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Small Business Identity and Entrepreneurial Identity in a Destination Resort Town: Are Birds of a Feather Flocking to the Beach?

Janice A. Black
Coastal Carolina University

Carol Megehee
Coastal Carolina University

Frances H. Fabian
The University of Memphis

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SMALL BUSINESS IDENTITY AND ENTREPRENEURIAL IDENTITY IN A DESTINATION RESORT TOWN: ARE BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCKING TO THE BEACH?

Janice A. Black
Coastal Carolina University
janblack@coastal.edu
843-349-5012

Carol Megehee
Coastal Carolina University
cmegehee@coastal.edu
843-349-2706

Frances H. Fabian
The University of Memphis
ffabian@memphis.edu
901-678-2851

ABSTRACT

Identities can be considered an intangible resource when they support the competitive advantage of a firm. Some work has shown that the context of an organization matters but will that hold true at a beach location filled with large numbers of micro-businesses and small businesses where entrepreneurs and small business owners engage their world both as individuals and as organizations? We examine the literature on identity and utilize a zoomorphic metaphor to elicit unbiased understandings of the coherence or dissonance of entrepreneurial and organizational identities. We found some intriguing results showing unexpected similarities and an affinity for coherent identities.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational identity has spurred a voluminous research literature, not in small in part because it is a compelling construct also of interest to strategy researchers as an intangible and difficult-to-duplicate resource (Lowe, George, & Alexy, 2012) that is potentially key to addressing hypercompetitive environments. But firms are also creations of their founders, who bring to the table their own entrepreneurial identities that are "imprinted" upon their organization (Stinchcombe, 1965). This imprinting continues to be of interest to management scholars for understanding how firms are designed based on their understanding of founding environmental conditions (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013). Our research is an initial foray into assessing the level of coherence small organizations hold between these two identity patterns, and the extent to which they share patterns as predicted by the extent identities reflect responses to the environment. Specifically, we consider the question, "Do small firms tend to associate coherent behavioral and motivational identities for both the entrepreneur and the organization?" Secondly, "Do small and medium sized enterprises (SME) in a common geographic cluster location have similar entrepreneurial and organizational identity patterns?"

This paper reports upon a pilot study using an imaginative method that can avoid many pitfalls of response bias. In particular, we draw on research that draws on a very abstract metaphor to tap into analogical tendencies in firms in regard to competing in their environment. We asked 41 entrepreneurs in a single community to assess both their own and their organizational identity using animal pictures. Animal metaphors and archetypes are powerful tools as they have implicit and explicit meanings across cultures (LLoyd & Woodside, 2013). Eliciting an animal metaphor has been successfully used in marketing and organization science (von Wallpach & Woodside, 2009). By categorizing animals across dimensions that map onto behavioral and motivational patterns, we then investigate whether such mapping is 1) pervasive and similar by geographic location; and 2) likely to be coherent (matching in behavior/motivation) across the two identities.

Our preliminary findings indicate that our respondents are intrigued by the method, and generally capable of choosing illustrative animals to represent both their own and their organization's "identity." Further data analysis with a larger sample will help cement the initial indications reported here. Of special interest are the implications for whether coherence across identities have implications for performance and satisfaction dependent variables. In the next sections, we describe the theory compelling this research, our preliminary hypotheses, and our findings with a sample in one community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identities in Organizations

Dynamic capabilities (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000), and especially those that are intangible and difficult to duplicate (Barney, 1991), are critical features in strategy discussions about competing in today's often hostile, hypercompetitive environments. Organizational identity has arisen as just such an intangible resource, and is often conceptualized as consciously crafted and coherent sets of inter-connected processes that facilitate achieving strategic goals (Lowe, George, & Alexy, 2012; Autio, George, & Alexy, 2011). "Coherence" requires predictable, repeated actions or behaviors within a specific context (Lowe, George, & Alexy, 2012), and is generally thought to be driven by an organizational identity. More exactly, organizational identity has been described as the central idea of an organization that is presented to its various constituents to achieve the organization's strategic goals (van Riel & Balmer, 1997; Hatch & Schultz, 1997).

