most promising way uses institutional ethnography within the framework of multiple case study. In this design, institutional ethnography describes the various cases, providing the data, then case study explores the similarities and differences through the comparative nature of multiple cases. Each participating organization is treated as a separate case that is examined through institutional ethnography. Adding the institutional ethnography element within the case study ensures a thorough examination of the power structures and how texts coordinate people's actions. Based on institutional ethnography’s commitments, there is also an emphasis on people's lived experience.

This study emphasized lived experience by asking for examples of how people have seen vision and mission practiced in their organization. The institutional ethnographies created for each organization would differ from typical case profiles in how they will explicitly explore power within the system using the concept of ruling relations and how texts are deployed to coordinate people’s work. These profiles were then used to study the differences and similarities between the cases and theorize why the differences present were observed. The case study results focused on the comparison of the organizations' methods of coordination and the ways that differences within the organizations are manifest in their processes and outcomes.

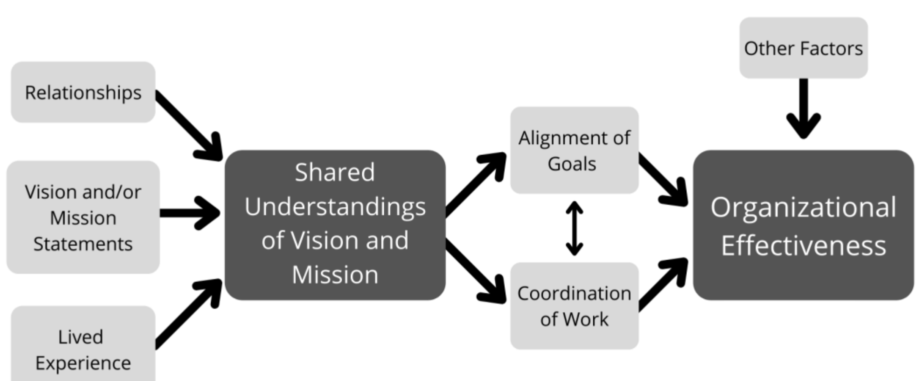
Examining how organizations coordinate participants' work towards their vision and mission by investigating people's lived experiences and the effects of ruling relations mediated in texts can occur using an embedded design. Embedding institutional ethnography within multiple case study emphasizes the comparison of the different organizations. For this particular study, the comparison is particularly important since the variations between the organizations may show how coordination occurs under different circumstances and illuminate common themes and practices.

Research Design

Insights gained in the literature review are the premise of this research. Vision and mission statements are not the primary areas of interest because the statements may or may not reflect what people actually believe. Instead, the focus is on how an organization's shared understanding of vision and mission influences its effectiveness. In this study, shared vision and mission are understood to give rise to an alignment of goals and the coordination of participants' actions toward overarching aims. Alignment is the shared agreement and understanding about common goals and the methods used to achieve those goals. Coordination is the way a participant's work is directed, so it contributes to and supports others' work to achieve common goals. This coordination can be both intentional and unconscious at the same time. A diagram of the proposed connection of vision and mission and organization effectiveness is presented in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3. 1

Connection Between Vision and Mission and Organizational Effectiveness

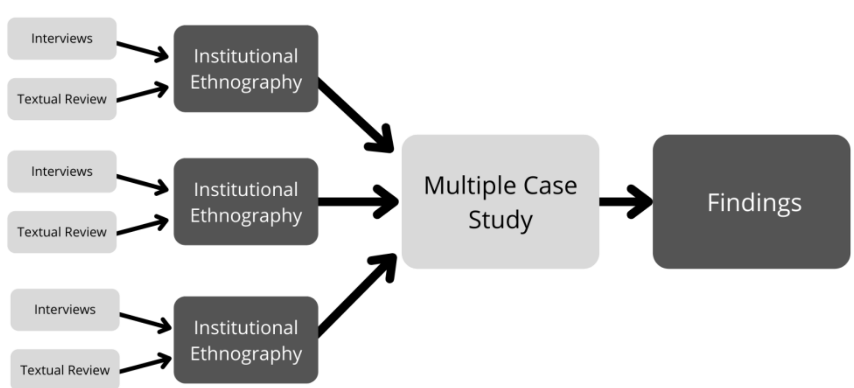


Determining effectiveness, however, is difficult because of the many variables that are present in its assessment. Herman and Renz (2008) demonstrated that effectiveness could be determined using the proxy of respondents' perceptions of how well an organization addresses core concerns. As discussed in the literature review, exploring organizational effectiveness with this insight from Herman and Renz (2008) avoids some of the issues present in determining whether an organization is succeeding or not. This study used the model that Herman and Renz (2008) provide for evaluating effectiveness.

Based on the research methods identified for this study, an overall design was developed. Brinkerhoff's (2003) suggestion that successful cases be used as the subjects for case study guided site selection. Effective organizations were identified and then examined for how vision and mission were evident in the organizations. Organizational characteristics were also considered in selecting the participating organizations. Details of the identification and selection process are included below. Institutional ethnographies were created for these effective organizations based on the interviews of organizational participants and the review of key texts. The institutional ethnographies were embedded into a multiple case study. The multiple case study examined the themes present among the different institutional ethnographies, attempting to provide a deeper understanding of how vision and mission were expressed in these organizations and how it contributes to their effectiveness. A diagram of the steps in the research design is presented in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3. 2

Research Study Design Conceptualization



This framework created a study that explored the research questions with clarity and depth. Institutional ethnography informed what elements need to be probed in each organization, such as ruling relations and texts. Institutional ethnography also oriented the study to prioritize gathering information through people's lived experiences. Multiple case study provided the tools for analyzing the data gathered through institutional ethnography. The triangulating effect of multiple case study provided depth to the analysis by examining how a particular element was present or absent across the cases and suggesting why the elements were observed in particular configurations.

Site selection criteria

The context in which organizations operate affects how participants' work towards a central vision and mission is coordinated. Different fields have different operating norms. The same work done in different areas can be approached differently because expectations can be rooted in shared cultural practices that vary by geography. These contextual variations could make it more difficult to discern what factors contribute to the observed phenomenon. Comparing organizations with similar contexts will potentially reduce variation and allow for more meaningful results to be uncovered. Choosing a particular sector of not-for-profit organizations in one geographic area assisted in limiting the contextual variations. In the Milwaukee metropolitan area, multiple organizations are addressing the issues of homelessness with diverse approaches. This field was deemed an appropriate choice for the research because of the multiplicity of organizations and approaches. Additionally, selecting organizations with good reputations and track records in fulfilling their mission was preferable based on Brinkerhoff's (2003) rationale that when resources are limited, choosing successful examples to study can provide results that are more easily applied to other situations.

Based on personal observation, four organizational characteristics seemed to have the most potential to impact how vision and mission coordination was implemented. These four are the degree of vision and mission abstraction, organizational size, organizational age, and whether volunteers or employees implement most of the organization's work. How abstract the vision and mission are may influence participants' understanding of the way their work contributes to the organization's ultimate goals. Vision and mission were considered abstract if they involved advocacy or other non-tangible actions. If the focus was providing concrete, direct service, such as clothing, food, or temporary shelter, the focus was considered concrete. The size of the organization may affect how well the vision and mission are shared by the participants by influencing organizational communication. The length of time an organization has been in existence may sharpen or diffuse its focus on its vision and mission. Whether the work is done primarily by volunteers or employees may impact the ability of the organization to instill a unified vision and mission.

Identifying participating organizations was achieved by interviewing two people who have extensive contacts with organizations working with people experiencing homelessness in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, metropolitan area. These site selection informants were asked to identify several organizations besides their own that were making significant differences in the sector. The lists of organizations provided by the site selection informants were then compared to see which organizations were mentioned several times. Once the lists were compared, the most frequently mentioned organizations' published vision and mission statements were reviewed to evaluate the explicitness of the statements.

Decisions about which organizations to approach first were based on how well regarded and effective the organization is in the community, how thorough their published vision and mission materials were, and finally, organizational characteristics that may affect how vision and mission are implemented. Three organizations were identified for recruitment and accepted the invitation to participate. The identified organizational characteristics were fully represented in these three organizations. The three organizations participating in this study were Mr. Bob's Under the Bridge, The Shelter Space, and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness. A table comparing the participating organizations based on their characteristics is below in Table 3.1.

Table 3. 1

Participating Organizations

Organization Name	Concrete/ Abstract Focus	Organization Size	Year Formed	Nature of Participants
Mr. Bob's Under the Bridge	Concrete	500+ volunteers	2007	Fully Volunteer
The Shelter Space	Hybrid	100+ employees, 100s of volunteers	1982	Employees and Volunteer
Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness	Abstract	~10 people involved	2015	Volunteer (with Executive Director paid)

Steps in conducting institutional ethnography

Structuring the institutional ethnography interviews was an integral part of the study. The primary interest of the study is how work toward broader goals is coordinated through the whole organization based on shared vision and mission. Engaging a wide range of participants within the organization was needed to explore how vision and mission are understood and enacted. Interviewing both top leadership and those implementing the vision and mission was critical for conducting the institutional ethnographies.

Six interviews were the target number for each organization. The points of contact at the various organizations helped identify respondents to be recruited and provided an introduction between the researcher and the individuals. More interviews could have been added if additional information was required or unique information was available from individuals not included in the first list of respondents. Ideally, the six interviews per organization included:

- two or three individuals (employees or volunteers) responsible for implementing the organization’s work,
- one or two individuals in management roles,
- one member of the board of directors,
- and one individual in an executive role.

These interviews aimed to create an overview of the organization's various participants, their roles, and how the vision and mission were embodied in their work.

The managers, board members, and executives were ideally the last interviews to be conducted. This was to allow the experiences of those who implement the organization's work more weight in interpreting what is occurring within the organizations. Placing the interviews with leadership later in the process also made it possible to explore the themes uncovered in the previous interviews. It also created the possibility of asking more probing questions about how the vision and mission were developed and communicated. In the process, accommodations had to be made due to scheduling issues. The managers and board members were not always the last to be interviewed; however, the individuals in the executive role were always the last interviews for each organization.

Mapping shared mental models was another tool used to structure the interviews. Mental models are the ways that groups of individuals collectively understand a particular situation and decide how to respond to that situation. Shared mental models can be present in multiple ways as "the overlap of individuals' set of knowledge and/or assumptions that act as the basis for understanding and decision making between individuals" (Gisick et al., 2018, p. 207). Research on shared mental models has centered primarily on teams operating in high-workload settings where rapid, coordinated decisions are needed. These include operating procedures in surgery rooms, evasive maneuvers in flight cockpits, and the responses to a rapidly changing battlefront by military units (Cannon-Bowers, Salas, & Converse, 1993; Stout, Cannon-Bowers, Salas, & Milanovich, 1999). The underlying assumption is that having common ways of understanding particular situations helps to coordinate work and communication in events requiring rapid response, leading to faster response times and better outcomes.

Exploring participants’ shared or divergent mental models showed potential for understanding how people conceptualize and enact the vision and mission of an organization. Identifying shared mental models within these organizations allowed for an exploration of how vision and mission are enacted and how they assist organizational coordination and effectiveness. The organizations studied do not regularly face situations requiring fast, complex, coordinated decisions. However, as discussed when reviewing how vision and mission statements help organizations become more effective, alignment of understanding is the ideal outcome from a shared vision and mission. The reason for using shared mental models in this study was to examine if this alignment is present in the ways participants conceptualize their work and, if so, how it was expressed. Since most of the research on shared mental models has focused on small teams working in critical settings, adapting the research to reflect a different environment was necessary for this study. This adaptation consisted of taking the tools used to examine shared mental models and looking for ways broader categories are understood by participants rather than focusing on particular actions in decision-making moments.

Gisick et al. (2018) present three categories of tools used to explore shared mental models: cognitive interviews, card sorting, and concept mapping. The use of cognitive interviews with verbal probes to elicit the respondents' understanding of the vision and mission of the organization was appropriate for this study. Cognitive interviews align with the overall purpose of this study to explore how participants within an organization understand vision and mission and how that understanding contributes to organizational effectiveness. Shared mental models also complement institutional ethnography’s goal to uncover the underlying thought patterns that influence how people interpret and implement their work within organizations. Thought patterns were explored by asking respondents to elaborate on the ways they arrived at a particular answer they had given. For example, after they explained the vision and mission of the organization in their own words, they were asked to explain how they knew that statement to be true. In asking this follow-up question, they were given the opportunity to explain what experiences and thought processes helped them arrive at their given answer. These responses were then compared with others from the same organization to find overlaps in knowledge and assumptions.

Adding cognitive interview questions to the overall interview protocol did not detract from the study's goals but enhanced the questions used to create the institutional ethnography by exploring the processes that respondents used to arrive at their answers. This synergy was also present in the subsequent coding work. Exploring shared mental models aligned with the thematic analysis and coding work at the individual and cross-case levels. In this study, shared mental models acted as a theoretical tool for exploring and assessing the process of aligning the respondents' understanding of vision and mission within the organization.

