Organizational Identity Formation Processes: A Case Study Examining the Relationship between the Emergence of Organizational Identity Labels and the Creation and Negotiation of their Meanings

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to Mrs. Mildred Stone Mosley White, my mother and best friend. I had to make a decision that no son should ever have to make. I had to decide when the doctors should remove my mother from life support. On December 6, 2006, she died due to complications of type 2 diabetes.

In addition, I wish to dedicate the organizational members that have formed this not-for-profit organization to educate individuals about diabetes, and promote health via exercise and proper diet. As a son of someone who died from complications due to type 2 diabetes, I appreciate their efforts to help others with the prevention or better management of type 2 diabetes.

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Dr. Corley, thank you for your continued support and honesty. I remember the day that I sat in front of my cohort members and presented my dissertation proposal to you. Immediately, you pointed out that 80 % of my proposal was already known in the literature. I was crushed. However, you did acknowledge that 20 per cent of my proposal was not known, and that is what I should focus on developing. You agreed to meet with me at your office to discuss the development of my proposal. I am honored that you saw enough in me and my 20 % to do so. During my visit to your office you were very supportive and agreed to serve on my committee. Thank you.

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Organizational Identity Formation Processes:
A Case Study Examining the Relationship between the Emergence of Organizational Identity Labels and the Creation and Negotiation of their Meanings

The social constructionist perspective of organizational identity (OI) is that it resides in collectively shared beliefs and understandings about central and relatively permanent features of an organization. Gioia, Schultz and Corley (2000) suggest that the content of an organization's identity consists of two tangled aspects: labels and the meanings associated with them. This qualitative case study explored the OI labels and their associated meanings of a newly established organization focused on diabetes. The research objective was to examine the relationship between the emergence of OI labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings during the organizational identity formation processes (OIFP). Data were gathered from audio visual materials, documents, interviews, and observations. Findings demonstrated that four OI labels emerged and associated meanings were created during the OI formation processes. The OI label "not-for-profit" originated during the initial phase of development of the now-established organization and was predetermined by the State of New York and the IRS. The OI label "focused on diabetes" described the specific disease that the organization addressed. The OI label "healthcare practitioner driven" described the occupation of NEO members. The OI label "educators" described the community outreach activities NEO offered. The phrase "African American-based" and term "young," which were used at the intrasubjective level to describe the organization, did not move beyond the individual level; there was no "interchange or synthesis of two, or more, communicating selves"

(Wiley, 1988, p. 258) related to these terms/phrases or their associated meanings. Conclusions offer refinements to OI theory, suggesting the utility of the two tangled aspects of the content of OIFP, the emergence of the labels and the creation and negotiation of their associated meanings, and provide a practical application to newly established organizations.

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CHAPTER 1:

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the beginning, organizational members must be able to collectively express who the organization is becoming in a manner that represents their collective thoughts, feelings, and intentions about the new organization. The success of the organization depends on the members being able to motivate and mobilize potential resource providers into committing needed resources such as money, employees, collaborators, and partners (Martens, Jennings, & Jennings, 2007). Motivating and mobilizing potential resource providers can be achieved by clearly articulating who the newly established organization is becoming.

An organization is "a network of intersubjectively shared meanings that are sustained through the development of a common language and everyday social interaction" (Walsh & Ungson, 1991, p. 60). The importance of an organization having a clear identity as it is being formed has been well documented in organizational scholarship and practice (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Clegg, Rhodes, & Kornberger, 2007; Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013; McIlnay, 1998; Weisbrod, 1988; Whetten, 2006; Young, 2011). Organizational identity (OI) theory asserts that the features of origination (e.g., what is central, enduring, and distinctive) are related to the formation of an organization's identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985). In practice, it has been found that selecting an identity in the beginning "is tantamount to an organization's defining a north star by which to navigate its course of action and shape strategy for the future" (Young, 2011, p. 155). Initial clarity leads to "setting successful long-term strategy (e.g., the set of

policies and practices through which the organization addresses its purposes)" (Young, 2011, p. 139).

The problem theoretically and practically is that the lack of a clear identity presents challenges to the OI formation processes (Clegg et al., 2007). Theoretically, the concept of OI has been investigated as a 'tangled' notion of features of the organization that are central, enduring, and distinctive. Since a new organization is beginning to form its identity, it will not have enduring features, which causes a problem for theorists when using the 'enduring' pillar of Albert and Whetten's (1985) original definition of OI theory. Furthermore, Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000) noted that the concept may be studied as two tangled aspects: labels and label meanings. The OI labels are the symbolic expression of how organizational members collectively answer the question "Who are we as an organization?" (Gioia et al., 2000). The meanings of those OI labels represent the thoughts, feelings, and intentions of those OI labels (Linell & Markova, 1993; Weick, 1995). Therefore, the formation of an organization's identity may be 'untangled' (Rerup & Gioia, 2011) and investigated as two distinctive processes: the emergence of the OI labels and the creation and negotiation of the meanings associated with those labels. From current scholars (e.g., Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010; Kroezen & Heugens, 2012), we now understand the 'tangled' OI formation process, in other words, how an organization's tangled identity emerges during the identity formation process.

In practice, the problem is that as a newly established organization moves from its inception, organizational members may unconsciously use the same terms or phrases they initially used to describe the organization's identity even if the terms/phrases or "meanings of those labels" have changed (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 126). In some situations,

the members may create multiple meanings for the same term or phrase (Clegg et al., 2007) once those terms or phrases become OI labels. As an example, the organizational members may use the OI label 'consultants' to describe who they are as an organization. Initially, the OI label 'consultants' could mean coach. As the members socially construct their OI, the initial meaning of the descriptor could change from coach to advisor. In addition, the organizational members may simultaneously use both meanings, coach and advisor, to describe their thoughts, feelings, and intentions related to the OI label 'consultants,' which may confuse both internal and external audiences.

In summary, OI theory and organizational scholarship contend that the identity formation processes of an organization are important for the future of the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Clegg et al., 2007; Gioia et al., 2013; McIlnay, 1998; Whetten, 2006; Young, 2011). In the OI formation processes, the relationship is not yet understood between the components of the 'untangled' content of OI, i.e., its labels and their meanings. More specifically, OI theorists and practitioners do not understand the interaction between the emergence of the OI labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings during OI formation processes.

Therefore, OI theory and scholarship would benefit from an empirical investigation of the relationship between the emergence of the OI labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings during the OI formation processes. Without this type of study, when investigating OI, theorists may continue to investigate the formation of a 'tangled' identity content instead of investigating its formation processes as two untangled processes (i.e., the emergence of OI labels and the creation and negotiation process of meanings associated with those labels), and organizational members may

unconsciously use the same labels they initially used to describe the organization's identity "even if the meanings of those labels" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 126) have changed or if members have created multiple meanings of those OI labels (Clegg et al., 2007) but have not negotiated those meanings.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the relationship between the emergence of OI labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings during the OI formation process of a newly established organization. A new organization was selected for this study that represented a ubiquitous organizational form and was expected to provide an information-rich site for examining the OI formation processes as the organization socially constructed the answer to the question: "Who are we becoming?" (Schultz, Maguire, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2012, p. 4) as an organization. The purpose of the study was to "untangle" (Rerup & Gioia, 2011) the formation of the identity content—in other words, to investigate the emergence of OI labels separately from the creation and negotiation of meanings associated with those OI labels. The study was grounded in a case study design using data collected from interviews of organizational members belonging to a newly established organization who were experiencing the OI formation process. Interviews served as the primary source of data, triangulated with documents and researcher observations of the study site, both of which served as secondary sources of data.

One overarching research question with three subquestions guided this study:

RQ1: How does the content of OI emerge in a newly established organization?

1a. What are the OI labels used to describe the newly established organization?

1b. What are the meanings associated with those OI labels?

1c. How are the meanings associated with OI labels negotiated during the OI formation processes?

Statement of Potential Significance

This study offers a theoretical contribution to the wide spectrum of OI literature through its grounded insights into the OI formation processes. This study suggests some implications for management practices in the context of newly established organizations. The following section highlights these contributions.

Significance for Theory

First, this study expands on the understanding of untangling OI content (i.e., separately investigating OI labels and their meanings), thus providing a platform to better understand how the OI content emerges. Theory suggests that the content of an organization's identity consists of two tangled aspects: labels and the meanings associated with them (Gioia et al., 2000). Researchers (e.g. Rerup & Gioia, 2011) have called for the future research to untangle the labels from the meanings associated with those labels. Furthermore, these two aspects should be investigated separately after they have been untangled.

Second, from the literature, we know that OI labels are the symbolic expression of how organizational members collectively answer the question "Who are we as an organization?" (Gioia et al., 2000). Few studies have investigated the process by which

OI labels emerge. This study identified the processes of how four terms/phrases moved from the intrasubjective level and emerged at the intersubjective level where they became OI labels.

Third, this study investigates the process by which the meanings of those OI labels are created. Form the literature we know that the meanings of OI labels are those thoughts, feelings, and intentions of OI labels (Linell & Markova, 1993; Weick, 1995). This study identified the processes of how the meanings associated with the four OI labels of this study were created by the members.

Theoretically, we know that in some situations, the members may create multiple meanings for the same term or phrase (Clegg et al., 2007) once those terms or phrases become OI labels. We do not understand how these multiple meanings are negotiated (i.e., "To arrange for or bring about through conference, discussion, and compromise", Merriam-Webster). This study identities the process by which multiple meanings of the respective OI labels are conferenced, discussed, and compromised.

In theory, from the social actor's perspective (e.g. , Kroezen & Heugens, 2012), we understand the 'tangled' OI formation process (i.e., disidentification, anticipated audience judgment, and image-vision alignment (Kroezen & Heugens, 2012, p. 106). From a social constructionist perspective and social actor perspective (e.g., Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010), we understand 'tangled' OI formation process (articulating a vision, experiencing a meaning void, engaging in experiential contrasts, and converging on a consensual identity); and four stage-like (negotiating identity claims, attaining optimal distinctiveness, performing luminal actions, and assimilation of legitimizing feedback) (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010, p.1). This study investigates the

emergent formation processes of the 'untangled' OI content (i.e., the OI labels, the OI label meanings, and the negotiation of multiple OI label meanings) during the movement from individual cognition ("I think") to collective cognition ("we think").

Significance for Practice

This study offers new insights into forming an OI, which is a critical event in establishing a new organization and may be helpful to any organization. As stated earlier, a formed and collective identity may motivate and mobilize potential resource providers into committing needed resources such as money, employees, collaborators, and partners (Martens et al., 2007). An unclear and noncollective identity may send mixed messages to potential donors, potential new organizational members, and potential new organizational partners. Without this type of study, organizational members may unconsciously use the same labels they initially used to describe the organization's identity "even if the meanings of those labels" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 126) have changed or if they have created multiple meanings for those labels (Clegg et al., 2007) since the inception of the organization (Gioia et al., 2013), which may confuse donors, members, and partners, resulting in fewer resources.

Theoretical Foundation and Conceptual Framework

From a social constructionist perspective, this study focused on the emergence of OI labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings during the OI formation processes. The construct guiding this study was OI, and the theoretical lens was OI theory (Albert & Whetten, 1985), specifically the central and distinctive pillars. Additionally,

this study used the intrasubjective level and the intersubjective levels, two of Wiley's (1988) four social theory levels. More specifically, this study used the notion that the OI formation process "occurs in the movement from intrasubjective level to intersubjective level (as 'the self gets transformed from "I" into "we"'; Weick, 1995, p. 71)" (Ashforth, Rogers, & Corley, 2011, p. 1146). In addition, this study used Gioia et al.'s (2000) notion that the content of an organization's identity consists of two tangled aspects: (1) labels, which are the symbolic expression of how organizational members collectively answer the question "Who are we as an organization?" (Gioia et al., 2000); and (2) the meanings associated with those labels, which are the thoughts, feelings, and intentions related to the OI labels (Linell & Markova, 1993; Weick, 1995).

The construct of OI, two pillars of its foundational theory (i.e., central and distinctive), and its notion of where an organization's identity is formed (i.e., between the intrasubjective and intersubjective levels of Wiley's levels of social theory), combined with the two aspects of the organization's identity content (i.e., OI labels and OI label meanings), provided the conceptual framework for this research study, as shown in Figure 1.1.

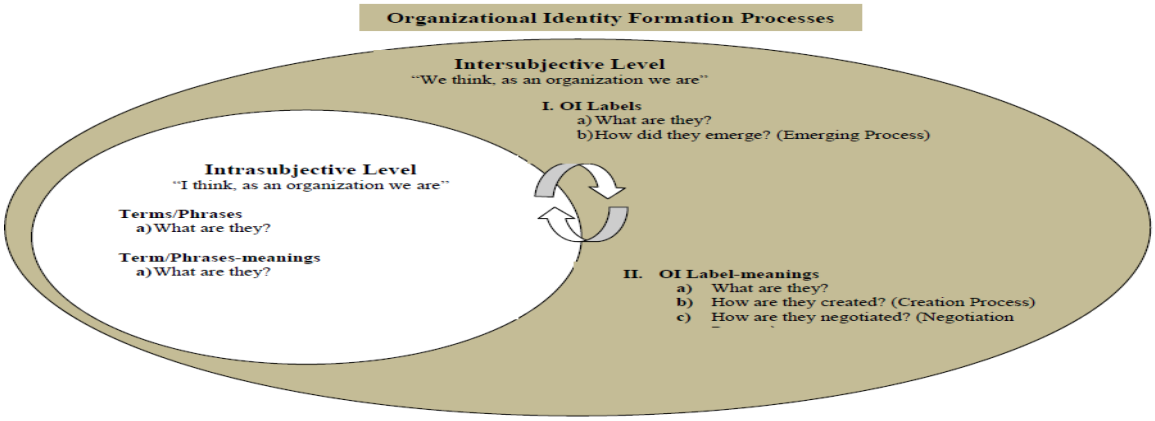

Figure 1.1. Conceptual framework of the terms and phrases at the intrasubjective level and OI label and associated meanings of those OI labels at the intersubjective levels.

Organizational Identity

OI as a construct. The notion of an organization possessing an identity is credited to Selznick's (1957) proposition that "by taking on a distinctive set of values, the organization acquires a character structure, an identity" (p. 24).

OI theory. This dissertation was grounded in two pillars of OI theory, which was defined by Albert and Whetten (1985) as those features of the organization that describe the organization's essence. In other words, OI is what is central and distinctive about an organization.

Social constructionist perspective of OI. From the social constructionist perspective (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 1991, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia et al., 2000), when the question is 'who' is responsible for forming and changing the organization's identity, the focus is usually on the organizational members. Members develop an identity to provide meanings to their experiences (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia, 1998).

How OI is formed. OI is formed as "the self gets transformed from 'I' into 'we' (Weick, 1995, p. 71)" (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1146).

Where OI resides. OI "resides in shared interpretive schemes that members collectively construct in order to provide meaning to their organizational experience" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 126). As noted by Ashforth et al. (2011), "Wiley (1988) and Weick (1995) recognized that OI likely resides in the social structures" (p. 1146).

Social Theory

Seminal work of social theory. According to Wiley (1988), "Levels theory constitutes the levels and therefore the kinds of social reality" (p. 254). The four levels are (1) intrasubjective (individual), (2) intersubjective (interaction), (3) generic subjective (social), and (4) cultural ("a completely decentered, subjectless level of symbolic reality") (p. 259). Of particular interest to this study was the intersubjective level. Wiley (1988) identified the intersubjective as "emergent upon the interchange and synthesis of two, or more, communicating selves" (p. 258). He noted, "The interactive synthesis of meanings is captured in Schutz's notion of the 'we experience' or Blumer's of the 'joint act'" (1988, p. 258).

Application of social theory. Scholars have employed a social theory approach (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2011; Weick, 1995). For example, Weick (1995) used Wiley's (1988) notion of levels of social theory to describe organizational sensemaking. Weick (1995) noted that "sensemaking through generic subjectivity is a mainstay of organizational analysis" (p. 71). More specifically related to this study is Weick's interpretation of 'meaning' at the intersubjective level. Weick (1995) noted,

"Intersubjective meaning becomes distinct from intrasubjective meaning when individual thoughts, feelings, and intentions are merged or synthesized into conversations during which the self gets transformed from 'I' into 'we' (e.g., Linell & Markova, 1993)" (p. 71).

In addition to Weick, Ashforth et al. (2011) built upon Wiley's specification of different levels of social theory by developing the construction of identity at three of the four extraindividual levels of analysis: intrasubjective ("I think"), intersubjective ("we think"), and generic subjective ("it is").

Social theory and OI. Each level of analysis of the process is imperative to the organization's capacity to form and continually construct an identity (Ashforth et al., 2011). Grounded in social theory, the construction of identity at each extraindividual level of analysis depicts four extraindividual levels of individual cognition about identity: (a) intrasubjective ("I think"); (b) intersubjective ("we think"); (c) generic subjective ("it is"); and (d) cultural representing ("a completely decentered, subjectless level of symbolic reality") (Wiley, 1988).

Relevance of social theory and OI to this study. Ashforth et al.'s (2011) construction of identity at two of the four extraindividual level of analysis offers a platform to examine the relationship between the emergence of OI labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings during the OI formation processes. As noted earlier, Weick (1995) recognized that although organizational "identity likely resides in the social structures comprising the generic subjective level" (p. 1146), which means that there is a distinction between the individual and the collective, the formation of an OI "occurs in the movement from intrasubjective level to intersubjective level (as 'the self

gets transformed from "I" into "we"'; Weick, 1995, p. 71)" (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1146).

Combining Social Theory and OI

OI formation at the intrasubjective (individual) level. This study untangled the content of OI by investigating what individual members thought were the terms/phrases used to describe their organization.

OI formation at the intersubjective (interactive) level. This study untangled the content of OI by investigating the OI labels, in other words, the symbolic expression(s) of how organizational members collectively (i.e., socially) answer the question "Who are we as an organization?" or, more relevant to this study, "Who are we becoming?" (Schultz et al., 2012, p. 4) as an organization. Next, this study sought to understand the collective thoughts, feelings, and intentions of those OI labels, in other words, the meanings associated with those labels.

Summary of the Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study research design involving investigation of "a real-life, contemporary bounded system over time (a case)" (Creswell, 1998, p. 97). The study site was an organization with 11 members that obtained its 501(c)(3) public charity status in March 2013; it was involved in promoting health via exercise and proper diet. Data collection and analysis occurred iteratively. The nonlinear methods of data collection for this study followed Creswell's (1998) data collection circle, which involves interrelated activities, including locating a site, gaining access and

developing rapport, purposeful sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving field issues, and storing data. Using Creswell's (1998) data analysis spiral as a tool, the data were collected in a nonlinear fashion through six steps: (1) organizing the gathered data; (2) reading the transcripts and writing memos; (3) describing, classifying, and interpreting the data into codes, which were converted into first-order concepts; (4) abstractly assigning first-order codes as second-order themes; (5) linking the second-order themes as aggregate dimensions; and (6) representing the data in a visual form (e.g., data structure). For quality assurance, data sources were triangulated (Denzin, 1989), and participants engaged in the research process through member checks. Additional triangulation was achieved through peer examination and a researcher reflective journal to counter bias.

Trade-offs and Limitations of the Study

Qualitative research does not seek generalizability. The intentional narrow focus of this study may appear to be a limitation. The case study covered a 5-month period, which may be a limitation when compared to a longitudinal study. Because the study involved a single case, no comparisons of findings were offered. Another limitation was bias. My explicit focus on the OI formation processes of a newly established organization suggests a bias and may have had some effect on my interpretations of the data. In addition, during the interviews I asked respondents about how new ideas were introduced and adopted by other members. The respondents may not have revealed accurate depictions. Their responses influenced my interpretations. Also, the respondents may

have not clearly understood the question and simply answered the best way they knew how, which also affected my interpretation.

This study's focus was on OI, not organizational culture, organizational identification, or organizational image. This study differentiated OI from organizational culture ("a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the collective learned as it solved its problems of external adaption and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those patterns" [Schein, 1992, p. 12]); organizational identification ("occurring when an individual's beliefs about his or her organization becomes self-referential or self-defining" [Pratt, 1998, p. 172]); and organizational image (the attributes that organizational members believe outsiders hold regarding the organization [Dutton & Dukerich, 1991]).

Definitions of Key Terms

Content of an organization's identity: Two tangled aspects: OI labels and the meanings associated with those labels (Gioia et al., 2000).

Meanings of OI labels: Thoughts, feelings, and intentions of OI labels (Linell & Markova, 1993; Weick, 1995).

OI labels: The symbolic expression of how organizational members collectively answer the question "Who are we as an organization?" (Gioia et al., 2000).

OI formation processes: The processes of movement from intrasubjective to intersubjective, i.e., "the self gets transformed from 'I' into 'we' (Weick, 1995, p. 71)" (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1146).

OI theory: The features (i.e., that which is central, enduring and distinctive) of the organization that describe the organization's essence (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

Organization: "A network of intersubjectively shared meanings that are sustained through the development of a common language and everyday social interaction" (Walsh & Ungson, 1991, p. 60).

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational identity (OI) has been defined from several perspectives and studied in various contexts, for different purposes, and through a range of disciplines. Some researchers focused on why OI was important, while others researched the key factors of OI. This chapter reviews the theoretical and empirical works related to OI.

One overarching research question with three subquestions guided this study:

RQ1: How does the content of OI emerge in a newly established organization?

1a. What are the OI labels used to describe the newly established organization?

1b. What are the meanings associated with those OI labels?

1c. How are the meanings associated with OI labels negotiated during the OI formation processes?

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the relationship between the emergence of OI labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings during the OI formation processes of a newly established organization. The literature review is framed by the study's research questions and undergirded by the study's theoretical foundation and conceptual framework. Therefore, the literature review is divided into two major sections and one minor focus area: (1) historical perspectives of OI, addressing the theory, its developmental stages, and perspectives of OI; (2) OI processes, including change processes and formation processes; and (3) untangling the content of an organization's identity, which consists of two tangled aspects, the OI labels and the meanings associated with those OI labels.

Literature Search

For this literature review, key theoretical and empirically based research studies of OI were included. An empirically based study is defined as "any study that had a systematic data collection plan (qualitative or quantitative) that was created to answer specific research/evaluation questions that were established a priori" (Lawless & Pellegrino, 2007, p. 584). A study is considered to be of high quality "if its research design and analytic strategy were appropriate to the topic under study, its methodology was applied in a careful manner, its focus was relevant to the research questions, and its interpretation was well-supported" (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006, p. 178). First, a broad literature search on OI was conducted using three electronic databases: PsychINFO, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. The following key words and phrases were used singularly and in combination: OI, OI formation, OI change, identity claims, identity labels, identity meanings, identity understandings. The search was limited to peer-reviewed journals. Published scholarly reviews of literature found through initial search strategies were used to identify additional studies, as were the reference lists of key studies. Related unpublished dissertations were sought in an effort to glean studies that might have been missed by other search strategies.

The abstracts of identified studies were reviewed to determine their relevance to the current study. Studies that were insufficiently relevant to the research questions were eliminated. Many of the studies were of initial interest, but upon closer inspection did not meet the aforementioned criteria of being high-quality and empirically based. Some studies claimed to be empirically based yet failed to adequately describe or support the analyses performed. Given the limited research on OI formation processes, studies of OI

change were included in the review. Given the limited research on the 'untangled' content of OI (i.e., OI labels and OI label meanings), studies of 'tangled' content of OI were included in the review.

This group of studies is by no means exhaustive. However, collectively, the group of studies represents the recent empirical research on OI. The process for reviewing and synthesizing data from the studies is interpretative; articulations in this study of factors related to how the content of OI emerges in a newly established organization.

Historical Perspective of Organizational Identity

The notion of an organization possessing an identity is credited to Selznick's (1957) proposition that "by taking on a distinctive set of values, the organization acquires a character structure, an identity" (p. 24). Some 30 years later, researchers began to develop theories regarding the features of OI. In addition, researchers began to theorize about its developmental stages and offer different perspectives on it.

Organizational Identity Theory

Albert and Whetten (1985) defined the concept of OI by focusing on the features of the organization that describes the organization's essence. The notion was that the identity distinguished the organization from others and exhibited some degree of continuity over time. The pillars of OI were categorized as that which is most central, enduring, and distinctive to an organization. Centrality, the first pillar, describes the very essence of an identity and is used by leaders as a guide for what they should do and how other institutions should relate to them. The second pillar, enduring, represents the

temporal continuity or durability of identity. Distinctiveness is the third pillar of Albert and Whetten's (1985) definition of OI theory and describes the enhancement of the reputation and cues that enable external audiences to perceive the organization as legitimate and appropriate.