Organizational identity's original context arose with examinations of the entrepreneurial start-up phase of the company (Stinchcombe, 1965). Entrepreneurs, through their direct engagement of their market environment, craft their organization and adopt both their personal entrepreneurial identity and the initial foundation of their organizational identity (Brunel, 2004). The organizational identity both influences individual level identities of those involved in the organization, and is influenced by the sense making efforts of the entrepreneur (Giddens, 1991; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Small organizations, then, must early on balance an entrepreneurial identity as well as a formulating organizational identity. While variation in identities may not be unusual in larger organizations (Fiol, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009) -- in smaller organizations, the functionality of such variation may be limited. Consequently, a coherence among identities present in an organization is likely desirable to instill a clear and reliable – i.e., coherent - strategy. While this may result in an organizational identity and an entrepreneurial identity that are very similar, though, this is not guaranteed (Fiol, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009). Identity congruence has been found suspect in larger organizations (Foreman & Whetten, 2002) and other intangible constructs have been found to vary in smaller organizations (Pett & Wolff, 2012). Furthermore, the actions of similar cohorts (Falk, Heblich, & Luedemann, 2012) along with location (Shields, 2005) may influence the forming of the identity. This leads us to examine strategic orientation and goals for entrepreneurs with consideration for their location choice.

The strong emphasis on the environment as a basis for the initial entrepreneurial imprinting also indicates that we would expect either geographic location or industry to lead to similar patterns in adopted behaviors and motivations. The latter is well represented in Spender's (1989) work on industry recipes as key to the adoption of behavioral patterns. But for small firms, entrepreneurs are much more likely to be heavily reliant on their immediate geographical locale. Sarasvathy (2008), for instance, introduced the importance of "effectuation" in understanding successful entrepreneurship; in this perspective, founders marshal their accessible resources and rely on known others to formulate their business. To the extent that firms are heavily dependent on serving a small geographical market niche, it is thus likely that they will experience a similar market environment that transcends industry parameters, e.g., recession levels, demographic trends, cyclical demand, taxes. Moreover, the competitive cohort of a firm often helps to shape coherence as well (Flint & Van Fleet, 2011) – and in the battle for dollars, small organizations may see their neighboring firms as more direct threats than industry competitors (a phenomenon potentially experiencing qualitative change with the internet/Amazon). In sum, we might expect small firm entrepreneurs in a particular locale to cohere toward certain patterns. Yet, we are unaware of investigations examining the question: do small and medium sized enterprises (SME) in a common geographic cluster location have similar entrepreneurial and/or organizational identity patterns?

The Patterning of Identity

Research literature indicates that entrepreneurs heavily rely on stylized depictions, for instance, stories, to develop an identity (Downing, 2005). As an entrepreneur moves from an old environment into their new emerging organization's environment, they begin developing their entrepreneurial identities (Down & Reveley, 2004; King, Clemens, & Fry, 2011). Indeed, some have contended that an entrepreneur's passion is a stylized version of entrepreneurial identity (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2009). Throughout the founding process, the entrepreneur refines the stories and illustrations to make sense of his/her own activities (Downing, 2005; Jones, Latham, & Betta, 2008). Further by experimenting with the coherence of the story, the entrepreneur tests various versions of "self" (Ibarra, 1999).

In addition, though, entrepreneurs must make strategic decisions about, and for, the organization, which then influences the development of organizational identity (Kjaergaard, 2009). This organizational identity then provides a basis for further sensemaking (Mills & Weatherbee,

2006) to those who engage in setting entrepreneurial or strategic goals for the organizations (Kjaergaard, 2009). It acts as a mechanism to coordinate the efforts of various stakeholders to reach organizational goals (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). The entrepreneur is also engaged in convincing relevant outsiders (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 1996) that the business is a legitimate one (Holt & Macpherson, 2010). Indeed, as the entrepreneur tells stories, images often also become embedded that provide a short hand understanding of those identities (Ibarra, 1999; Hatch & Schultz, 1997). In fact, because of a need to be flexible during the ambiguous times of starting a business, an entrepreneur may even use metaphors to help convey the identity in general terms (Cornelissen, 2006).

Accordingly, entrepreneurs ultimately embed an unconscious level of identity at both the organizational and individual levels that can then continue to guide future actions (Warren, 2004; Whetten, 2006). Any effort to categorize identity patterns, though needs to consider the dimensions of strategic behavior that can be analogized. For example, a key defining dimension across firms is their reason for being, and their unique attributes (Whetten, 2006). In the next section, we examine two dimensions of strategic motivation and behavior.

Two pattern dimensions

We identified two dimensions as comprehensive and dichotomous which we believed would differentiate patterns of identity in small firms. Many scholars have looked at an entrepreneur's characteristics and attitudes to characterize their identity. Prominent constructs in this characteristic perspective include risk taking (Macko & Tyszka, 2009) and entrepreneurial orientation (Miller, 1983). Further depicting ongoing behavior after the entrepreneurial decision, *entrepreneurial volition* (Black & Farias, 2005), focuses on preferences for certain types of action in entrepreneurial acts. These behaviors tend to be related to the goals the entrepreneur has adopted in formulating the business.

