The Role of Brand in the Nonprofit Sector:
A Framework for Organizations Working Globally[*]

A New Day for Nonprofit Brands

We see nonprofit brands everywhere today. The logos of organizations from Amnesty International to the World Wildlife Fund are some of the most widely recognized in the world. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, many nonprofit brands are more trusted by the public than the best known for-profit brands. Large nonprofit organizations, from Harvard University to the American Red Cross, have detailed policies to manage the use of their logos, and even small nonprofits frequently experiment with putting their names on coffee cups, pens, and t-shirts. Effective branding is becoming a central concern of leaders across the nonprofit sector as many nonprofit managers feel increasing competition from other nonprofits, for-profit businesses, and new organizations that claim to blur the boundaries between nonprofit, for-profit, and public sectors.

Branding in the nonprofit sector appears to be at an inflection point in its development, with more organizations explicitly taking up both the language and activities of brand management. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation recently appointed a Director of Global Brand and Innovation, Oxfam International has embarked on a confederation-wide "global identity project", and the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria is only one of several organizations in the middle of a "rebranding" process. New books are appearing that

promote greater attention to branding among nonprofits, and brand consultants are appearing with increasing frequency at nonprofit conferences.

While brand management in many nonprofits remains narrowly focused on fundraising, what makes this moment potentially significant is that some organizations in the sector appear to be outgrowing a more traditional brand paradigm and exploring the wider, distinctive, strategic roles that brands can play: driving broad, long-term social goals, while strengthening internal identity, cohesion, and capacity. Brand managers in these pioneering organizations are abandoning a primary focus on revenue generation and focusing instead on social impact and organizational coherence. Indeed, some of the most interesting brand strategies are being developed in endowed, private foundations with no fundraising targets at all. As one global foundation's brand executive described the thinking and questioning going on inside his foundation:

> "We're brand-makers. We're catalysts. Could we have greater impact if we leveraged our brand in different ways? What difference could it make to attach our logo to things to move conversations forward or elevate certain issues? Can we use our brand to elevate other brands?"

These are not questions about revenue or the use of a logo for fundraising purposes. These are questions about employing brand in the cause of public discourse and social impact. Yet, if the ultimate ambitions of nonprofit brand managers are growing, the strategic frameworks and management tools available to them have not kept up. The models, terminology, and tools used in the nonprofit sector remain, for the most part, direct imports from the for-profit world, focused on recognition and revenue. Some nonprofits, for example, follow the example of their for-profit counterparts and engage consultants to establish the financial value of their brands, getting reports back that value the brand sometimes in the millions of dollars, but the meaning of these valuations in the nonprofit sector is vague at best.[1]

Consider the case of Habitat for Humanity which, in 2001, engaged Interbrand to measure the value of its brand, resulting in a valuation of just under $2 billion.[2] At the time, Habitat used

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[1] While a for-profit company can treat its brand as a financial asset and show its valuation on its balance sheet, the monetary valuation of a nonprofit brand cannot and should not be treated as an unrestricted asset unless the organization is considering conversion into a for-profit entity, the equivalent of a "moment of sale" for accounting purposes when intangible assets are recognized.

[2] Interbrand valued nonprofit brands in that year using a wide variety of data, including the public's level of trust that donations will be used effectively, public perception of the organization's financial stability, public experience with the cause, the organization's level of contact with donors, and the ease of transactions for donors. See: Robin Rusch, "Do Nonprofits Have Value?" in BrandChannel, 29 July 2002, page 1, available at brancchannel.com; print version on file with the Hauser Center.

this valuation to negotiate favorable revenue-generating co-branding agreements with corporate partners. Seven years later, when Cone Inc. conducted a ranking of the top 100 nonprofit brands, it described its purpose in producing these valuations as "to help all nonprofits better understand how to protect and evolve their brands to generate as much revenue as possible."[3]

While such tools and their proprietors remain focused on revenue, our interviews in 2010 and 2011 with nonprofit leaders, brand managers, and consultants suggest that the field is starting to move towards a broader, more strategic view of the role of brands. The nonprofit leaders we spoke to no longer manage their brands principally for the sake of revenue. They are after something bigger here, even if they have not yet defined it more precisely than contribution-to-mission or social impact. One brand consultant told us, referring to his nonprofit clients: "People sense that branding probably could do something very useful for them, but they don't really know what that is. The shift, the most powerful shift, I think, is still to come."