Developmental Stages of the Concept of Organizational Identity

In Gioia et al.'s (2013) discussion of the studies related to the formation and change of an organization's identity, they categorized the development of the concept into three stages: infancy stages, developmental period, and aged adolescence (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1
The Stages of the Development of the Concept of Organizational Identity

Stage	Topic	Scholar(s)
Infancy stage (1985–1991)	Central, enduring, and distinctive	Albert and Whetten (1985)
	Organization's image and identity	Dutton and Dukerich (1991)
	Identity, behavior, value, and meaning	Fiol (1991)
	Link to metaphors	Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991)
Developmental period (1994–1998)	Failed identity transitions	Reger, Gustafson, Demarie, and Mullane (1994)
	Organizational processes	Elsbach and Kramer (1996)
	Identity and desired future image	Gioia and Thomas (1996)
	Shared interpretive schemes that members collectively construct to provide meaning to their experience	Gioia (1998)
Aged adolescence (2002–2005)	Identity and sustainability	Fiol (2002)
	Identity dynamics	Hatch and Schultz (2002)
	Hierarchical differences	Corley (2004)
	Identity ambiguity	Corley and Gioia (2004)
	Continuity and change in identity	Chreim (2005)

Note. Adopted from Gioia et al., 2013.

Infancy stage (1985–1991). In addition to introducing and developing the concept of OI, Albert and Whetten (1985) focused on research topics including the

related concepts of dual and multiple identities. Their research focused on a wide scope of empirical questions and hypotheses related to OI, such as the relationship of identity to the organizational life cycle. For example, Albert and Whetten (1985) investigated coping mechanisms and how people made sense of their behaviors. These seminal researchers are also known for proposing the notion that organizations not only have an identity, but could have dual and multiple identities. Other research topics and questions addressed during this infancy stage of investigating OI included "how individuals and organizations make sense of and act on nontraditional and emotional strategic issues" (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991, p. 517) and how "organizations manage the cognitive processes by which a firm invests in resources for competitive advantage" (Fiol, 1991, p. 191).

In addition to the varying research topics, researchers began to use different methodologies for data collection and analysis to understand OI. The dominant approach employed during this stage of development was qualitative and included both case studies (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991) and ethnography (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Researchers during this stage (e.g., Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 1991; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) collected data from similar data sources, including interviews, documents (e.g., reports, memos, newspaper articles), and observations.

What we know from the results of the investigations during the infancy stage of OI is that an organization's identity may evolve from a single identity to dual or even multiple identities (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Dutton and Dukerich (1991) informed us that an "organization's identity and image are critical constructs when seeking to understand the relationship between actions on and interpretations of an issue over time"

(p. 520). Organizational leaders and other members may find it "difficult if they attempt to manage exhibited behaviors that occur during the OI processes" (Fiol, 1991, p. 208).

Developmental period (1994–1998). During this stage, researchers questioned several features of Albert and Whetten's (1985) OI theory. Researchers (e.g., Fiol & Gioia, 1998; Fiol, Hatch, & Golden-Biddle, 1998; Sarson & Fiol, 1995) questioned the 'enduring' pillar of Albert and Whetten's definition by suggesting that identity at the organizational level was less enduring and should be considered a continuous renegotiated set of meanings about how organizational members answer the self-generated question of "who we are." For example, Sarson and Fiol (1995) suggested that the concept of OI was the changing of shared beliefs among stakeholders of an organization.

Gioia and Thomas's (1996) interest in 'enduring' evolved around the notion of organizational members presuming the organization's identity to be malleable. Informed by Gioia and Thomas's (1996) study, we know that identity change could be deliberate and planned. From their study, we also know that there is a process of interdependency between identity and image. It is during this process that an organization's identity change could be initiated. Gioia and Thomas's (1996) study informs us that creation of an identity at the organizational level does not require long periods of time.

Aged adolescence (2000–2005). During this stage of investigating OI, other concepts such as culture were introduced, and their relationship to identity was explored. Social constructionists viewed both organizational culture and identity as "collectively shared interpretive schemes" (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006, p. 437). Schein (1992) defined organizational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the collective learned as it solved its problems of external adaption and internal integration, that has worked

well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those patterns" (p. 12). OI was understood to be relational and consciously self-reflective, while organizational culture was understood as being mostly tacit and rooted in shared practices (Fiol et al., 1998; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Pratt, 2003). In fact, Hatch and Schultz (2000) stated, "Identity is at least partly influenced by our activities and beliefs, which are grounded in and interpreted using cultural assumptions and values" (p. 25).

Perspectives of Organizational Identity

In reviewing the literature stream pertaining to identity at the organizational level, four prevalent perspectives on OI exist: the institutionalist, the population ecologist, the social actor, and the social constructionist (Gioia et al., 2013).

Institutionalist. Researchers with this perspective emphasized the 'sameness' or isomorphic aspect of OI. The focus of their research was to understand an organization's identity by focusing on those individuals or documents that can speak for the organization as a social actor in society. For example, Glynn and Abzug (2002) focused on the organization's name as a symbolic expression of the organization. The findings of the institutionalist research efforts were significant to theory in that they explored "the construct of symbolic isomorphism, and examined its effects on the homogenization of names and legitimacy" (Glynn & Abzug, 2002, p. 267).

Population ecologist. As discussed by Gioia et al. (2013), Polos, Hannan, and Carroll (2002) defined the population ecologist perspective (e.g., Hannan & Freeman, 1977) as the view that "identity is a concept held by outsiders about organizations" (p.

127). This view is closely aligned with the view of perceived image, or the perception of the attributes that organizational members believe outsiders hold regarding the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). As stated earlier, Dutton and Dukerich's (1991) work investigated the relationship between an organization's identity and image. Gioia et al. (2013) suggested that for a researcher with this perspective, OI "is overwhelmingly defined by category (industry) membership" (p. 127) and is defined by the "attributes associated with that category by outside parties" (p. 127).

The social actor and social constructionist perspectives. The remaining two perspectives, the social actor perspective and social constructionist perspective, describe OI using a very different investigative lens of research questions—in other words, what-type questions, who-type questions, why-type questions, and how-type questions. According to Van de Ven (2007), 'who' questions generally seek to determine whose perspective is considered, 'what' questions seek factors, 'why' questions seek to determine purpose, and 'how' questions seek to determine processes. The two perspectives and their characteristics are compared in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2
Perspectives on Organizational Identity: Social Actor Versus Social Constructionist

Characteristics	**Social actor (i.e., identity claims)**	**Social constructionist (i.e., shared understandings)**
Theoretical foundations	Institutional theory	Social constructivism
Where OI resides	Institutional claims, available to members, about central, enduring, and distinctive properties of their organization	Collectively shared beliefs and understandings about central and relatively permanent features of an organization
Emphasis on cognitive processes	Identity claims are organizational self-definitions proposed by organizational leaders, providing members with a consistent and legitimate narrative to construct a collective sense of self	Shared understandings are the results of sensemaking processes carried out by members as they interrogate themselves on central and distinctive features of their organization

Characteristics	Social actor (i.e., identity claims)	Social constructionist (i.e., shared understandings)
Seminal theorists	Czarniawska, 1997; Whetten, 2003; Whetten & Mackey, 2002	Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 1991, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996, Gioia et al., 2000

Note. Adopted from Ravasi and Schultz, 2006, p. 434.

'**What' questions.** When asking 'what' questions, researchers are typically interested in the factors related to the phenomenon. Researchers with a social actor perspective (e.g., Czarniawska, 1997; Whetten & Mackey, 2002; Whetten, 2003) generally focus on the claims made in articulating the features of OI. In contrast, researchers with a social constructionist perspective (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 1991, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia et al., 2000) focus primarily on the labels and meanings that members use to describe themselves and their core attributes.

'**Who' questions.** The question of who is responsible for forming and changing the organization's identity has been the focus of some research on OI. Researchers with a social actor perspective usually focus on the leaders, while those with a social constructionist perspective usually focus on organizational members. The underlining factor of how researchers defined OI was the notion of people in the workplace sharing some attributes.

'Why' questions. Other focus areas of OI have included why an organization developed a specific identity. Researchers with the social actor perspective believe that organizations develop identities to "satisfy their inherent needs to be the same yesterday, today and tomorrow and to be unique actors or entities" (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, p. 396). A more socially constructed perspective is that members develop an identity to

provide meanings to their experiences (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia, 1998).

'How' questions. Of special interest to this study was research that investigated how OI is formed. Those with a social actor perspective suggest that OI is formed by providing organizational members with overt, legitimate, and consistent narratives. Those with a social constructionist perspective suggest that OI is formed as members engage in a sensemaking process and interrogate themselves about the organization's features. Table 2.3 shows the varied questions asked by researchers to understand the processes of OI.

Table 2.3
Questions Asked by Researchers to Understand the Processes of Organizational Identity

Research focus/question(s) of 'how'	Scholar
How does an organization's identity affect its filtering of technological opportunities and its ability to respond to identity-challenging technologies? When an organization's pursuit of an identity-challenging technology results in a shift in identity, how does the change process unfold?	Tripsas (2009)
How does organizational identity change occur during a corporate spin-off?	Corley and Gioia (2004)
How do senior managers of a bank manage subtle and continued shifts in organizational identity over decades by retaining old labels and adding/subtracting meanings from those labels?	Chreim (2005)
What are the processes by which organizational identities change during the initial phases of a merger between two formerly rival healthcare organizations?	Clark, Gioia, Ketchen, and Thomas (2010)
How did interactions change members' understandings about central and distinctive attributes of an organization?	Ravasi and Schultz (2006)

The focus of this study, in alignment with a social constructionist perspective, is how the content of OI emerged in a newly established organization.

Organizational Identity Processes: Its Change and Formation from a Social Constructionist Perspective

In their article in the *Academy of Management Annals,* Gioia et al. (2013) noted 51 articles related to OI. The overwhelming majority of those articles focused on the change of an organization's identity. As noted earlier, given the limited research on the OI formation processes, studies of OI change were included in this review.

Organizational Identity Change Processes

This section is framed by the 'enduring' pillar of Albert and Whetten's (1985) notion that OI is central, enduring, and distinctive. Scholars (e.g., Chreim, 2005; Clark et al., 2010; Gioia et al., 2000; Gustafson & Reger, 1995; Margolis & Hansen, 2002; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Tripsas, 2009) have studied processes of OI change. Identity change has been portrayed as a "nested structure, with intangible identity at its core, and tangible identity attributes at the periphery" (Gustafson & Reger, 1995, p. 464).

Processes and models of OI change. Fiol (2002) proposed a multiphase and multilevel model of identity transformation that begins to "encompass the paradoxical requirement of both a highly identified and a less highly identified work-force" (p. 654). Drawing on social identity theory, and building on Lewin's (1951) theory of change (i.e., unfreezing, moving, and refreezing), Fiol (2002) focused on collective beliefs and described and unpacked the processes that allow change agents to "capitalize on the paradoxical requirements of both greater and less organizational identity" (p. 655). From Hatch and Schultz's (2002) dynamic process model we know that an organization's 'self' may be continuously socially constructed. This ongoing construction may occur as

differences are highlighted between how organizational members and external forces define the identity of the organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

Data collection methods. The processes of OI change have been investigated using several data collection methods, including a discursive approach (Chreim, 2005); a linguistic approach (Gioia et al., 2000); "an interpretive, grounded theory approach" (Clark et al., 2010, p. 397); a qualitative inductive (Corley, 2004) and emergent process (Margolis & Hansen, 2002); and a longitudinal approach (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Tripsas (2009) noted that an inductive, longitudinal, field-based case study was well suited for developing grounded theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Data sources. Studies have illustrated the use of multiple data sources, such as interviews (e.g., structured, semistructured, in person, via phone), observations, and internal documents (e.g., reports, message boards, the organization's web page, newspapers, Internet sites, video clips from news reports). These data sources and the uniformity with which they were produced made them suitable documents for the study of how changes in OI are framed. Documents such as annual reports also provided longitudinal data (Chreim, 2005; Christensen & Cheney, 1994). Interviews were an important aspect of capturing the perceptions of OI. Semistructured interviews were also useful in investigations of OI change (Margolis & Hansen, 2002; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), and archival and pilot interviews were used to "understand the historical context and fill in gaps of knowledge for time periods and key events" (Clark et al., 2010, p. 404).

Data analysis methods. Data collected during investigations related to the OI change process were analyzed through techniques including coded messages, naturalistic

inquiry, theoretical sampling, first-order coding, fine-grained coding, document review, member checks, content analysis, and saturation. To analyze managers' evolving narrative of a bank's identity, Chreim (2005) focused on the message to shareholders in the annual report. By studying the subsequent texts, Chreim was able to track the evolution of the identity narrative that was continually reconstituted by senior management.

Clark et al. (2010) applied the processes of naturalistic inquiry as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), as well as "constant comparison and theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) through a process of cycling among data, emerging theory, and relevant literature" (Clark et al., 2010, p. 407). Clark et al. (2010) noted that this technique was used in an effort to develop "a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the merger process as they transpired" (p. 407). Other techniques utilized by Clark et al. (2010) that were used by this study included first-order analysis (Van Maanen, 1979), thorough coding of transcripts, and developing a coding scheme consisting of both in vivo codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and first-order codes (Van Maanen, 1979) (see chapter 3 for more details).

From studies investigating OI change, we know that "identity is subject to continual reconstitution" (Chreim, 2005, p. 586). In addition, we know that organizational "culture is a central construct in understanding the evolution of organizational identities" (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006, p. 455). These understandings may be useful in understanding how OI is formed.

Organizational Identity Formation Processes

This section addresses the process through which identity is formed at the organizational level. Researchers (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2011; Czarniawska & Wolff, 1998; Clegg et al., 2007; Gioia et al., 2010; Kroezen & Heugens, 2012) have investigated the organizational formation processes. These studies provide a framework for understanding the emergence of OI labels and the creation and negotiation of meanings for those labels.

Social actor perspective. Kroezen and Heugens (2012) provided a generic model of how identity content forms in a typical organization. They proposed that its formation occurs via a two-step process. The first step involves identity imprinting (i.e., strategic emulation, value proposition formation, and critical decision-making) (p. 99), and the second step involves embracing the values orientation (i.e., disidentification, anticipated audience judgment, and image-vision alignment) (p. 106).

OI formation has been linked to the construct of legitimacy (Clegg et al., 2007; Czarniawska & Wolff, 1998). For example, Czarniawska and Wolff (1998) "compared and contrasted the fates of two new organizations that formed in highly institutionalized organizational fields" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 155). Their research focused on an "understanding about how identity could facilitate (or undermine) legitimacy and success for newcomers" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 155). Their findings suggested that new organizations might attempt to mimic existing organizations, which can be interpreted as central to legitimacy.

Social constructionist perspective. Ashforth et al. (2011) focused on two research questions regarding the OI formation process, i.e., how-type questions: "How do

nested identities become linked across levels of analysis? And, once linked, how isomorphic are nested identities across levels of analysis?" (p. 1144). Their findings—that "individual cognitions about identity (e.g.. 'I think') facilitate the emergence of shared cognitions ('we think')" (p. 1146)—have implications for this study. Gioia et al. (2013) noted that only two studies of empirically grounded models of the OI formation process have been published, one from a social constructionist perspective (i.e., Gioia et al., 2010) and the other from a social actor perspective (i.e., Kroezen & Heugens, 2012).

Social constructionist perspective and social actor perspective. Historically, researchers have investigated the concept of OI from the social actor perceptive or from the social constructionist perspective. In their investigation of the processes involved in the formation of an organization's identity, Gioia et al. (2010) developed a grounded model of the OI formation process that combined these two perspectives. The model consisted of eight processes: four sequential (articulating a vision, experiencing a meaning void, engaging in experiential contrasts, and converging on a consensual identity); and four stage-like (negotiating identity claims, attaining optimal distinctiveness, performing luminal actions, and assimilation of legitimizing feedback) (Gioia et al., 2010, p. 1).

Conclusions of Organizational Identity Formation Processes

Overall, we can conclude that the concept of OI can be linked to other concepts such as legitimacy. We also know that its formation is related to the enactment of a given construction and the ensuing organizational sensemaking (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1146; Wiley, 1988). We can also conclude that its formation can be investigated utilizing either

the social constructionist perspective or social actor perspective. In some cases, it can be investigated from both perspectives.

Untangling the Content of an Organization's Identity: Labels and Their Meanings

As noted earlier, Gioia et al. (2000) suggested that the content of an organization's identity consists of two tangled aspects, labels and meanings associated with those labels. In addition, we know that these two tangled aspects can be untangled and investigated separately (Rerup & Gioia, 2011). Related to this notion, this study expands on the insights discussed in previous sections by untangling the OI labels and their meanings, thus providing a better understanding of the emergence of the labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings during the OI formation process. The literature search identified efforts by researchers (e.g., Chreim, 2005; Corley & Gioia, 2004) studying OI labels and meanings associated with those labels. This section reviews the current research on *untangled* OI labels and OI label meanings.

Organizational Identity Label Change and Label Meaning Change

In one study, OI changed over time through the efforts of managers "retaining old labels and adding/subtracting meanings from those labels" (Chreim, 2005, p. 567). Gioia et al. (2000) proposed that "identity change could manifest in two distinct but related ways: a change in the labels or a change in their meanings" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 143). According to Gioia et al. (2000), "When labels persist, there is the perception that the

identity persists, i.e., enduring; the durability is in the label, . . . however, not in the interpretation of the meanings that make up the ostensible core" (p. 75).

Top managers may use sensegiving as a process to influence others' constructions of meaning (Chreim, 2005; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Pratt, 2000). Clegg et al. (2007) searched the Internet for companies in Australia that used the descriptor (i.e., label) 'business coaching' to define their activities. During the investigation, it was apparent that the business coaches were vacillating on the meaning of 'business coach.' Their findings suggest that there was a change of meaning to include 'business consultant.'

Multiple Organizational Identity Label Meanings

Corley and Gioia (2004) examined OI labels and meanings associated with the organization's identity. They noted that organizations' identities had a dual nature comprising language and meanings. We know from their study that identity labels represent the symbolic expression of how organizational members *collectively* describe who they are as an organization. Findings of the study indicated that the organizational "members often applied multiple meanings to the same OI label." An example offered in their study was the OI label 'innovative,' which was used by organizational members to describe their organization. In this study, organizational members had multiple meanings of this OI label, such as cutting-edge scientific research, industry-leading customer service, and always first to market.

Corley (2004) noted that research informants stated that they did not reject the multiple meanings of 'innovative,' nor did they view the multiple meanings as

conflicting. However, as noted in the findings, some employees did experience some identity ambiguity and stated that due to the new labels, they did not understand the meaning of "who the company was becoming" (p. 117). This study aided the understanding of Research Question 1c: *How are the meanings associated with OI labels negotiated during the OI formation processes?*

Conclusion

The literature related to OI has addressed its historical perspectives such as what it is, its developmental stages, and the four main perspectives of researchers. For this study, the research was narrowed to understand the 'how' questions related to OI (i.e., its processes). More specifically, this literature review focused on the processes of OI change, which is the focus of much of the studies related to OI. In addition, this review included the few studies that investigated the formation of an organization's identity. The study concluded by highlighting the studies of OI that investigated the two tangled aspects of OI's content, its OI labels and OI label meanings. The next chapter explains the research design and methods used in this study to inform our understanding of the interplay between the emergence of the OI labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings during the OI formation processes.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodological approach that guided this study, which was informed by an interpretivist paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) that relied on an epistemology that views organizational identity (OI) as socially constructed (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 1991, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia et al., 2000). These perspectives enabled me, the researcher, to understand and explain the social world primarily from the point of view of the organizational members directly involved in the social process of forming an OI (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). One overarching research question guided this study: *How does the content of OI emerge in a newly established organization?* There were three subquestions: (a) *What are the OI labels used to describe the newly established organization?* (b) *What are the meanings associated with those OI labels?* and (c) *How are the meanings associated with OI labels negotiated during the OI formation processes?*

The aspects of the methodological approach for this case study are summarized in Table 3.1. The chapter then provides details on the research design, methods for an iterative process of data collection and analysis, the study's trustworthiness, and the protection of human subjects.

Table 3.1
Summary of Methodological Approach

Research strategy	**Description**
Research questions	RQ1: How does the content of OI emerge in a newly established organization? 1a) What are the OI labels used to describe the newly established organization? 1b) What are the meanings associated with those OI labels?

	1c) How are the meanings associated with OI labels negotiated during the OI formation processes?
Worldview	Informed by an interpretivist paradigm that relies on an epistemology that sees organizational identity as socially constructed
Study site	A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization as of March 2013 promoting health via exercise and proper diet of individuals, with 11 organizational members (doctors and officers) meeting virtually via Skype
Research design (Creswell, 1998)	A qualitative case study with a single site using nonprobability sampling/snowballing with an iterative process of data collection and analysis
Forms of data (Creswell, 1998)	a) Documents (501(c)(3) tax-exempt status documents, meeting notes) b) Observations (services delivered) c) Interviews (semistructured via Skype and telephone) d) Audiovisual materials (site's public website)
Data collection: Creswell's "data collection circle" (1998, p. 145)	a) Locating a site b) Gaining access and developing rapport c) Purposeful sampling d) Collecting data e) Recording information f) Resolving field issues g) Storing data
Data analysis: Creswell's "data analysis spiral" (1998, p. 145)	a) Organizing the gathered data b) Reading the transcripts and writing memos c) Describing, classifying and interpreting the data at three levels: i. First-order concepts: Using open coding, with "language used by the informants" (Corley & Gioia, 2004, p. 183) ii. Second-order themes: Using axial coding (i.e., searching for relationships between and among these categories) (Corley & Gioia, 2004). iii. Aggregate dimensions: Assembling the major themes into aggregate dimensions (Corley & Gioia, 2004) d) Represent the data in a visual form
Quality assurance/ trustworthiness	a) Triangulating data sources (Denzin, 1989) b) Member checks c) c) Peer examination
Limitation of study	a) Limited number of documents (newly established organization) b) Limited internal documentation about the emergence process of OI labels and creating and negotiating the meanings of those labels c) Limited time period of study (5 months) d) Examination of a single case with no comparison e) Bias introduced from the subjects through their subjective responses to the interview questions or from the researcher in interpretations of the data

Qualitative Case Study Research Design

The overall methodology involved a qualitative case study research design in which I, the investigator, investigated "a real-life, contemporary bounded system over time (a case)" (Creswell, 1998, p. 97). In discussing case studies, Creswell (1998) indicated, "Case study research is a type of design in qualitative research that may be an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry" (p. 97). The case was time bound based on what was discovered during the period of data collection. More specifically, my research involved a single instrumental case study (Stake, 1995), in which I focused on an issue and then selected one bounded case to illustrate this issue. In selecting a case, I chose one that showed different perspectives on the OI formation process. Such method is called purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2012). The level of analysis was organizational to help understand how OI labels emerged at the intersubjective ("we think") level and how the meanings associated with OI identity labels were created and negotiated.

Iterative Process of Data Collection and Data Analysis

Citing Dey (1993, p. 6), Creswell (1998) noted that qualitative researchers "learn by doing" (p. 182). Therefore, the process of data collection and analysis used for this study occurred simultaneously. The nonlinear methods of data collection for this study followed Creswell's (1998) "data collection circle," which are interrelated activities including locating a site, gaining access and developing rapport, purposeful sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving field issues, and storing data (p. 145). Using Creswell's (1998) "data analysis spiral" as a tool, I simultaneously analyzed the data in a nonlinear fashion—organizing the gathered data; reading the transcripts and

writing memos; describing, classifying, and interpreting the data into codes; and representing the data in a visual form (e.g., data structure). For quality assurance, this study triangulated the data sources (Denzin, 1989). This iterative process allowed a greater understanding of what data to collect next. Figure 3.1 depicts the iterative process of data collection and data analysis.

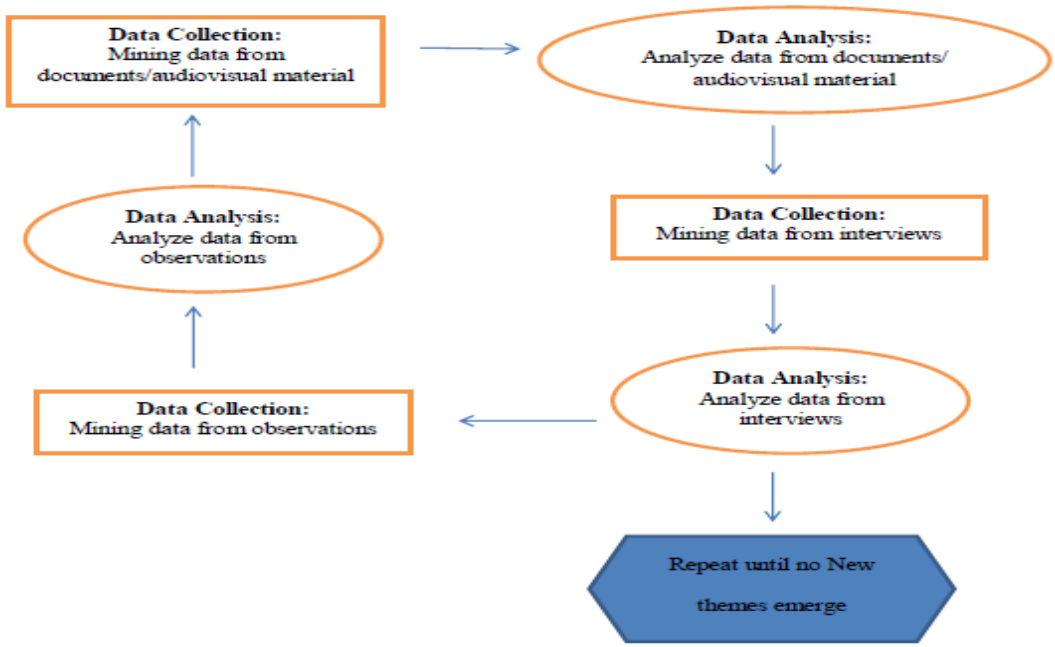

Figure 3.1. Iterative process of data collection and analysis.