Using institutional ethnography and shared mental models together in the interviews required the protocol to be structured so both the respondents' responses and their ways of arriving at their answers were examined. A semi-structured format ensured that significant topics of interest were covered while allowing flexibility. This flexibility provided the ability to follow up with probing questions that clarified and elicited further information useful for creating the institutional ethnographies and exploring shared mental models.

Adapting questions from studies that looked at the internalization of organizational mission provided guidance for structuring the interview protocol. Marimon et al. (2016) created a standardized survey to assess hundreds of individuals across multiple for-profit companies to see how individuals in middle management had internalized the company's mission. Within the survey, there were seven different categories:

- knowing the content of the mission,

- understanding the importance of the mission,
- visible commitment of the "bosses,"
- visible commitment of co-workers,
- perceived coherence between mission and practice,
- reflection on the mission,
- and frequently recalling the mission (Marimon et al., 2016).

While the scope and methods for this survey were not appropriate for this project, some of the categories of questions were used to create open-ended questions that allowed a glimpse into respondents' views of their organization's vision and mission. This was particularly the case in the categories of knowing the content of mission, understanding the importance of the mission, and the perceived coherence between mission and practice. A copy of the interview protocol used in this study is provided in Appendix A.

Texts were explored as part of the institutional ethnography. Of interest in this part of the investigation were texts that guide how a person accomplishes a particular task, fulfills a specific role, or encourages a particular way of conceiving a situation. During the interviews, care was taken to identify texts, especially documents acting as texts. However, no respondents identified any documents that were critical to them doing their work or understanding their organization's vision and mission. Instead, the respondents tended to identify individuals who were instrumental in their comprehension of the organization's vision and mission, their role in the organization, and how they should view particular situations. In this light, the identified individuals met the criteria for being considered a text.

While the respondents did not specifically identify any documents as crucial to their work or understanding of the organization's vision and mission, organizational documents were examined. These materials included organizational vision and mission statements, position descriptions, recent board minutes, and other promotional material produced by the organization, especially items published on the organizations' websites. The documents reviewed were examined for the worldviews and ruling relations that exert power in the organization based on the work of Campbell & Gregor (2004). The individuals identified as texts were already part of the pool of respondents. The connections between the entire pool of respondents and those identified as texts also were examined for ruling relations.

Based on the review of texts and the information gathered in the interviews, ruling relations were posited. The interview responses and the texts, taken together, identified potential points where power was enacted within the organization and views that carried more weight were expressed. These ruling relations were then used in collaboration with the data gathered from the interviews to create institutional ethnographies of the organizations. Provisions were made to ask follow-up questions or conduct further interviews if there were continuing questions about the material uncovered in the interviews or the textual review. However, no interviews beyond the initial six per organization were needed.

As the attributes of each organization were uncovered and documented in the institutional ethnography process, key themes and interactions were identified. The themes and their interactions were assembled into reports for each organization. These reports documented critical elements of the organization's structure and processes, illustrating the coordination of participants' work within the organization. A uniform format with consistent sections and topics to be addressed in each section was created for the institutional ethnographies. The uniform format was used to facilitate the project's use of multiple case study, assisting the comparison of the different organizations. As the reports came closer to a final draft, they were submitted to representatives of the participating organizations for feedback. This was done to see how the self-perceptions of the organizations connected and diverged from the draft report. Minor factual revisions of the reports, such as the year a program started, were completed based on organizational feedback. A separate report was developed for each organization.

Analysis of case studies

An analysis of the case studies was conducted after the reports were finalized. This analysis was done to uncover the parts of the individual cases that are similar and different. The goal was to suggest how effective organizations approach the task of coordinating participants' work toward larger organizational aims.

The comparison used Robert Stake's (2006) framework. In this framework, the cases to be studied have common elements that allow for exploring a particular phenomenon through either typical or exceptional cases that illustrate the phenomenon being examined. According to Stake, the cases should have a commonality that allows for a thorough review of how they are comparable to and divergent from one another. The case reports were created specifically for this study and structured to allow ease of comparison and connection with the research questions and methods.

One of the goals of multiple case study analysis is to triangulate the conclusions showing how something is present within all the cases under consideration, or only appears in a particular instance. Triangulation allows for greater certainty that the assertions made in the analysis are more objective than simply arising from the researcher's bias (Stake, 2006). This triangulation was accomplished using the various comparative sections of the institutional ethnography reports during the case study.

The actual analysis of the different cases relied on identifying themes through a close reading of the reports using MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis program, to assist that process. By reading the reports together, with attention to detail, emergent themes that seem particularly relevant to the study were found. Those themes were explored by looking at the ways they were present or absent among the different cases, how they were expressed differently in each case, and the potential sources for the commonalities or differences (Stake, 2006).

The culmination of the study was a final report that explores the various themes, the convergence, and the divergence of the ways the themes are observed. This report shares what knowledge was gleaned from the process, what seems to be commonalities and differences among these successful groups, and potential future routes of exploration to better understand the process of organizational coordination of people's work toward common goals.

Summary

Undertaking this qualitative study about how shared vision and mission affect organizational effectiveness employed several different research tools. Institutional ethnography was used as a primary lens for understanding different organizations. Multiple case study was used to analyze the similarities and differences between the organizations. A research study design was created based on the use of institutional ethnography within multiple case study. This design settled on exploring three successful not-for-profit organizations located in the Milwaukee metropolitan area that engage the issues of homelessness. Steps to be used in selecting the organizations, conducting the interviews, creating the institutional ethnographies, and analyzing the case studies were discussed.

Chapter 4: Research Results and Analysis

Three organizations participated in this study concerning the relationship between vision and mission and organizational effectiveness. Following the research design, six research interviews were conducted with individuals involved in each of the three participating organizations. The recorded interviews ranged between 20 and 90 minutes. Select portions were transcribed for ease of coding. The interviews for each organization were then coded using guidance from Braun and Clarke (2006), where initial codes are generated from several readings of the material. The interviews were then read again, and instances of the themes were documented in the transcriptions. As the analysis progressed, themes were added and adjusted to reflect the breadth and depth of the material present. When the documentation was completed, the themes were reviewed and adjusted to ensure that the code fully represented the ideas and statements involved in the category. From the thematic coding, profiles were created for each organization using institutional ethnography categories. The institutional ethnography focused on how vision and mission were enacted in the participants' work, how vision and mission were transmitted through the organization, and how power was observed and expressed. The created profiles were then presented to designated people in each organization to review. Minor, factual changes were made based on feedback from the review of the reports. The reviews affirmed that the descriptions provided were accurate from the perspectives of the designees.

A case study analysis was undertaken once the institutional ethnography profiles were completed. This analysis involved identifying significant themes relevant to how shared vision and mission impact organizational effectiveness. This process was completed using Stake's method for multiple case study analysis (Stake, 2006). In this process, the cases are reviewed separately, the themes in each case are identified and then compared with the themes from all the cases. Important themes were then explored, and the reasons for the similarities and differences were suggested.

The profiles of all three organizations and the multiple case study are included in this section. Two of the organizations gave permission for their name to be used in this study. One preferred not to be named, so a pseudonym was assigned. The published vision or mission statement is included with each institutional ethnography. The statements are labeled how the organization presented them on its website. If the organization labeled its purpose as a mission statement on its website, it is labeled as a mission statement here. A vision statement was handled similarly. This practice conforms with the conclusions shared in the literature review that vision and mission statements are often used interchangeably, and the distinctions are not universally understood. None of the participating organizations had both vision and mission statements.

In the institutional ethnographies and the subsequent case study, pseudonyms are used for those interviewed. An exception to this rule is the case where the name of the founder(s) are publically known, and permission was given for the use of their name. A list of those participating in the interviews, their role, and their organizational affiliation is provided in Table 4.1.

Table 4. 1

Participants by Organization

Mr. Bob's Under the Bridge		The Shelter Space		Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness	
Name	Role	Name	Role	Name	Role
Sandra	Front Line Volunteer	Rachel	Front Line Staff Member	William	Board Member
Margaret	Front Line Volunteer	Simon	Front Line Staff Member	Melissa	Board Member
Carolina	Mid-level manager	James	Volunteer	Miles	Board Member
Diane	Mid-level manager	Ashleigh	Mid-level manager	Brandon	Board Member
Kristen	Board Member	Jacqueline	Board Member	Ken	Board Chair
Bob	Founder	Catherine	Executive Director	Joe	Executive Director

Institutional Ethnography - Mr. Bob's Under the Bridge

Vision Statement

> "Creating a welcoming community in which every person receives their basic necessities, guidance, hope, and compassion" (https://mrbobsunderthebridge.org/about/)

Background

Mr. Bob's Under the Bridge (MBUTB) is an organization founded by Bob Burmeister to help those living without permanent housing in the city of Milwaukee. Begun in 2007, the organization has gone through several changes regarding the scope of work, the location where it distributes supplies, and its formal structure. Currently, the organization works with over 200 volunteers, including a board of eight. The board of directors acts as a coordinating committee and provides institutional oversight. The founder is no longer in a formal role of authority within the organizational chart but is still intimately involved in the operations that are of interest to him.

The focus of the organization's work is on providing people in unstable living situations with basic needs such as clothing, camping equipment, and other durable supplies needed when living without permanent shelter. The work is divided into two major components: collecting and sorting donations received and distributing those items. The collection and sorting of donations are processed at Mr. Bob's facility located in suburban Milwaukee on Thursday evenings. The supplies are distributed at a park south of downtown Milwaukee on Saturday mornings.

The site selection informants identified this organization as effective based on its outreach to those struggling with homelessness and harnessing the dedication of numerous volunteers. On a typical Thursday evening, 20 to 30 volunteers sort donated materials, and on Saturday mornings, around 60 individuals are served through the distribution.

This profile has been completed based on the review of organizational documents, or texts as defined by institutional ethnography, including the published website. Six interviews with organization members who are regularly involved in the activities of Mr. Bob's Under the Bridge were a key part of developing this profile.

Understanding of Vision and Mission

In the interviews, no one quoted the mission statement verbatim. Two individuals said that they wished they knew it verbatim but did not. However, the lack of articulation of the formal vision statement did not prevent a clearly defined vision and mission from being present.

The main word connected to the vision and mission in the conversations was dignity. Those involved in the organization recognized that the most important goal was to affirm the dignity of everyone involved. All the people interviewed said treating people with dignity was of utmost importance. For those interviewed, this is the case even when people are struggling with stable shelter, addiction, or mental health issues. When asked about how the work she did fit into the larger context of the organization’s larger vision and mission, a person who volunteers most Saturday mornings, "Margaret," said, "Dignity. Everybody deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. I don't care who you are or what you do, or what drugs you're on. I don't care. You are a child of God."

This vision and mission of recognizing the dignity of everyone are shown in multiple ways throughout the organization. It is primarily demonstrated by the way items are distributed on Saturday morning. All those interviewed described how relationships are the most important part of the distribution process. A volunteer coordinator for Saturday mornings, "Diane," put it this way: "When I speak of really giving dignity to people and helping people and connecting with people, looking them in their eyes, and making them smile, I really mean that, because I know people need that."

The human connection seems to be the essential work of the organization. The provision of necessities is part of the human connection, but it is not the primary focus. A few volunteers described the deep and long-lasting relationships they have developed with those living in chronic homelessness over the years of service. Margaret spoke about how she became friends with several people who came to MBUTB for assistance and how the death of one of those from a drug overdose deeply affected her.

This focus on dignity also encouraged changes in the organization's processes for distributing supplies and food. In pre-pandemic times garbage bags of clothes would be laid out for folks coming for assistance to rummage through, find the size that fits them, and then take what they wanted or needed. The COVID-19 pandemic forced changes to this practice to allow for more social distance and less physical contact between individuals. Presently, people are invited to come to the trailer where items are stored, asked what items they need and in what sizes, and then volunteers get the requested items and pass them on to the "friend," as those who are getting supplies are often referred. These changes in the distribution required adjusting the practices on Thursday evening, where items needed to be sorted by type and size. Several individuals recognized that this additional step serves the dignity of those involved since they do not have to rummage through a garbage bag and furthers the personal connection between the volunteers and those seeking assistance since a volunteer is serving the friend. This process allows for more people to be served since there is less likelihood that individuals will take more than what they need at one time.

It also appears that dignity is valued in other aspects of organizational life. One person, "Carolina," the Thursday night coordinator, related the story of how an older adult living center was enlisted to help with the organization's work. MBUTB is often given used underwear as part of the donation process. Before these are sorted and loaded onto the trailer used for distribution, the underwear is sent to a senior living center where residents wash, dry, and fold them, ensuring the garments are in good shape and clean. By doing so, individuals who have a limited ability to serve others due to health concerns are given a job where they are able to make a difference, recognizing the dignity of their life and work.