This discussion paper is the first product of a larger, continuing project to help the leaders of nonprofit organizations—boards, executives, managers, and staff—better understand and manage their brands. Our goal is to help nonprofit organizations make more effective use of their brands to catalyze their strengths and advance their social missions. Our conclusions here are all tentative. We share our propositions and present a conceptual framework based on our initial findings to provoke reaction from scholars and practitioners active across the nonprofit sector. At the same time, we are beginning to test the resonance and practical implications of this framework in actual organizations as part of the next phase of our work. Language matters in this endeavor, as does the current fascination in the field with the very idea of brand and the practice of brand management. In developing a conceptual framework, principles, and prototypes of some tools, we have relied heavily on the language used by nonprofit leaders themselves, drawing from the first 31 interviews completed at this writing as part of our continuing study.[4]

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[3] The Cone Nonprofit Power Brand 100 (http://www.coneinc.com/nonprofitpowerbrand100)

[4] This includes 14 interviews with scholars and consultants in the fields of nonprofit branding and nonprofit management and 17 interviews with practitioners in various nonprofit organizations and philanthropies working internationally. .

The Ambivalent Embrace of Nonprofit Branding

We have been struck throughout our work by the increasingly confident use of the language of branding in the sector, but we hear as well, a strong current of skepticism and distrust. While some executives are convinced of the strategic value of brand for their organizations, many others are deeply ambivalent about both the concept of brand and the terminology of branding, and even the enthusiasts recognize the ambivalence of colleagues in their organizations and fields.

We take that skepticism seriously. While some champions of branding urge nonprofit leaders to push through this skepticism, dismissing it as "prejudice" or "unfounded," we believe the skepticism is more considered and contains clues about how nonprofit brands need to be managed differently from their for-profit counterparts.[5] If we are to develop a new framework and set of tools for nonprofit brand management, we need to understand why the people who would use those tools feel so ambivalent about the very idea of branding. Our interviews suggest at least four sources for this ambivalence.

First, branding is still widely associated with the commercial pursuit of monetary gain. Branding skeptics think of the premium that for-profit firms charge for brand-name products and worry that branding in the nonprofit sector will tempt organizations to promote their names for the sake of revenue rather than focusing on the work itself. They fear that brand management implies that the names of their organizations are inflated beyond what the quality of their work alone would support. They fear the organization is pursuing revenue as a goal in its own right, separate from the work to achieve the mission, "selling ideas the way you sell cereal," as a nonprofit CEO put it in one of our interviews. Those studying nonprofit branding similarly worry about the "over-commercialization of the (nonprofit) sector and misappropriation of techniques developed specifically for the commercial environment."[6] As one study of brand in British nonprofits explained, "many people see the brand as exploitative, as something that lives in the wicked capitalistic world."[7] Within this charged language lies a sober concern in

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[5] The one-time head of communications at a large international NGO described the challenge of building internal support for attention to the brand as the need to "overcome prejudice" that brand management was meant only for the "crass commercial world." The head of communications at Habitat described what he thought was "a squeamishness in the minds of nonprofit leadership" when it comes to putting a monetary value on "a charitable cause or humanitarian effort." See Rusch, "Do Nonprofits Have value?" pages 2-3.

[6] Stride, "An investigation into the values dimensions of branding: implications for the charity sector*." International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 2006. page 115

[7] Hankinson, "The internal brand in leading UK charities," Journal of Product and Brand Management, 2004, page 92

words like "commercialization" and "capitalistic," that branding is inherently about the pursuit of revenue as an end it itself and that the nonprofit sector aspires to something more meaningful.

Second, brand management in nonprofits is sometimes seen by skeptics as an effort by senior managers to impose greater conformity in goals and priorities from the top down through the creation of new tag lines and graphic images developed outside of a full strategic planning process. Indeed, many people we interviewed drew analogies between re-branding efforts and strategic planning, noting, for example, that a recent rebranding served to clarify an organization's mission and encouraged everyone in the organization to use the same language and images to describe that mission. But rebranding processes are usually staffed differently and organized with less participation than classic strategic planning.[8] As a result, the new brand can feel peremptorily imposed from above. These concerns can be especially great when a new leader initiates a rebranding as part of an aggressive effort to change the way an organization works, rather than developing a new brand to consolidate a change agreed in a genuinely participatory process. When those changes are controversial, re-branding efforts can become the lightening rod for an underlying anger over changes in strategy being imposed from above without effective consultation. When brand managers start talking about needing to "police the brand," it is a clue that brand management may be feeling authoritarian.

Third, brand skeptics sometimes worry that a focus on brand management betrays negative personal values different from the core values that nonprofits espouse and that they believe are held strongly by most on the frontlines of their organizations. Those negative values can include arrogance, vanity, or avarice, sometimes attributed specifically to an organization's leadership. As one nonprofit consultant described this source of ambivalence about branding efforts, "too many foundations have approached the brand question [from] a purely ego-driven mode of either the CEO or the board or the founder." But the concern that brands may conflict with core organizational values is not confined to private foundations. In our interviews, some practitioners warned that campaigns to "save a slave" seemed to exploit suffering or marginalization to grab people's attention while objectifying and demeaning people. In a sincere effort to evoke powerful emotions among audiences distant from the places where international organizations work to support people living in extreme poverty, branding efforts may find themselves in conflict with the values of respect and strength-based work that

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[8]An organizational strategy is based on the mission, vision and values of an organization (as well as its theory of change) and the assessment of the *external environment, and the internal capabilities* of an organization. A brand is different in that it is an *intangible asset* that exists whether you actively manage it or not. You don't need to have an organizational strategy to have a brand, but you do need a strategy to manage a brand effectively. A brand is about *creating relationships and building trust*.

underlie the local empowerment programs of these organizations. Although arguably aligned with an organization's relief or anti-poverty mission, such branding creates dissonance with the organization's core values.