Data Collection Circle

Rigorous procedures were used to gather qualitative data on members' perceptions of the OI labels as well as members' perceptions of the dynamic interplay between the OI labels and their meanings within a newly established organization as related to the OI formation process. Creswell's (1998) "data collection circle" framed the data collection process. The data collection circle processes include activities such as

selecting a site, gaining access and developing rapport, purposeful sampling, identifying the forms of data, establishing the recording procedures, managing field issues, and properly storing data. Figure 3.2 depicts Creswell's (1998) data collection circle.

Figure 3.2. Creswell's (1998) data collection activities (i.e., data circle) (p. 110).

Locating Site

As indicated earlier, this study was a single-unit case study, a bounded system (Creswell, 1998). It was critical to find a site that had been formally established no more than a year earlier and that was beginning to form its identity because I sought to gain insight about the OI formation (not change) processes. Further, I sought to gather rich data that were "detailed, focused, and full" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 13). Therefore, a site was selected where the phenomenon of emerging OI labels and creating and negotiating meanings for those OI labels, regularly occurred and could be observed (Patton, 1991). I

attempted to gather rich data (Charmaz, 2006), as Geertz (1973) and Charmaz (2006) noted that obtaining rich data means seeking "thick descriptions."

"NEO" (a pseudonym to preserve the site's anonymity) was selected for this study. NEO's mission is to promote health via exercise and proper diet among individuals living throughout New York City. The organization has approximately 11 organizational members, which it calls the doctors and officers. The site is a virtual organization, and its members meet via Group Meeting™ online. The initiatives of NEO occurred in several external venues in New York City. NEO received its 501(c)(3) status in March 2013 and was 5 months old when this study was approved by the institutional review board.

Access and Rapport

Creswell (1998) noted that it is important for a researcher to gain access to a site. The NEO president provided access to NEO and its organizational members. In addition, the president served as a primary informant. The president was open to me as the researcher, giving me access to all documents he had and access to the two community activities held during the research period. During initial contact with NEO, I became more familiar with the president to learn about NEO's social structure. The goal of this process was to ensure that all ethical considerations were met as well as to develop rapport with the president. The process may have increased the response rate of those invited to participate, and it offered an introduction to preliminary contextual elements of NEO that were relevant to the research.

Purposeful Sampling

Three considerations went into the purposeful sampling for this study: who to select as participants for the study, the specific type of sampling strategy, and the size of the sample to be studied (Creswell, 1998).

Criteria for participation. Weiss (1994) suggested that in selecting participants, researchers should focus on those who will provide the data required by the study. Such was the case for this study. Participants were needed who could "contribute to building the opening and axial coding" (Creswell, 1998, p. 155). The process is also known as theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To participate in the interviews, individuals had to meet two criteria: (1) be willing to talk freely, and (2) be currently involved in work related to the formation of NEO's identity.

Type of sampling. Merriam (2009) suggested that for most qualitative research, nonprobability sampling is the method of choice, and the most common form is called purposeful. Purposeful sampling was employed (Kumar, Stern, & Anderson, 1993) to select key informants with insight into the formation of NEO's identity. This form of nonprobability sampling was used in my study since I wanted to "discover, understand, and gain insight" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77) and therefore I "selected a sample from which most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). This type of purposeful sampling is known as snowballing (Creswell, 1998, p. 152).

Sample size. NEO had 11 organizational members. An important decision related to how many NEO organizational members should be included in this study (Creswell, 1998). From previous conversations with NEO's president, it was decided that the initial sample size was expected to be four to seven members. Ultimately, six NEO members

were included in this study: the president, the founder, the cofounder, the treasurer, the vice president of pediatric health, and the physical fitness instructor.

Forms of Data

Creswell (1998) grouped data into four basic types: documents, observations, interviews, and audiovisual materials. These four types of data were gathered and provided insight as to how the content of OI emerged in NEO. Table 3.2 summarizes the data collection methods, including sample, strategy, and outcome.

Table 3.2
Overview of the Data Collection Methods, Including Sample, Strategy, and Outcome

Method	**Sample population**	**Strategy**	**Outcome**
Mining data from documents	Data sources: letter granting federal tax-exempt status, state incorporation document, strategic report, strategic plan report	Reviewed documents seeking internal and external contextual factors of labels and meanings	Familiarized the researcher with NEO; increased trustworthiness
Observations	Field notes from observations that occurred during public program activities	Developed observational interpretation profiles	Provided emergent themes; led to analysis of participants' responses and theoretical frames/ constructs, clarity, and more in-depth understanding; informed secondary research questions
Semistructured interviews	Six organizational members who met the criteria of being (1) willing to talk freely, and (2) currently involved in work related to the formation of NEO's identity	Held initial, follow-up, and final person-to-person, semistructured interviews with organizational members involved in the formation of the organization's identity	Provided emergent themes; led to analysis of participants' responses and theoretical frames/ constructs, clarity, and more in-depth understanding; informed secondary research questions
Audiovisual materials	Data source: NEO'S website	Reviewed materials seeking internal and external contextual factors of labels and meanings	Familiarized the researcher with NEO; increased trustworthiness

Following Gioia et al. (2010), Table 3.3 displays a detailed list of all data sources, as well as the audience and source for whom that information was created.

Table *3.3*
Types of Collected Data

Data type	**Quantity**	**Original source**	**Original (intended) audience**
Interviews	12	Informants	Analysis for this study
501(c)(3) status letter from Internal Revenue Service	1 page	Internal Revenue Service	Notification to NEO and public acknowledgment of NEO's tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) status
State of New York incorporation document	6 pages	State of New York	Notification of incorporation status; according to the New York State Department of State, clarification of what NEO is not (e.g., a hospital)
Strategic report	5 pages	Strategic Planning Committee	The State of New York, the Internal Revenue Service, and general audiences (e.g., donors, new board members)
NEO strategic plan report	6 pages	NEO's president	NEO Board of Directors Planning Committee
Observational data	Approximately 3 hours	Researcher's notes from NEO events	For data analysis
NEO website	5 web pages	NEO public website	External audiences

Documents. Data were gathered from documents to gain familiarity with NEO. Unlike interviews and observations, mining data from documents does not "intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the presence of the investigator does" (Merriam, 2009, p. 139). Documents included the 501(c)(3) status letter from the IRS, the State of New York incorporation document, strategic report, and NEO's strategic plan report. Merriam (2009) citing Guba and Lincoln (1981), stated, "The first and most important injunction to anyone looking for official records is to presume that if an event happened, some

record of it exists" (p. 139). As NEO obtained its 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status in March 2013, a copy of the public record was requested and received.

Observations. Another tool for collecting data was observations (Creswell, 1998). The theoretical foundation and conceptual framework, the problem, and the research questions determined what events I attended (Merriam, 2009). Patton (1990) suggested that observations provide data around the organization's identity, allowing for additional perspectives on the organization that are not gathered from documents or interviews.

NEO did not have a physical space; rather, members met virtually. Furthermore, the services that were provided to the public were rendered in external forums. I developed interpretation profiles that were developed from observations that occurred in the setting where NEO members engaged with each other and the public. All occurrences that I observed were during public program activities.

Merriam (2009) noted that "written accounts of the observations constitute field notes, which are analogous to the interview transcripts" (p. 128). Notes were jotted down during my observations and later recorded in detail. A digital recording was used to complete sections of the observance that were not written down. Merriam (2009) suggested that to recall data later, the researcher should pay attention during the observations, look for key words, concentrate on first and last words of the conversation, and play back remarks and scenes during breaks in the talking or observing.

Merriam (2009) provided a list of potential elements to observe, such as the participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors, and the researcher's own behavior as an observer. While observing the participants, I attempted to describe

who was in the scene or, in this case, at the public activities. I noted the number of NEO organizational members, their role (e.g., officers or doctors). An attempt was made to observe what was occurring, if there was a sequence of activities, and which members were connected to those activities. Interactions were very important to this study. Attempts were made to observe who interacted with whom, how frequently, who led the interactions, and how others responded. More important were the subtle factors: the informal, symbolic, and connotative meanings and words used by members during activities and interactions. Nonverbal communications, such as the dress code of the members, were also noted.

My behavior as an observer was very important. I was as much a part of the scene as the participants. I noted how my participation affected the scene, if I was acknowledged, or if I was asked questions about NEO or my presence at the events. Those became observer comments (Merriam, 2009). As a nonparticipant, I was an outsider of the group (Creswell, 1998); however, I did engage in a group activity as a community participant and not as a representative of NEO.

Semistructured interviews. DeMarrais (2004) defined interviews as "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (p. 55). This study utilized person-to-person interviews, defined by Merriam (2009) as "one person eliciting information from another" (p. 88). As a researcher based in Washington, DC, I did not have constant face-to-face access to NEO's organizational members who were located in New York City. Options for conducting interviews were via Skype or telephone. Creswell (1998) noted that a

"telephone interview provides the best source of information when the researcher does not have direct access to individuals" (p. 164).

The type of interview for my study was semistructured. During the participant engagement portion of my study, a series of semistructured interviews—initial, follow-up, and final—were conducted with organizational members involved in the formation of the organization's identity. Following Merriam's (2009, p. 89) recommendation for semistructured interviews, the interview questions were flexible. This format allowed me to "respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Also following the recommendations of Merriam (2009), this study followed Patton's (2002) six types of questions: experience and behavior questions (e.g., "Tell me about . . . "), opinion and values questions (e.g., "What is your opinion?"), feeling questions (e.g., "How do you feel?"), knowledge questions (e.g., "What do you know?"), sensory questions (e.g., "What was your behavior when you saw or heard . . . "), and background/demographics (e.g., number of months with NEO). Creswell (1998) offered several recommendations for the interview protocol document, such as placing space between the questions, memorizing the questions, and writing out closing comments. The interview protocol established for this study enabled notetaking during interviews.

Each of the six participants received a cover letter, informed consent form, an information sheet about the research study (see Appendix A), an email from the president inviting NEO members to participate in the research study (see Appendix D), and a copy of the letter from NEO's founding and current president approving the study. Once they provided their informed consent, interviews were scheduled at mutually agreeable times.

The interviews via telephone were captured using My Teamwork Conference and Collaboration Service™, a teleconference recorder. Recordings were transcribed at a later time. Each participant was assigned a unique identifier to ensure confidentiality. I noted the number of the interviewee and which aspect of NEO he or she represented (e.g., board of officers, doctors).

Audiovisual materials. NEO had a public web page. The website also included a "public forum," which was created to allow public response to NEO-generated topics. These audiovisual materials were included in the data collection process.

Field Issues

Creswell (1998) noted that building trust and credibility at the field site and getting people to respond are field issues. Opportunities to build face-to-face rapport with the organizational members of NEO were limited during this study. I traveled to New York City on several occasions to meet with the members to conduct interviews and observe two public presentations. During August to October 2013, members of the organization came together only to provide services; they did not have in-person organizational meetings.

Storing Data

Creswell (1998) offered some principles about data storage and handling, such as backing up computer files, using high-quality audiotapes, developing a master list of types of information gathered, protecting anonymity, and developing a data collection matrix. Each day that I worked on the dissertation, I backed up computer files on two

thumb drives, into four email accounts, and on two laptops. I developed a master list of types of information gathered and used pseudonyms to protect anonymity. I also developed a data collection matrix (see Appendix E).

Determining Data Saturation

As indicated earlier, data collection and analysis was an iterative process for generating theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Therefore, I had a strategy for knowing when to stop gathering data. Charmaz (2006) suggested that researchers should stop when the categories are saturated. She explained that saturation may occur when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of the researcher's core theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113). Charmaz (2006) cited Glaser (2011) in stating that "saturation is not seeing the same pattern over and over again, it is the conceptualization of comparisons of these incidents which yield different properties of the pattern, until no new properties of the pattern emerges" (p. 113). Charmaz (2006, p. 114) offered the following questions, which were used to determine data saturation for this research:

- Which comparisons did I make between data within and between categories?
- What sense did I make of these comparisons?
- Where did they lead me?
- How did my comparisons illuminate my theoretical categories?
- In what other directions, if any, did they take me?
- What new conceptual relationships, if any, did I see?

Data Analysis and Representation

Creswell's (1998) "data collection spiral" consists of several steps: (a) organizing the data; (b) reading and memoing; (c) describing, classifying, and interpreting data into codes and themes; and (d) representing and visualizing the data (Figure 3.3).

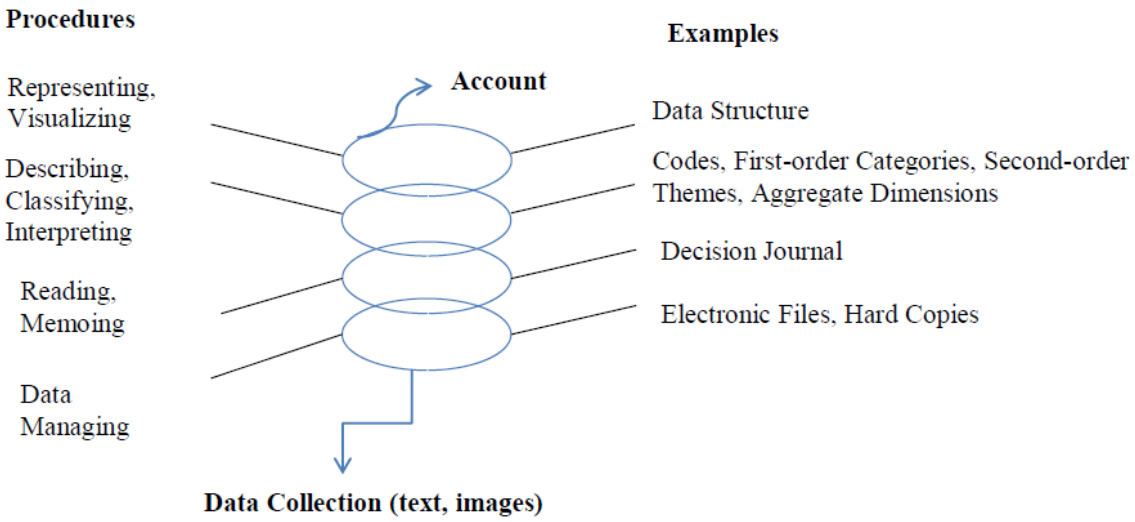

Figure 3.3. Creswell's (1998) data analysis spiral (p. 143).

Managing the Data

In Creswell's (1998) data analysis spiral, the first loop is managing the data. For this study, both electronic and hard copy files were developed. I created documents in Word. In addition, I printed out the documents frequently.

Reading and Memoing

Memoing (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990) is the process of documenting thoughts about the process of analysis, possible theoretical explanations, and personal experiences related to analysis. Charmaz (2006) noted that a pivotal step between data collection and writing drafts for papers is memo writing, as this process prompts the

researcher to "analyze data and codes early in the research process" (p. 72). Creswell (1998) suggested that researchers should write notes in the margins of field notes or transcripts. I developed a decision journal to capture the memos, which were short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occurred to me. In this decision journal, I "caught my thoughts, captured the comparisons and connections, and crystallized questions and directions" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72).

As a prerequisite, Charmaz (2006) recommended that researchers "study the emerging data" (p. 80). According to Charmaz, the researcher should first identify the topic with a very specific title and then write. Following Charmaz's (2006) recommendations, I asked myself a number of questions as I collected the data, including (1) what was going on in the field setting, (2) what people were doing, (3) what people were saying, and (4) what connections I could make. During the construction of the more advanced memos, I traced and categorized data subsumed by my topic, described how categories emerged, identified the beliefs and assumptions that I had that supported those beliefs, and discussed the topics from various vantage points (Charmaz, 2006).

Describing, Classifying, and Interpreting Data: First-Order Concepts, Second-Order Themes, and Aggregate Dimensions

Coding software. To aid in coding and analyzing text throughout the entire process (Clark et al., 2010), I used Atlas.ti, a software program that supports qualitative research. The software allowed me to collect, organize, and analyze content from interviews, documents, and observations. The software is designed to handle documents collected during a study, such as Word documents, PDFs, and web pages. As the data

analysis involved constant comparison and theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the software allowed me to work through information, highlighting key points, and facilitated fast recall or analysis. This software also allowed the storage of this project's database and research materials as a single file. The software's query tools assisted me in efforts to uncover subtle trends.

Coding. Miles and Huberman (1994) classified codes into three types: (a) descriptive (i.e., the broadest codes, which attribute some aspects of the phenomenon to a segment of the data), (b) interpretive (i.e., codes that begin to ascribe meaning to the phenomenon in an effort to provide explanation), and (c) patterns (i.e., codes that allow for the emergence of themes within the data). The data analysis method used in Corley and Gioia's (2004) investigation of OI change was useful in my study of OI formation. The methods included developing first-order codes, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions. Following Corley (2004), Table 3.4 depicts the template for my analytical framework.

Table 3.4
Template for Analytical Framework

First-order category	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
First-order category		
First-order category	Second-order themes	
First-order category		
First-order category	Second-order themes	
First-order category		

Initial review of documents. From the document review, I noticed that NEO members had known each other as friends, through a community-based initiative, and through a State of New York not-for-profit organization prior to becoming a federal

501(c)(3) public charity. I sorted the collected data into phases, which corresponded to how the members had organized themselves in the past. I coded only Phase IV, the federal 501(c)(3) public charity phase.

First-order concepts. I used Atlas.ti to identify important quotations. Then I converted the quotations into first-order concepts of the data. This technique was used by Corley and Gioia (2004) and is called open coding. Corley and Gioia (2004) noted that whenever possible, "conceptual coding used in-vivo (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) or first order (Van Maanen, 1979) codes (i.e., language used by the informants)" (p. 183). In addition, when an in vivo code was unavailable, they used a simple descriptive phrase. Short phrases, expressed in first-order terms, were used to avoid any violation of confidentiality agreements.

Second-order themes (axial coding). As prescribed by other researchers (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Clark et al., 2010), I used "second-order analysis to view the data at a higher level of theoretical abstraction" (Clark et al., 2010, p. 407). Corley and Gioia (2004) suggested that this phase should include axial coding (i.e., searching for relationships between and among these categories). In this phase, I combined first-order concepts into major themes of interest and used "the constant comparative method" (Clark et al., 2010, p. 407) by "repeatedly comparing data over time and across informants" (Clark et al., 2010, p. 407). As indicated earlier, pattern codes allowed for the emergence of themes within the data. The intent of this method was to identify patterns of similarity or differences that emerged from the data during the analysis process.

Aggregate dimensions. The major themes were assembled into aggregate dimensions (Corley & Gioia, 2004). As noted by Clark et al. (2010), to simplify groupings, this process involved examining the relationships among first-order concepts and second-order themes. Once the themes were developed, a deductive approach was selected as an analytic framework in order to categorize the data. The theoretical foundation (i.e., OI theory), perspective of this study (i.e., social constructionist perspective) and conceptual framework (i.e., OI formation processes, OI labels, and the meanings associated with those labels) were applied to the findings.

Theoretical sampling. Another strategy that I used to narrow the research focus on emerging categories was theoretical sampling. This strategy "involved starting with data, constructing tentative ideas about the data, and then examining these ideas through further empirical inquiry" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 102). This step helped to elaborate the meaning of this study's categories, discover variation within them, and define gaps among categories. Charmaz (2006) explained that "gaps between categories imply that the current categories do not account for the full range of relevant experience" (p. 108).

Representing and Visualizing the Data

In Creswell's (1998) final phase of the spiral, he suggested that researchers represent the data by packaging what was found. For this study, the data were presented in a data structure.

A sorting strategy provided a "means of creating and refining theoretical links and a way to work on theoretical integration of categories" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 117).

Charmaz's (2006) suggestions for sorting, comparing, and integrating memos (p. 117) were followed:

- sorted memos by the title of each category
- compared categories
- considered how their order reflects the studied experience
- thought of how their order fits the logic of the categories
- create the best possible balance between the studied experience, the categories, and the theoretical statements about them (p. 117)

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was enhanced by its qualitative design. To ensure trustworthiness and seek corroboration across data sources and methods for this study, Guba's (1981) criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries were considered. Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggested that the four major concerns relating to trustworthiness are (a) truth value, (b) applicability, (c) consistency, and (d) neutrality. Table 3.5 depicts the scientific and naturalistic terms appropriate to the four aspects of trustworthiness (Guba, 1981).

Table 3.5
The Scientific and Naturalistic Terms Appropriate to the Four Aspects of Trustworthiness

Aspect	Scientific term	Naturalistic term
Truth value	Internal validity	Credibility
Applicability	External validity, generalizability	Transferability
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability
Neutrality	Objectivity	Conformability

Note. From Guba, 1981.

To address the study's *truth value,* I was concerned with testing the credibility of findings and interpretations with the various sources, the organizational members, from which data were collected. Guba referred to this testing of credibility process as doing

member checks. Both member checks and peer examination are discussed in more detail below.

To address *applicability,* I assumed that generalizations were impossible because the phenomenon of adopting OI labels and creating and negotiating meanings for those labels is intimately tied to the time and the context in which it is found (Guba, 1981). However, there is the possibility of transferability between two similar contexts. To aid in determining transferability, a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the study context was provided. As a naturalist, I did not attempt to form generalizations that will hold in all times and in all places (Guba, 1981).

To address *consistency,* I interpreted it as dependability, "a concept that embraces elements both of the stability implied by the rationalistic term reliable and of the trackability required by explainable changes in instrumentation" (Guba, 1981, p. 80). Aspects of dependability are discussed in the section below on data convergence and saturation.

To address *neutrality,* I recognized that my own predispositions may have become factors as I used myself as an instrument in this study. I willed the burden of neutrality on me, focusing on the conformability of the data produced (Guba, 1981; Scriven, 1972). The section below on bias discusses this issue in more depth.

Triangulation

As with other qualitative methods, the classic tradition of triangulation (Denzin, 1989) was used to enhance reliability and credibility (Patton, 1991) and to serve as a tool to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For quality assurance, my study

triangulated the data sources (Denzin, 1989) and participants engaged in the research process (i.e., through members checks). The findings of my study came from interview data, observation data, and analysis of documents and audiovisual material. Because I started with collecting documents and audiovisual material before moving iteratively through the interviews and observations, I identified terms and phrases of interest that appeared to be evidence of emerging OI labels. My interpreted OI labels were then triangulated through the interviews and observation data. Because the findings presented as OI labels did appear in all four evidence sources and the OI label meanings from the interviews and triangulated by the member checks and peer examination, I have high confidence that these items are indeed the content of NEO's OI, i.e., its OI labels and OI label meanings. Furthermore, interviews were an opportunity to see which terms/phrases used by individual members moved from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level.

Member Checks

All 12 transcripts were reviewed and approved by the interviewees. This action is a form of a member check, defined by Merriam (1998) as "taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (p. 204). Within 24 hours of the interview, I gave each interviewee the opportunity to change any portion of the transcript. None of the six interviewees changed the transcripts. In subsequent conversations either in person or during observations, members were allowed to clarify points made during the interview.

However, these clarifications did not affect the overall intent of the transcript, but instead added some additional information that did not affect the coding.

Peer Examination

I also used peer examination to enhance the *truth value,* as I was concerned with testing the credibility of findings and interpretations with the various sources. I sent all three dissertation committee members several of the transcripts along with an early coding schema. I asked them to review the transcript using the schema as well as to add additional codes that they believed were important based on themes in the data. No additional codes were added. Furthermore, I participated in two data collection meetings, one with two dissertation committee members and a second with the third dissertation committee member. Prior to each meeting I created a 1-page summary of my initial findings. After discussion with the peer examiners (i.e., dissertation committee), I presented this summary of the findings to the research site for review. This summary included the list of interpreted OI labels and their associated meanings and a description of the emergent processes of the OI labels and the creation and negotiation processes of their associated meanings.

Researcher's Role and Bias

There are three forms of bias that this dissertation accounted for: researcher, role, and response/nonresponse. Because my work responsibility includes OI change, and my organization's mission is similar to that of NEO, to control researcher bias, data were collected and triangulated from four different sources. Second, to address role bias,

because the research focuses on members who by their very nature have a bias towards a certain view, I also used the organization's documents and audiovisual materials as an objective lens. To account for nonresponse bias, I made additional efforts to ascertain informal perceptions and to glean insights during public events attended and documents and audiovisual materials reviewed.