A second dimension differentiating entrepreneurial or small firms is their preferences for implementation, specifically, whether a firm is considered a very collaborative venture, or an extension of a singular entrepreneur's vision. We provide more on these dimensions below.

Motivational Aspect: Success Goals. Stewart and colleagues (2003) provided insight on the need to account for key differences in motivation of an entrepreneur versus a small business owner, with the former ranking higher on characteristics such as achievement motivation, risk taking and innovation (Stewart, Jr., Carland, Carland, Watson, & Sweo, 2003). Specifically, an entrepreneur is likely to set organizational goals that take the disruptive stance suggested by Schumpeter (Whelan & O'Gorman, 2007). Such an entrepreneur may seek to gain larger economic rents, and thereby, acquire a disproportionate share of the returns from the marketplace (Barney, 1991). In contrast, a small business owner may want to have a basic return, and is indifferent to pursuing a disproportionate return (Mehlum, Moene, & Torvik, 2003).

We refer to this dichotomy as representing two different success goals: one that emphasizes economic returns (economic goals), and the other experience attainment (experience goals). These categories reflect similar constructs found throughout the literature. For instance, Powell and Eddleston (2013) depicted this as entrepreneurs gravitating towards economic success versus experiencing success or pleasure from simply being in business and obtaining a modest return

(Powell & Eddleston, 2013). They also closely map to growth versus income goals (Stewart, Jr., Carland, Carland, Watson, & Sweo, 2003) or a market versus lifestyle entrepreneur (Marchant & Mottiar, 2011).

Behavioral Aspect: To Collaborate or Not. A second key dimension that differentiates entrepreneurial firms is the degree to which an entrepreneur may prefer to "work alone" or encourage collaboration with others (Cooper & Saral, 2013). Most of the literature has examined this question under the umbrella of preferences for a new venture teams (i.e., a simple search in a scholarly article database found 748 articles in the past 20 years), with less on how preferences to work in collaborative team or as an individual might impact an entrepreneur's identity. Given the high profile work on effectuation, it is surprising that there has been relatively less coverage on how an entrepreneur may vary across the identities of "part of a collaborative endeavor that will make a statement in the world" (Ruef, Aldrich, & Carter, 2003) or, alternatively, see as an "iconic entrepreneurial hero" (from an ordinary background, who overcomes obstacles to reach entrepreneurial success, cf., (Whelan & O'Gorman, 2007). Interestingly, initial investigations indicate that there may be a fairly even chance that either of the above two perspectives are taken (Ruef et al., 2003).

In both cases, it is likely that preferences toward aggressive growth versus lifestyle maintenance, or collaborative versus solitary behavior are likely areas of entrepreneurial volition that may impact both entrepreneurial identity and organizational identity. Such an assertion adopts the viewpoint that the development of identity is heavily socially constructed (Giddens, 1991). Entrepreneurs engage in conversation as they make sense of their new environment (Downing, 2005), and members of founding entrepreneurial teams share ideas, innovate, and collaborate no matter their official organizational level (Reich, 1987).

Other pattern inputs

In the above, we alluded to several implications that the location of an endeavor may impact the development of an identity, and in turn, the volition to take action. Some research indicates vital differences in entrepreneurial perceptions based on whether it occurs in the market core or its periphery (Felzensztein, Gimmon, & Aqueveque, 2013). Location can also be important when geographic clusters of companies within an industry crop up (Lorenzen & Mudambi, 2013). Thus, for this first testing of our methods, we were interested in concentrating on firms from one geographic location, but from a number of industries. Below we consider some preliminary hypotheses we examined with our methodology.

Investigative goals

A first objective given the review above is assessing whether entrepreneurs actively implement "coherent" patterns on both dimensions, or whether they are indifferent to identifying similar behavior patterns to themselves and their firms. With the small sample, we will not be able to run rigorous statistical tests, but we can observe whether coherence is favored over dissonance (opposite categories) or overlapping (one coherent, one dissonant) statuses. Noting we hold the location constant within a geographic cluster, we examine the pattern of entrepreneurial-organizational coherence patterns. If there is random entrepreneurial-organizational coherence patterns then all combinations might be populated according to the animal numbers (associated with pairings). So, our first question is: Do Entrepreneurial-Organizational identity pairings randomly align with their incidence? We are interested in examining this on two dimensions: a) is there a coherence preference versus dissonance/overlap preference where dimensions are examined together; and b) do the two dimensions seem to randomly map separately?