Fourth, particularly in organizations that work regularly in coalitions and in collaborative ventures, skeptics worry that one organization's powerful brand will overshadow weaker brands, reinforcing, rather than correcting imbalances of power among partners. When large nonprofits insist that joint activities conform to their idea of quality, or merely use their greater capacity to overshadow their less capacious partner, brand management by the larger organization can feel to the weaker organization like bullying, and these bully brands give brand management a bad reputation. As one nonprofit leader described his experience as the weaker partner in a joint branding effort, "the strings attached and the requirements can easily crush what makes an organization effective."

The four sources of ambivalence we've described are not ubiquitous, but the skepticism is common enough in the sector as a whole that it is worth understanding. Moreover, each of these four sources of skepticism about branding in the nonprofit sector reveals a corresponding source of pride in the nonprofit sector: pride in the mission of an organization, pride in participatory planning, pride in the values that define organizational culture, and pride in supportive partnerships. Instead of pushing past the skeptics or dismissing their feelings of ambivalence, we want to take them seriously, recognizing the pride that they feel and asking what insight about the potential role of brand that pride might contain. Before we look for the insight about brand management in each of these sources of pride, we need to define more precisely what we mean by brand and the roles it can play in nonprofits.

The Meaning and Role of Nonprofit Brands

The definition of brand does not vary across sectors, though its role does to some extent. In the nonprofit, for-profit, and public sectors, a brand is more than the name, logo, and graphic design used by an organization. It is a psychological construct held in the minds of anyone aware of the branded product, person, organization, or movement. Brand management in any sector, is the work of managing these psychological associations. While this definition applies to brands at many levels—individual products or services, an organization as a whole, and the networks, coalitions, and alliances that join organizations together—we focus in this paper primarily on the brands that define a single organization.

When we asked nonprofit practitioners, management scholars, and nonprofit-brand consultants what a brand is, the responses were not different from what those looking at other sectors might say:

- Brand is an intangible asset.
- Brand is a promise that conveys who you are, what you do, and why that matters.
- Brand captures the "persona" of an organization, its "soul" or "essence."
- Brand is not only what is projected, but also what is perceived.
- Brand is a source of efficiency because it acts as a "time-saving device," providing a "short-cut" in the decision making of potential investors, customers, clients, and partners.

Not only are these definitions of brand resonant across sectors, but some of the roles that brands play, also crossover. Strong brands in all sectors help organizations acquire resources (financial, human, and social) and build key partnerships. The trust strong brands elicit also provides organizations with the authority and credibility to deploy those resources more efficiently and flexibly than organizations with weaker brands.

Distinctions between Nonprofit and For-Profit Brands

It is no surprise that nonprofit brand managers define brands and some of their roles in terms that apply across sectors. The vocabulary of branding is only one element of the language of business management and business strategy permeating both the nonprofit and public sectors. Business language is spreading in part because it is proving useful to veteran nonprofit executives in communicating with board members and donors whose own roots are in the for-profit world, and also in part because many of the people managing brands in the nonprofit sector have themselves come from for-profit businesses. Indeed, we were struck to find that many of the nonprofit brand managers we interviewed during our research had themselves come from the private sector.

Yet even for the crossover nonprofit brand managers we interviewed, trained and tested in the for-profit world, the role of brand in the nonprofit sector differs in some important respects from its role in the private sector. These differences relate to the role of brand in driving broad, long-term social goals, the role of brand inside nonprofit organizations, and the multiplicity of audiences that nonprofits must address. These differences may come down to questions of emphasis and focus, since brands in the for-profit world also contribute to long-term business purposes, play internal roles, and speak to multiple audiences. Still, it would appear that the greater weight given to these roles of brand in the nonprofit sector is fundamental, rooted in

the fact that each nonprofit organization advances a multiplicity of value propositions, irreducible to a single monetary metric.[9]

The Evolution of the Nonprofit Brand Paradigm

As significant as the difference in the role of brand between sectors is the difference between the traditional and the emerging role of brands within the nonprofit sector itself.