Similarly, youth board members' roles also demonstrated dignity in the organization. While no current youth board members were interviewed, “Kristen,” a volunteer who previously served as a youth board member, was. Kristen detailed how people under 18 were given important tasks to oversee and acted as full members of the board of directors. The youth board members undertook many aspects of the Saturday morning distribution process, including leadership roles helping to coordinate others' work. This role appears to increase confidence and dedication in the youth board members, which affirms the dignity of folks who may not have as much world experience, but are learning, growing, and making an impact.

While the theme of dignity was present in the interviews, asking about the vision and mission directly produced some divergence in responses. Everyone acknowledged that working with people experiencing homelessness was part of the vision and mission, but how that was expressed differed. Some considered that they were providing a vital service as the core of the work that the organization does. Others mentioned the human connection as paramount for the work of the organization. Several expressed that volunteers benefited from their involvement as a core part of the vision and mission.

Several of those interviewed recognized there were limits to the vision and mission of the organization. These limits were present when "Sandra" said,

> We don't see our goal as finding them housing or getting them off drugs or, you know, getting them the mental health that they need. There's other organizations that are working on that task, but in the meantime, we can help them be warm, be comfortable, hopefully be safe. We can help with that aspect while they're working on their other challenges.

Limiting the scope helps define the vision and mission as much as statements that say what the organization is doing and set it apart from other groups working with those experiencing homelessness.

The insights of those interviewed relate to the current published Vision Statement in significant ways. The concept of creating a welcoming environment that provides hope and compassion aligns with the overarching theme of dignity. The way that dignity is expressed in providing supplies to those experiencing homelessness is also present in this statement. What is surprising is that the concept of homelessness is never mentioned in the statement, which would be expected since that is a major focus of the organization. This absence may result from a shared understanding implicit in the organization that makes direct reference to homelessness unnecessary.

After several introductory questions, all of the respondents were asked to state in their own words what the vision and mission of the organization was. A follow-up question was then asked if the organization was successful in living the vision and mission that they had described. This question was used as a proxy for organizational effectiveness (Herman & Renz, 2008). All the respondents confirmed that they believed the organization was effective in undertaking the vision and mission they shared. They then provided details of how they saw that happening.

One of the most impressive discoveries in this organization was the degree of vision and mission alignment. All six participants had a similar understanding of the organization's vision and mission. The idea of dignity came up repeatedly without the respondents being prompted. Based on the work of Kopaneva and Sias (2015), this kind of integration of vision and mission, even if not completely aligned with the written vision and mission statement, is not expected in most organizations.

Activities Involved in Vision and Mission

There are three main categories of activities present in the organization: Thursday sorting, Saturday morning distribution, and administrative tasks. All three exemplify parts of the vision and mission being lived out.

The Thursday sorting is a weekly activity that occurs at the organization's rented space in suburban Milwaukee. Volunteers are present to receive donations of new and used items that may help people living without permanent shelter. The collected donations are then given to groups of volunteers to sort according to utility, category, and size. Those items are then stored in specific locations at the site until needed to restock the trailer used in distribution. The truck and trailer for Saturday distribution are stocked during Thursday evening's work.

This process has been streamlined in the last year by the acquisition of their current space. Previously, using a church basement meant materials had to be brought out before the sorting could start and then packed away into storage when the event was over. This process involves many volunteers, with a coordinator ensuring people know their particular task. A wide variety of volunteers participate in this part of the work of the organization, with some only coming once and others becoming regular participants. Other community groups can interface with the organization by bringing a larger group to assist with the sorting. The restocking on the trailer is often done by those responsible for distribution on Saturday mornings. These processes support the vision and mission by collecting items that provide for people's physical needs and cultivating community through shared work and time together. Dignity seems woven into the practice by emphasizing the need to make connections among the volunteers and between the volunteers and friends.

As described by those interviewed, the distribution that occurs on Saturday morning is the organization's primary focus. In this weekly event, the truck and trailer are driven from a suburban location to a park south of downtown Milwaukee. The truck is often driven by the organization's founder and the youth board members. The truck meets with other volunteers at the park, and tasks are assigned. Then the volunteers take time to set up various stations for people to obtain supplies, including clothing, toiletries, food, showers, and other supplies needed for living without permanent housing. While the supplies are distributed, volunteers are encouraged to talk with those there to receive items, get to know them and their stories, refer them to other services, and make sure the value of each person there is respected. By encouraging these connections and respect, it is hoped that the friends will internalize a message that counters the negative stereotypes often associated with homelessness.

As mentioned previously, this process was streamlined with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Multiple people interviewed noted this as an improvement. They cited this as a way to both respect the dignity of those getting supplies in a more robust way and allow for more personal connections between those receiving items and the volunteers.

Distribution takes about an hour, with everyone getting at least some of the items they were looking for. When the last friend has been served, the remaining supplies are put away, and the volunteers gather to discuss their experiences. The founder or one of the organizers for the Saturday morning distribution will lead a discussion to allow volunteers to process their experience and share their learnings. The discussion leader will often emphasize the need for dignity and encourage the volunteers to take their experiences into their everyday lives.

This program feature, central to the organization's life, clearly shows the vision and mission of the organization in action. The goal of helping individuals living with homelessness while promoting dignity is shown in multiple ways. The method for distribution of supplies shows respect for people even when they are in a vulnerable position of not having a permanent home. The way these individuals are referred to as friends reinforces the personal connection sought as a way of showing value. The encouragement to make relationships and learn stories, even if someone is there only once, further indicates the recognition of worth present in each person. Finally, how younger people are given crucial leadership roles in this recurring event exemplifies the dignity of all people.

In addition to the group activities mentioned previously, some other tasks and activities support and promote the organization's vision and mission. The board of directors meets regularly and considers strategic planning to make the mission more effective. The board recently relocated the sorting and office functions out of a church basement and the founder's home into a space dedicated for use by not-for-profit groups. The inclusion of a variety of individuals on the board, including several high school students, seems to be a way that the organization promotes the dignity of people within the structure.

Power within Organization

The ways that power is manifest within the organization seem easily understood based on the interviews. All the interviews came back to the role of the organization's founder. The founder has intentionally tried to take steps back from direct authority, recently resigning from the board of directors and attending fewer meetings. Even so, the vision of the founder and the relationships with him were mentioned in all the interviews. People commented how his vision was inspiring. They also reflected on how he was the one that showed them the need for and the capacity of the organization. Kristen even said of the founder, "I just think the way that Bob expresses himself becomes your mission statement. Because we all just adapt. He's so inspiring, that we all just manage to kind of adapt that mindset, and that kind of fuels our mission." The founder is also the person people look to for direction and information about how to do their tasks. It seems that the organization's size, with a small group of core volunteers and small groups participating in the regular events of the organization, allows for this kind of personal connection. While there are job descriptions for the different officers of the board of directors, there is no documentation that lists the tasks people are to be doing during the various events. The organization's functioning relies on word of mouth, which seems to come back to the founder. Even though it is not essential for participating in MBUTB, those interviewed indicated that a personal connection with the founder was an important aspect of their connection to the organization. All those interviewed highlighted how they had gotten to know the founder and how he had either helped or inspired them.

The way the board of directors is organized also helps focus power and action within MBUTB. The eight-member board includes people who help shape the organization's vision, people who keep the institutional functions in proper order, and people who are primarily responsible for the operations. The board consists of a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, regular board members, and two youth board members. The board regularly considers ways to strengthen and expand the organization's reach and considers streamlining regular processes to better align with the vision and mission and increase efficiency.

The people in coordinating roles for the organization's primary activities are part of the board. The person coordinating the Thursday evening sorting, the coordinator for the Saturday morning distribution, and the youth board members who help with the Saturday morning distribution are all board members. This structure highlights how decision-making power regarding goals and processes is centralized into one group of people.

Power also seemed to be centered in individuals who have been with the organization for extended periods. Included in the interviews were people who have been working with the founder and the organization for over a decade. It was clear from the way people spoke of the long-term volunteers that people tended to defer to them in the processes and decisions within the organization. Many of these long-term participants are either current board members or have been so in the past.

Institutional Ethnography – The Shelter Space

Mission Statement

> "[Shelter Space] provides shelter, housing, education, and services to Milwaukee's homeless who seek to transform their lives with dignity and purpose." (from the organization’s 2019 Annual Report)

Background

Founded in 1982, The Shelter Space started as a short-term housing ministry of a coalition of congregations. Over the following two and a half decades, the mission grew and changed to include programs to support people moving into permanent housing. This increase in scope included the addition of programs to assist people on the verge of becoming homeless, supportive housing for those transitioning out of temporary shelter, and substance abuse and mental health counseling services.

After a significant transition period in the early 2000s, a new executive director, “Catherine,” was hired in 2007. She brought a wide range of backgrounds and skills to help the organization focus on the financial challenges and programmatic opportunities. The budget for the organization has more than quadrupled in the last fourteen years, going from a $2 million budget in 2007 to a $9 million budget in 2021. The organization provides shelter for 86 men on a nightly basis, counseling and addiction recovery services for those in their programs and the broader community, support for people transitioning to permanent housing, and most recently, a significant commitment to anti-racism work.

The site selection informants identified this organization as effective based on its ability to move people from living without permanent housing to situations that allow them to feel safe and secure. The Shelter Space has over 100 employees and more than 2,500 people who have volunteered in some way to help support the organization. Additionally, the organization is currently assisting more than 1,200 individuals and families with services around issues of homelessness.

This profile was completed with the review of organizational documents and interviews. The documents reviewed included the publicly published website, board minutes from the past year, a sample job description, and several years of annual reports. Six interviews were undertaken. These included three employees; the executive director, who retired in September of 2021; a board member; and a volunteer who has knowledge of the activities of The Shelter Space. The interviews were completed in March and April of 2021, while the profile was finished in September of the same year.

Understanding of Vision and Mission

In the interviews, several people quoted the tag line for the organization, "More Than Shelter." While this is not the entirety of the vision and mission statements, it does sum up the general ethos of the organization. As people described the organization's work, their interpretation of this tagline helped show how the vision and mission play out in lived experiences.

One of the significant themes that became apparent from the interviews was a dedication to serving those in need because of issues surrounding homelessness. This sense of service was grounded in respect and compassion. There was a recognition that everyone deserves respect and compassion. As one respondent, "Rachel," said, "[People living with homelessness] are human beings... who are experiencing human suffering... [T] hey're human beings who need help. And that's our job as human beings to help other people." This sentiment was revealed multiple times through the interviews. One response linked how they interacted with clients working through addiction and mental health issues to providing basic respect and compassion through open dialogue about the client's concerns. This theme of respect was also a response from "Simon." He highlighted the work done around property safety and maintenance overseen by the organization as clients were moved into stable, more permanent housing. Clients were shown respect by helping address issues with their physical space before they became significant problems. If the issue was the responsibility of the landlords, clients were shown that they deserved safe and pleasant places to live. If the issue was from the client’s behavior, they were afforded the chance to adjust their use of the space before eviction became necessary.

Connected to the idea of respect and compassion is the work of anti-racism. Anti-racism is the work of exposing and dismantling systems and practices that promote racist attitudes and policies to create a more equitable society. This idea relates to the theme of respect and compassion by recognizing how racism is active in systems and then raising awareness, so people act in ways that value each person's unique experience. The executive director, Catherine, mentioned anti-racism work explicitly, and one employee, Simon, spoke of it tangentially, reflecting on how racism is part of the overall set of issues he sees active in his work. Even so, anti-racism did not seem to be integral to the conceptualization of the organization's vision and mission at this point.

A strong emphasis on empowerment is related to serving others through respect and compassion. Those interviewed spoke of empowerment for clients and empowerment for themselves through the organization. While the focus of empowerment is different in these two situations, both speak of a commitment central to its vision and mission.

In working with clients, those interviewed suggested that empowerment took two forms. One was including the clients in decision-making processes to shape their own goals and plans. As Rachel said: "[O]ur job, our duty, our responsibility, … is to empower people and let them know, 'Hey, you know, you can be an active participant in your life, and you can make decisions.'" The other was a requirement that clients of The Shelter Space act on their own behalf even if the staff continued to support them. A different respondent, "Ashleigh," shared a composite experience of working with clients to secure their own living arrangements:

> I think the biggest thing, especially for this population, a lot of people have never had their own place before. And so when you tell them to talk to a landlord or whatever, that fear just kind of comes in and takes over. And I'm like, 'Nope, uh-um, we can call them over the phone.' Or 'No, go look at the place,' and then when they do it and they get approved and they're able to get their keys, they're like, 'Man, I can't believe.' Like, 'Yeah, I was believing in you the whole time, but you had to see it for yourself.'

This quote shows empowerment in action by encouraging those dealing with homelessness to take the first steps to secure their own home even when they are not sure they can do it. The previously explored theme of dignity is also present in this quotation, where the developing skills of the client are affirmed.