Miles and Huberman noted that the law of instrumentation says that what "we think exists and that which we believe to really exist are completely determined by the instruments we use to research such beliefs" (1994, p. 56). The choice of conceptual instruments influences how reality is created. For this study, an action frame of reference based on assumptions of collectives and social constructions of reality were biases. The questions and analytical frameworks selected to analyze the interview and observational data were based on these assumptions. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that the challenge is to be "explicitly mindful of the purposes of study and of the conceptual lenses on it—while allowing oneself to be open and to be reeducated by the things we don't know or expect to find" (p. 56).

The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in a qualitative study. According to Creswell (1998), the role of the researcher is based on merit, time spent in the field, and rapport established with the participants. Lastly, in the role of the researcher, experiences are critical to the merit of the study (LeCompte, Preissle, & Tesch, 1993). Thus, my experience in organizations was considered relevant and useful. As the researcher, I captured insights and reflections in field notes throughout the data collection and data analysis phases. These insights were useful during the data analysis and later in the interpretation and recommendation sections.

Convergence of Findings and Data Saturation

Adding to the trustworthiness of the study, during the data analysis phase, I achieved convergence and saturation of data. As the researcher, I conducted interviews, observed, and collected documents and audiovisual material. As more data were collected iteratively, the findings converged into patterns that remained stable through the end of data collection. This convergence gave me confidence that what was being uncovered were OI labels and their associated meanings. Furthermore, the observation data (of physical activities and educational seminars) demonstrated identity in action. The observations were excellent opportunities to gather first-hand data that supported that what was being recorded as an OI label was an OI label and not an individual term/phrase. The documents were analyzed at the beginning of the data collection period.

I determined that data saturation had been reached when no new—only supporting and reinforcing—data emerged from the interviews. Once I interpreted that only four terms moved from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level and became OI labels, I sought to understand the emergence process for each OI label. This involved analyzing the data related to a specific term/phrase. For example, it is my interpretation that the emergence process of personal value identity orientation helped to facilitate the phrase "focused on diabetes" moving from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level, where it became an OI label. Collectively, the members had a connection to the disease of diabetes. This connection influenced the members' values of participating in activities to stay healthy and inviting others to participate. After I interpreted that this process helped to facilitate the specific OI label "focused on diabetes," I began to seek other OI labels that emerged as a result of the emergence

process of personal value identity orientation. I continued this technique until each OI label had a respective emergence process.

After I interpreted which processes were involved in the emergence of OI labels at the intersubjective level, I began seeking new emergence processes for the four OI labels. I reviewed the data that emerged from the different sources, seeking new themes related to the facilitation of movement of terms/phrase from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level. After further analysis, data supported a new theme that represented the process of the founder, an emergency physician, and other medical professionals having a professional connection and wanting to help patients before they arrive at the emergency room. This was a distinctively new theme. I then made changes to the theme "personal value identity orientation" and added a new theme, "professional value identity orientation." This technique was also used to identify the creation themes of the OI label meanings. This technique was followed until no new themes emerged to represent the emergence processes of OI labels and the creation processes of the OI label meanings.

Human Subjects

The study faced ethical dilemmas typical in organizational research. The purpose of the study, methods, confidentiality/anonymity concerns, and the volunteer nature of the study were reviewed with each participant before he or she provided informed consent. The data that were collected will remain confidential, and results have been written in such a way that NEO and the participants are not identifiable. Procedures were administered in accordance with human subject guidelines. All procedures required by

the Graduate School of Education and Human Development and the Office of Human Research institutional review board were followed.

CHAPTER 4:

FINDINGS

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the relationship between the emergence of organizational identity (OI) labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings during the OI formation processes of a newly established organization. The findings presented in this chapter answer the research questions related to this purpose. First, the findings present a description of the three developmental stages that occurred prior to the designation of NEO as a federal 501(c)(3) public charity (i.e., friends, community-based initiative, and State of New York not-for-profit corporation), which offers a context for the findings presented later in the chapter. The chapter then presents the findings that respond to the first two secondary research questions: (1a) *What are the OI labels used to describe the newly established organization?* and (1b) *What are the meanings associated with those OI labels?* The next section addresses the overarching research question, highlighting five OI label emergence processes—personal values orientation, professional values orientation, enactment of practices from their past, similarity to like organizations, and assimilation of legitimizing feedback—and addressing how the content of OI emerged in this newly established organization. The chapter concludes with the findings for Research Question 1c: *How are the meanings associated with OI labels negotiated during the OI formation processes?* This part discusses OI label meaning creation processes through the enactment of activities and beliefs.

Developmental Stages Before Initiation of the Public Charity

Before presenting the emergent processes, it is important to gain a sense of NEO's identity as it existed prior to the OI formation process, which began in March 2013 as NEO was designated a federal 501(c)(3) public charity. One of the key aspects in the research design was the opportunity for me to gain access to public documents created for and about NEO right away. This enabled me to develop a basis for comparison with data gathered as the interviews began. The following account of NEO's pre-OI formation process thus emerged from early conversations with the president, as well as documentation available in both company archives and external databases.

The developmental stage *friends* does not represent an organization; therefore, the identity of the collective involved in this time period is described as a group of friends. The developmental stage *community initiative* represents the time period prior to becoming a corporation. The developmental stage *State of New York not-for-profit (i.e., pre-NEO)* acknowledges the existence of an organization; however, the members of this not-for-profit then applied for and received the designation as a federal public charity and were recognized as a newly established organization as of March 2013. The developmental time period that began in March 2013 represents the recognition of NEO as a federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS) 501(c)(3) public charity and is discussed in later sections of this chapter.

Friends

A close friend of NEO members died from complications due to diabetes. Amongst themselves, the group of friends discussed that they were gaining a few

unwanted pounds and may also be at risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The cofounder of NEO explained:

> We decided to start working on ourselves. As a typical form of exercise, the founder, a close friend, and I were working out at a local gym and playing basketball. Friends were getting sick, letting themselves go. We were determined to stay physically fit. As a group, we wanted to motivate each other.

For the group of friends, the disease known as diabetes was an issue that was personal to them.

The group of friends felt that they should not limit their workout to themselves. "We realized in our community there wasn't a lot of support to be healthy," said the current treasurer of NEO. He continued, "And when I say in our community, I'm thinking the Bronx. Our predominant focus is in the Bronx. That's where we focus on keeping people healthy out here." The current national president of NEO explained:

> There were certain activities that we were doing on our own to try and encourage ourselves and those within our network of individuals to do so. And the idea was: Why not establish an organization and do more with it?

In addition to concern with the health of close friends, the founder of NEO, who is also an emergency room physician, often shared stories of his patients with his friends. The founder explained, "The organization was started based on the need, what I felt we needed in our community." He continued:

> As a physician, everybody I see in the hospital has diabetes. It's the norm. I want to educate people about diabetes. At work I educate people about type 2. I also educate my close group of friends. Type 2, it's acquired. That means we can change this. I have been preaching this for many years with them and my close friends.

Corroborating the conversation of the founder of NEO, the cofounder stated, “The founder was telling us about a patient at work who was less than 40 and had diabetes.”

Community Initiative

What started out as an activity with friends soon snowballed into a community-based initiative. The founder of NEO stated, “We could mesh what we like to do, be active, be educators, and bring awareness to our community.” The initiative was geared towards promotion of health via exercise and proper diet. The group’s organizers began to modify their workout routine to incorporate more people, add other physical fitness activities, and include educational awareness seminars. The cofounder of NEO stated, ”They don’t have the knowledge, so we educate them.” He continued:

> We tell them to choose water over soda, cut down on snacks. So we went to the gym and had about 20 people join us. We incorporated women, cardio, and we invited people for the next one. At the next event we decided to go to the gym and focus on physical fitness. We made it reoccurring. It was a good turnout. Then people started talking about other things they could do. One friend said, “I do martial arts.” Another said, “I do Zumba and yoga.” We incorporated cycling also.

In addition to adding different forms of physical activity to the workout regime, the group decided to further use the expertise of some of its members with medical training. The cofounder of NEO stated:

> The founder and his wife suggested we take blood pressures and [hemoglobin] A1C. We did this while people were in the gym. We did biking. We would always take blood sugar [levels] and give tips on how to get it down. We told ourselves: Make that the focus.

The members of the community initiative were not the only group noticing the problems of type 2 diabetes in the community. The cofounder of NEO stated, “In the

newspaper, diabetes was an epidemic. We heard about a hospital that wanted to start something in the community, but the hospital did not want to make it official. We realized that we have something here." The national president of NEO stated that a "nonprofit could be used to get things done." The founder of NEO said:

> We could not just focus on the giving charity part, we had to take the next steps and get the documents. We talked about that: If we are going to do it then we need to do the official stuff, the paperwork, file for incorporation.

The initiative's organizers began to think about becoming more official. The national president of NEO stated:

> The founder of NEO spoke of the potential to be an established nonprofit and being able to address the area within the health need. The organizational structure of a not-for-profit was a better fit for the mission of the new organization. The focus was diabetes because it was something that affected some of our families.

To start the process of filing for incorporation status with the State of New York, the collective had to make some critical decisions about their OI, *who they were to become as an organization.*

State of New York Corporation

Expanding from a group of friends to a community-based initiative into a legal corporation required more structure and intentionality of programs and routines. The group of friends looked for experts from the healthcare profession to help form the corporation preceding NEO. As a member of a social fraternity, the founder of NEO had a passion for serving the community. The founder stated:

> We took this idea back to the fraternity. The fraternity did not feel that this was their mission. I was saddened because most of the members in this current nonprofit are also part of my fraternity. We thought it would be a good fit.

The cofounder of NEO explained, “We had friends join to help people in the community.” When asked about the first meeting to decide on the structure of the corporation, the founder replied, “We talked about how to get more people to help us.” He continued:

> We still talked about how to expand to include the community at large. We were all in agreement. We wanted to involve strangers. We knew we needed our core group to join. I personally spoke to the 10 core people. I am happy to say they are all educated and was excited about starting. So I had a formal meeting, a roundtable. We shared the vision. The core group met at my house. There were probably 10 to 12. At that meeting we decided to have an official organization. I was excited that they wanted to do this. I mean, we were already helping each other. We talked about that—the ultimate goal, the vision. It was to have the organization be involved in the immediate community, in the Bronx. We wanted to replicate the programs in the other five boroughs and make it citywide. We wanted to take this national, then worldwide. That was the vision I gave to the group. That was what I told them. That was our first official meeting.

The founder of NEO smiled as he said, “Before they left, each person had accepted an official position.”

The development of the new corporation began to take form. The group needed a formal leader. The cofounder of NEO stated in regards to the founding president, “He is great at business organizing, dealing with nonprofits, spreadsheets, and taxes. He became president. He is good at those things, making it official.”

On June 14, 2012, the friends, and then community initiative, became an official corporation. A letter and certificate were received from the first deputy secretary of state for the State of New York. The letter declared that the corporation was a not-for-profit. Internally, pre-NEO officials began to create documents and create a website to describe and market pre-NEO Inc. Table 4.1 outlines the programs and routines of pre-NEO.

Table 4.1
Organizational Structure of the New York Not-for-Profit

Area	**Focus**
The company	A New York–based, nonprofit organization established to provide education on the scope of diabetes, while encouraging healthy lifestyles and promoting disease prevention to at-risk communities in the greater New York area
The mission	To combat diabetes through prevention and education efforts
Activities	a. Basic diabetic screening b. Education seminars (e.g., glycemic index, dancing, and physical fitness) c. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention diabetes prevention programs d. Nutrition education/consultation
Target market	Reflects its community, without excluding anyone based on race, religion, or sexual orientation. However, its focus was on those aged 25 to 45. It embraced those who suffer from the disease regardless of their prospects, provided they are willing to transition to a place of enhanced mind-body-spirit wellness.
Operations	Targeted the first quarter of 2013 to begin the education health seminars (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention diabetes prevention programs). The seminars would focus on prevention through lifestyle intervention. The delivery would involve a hybrid design, including both an in-person classroom setting and a web-based approach. There would also be a focus on nutrition and fitness. The management team would be deployed in a manner that focused on their individual area of expertise in an effort to address the specific needs of the program. Participants would benefit from nutrition education, fitness, and a thorough understanding of the disease.

A second public document obtained from NEO's president outlined the State of New York not-for-profit's intention to become a federal 501(c)(3) public charity. Findings from that document suggest that in November 2012, the officials submitted an application to the IRS as well as paperwork for a New York State charity registration. The soon-to-be board of directors for NEO engaged in board and management meetings weekly. The record also indicates that two public events were scheduled: (1) a lifestyle intervention initiation class to be held in January 2013 and (2) a lifestyle intervention weekend retreat to be held sometime in the second quarter of 2013. In March 2013, the organization received its status as NEO, a federal 501(c)(3) public charity.

Research Question 1a: OI Labels Used to Describe the Newly Established Organization

The content of an organization's identity content is not fully disclosed by simply asking the direct question, "How does the content of OI emerge in a newly established organization?" Gioia et al. (2000) noted that the content of OI includes two tangled aspects: OI labels and OI label meanings. Therefore, I investigated the terms/phrases separately from their associated meanings through a series of techniques and questions. The most effective method for untangling the terms from their associated meanings during an interview was by asking the respondents to (1) tell a story about what was central and distinctive about NEO; (2) describe how members individually and collectively constructed their activities (e.g., formal and informal interactions, business practices, staff meetings, problem-solving meetings, strategic planning sessions) in order to provide meaning to their organizational experience; (3) describe how new ideas were introduced and adopted by the organization; (4) describe what term(s) or label(s) NEO members used to describe itself as an organization; and (5) describe the meanings of those labels. This group of questions revealed additional information not disclosed in responses to the direct question technique. These combined questions gave the findings trustworthiness and me confidence that what indeed were found were the OI labels and the OI label meanings of the newly established organization.

Findings showed four OI labels, here labeled "healthcare practitioner driven," "not-for-profit," "educators," and "focused on diabetes." Two additional terms or phrases are also discussed in this section: "young" and "African American-based." Each term or

phrase is discussed in terms of its use at the intrasubjective level ("I think . . .") and its emergence at the intersubjective level ("we think . . .").

OI Label 1: Healthcare Practitioner Driven

Intrasubjective level. Evidence from interviews with the founder suggested the presence of the phrase "healthcare practitioner driven" at the intrasubjective ("I think") level. When the founder was asked what term(s) or phrase(s) describe NEO as an organization, one response was, "We are a different organization because we are healthcare practitioner driven."

Intersubjective level. Similar to the founder, NEO's organizational members used the phrase "healthcare practitioner" to describe NEO as an organization. This suggests that there was an "interchange and synthesis of two, or more, communicating selves" (Wiley, 1988, p. 258). When asked what term(s) or phrase(s) NEO members currently used to describe NEO as an organization, the cofounder stated, "The founder pitched the idea of being a healthcare driven organization to some nurses and other friends of his who were medical professionals."

Evidence from documents suggested the emergence of the OI label "healthcare practitioner driven" at the intersubjective ("we think") level. For example, NEO's website provides a list of its governing body, referred to as doctors/officers. Six of the 12 governing members were physicians.

OI Label 2: Not-for-profit

Intrasubjective level. Evidence from interviews with the founder suggested the presence of the phrase "not-for-profit" at the intrasubjective ("I think") level. When the founder was asked what term(s) or phrase(s) described NEO as an organization, a second reply was, "I would say that NEO is first of all a charity."

Intersubjective level. Similar to the founder, NEO's organizational members used the term "not-for-profit" to describe NEO as an organization. For example, the current vice president of pediatric health stated, "NEO is a not-for-profit organization. We are not getting any financial reward out of this. So yes, it is in that case a not-for-profit." Evidence from documents created by NEO suggested the emergence of the OI label "not-for-profit" at the intersubjective ("we think") level. One document described NEO as

> a New York based, non-profit organization established for the purpose of providing education on the scope of diabetes, while encouraging healthy lifestyles and promoting disease prevention to at-risk communities in the greater New York area.

OI Label 3: Educators

Intrasubjective level. Evidence from interviews with the founder supports the presence of the term "educators" at the intrasubjective ("I think") level. When the founder was asked what term(s) or phrase(s) describe NEO as an organization, a third response was, "I want to educate people about diabetes. At work, I educate people about type 2. I also educate my close group of friends." Evidence from observations also suggested this term at the intrasubjective level. During a visit, I witnessed NEO's

founder, cofounder, vice president of pediatric health, and a yoga instructor provide educational information about diabetes, eating healthy, and active living to participants at a community health fair.

Intersubjective level. Similar to the founder, NEO's organizational members used the term "educators" to describe NEO as an organization. During an interview, the vice president of pediatric health commented, "The focus to want to educate people, it very much identifies us. Educators is definitely a term that we use." The national president stated, "I definitely think that education is part of what we want to do and set out to do. We educate." The cofounder stated:

> I believe that educators are a good way to describe who we are. We have nutritionist and medical doctors working with us. We have a lot of people who are in it and who can educate others. Folks—those that might not know what to eat or how to go about it—we educate those who have a bad diet, those on borderline of having prediabetes, and those who have it about some of those things they can do to prevent it and reverse it. So I would say, yes, there is an educator's portion as well in what we do.

Evidence from documents suggested the emergence of the OI label "educators" at the intersubjective ("we think") level. In documents developed by NEO, tentative dates were listed for NEO's lifestyle intervention course. In addition, NEO received approval by the State of New York to become health educators. Table 4.2 depicts the documents supporting the emergence of the OI label "educators."

Table 4.2
Documentary Evidence Supporting the Emergence of the OI Label "Educators"

…through education and a healthy lifestyle (Document)
Conducting group fitness classes (Document)
Education seminars (Document)
Healthy lifestyle and international health promotion (Document)
HMO health fair (Document)
Lifestyle intervention weekend retreat (Document)

OI Label 4: Focused on Diabetes

Intrasubjective level. When the founder was asked what term(s) or phrase(s) described NEO as an organization, a fourth response from NEO's founder was, "Diabetes is what I felt was important." Evidence from observations suggested the presence of the OI label "focused on diabetes" at the intrasubjective ("I think") level. During my visit with NEO on August 17, 2013, I witnessed some someone asking, "What is NEO?" The founder responded, "We are an organization against diabetes" (Observation 1).

Intersubjective level. Similar to the founder, NEO's organizational members used the phrase "focused on diabetes" to describe NEO as an organization. When asked what term(s) or phrase(s) NEO members currently used to describe NEO as an organization, the cofounder responded, "Diabetes is the main one we definitely focus on. We feel it is so prevalent in all ages, which is why we identify with it the most. It could be the face of what we do. It is prevalent to where we live." The vice president of pediatric health stated, "I think diabetes is our main focus." The current national president corroborated, "Diabetes is what we are focused on."

Evidence from documents suggested the emergence of the OI label "focused on diabetes" at the intersubjective ("we think") level. NEO's website had a page specifically designed to educate people about diabetes:

> Diabetes, sometimes just referred to as "sugar," is a really common condition that can cause all kinds of trouble—even death—but can usually be prevented or controlled by a combination of common sense, healthy diet and plenty of exercise. Diabetes comes in two flavors. One is the kind you usually get when really young and means you don't have enough insulin. You can't usually prevent it but many of the complications can be avoided by the careful use of insulin, eating right and

> maintaining plenty of physical activity. The other you get as you get older and majorly related to eating badly and gaining weight. Your body still has insulin but it doesn't work so well because excess fat neutralizes the insulin's effects.

Term: Young

Intrasubjective level. The intrasubjective represents the individual level of analysis (i.e., "I think") and is not limited to the founder of an organization. In the case of NEO, several members expressed their own (intrasubjective; i.e., "I think") individual cognitions of NEO as being young.

Intersubjective level. Although the cofounder stated, "The organization is young, very new," and the national president stated, "That's part of growing up. We have to figure out what we want to do," there was limited evidence from interviews, observations, and documents that suggested there was an "interchange and synthesis of two, or more, communicating selves" (Wiley, 1988, p. 258) that the organizational members were using the term "young" collectively to describe NEO as an organization.

Phrase: African American-Based

Intrasubjective level. The treasurer expressed his opinion of the importance of highlighting the fact that NEO was established by African Americans. "We are an African American-based organization that is trying to take a proactive role to help our community." When asked why the term "African American-based" was important to NEO, the treasurer explained:

> We try to back away from it often, but we have to go back to it. We are an African American-based organization that is trying to take a proactive role to help out community. I think that's a key point that describes the organization. African American is a big part of who we are.

In another interview the treasurer stated:

> Being mostly African Americans may also hinder us in reaching the populations that we want. We have African Americans coming, but some of the other groups like Latinos don't participate with us. This part of the Bronx is heavily Latino, but they see that we are black and the participants are black, and that may turn off the Latinos.

Intersubjective level. Evidence from interviews or documents did not suggest the presence of the OI label "African American-based organization" at the intersubjective ("we think") level.

Research Question 1b: Associated Meanings of OI Labels

The respective meanings of OI labels represent the collective thoughts, feelings, and intentions (Linell & Markova, 1993; Weick, 1995) of the OI labels. As meanings are the thoughts, feelings, and intentions, only evidence that was collected during the interviews supported the creation of OI label meanings. Therefore, the OI label meanings were not triangulated.

Four terms/phrases moved from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level where they became OI labels. Each OI label had a respective meaning. Table 4.3 lists those four OI labels and their respective meanings.

Table 4.3
OI Labels and Their Created Associated Meanings for NEO

OI label	Associated meanings of the OI label
Educators	• Conducts community outreach activities (e.g., physical fitness activities).
Focused on diabetes	• Offers prevention activities for those who do not have diabetes • Offers management and care for those living with diabetes
Healthcare practitioner driven	• Has a board of directors predominantly comprising physicians

OI label	Associated meanings of the OI label
Not-for-profit	• Provides no direct monetary profit to NEO members • Gives back to the community • Has a good business structure for people to donate funds • Allows those who donate to receive tax deductions

OI Label Meanings: Healthcare Practitioner Driven

When asked what the OI label "healthcare practitioner driven" meant to NEO, the founder stated, "Having medical professionals serve on the board." The current vice president of pediatric health stated, "What is unique is that we are mostly physicians. We are either working in healthcare or fitness."

OI Label Meanings: Not-for-profit

Evidence from interviews suggested the creation of four associated meanings for the OI label "not-for-profit" at the intersubjective ("we think") level. When the members said that NEO was a not-for-profit organization, their collective thoughts, feelings, and intentions (i.e., meanings) about the symbolic expression (i.e., OI label) "not-for-profit" were that NEO (1) provides no direct monetary profit for NEO members; (2) gives back to the community; (3) has a good business structure for people to donate funds; and (4) allows those who donate to receive tax deductions.

When asked what the OI label "not-for-profit" meant to NEO, the founder stated, "We are not trying to amass wealth." The current treasurer replied, "Our efforts do not necessarily bring profit."

A second meaning of the OI label that was created at the intersubjective level was that NEO gives back to the community. The current treasurer stated, "One of the things that the organization is focused on is doing community outreach, but the main thing is to give back to our community by doing community outreach." This sentiment was echoed by the cofounder who said, "It means to give back."

Having a way to raise funds and allowing donors to receive tax deductions were the third and fourth NEO meanings of the OI label "not-for-profit." The cofounder stated, "The president sent a group text saying we now have 501(c)(3) status." He continued:

> Then we discussed it at the Wednesday meeting. He explained what it means when we raise funds for the initiatives that we have. To me it means that it would just be easier to solicit funds and raise funds and not have to worry about the tax portion of it. We talked about being tax exempt. . . . The other aspects of it are to raise funds.

These connected meanings were corroborated by both the founder who said, "We could raise funds to do this," and the current national president who said, "We always talk about how we can raise funds for our initiatives."

Evidence from NEO's website indicated that NEO intended to solicit funds from donors. For example, a section on NEO's website was titled "Donate Today." In addition to the website, NEO's leaders created a strategic planning document that included a fundraising strategy. A section documenting the financial strategy indicated that NEO was a new nonprofit organization and as part of its development cycle would continue to raise funds to support its operation.

Evidence from documents created by external sources also indicated that NEO intended to solicit funds. For example, a document received from the State of New York

stated: “Contributions to you are deductible under section 170 of the Code. You are also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under section 2055, 2106 or 2522 of the Code.”

OI Label Meanings: Educators

Evidence from interviews suggested the creation of one associated meaning for the OI label “educators” at the intersubjective (“we think”) level. When the members said that NEO was an organization focused on educating the community, their collective thoughts, feelings, and intentions (i.e., meanings) about the symbolic expression (i.e., OI label) “educators” were that NEO conducts community outreach activities such as bike rides. When asked what the OI label “educators” meant to him, the founder said:

> I want to educate people about diabetes. We do physical fitness activities, focus on the awareness of the effects of diabetes, being active, living a healthy lifestyle, and educating our community on how their lifestyle can affect them. So we educate people and teach physical fitness.