The dominant brand paradigm typical in nonprofit organizations a decade ago focused on communications. Nonprofit executives believed that increased visibility, favorable positioning in relation to competitors, and recognition among target audiences would translate into fundraising success. Branding was a tool for managing the external perceptions of an organization, a subject for the communications, fundraising, and marketing departments. In contrast, the emerging brand paradigm imagines brand to have a broader, strategic contribution to make to an organization's mission and theory of change, as well as an internal role in expressing an organization's values. Increasingly, branding is now a matter for the entire executive team of a nonprofit. Reflecting this shift, several nonprofit leaders we interviewed described their brands today not only as economic assets, but also as strategic and political assets. At every step in an organization's strategy and theory of change, strong brands are increasingly seen as assisting nonprofits to build operational capacity, galvanize support, and maintain focus on the social mission.

These trends in the way that nonprofits leaders are using their brands—apparent in scholarly writing and in our in-depth interviews—suggest four propositions about the emerging role of nonprofit brands. These propositions represent our tentative answers to four sequentially connected questions, answers that fit together into a coherent framework.

First, where do brands fit within an organization's strategy? According to the vast majority of interviews we conducted and writings we reviewed, the role of brand is to advance the organization's strategy. The management of brand is nested within an organization's strategy, which is in turn nested within an organization's mission and values. As the executive director of a domestic southern NGO put explained it, "Building brand is managing mission and remaining full course and faithful to it." Or, as a nonprofit consultant put the related point, "Brand is an exquisite bridge between program strategy and external communications."

Second, what is this asset we call "brand"? Here we find a double answer. Internally, the brand embodies the identity of the organization capturing both mission and values. Externally, the

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[9] As long ago as 1998 a seminal work on nonprofit brands emphasized both the internal role of nonprofit brand and the "multiple publics" that nonprofit brands address. Richie, Swami and Weinberg. "A Brand New World for Nonprofits." *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 1998. Pages 29 to 32
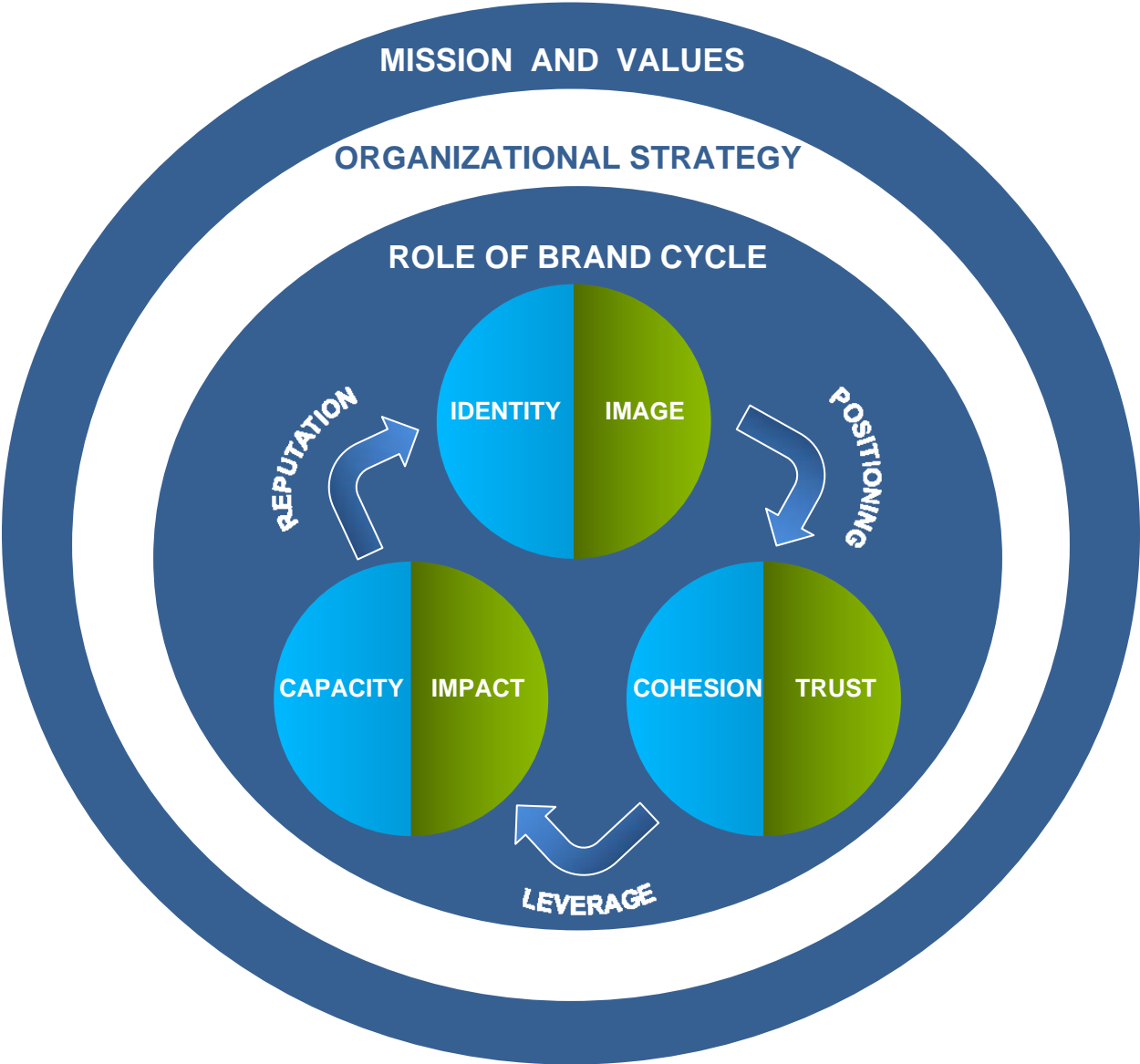
brand reflects the image held in the minds of the organization's multiple external stakeholders. A nonprofit brand is most powerful when the organization's values and mission are aligned with its brand identity, and when this internal identity is in turn, aligned with the external image. Indeed, it is often a misalignment between identity and image that is the impetus for rebranding efforts in nonprofit organizations. Organizations with strong alignment among mission, values, and brand identity on the one hand, and brand identity and brand image on the other, are able to establish a clear, distinct, consistent, and credible position in the minds of both internal and external stakeholders. An executive of an international conservation NGO emphasized the role of brand in creating this dual alignment by stating that "in refocusing (our) brand there first must be internal clarity…then we see where those views are in synch with our constituencies and where they're not."