Empowerment is also present in the way staff and volunteers are treated and encouraged to make decisions and actions for the benefit of the clients. The executive director noted that the upcoming changes with her retirement necessitated empowering the senior leadership structure to take more authority and responsibility for their respective areas. Employees that worked directly with clients felt, as Simon put it, like they "always have a seat at the table," even with executive staff. This sense of empowerment for staff was likely fostered through the open door policy of the executive director. In this policy, Catherine would welcome anyone to come into her office and share their concerns.

Another theme present in the interviews was an interdisciplinary approach to serving clients' needs. The interviews highlighted how several different programs were running within the organization somewhat autonomously from one another. The interim housing programs, clinical services, and transitional housing services each have staff dedicated to their areas of responsibility. Staff dedicated to particular programs is necessary for an organization of this size and scope. In many organizations, this "siloing" effect could lead to territorialism and services being uncoordinated. At The Shelter Space, however, work occurs across those boundaries to ensure that clients who are struggling are identified and provided with support. In speaking of the interdisciplinary approach, Simon said: "And that's why we divide up the work. So like I'll handle it with the landlord. The case manager is going to work with the client on this,… the supervisor... and the housing director are going to support everybody in between." This comment represents the interdisciplinary work that occurs within the organization. Ashleigh and Rachel echoed these ideas by discussing how they work with coworkers in their departments and across the organization.

One other significant theme that occurred in multiple interviews was the executive director. Many recognized the connection they had with Catherine. Several employees and the interviewed volunteer highlighted the previously mentioned open door policy of the executive director. Two employees, Rachael and Ashleigh, mentioned that the executive director was involved in their hiring, which is surprising in an organization of this size. The volunteer, "James," also shared his connection with the executive director. The relationship started when he was a client of the organization. James shared that Catherine was someone he felt he could ask for help, and she would help any way she could. Catherine also mentioned that, with her pending retirement, she was trying to help the organizational culture shift. This focus on culture shift arose from her concern about issues associated with “founder’s syndrome.” Founder’s syndrome is a concept where the direction that an organization takes after the founder leaves can be perilous, potentially leading to the disintegration of the organization because the founder has embodied the organization to such a degree that it can be difficult for others to move the vision and mission forward without them (Block & Rosenberg, 2002). This sense of connection with the executive director may indicate that the organization will have a difficult time when she retires.

While there was significant alignment within the articulated vision and mission of those interviewed, there seemed to be some divergence in how various people emphasized different parts of the vision and mission. The idea that the organization was more than just shelter was universally highlighted. The differences seemed primarily based on the respondent's position within the organization. People understood things through the lens of their particular part of the organization’s work, with their role coloring the way they articulated the overall vision and mission.

The organization’s vision and mission had limits to its scope. Most of those interviewed articulated that some people were not open to the help and support that the organization provided. This was often because the clients were not ready to make necessary changes in their lives that would help them move into stable housing. After several interventions, if people were unwilling to do the work, the organization would not continue using resources to help them until the clients decided to invest effort into the process. There was also an acknowledgment that they had limited resources and would do what they could with what they had, but they could not address all the needs of people in the area dealing with the issues surrounding homelessness.

Overall, the knowledge and articulation of the organization’s tagline seem to mean there is a significant relationship between people’s understanding of the vision and mission and the published statements. There is clear alignment with the respondents’ views that the work is not just getting people sleeping in beds but helping people move beyond the complex of issues that lead to homelessness.

There is also significant agreement that respect and dignity are integral to this work. A newer piece of the organization’s developing understanding of itself is in the area of anti-racism. While this is articulated on the homepage of the organization’s website, it did not figure prominently in the responses of those interviewed. It may be that this additional focus is in the process of being integrated into the organization’s shared understanding.

In order to confirm that the organization was effective, a series of questions were used to probe the respondents’ views on this topic. After being asked to give the organization’s vision and mission in their own words, they were then asked if they believed this was successfully being lived out. Herman and Renz's (2008) work was a guide for understanding organizational effectiveness. All the participants confirmed that they saw the organization as successful in its work by providing examples of times they saw the vision and mission they identified enacted.

This large not-for-profit organization has achieved relative uniformity in its shared vision and mission. The separate structural functions of the organization suggest that there would be a broader divergence of the articulated vision and mission. However, the interviews do not support this assumption. People’s understanding of the vision and mission regularly returned to ensuring that clients were helped to find permanent housing.

Activities Involved in Vision and Mission

The primary activities of the vision and mission encountered in the interviews and document review centered around three main areas: shelter, treatment, and housing support.

The initial purpose of the organization was to provide overnight housing for single people who were without permanent housing and living on the streets. This purpose has morphed over the years, so the shelter is now more comprehensive. It now addresses the underlying issues of those experiencing homelessness. The core function of overnight shelter remains vital to implementing the vision and mission. This work involves providing safe places to sleep, hygiene supplies, facilities, and nutritious food. James, the volunteer, comes in every weekday and prepares lunch for those residing at the shelter. This act recognizes the dignity of those there and works to bring more vitality to their lives.

Treatment for multiple health issues, including mental health, physical health, and addiction treatment, was also an explicit part of the organization's vision and mission. This is accomplished by staff regularly working with clients using the shelter to address issues. There are members of the staff that help to schedule various appointments for healthcare and facilitate activities that allow clients to more easily carry out activities of daily living. In addition, the work that the clients do in treatment is understood to be their job. Clients are not required to leave the shelter by a particular time in the morning as other facilities have tended to do. This work engages the commitment to provide education and treatment for clients while also helping to develop purpose.

Based on interviews, providing supportive housing seems to be a part of the organization's vision and mission that is more removed from the first two areas. While clients who have been sheltered and gone through treatment do use these services, it seems that when they are using these services, they are at the point where the previous two areas are not needed as urgently. Additionally, other populations appear to use these services at a higher rate than those who have gone through the shelter and treatment aspects of the organization. The housing support consists of several different programs. The one referred to most in the interviews had the organization acting as a rental agency that would contract with landlords to be the lessee of record. The clients would then lease the property from the organization. The organization would then act as an intermediary ensuring that the unit was kept in good repair by the landlord and the tenant understood and complied with their obligations. This allowed for a much lower rate of eviction for the clients. It also allowed early intervention by caseworkers and other professionals within the organization if issues started to be identified for the client. A rapid rehousing program for people who had recently found themselves without a home was also mentioned as an activity that the organization undertook. Details of this program were not well described in the interviews. This area of focus relates to the vision and mission of the organization by helping to move them from homelessness to permanent housing.

Power within Organization

Within the organization, power structures appear clearly articulated. Authority is enacted in a hierarchical manner that mirrors many organizations of similar size in the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors. Over the last several years, an executive team has been formed to manage operations, with the executive director and board of directors overseeing strategic goals and plans. The different service lines are also hierarchical, each having its own reporting structure. Even so, the hierarchical structure does not seem rigid enough to make people feel inconsequential. People working at front-line positions reported that they feel like they are “at the table” and heard by those even at the executive levels. The position description reviewed detailed to whom the position reported and the overall goal of the position. The supervisory relationship present in the job description recognizes the hierarchy in the organization. However, the overall goal of the position details how the staff member is to provide direct service to the client. The duties and responsibilities present in the job description also emphasized that the client’s needs are the primary focus. The first full sentence of the sample job description reads: “This position’s primary responsibilities are to provide direct service to Veterans who have become homeless through housing advocacy and placement.” This emphasis on client service could be understood as mitigating the hierarchical nature required by an organization of this size.

The board of directors also serves as a source of authority within the organization. As part of the textual review, board minutes for the past year clearly showed actions focused on the organization's overall health and well-being, including financial oversight and relationships with the broader community. The vision and mission were addressed in the minutes, but sometimes more implicitly than explicitly. Hiring Catherine’s replacement was part of that implicit work of living out the vision and mission. Explicitly, a revision to the mission statement was also mentioned. However, that work was put on hold until the new executive was hired and oriented to the role. The board's function has been limited recently by the current pandemic, reducing their connections to the physical space and those participating there to a great extent. It seems that while the board has ultimate power in the organization, much of that power is translated through the work of the executive director.

It seems that much of the power within the organization focuses on the executive director. Catherine's work has helped the organization's finances more than quadruple since she started. This increase in funding likely has contributed to her power within the organization since she has demonstrated herself to be highly capable. With the dramatic increase in budget also comes the increase in the scope of the organization and its personnel. Most of the personnel at the organization have been hired under the tenure of, and likely with the help of, the executive director. Additionally, the open-door policy allows for personal connections to be a core part of the power within the organization. The strong leadership and personality of the executive director seem to be a significant part of the shared vision and mission of the organization.

Institutional Ethnography – Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness

Mission Statement:

> "The mission of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness (WCAH) is to generate policies, community support, and State/Local resources for housing and services to end homelessness in Wisconsin.

We believe that everyone deserves a safe, decent and affordable place to call home and that homelessness is preventable. We understand that many factors may cause homelessness including a physical or mental health crisis, a lost job, a mismatch between income and housing costs, family violence, or a transition from an institutional setting back into the community.

WCAH will achieve its mission through advocacy, coordination, and building public awareness. The coalition endeavors to be the hub of a statewide network of homeless service providers and other concerned individuals and organizations across Wisconsin." (http://wcahwi.org/about-us/)

Background

The Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness (WCAH) was founded in 2016 by Joe Volk and Ken Schmidt to bring together various stakeholders in Wisconsin to advocate for statewide attention and funding of programs addressing the issues of homelessness. Both men had previous experience running large not-for-profit organizations that had worked with people dealing with homelessness as a significant part of their mission. Both had also been involved in attempts to create a statewide group to coordinate efforts to bring about more attention from the state government regarding homelessness; those previous efforts had not succeeded. As they entered retirement, they felt that this was a time that they might help this effort succeed.

Modeled on multiple statewide coalitions, primarily one in Minnesota, this organization's focus is to work as a small agile group that educates and advocates for state resources to be guided toward programs that will reduce and eventually end the issue of homelessness. This work is undertaken primarily by the executive director with the support and input from the board of directors. The only employee is the executive director, who is contracted through a separately incorporated organization. The board of directors consists of nine individuals plus the executive director.

The site selection informants identified this as an effective organization based on the advocacy work they have been involved with at the state level. The organization was significantly involved in creating the Inter Agency Council on Homelessness during the Scott Walker administration. It also lists as a major accomplishment the first significant increase in funding for homelessness programs in the state of Wisconsin since the 1990s, which occurred in 2017.

This profile has been completed with the review of organizational documents, including the publically published website and six interviews with organization members who are regularly involved in the activities of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness.

Understanding of Vision and Mission

The interviews conducted involved individuals who are part of the board of directors. Engaging other people would not have provided the desired insight because individuals outside this group have minimal involvement. When asked about the vision and mission of the organization, all were clear that they were working towards ending homelessness through better funding and coordination of state programs aimed towards the issue of homelessness. Even so, the interviews did not reveal significant shared understandings of how the vision and mission are enacted.

The organization describes itself as a coalition, which may be one of the first defining features of the organization and its vision and mission. A coalition is a group of individuals who agree to work together for a specific end while retaining their own individual agendas. Those interviewed are either presently involved in or retired from organizations other than WCAH. The organizations that the individuals have connections with all address issues associated with homelessness. Many of those interviewed brought examples from their organizations into the discussion of the WCAH's work. Little detail was given about what was being done when people asked about the focus organization's vision and mission.

One item shared in several interviews was an understanding that the organization bridges divides. The divides described were across organizations working to end homelessness and political divides. Ken, the board president, cited territorialism as part of the reason previous attempts to make a coalition like this failed. The tendency of service providers to focus on their own organization's bottom line rather than how state policy and budget would impact the overall picture of homelessness made working together difficult. This territorialism does not seem to be an issue for the WCAH. The participants share an ethos that their work for WCAH does not need to benefit the organizations that the board members represent. Instead, the work needs to benefit the state as a whole in combating the issues surrounding homelessness. The board president, Ken, summed it up this way: "The reason I'm doing this is not necessarily for the benefit of organizations. I do this because … I've met too many people who have never had a chance in their life." It seems this organization can bridge the divide between multiple organizations is helped by the executive director, Joe, and board president, Ken, both being retired from social service agencies that worked with people experiencing homelessness. They can be seen as experienced and knowledgeable without having the agenda of a particular organization in mind.

The bridging of political divides is also present in multiple interviews. There is a recognition that a majority of the organizations working around the constellation of homelessness issues tend to be perceived as liberal. There is also the reality that politics at the state level tend towards conservatism in the legislature. In today's political environment, this can create a situation where distrust prevents conversations from even beginning. The organization's approach is that advocacy and outreach to those in the legislative majority are needed to enact any substantive change. To this end, the executive director and board members have cultivated relationships with Republican members of the state legislature. Through this effort, they have shown legislators how homelessness is present in their districts, the types of people who are impacted by homelessness, the antecedents that can lead to homelessness, the short-term and long-term effects on people as they live with homelessness, and what different policies and budget priorities can do to alleviate the effects. The board members and executive director have received some pushback for actively working across political divides but see this as an integral part of their vision and mission to better state policy and budgeting around homelessness issues.