We were also interested in determining whether entrepreneurial and small firms indicated a preference for a "solitary" versus "collective" orientation. Recent research by Cooper and Saral (2013) suggests that a solitary orientation is more likely at an entrepreneurial level. Drawing from this observation, we examine "Are there more solitary than collective orientations in our respondents?"

Finally we are interested in whether the delineation of economic versus experiential goals are indeed important differentiators in our population. We consider their general incidence in our sample. Additionally, given recent research shows women tend to be drawn to the characteristics of the experience success goals over economic goals (Powell & Eddleston, 2013), we will also consider any signs of gender difference.

Next, we discuss our adoption of an innovative methodology for capturing the unconscious patterns in the perceptions of respondents in regard to these dimensions related to their entrepreneurial and organizational identities. Because identity is crafted by conscious choice, but then evolves into an unconscious or tacit application mode (Goffin & Koners, 2011), we adopted unique tools to elicit such patterns and make them available for research (Zaltman, 2003). Specifically, metaphors are a powerful tool that have actually been employed for millennia to help elicit identities (Zaltman & Zaltman, 2008; Woodside, 2008; Edwards, 2011). We discuss the methodology under development in the next section.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Industry Cluster

The identity literature review indicated that external contexts can significantly impact identity development. Consequently, we limit our first data collection to a specific region. As different regions have unique characteristics, we chose a region with a relatively broad set of companies, but which nonetheless hold industry identifications. For this investigation, then, we chose our full business sample from a beach resort locale with tourism as the main identifying aspect of the region.

Metaphor Technique

A nice attribute of using metaphors is that they can provide contextually-driven understandings (Cornelissen, 2006). Because of this, a richer understanding of the underlying phenomena of interest can be derived (Woodside, 2008; Zaltman & Zaltman, 2008). Past research has reported success with the technique for an array of questions. For instance, when career transitions (e.g., becoming an entrepreneur) are examined, a visual metaphor has been successfully used to surface identity (Barner, 2011). Animal metaphor and archetypes have implicit and explicit meanings across cultures (LLoyd & Woodside, 2013), and have been thus argued to be uniquely generalizable and powerful tools. More particularly, eliciting an animal metaphor has been used in both marketing and organization science (von Wallpach & Woodside, 2009).

For instance, this "zoomorphism" has been used as a way to investigate the self-authentication of customers and their motives (Healy & Beverland, 2013). Kesebir (2012) suggested that humans can even display the characteristics of a "superorganism" (e.g., beehive) when they have a unity of action to reach a common desired outcome. On a more populist note, advertisers have used animal symbols to reach out to customers at a deep level (LLoyd & Woodside, 2013) or even associated human characteristics with animals as they key archetypes in the minds of customers (LLoyd & Woodside, 2013). Our study does assume that most entrepreneurs (like their consumer counterparts) are able to readily visualize and describe appropriate animal metaphors.

Because we have specific dimensions we seek to investigate based on our literature review, we developed a set of trigger animals to induce the metaphorical mapping. Allowing individual to freely select animals may be optimal for surfacing unconscious values and beliefs (Feinson, 1998), but may lead to difficult-to-categorize responses. Zoomorphic pictures have been successfully used by others in the marketing area (Woodside, 2008; Zaltman & Zaltman, 2008). Optimistically, the marketing research found that individuals appear to have little difficulty using animal characteristics and identifying themselves or others with the characteristics of a single animal (von Wallpach & Woodside, 2009).

Because of the dimensional identity characteristics of interest (collective-solitary and economic-experience), the researchers assembled a set of animal pictures that have the characteristics of interest embedded in picture. A central acknowledgement of this restricted elicitation set is that it is predicated on individuals knowing the animals, and their associated characteristics.

Collective-Solitary and Collaborative Orientation. Given the collaboration versus sole individual perspective of the entrepreneurial construct, we first chose animals that can be grouped either into normally solitary, or normally collective, animals. A collective animal is generally found in groups in it native habitat. For instance, both sheep and lions are example herd (or pride) collective animals. Contrariwise, alligators and moose are more solitary animals.