Third, what does the alignment of mission, values, identity, and image produce? Internally, the result of strong alignment and clear positioning is cohesion among diverse internal constituencies. Externally, the result is greater trust among multiple audiences: including partners, beneficiaries, participants, and donors. Internally, a strong brand identity means having a clear sense of who the organization is, what it does, and why this is important. When an organization's employees and volunteers across functional areas and geographies all embrace a common brand identity, it creates organizational cohesion, builds focus, and reinforces shared values. Externally, the importance of brand creating trust is familiar enough. Because nonprofit organizations rely on establishing trust with many external audiences, including partners of all kinds, doing what you say you do (alignment between identity and image) is critically important.

Fourth, how does a nonprofit leverage this cohesion and trust? Both internal cohesion and high levels of external trust contribute to building greater organizational capacity and fueling social impact. A cohesive organization makes more efficient and focused use of existing resources and external trust attracts additional talent, financing, and authority. This increase in organizational capacity is directly related to an organization's ability to have enhanced social impact. By leveraging the trust of partners, beneficiaries and policymakers among others, an organization is in a better position to effectively implement its mission objectives.

These four propositions fit together in a single conceptual framework we call the Role of Brand Cycle. As Figure 1 illustrates, the role of brand is nested within organizational strategy, which in turn is nested within the mission and values of the organization. Here, brand plays a variety of roles that, when performed well, link together in a virtuous cycle. With stronger impact and capacity circling back to strengthen the identity and image with which the cycle began.

Figure 1. The Role of Brand Cycle

MISSION AND VALUES

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

ROLE OF BRAND CYCLE

IDENTITY   IMAGE

REPUTATION

POSITIONING

CAPACITY   IMPACT

COHESION   TRUST

LEVERAGE

The Nonprofit Brand IDEA

Let us return now, to the brand skeptics and to the four sources of ambivalence towards the use of brand that we identified earlier. These skeptics worry that branding will be used: (1) to promote revenue generation rather than attending to mission; (2) to impose new purposes, goals, and images from the top down, enforced by a new cadre of brand police; (3) to betray noble, organizational values, indulging organizational arrogance, vanity, or avarice; or (4) to perpetuate inequalities where powerful organizations overshadow weaker organizations and exacerbate power differentials among partners and collaborators.

These are real dangers deserving attention from those who would advance any branding effort in a nonprofit organization. In some organizations, all may be present; in others, only one or two, or perhaps none at all. But whether or not present in any particular case, each stems from a source of organizational pride—the mission, the participatory processes, the values, and the partnerships—at the heart of many nonprofit organizations. Rather than push past these skeptics and the pride they express in their organizations, brand building and management in the nonprofit sector has the opportunity to embrace these sources of pride by adopting four principles that guard against the concerns of the skeptics. We call these four principles the nonprofit brand IDEA: *brand **I**ntegrity*, *brand **D**emocracy*, *brand **E**thics,* and *brand **A**ffinity.* The principles articulated in the nonprofit brand IDEA flow from the Brand Cycle described above. Indeed, whether one begins with the skeptics or the brand managers, the same four principles emerge as appropriate guideposts for building brands in the nonprofit sector.