Another item mentioned in all the interviews was the presence of the executive director. It seemed that responses about the vision and mission eventually returned to the executive director and his efforts in terms of policy and advocacy. When asked about their roles, most of the respondents reflected on how they were supporting the work of the executive director. Several cited regular strategizing conversations they had with the executive director to assist in his advocating with legislators and administrators. Another, “William,” mentioned working with the executive director to formulate policy papers that could be used in bills and rulemaking. The executive director was also significant in how those interviewed understood their roles within the organization and the overall vision and mission. One individual, “Brandon,” speaking about the board of directors, said, “it’s a collection of folks who defer to [the executive director’s] proven abilities and results, and it’s people who share… a common analysis of homelessness.”

With the vision and mission of the organization being rather broad in scope, it was hard to find definitive details that created a shared understanding. All clearly understood the overall vision and mission of advocating for better funding and policies to help those dealing with homelessness. However, the specific actions that the vision and mission led to were harder to enumerate. Deciding what divergence was present in people’s view of the organization’s vision and mission was difficult. The diversity of responses could be attributed to the respondents' context. The responses could reflect the experiences those interviewed brought from the organizations they represented rather than an actual divergence in the interpretation of the vision and mission.

One item that was very clear in terms of the vision and mission of the organization is the presence of clear boundaries of their scope. This organization focuses on advocacy at the state level; it is not currently, nor ever will be, a direct service provider. The role of the coalition mentioned most was the advocacy work done with legislators at the state level. The only item mentioned about advocacy work on a regional or local level was the one billboard in the Milwaukee area. Additionally, the three respondents currently connected with service providers, William, "Miles," and Brandon, noted that this organization worked because the focus was on statewide advocacy rather than advantaging any particular agency. There is also a clear understanding that the organization is a coalition working to bring various stakeholders together to jointly advocate for better policy and funding around homelessness.

The published vision and mission statement describe themes that align well with those presented in the interviews. The core focus of advocacy, coordination, and building public awareness resonated with material gathered in the interviews. The respondents all touched on at least one of these themes, but there was not a coordinated, clearly articulated thread that seemed to connect all of the interview responses to the printed statement. As with most vision and mission statements, none of the respondents could quote it verbatim.

A proxy question was used to determine if the organization was successful in its vision and mission. The work of Herman and Renz (2008) was the basis for this decision. After asking the respondents to give their understanding of the vision and mission in their own words, they were then asked if the organization was successful in living that out. All affirmed that they did feel the organization was effective in moving towards the vision and mission they had articulated.

The most significant insight provided by the interviews was the unique character of this organization as a coalition. People on the board all come from different organizations which have slightly different foci and approaches to the issues around homelessness. These differences appear in the articulated understandings of the vision and mission for WCAH, which does not always feel well defined in terms of actions. This aspect of being a coalition also explains the need to bridge divides, whether in terms of individual organizations participating in the work or the attempts to reach across political divides. Additionally, the coalition aspect also makes the role of the executive director critical since he acts as the central focus of these various approaches.

Activities Involved in Vision and Mission

The organization's primary activities focus totally on advocacy for issues around homelessness. The primary object of the advocacy work seems to be the state government, with some limited efforts at raising awareness of the general public about the conditions people living with homelessness face.

Advocating for increased coordination by state government, increased funding, and more effective public policy around issues of homelessness was the activity most discussed in the interviews. Two items were cited as the most successful activities of WCAH. The first was the work on the significant budget increase for programs addressing homelessness in the 2017 state budget. The creation of the Inter Agency Council on Homelessness was the second. There was recognition that the organization did not accomplish these independently. Even so, there was still great pride that they were instrumental in bringing these to fruition.

Also discussed was the strategizing and relationship building that had been undertaken with state legislators. While the executive director seems to be the primary point of contact, several board members participated in that work. Additionally, a few board members said they have regular strategizing conversations with the executive director about how to approach different issues and individuals within state government effectively. One board member, Brandon, also mentioned the writing of white papers, draft policy statements, as something he and the executive director have worked on together. These are provided to lawmakers to encourage discussion and thought about various aspects of homelessness policy at the state level.

Raising awareness of the conditions of homelessness was also an effort mentioned in several interviews. In conjunction with donated billboard space, the organization put up a sign during the winter that read something to the effect of “Current Room Temperature for the Homeless,” indicating that the current outdoor temperature was the room temperature those dealing with homelessness were experiencing. Building public awareness about the issues of homelessness was the goal of this effort.

Power within Organization

Power within the organization is relatively easy to trace when there are essentially only ten individuals participating in the organization's work. Most of the power, both formal and informal, rests with the executive director.

The interviews continually came back to the relationship that the individuals had with the executive director and how the executive director was the source of most knowledge of the working of the organization. In terms of action, it is the executive director who makes a great majority of the connections with legislators and state officials; it is the executive director who is responsible for the overall advocacy strategy; it is the executive director to whom people on the board provide consultation and support in his efforts. Most of the work and decisions center around the executive director, and it seems that his is the most influential voice. The executive director also acknowledged this in his interview by listing that one of the challenges the organization faces is Founder’s Syndrome.

The centrality of the executive director’s relationships is also shown through the written documentation present within the organization. There are no formal written minutes of the board of directors. The most recent job description for the executive director is a consulting services agreement from 2016. This document lays out the executive director's responsibilities and how the contract is executed and can be ended. Other than this document and the website, no other written documents were available for this organization. The lack of these texts is not necessarily a problem; it simply illustrates that power and authority are conveyed through trusting relationships and unwritten expectations that seem to be implicitly understood by those involved.

Power within an organization held in this manner allows for an agile system bound by trust and personal relationships. Managing the organization in this way allows for changes in strategy and functioning to occur quickly in response to different contexts and opportunities. The organization's size allows this model to be highly functional in this case because relatively few people are involved in decisions, and those involved know and trust one another's motives, skills, and decision-making processes. As mentioned previously, there is also a potential future concern about this style of organizational management. When the current executive director decides to step away, significant changes will likely be needed in the power structure to adapt to new relationships and leadership styles.

Case Study

Alignment of Vision and Mission

As the three organizations are considered together, similarities emerge. There is complexity and richness in the similarities that point to how effective organizations enact vision and mission.

One of the most surprising items from the interviews was the degree to which the respondents' themes mirrored the written vision and mission statements of the respective organizations. While there were no verbatim recitations of the vision and mission statements, the themes were often close. This level of agreement is unexpected based on research in the for-profit world (Khandelwal & Mohendra, 2010; Kopaneva & Sias, 2015). While there were not enough interviews to meaningfully determine the exact rate of agreement between the written statements and the respondents' articulated views, it does seem that there is a greater degree of alignment than the published studies report. This degree of alignment suggests that not-for-profits do indeed have a greater sense of vision and mission because they are central to the organizations' continued motivation and work (Meehan & Jonker, 2018a).

This sense of vision and mission appears in the responses from people working with MBUTB. The view that dignity was key to the organization's work showed up in all six interviews in multiple ways. This connects to the published vision statement, where themes of a welcoming community, hope, and compassion are central to the organization's work. Also articulated in every interview was the commitment to providing necessities for people living with homelessness. However, the respondents did not articulate that the vision statement provided guidance for the work they did. Several people mentioned items that fit this theme, but the actual vision statement did not seem central to the people's understanding of the organization based on the interviews.

The Shelter Space also had a relatively high degree of connection between the mission statement and how respondents characterized the vision and mission. There were variations in which parts of the statement each respondent highlighted based on their particular position within the organization. Those who worked in rehousing and housing management understandably emphasized the services provided around housing support. Those who worked in mental health and substance abuse treatment emphasized that work. Even so, all recognized and articulated the organization's tagline that they are "More Than Shelter." All the respondents said that what they were doing was not just providing a safe space for people to sleep overnight but actively working to change the situation of those living in or on the verge of homelessness. The emphasis on dignity and purpose for those with whom The Shelter Space was working also came through clearly in the interviews.

With the WCAH, making conclusions that themes contained in the mission statement and the interviews were highly aligned was more difficult than the other two organizations. While every interview showed a keen concern for increasing state spending on programs that assisted people living with homelessness, how it was articulated was less consistent across the various responses. One possible factor is that WCAH had the longest vision or mission statement of the three organizations. The statement detailed the organization's values and the methods used to accomplish its mission. While this is what the literature suggests makes a good mission statement (Collins & Porras, 1994; Foster & Akdere, 2007), it may be that not having a short phrase or theme tied into the organization's ongoing work made it less easy to remember and communicate. The frequency of interactions may also affect the thematic alignment present in the interviews and written statements. Board meetings, being the primary time for all in the organization to interact, occur every two months. Between those times, there are points of contact between several of the board members, but it does not include everyone. Less frequent organizational contact may contribute to the vision and mission being less commonly held. Additionally, the previously noted structure of WCAH, as a coalition of different individuals and organizations, could be another contributing factor in this difficulty in determining highly aligned themes.

Scope and Boundaries

A key theme present when examining these organizations is how the primary vision and mission are related to the scope of their work. The organization that focuses primarily on advocacy, WCAH, focuses significant time and resources on the state funding and rules making processes. With its commitment to more than shelter, the Shelter Space provides an overnight shelter and housing assistance. Going beyond shelter, it also works to address the underlying causes of homelessness through treatment of addiction and mental health issues. Education is another part of the work so that clients can navigate the housing market better. With a scope of vision and mission that engages direct service to those currently dealing with homelessness, MBUTB focuses on the dignity of individuals even when faced with dehumanizing situations. While this assertion that vision and mission are related to the scope of work an organization undertakes may seem logical, there are situations where organizations experience “mission drift,” and the scope of activities does not match the vision and mission (Grimes, Williams, & Zhao, 2019).

Related to scope, all three organizations seem to understand the boundaries around their work. While MBUTB can provide referrals for folks to find help in obtaining permanent housing or treatment options, they recognize that other organizations can do that work better and, therefore, do not work to duplicate services. The Shelter Space demonstrated in a number of the interviews that they know they cannot help people who are not ready to make a personal commitment to change. While they do try to help all those who have been accepted into their service lines, they also recognize that the limited resources they have requires them to, at times, make hard choices that focus resources on some individuals while not on others. The Shelter Space also recognizes that its work focuses on helping people move out of homelessness rather than providing services intended for short-term relief. With the coalition approach, WCAH has several factors that contribute to the successful boundaries of its mission. Being comprised of representatives from other service-providing organizations helps WCAH keep its focus on advocacy. The constituent organizations are already conduits for assistance throughout the state, so there is no need to duplicate services. The recognition that other organizations provide advocacy at the national level also allows the scope to stay focused on Wisconsin. A limitation in scope seems to be something that all of these organizations do well, limiting mission drift, which may provide some insight into why they are effective at what they do.

Mental Models

In reviewing the interviews for this study and how people understood the vision and mission of their particular organization, it was clear that shared mental models were present in one, potentially present in a second, and not clearly present in the third. Shared mental models occur when individuals have common knowledge and assumptions that are the basis for comprehension and decision-making (Gisick et al., 2018). These mental models are important when considering how a shared understanding of vision and mission is created. The review of the literature and the results of this study suggest that the actual vision or mission statements are not the most important part of having an aligned organizational understanding. Instead, shared concepts of what an organization is about and how participants' work connects to that idea seem the most important.

MBUTB clearly had a shared mental model of its vision and mission. Dignity was repeatedly expressed as a core concern of the organization. This was done without prompting, showing that the participants understood their work in a similar manner. Several factors could account for this shared mental model. Because MBUTB focuses primarily on direct service of tangible goods to people living with homelessness, the unambiguous nature of the work could make it easier to understand what, why, and how the organization is engaging as vision and mission. Additionally, the limited divisions within the organization and frequent engagement with one another could contribute to a broader sharing of similar understandings. This shared mental model likely reinforces why certain tasks are undertaken and others are avoided. Shared mental models also help participants coordinate their work to maximize desired outcomes by reducing confusion and conflict over why and what they are doing.

Shared mental models were not as clearly seen in The Shelter Space and WCAH. The lack of mental models may not hinder these organizations because of the structures they have adopted. It is possible that having stronger shared mental models would increase the cohesion of the organizations and make them even more effective. While there is significant alignment within the themes expressed regarding the vision and mission, how people articulated and conceptualized the work at The Shelter Space did not have the same degree of alignment as seen in MBUTB. The diversity of the roles people play within the organization, its size, and the fact that there are no regular group interactions throughout the organization could be reasons for this difference. In the WCAH, shared mental models are difficult to identify through the interviews. This difficulty is likely for the same reasons mentioned when considering the alignment of themes between the interviews and the published mission statement. The coalition model could also help to explain these variations at WCAH.