The treasurer stated, “For our educational piece, it’s about increasing the well-being and [being] conscious of one’s lifestyle.”

OI Label Meanings: Focused on Diabetes

Evidence from interviews suggested the creation of three associated meanings for the OI label “focused on diabetes” at the intersubjective (“we think”) level. When the members said that NEO was an organization focused on diabetes, their collective thoughts, feelings, and intentions (i.e., meanings) about the symbolic expression (i.e., OI label) were (1) we are focused on diabetes prevention, (2) we are focused on those

affected by type 2 diabetes, and (3) we are focused on both the prevention of diabetes and those affected by diabetes.

When asked what the OI label "focused on diabetes" meant to him, the founder said, "Type 2, it's acquired. That means we can change this. I have been preaching this for many years with them, my close friends." Other responses varied but were similar to the response from the founder. The treasurer said, "When we say 'focused on diabetes,' we kind of want a focus on the effects of diabetes in at-risk communities. So we wanted to see what we can do to help people avoid this disease. We also do diabetes screening." Other meanings suggested that NEO was focusing on those affected by type 2 diabetes. The national president said, "We focus on those who are affected by diabetes and ways that they can fight this." A third meaning was that NEO was focusing on prevention and those affected by diabetes. The treasurer stated, "It's about either limiting the effects of diabetes or avoid it all together." The national president said, "We want to promote preventing to those who are at risk, but I think it's also important to look at those [who] already live with it and try to be with them as well."

Evidence from documents also supported the presence of multiple meanings for the OI label "focused on diabetes" at the intersubjective level, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4
Multiple Meanings for the OI Label "Focused on "Diabetes" Found in Documents

Meaning	**Evidence from documentation**
1. Focusing on diabetes prevention	A key component to diabetes prevention (Document)
	Basic diabetic screening (Document)
	… diabetes prevention programs (Document)
	Diabetic prevention screening such as blood glucose
	The good news is that in some cases, diabetes can be prevented (Document)
	We will also conduct basic diabetes preventative screenings such as body mass index, BMI glucose and blood pressure (Document)

Meaning	Evidence from documentation
2. Focusing on those affected by type 2diabetes	. . . awareness of the effects of diabetes (Document)
	He has a deep interest in helping those with diabetes (Document)
	Thank goodness we have a lot better tests today which allow people with diabetes to keep careful track of their blood sugar, often multiple times a day and helps them control the condition through appropriate use of medicines, exercise and diet. (Document)
	those who suffer from the disease (Document)
	You can't usually prevent it but many of the complications can be avoided by the careful use of insulin, eating right and maintaining plenty of physical activity. The other you get as you get older and majorly related to eating badly and gaining weight. (Document)

Summary

Findings demonstrated that four OI labels emerged and associated meanings were created during the OI formation processes. The OI label "not-for-profit" originated during the initial phase of development of the now-established organization and was predetermined by the State of New York and the IRS. The OI label "focused on diabetes" described the specific disease that the organization addressed. The OI label "healthcare practitioner driven" described the occupation of NEO members. The OI label "educators" described the community outreach activities NEO offered. The phrase "African American-based" and term "young," which were used at the intrasubjective level to describe the organization, did not move beyond the individual level; there was no "interchange or synthesis of two, or more, communicating selves" (Wiley, 1988, p. 258) related to these terms/phrases or their associated meanings.

Overarching Research Question: How the Content of OI Emerges in a Newly Established Organization

It is important to reiterate the overarching purpose of my study. Based on prior research into OI, we know that OI formation occurs in the movement from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level, i.e., "the self gets transformed from 'I' into 'we' (Weick, 1995, p. 71)" (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1146). As noted by Gioia et al. (2000), the content of OI consists of two tangled aspects: OI labels and the meanings associated with those labels.

We do not understand how the content of OI emerges in a newly established organization. The purpose of my study was to untangle the content of OI, i.e., separate the OI labels from the meanings associated with those labels by providing insight into the factors and subprocesses involved in an organization's identity formation as it becomes a newly established organization.

Five emergence processes of OI formation were identified in this newly established organization: (1) personal value identity orientation, (2) professional value identity orientation, (3) enactment of practices from their past, (4) similarity to like organizations, and (5) assimilation of legitimizing feedback. The processes (second-order themes) and their factors (first-order concepts) are highlighted in Table 4.5 and discussed in more detail as the section discusses the two aggregate dimensions: embracing a values orientation and oligopoly.

Table 4.5
Emergence Processes of the 'Untangled' OI Content and OI Formation Process

First-order concepts	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
Linking personal connections to the vision	Personal value	Embracing

Trusting internal subject-matter experts	identity orientation	a values orientation
Having internal subject-matter experts	Professional value identity orientation	
Linking professional experience to the vision		
When we were friends	Enactment of practices from their past	Oligopoly
When we were a community-based initiative		
When we were a State of New York not-for-profit		
An organizational structure that is a better fit for the mission	Similarity to like organizations	
Validated by an external source	Assimilation of legitimizing feedback	
Understanding public terminology		

Aggregate Dimension: Embracing a Values Orientation

What emerged from the informants' experiences were two themes relating to the members embracing their values orientation. These two themes, personal value identity orientation and professional value identity orientation, emerged from the actions directly experienced by informants described in the first-order categories (Table 4.6) that helped me establish the nature of what I came to refer to as an orientation for NEO's values.

Table 4.6
Data Structure for the Dimension "Embracing Value-Identity Orientation"

First-order categories	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
• Family was affected by diabetes	Personal value-identity orientation	Embracing value-identity orientation
• We had a friend . . .		
• I just trusted their view on the matter		
• Treasurer suggested that we become a not-for-profit	Professional value-identity orientation	
• They are the experts on that		
• The founder is the expert		
• In my profession		
• The founder would say all the time		

Personal value identity orientation. Linking the organizational members' personal connections to the vision of NEO facilitated moving the phrases "focused on diabetes" and "not-for-profit" from the intrasubjective ("I think") level to the

intersubjective ("we think") level where they became OI labels, and also facilitated the creation of their respective meanings at the intersubjective level.

To the organizational members of NEO, the organization's vision and mission represented more than just strategic plans and organizational charts. The cofounder stated, "We say to ourselves, continue. It is more personal." Many of NEO's members expressed having a personal connection to diabetes. They often spoke of close friends who either had diabetes or had died from complications of the disease. "We had a friend. He was our main motivation. At his funeral, his mom told everyone to get tested for diabetes. That's why NEO started," stated the cofounder of NEO. He continued, "It is so prevalent where we live." He continued:

> Most of us currently have family members and friends who have been battling diabetes for the majority of their lives. Our close friend, who is with us all the time, he can barely walk when he hangs out with us. Sometimes, he can barely open a bottle of drink. He cannot even turn the bottle to open it. . . . He is debilitated. It is directly from diabetes. We know that at any time he can die.

Having personal connections to family and friends who already had diabetes facilitated the creation of the meaning "those affected by type 2 diabetes" to represent the OI label "focused on diabetes."

Trusting internal subject-matter experts facilitated moving the phrases "focused on diabetes" and "not-for-profit" from the intrasubjective ("I think") level to the intersubjective ("we think") level where they became OI labels, and facilitated the creation of their respective meanings at the intersubjective level.

The cofounder corroborated trust in internal experts:

> The founder is the expert. I asked: If we are going to focus on prevention, then what about the people who have it? The founder said it's both. He said we can

> help those who do not have it, and for those who do we can reverse it. He told us that it is not the end for people who have it. He said just by doing the same things that somebody who don't have it can get the same results. If one has it, the one can reverse it. The group decided that we would focus on both. . . . So we said that's even better that we can focus on both. It can be another aspect that we can focus on. We said we are good. We believe in the founder.

Members stated that they were not the experts at forming a not-for-profit, but that they trusted the internal members who were. The cofounder stated, "We did not discuss the term 'not-for-'profit' amongst ourselves. . . . We relied on the president and treasurer to put it together." He continued:

> The president had some knowledge about the process and agreed with the treasurer. So we decided to move forward with the paperwork. That night we decided—me, another member—we are not the experts, the treasurer is. He let us know what we needed to do when we approached other organizations to finance the initiative. The president went over the benefits. The president worked with a lawyer to help us get the status, and when the lawyer told the president, the president told us, the members. At the regular meeting, we kind of went over it, but did not discuss the difference between being a public charity and a private foundation. I did not say much because I do not know. I just trusted their view on the matter. We said "let's do it."

Trusting the internal subject-matter experts helped facilitate the creation of the phrase "focused on people at risk of diabetes and those who have it" as representing the meaning of the OI label "focused on diabetes." Table 4.7 summarizes some representative data for this theme.

Table 4.7
Representative Data for the Theme "Personal Value Identity Orientation"

First-order categories	**Representative data**
Family was affected by diabetes	"Some of our family was affected by diabetes, and some of them have died" (Treasurer).
We had a friend . . .	"We had a friend. . . . He was our main motivation. At his funeral, his mom told everyone to get tested for diabetes. That's how NEO started" (Cofounder).

I just trusted their view on the matter	"The president had some knowledge about the process and agreed with the treasurer. We are not the experts, the treasurer is. I just trusted their view on the matter. We said: 'Let's do it'" (Cofounder).

Professional value identity orientation. Linking the organizational members' professional connections to the vision of NEO facilitated the movement of the phrases "not-for-profit," "healthcare practitioner driven," "educators," and "focused on diabetes" from the intrasubjective ("I think") level to the intersubjective ("we think") level where they became OI labels, and also facilitated the creation of their respective meanings at the intersubjective level.

When asked why NEO was started as a not-for-profit, the founder replied:

> It was started as a nonprofit because in the past, and even now, I sit on the board of other nonprofits. I have led other nonprofits. I have compared for-profits and other nonprofits. I figured nonprofit would be better, especially with our mission and vision. It's a better fit for a nonprofit. We could raise funds to do this.

Members relied on the treasurer, who is a corporate tax accountant, and the president, who is a financier, to complete the paperwork for federal tax-exempt status. The cofounder stated, "The treasurer suggested that we become a not-for-profit." He continued, "He let us know that if we were thinking of incorporating and organizing that for tax purposes, that we should go the 501(c)(3) route. At the regular meeting, we kind of went over it." Having internal subject-matter experts facilitated the creation of four meanings of the OI label "not-for-profit": that NEO (1) provides no direct monetary profit for NEO members, (2) gives back to the community, (3) has a good business structure (as opposed to a for-profit structure) for people to donate funds; and (4) allows those who donate to receive tax deductions.

During the developmental phase of NEO, a meeting was hosted by the founder, a physician. He stated that during that meeting, members asked how NEO would be different from other not-for-profit organizations focused on diabetes. It was decided that the organization was to become healthcare practitioner driven to help educate the community. The founder stated, "Physicians would be the face of the organization." The organization had identified someone to become the president, but did not have enough healthcare providers involved. The founder stated, "My job is to bring in more doctors." As a physician, the founder was the internal expert used to involve more physicians with NEO. Corroborating the founder, the cofounder stated:

> As members, we cannot offer medical advice to participants at our events. Because of the funder, we now have medical doctors involved with us. They can educate people about diabetes prevention and how to reverse it if they have it. They are the experts on that. The founder pitched the idea of a healthcare practitioner driven to his friends in the medical profession. We all agreed that it was a good idea to get other medical professionals involved. It was his job to bring on as many healthcare professionals around. They are the experts on diabetes. They can help us educate the public. So that's what the founder did. He explained that he needed to have some other people who know about the disease. As physicians, they see the effects of diabetes every day. The medical professionals agreed with him and joined NEO.

Having internal subject-matter experts facilitated "having a board of directors predominantly comprising physicians" as the meaning of the OI label "healthcare practitioner driven."

Linking the organizational members' professional experiences to the vision of NEO facilitated moving the term "focused on diabetes" and "educators" from the intrasubjective ("I think") level to the intersubjective ("we think") level where they became OI labels, and facilitated the creation of their respective meanings at the

intersubjective level.

In an interview with the founder, he explained professional connections to diabetes. He stated, "The organization was started based on the need that I saw from work and what I felt we needed in our community." He continued:

> In my profession, I am an emergency room physician. So in my line of work I see same health trends. The poor health in our community stems from hypertension and diabetes. I wanted to take it on and find a way to educate and re-educate. So diabetes is what I felt was important.

The national president stated, "NEO was founded because the founder, having a medical background, saw a need to have a way in which we can address a certain area within our community that has been affected by diabetes." The cofounder stated,

> The founder would say all the time, even before we became an organization, that people are coming in the ER [emergency room] who are 30 years old and are dying. That's why we started the organization. It was from the founder seeing what he sees where he works.

Having professional connections to patients who are at risk of getting diabetes or already have it facilitated the creation of the phrase "those affected by type 2 diabetes" to represent the meaning of the OI label "focused on diabetes."

NEO's members expressed having a professional connection to the need to become health educators in their community. The treasurer expressed what he had experienced in the past with a veteran. He said:

> We have this guy who comes to us sometimes. He is a veteran. He came 3 to 4 weeks ago and asked us about diabetes. He told us that he did not get help when he was in the service. He was confident about what he knows about diabetes. He said that the military did not do a good job with that. They did not proactively provide information. So at the event, a NEO member, who is also a physician, was able to educate him. She also told him about some resources at the hospital

where she works. She said that there was a gym session that he could go to help keep his blood moving.

The vice president of pediatric health stated, "We find great pride in planting those seeds." She continued:

> "Educators" is definitely a term that we use. There is this saying, once you have been educated with some knowledge that you did not have before, no one can take that away from you. No one can go into your brain and take that out. We have to plant seeds. And when you plant seeds, the ideas start to germinate and grow into generations. And that is passed on to generations. They then understand how to live a better life, mind, body, and spirit, and how to be on a path to better health and wellness. So even if it's not immediate or takes effect immediately, regardless, the seed is planted. Overall, it's a great thing to plant that seed. We take a lot of pride in that. As a physician, and there are a lot of us in the organization, that's something that brought us into the medical field in the first place. We are educating.

Having professional connections to patients who needed to be educated facilitated the creation of the phrase "providing seminars" to represent the meaning of the OI label "educators." Table 4.8 provides representative data for the theme "professional value identity orientation."

Table 4.8
Representative Data for the Theme "Professional Value Identity Orientation"

First-order categories	Representative data
Treasurer suggested that we become a not-for-profit	"The treasurer suggested that we become a not-for-profit. He let us know that if we were thinking of incorporating and organizing that for tax purposes, we should go the 501(c)(3) route. At the regular meeting, we kind of went over it, but did not discuss the difference between being a public charity and a private foundation" (Cofounder).
They are the experts on that	"As members, we cannot offer medical advice to participants at our events. Because of the funder, we now have medical doctors involved with us. They can educate people about diabetes prevention and how to reverse it if they have it. They are the experts on that" (Cofounder).
The founder is the expert	"The founder is the expert. I asked: If we are going to focus on prevention, then what about the people who has it? The founder said it's both" (Cofounder).
In my profession	"In my profession, I am an emergency room physician. So in my line of work I see same health trends. The poor health in our community stems from hypertension and diabetes. I wanted to take it on and find a way to educate and

	re-educate. So diabetes is what I felt was important" (Founder).
The founder would say all the time . . .	"The founder would say all the time, even before we became an organization, that people are coming in the ER who are 30 years old and are dying. That's why we started the organization. It was from the founder seeing what he sees where he works" (Cofounder).

Aggregate Dimension: Oligopoly

What emerged from the informants' experiences were three specific themes: (1) enactment of practices; (2) similarity to like organizations; and (3) assimilation of legitimizing feedback. Each emerged from the first-order categories directly experienced by the informants (see Table 4.9) that helped me establish the nature of what I came to refer to as oligopoly, i.e., a "limited set of completive benchmarks that is mutually defined to simplify and make sense of the business environment" (Porac, Thomas, & Baden-Fuller, p. 413; Weick, 1995, p. 76).

Table 4.9
Data Structure for the Oligopoly Dimension

First-order categories	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
• Friends were getting sick • Community-based initiative • The State of New York corporation and designation as a not-for-profit	Enactment of practices from their past	Oligopoly
• An organizational structure that is a better fit for our mission	Similarity to like organizations	
• State of New York	Assimilation of legitimizing feedback	
• Internal Revenue Service		
• People more inclined to understand a not-for-profit than a public charity		

Enactment of practices from their past. The emerging theme "enactment of practices of their past" included three first-order concepts: (1) when we were friends, (2) when we were an initiative, and (3) when we were a not-for-profit corporation in the State of New York. Enactment of practices of their past when they were friends

facilitated in moving the terms “not-for-profit” and “focused on diabetes” from the intrasubjective (“I think”) level to the intersubjective (“we think”) level where they became OI labels, and facilitated the creation of their respective meanings at the intersubjective level.

When they were friends, they noticed that they themselves were gaining a few unwanted pounds and could be at risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The cofounder explained, “We decided to start working on ourselves. Friends were getting sick, letting themselves go. We are determined to stay physically fit. . . . As a group, we wanted to motivate each other.”

When asked why NEO members continued to use the general term “not-for-profit” even when the more accurate term was public charity, the treasurer stated, “It originally was always like that.” He continued:

> So the term “not-for-profit” should be resonating through the members. As a collective, we have been doing this type of work. We have been sponsoring it through our own selves and without corporate sponsorships or anything like that. So we’ve been, I guess, donating our funds to the organization with no anticipation of us getting it back right now. We were already doing charitable work, even before when it was just a social organization, amongst friends. We always wanted it to be a public charity.

Enactment of practices of their past when they were friends facilitated the creation of the meaning “giving back, not making money” to represent the meaning of the OI label “not-for-profit.”

Enactment of practices of their past when they were a community-based initiative facilitated the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. For example, the members hosted a community-wide event in the Bronx where they provided information about diabetes

awareness. In addition to the seminars, the members provided physical fitness activities such as yoga.

Enactment of practices of their past when they were a State of New York not-for-profit facilitated the movement of the term "not-for-profit" from the intrasubjective ("I think") level to the intersubjective ("we think") level where they became OI labels, and facilitated the creation of its respective meaning at the intersubjective level.

The designation as a not-for-profit in the State of New York was merely a phase of becoming a federal 501(c)(3) public charity. The national president stated, "The term 'not-for-profit' is a term that we use to describe who we are." He continued:

> It was always the plan to be a not-for-profit. The State of New York corporation and designation as a not-for-profit in the State of New York was just a way to, for us to identify ourselves until we got the federal designation. We could have chosen a LLC, a corporation, or a not-for-profit. It was just a way for the state to understand who we were and how we wanted to be classified. We did this when we were filling out the forms. We never saw ourselves as being a private entity. We always considered ourselves as an organization that we would go to the public to do fundraising to do the programs for the things that we would do as a not-for-profit. We knew that we were more going towards the public charity route. That was discussed. It was not like there was this fund coming from a source. So we did discuss. So we knew the distinction. In terms of the fact that we did not see ourselves as a private entity, we knew that this is what we wanted to do from a directional standpoint. We more saw ourselves as raising funds via public efforts and fundraising and reaching out to the public to develop the organization. The board got it. We are more in line this way. We decided to go for public charity as opposed to private foundation.

Enactment of practices of their past when they were a State of New York not-for-profit created the meanings "has a good business structure for people to donate funds" and "allows those who donate to receive tax deductions" for the OI label "not-for-profit." Table 4.10 summarizes representative data for this theme.

Table 4.10

Representative Data for the Theme "Enactment of Practices from Their Past"

First-order categories	Representative data
Friends were getting sick	"We decided to start working on ourselves. Friends were getting sick, letting themselves go" (Cofounder).
Community-based initiative	"We try to educate people on it. . . . Education, it is a key component of the organization" (Treasurer).
The State of New York corporation and designation as a not-for-profit	"It was always the plan to be a not-for-profit. The State of New York corporation and designation as a not-for-profit in the State of New York was just a way to for us to identify ourselves until we got the federal designation" (National President).

Similarity to like organizations. The emerging theme "similarity to like organizations" had one first-order concept: (1) an organizational structure that is a better fit for our mission. It also facilitated the movement of the terms "focused on diabetes" and "not-for-profit" from the intrasubjective ("I think") level to the intersubjective ("we think") level where they became OI labels, and facilitated the creation of their respective meanings at the intersubjective level.

The president explained:

> So there are certain similarities to other organizations going out there to try and encourage a more healthy lifestyle, and related to diabetes. So we are certainly not doing something innovative in terms of what we are address[ing] or the need of what we are address[ing]. So they are similar. You will probably find similarity in the things that we are talking about and the things that we are doing.

"Some of our ideas are borrowed from other organizations," said the treasurer. One of the first official activities as a federal 501(c)(3) public charity was the "Bike the Hudson," a national diabetes awareness campaign cohosted by NEO and three other organizations. The treasurer continued:

> Bike the Hudson event—it was one of our first events as an organization. We started talking about programs, then I said: Why not make the bike event? I wanted to promote a charity. We had already thought about the steps of starting a

> charity. So I said: Why don't we just connect the event with the organization? I was going to do it anyway on my own.

Documents highlighted a focus on diabetes, indicating that NEO aimed to prevent diabetes and that NEO was in line with a national goal to fight diabetes.

Similarity to like organizations influenced the creation of a meaning of the OI labels "focused on diabetes" (e.g., prevention) and "not-for-profit" (e.g., we are giving). Representative data are summarized in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11
Representative Data for the Theme "Similarity to Like Organizations"

First-order categories	Representative data
An organizational structure that is a better fit for our mission	"So there are certain similarities to other organizations going out there to try and encourage a more healthy lifestyle, and related to diabetes" (National President).

Assimilation of legitimizing feedback. The second-order theme "assimilation of legitimizing feedback" consisted of two first-order concepts: (1) validation by an external source and (2) understanding public terminology. Receiving validation from external sources facilitated the movement of the terms "healthcare practitioner driven," "not-for-profit," "focused on diabetes," and "educators" from the intrasubjective ("I think") level to the intersubjective ("we think") level where they became OI labels, and facilitated the creation of their respective meanings at the intersubjective level.

The treasurer stated:

> Now that we have physicians working with us, that brings a higher level of respect to the organization. That helps people to hear what we have to say. As an organization, and on our board, we have physicians. They provide most of the education.

In June 2012, NEO officials received designation from the State of New York as a not-for-profit corporation. In March 2013, NEO officials received a letter from the IRS. The letter stated:

> We are pleased to inform you that upon review of your application for tax exempt status we have determined that you are exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to you are deductible under section 170 of the Code. You are also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under section 2055, 2106 or 2522 of the Code. Because this letter could help resolve any questions regarding your exempt status, you should keep it in your permanent records.
>
> Organizations exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Code are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. We determined that you are a public charity under the Code section(s) listed in the heading of this letter.

In addition to receiving its designation as a federal 501(c)(3), NEO was approved by the New York State Department of Education to be health educators. When asked why it was important that people knew NEO was approved by the state to be health educators, the treasurer replied, "Now, we can go out and do that. We can talk about health awareness." The cofounder provided more insight. He stated,

> It was discussed as a meeting. We did not in detail, but they did say that we were looking for that validation. . . . We feel that we will use it more as we pitch to others about what we do. If we want to go to a school and speaking to administration, when we are meeting with them we can say that we are educators on this topic. We can educate the members at the school, administrators, students, and teachers. So we will definitely start to use it. We can set up a seminar, educate people who came out, go into our points, and then educate on the disease.

Being validated by an external source helped influence the creation of a meaning for the OI label "not-for-profit": providing no direct monetary profit for NEO members, having a good business structure for people to donate, and allowing those who donate to receive tax deductions.

Understanding public terminology facilitated the movement of the term "not-for-profit" from the intrasubjective ("I think") level to the intersubjective ("we think") level where they became OI labels, and the creation of its meanings at the intersubjective level.

As stated previously, NEO is now a public charity, a specific type of not-for-profit. However, members continued to use the general OI label "not-for-profit." When asked why, the national president replied: "We use 'not-for-profit' because it's more, at least more recognized, more understood." He continued, "People are more inclined to understand a not-for-profit than a public charity. So that's why we use it, because it's a familiar terminology. 'Not-for-profit' is the general terminology."

During my visits with NEO on August 17, 2013, participants at a community health fair received information about diabetes at no cost to them. In addition to the information, participants were able to participate in a Zumba class, again at no cost. In the background I heard the cofounder respond to someone, "We are a not-for-profit." I turned to the founder and asked, "Why do NEO members use the term 'not-for-profit'?" He replied, "People want to know, are you selling, not trying to get anything."

Understanding public terminology influenced the creation of meanings for the OI label "not-for-profit": (1) providing no direct monetary profit for NEO members; and (2) giving back to the community. Representative data for the theme are summarized in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12
Representative Data for the Theme "Assimilation of Legitimizing Feedback"

First-order categories	**Representative data**
State of New York	June 2012 designation from the State of New York as a corporation defined in subparagraph (a)(5) of Section 102 (Definitions) of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law (Document).