By **BRAND INTEGRITY**, we mean that the brand is aligned with, and bonded to, the mission of the organization and that the brand identity is aligned with the brand image. To be clear, we are using the word *integrity* in the sense of *structural integrity*, not moral integrity. This notion of structural alignment of brand to mission is an answer to those who fear brand management is devoted to the pursuit of revenue for its own sake, and it is also a restatement of part of the role of brand identity and image (we come to alignment with organization values later). Internally, a brand with high structural integrity connects the mission to the identity of the organization, giving members, staff, volunteers, trustees, and others a common sense of why the organization does what it does and why it matters in the world. Externally, a brand with high structural integrity captures the mission in its public image and deploys that image in service of its mission at every step of a clearly articulated strategy.

One tool that brand managers can use to strengthen a brand's structural integrity is to identify the role of the brand at each step in an organization's theory of change. Recently, the new CEO of a large international development NGO urged the program leadership to articulate the organization's distinctive theory of change and identify key aspects of programming. One part

of that theory was that "marginalized girls and women [were] at the center of all of programming." This connected perfectly with a brand focused on women's empowerment. As the executive we talked to explained: "[W]hat you get is a brand that has real integrity … from the kind of work that's being done to the image that you are trying to portray of yourself." By identifying and aligning the role of brand at each step of an organization's theory of change, brand integrity answers the skeptics who fear that branding pursues revenue rather than mission.

By **BRAND DEMOCRACY**, we mean that the organization trusts its members, staff, participants, and volunteers to communicate their own clear understanding of the organization's core identity and be its brand advocates. It is an answer to the skeptics who worry that a nonprofit brand can become a tool in top-down strategic planning. It is also a concomitant principle to our proposition that brand builds organizational coherence. The need to exert control on how the brand is presented and portrayed in order to produce consistency is largely eliminated. With brand democracy, every employee and volunteer becomes an effective brand ambassador. The growth of social media has not only made brand control increasingly difficult, if not impossible, but it has also rendered the traditional boundaries of the organization increasingly porous, so that brand democracy extends to anyone blogging or tweeting about a particular organization. As one social enterprise foundation executive notes "given the rise in social media it would be *insane* to try to control the brand."

The staff responsible for brand management may organize trainings and provide resources, such as sample text and on-line templates, which all staff can use to communicate the mission, strategy, work, and values of the organization, but organizations with high brand democracy do not police their brands, suppressing unauthorized graphics, colors, or other representations of the organization. Indeed, a robust role for nonprofit brands seems to require a participatory form of brand management. For brand democracy to work effectively, however, an organization must have organizational cohesion driven by a strong brand identity. As previously discussed, a strong brand identity anchored in, and aligned to the organization's core values, provides cohesion and focus. It is this brand cohesion that provides a "moral compass" for decision making concerning the brand itself, or brand ethics, that is firmly rooted in the organization's values.

To some brand managers, this may seem heretical, but among nonprofit leaders it has obvious attraction.[10] Without high brand integrity, brand democracy could result in inconsistent

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[10] While some brand managers insist that today brand democracy is important in all sectors, two scholars propose that while in for-profit companies "brands need to be tightly controlled and enforced," in nonprofit organizations, "a consultative and participative approach to brand management is crucial to the development of a coherent and

messages and images, but when combined with high brand integrity, brand democracy enhances the strength of the brand. Brand democracy, however, is not brand anarchy. Each organization can establish the limits or parameters on its brand, but the space within these limits can be large, and individuals, as well as regional offices, can be encouraged to use that space creatively, learning from each other with the head office celebrating especially creative or effective original brand images, slogans, or other representations. An executive we interviewed from a large international nonprofit used the following metaphor to describe what holds their brand together: "I describe the work that we're doing on global identity as creating bookends. These are the boundaries of our brand. And within those boundaries, each affiliate will have the ability to dial up and dial down certain messages to meet their local market, but they will be unified in overall look, in overall voice, in some graphic standards and so that we do convey one brand."

While some organizations carefully delineate these "bookends," other organizations are experimenting with an open source platform, literally democratizing the logo and tag line process. A unique example of this is the open-source nature of the _Tck Tck Tck_ campaign, which allowed participating organizations and groups to take up and adapt the collective campaign brand according to their own local contexts. The ability to modulate brand according to different languages and cultures and the multiplicity of voices was seen as central to building a broader climate justice movement. The campaign brand manager noted, "Usually, I guess this is a no-go in branding, but all this was tolerated because the idea was to unite as much of civil society, all sorts of activists and movements that were out there and cared about climate change…under one banner."

By **BRAND ETHICS**, we mean that the brand itself and the way in which the brand is deployed reflect the core values of the organization. Just as brand integrity aligns and cements the brand with mission, brand ethics aligns both the brand identity and the brand image with the values and culture of the organization. Brand ethics appear in a double role: the establishment of an ethical brand, and the ethical use of brand. For example, we heard from one foundation official whom we interviewed that the foundation's brand included its reputation for "a strong focus on ethics." We heard even more, however, about the ethical use of brand, and the need to avoid displaying brands in ways that cause offense (for example, covering latrines in disaster areas with the colorful logos of the organizations providing the latrines) or constructing brand images that violate the organization's own values (for example, using pitiful photographs of beneficiaries to motivate donors). This principle answers the skeptics concern that brand management will betray those values in favor of arrogance, vanity, or avarice.   It also follows

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powerful brand." See: Stride and Lee, "No Logo? No Way. Branding in the Nonprofit Sector, 2007pages 114 and 118

from the proposition concerning identity and image, aligning nonprofit brand with an organization's values, just as brand integrity aligns identity and image with the organization's mission.