Organizational Characteristics

In designing this study, variations in the participating organizations' traits were intentionally included to explore what insights might arise from those differences. Among these traits were organizational size, the length of time that the organization had been in existence, and whether the organization's work is carried out primarily by volunteers or paid staff. In looking at the three organizations, these features do not seem to have much impact on the alignment of vision and mission. However, two other organizational traits may factor into the differences noted in the observed alignment of vision and mission. These are the degree of abstraction of the organization's work and how often people engage with one another on the organization's work.

When the difference in the size of the organizations is considered, there are surprisingly limited differences in the degree of alignment noted. The Shelter Space has the most people involved, with over one hundred employees and hundreds of people volunteering in different capacities, while MBUTB has had over five hundred people volunteer with the organization during 2020. Both of these have significant thematic alignment regarding their vision and mission. As mentioned earlier, at The Shelter Space, the emphasis placed on different aspects of the vision and mission varies based on the different areas in which an individual works. This variation could be seen as a function of the organization's size, but it does seem to be minor in the broader scope of understanding the vision and mission. While WCAH has less alignment in how the vision and mission are articulated, it is not clear that this is a function of its size. With ten people making up the organization's core, an assumption may have been made that everyone has the same understanding of the organizational vision and mission. However, it seems more likely that this is a function of the nature of the organization being a coalition.

The length of time that the organizations have been functioning also seems to have little impact on how vision and mission are aligned and understood. While The Shelter Space has been in existence since 1982, there has been a significant reorientation. This appears to be commensurate with the tenure of the executive director, who arrived in 2007 and just recently retired. With considerable growth in the number of employees, budgets, and formal structures, this reorientation could be understood as a new start for the organization. This could arguably mean that the time frame that one considers for The Shelter Space is only fourteen years. Meanwhile, MBUTB traces its founding to 2007. The past fourteen years have seen significant growth and transformations as the location, the methods, and the people involved have changed. The pandemic of 2020-21 forced significant changes to the methods of operation, but even so, the articulation of the vision and mission seems to have only gotten clearer in this adversity. Finally, WCAH is the most recently formed, with only six years of history. The organization's size has not changed significantly over time, with a few people leaving the board and others recruited to join. The concept of mission creep suggests that vision and mission become less defined over time (Meehan & Jonker, 2018b). Mission creep does not seem to be present in these successful organizations. This may occur because the organizations that have been around longer revisit and revise their vision and mission as conditions warrant. It could also be a function of their clarity of scope and the presence of boundaries.

In these three cases, who carries out the organization's work seems to make no noticeable difference in the overall organizational alignment of vision and mission. The Shelter Space and MBUTB are opposites in this regard, with The Shelter Space using primarily paid staff-driven and MBUTB being fully volunteer. The differences in the vision and mission alignment appear to be minimal. Observed differences are easily attributed to the segmentation of the work seen in the larger staff of The Shelter Space rather than a factor of paid staff versus volunteers. WCAH is somewhat of a hybrid of the two, with most of the work being done by the executive director, who, while a contract employee, gets a minimal salary for his time and effort. As mentioned earlier, WCAH’s alignment of vision and mission is harder to determine, so making any inferences from this case regarding the status of those who implement the program is difficult.

One of the significant areas where it seems these organizations show a difference in the alignment of vision and mission is around how tangible the scope of the work is. The ease in seeing alignment within the organizations becomes harder as one moves from a very tangible scope, like giving useful items to a person in need, to a less tangible one, like encouraging state lawmakers to adopt certain policies. MBUTB has a vision and mission that focuses on giving something to someone in need. It also is the organization with the highest degree of alignment of the three participating. The Shelter Space has a scope that is both tangible and, in some ways, intangible. It does provide shelter, but there is also a focus on treatment and developing skills and resources for the clients. It could be that this combination of concrete and abstract outcomes contributes to the increased difficulty of having a highly aligned vision and mission. With the WCAH, the goals and aims of the organization are primarily abstract, with advocacy for better homelessness policy and funding in the state and increased awareness of the issues surrounding homelessness being central. This factor may explain part of the difficulty of seeing the alignment of vision and mission within the interviews.

A final organizational characteristic that may influence how strongly aligned the vision and mission are within the organization is the frequency of engagement. This factor emerged in reviewing the institutional ethnographies rather than during the site selection. MBUTB has regular engagement among many of the core volunteers every week. People who do the sorting gather weekly on Thursdays; those who distribute the items gather weekly on Saturdays. Some individuals participate in both gatherings, potentially acting as a bridge. Those who participate in the board meetings may provide another source of regular, frequent interactions, helping to engender a shared vision and mission among the participants. At The Shelter Space, there is regular engagement of coworkers to help reinforce shared views of the vision and mission, but that often happens only within particular program areas. While the organization does a good job of overcoming “silos,” there is still a tendency to interact most frequently with those in the same service line. This regular interaction within the team may help explain how The Shelter Space has a general alignment of its vision and mission and some variations based on the position within the organization. The WCAH only meets as a whole group every other month. As previously mentioned, between these meetings, there are contacts between the executive director and other members of the board to talk about strategy, but these conversations do not include everyone in the organization. This varied level of engagement within the organization may help to explain some of the differences we see in the alignment of vision and mission.

Integration of Vision and Mission into Entire Organization

One interesting and unexpected insight from the interviews was a sense that the vision and mission of the organizations were present in the ways the organization structured itself. The vision and mission were enacted not only in addressing the end goals but also in the way volunteers and employees were engaged. This was also seen in the way communication happened within the organizations.

MBUTB is a prime example of vision and mission integrated into the entire life of the organization. The dignity demonstrated in the work that people were doing with those experiencing homelessness was also seen in how people within the organization treated one another. As noted in the profile, teenagers serving on the board were given critical roles to fulfill and understood as equals in decision-making processes and implementation. Additionally, older adults in care facilities were able to contribute by washing and folding donated items, recognizing that they could still help others even if they were not able to do so in ways they had previously. Similarly, The Shelter Space's vision and mission were also lived out in the way that employees were empowered to help those who were being served. This empowerment was most apparent when employees were encouraged to work across boundaries and reach out to others to facilitate improved situations for clients. Empowerment also allowed employees to take action without going through a cumbersome hierarchy that could slow down results and leave employees feeling like they had less agency. At the WCAH, the fact that it was a coalition was displayed in the internal operations. While members of the board come from different organizations, they all articulated their primary concern being the benefit of those experiencing homelessness. This ethos meant that they were not focused on what their individual organizations might gain from the advocacy work but rather on ending homelessness across the state.

Communication was another key aspect in the integration of vision and mission into the overall life of the organizations. At MBUTB, every Saturday morning, the volunteers are gathered together at the end of the distribution to debrief. During that reflection, a member of the leadership communicates to the volunteers that the work they have done recognizes the dignity of those they helped. In The Shelter Space, the organization's larger size makes this daily gathering impossible. Still, there is regular verbal communication among staff and through written channels where the vision and mission are articulated. WCAH has much less formal communication. However, the way informal communication happens between individuals seems to reinforce the coalition aspect. As part of this informal communication, the executive director consults with board members to craft the advocacy strategies that are more likely to lead to positive outcomes.

Role of Executive Director

The founder or executive director's role in the understanding of the vision and mission was another theme present in all three organizations. All the interviews referenced the founder or executive director as crucial to the vision and mission of their particular organization. The executive director or founder was often seen as a text to whom people could turn to comprehend the organizational vision and mission better and put it into practice. Sentiments about how the founder or executive director was inspirational in articulating their vision for the organization were often shared. Also mentioned in several cases was how these leaders impressed the respondents with their dedication to the organization's work.

At MBUTB and WCAH, all the interviews noted personal relationships with the executive director or founder and how, when they had questions, those were the leaders people went to for guidance. At The Shelter Space, the larger structure likely made this more difficult, but most of those interviewed knew the executive director, and a majority of those interviewed made references to how they had personal interactions with her. There is the possibility that connection with the executive director is crucial in an organization's articulation of its vision and mission. Although this study cannot examine this question in any meaningful way, it has potential for future analysis.

Reports of Organizational Effectiveness

Finally, one commonality in all of the interviews was an affirmation that the organizations were successful in living out their vision and mission. As mentioned previously, some research suggests that asking a respondent to assess how well an organization addresses what the respondent sees as the important issues for an organization can act as a proxy for organizational effectiveness (Herman & Renz, 2008). In taking this approach, there is less imposition of the researchers' constructs of what effectiveness is for a particular organization.

In the interview protocol, each respondent was asked how they would articulate the vision and mission of the organization, what evidence helped them know that was the vision and mission, and why the vision and mission were important to them. Then they were asked if the organization was successful in living out that vision and mission and how they knew they were successful. All those interviewed responded that their organization was successful and gave examples of why it was true. This finding is not surprising because these organizations were selected as highly-effective organizations. Using Herman & Renz's (2008) work confirms that the organizations being studied are likely effective in their work and are good subjects for understanding how vision and mission are involved in organizational effectiveness. This, combined with the outside informants' appraisals of the subject organizations, helps fulfill Stake's (2006) emphasis on triangulation, where one confirms an assertion from multiple sources.

The affirmation that these organizations are effective allows for the appropriation of Brinkerhoff‘s (2003) view that when resources are limited, and one wants to look at factors that contribute to success, one should examine those that are doing particularly well.

Summary

Undertaking the institutional ethnographies and the multiple case study analysis provided a thick description of how three highly effective organizations are working to improve the lives of people struggling with homelessness in the Milwaukee metropolitan area. These three organizations are approaching different parts of the issues those dealing with homelessness face. The case study identified themes by analyzing the similarities and differences in their organizational structures, methods, and conceptualizations. The implications of these identified themes will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations, Limitations, and Further Research

Findings

This study explored relationships between the vision and mission of an organization and its overall effectiveness. Reviewing the results from the institutional ethnographies and the case study and comparing them with the theory and insights from the literature review provided new information about the world of not-for-profits, their vision, mission, and effectiveness. In this study, the participating organizations had reasonably well aligned understandings of their vision and mission. They also created limits to their scope of activities based on their vision and mission. Connections between the ease of remembering the essence of the vision and mission and organizational alignment were present. Personal relationships with leaders seem to have the potential to increase engagement with the organizational vision and mission. With this study being one of the few to use institutional ethnography embedded within multiple case study, several observations were made regarding the use of the research methods.

Shared Vision and Mission

The effective organizations engaged in this study had participants with a shared understanding of vision and mission. This shared vision and mission occurred not from studying the printed statement but from cultivating an ethos that permeated the organization. The written statements were helpful guides to keep leaders focused on the vision and mission. However, since no one in the study claimed to know their organization’s written statement well, it does not seem to be central to understanding the vision and mission. Instead, the source of meaning and guidance for participants’ actions came from people within the organization. Having a connection with other participants, particularly those in leadership, was the primary reason given for knowing the vision and mission. This insight came from respondents' answers when they were asked how they knew the vision and mission that they articulated was truly the vision and mission of the organization. People cited conversations with others in the organization and observing the actions of other participants as ways they came to know the vision and mission.

These findings highlight some of the material found in the literature review. Alignment seems central to these organizations, which directly connects to the literature. As Collins and Porras note, "When you have superb alignment, a visitor could drop in from outer space and infer your vision from the operations and activities of the company without ever reading it on paper or meeting a single senior executive" (1994, p. 77). This is precisely what was found in the organizations studied. The ideas expressed in the interviews concerning the vision and mission resonate with those expressed in the published statements. Kopaneva & Sias (2015) observed a relatively low alignment between the themes present in interview responses and official company statements. In contrast to Kopaneva & Sias' study, the overall alignment between respondents' conceptions of the vision and mission and the actual statements in this study was relatively high for two of the three organizations participating in this study. This alignment illustrates the idea that, since mission is so central to not-for-profits, it has to be more prominent in the activities of the organizations or they risk being rudderless (Meehan & Jonker, 2018b).

Organizational Scope

One of the features seen in the institutional ethnographic studies completed for this project was a clear understanding of the organizations' scope. Through the interviews, all three organizations demonstrated that there were activities in which they intentionally did not engage. This limit of scope is related to the alignment of vision and mission because it not only focuses participants on what not to do but allows for greater focus on what they should be doing. Limiting the types of things that the organizations do allows for improving the current mission rather than diverting energy into creating something new. Limiting the scope also encourages specialization and potential increases in efficiencies, which, in turn, can make the organization more effective at living out its vision and mission. When working with those experiencing homelessness, a limited scope can also discourage duplication of services and allow for partnerships to arise between different organizations, hopefully increasing resources for those in need.