Internal Revenue Service	March 2013 designation as a federal 501(c)(3) public charity (Document).
People are more inclined to understand a not-for-profit than a public charity	"We use 'not-for-profit' because it's more, at least more recognized, more understood. Generally speaking, . . . people are more inclined to understand a not-for-profit than a public charity. So that's why we use it because it's a familiar terminology. Not-for-profit is the general terminology" (National President).

Research Question 1c: Negotiation of Meanings Associated with OI Labels During the OI Formation Processes

The factor of NEO members enacting activities and beliefs guided the negotiation process of the meanings of the OI labels "not-for-profit" and "focused on diabetes." Table 4.13 depicts the negotiation process of enactment of activities and beliefs.

Table 4.13
The Negotiation Process of Enactment of Activities and Beliefs

First-order concept	**Second-order theme**
We develop actives based on what we believe will work for a specific population.	Enactment of activities and beliefs

"Intersubjective meaning becomes distinct from intrasubjective meaning when individual thoughts, feelings, and intentions were merged or synthesized into conversations during which the self was transformed from 'I' into 'we'" (e.g., Linell & Markova, 1993)" (Weick, 1995, p. 71). Research Question 1c asked: *How are the meanings associated with identity labels negotiated during the OI formation processes?* What emerged from the informants' experiences was one specific theme relating to the members' enactment of activities and beliefs. This theme emerged from the first-order category directly experienced by the informants (see Table 4.14), which helped me establish the nature of what I came to refer to as enactment of activities and beliefs.

Table 4.14
Data Structure for the Theme "Enactment of Activities and Beliefs"

First-order categories	Second-order themes
• I have an activity that I would like to manage.	Enactment of activities and beliefs
• We provide multiple meanings.	

The emerging theme "enactment of activities and beliefs" includes two concepts: (1) managing different activities and (2) providing multiple services, thereby allowing for multiple meanings.

The fact that different members had ownership of specific activities facilitated the movement of the phrase "focused on diabetes" from the intrasubjective ("I think") level to the intersubjective ("we think") level where they became OI labels, and the creation of their respective meanings at the intersubjective level. The vice president of pediatric health stated, "That is actually why I was brought into the organization." She continued:

> Sometime down the road our plan is to branch into pediatrics. That's why I was brought on as VP of pediatrics. We can get into the prevention realm. It was discussed in the group, but we decided to focus on adults for now. We are talking about further down the road. Earlier in one of our meetings I brought up that if we are going to focus on the prevention aspects, then to prevent people from getting it in the first place we need to work with children. So we agreed that it would be in the future. Maybe it's our next big project. We did not set a definite timeframe. We do not have a launch plan. But we did agree that whenever we got together with a group that we would incorporate our work with the children.

When asked what the OI label "focused on diabetes" meant to the organization, the vice president of pediatric health responded, "In healthcare you always want to prevent things from coming about, but also the reality of things that exists. So you have to cover both rounds—do stuff for people who are active and affected." This sentiment was echoed by the cofounder. He stated, "The founder said it's both." He continued:

> He said we can help those who do not have it, and for those who do, we can reverse it. He told us that it is not the end for people who have it. He said just by doing the same things that somebody who don't have it can get the same results. If one has it, the one can reverse it. The group decided that we would focus on both. I brought it up. The founder is the expert. My main question was: How about people who have it? We are not providing insulin. What are we doing? So we said that's even better that we can focus on both. It can be another aspect that we can focus on. We said we are good. We believe in the founder.

The vice president of pediatric health stated, "Our interventions also help the further progression of diabetes. It may not prevent people from getting it in the first place, but prevents how it worsens." Representative data for this theme are summarized in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15
Representative Data for the Theme "Enactment of Activities and Beliefs"

First-order categories	Representative data
I have an activity that I would like to manage	"Sometime down the road our plan is to branch into pediatrics. That's why I was brought on as VP of pediatrics. We can get into the prevention realm" (Pediatric Health Vice President).
We provide multiple services.	"Our interventions also help the further progression of diabetes. It may not prevent people from getting it in the first place, but prevents how it worsens" (Pediatric Health Vice President).

Summary of Emergence Processes

This chapter has chronicled findings regarding the OI content of a newly established organization by examining the relationship between the emergence of OI labels and the creation and negotiation of the OI label meanings during OI formation processes. OI labels of key informants regarding the symbolic expressions of how organizational members collectively answered the question "Who are we as an organization?" and their thoughts, feelings, and intentions about the OI label were corroborated with documents and researcher observations. Not every term or phrase that

developed at the intrasubjective level moved to the intersubjective level to become an OI label. The four OI labels and their associated meanings that emerged during the study may have remained the same as they moved from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level where they became OI labels; however, for some of the OI labels, members created multiple meanings.

OI labels—healthcare practitioner driven, a not-for-profit, educators, and focused on diabetes—all "moved beyond any single individual and emerged upon the interchange and synthesis of two, or more, communicating selves" (Wiley, 1988, p. 258). As Weick (1995) noted, "This transformation is not simply interaction in which norms are shared. . . . Instead, a 'level of social reality' (Wiley, 1988, p. 254) forms, which consists of an intersubject, or joined subject" (p. 71).

A fifth term, that the organization was young, did not move beyond individual cognition. Evidence suggested multiple individual cognitions about the OI label "young"; however, evidence did not suggest a collective cognition. Multiple individual cognition does not indicate collective cognition. There was limited evidence from interviews, documents, or observations to suggest that multiple individual cognitions regarding the OI label "African American-based" facilitated the emergence of NEO's other organizational members' shared cognitions ("we think") (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1146), so that the phrase "African American-based" became a symbolic expression (i.e., OI label) that NEO members used to collectively answer the question "Who are we as an organization?" (Corley & Gioia, 2004) or "who are we becoming?" (Schultz et al., 2012, p. 4). The phrase was mentioned by only one NEO organizational member and noted only once in all the documents related to NEO.

Young (2011) stated that “choosing an identity is tantamount to an organization’s defining a north star by which to navigate its course of action and shape strategy for the future” (p. 155). A newly established organization needs to have a clear identity. If not, the organization could suffer from not being able to motivate and mobilize potential resource providers into committing needed resources such as money, employees, collaborators, and partners (Martens et al., 2007).

CHAPTER 5:

INTERPRETATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations related to the findings of this case study with respect to the study's theoretical underpinnings, conceptual framework, and research questions. Theoretically, in a newly established organization, the individual cognition of how members describe the new organization is merged into symbolic expressions of how organizational members collectively answer the question "Who are we becoming?" (Schultz et al., 2012, p. 4) or "Who are we as an organization?" (Gioia et al., 2000); therefore, the processes of movement from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level—i.e., "the self gets transformed from 'I' into 'we' (Weick, 1995, p. 71)" (Ashforth et al., 2011, p. 1146)—is where the organizational identity (OI) formation process occurs. How the content (i.e., OI labels and OI label meanings) of OI emerged in a newly established organization was the subject of this study. In this particular study, healthcare practitioner driven, a not-for-profit, educators, and focused on diabetes emerged as OI labels along with their associated created meanings.

A social constructionist perspective (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 1991, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia et al., 2000) guided the conceptual framework of this study. The untangled content of an organization's identity—more specifically its two tangled aspects of labels and the meanings associated with those labels—was at the forefront of this study (Gioia et al., 2000), and a newly established organization was the contextual basis for the study. Since newly established organizations are understood by

scholars to experience this movement from the intrasubjective ("I think") level to the intersubjective ("we think") level, how these newly established organizations form the identity content (i.e., OI labels and OI label meanings) holds significance for practice.

The context for the study was a 5-month-old federal 501(c)(3) public charity that emerged from a group a friends, which became a community-based initiative and then a State of New York corporation. This purpose of this study from a theoretical perspective was fivefold: (1) to untangle the OI labels and their meanings in a newly established organization; (2) to document the movement of terms/phrases that members used at the intrasubjective level as the terms/phrases emerged at the intersubjective level to become OI labels; (3) to document the emergence processes of those OI labels; (4) to document the creation processes of the associated meanings of those OI labels; and (5) to document the negotiation processes of the multiple meanings of a respective OI label. Qualitative evidence from interviews with the newly established organization's officers and doctors was triangulated with document and audiovisual material analysis and observations to surface findings. This chapter first presents a summary of primary findings and interprets these findings in relation to the research questions. Next, conclusions that follow from these findings regarding the OI formation processes are discussed. The implications of the findings for both theory and practice are addressed, and recommendations for future scholarly work are outlined.

Primary Findings and Interpretations

Overall, the study had nine core findings.

1. Research results demonstrated three developmental stages of NEO: (1) friends, (2) a community-based initiative, and (3) a State of New York not-for-profit corporation. The developmental stages occurred over the course of 5 years and climaxed in March 2013 when NEO received its designation from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as a federal 501(c)(3) public charity.
2. Six terms/phrases emerged at the intrasubjective level to describe how NEO members individually described NEO as an organization: (1) educators, (2) focused on diabetes, (3) not-for-profit, (4) healthcare practitioner driven, (5) African American-based, and (6) young.
3. Only four of the six terms/phrases moved from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level and became OI labels: (1) educators, (2) focused on diabetes, (3) not-for-profit, and (4) healthcare practitioner driven.
4. There was evidence of five emergence processes for the OI labels: (1) personal values orientation, (2) professional values orientation, (3) enactment of practices from their past, (4) similarity to like organizations, and (5) assimilation of legitimizing feedback.
5. During the organizational identity formation processes, the members of NEO focused on how they were similar to other organizations in their category but did not focus as much on how they were different.
6. Each of the four OI labels had at least one associated meaning that was collectively created by the organizational members.
7. As with the OI labels, there was evidence of the same five emergence processes for the OI label meanings: (1) personal values orientation, (2) professional values

orientation, (3) enactment of practices from their past, (4) similarity to like organizations, and (5) assimilation of legitimizing feedback.

8. There was evidence of one negotiation process for OI label meanings: (1) enactment of activities and beliefs.
9. Different OI labels emerged, and OI label meanings were created through different processes.

The next sections discuss the findings by research question, relating them to the literature.

Research Question 1a

Research Question 1a asked: *What are the OI labels used to describe the newly established organization?* The answer to this question is anchored to Table 5.1, which illustrates the terms/phrases that were formed at the intrasubjective level and moved to the intersubjective level, becoming OI labels. Four of the six terms/phrases identified at the intrasubjective level moved to the intersubjective level; the phrase "African American-based" and the term "young" did not. The titles of the terms/phrases did not change as they moved from one level to the next. The term "educator" and the phrase "not-for-profit" were predetermined by the government and were not likely to change by members as they use the term/phrase to describe NEO.

Table 5.1
Terms and Phrases at the Intrasubjective Level and OI Labels at the Intersubjective Level

Terms/phrases at the intrasubjective level		Organizational identity labels at the intersubjective level
Educators	→	Educators
Focused on diabetes	→	Focused on diabetes
Healthcare practitioner driven	→	Healthcare practitioner driven
Not-for-profit	→	Not-for-profit

Terms/phrases at the intrasubjective level	Organizational identity labels at the intersubjective level
African American-based	No synthesis of two or more communicating selves regarding the phrase.
Young	No synthesis of two or more communicating selves regarding the term.

In the table, the words "intrasubjective" and "intersubjective" are used to describe organizational sensemaking as the members individually and collectively describe the newly established organization. If the term/phrase was used by individuals to describe NEO, then "intrasubjective" was used. "Intersubjective" represents terms/phrases that showed evidence of the "interchange and synthesis of two, or more, communicating selves" (Wiley, 1988, p. 258). For example, more than two informants used the same term/phrase in the sense of "we use this word to describe NEO." Once the term/phrase moved to the intersubjective level, it was then considered to be the symbolic expression of how NEO members collectively answered the question "Who are we as an organization?" (Gioia et al., 2000); in other words, it became an OI label.

While the term "young" did not move from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level (i.e., did not become an OI label), the term was used by several members to describe the members of NEO and not NEO as an organization. Stating "we are young," several members used the term to describe either the age of the members or the length of their professional careers, not the age of NEO. Even if this personal identity was used to describe NEO as an organization, it would not survive the passage of time, as an organization cannot be considered young after a certain point. It would not satisfy the "enduring" pillar of Albert and Whetten's (1985) OI theory.

Interpretation related to the OI literature. In his seminal work, Selznick (1957) described the notion of an organization possessing an identity: "By taking on a distinctive set of values, the organization acquires a character structure, an identity" (p. 24). In their seminal work, Albert and Whetten (1985) described the notion of OI theory using three pillars: what is most central, enduring, and distinctive to an organization. Gioia et al. (2000) noted that the content of an organization's identity consists of two tangled aspects: (1) labels (i.e., the symbolic expression of how organizational members collectively answer the question "Who are we as an organization?" and (2) meanings of those OI labels (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and intentions of OI labels) (Linell & Markova, 1993; Weick, 1995). Ashforth et al. (2011) noted that OI is formed in the processes of movement from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level.

The findings here are consistent with these observations. What was central to NEO members was that NEO was an organization "focused on diabetes." No other disease was found to be the focus of the organization. In addition, what else was central to NEO members was that NEO was a not-for-profit organization. Participants of NEO activities were never charged a fee for services.

The terms/phrases "educators," "focused on diabetes," "healthcare practitioner driven," and "not-for-profit" were identified as the distinctive features of the OI content. All four moved terms/phrases moved from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level where they became OIabels. Once at the intersubjective level, all four became OI labels representing symbolic expressions of NEO members who collectively answered the question of who NEO is.

Research Question 1b

Research Question 1b asked: *What are the meanings associated with those OI labels?* The answer to this question is displayed in Table 5.2, which presents OI label meanings created at the intersubjective level to describe the collective thoughts, feelings, and intentions about the OI labels.

Table 5.2
OI Labels and Associated Meanings

Organizational identity labels at the intersubjective level	**Associated meanings of the OI label**
Educators	Conducts community outreach activities (e.g., physical fitness activities)
Focused on diabetes	a) Offers prevention activities for those who do not have diabetes b) Offers management and care for those living with diabetes
Healthcare practitioner driven	Has a board of directors predominantly comprising physicians
Not-for-profit	a) Provides no direct monetary profit for NEO members b) Gives back to the community c) Has a good business structure for people to donate funds d) Allows those who donate to receive tax deductions

Each OI label had an associated meaning. The OI label "educator" was predetermined by the State of New York. In April 2013, NEO was designated as a health education organization. With this designation came specific guidelines for what services NEO could provide, in turn describing who NEO would become. For example, one guideline was that NEO could only conduct community outreach activities such as providing awareness seminars and physical fitness activities. Although most NEO members were physicians, NEO as a State of New York health educator could not provide medical services.

Although at least 20% of NEO members were not physicians, when NEO members collectively described NEO as an organization, one of the OI labels they used was healthcare practitioner driven. At the intersubjective level, to NEO members, the OI label meant that NEO has a board of directors predominantly comprising physicians. No other professions held by NEO members were used as OI labels to describe the nonphysician members.

The OI label "focused on diabetes" had two associated meanings, and the OI label "not-for-profit" had four associated meanings. As with the "educator" OI label, the meaning for the "not-for-profit" label was predetermined by the federal government. According to the IRS, not-for-profit organizational members may not receive direct monetary profit, and donations to the not-for-profit are tax deductible.

Interpretation related to the OI literature. As stated throughout the study, Gioia et al. (2000) described the two tangled aspects of the content of an organization's identity.

> Identities consist of constellations of features and labels appropriate for different contexts and interactions. Yet, some of the labels are shared in common across different identities, which implies that meanings for the common labels are flexible enough to accommodate the differing demands of multiple possible contexts and audiences (e.g., customers, employees, and competitors). (p. 72)

In addition, Weick (1995) described the movement of meanings from the intersubjective level to the intersubjective level:

> Intersubjective meaning becomes distinct from intrasubjective meaning when individual thoughts, feelings, and intentions are merged or synthesized into conversations during which the self gets transformed from 'I' into 'we' (e.g., Linell & Markova, 1993). (p. 71)

The findings here are consistent with these observations. The OI label "focused on diabetes" and the OI label "not-for-profit" were untangled from their meanings. In fact, in this study, the OI label "focused on diabetes" was untangled from its two meanings: (1) prevention activities for those who do not have diabetes and (2) management and care for those living with diabetes. Type 2 diabetes was the focus of NEO. For members of NEO, their individual thoughts, feelings, and intentions about the phrase "focused on diabetes" were that NEO would provide educational awareness services and physical fitness and nutrition activities for two populations, those who have type 2 diabetes and those who are at risk but do not have type 2 diabetes. No evidence indicated that NEO was focusing on type 1 diabetes.

Similar to the OI label "focused on diabetes," the OI label "not-for-profit" had multiple meanings. Two meanings ("providing no direct monetary profit for NEO members" and "allowing those who donate to receive tax deductions") were predetermined by the IRS. NEO members created two additional but not opposing meanings for the OI label: NEO (1) gives back to the community, and (2) has a good business structure (as opposed to a for-profit structure) for people to donate funds. There was no evidence to suggest that NEO considered becoming a for-profit organization. As NEO members socially constructed NEO's OI, individual meanings (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and intentions) about the OI label "focused on diabetes" were merged or synthesized into conversations during which the self was transformed from the intrasubjective level ("I think the meaning of 'focused on diabetes' is. . .") into the intersubjective level ("we think the meaning of 'focused on diabetes' is . . . ") (Weick, 1995).

Research Question 1c

The first two secondary questions asked 'what' questions, that is, they sought to answer what OI labels were used and what the meanings of those OI labels were. This section shifts to a 'how' question, which seeks to understand process. Research Question 1c asked: *How are the meanings associated with OI labels negotiated during the OI formation processes?* This study used Merriam-Webster's definition of negotiate: "To arrange for or bring about through conference, discussion, and compromise" ("Negotiate," n.d.). The answer to this question is highlighted in Table 5.3, a presentation of the negotiation process of OI label meanings. The multiple meanings of the OI labels "focused on diabetes" and "not-for-profit" were negotiated by NEO members as they enacted activities and beliefs about the OI labels.

Table 5.3
Negotiation Processes of OI Label Meanings

OI labels	Associated meanings of the OI label	Negotiation process of OI label meanings
Focused on diabetes	a) Offer prevention activities for those who do not have diabetes	Enactment of activities and beliefs
	b) Offer management and care for those living with diabetes	
Not-for-profit	a) Provides no direct monetary profit for NEO members	
	b) Gives back to the community	
	c) Has a good business structure for people to donate funds	
	d) Allows those who donate to receive tax deductions	

Enactment is the notion that "people often produce part of the environment they face (Pondy & Mitroff, 1979, p. 17)" (Weick, 1995, p. 30). The notion of enactment of activities and beliefs denotes that people often draw from their own beliefs to produce

activities that become part of their environment. Members enact an identity in order to provide meaning to their experiences (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia, 1998), which is influenced by the members' activities and beliefs. This notion of enactment of activities and beliefs influenced how NEO members conferenced, discussed, and compromised the multiple meanings of the OI labels "focused on diabetes" and "not-for-profit."

NEO members did not conference over OI labels or meanings per se. However, what they did was discuss which activities members were interested in managing. This discussion was typically informal. One member decided that he had an expertise in providing educational seminars about diabetes. Another member indicated to the group that her strength was working with youth. These discussions of what activities NEO would provide to the community were inadvertently helping NEO members negotiate if the focus of the organization was diabetes prevention or management, the two meanings of the OI label "focused on diabetes" that emerged from the data. As the compromises were made regarding what activities would be provided and which NEO member would manage the activity, the two meanings of the OI label "focused on diabetes" were negotiated.

Another important insight was how NEO members negotiated the multiple meanings of the OI label "not-for-profit." Two of the meanings (e.g., no direct monetary profit and donors receiving tax credit) were preestablished by the IRS. The meaning did emerge from the data; however, these two meanings were not created by NEO members, only adopted. The fact that a not-for-profit structure was appropriate for getting others involved by donating money was a third meaning that emerged from the data. NEO

members in the past had funded all the initiatives from money they themselves donated. With this new structure and tax-exempt status, NEO could now ask others for donations. The fourth meaning that was created by NEO was this thought, intent, and feeling that as a not-for-profit, NEO's main purpose was to give back to the community. Members expressed a belief that they were in a position to provide needed activities such as free screenings at no cost to residents of the Bronx.

Interpretation related to the OI literature. Hatch (1993) stated that cultural assumptions are "experienced as general expectations that provide possible responses to a situation, responses that reflect and embody cultural values" (p. 664). Values are enduring beliefs that certain patterns of behavior or end states are preferable to others (Rokeach, 1973), and they guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). According to Hatch (1993), "The values themselves are constituted by perceptions, cognitions, and emotions activated by cultural assumptions" (p. 664).

The findings here are consistent with these observations. These conferences, discussions, and compromises about the activities that NEO would provide were influenced by the cultural assumptions that each member held regarding what was needed in the community. Those cultural assumptions would not be challenged until members developed new values about the work in the community that did not align with their current values (Hatch, 2000). For example, one member might develop the belief that activities provided to prevent diabetes should be the main focus of NEO. If the members were not able to negotiate how to provide activities that provided assistance to those with

and those at risk of diabetes, the cultural assumptions held by the collective might be challenged.

Overarching Research Question

The overarching research question guiding this study was: *How does the content of OI emerge in a newly established organization?* The answer to this question is highlighted in Table 5.4, which presents the emergence processes of OI labels and the creation processes of OI label meanings. This study untangled the content of NEO's identity and described how the content emerged. The research demonstrated five notable processes of OI formation in NEO: (1) personal value identity orientation, (2) professional value identity orientation, (3) enactment of practices of their past, (4) similarity to like organizations, and (5) assimilation of legitimizing feedback.

Table 5.4
The Emergence Processes of OI Labels and the Creation Processes of OI Label Meanings

Second-order themes	OI label	OI label meanings
• Professional value identity orientation • Enactment of practices from their past • Assimilation of legitimizing feedback	Educators	• Conducts community outreach activities (e.g., physical fitness activities).
• Personal value identity orientation • Professional value identity orientation • Enactment of practices from their past • Similarity to like organizations • Assimilation of	Focused on diabetes	• Offers prevention activities for those who do not have diabetes • Offers management and care for those living with diabetes

legitimizing feedback		
• Professional value identity orientation • Professional value identity orientation • Enactment of practices from their past • Assimilation of legitimizing feedback	Healthcare practitioner driven	• Has a board of directors predominantly comprising physicians
• Personal value identity orientation • Professional value identity orientation • Enactment of practices from their past • Similarity to like organizations • Assimilation of legitimizing feedback	Not-for-profit	• Provides no direct monetary profit to NEO members • Gives back to the community • Has a good business structure for people to donate funds • Allows those who donate to receive tax deductions

Embracing an identity values orientation. Data began to emerge from NEO's three stages of development (i.e., friends, a community-based initiative, and a State of New York not-for-profit), which occurred before NEO became a federal 501(c)(3) public charity. As cited by Weick (1995, p. 76), McCaskey (1982) stated, "Without objective criteria, players rely more on personal and/or professional values to make sense of the situation" (p. 91). Two themes of embracing an identity values orientation were found: personal value identity orientation and professional value identity orientation. They are connected, but are discussed separately.

The group of friends did not embark on becoming a public charity. There was limited evidence to suggest that there was a clear objective; the friends (current members of NEO) oriented their personal values about staying healthy through proper nutrition and

physical fitness activities to help people who were at risk or already affected by type 2 diabetes. The founder, an emergency room physician, used his professional values to make sense of what could be done to help people before their condition escalated to the point where they needed to visit the emergency room. Furthermore, the founder invited other medical professionals, who he thought shared his values of educating people about diabetes, to his home to discuss the possibility of forming a healthcare practitioner driven, not-for-profit organization that was focused on type 2 diabetes.

***Personal value identity orientation*.** Identity refers to the various meanings attached to oneself by self and others, and locates one in social space through the relationships implied by the identity (Gecas & Burke, 1995). Social identity theorists define personal identity as a set of idiosyncratic traits and personality characteristics (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Personal identity is produced through value commitments (Hitlin, 2013). Values are enduring beliefs that certain patterns of behavior or end states are preferable to others (Rokeach, 1973), and they guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events (Schwartz, 1992; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). The notion of personal values denotes a player who relies "more on personal values to make sense of the situation" (McCaskey, 1982, as cited by Weick, 1995, p. 92). When individuals conceive of themselves in terms of the values they hold, personal value identity emerges (Gecas, 2000). The intrasubjective ("I think") level represents the individual (e.g., personal) cognition about identity (Ashforth et al., 2011; Weick, 1995; Wiley, 1988). Thus, how an individual relies on his or her personal values in an organization plays a critical role in the OI formation processes, which occurs in the

movement from the intrasubjective ("I think") level to the intersubjective ("we think") level.