By **BRAND AFFINITY**, we mean that the brand is a good team player. It works well alongside other brands, sharing space and credit generously, promoting collective over individual interests. Such a brand attracts partners and collaborators, for it lends value to the partnerships without exploiting them. An organization with high brand affinity has shaped and managed its brand so that it combines smoothly and generously with its partners, collaborators, and coalition members. As one former CEO we interviewed explained the ambition of his international organization in its joint ventures, "Part of the way we came to view ourselves is not being the leader but being a partner of choice."

Indeed, organizations with the highest brand affinity actually promote the brands of their partners as much or more than they promote their own brands. Such brands redress rather than exacerbate the power imbalances that inevitably exist in any partnership or collaboration. For example, one practitioner we interviewed described how the international development organization in which he worked helped a group of poor and relatively powerless farmers organize themselves and then sought opportunities to collaborate with the new association and promoted the brand of the new association alongside its own. Another practitioner, this one at a private foundation, described how donors think about affinity: "We are funders…but the work is done and implemented by others. Success from our standpoint is that they are recognized and…emboldened."

Although we are focused here principally on organization brands, we can see brand affinity at work especially clearly in coalition brands, where multiple organizations join in a common cause that will have its own image and identity. Organization leaders often worry in such coalitions that collective identity will overshadow their own independent brand, and we heard stories of coalitions—such as the Make Poverty History campaign—that collapsed because of this concern. On the other hand, one interviewee praised another coalition precisely because it allowed individual member brands to remain prominent, while also recognizing that they were all moving toward the same goal. In this coalition, each organization retained its own identity and logo, described as a fleet of ships with distinct brand flags: "Everybody [has] this little additional flag on the top mast that [has] the [coalition identity]. So, in a way, we are all different groups, but we are all united. We are coordinated. And we are showing all of the same flag in addition to our own colors."

The principle of brand affinity answers skeptics worried about bully brands, but it also flows from the need to create impact and build capacity on any important issue. Organizations with ambitious, multi-faceted, or long-term social objectives, usually have a clear understanding of

their own, limited internal capacity and their need for multiple partners to achieve these broad social goals. Such organizations can focus their brand on these broad social goals rather than their individual organizations, promoting collective over individual interests. These organizations understand that they cannot achieve their goals without partners and so use their brands to attract and promote their partners through brand affinity. The value of brand affinity may be especially great for organizations emphasizing public advocacy as part of their strategies, as such advocacy usually requires complex coalitions.

The four principles captured in the nonprofit brand IDEA address the dominant sources of ambivalence about branding in the nonprofit sector, reinforce organizational strengths and the shared sources of pride, and capture the essence of the role of brand in nonprofits as depicted in the Role of Brand Cycle. The chart below shows these correspondences.

Figure 2. From Brand Skepticism to the Nonprofit Brand IDEA and the Corresponding Roles of Nonprofit Brands

Source of Skepticism	Source of Pride	Nonprofit Brand Principle	Corresponding Role of Brand
Pursuit of revenue will overshadow mission.	Mission	**I**ntegrity	*Align identity and image with organization's mission*
New purposes, goals, and images will be enforced from the top down.	Participatory Process	**D**emocracy	*Build coherence internally*
Organizational values will be betrayed by indulging arrogance, vanity, and avarice.	Values and Culture	**E**thics	*Align identity and image with organization's core values*
Bully brands will overshadow weaker organizations and exacerbate power differentials.	Partnerships	**A**ffinity	*Build capacity and achieve impact by supporting partnerships*

Implications of the IDEA Framework for Nonprofit Brand Building and Management

Governance of Nonprofit Brands

The emerging paradigm we describe helps to clarify the role of boards and management in the governance of brand. Boards and executives operating within this paradigm are asking much more than what the contribution of brand management has been to revenue. They are asking how the brand is aligned with the mission, values, and strategy of the organization. They are asking about the alignment of image and identity, and they are asking about the contribution of brand to internal cohesion as much as to external trust. Perhaps most important, they are asking about the results of brand management in terms of strengthened operational capacity well beyond financial resources, and in terms of social impact. Good brand management in this new paradigm should not only increase commitment and pride among staff and board members, but also help prevent mission-drift, focusing an organization's work and clarifying choices about which projects, resources, and partnerships to pursue. Increasingly, nonprofits are looking to brand management as a means to change the way people inside and outside the organization see and act on social problems, expanding people's vision of what is possible.