In the literature, the way vision and mission statements limit an organization's scope does not receive much attention. However, inferences can be made that this creation of boundaries may be present. In critiquing mission statements, one article cites a common argument that they are used to keep corporations "on track," (Bartkus, Glassman, & McAffee, 2000) presumably by limiting the options for activities considered. Bartkus, Glassman, and McAffee argued that limits created by a mission statement might make a firm unable to adapt to changing situations and is therefore not a desirable use of the statement. This concern about limits may be the case for a corporation seeking to find new markets and products to increase profits. However, it is not as likely the case in a not-for-profit environment where needs seem to be inexhaustible and resources are limited.

Alignment of Organizational Work

Repeated connections with core organizational concepts seem to be significant in aligning participants' understanding of vision and mission and coordinating their work. This repeated connection seems to create shared understandings of what people are supposed to do to advance the organization's vision and mission. Mr. Bob's Under the Bridge (MBUTB) illustrates this well, where the weekly review of the Saturday distribution includes contextualizing the work undertaken. This explanation connects the tasks done in service to those in need to the core concept of dignity. In The Shelter Space, the tagline serves similarly, helping volunteers and staff alike see what they are doing as providing “More Than Shelter.” These regular, impactful connections tie people’s understanding together and allow the organization to be more purposeful in meeting its objectives.

Shared mental models help facilitate the process of vision and mission alignment within organizations. In shared mental models, some sets of people working together have overlapping knowledge and assumptions. These overlapping ways of seeing the world become the basis for comprehending certain situations and acting upon the information present (Gisick et al., 2018). The results of this study suggest that shared mental models are part of the alignment process that allows for explicit and implicit vision and mission understandings to be widely held throughout an organization. Shared mental models are seen particularly well in MBUTB. The shared concept of dignity that was repeated in all the interviews was central to the vision and mission of the organization. This concept, however, was implicit because it was not directly mentioned in the published vision statement. Shared mental models help to explain the way this diffusion occurred.

Vision and Mission Statements

Another insight that came while looking at the alignment of vision and mission within the organizations was the length of the actual statement. As noted in the organizational profiles, each had a statement published on their websites. The two organizations with shorter statements that were easier to remember seemed to have greater alignment. While that degree of alignment is likely attributable to multiple factors, it is possible that narrowing down the focus of the vision and mission contributes to this alignment. Having a memorable tagline, as The Shelter Space does, where the meaning of the phrase is communicated to participants by others in the organization creates a central theme for shared understanding. Having a central concept embedded throughout the organization, such as dignity at MBUTB, can allow people to see what they are doing through that lens.

Having a shorter vision or mission statement could be helpful for overall organizational alignment. This conciseness may help to explain some of the results found in another, previously mentioned study. While Kopaneva & Sias (2015) do not detail the corporations or the length of their mission statements, they point out that the official published statements were broader and more complex than the vision and mission that the employees provide. While this more complex statement may be appropriate and helpful for the corporation as a whole, it may not be the best for creating overall alignment. If alignment of vision and mission is the preferred outcome, a shorter statement may be needed.

People within the observed organizations did not know the verbiage of the vision and mission statements well, which suggests that written statements are not the key vehicle for communicating organizational goals. Instead, volunteers and staff are the sources for knowing the vision and mission. These relationships could be made directly with the founder or executive director or among other participants within the organization, but relationships appear to be foundational to comprehension of the vision and mission. A connection with the founder or executive director was observed in all three participating organizations, with all interviews mentioning the leaders in some context. This implies that the role may be crucial for communicating vision and mission through words or action. Unfortunately, the methods used in this study were not designed to trace the complex social phenomenon of communicating vision and mission. Therefore, with the data available, no significant inferences can be made regarding the ways relationships transmit vision and mission. Even so, it seems to be important to foster relationships within organizations that effectively align work to vision and mission. By having those connections with others in the organization, participants can witness the attitudes and actions of others living the vision and mission. These connections can make it more likely for the participants to internalize that purpose, so their actions also reflect the organizational vision and mission. How this insight relates to the broader literature is unknown since concepts of leadership and organizational communication were not deeply examined in this study.

Institutional Ethnography and Case Study

This study’s combined use of institutional ethnography and case study appears to have been effective. Institutional ethnography provided a lens with which to examine individual organizations. Institutional ethnography helped to focus the study on how the organizations functioned in directing the work of the individuals involved. It also helped to reveal how the actions of the organization and its underlying beliefs coalesced to make the institution function. Case study allowed the way different organizations operated to be compared for insights into the commonalities and differences. Using these two together created the expected flow of data collection from institutional ethnography to analysis through case study. The analysis was then used to illustrate theoretical models and provide insights into how vision and mission operate in effective not-for-profit organizations.

While the process of using the two methodologies together worked in this study, some aspects of institutional ethnography could have been better utilized. These issues centered around how ruling relations and texts were observed in the organizations. The emphasis on ruling relations works primarily in larger groups where personal relationships give way to complex systems. In MBUTB and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness (WCAH), the organizations' functions center on personal relationships. Power was invested in personal relationships rather than prescribed roles and functions. While this does not mean institutional ethnography cannot be used to examine these systems, this does suggest that some of the deeper insights the methodology provides, such as ways texts guide the actions of individuals working within a system, may not be as relevant to these particular situations.

One of the reasons that documents were not readily available in two of the three organizations could be explained by some of the underlying assumptions of institutional ethnography. Texts are understood as the way ruling relations are mediated through organizations that have become large and complex enough that personal relationships are not the primary means of connection to the institution. One of the organizations involved in this study, WCAH, is based on personal relationships. Another, MBUTB, has a significant investment in personal relationships. When reviewing documents as texts, both of these organizations had limited amounts of information contained in written form. This lack of documentation could result from the structure and size of these organizations not rising to the complexity where these types of documents are necessary for effectively carrying out their vision and mission. The Shelter Space, however, did have these types of documents. This difference supports the inference that an organization with complex reporting structures and a larger group of people to coordinate should require more than personal relationships to manage the institution.

Using institutional ethnography and multiple case study together was an effective combination for comparing how organizations engage in crucial aspects of their work. In this study, the insights provided by using these two methodologies together were more than if only one of them had been employed. By having institutional ethnography and multiple case study together, aspects of organizational culture were able to be probed deeply and then compared with other organizations to see how different aspects contributed to the life of a not-for-profit organization. This combination of qualitative methods does have benefits for future use, especially in situations where a comparison of organizational processes and underlying culture is desired. Future studies should consider the size and complexity of the organizations that are being examined to determine if all of the tools institutional ethnography provides are able to be deployed effectively.

Conclusions

The starting point for this project was the research questions. These questions were designed to probe the relationship between vision and mission and organizational effectiveness in not-for-profits. The primary research question was as follows:

- How do shared vision and mission impact the effectiveness of a not-for-profit organization?

The secondary research questions were created to explore different aspects of the primary research question. These questions allowed for a close examination of some of the dynamics present in not-for-profit organizations around the concepts of vision and mission. The secondary research questions were articulated in this way:

- How is alignment of vision and mission present within different organizations? What helps to demonstrate the alignment?
- How do different organizations approach this task of coordination of vision and mission between participants? How are different approaches effective in different contexts?
- How do different characteristics of organizations influence the way they approach the task of coordination toward larger goals?

The primary question encouraged an examination of the thinking around vision and mission and organizational effectiveness, the best methods to explore these topics with the resources available, and how three different organizations embodied vision and mission effectively. From this exploration, insights have been gained into the ways vision and mission impact not-for-profit organizational effectiveness. The study design shifted this question slightly to look at how shared vision and mission were observed in effective organizations.

Having a shared vision and mission seems to be an active element in the work of the effective organizations that were studied. This shared vision and mission is not understood primarily through the official vision or mission statements but rather through shared meaning and relationships. These shared meanings and relationships help coordinate the ways organizational participants conceptualize and approach the work of the organization and their tasks. These common ideas and approaches to their work allowed the participating organizations to have a more concerted effort to fulfill their vision and mission, thereby being effective.

Alignment of vision and mission seemed to be present in the participating organizations. Common language appears to be a primary way alignment was observed within the organizations. In the studied organizations, the thoughts expressed concerning the vision and mission used similar concepts and words. MBUTB effectively demonstrated this with a strong emphasis on dignity throughout the organization. The concept of shared mental models seems to be a significant way that this alignment can be understood and observed.

The task of coordination toward vision and mission alignment seemed to fall into two categories among the organizations studied. Two organizations, MBUTB and WCAH, which were small enough to have strong connections among the core volunteers, used relationships to facilitate coordination. The strong connections present between the founder or executive director and those interviews highlighted how personal connections allowed for ideas to be shared and decisions to be made regarding appropriate actions. In The Shelter Space, which had the most formalized structure of the three organizations, the ability to communicate across program areas was observed. This cross-organizational communication allowed multiple employees to focus on the needs of shared clients and achieve better outcomes for the clients and enact the organization's vision and mission. Additionally, like in the other two organizations, relationships were encouraged and used to coordinate the organization's work and bridge program boundaries.

The examination of organizational characteristics and their influence on the coordination of vision and mission work revealed few definitive answers. No clear connections seemed present in terms of organizational size, organizational age, or the use of volunteers or employees to accomplish their work. How tangible the scope of work was may influence how effectively alignment and coordination are employed, but the connection is not clear from the data gathered in this study. Likewise, the frequency of contact may have an impact on the degree of shared vision and mission understanding, which, in turn, affects the task of coordination. The data regarding this organizational characteristic is also not clear enough to make a determination.

Recommendations for Organizations

Based on the results from this study, other organizations that are trying to improve their overall effectiveness in living out their vision and mission may consider the following suggestions:

- Focus less on crafting the perfect vision or mission statement. Focus more on creating common agreement about what is of core importance for the organization.
- Be clear about what the vision and mission are, but also what they are not. Effective boundaries in the scope can be crucial for overall organizational alignment.
- Distill the vision and mission into a short, easy-to-remember sentence or phrase.
- Encourage communication among the organization's participants about the vision and mission and how it relates to their work.
- Build effective leadership that thrives on relationships and making connections as a way to communicate vision and mission throughout the organization.
- Help people see the concrete results of the vision and mission and focus on how the work makes a difference.

While bullet points are easy to write and read, making these suggestions work in organizations takes trial and error. The organizations that participated in this study have put in years of work to be as effective as they currently are. Many of the participants have been involved in other organizations where they have developed skills that allow them to be effective at the current time. What these suggestions look like in a particular organization will vary based on contexts and needs.

Limitations

As with every study, there are limitations to what can be understood and generalized through this research. This research is a qualitative study and is not meant to be interpreted as how a representative sample of effective not-for-profit organizations operate regarding vision and mission.

In designing this study, it was necessary to limit the number of organizations that were examined due to the resources available to carry out the research. The differences in organizational characteristics present in the three participating organizations do not represent the full extent of variations possible in the realm of not-for-profits. The way these successful organizations accomplish their work may or may not express standard practices regarding vision and mission. Replication of this study could provide insight into how organizational characteristics affect the ways vision and mission are lived within organizations.

Another limitation in the interpretation of the results comes from how the organizations in this study were chosen. Because the focus of this study was on effective organizations, those recruited were recognized as successful. This choice was based on the premise of The Success Case Method, where limited resources sometimes make it more essential to find out what is going right rather than diagnosing what is going wrong (Brinkerhoff, 2003). This necessary decision could mean that only a particular type of successful organization was chosen to participate. Connected with this selection issue are the informants who helped identify the organizations to study. These site selection informants were asked to identify successful organizations working on the issues of homelessness in the Milwaukee metropolitan area. They may have been drawn to organizations where the executive directors or founders were highly visible in the broader community. This potential selection bias could be a source of the observations about the central role of leadership in this study. It is also possible that connections between vision and mission and the executive director or founder may not be present in other effective organizations with leadership that is less publicly visible.

Another potential issue present in the study is how respondents were selected and recruited. While the researcher was the one to contact and explain the research project's methods and goals, upper management was crucial in identifying to whom to reach out. Selection bias could be present in this situation. It is possible that people who would present the best understanding of the organization's vision and mission were selected. It could also be that individuals who were highly connected to the executive director or founder were recruited. In both of these possible scenarios, this could lead to interpretations where the vision and mission seemed more aligned than it truly is throughout the organization. It could also create a sense that the executive director or founder is more central to the vision and mission than is the case.

The timing of when this study was undertaken also presented some difficulties in the full implementation of the methods used in institutional ethnography. Typically, direct observations of people performing their roles are desired in institutional ethnography. This observation allows the research to probe how people are informed about their work and what underlying texts guide it. Because the fieldwork occurred during a pandemic, it was not feasible to do this to the extent that the methodology typically prescribes. The probing questions during the interviews tried to uncover some of the concepts which are usually observed when watching people doing their assigned tasks.