Personal values influenced the emergence of the OI label "focused on diabetes" being used by NEO members to describe NEO and the creation of its two meanings (i.e., prevention activities for those who do not have diabetes and management and care for those living with diabetes). This process also influenced the creation of other OI label meanings, such as the "giving back to the community" meaning of the OI label "not-for-profit."

Friends, now NEO members, said that the death of a close friend who died due to complications of diabetes affected them personally. His death inspired them to start working out in the gym to become healthier. Over time, they formed a community-based initiative and invited others to join them in fitness classes and educational awareness seminars. The members continued these practices as the community-based initiative became a State of New York not-for-profit. Personal values of staying healthy through proper diet and exercise were shared between the members. Eventually, they collectively began to describe themselves with the same phrase, an organization with a focus on diabetes.

Another important insight was the personal values the friends, now NEO members, held towards providing services at no cost to participants. In their full-time jobs, many of the NEO members were physicians and were paid to provide educational seminars and physical fitness activities for individuals who had or were at risk of diabetes. However, there was an enduring belief that certain patterns of behavior (i.e., providing service at no cost to participants who needed it) influenced how NEO members

decided to fund the organization's programs. The members decided that if someone needed the services, then the ability to pay should not be a factor in the person deciding to participate. The IRS established the term/phrase/OI label "not-for-profit." However, individually, at the intrasubjective level, the associated meaning that NEO members created to describe the OI label was socially created by the members and was based on the members' personal values. During the formation of NEO's identity, members shared their personal values of giving back to the community. There was a merger/synthesis of several members to provide the services at no charge.

***Professional value identity orientation*.** Similar to personal value identity orientation, the notion of professional value identity orientation denotes a player who relies "more on professional values to make sense of the situation" (McCaskey, 1982, as cited by Weick, 1995, p. 92). Individual work identity has been defined as a "work-based self-concept, comprised of a combination of organizational, occupational, and other identities, that affects the roles people adopt and the corresponding ways they behave when performing their work" (Walsh & Gordon, 2008, p. 46). An occupation's unique set of codes, such as values, influences the professionals' tendency to develop a strong culture (Walsh & Gordon, 2008). Researchers (e.g., Walsh & Gordon, 2008) have argued that individuals may use their profession's positive defining values to determine their organization's identity. Similar to how individuals may orient their personal value identity in an organization, they may also orient their professional value identity. Professional values influenced the emergence of the OI label "healthcare practitioner driven." Also, this process facilitated the creation of the two meanings of the OI label

"focused on diabetes." Thus, having a professional value identity played a critical role in the OI formation processes of this newly established organization.

The emergency room physician (now NEO founder) was affected by the fact that many of his patients were battling diabetes, and some were dying at very young ages. He wanted to help people before their condition progressed to the point where they had to visit the emergency room. He believed that making a major impact in the community related to diabetes required more than he as one person could do. It required him to convene with other medical professionals who he believed shared his professional value of preventative care. At described in detail in chapter 4, a meeting was held at the home of the physician (now NEO founder), where the topic was educating people about diabetes and establishing a healthcare practitioner driven, not-for-profit organization that would eventually become a public charity. At the meeting, the invited physicians agreed. There was a merger of the now founder's professional value identity ("I think") with that of the attendees, thus facilitating a common view ("we think") that they could do this.

Interpretation related to the OI literature. In the study of how nested identities become linked across different levels of analysis, Ashforth et al. (2011) cited Drori et al.'s (2009) work that investigated how the personal values of an individual (the founder in both this study and Drori et al.'s 2009 study) could influence new members of an organization. Ashforth et al. suggested that as these values aid in new "employees enacting their intersubjective understanding, they created a seemingly objective reality . . . that transcended their individual and joint constructions" (2011, p. 1146). The intersubjective understandings could manifest themselves in the symbolic expression of how organizational members collectively answer the question "Who are we as an

organization?" (Gioia et al., 2000)—i.e., the OI labels. Furthermore, the intersubjective understandings could also manifest themselves in the collective thoughts, feelings, and intentions of OI labels (Linell & Markova, 1993; Weick, 1995)—i.e., the meanings of the OI labels.

The findings here are consistent with these observations. For this group of friends that eventually founded NEO, their personal value identity emerged as each member individually conceived of himself or herself in terms of the values he or she held about staying healthy through proper diet and not charging people to participate in activities. During the OI formation processes, these individual constructions were synthesized and merged to the content of NEO's identity, an organization providing services at no cost to those in need of diabetes education.

As a physician, the founder conceived of himself in terms of the values he held about using his professional expertise about diabetes prevention and management to provide services to participants outside of the emergency room or medical facility. He contacted his colleagues who he felt held the same values. During the meeting in his home to discuss establishing a new organization, the individual construction of what the founder believed NEO should become was synthesized and merged with that of the other physicians in attendance.

Oligopoly. Over the years, the friends, now NEO members, were engaged in a community-based initiative and as board members of a State of New York not-for-profit. Often, they used their past experiences as benchmarks to help them establish NEO. Individually and collectively, there existed a "limited set of completive benchmarks that is mutually defined to simplify and make sense of the business environment" (Porac et

al., 1989, p. 413), known as oligopoly. According to Weick (1995), these "benchmarks are the frame within which identities and strategies materialize" (p. 76). Three factors related to oligopoly led to the emergence of NEO's OI formation: (1) enactment of practices from their past, (2) similarity to like organizations, and (3) assimilation of legitimizing feedback from both authoritative and general population audiences.

Enactment of practices from their past. The notion of enactment of practices from their past denotes that people often draw from their own past experiences to produce part of their environment. At the organizational level, in particular from the social constructionist perspective (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 1991, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia et al., 2000), identity is created through social interactions of the organizational members. If these members are familiar with each other and have previously worked together in some capacity, they are likely to draw from their own past experiences based on their organizational memory. Walsh and Ungson (1991) defined organizational memory as "stored information from an organization's history that can be brought to bear on present decisions" (p. 61). Members may share experiences and openly discuss "their shared experience in close proximity to its occurrence and hammer out a common way to encode it and talk about it" (Weick, 1995, p. 188). Recalling this stored information and enacting practices may be part of their decision-making process. The success of those practices may be used as benchmarks. Thus, enacting practices from their past plays a critical role in identity; when members have worked together in the past and are establishing what would be considered a new organization, these members may intentionally select practices from their past that they believed work well and they think will fit the new organization they are establishing. NEO members enacted practices that

were developed when they were friends, then a community-based initiative, and then a State of New York not-for-profit to help them make sense of what would be their new work environment.

As friends, NEO members developed the practices of working out at the gym in order to stay healthy and possibly avoid diabetes. They continued these activities as they began to formalize their efforts and become a community-based initiative. The healthcare professionals who were members of the initiative eventually began to provide (at no cost to participants) clinical screenings for diabetes to all participants of the physical fitness activities. As time passed, members began to describe their programs as healthcare practitioner driven education about diabetes at no cost to participants.

As an established not-for-profit recognized by the State of New York, the members continued the practice of not charging others to work out with them and providing clinical screenings for diabetes. Many of the not-for-profit members were physicians and could have decided to charge a fee for service, but they held on to the practices of providing healthcare practitioner driven education about diabetes at no cost to individuals. When completing the paperwork to become a federal 501(c)(3) public charity, the members had to decide how they would describe the new public charity and what programs and practices would guide the work. As discussed in detail in chapter 4, NEO indicated the following: “a New York-based, nonprofit organization established for the purpose of providing education on the scope of diabetes, while encouraging healthy lifestyles and promoting disease prevention to at-risk communities in the greater New York area” (NEO’s federal IRS application). These activities (i.e., programs) became practices for the members. Each individual member (“I think”) had an idea of what

activities should be incorporated (e.g., yoga, clinical screenings). These activities were implemented in an informal manner.

Interpretation related to the OI literature. In their seminal work on organizational memory published in the *Academy of Management Review* in 1991, Walsh and Ungson described their notion of organizations incorporating some sort of memory.

> In general, an organization may exist independent of particular individuals, but it should be recognized that individuals acquire information in problem-solving and decision-making activities. This focus on individual cognitive activities as the central element in the organization's acquisition of information reflects an active construction of memory. However, interpretations of problems and solutions vary with individuals. The thread of coherence that characterizes organizational interpretations is made possible by the sharing of interpretations. Thus, through this process of sharing, the organizational interpretation system in part transcends the individual level. (Walsh & Ungson, 1991, p. 61).

The findings here are consistent with these observations. The majority of NEO's current members have been together for all three stages of development (i.e., friends, community-based initiative, and State of New York not-for-profit). These individuals have acquired information about why NEO is focused on diabetes, why the majority of its members are physicians, why NEO is a public charity and not-for-profit, and why they are educators. On the individual (intrasubjective) level, these members develop interpretations about who NEO is becoming. As the members share their individual interpretations, there is a merging of the communicating selves, which characterizes organizational interpretations of who NEO is becoming.

***Similarity to like organizations*.** In organizational theory, the notion of optimal distinctiveness has been defined as "being similar enough to competitors to gain legitimacy while being different enough to reap a competitive advantage" (Brewer, 1991;

Gioia et al., 2010, p. 25). In addition to being distinctive from like organizations (Albert & Whetten, 1995; Brewer, 1991; Gioia et al., 2010), organizational members must also understand and be able to describe what makes them similar to like organizations (Brewer, 1991; Clegg et al., 2007; Czarniawska & Wolff, 1998; Gioia et al., 2010, 2013). The informants believed that they should have some similarities to like organizations. For example, NEO members stated that like other not-for-profits, participants should not be charged for services rendered.

Another insight was that NEO members believed that they should also appear to be similar to other not-for-profits specifically focused on diabetes. NEO members described how they would contact other like organizations with the intent of understanding how those organizations operated. One purpose of the call was to understand what features of NEO would be distinguishable, but in order to seek legitimation from donors NEO had to also describe how it was similar to like organizations focused on diabetes.

The basis for NEO's description of who it is was grounded in what it did for the community it served. In organizations, members develop programs and related practices that may indicate how they are similar to like organizations or what distinguishes them from other organizations (i.e., attaining optimal distinctiveness). Thus, the notion of being similar to like organizations is important to the formation of a newly established organization.

NEO members collectively constructed programs and practices, which in turn helped them create the meanings of the OI labels they used to describe NEO. First, programs were developed to educate people about diabetes. The physicians involved with

NEO helped to develop the content of what would be taught to participants. In addition, the physicians helped develop the language that appeared in the application to the State of New York to become recognized as State of New York health educators. Second, the president and treasurer helped to develop the organizational practices. This was evident in the application to become a State of New York not-for-profit and a federal 501(c)(3) public charity. Developing the programs and practices facilitated the emergence of OI labels of who NEO was becoming and the creation of the associated meanings of those OI labels. NEO members soon began to create meanings for those OI labels.

Interpretation related to the OI literature. In Gioia et al.'s (2010) investigation of the processes involved in forming an OI, one sequential stage that emerged was attaining optimal distinctiveness.

> Appearing similar to a select few other schools helped CITS's entrée into legitimate academic and professional environments. CITS members "did not want to be seen as a totally new entity from the outside" (Faculty 11). In addition, members needed reassurance as they moved from previous experience to a new beginning that not all would be unknown. (p. 25)

The findings here are consistent with these observations. In completing the paperwork to become a State of New York not-for-profit, a federal 501(c)(3) public charity, and a State of New York health educator, NEO had to answer specific questions to indicate to the authorities that it met the requirements for these designations. Similar to the informants in Gioia et al.'s (2010) study, these informants were interested in receiving donated funds from external sources. It was imperative that external sources had a reference of who NEO would become, not how NEO was so different from other

organizations. Highlighting what distinguished NEO from other like organizations would not have been an effective strategy during the formation of its identity.

Assimilation of legitimizing feedback. As noted in Gioia et al.'s (2010) investigation of the processes involved in forming an OI, receiving legitimizing feedback pertains to stakeholders' affirmations that the organization is achieving legitimacy, i.e., that its actions are "desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (Suchman, 1995: 574)" (p. 28). Thus, in the effort to motivate and mobilize potential resource providers, the notion of assimilation of legitimizing feedback is key to how members of a newly established organization select OI labels and create meanings for those OI labels to articulate who the organization is becoming.

When new organizations begin to form their identity, they often assimilate legitimizing feedback from external sources. In some cases, this legitimation may be required for legal purposes to become an organization. In other cases, the legitimation may be due to encouraging potential resource providers to commit needed resources such as money, employees, collaborators, and partners (Martens et al., 2007). The potential for using OI labels that resonate with external audiences is high, especially when those labels are widely used and accepted.

A major requirement from the IRS for an organization to become a federal 501(c)(3) not-for-profit is that the group receive recognition from a state as a not-for-profit corporation. Prior to applying to become a federal 501(c)(3), an organization must make several decisions: (1) whether the funds it generates will come from individual(s) belonging to the not-for-profit and then be distributed to a public charity, or (2) whether

the funds needed to manage the not-for-profit will be generated from donated funds from others and then be used to provide services to the community. In the former case, the not-for-profit would be designated as a private foundation. In the latter case, the not-for-profit would be considered a public charity. NEO chose the latter.

The members of the community-based initiative decided that they would seek to become a public charity (described in detail in chapter 4), which required that they first become a State of New York not-for-profit. In June 2012 they received that recognition. As part of their organizational plan, the State of New York not-for-profit became a specific type, a federal 501(c)(3) public charity, in March 2013. Although NEO is currently recognized as a public charity, a specific type of federal not-for-profit, NEO members did not use the term "public charity" to describe who they are. An informant explained that they continued to use the term "not-for-profit" because they were seeking legitimation from participants and donors—who used the term "not-for-profit" and not the official term "public charity."

Interpretation related to the OI literature. Wry, Lounsbury, and Glynn (2011) linked identity to legitimacy.

> Legitimacy is more likely to be achieved when members articulate a clear defining collective identity story that identifies the group's orienting purpose and core practices. (p. 449)

The findings here are consistent with these observations. NEO members' story of who NEO was becoming was embedded in the content of NEO's identity. NEO was successful in completing the needed paperwork described above. As NEO began seeking

funding from external sources, it was imperative that NEO members were telling consistent stories of who NEO is.

Conclusions Related to the Organizational Identity Literature

In reaching conclusions of this study, I seek to join conversations in the literature (Huff, 1999) concerning OI in newly established organizations. The foreground of this study has been the OI literature: the emergence of OI labels and the creation and negotiation of the associated meanings of those OI labels. The context for the study has been a now 10-month-old not-for-profit organization. The research purpose has been to examine the relationship between the emergence of OI labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings during the OI formation processes of a newly established organization. Conclusions that both confirm the referenced scholarly literature and that add new insights are presented.

Findings of this study corroborate the emergence of an organization's identity labels and the creation and negotiation of the OI label meanings. The terms and phrases used by members at the intrasubjective (i.e., individual, "I think") level to describe who the organization is becoming moved to the intersubjective (i.e., collective, "we think") level where they became OI labels, offering support to the following concepts of OI: (1) Wiley's (1988) notion of social theory levels, specifically the intrasubjective level and the intersubjective level; (2) Ashforth et al.'s (2011) notion that the OI formation process occurs as the self gets transformed from 'I' into 'we.'; (3) Gioia et al.'s (2000) notion that the content of an organization's identity consists of two tangled aspects, labels and meanings; (4) Gioia et al.'s (2000) definition of labels (i.e., the symbolic expression of

how organizational members collectively answer the question "Who are we as an organization?" (Gioia et al., 2000); and (5) Linell and Markova's (1993) and Weick's (1995) definition of meanings (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and intentions).

Subsequently, this study has five conclusions: (1) *Distinct processes may facilitate the emergence of OI labels and the creation of specific OI label meanings; (2) personal value identity orientation and professional value identity orientation may expand beyond the original collective;* (3) *the emergence process "enactment of practices from their past" is important for a newly established organization;* (4*) in emerging organizations interpretation legitimating feedback from external sources focuses more on similarities to other organizations in their industry rather than focusing on differences; and (5) there is value of action in the OI formation processes in emerging organizations rather than discussion and reflection.* These five conclusions are discussed below.

Conclusion 1

Distinct processes may facilitate the emergence of OI labels and the creation of specific OI label meanings.

It is a conclusion of my study that distinctive emergence processes facilitated the movement of specific terms/phrases from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level to become OI labels. In this case study, two processes facilitated the emergence of all four OI labels and the creation of their associated meanings. The processes "enactment of practices from their past" and "assimilation of legitimizing feedback" facilitated the emergence process of the OI labels "focused on diabetes," "not-for-profit," "educators,"

and “healthcare practitioner driven.” In addition, these processes also facilitated the creation of the meanings of the respective OI labels. This was not the case for the remaining processes: (1) personal value identity orientation, (2) professional value identity orientation, and (3) similarity to like organizations. Those three processes facilitated the emergence of only the OI labels “focused on diabetes” and “not-for-profit,” not “educators” and “healthcare practitioner driven.” In addition, those three processes facilitated the creation of the meanings of only those same two OI labels.

Conclusion 2

Personal value identity orientation and professional value identity orientation expanded beyond the original collective.

The value identity of who an organization is becoming is not limited to founder or the original group of friends. In addition to the movement from the “I” to the “we” of the founder, original members play a role in this merger of ideas about who the newly established organization is becoming. Who is responsible for the formation of an identity of a newly established organization? While Ashforth et al. suggested that as values of the founder aid in new “employees enacting their intersubjective understanding, they created a seemingly objective reality . . . that transcended their individual and joint constructions” (2011, p. 1146).

The findings here suggest that the values of multiple members, which may or may not include the founder, may influence the organizational identity formation processes of a newly established organization. As the group of friends began to expand, they invited others to participate. Members of the community located in the Bronx attended the

physical fitness activities and free screenings for diabetes. As time progressed and participation increased, the group of friends became a community-based initiative. Eventually the participation of the pre-NEO programs grew and more individuals joined the initiative. The new "we" now included others outside of the original founder and founding members. As the community-based initiative expanded, the founder and his wife, both physicians, believed that the soon-to-be NEO needed to have more physicians formally involved. As stated in chapter 4, the founder held a meeting at his home and invited other medical professionals to discuss and possibly join the soon-to-be NEO. Other than what emerged from the interviews with the founder and a few other members, there was very limited documentation of what was expressed by the medical professional invitees. What is known is that soon after that meeting, the membership of what is now NEO's executive board grew in terms of the number of physicians. Currently, more than 80% of NEO's executive team are medical professionals. What can be concluded is that the invited medical professionals agreed with the presentation and began to think of pre-NEO as a healthcare practitioner driven not-for-profit organization with a focus on educating individuals about diabetes in spaces other than emergency care facilities.

In the literature, few researchers have investigated the identity formation of a newly established organization. For the few that have, they have investigated this phenomenon from either a social constructionist perspective of a social actor perspective. This seems to support Gioia et al.'s (2010) notion "that both social construction and social actor views of identity related processes were not only germane to the formation of organizational identity but that these processes were also mutually constitutive in creating a workable identity" (p. 1). In sum, it is a conclusion that the values of multiple members,

including the founder, are important in the organizational identity formation processes of a newly established organization.

Conclusion 3

The process "enactment of practices from their past" is important to emergence of OI labels and the creation of their associated meanings during the OI formation process of a newly established organization.

The process that I termed "enactment of practices from their past" may facilitate the emergence OI labels. In addition, the process of "enactment of practices from their may facilitate the creation process of the OI label-meanings. Thus, a conclusion of this study was that the emergence process of enactment of practices from an organization's is important to the OI formation processes.

While Walsh and Ungson (1991) defined organizational memory as "stored information from an organization's history that can be brought to bear on present decisions" (p. 61), the finding here suggests that not all memory is developed when the collective is not an official organization. The stored information may come from the history of a group of friends. NEO received its designation from the IRS as a federal 501(c)(3) public charity. However, NEO's identity formation did not begin with this designation. Since the time when the members were only friends, they were consciously and unconsciously developing an identity of who NEO was becoming. For example, the group of friends always had a focus on diabetes (e.g., focused on type 2 diabetes, people with it and at risk for it). The group of friends never charged individuals to participate (e.g., it was at no cost to the participants and the friends were giving back to their community). Members—particularly those who were medical professionals—helped to

develop the content (e.g., healthcare practitioner driven) for the educational seminars (e.g., educators). The activities and programs that were developed during the stage as friends were enacted during the community-based initiative, the State of New York not-for-profit, and finally in NEO. In sum, it is the conclusion of this study that the stored information from the history of a group of friends may facilitate the emergence of OI labels and the creation of their associated meanings during the OI formation process of a newly established organization.

Conclusion 4

> *In emerging organizations interpretation legitimating feedback from external sources focuses more on similarities to other organizations in their industry rather than focusing on differences.*

In practical terms, members of a newly established organization must be able to motivate and mobilize potential resource providers into committing needed resources such as money. As members of a newly established organization, members may believe that they have to narrow their descriptions of 'who' the organization is becoming by using the terms and phrases that seemed similar to how other like organizations described themselves.

While the literature suggest that organizations focus on "being similar enough to competitors to gain legitimacy while being different enough to reap a competitive advantage" (Brewer, 1991; Gioia et al., 2010, p. 25), this is not always the case for newly established organizations. Can members of new organizations gain external support if the external supporters are unclear about the identity of the newly established organizations?

During the organizational identify formation processes, do all organizations focus on both their similarities and their differences?

In this case study, the need to be 'similar' to like organizations facilitated the emergence of the OI label "not-for-profit" and the creation of two of its four associated meanings: (1) others can donate, and (2) donors can receive tax deductions for their donation. One reason that the community-based initiative became a not-for-profit organization was so that the initiatives could be funded by external donors. Prior to receiving its designation as a State of New York not-for-profit, the initiatives were funded by pre-NEO members and other external sources. Following the advice of the internal expert, the treasurer, the community-based initiative became a not-for-profit, which not only expanded the funding pool, but also allowed for a tax deduction for all donors of the initiative.

During the interviews, respondents stated that what made NEO unique was this notion of being healthcare practitioner driven. This phrase did not appear in NEO's documents with an emphasis on it being what made the organization unique. During the meeting at the founder's home, many of the invited guests asked what would make NEO unique. It was decided that being a healthcare practitioner driven organization would make them unique. Still, NEO members did not use this OI label when they were seeking legitimation from donors. NEO members focused on assimilation of legitimating feedback from external sources by highlighting their similarity to other not-for-profit organizations and not their distinctive difference, such as being healthcare practitioner driven.

Conclusion 5

There is value of action in the OI formation processes in emerging organizations rather than discussion and reflection.

Another conclusion of this study is that there is value of action in the OI formation processes in emerging organizations. Typically, members use discussion and reflection to make decisions. In some instances, members rely on organizational memory to help form decisions. Decisions, depending on the magnitude, may be observed as members perform an action. In this case study, members valued action over discussion and reflections. For example, members provided educational seminars about diabetes and facilitated physical fitness activities targeting youth without full discussion of the group. If there was a discussion with other group members, the discussion was informal. "I called my girl and asked if she wanted to join me at an event" (Vice President). "The treasurer called me and asked if we should attend a community health fair. I sent a text to the group to see who could join us" (President). "Rarely do we discuss how we make decisions. We just ask is everyone good with the idea. Someone may ask 'you good'. We all say we are good. That's how we make our decision: (Co-founder)'.

Implications for Organizational Identity Theory

My study answered the questions it sought to understand: *How does the content of OI emerge in a newly established organization? What are the OI labels used to describe the newly established organization? What are the meanings associated with those OI labels? How are the meanings associated with OI labels negotiated during the OI formation processes?* In doing so, it has implications for the theoretical conversations

around OI formation, for future research, and for practical applications in newly established organizations.

In addition to the notion of where an organization's identity is formed (i.e., between the intrasubjective and intersubjective levels of Wiley's levels of social theory), and the two aspects of the organization's identity content (i.e., OI labels and OI label meanings), findings from this study suggests that the during the organizational identity formation processes of a newly established organization, members may use "stored information from an organization's history that can be brought to bear on present decisions" (Walsh & Ungson, 1991, p. 61), in other words, the organizational memory from their past. Although the focus of this study was OI and not organizational image, findings from this study suggests that the during the organizational identity formation processes of a newly established organization, members are concerned with the image of the organization, in other words, the attributes that organizational members believe outsiders hold regarding the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Figure 5.1 depicts the revised conceptual framework.