Challenges in Managing Global Brands

Building and managing a brand is complex enough for any nonprofit, but this work is especially challenging for organizations working globally. Because language and the meaning of symbols vary from place to place, equating brand with specific words or images is especially dangerous for global organizations. These organizations will find it especially important to build their brands around missions, values, and strategy, leaving it to work groups operating in widely differing contexts to represent these ideas in different ways. In short, internal coherence and brand democracy may be especially important for global nonprofits. Global nonprofits also speak to especially diverse audiences, making the alignment of image and identity particularly challenging. If images are too closely tied to specific projects or designed to appeal to particular donors or supporters, they may quickly become detached from the internal identity of the organization. Aligning identity and image, and keeping both bonded to the fundamental mission and values of the organization will require special skill in large, multi-site, global organizations.

Additionally, the partnerships essential to almost all nonprofit activity are especially prevalent in the work of global organizations, so the importance of a brand fitting well with many partners is especially high. Cross-cultural partnerships and joint ventures with substantial power imbalances are commonplace for global organizations, so brand affinity is particularly important for global nonprofit organizations.

Managing Risk in Branded Organizations

An organization with a low profile and no reputation to lose may be willing to take on great risks in the course of innovation to achieve an important mission; but once the organization has established a trusted brand, it may decline to pursue some projects that put the brand at risk. We explored this issue throughout our interviews and were impressed at how frequently this possibility was rejected. Yes, practitioners acknowledged, there can be tension between brand protection and the risks inherent in innovation or advocacy, but these are tensions that governance and management should be strong enough to manage. Indeed, it appears that high brand integrity, by strengthening internal cohesion and trust among partners, enables an organization to do more, which may translate into a greater willingness to experiment, take risks, and drive innovation.

In some cases, managing risk may lead a strongly branded organization to take a low-profile role. This has frequently been the case, for example, for the CLEEN Foundation in Nigeria, which prominently conducts research to advance justice reform in its own name in partnership with government officials at the state and federal levels, but plays a low-profile role with nonprofit partners in its advocacy work that is often critical of government. The organization does not avoid conflict with government, but carefully manages its profile in this work, embedding itself in more prominently branded coalitions.

It may be that increased attention to branding involves a special role for nonprofit boards. The board is where risk management meets brand management, or at least where responsibility for the oversight of those management activities resides.

Conclusion

The definition of brand, the roles that brand play, the new paradigm of brand in the nonprofit sector, and the value of pursuing the nonprofit brand IDEA are all hypotheses at this point. The ideas flow from the interviews we have conducted, the literature we have reviewed, and our collective experience, but we have not tested them systematically. We hope to explore their resonance in a series of in depth case studies in the next phase of this research.

The subject of nonprofit brands is both timely and exciting, as evidenced by the ubiquitous and highly visible nature of nonprofits brands, the increased number of recent publications, and the willingness and enthusiasm of experts and practitioners to be included in this study. While many in the sector feel that their brands could be more powerful and better deployed to further the social goals of their organizations, they are not always sure how to accomplish this. Many nonprofit brand managers use models and frameworks adopted from the for-profit sector, but there is unease about the relevance and usefulness of these approaches. Perhaps related to this, there remains deeply rooted skepticism and ambivalence towards the role and use of brands and brand management in nonprofit organizations. At the same time, as we have

seen, there appears to be shift in the role of brands in the nonprofit sector from a traditional focus on fundraising to a perception that brands are strategic assets that can be leveraged by nonprofit organizations to advance their missions. In addition, nonprofit brands appear to play more critical internal roles than their for-profit counterparts.

The IDEA framework we propose sets out the key principles in brand management that help to address various sources of brand skepticism that exist within organizations while promoting sources of organizational pride and integrating the propositions emerging from our research. The framework has several implications. From Brand Integrity and Brand Ethics, we learn that brand must be aligned with – and flow from – an organization's mission and core values. Thus, before an organization brands, re-brands, or begins to manage its brand, it must be clear about the strategy that branding is meant to advance. Brand can and should contribute in a variety of ways to each step of the organization's theory of change. From Brand Democracy, we learn the importance of participatory brand management. Having members, staff, participants, and volunteers think about brand can often serve as a stimulus to clarify an organization's core identity and foster a shared understanding of what the mission means in an evolving context. A brand that serves to clarify and focus an organization's identity in a way that is grounded in mission and core values can be enormously helpful in fostering cohesion and pride in an organization. Finally, from Brand Affinity, we learn the importance of brand positioning in developing partnerships. A nonprofit brand can often serve as a moral compass for the organization, helping to facilitate choices about which resources and partnerships to pursue in order to increase organizational capacity and effectiveness.

Our conclusions here are all tentative. We invite and welcome your feedback, reactions, and suggestions. You can contact us at hauser_brand_project@hausercenter.org or take a brief survey relating to the discussion paper by clicking here.