Another difficulty identified in conducting the institutional ethnography portion of this study was the lack of documentation to review. The assertion that texts help mediate ruling relations across time and space has significant weight in institutional ethnography. Unfortunately, two organizations had few documents that helped uncover these processes. One organization had no written board minutes; another had no position descriptions outside of those included in the bylaws. This lack of written documentation made it necessary to look at texts in a broader sense than words on paper. Instead, relationships were examined as ways to convey information and power that the institutional ethnography category represents. Ruling relations were still present, but they were communicated through personal relationships rather than the written documents that are traditionally considered by institutional ethnography.

Even with these limitations, the information gathered in this study allows for insights into vision and mission and how they connect to organizational effectiveness.

Further Research

The results of this study suggest the need for further research in several areas. The first area that needs significant attention is a broader study examining if not-for-profit organizations have a higher degree of alignment in vision and mission than has been reported in for-profit corporations. Using quantitative methods to gain a broader, more generalizable understanding of how organizations' vision and mission align with those that their participants articulate could illuminate the difference that having mission as the prime motivation encourages in not-for-profits. Quantitative methods could be used to look at a number of organizations, noting their self-understanding of effectiveness and then comparing that to the organization's overall degree of vision and mission alignment. Undertaking this line of inquiry can create better, generalizable recommendations for not-for-profit organizations regarding the connection of vision and mission alignment to organizational effectiveness.

The second area of further research that the current study raises involves executives and their involvement in shaping, disseminating, and inspiring the organization's vision and mission. While many articles suggest leadership is crucial for organizational vision and mission to thrive, few studies empirically describe how this happens. Additionally, a phenomenon seen in this study was how a personal connection with the founder or executive director was present in nearly all of the interviews. This connection could suggest that relationships with leaders are an integral component of effective vision and mission. Further studies on this phenomenon could guide leaders to leverage this effect, if it exists.

A final area that this study was unable to address is the methods that effective organizations use in communicating vision and mission to their participants. While alignment of vision and mission were examined and people were asked how they knew certain pieces of information, the pathways of communication were not able to be probed. A study focused on how vision and mission are disseminated through not-for-profit organizations could help these groups, bringing greater alignment and potential effectiveness.

Summary

By looking at three highly effective organizations and how shared vision and mission impact their overall effectiveness, several important insights have been gained.

- Effective organizations create an alignment of vision and mission between participants that assists in working towards overall organizational goals. Part of that alignment included understanding what was within the organization's scope and what was not.
- Vision and mission in these organizations are shown through shared ways of thinking about the organization's work rather than actual statements that were known verbatim. This shared understanding seems to be a function of a clear, concise central idea and sustained contact between participants.
- The coordination of vision and mission seems to be most effectively mediated by relationships, especially between participants and those in leadership roles.
- Most variations in organizational demographics seem to have little impact on the degree of vision and mission alignment present. The two exceptions seem to be the degree of vision and mission abstraction and frequency of contact.

This dissertation started as a project to help a congregation be more effective. Through this process, it appears that mission or vision statements, in and of themselves, are of limited value. However, the alignment that can be created by having a meaningful shared vision and mission is of significant value. Relationships play a key role in having that vision and mission understood throughout the organization.

The quest to understand if a strong vision statement led to an effective organization could take a lifetime or more to complete. This project has become a dissertation that describes some aspects of how vision and mission influence organizational effectiveness through many iterations. It has also raised more lines of inquiry along the way that are needed to further our comprehension of organizational effectiveness.

References

Alegre, I., Berbegal-Mirabent, J., Guerrero, A., & Mas-Machuca, M. (2018). The real mission of the mission statement: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of Management and Organization*, *24*(4), 456–473. https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2017.82

Arnd-Caddigan, M., & Pozzuto, R. (2008). Types of knowledge, forms of practice. *The Qualitative Report*, *13*(1), 61–77.

Bartkus, B., Glassman, M., & McAffee, R. B. (2000). Mission Statements: Are They Smoke and Mirrors? *Business Horizons*, *43*(6), 23–28.

Block, S. R., & Rosenberg, S. (2002). Toward an Understanding of Founder’s Syndrome. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *12*(4).

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brinkerhoff, R. O. (2003). *The Success Case Method: Find Out Quickly What’s Working and What’s Not*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Campbell, M., & Gregor, F. (2004). *Mapping social relations: a primer in doing institutional ethnography* (US edition). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Cannon-Bowers, J. A., Salas, E., & Converse, S. (1993). Shared Mental Modles in Expert Team Decision Making. In N. J. Castellan (Ed.), *Individual and Group Decision Making: Current Issues* (pp. 222–247). Hillsdale, N.J.: Eribaum.

Collins, J. C., & Porras, J. I. (1994). Building Your Company’s Vision. *Harvard Business Review*, *74*(5), 65–77. https://doi.org/Article

Cordery, C., & Sinclair, R. (2013). Measuring performance in the third sector. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, *10*(3/4), 196–212. https://doi.org/10.1108/QRAM-03-2013-0014

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Second ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches* (Fourth ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Devault, M. L., & McCoy, L. (2011). Institutional Ethnography: Using Interviews to Investigate Ruling Relations. In J. Holstein & J. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research* (pp. 751–776). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984492.n18

Drucker, P. F. (1992). Managing the non-profit organization: practices and principles. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Evans, B., Richmond, T., & Shields, J. (2005). Structuring Neoliberal Governance: The Nonprofit Sector, Emerging New Modes of Control and the Marketisation of Service Delivery. *Policy and Society*, *24*(1), 73–97. https://doi.org/10.1016/s1449-4035(05)70050-3

Forbes, D. P. (1998). Measuring the Unmeasurable: Empirical Studies of Nonprofit Organization Effectiveness from 1977 to 1997. *Nonprofit and Volunary Sector Quarterly1*, *27*(2), 183–202.

Foster, R. D., & Akdere, M. (2007). Effective organizational vision: Implications for human resource development. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, *31*(2), 100–111. https://doi.org/10.1108/0309059074336

Gisick, L. M., Webster, K. L., Keebler, J. R., Lazzara, E. H., Fouquet, S., Fletcher, K., Fagerlund, A., Lew, V., &Chan, R. (2018). Measuring shared mental models in healthcare. *Journal of Patient Safety and Risk Management*, *23*(5), 207–219. https://doi.org/10.1177/2516043518796442

Grimes, M. G., Williams, T. A., & Zhao, E. Y. (2019). Anchors aweigh: The sources, variety, and challenges of mission drift. *Academy of Management Review*, *44*(4), 819–845. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2017.0254

Hasenfeld, Y., & Garrow, E. E. (2012). Nonprofit human-service organizations, social rights, and advocacy in a neoliberal welfare state. *Social Service Review*, *86*(2), 295–322. https://doi.org/10.1086/666391

Helmig, B., Ingerfurth, S., & Pinz, A. (2013). Success and Failure of Nonprofit Organizations: Theoretical Foundations, Empirical Evidence, and Future Research. *Voluntas*, *25*(6), 1509–1538. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-013-9402-5

Herman, R. D., & Renz, D. O. (1997). Multiple Constituencies and the Social Construction of Nonprofit Organization Effectiveness. *Nonprofit and Volunary Sector Quarterly*, *26*(2), 185–206.

Herman, R. D., & Renz, D. O. (2008). Advancing nonprofit organizational effectiveness research and theory: Nine theses. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, *18*(4), 399–415. https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.195

Herts, R. D. (2011). *From outreach to engaged placemaking: understanding public land-grant university involvement with tourism planning and development*. (Order No. 3494925, Rutgers The State University of New Jersey - New Brunswick). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

Herts, R. D. (2013). From Outreach to Engaged Placemaking: Understanding Public Land-grant University Involvement with Tourism Planning and Development. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, *17*(1), 97–124. https://doi.org/10.7282/T3TB160V

Incite! Women of Color Against Violence (Ed.). (2007). *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Ireland, R. D., & Hitt, M. A. (1992). Mission Statements: Importance, Challenge, and Recommendations for Development. *Business Horizons*, *35*(3), 34–42.

Kantabutra, S. (2009). Toward a behavioral theory of vision in organizational settings. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, *30*(4), 319–337. https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730910961667

Khandelwal, K. A., & Mohendra, N. (2010). Espoused organizational values, vision, and corporate social responsibility: Does it matter to organizational members? *Vikalpa*, *35*(3), 19–35. https://doi.org/10.1177/0256090920100302

Kirk, G., & Nolan, S. B. (2010). Nonprofit Mission Statement Focus and Financial Performance. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *20*(4), 473–490. https://doi.org/10.1002/nml

Kopaneva, I., & Sias, P. M. (2015). Lost in translation: Employee and organizational constructions of mission and vision. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *29*(3), 358–384. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318915581648

Macedo, I. M., Pinho, J. C., & Silva, A. M. (2016). Revisiting the link between mission statements and organizational performance in the non-profit sector: The mediating effect of organizational commitment. *European Management Journal*, *34*(1). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2015.10.003

Marimon, F., Mas-Machuca, M., & Rey, C. (2016). Assessing the internalization of the mission. *Industrial Management and Data Systems*, *116*(1), 170–187. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-04-2015-0144

Mas-Machuca, M., & Marimon, F. (2019). From sense-making to perceived organizational performance: looking for the best way. *Journal of Management Development*, *38*(2), 105–117. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-05-2018-0155

Meehan, W. F., & Jonker, K. (2018). "The Primacy of Mission." In *Engine of Impact: Essentials of Strategic Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector* (pp. 27–46). Stanford, California: Stanford Business Books. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2326-1951.1966.tb02456.x

Nichols, N. (2016). Youth Development in Context: Housing Instability, Homelessness, and Youth "Work." In R. C. Mizzi, T. S. Rocco, & S. Shore (Eds.), *Disrupting adult and community education: teaching, learning, and working in the periphery* (pp. 35–49). Albany: University of New York Press.

Norstedt, M., & Breimo, J. P. (2016). Moving beyond everyday life in institutional ethnographies: Methodological challenges and ethical dilemmas. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, *17*(2). https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-17.2.2539

Patel, B. S., Booker, L. D., Ramos, H. M., & Bart, C. (2015). Mission statements and performance in non-profit organisations. *Corporate Governance (Bingley)*, *15*(5), 759–774. https://doi.org/10.1108/CG-07-2015-0098

Sawhill, J. C., & Williamson, D. (2001). Mission Impossible? *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *11*(3), 371–386.

Siciliano, J. I. (1997). The Relationship Between Formal Planning and Performance in Nonprofit Organizations. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, *7*(4), 387–403.

Sidhu, J. (2003). Mission statements: Is it time to shelve them? *European Management Journal*, *21*(4), 439–446. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0263-2373(03)00072-0

Smith, D. E. (2005). *Institutional enthoraphy: a sociology for people*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple Case Study Analysis*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Stout, R. J., Cannon-Bowers, J. A., Salas, E., & Milanovich, D. M. (1999). Planning, shared mental models, and coordinated performance: An empirical link is established. *Human Factors*, *41*(1), 61–71. https://doi.org/10.1518/001872099779577273

Wright, J. N. (2002). Mission and reality and why not? *Journal of Change Management*, *3*(1), 30–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/714042524

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (Sixth ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Zaccaro, S. J., & Banks, D. J. (2001). Leadership, Vision, and Organizational Effectiveness. In S. J. Zaccaro & R. J. Klimoski (Eds.), *The Nature of Organizational Leadership: Understanding the Performance Imperatives Confronting Today's Leaders2* (pp. 181–218). Center for Creative Leadership.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Hi, I'm [INSERT NAME] , one of the researchers from UW- Madison working on a project that [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is participating in. Thank you for being willing to participate in this project and share your insights about how the work you do with [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] contributes to its vision and mission.

I would like to record this interview for the research so I make sure I get all of your answers recorded correctly. May I start the recording?

I wanted to confirm that you received the letter that was sent earlier laying out what this project entails and what you can expect from your participation in this interview. Did you have a chance to review that letter?

What questions do you have about what was in that letter or the research project in general?

Are you at least 18 years old?

Are you voluntarily willing to participate in this research?

Are you willing to be quoted in publications without your name associated with the responses?

Great. Shall we get started?

How did you come to work with [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION]?

What is your role in [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION]?

How do you know what tasks you are supposed to do as part of that role?

How does your work fit into the larger picture of the organization and its vision and mission ?

In your opinion, what are the major vision and mission of the [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION]?

How do you know that those are the vision and mission of [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION]?

Why are the vision and mission important to you?

Is the organization successful in living the vision and mission?

How do you know that [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is[OR is not] successful in living the vision and mission?

Tell me about a typical day when you are working at [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION].

How do the major vision and mission of the organization play a role in to the work that you do?

In your typical day of work at [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION], how do you see others working toward the vision and mission?

That is the end of my questions. Is there anything else that you think I should know about the way [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] puts it mission and vision into action?

Thank you for your time. One last note: if you do have questions about what we talked about here or want to opt out of the study and not have your interview used, feel free to contact me or the faculty member I am working with, and we can discuss your questions and make appropriate arrangements. My contact information and the faculty member's contact information is in the letter you received earlier. Have a good day.