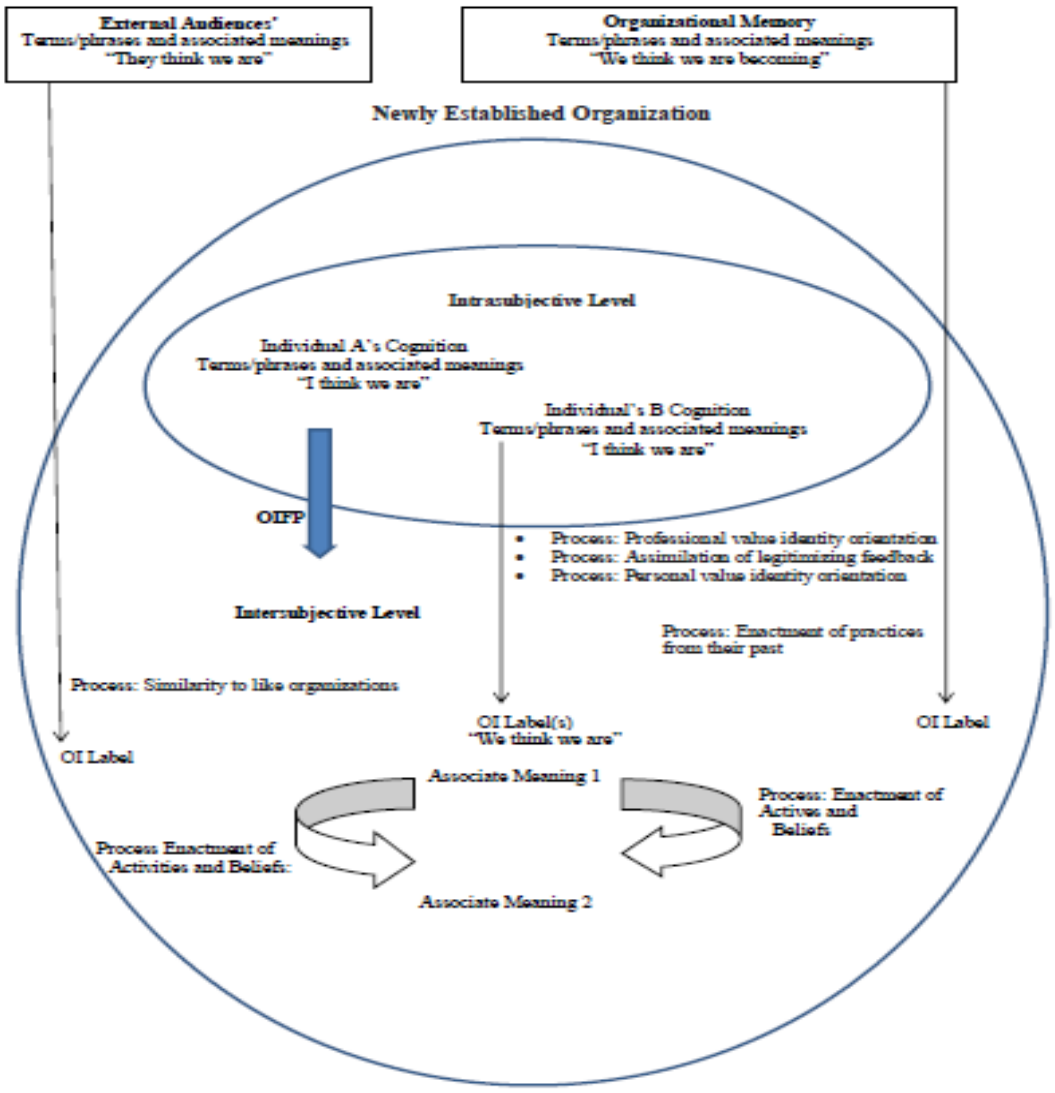

Figure 5.1. Conceptual framework of the members use of organizational memory and organizational image during the organizational identity formation processes.

This study demonstrated that a term or phrase that is used at the intrasubjective level to describe the organization may not move to the intersubjective level to become an OI label. The term "youth" and the phrase "African American-based" did not appear in the written documents or the audiovisual material, nor were they stated during my observations of NEO members providing services to the community. The four

terms/phrases that did become OI labels included educators, healthcare practitioner driven, focused on diabetes, and not-for-profit.

From the social constructionist perspective (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fiol, 1991, 2002; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Gioia et al., 2000), my study joins the conversations of one main theory base (OI; specifically Albert & Whetten, 1995). More specifically, my study focused on the relationship between the emergence of OI labels and their associated meanings during the OI formation processes of a newly established organization. It showed that organizational members embraced personal and professional value identity orientations, enacted practices of their past, selected activities from like organizations in an effort to receive legitimizing feedback from external audiences, and then negotiated the meanings of their OI labels through the enactment of activities and beliefs. As such, it adds another dimension to the conversation.

My study supports Gioia, Schultz, and Corley's (2000) idea that the content of an organization's identity consists of two tangled aspects, labels and their meanings. More specifically, my study was able to *untangle* and investigated separately the two aspects of an organization's identity (Rerup & Gioia, 2011); and Wiley's (1988), Weick's (1995), and Ashforth et al.'s (2011) idea that OI formation involves the process of movement from intrasubjective to intersubjective, i.e., "the self gets transformed from 'I' into 'we.'"

The study explored the theoretical postulate that organizational memory is stored information from an organization's history. "Organizational memory is the stored information from an organization's history that can be brought to bear on present decisions" (p. 61). While this may be true, the evidence from this study suggests that stored information may come from the history of a group of friends who not part of an

official organization. Rather, the stored information from a collective may be recalled as members of a new organization enact activities from their past prior to becoming an organization per se.

The study explored the theoretical postulate that organizations focus on optimal distinctiveness, in other words how they are similar and dissimilar to like organizations. While this has been suggested in other studies (e.g. Brewer, 1991; Gioia et al., 2010), the evidence from this study suggest that as the organization is forming, members seeking external resources may elaborate more on how similar the new organization is to its competitors. Initially, it may be easier for resources holder's to grasp the notion of providing resources to something that they understand.

I found that the interpretation and the expression of the labels and their meanings were consistent across NEO and came together in the form of an OI. Members never expressed a term/phrase or OI label (i.e., the symbolic expression of how organizational members collectively answer the question "Who are we as an organization?") (Gioia et al., 2000) that did not have a meaning (i.e., thought, feeling, and intention of OI labels) (Linell & Markova, 1993; Weick, 1995). By first asking the members, "What term(s) or phrase(s) describes NEO as an organization?" and then "What does that OI label mean to NEO?", I determined that the OI labels described each had a distinctive associated meaning. My study demonstrates that the OI label may simultaneously have multiple negotiated meanings.

Recommendations for Future Research

My study offers several opportunities and suggestions for future research. As one example, my study gives future researchers a starting point for duplicating the study across different types of organizations, not just not-for-profits, as well as for building off of the findings identified in this single-case study. Recommendations for future research include the following:

- Explore the emergence process of OI labels and the process of creating and negotiating OI label meanings in another newly established not-for-profit organization to see if similar findings result. This study was a single case study and did not seek generalizability. Research should seek to understand if the OI formation process that emerged in this study emerges in another newly established organization.
- Explore other organizations that do not operate in the traditional sense of brick and mortar. This study site was not a physical space; rather, members met virtually. Future researchers of OI should investigate the OIFP when the services provided by the study site are rendered in external forums.
- Conduct the study in a different type of organization. This study focused on a federal 501(c)(3) public charity. Future researchers could investigate the OI formation process in another type of not-for-profit, a private foundation. In a public charity, the funds used to support the organization are generated from the public and are used to provide direct services to participants. In a private foundation, the money is generated from a single entity, such as an individual or organization. The funds are given to a public charity to implement programs and

services. Researchers may find that the private foundation may not experience certain processes such as seeking legitimation from external sources since the foundation provides its own funding.

- Study the OI formation process in a for-profit business to gain a better understanding of whether the OI formation process that emerged in this study is limited to not-for-profit organizations. The OI formation processes of a for-profit may be different, as members may be required to overtly state their thoughts, feelings, and intentions about a label. In addition, leadership may give sense to those meanings in a for-profit organization.
- Explore whether there is an impact on the organization's identity if terms/phrases used at the intrasubjective level by individual members do not move to the intersubjective levels. Future research should investigate the benefit or loss to a company if all members do not have the same understanding of the organization's identity. Such research could explore the possibilities that arise with identity ambiguity.
- Conduct a longitudinal study of the long-term effects when an organization does not negotiate the meanings associated with its OI labels. Investigators could track these negotiated meanings over time and cross-reference them with a particular impact area of the organization, such as funding. Research could also seek to understand if there is an internal impact in how members negotiate differences in other aspects of the organizational setting, such as meetings.

Future researchers may also benefit from some lessons learned in this study related to methodology. My study demonstrated the importance of triangulation in

identifying if what is stated to be the organization's identity labels and their associated meanings turn out to be correct. When OI labels are found in documents, are revealed during interviews, and are manifested through actions during observation periods, a researcher has a higher degree of confidence that the OI labels truly are representative of the organization's identity. Therefore, future studies may want to include more than one source of information before arriving at final conclusions about an organization's identity, even for more positivist studies using surveys to measure identity.

In addition, my study demonstrated that the content of the organization's identity also consists of the OI label meanings. Therefore, researchers may want to seek evidence in documents and observations verifying the meanings associated with the OI labels that are identified during interviews. My research study also incorporated a variety of methods in its research protocol. Although all questions were designed to answer the research question, the individual interview questions were designed to help the participants think of their answers through different lenses. The more direct questions, such as "What term(s) or phrase(s) does NEO currently use to describe itself as an organization?" and "What do those terms/labels mean to NEO?" elicited those organizational labels and their associated meanings of which the organization was most aware. The inclusion of other questions that addressed different angles is advised in a research study. The different types of questions may give the researcher a chance to see which question types were most effective, as well as give participants an opportunity to reflect on their earlier answers by reframing the responses. The most successful questions in this study to elicit the organization's identity labels and their associated meanings were asked during the second interview and involved me stating to the interviewees, "The

following terms/labels emerged during the initial interviews, reviews of documents, and observations: (1) not-for-profit, (2) educators, (3) diabetes focused, and (4) young." I then stated, "The label 'not-for-profit' has been used by NEO members to describe who NEO is. Do you think the OI label 'not-for-profit' describes who NEO is? If so, why? If not, what other term do you think best describes who NEO is?" This technique was repeated for the remaining terms/phrases that emerged at the intrasubjective level. It was helpful in providing the members an opportunity to hear the terms that other members used to describe NOE as an organization and in understanding if these terms/phrases represented a "synthesis of two, or more, communicating selves" (Wiley, 1988, p. 258) and were now OI labels at the intersubjective level.

It is also suggested that future qualitative studies exploring the OI formation processes of a newly established organization carefully select a research site or sites. If the organization is a virtual organization such as NEO, the organization must not only be willing to participate in the study, but give full access to the researcher during the research period. I was granted access to all internal and external documents related to NEO, and it proved to be immeasurably beneficial to the quality of the study. However, due to the virtual nature of NEO, I was not able to witness interactions between members during conference calls or group texts with each other. Because OI has an important 'social construction' component, as described in this study, access to the organizational members socially constructing NEO's identity, particularly in negotiating meanings, is critical.

Additionally, researchers who examine OI and its formation process should carefully conduct epoché activities. I performed epoché by keeping a decision journal of

my thoughts and conceptions of what a not-for-profit organization focused on diabetes is and what its OI labels and associated meanings could be. In my decision journal, I noted that I anticipated that the newly established not-for-profit organization focused on diabetes would struggle with the meaning of "focused on diabetes"; that is, the organization would attempt to focus on both the prevention of diabetes and the management of care for those affected by diabetes. These ideas came from my own experience as the national director of mission delivery and strategic and philanthropic relationships for a 77-year-old not-for-profit organization focused on diabetes. After several interviews with NEO members, I learned that NEO's allowance for multiple meanings of the OI label "focused on diabetes" was intentional. The members had made a conscious choice to allow for dual meanings (e.g., prevention, management of care), as NEO had future plans of extending services to both populations. In addition, NEO's founder, a physician, often expressed a professional opinion to others that activities provided (e.g., education, physical fitness) to those who did not have diabetes could also benefit those who had the disease. The epoché activities ensured that my own perceptions did not bend the findings toward my original understanding of what constituted a not-for-profit organization focused on diabetes, and in turn its OI labels and their associated meanings.

Implications for Practice

Does having a clear OI benefit a newly established organization? Young (2011) noted that selecting an identity in the beginning "is tantamount to an organization's defining a north star by which to navigate its course of action and shape strategy for the

future" (p. 155). Martens et al. (2007) noted that the success of the organization depends on the members being able to motivate and mobilize potential resource providers into committing needed resources such as money, employees, collaborators, and partners (Martens et al., 2007). The "shaping strategy for the future" and "mobilizing potential resource providers" found in this study coincide with the observation.

How does understanding the OI formation processes add to the understanding of practice in newly established organizations? This study reached the conclusion that all terms and phrases that were used by members individually were not shared at a higher level of understanding and agreement by all members. Given that, the dynamics of the newly established organizational members individually making statements about who the organization is becoming is important. Thus, it is important for practitioners to develop an understanding of these dynamics in newly established organizations that could limit the organization in receiving funds because of a lack of clarity between all members regarding who the organization is becoming.

A second implication for practice is how members begin to express their thoughts, feelings, and intentions about the labels they are using to describe the organization. This study reached the conclusion that NEO members created multiple meanings for specific OI labels and that these meanings did not replace each other but were used simultaneously. Given that, understanding how members define the OI labels they are collectively using is important. Thus, it is important for practitioners to understand the specific meaning of an OI label and not just simply identify that the OI label has a meaning.

A third implication for practice is how members may or may not overtly discuss their thoughts, feelings, or intentions. This study concluded that NEO members did not overtly negotiate the multiple meanings of the OI label "focused on diabetes." Given that, understanding how members may or may not openly discuss their understandings may lead members to think that they have the same meaning. In addition, this lack of overt discussion may confuse potential resources who probe deeper for explanations of the organization's identity.

In this study, the organization did not have a traditional brick and mortar space for meetings or to provide services. Forming an organizational identity g as a virtual organization has both pros and cons. A pro that emerged from the findings of this study was the quickness in making decisions. Members often contacted one or two others, discussed an idea, and then acted. In turn, forming an organizational identity in a virtual organization has its cons as well. Members may find it difficult to collectively express who the organization is becoming in a manner that represents their collective thoughts, feelings, and intentions about the new organization. Meeting in a virtual space hinders the merging of two of more communicating selves, which is important in the movement from terms and phrase that are developed at the intrasubjective level and need to move to the intersubjective level to become OI labels.

In sum, this study substantiated OI scholarship on newly established organizations, concluding that a newly established organization may provide an information-rich site for examining the OI formation process as the organization socially constructs the answer to the question: "Who are we becoming?" (Schultz et al., 2012, p. 4) as an organization.

Relevance to NEO

NEO is a unique not-for-profit organization with an identity that is beginning to form as a healthcare practitioner driven organization of educators that is focused on diabetes. Using the OI label "not-for-profit," the members understand that they will not directly receive monetary profit, that they are giving back to the community that they now have a way for people to donate, and those who donate can receive tax deductions. They do not have an office; they meet virtually or at public venues to provide educational seminars or physical fitness activities.

NEO may be taking its identity for granted. It is not something that they think about or discuss on a regular basis. The OI labels used at the intersubjective level were terms/phrases that members used individually to describe to external others who NEO is becoming. The findings in my study will help NEO to understand who they are and who they are becoming as an organization. Additionally, NEO could take additional actions to openly discuss the associated meanings of the OI labels. As NEO continues its mission of focusing on diabetes, it can discuss if the focus is on the prevention of diabetes or the management of complications due to diabetes. In respect to the OI label, it is clear that NEO embraces the term not-for-profit, which was given to the organization by the State of New York in June 2012; however, as of March 2013, the IRS made a specific distinction of NEO as a public charity and not a private foundation, both of which are types of not-for-profit organizations. A clearly formed identity may motivate and mobilize potential resource providers into committing needed resources such as money, employees, collaborators, and partners.

My research study introduces important findings to the conversation about the OI formation processes. My study demonstrates how OI labels emerge and how their associated meanings are created and negotiated during the OI formation processes of a single newly established organization. As this study progressed, I recognized the importance of remaining open to alternative or rival explanations. When I started the study, I held a strong assumption—supported by the literature—that the durability of an organization's identity may be in only one identity content aspect (e.g., labels), but not in the other (e.g., meanings of those labels) (Gioia et al., 2000). However, as early as the second interviews, I noticed that although there may have been some durability in the meanings as they moved from the intrasubjective level to the intersubjective level, the members intentionally allowed for multiple meanings. Furthermore, findings note that the members in some cases did not negotiate those meanings. If I had not been open to the possibility of multiple meanings and the nonnegotiation of those meanings, the findings would have been forced to fit what I originally believed. With the strong convergence and saturation of the data, my study demonstrates how the OI content of NEO emerged during the OI formation processes and how the OI label meanings were negotiated. For NEO, both the emergence of the OI labels and the creation and negotiation of their meanings were intrinsically tied and interwoven in the content of their OI.

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APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

FIRST INTERVIEW

How does the content of OI emerge in a newly established organization?
Time of interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee name and division:

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me for the next hour. A pseudonym will be used, and your responses will be kept confidential. With your permission, this interview will be tape recorded for the purposes of transcribing and analyzing the data for use in my dissertation. You can stop the interview at any time for any reason.

To get us started, let me tell that I'm interested in newly established organizations? I'll be asking you a series of questions aimed at gaining this information from you.

Organizational Identity Theory = OIT

1. Central, enduring, and distinctive at the organization:
    a) Why was NEO started?
    b) What is at the heart, the most important part of NEO?
    c) Since NEO received its 501 (3) c status, what has been the constants?
    d) Describe the future of NEO in one year. Three years.
    e) What makes NEO unique - separates it from related organizations?
    f) What makes NEO similar – connects it with related organizations?

Organizational Identity Definition (social constructionists perspective) = OID

2. Processes (i.e., formal interactions, business practices, staff meetings, problem solving meetings, strategic planning sessions, etc.) that impact the organization.
    a) Describe the meetings that you have attended via Skype.
    b) Describe the meetings that you have attended in person.
    c) Do you notice a difference in the two meetings spaces? If so, what is the difference?
    d) If achieving the meeting goals is considered effective, which meeting space would you say is a better meeting structure for NEO?
3. Structures (i.e., rules, norms, procedures, roles/actions, etc.) that impact NEO.
    a) Describe how new ideas are introduced (e.g., staff meetings, board meetings).
    b) Describe how NEO makes a final decision on an issue.

Organizational Identity Formation Processes = OIFP

4. Founder's vision of NEO.
    a) Are you aware of the founder's vision for NEO? If so, please describe it to me.
    b) How did you find out about the founders vision?
    c) Have you heard NEO's leadership (e.g., president, board of directors) describe the founder's vision of NEO?
5. Organizational member's vision of NEO.
    a) What do members say about the vision of NEO?
    b) How influential are the members in shaping the vision of NEO?
    c) What is the role of leadership (e.g., president, board of directors) in shaping the vision of NEO?

Organizational Identity Content and Research Questions

6. If the founder introduced a term/label to describe NEO, what was it – were they?
    a) How did the founder make the term/label known to other organizational members?
    b) Is it known why the founder selected those terms/ labels?
    c) Does the founder still use those same words/labels?
7. What term(s) or label(s) does NEO currently use to describe itself as an organization?
    a) If NEO uses another tem or label to describe itself, is that term/label different from the ones introduced by founder, or another organizational member?
    b) What do those terms/labels mean to NEO?
    c) How did NEO decide that those were the terms/labels NEO would use on flyers, webpage, flyers, etc.?
    d) How does NEO explain to others the meaning of those terms/labels?

SECOND INTERVIEW

How does the content of OI emerge in a newly established organization?
Time of interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer: Interviewee name and division:

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me again for the next hour. As I indicated when we last spoke, a pseudonym will be used, and your responses will be kept confidential. With your permission, this interview will be tape recorded for the purposes of transcribing and analyzing the data for use in my dissertation. You can stop the interview at any time for any reason.

To get us started, let me remind you that I'm interested in newly established organizations? I'll be asking you a series of questions aimed at gaining this information from you.

Organizational Identity Theory = OIT

1. Central, enduring, and distinctive at the organization:
    a) Since we last spoke, what has been at the heart, the most important part of NEO?
    b) Since we last spoke, what have been the constants?
    c) What has proven to be unique to NEO - separates it from related organizations?
    d) What has proven to make NEO similar – connects it with related organizations?

Organizational Identity Definition (social constructionists perspective) = OID

2. Processes (i.e., formal interactions, business practices, staff meetings, problem solving meetings, strategic planning sessions, etc.) that impact the organization.
    a) If you attended a NEO meeting via Skype since we last spoke please describe the meeting.
    b) If you attended a NEO meeting in-person since we last spoke please describe the meeting.
    c) If you attended a NEO meeting via Skype and in person since we last spoke do you notice a difference in the two meetings spaces? If so, what is the difference?
    d) If achieving the meeting goals is considered effective, which meeting space would you say is a better meeting structure for NEO?
3. Structures (i.e., rules, norms, procedures, roles/actions, etc.) that impact NEO.
    a) Have any new ideas been introduced to the organization since we last spoke? If so, please describe how those new ideas were introduced (e.g., staff meetings, board meetings).
    c) Have any organizational-level decisions been made since we last spoke? If so, please describe how NEO made a final decision on an issue.

Organizational Identity Formation Processes = OIFP

4. Organizational member's vision of NEO.
    d) Sine we last spoke, what are NEO members saying about the vision of NEO?
    e) How influential are the members in shaping the vision of NEO?
    f) Since we last spoke, has there been a role of leadership (e.g., president, board of directors) in shaping the vision of NEO?

Organizational Identity Content and Research Questions

5. Since we last spoke, what term(s) or label(s) has NEO used to describe itself as an organization?

a) If NEO uses another tem or label to describe itself, is that term/label different from the ones introduced by founder, or another organizational member?
b) What do those terms/labels mean to NEO now?
c) How did NEO decide that those new terms/labels were the terms/labels NEO would use on flyers, webpage, flyers, etc.?
d) How does NEO explain to others the meaning of those new terms/labels?

APPENDIX B:

INFORMATION SHEET ABOUT RESEARCH STUDY

{ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION PROCESSES: A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ADOPTION OF LABELS AND THE CREATION OF THEIR MEANINGS}

{IRB # 071359}

You are invited to participate in a research study under the direction of Dr. Andrea Casey of the Department of Human and Organizational Learning, George Washington University (GWU). Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary. The purpose of this study is to examine the interplay between the adoption of labels and the creation of their meanings during the formation of organizational identity of a newly established organization.

If you choose to take part in this study, you will be asked to a) submit data from documents meeting minutes, b) allow me to observe you during the organization's meeting via Skype, c) participate in 3-semi structured interviews, and d) participate in a virtual focus group-virtual. The total amount of time you will spend in connection with this study is twelve (12) weeks.

There are no physical risks associated with this study. There is, however, the possible risk of loss of confidentiality. Every effort will be made to keep your information confidential, however, this can not be guaranteed. Some of the questions we will ask you as part of this study may make you feel uncomfortable. You may refuse to answer any of the questions and you may take a break at any time during the study. You may stop your participation in this study at any time.

You will not benefit directly from your participation in the study. The benefits to science and humankind that might result from this study are: The results of this study will contribute to increased understanding of the relationship between the adoption of labels and the creation of their meanings in a newly established organization. In addition, you may enjoy the opportunity to think, as you are being interviewed and afterward, about important events in the history of your organization that have influenced who/what the company will become. Taking part in this research will not help you directly. However, we hope that the information we get from this study may help others in the future or may help further this area of knowledge. You will not be paid for taking part in this study. The investigator can decide to withdraw you from the study at any time. You could be taken off the study for reasons related solely to you (for example, not following study-related directions from the Investigator) or because the entire study is stopped. Your employment will not be affected in any way whether you choose to participate or not.

If results of this research study are reported in journals or at scientific meetings, the people who participated in this study will not be named or identified. GW will not release any information about your research involvement without your written permission, unless required by law. Access to the raw data is restricted to the principal researcher, her dissertation committee members, GWU faculty members and doctoral students who may assist with analysis and quality review of the findings and interpretation, but your real name will not be revealed to them. Quotes used in the final report for this research will not be attributed to a specific participant. Direct quotes from interviews may be published, but complete transcripts of the interviews will not be published. I will use video/audio recordings as a tool to transcribe the interviews and observations. The video/audio recordings will not be used as part of any presentations. Interviews, using pseudonyms, will be transcribed into a word processing format. At the conclusion of the research study, all audiotapes and backup CDs will be destroyed. The researcher will retain the transcripts indefinitely as supporting data for the study. All data collected using the procedures described here will be treated as confidential. The Office of Human Research of George Washington University, at telephone number (202) 994-2715, can provide further information about your rights as a research participant. Further information regarding this study may be obtained by contacting Dr. Andrea Casey, Dissertation Chair, at 703-726-3763.

To ensure anonymity your signature is not required, unless you prefer to sign it. Your willingness to participate in this research study is implied if you proceed.

APPENDIX C:

OBSERVATIONAL SUMMARY FORM

Data Inventory #: **Date of Observation:**

Length (in minutes): **Date of summarizing:**

1. Name and significance of this observational event.
2. Who suggested this observational event? Why?
3. What is the significance/importance of this observational opportunity?
4. Brief summary of observations.
5. How do these observations relate to the research questions?