Predator/non-Predator and Economic-Experience Success Goals. We derive our next animal dimension drawing from a couple articles that linked economic systems to a predator-prey life cycle perspective (Mehlum, Moene, & Torvik, 2003; Kamimur, Burani, & Franca, 2011). The view of predators ranges from a bad and cannibalistic creature (Mehlum, Moene, & Torvik, 2003) to that of a part of a larger circle of life that is intrinsically related to the number of prey animals (Kamimur, Burani, & Franca, 2011). The more prey animals, the more "food" for predators and the more predators that exist. As predator numbers rise, then prey numbers fall ultimately causing predator numbers to also fall. The drawn analogy is that economic relationships reflect the need for a "predator" to exploit economic advantage in favorable conditions such that predators obtain a disproportionate share (Hall, Dominguez-Lacasa, & Gunther, 2012). More compellingly, the implication is that the predator disrupts the marketplace and may even drive competitors out of business as above average profits are sought. We use this version of the animal metaphor; but expand the "prey" animal to include a few non-aggressive omnivorous animals. Similarly, the few aggressive omnivorous animals (those that are primarily predators of other mammals (cannibalistic in a more general sense)) are grouped with predators.

We assembled as broad a set of animal pictures as possible. For this study, we recorded responses to pictures to gauge reactions to a very large set. Future testing will winnow categories into equal sizes in order to enhance analysis, and avoid any bias that prevalence might stimulate.

In the end, we gathered 129 different animals that roughly fit into the above two categories. If an animals had an online descriptions which included terms like flocked, groups, herd, hive, pride, schooled, or swarmed, it was classified as collective. Carnivorous animals which ate mammals or parts of mammals (like blood) were considered predators. Table 1 provides the animal groupings with associated counts of entrepreneurial and organizational identities that selected the dimension in the sample.

Table 1: Animals by Collective/Predator Category

	Predator	Non-Predator	*Total*
Collective	chimpanzee, coyote, dog, dolphin, eel, ferret, lion, monkey, mosquito, otter, pelican, penguin, rat, sea lion, seal, trout, turkey, walrus, wolf (19)	ant, antelope, bee, bison, camel, caribou, chicken, cod, cow, deer, donkey, dove, duck, elephant, elk, fish, goat, goose, gorilla, grouse, guinea pig, horse, ibex, ibis, impala, llama, kangaroo, kiwi, koi, mouse, mule, ostrich, oyster, pig, partridge, peacock, pheasant, pig, pigeon, rabbit, reindeer, raccoon, sheep, swan, termite, whale, wildebeest, yak, zebra (49)	68 EI 15 OI 15
Solitary	alligator, badger, bear, boar, bobcat, cat, cougar, crocodile, eagle, fly, fox, frog, hawk, leech, leopard, lizard, lobster, louse, mink, owl, panther, polar bear, sea turtle, shark, skunk, snake, tiger, toad, weasel (29)	aardvark, anteater, beaver, bird, buffalo, canary, chipmunk, cicada, echidna, gecko, giraffe, hamster, hare, hedgehog, hippopotamus, iguana, inchworm, katydid, koala, manatee, moose, muskrat, opossum, orangutan, panda, platypus, quail, rhinoceros, robin, salmon, squirrel, tortoise, woodchuck (33)	65 EI 10 OI 10
Total	48 EI 11 OI 10	82 EI 14 OI 15	

Data Gathering Procedures

A total of forty (40) entrepreneurs where identified and chosen by undergraduate research assistants who were in a management elective that focused on entrepreneurs. Thus this pilot test represented a convenience set reflecting the interests and eventual availability to students. We then removed those who were not located in the tourism zone giving a sample of twenty-one (21) micro through medium sized businesses.

The undergraduate students completed a human subjects online training session, and received instruction in qualitative methods. They were then instructed to interact with the entrepreneurs a minimum of 4 times. First, they called the entrepreneurs on the phone to make an appointment. Second, they went to the initial contact appointment and shared about the research project and set up an appointment for the first interview. Third, they collected their video team, and attended the first interview which was videotaped. Fourth, they administered the animal metaphor interview which was also videotaped. During this fourth interview, participants were asked to sort physical animal picture cards and identify several different categories of stakeholders, as well as tell their stories about that stakeholder as that animal. Drawing from these videotaped interviews, the below data tables created.

Demographics

Of the twenty-one companies, fourteen (67%) were micro-size organizations of less than 5 employees (Schmidt & Kolodinsky, 2007). Seven (33%) are considered small organizations. Because the students investigated the individual level entrepreneurial identity along with organizational identity (firm level), we were interested in examining the distribution of men and women: the sample included 18 men (85.7%) and 3 women (14.3%). Included ethnicities were: 18 white (85.7%), 1 Hispanic (4.7%), and 2 black (9.5%).

After reviewing the videotapes, nine of the twenty-one (42.9%) did not provide sufficient information to assess completely. As this study was also an exercise in teaching research methods to undergraduates, we examined the recordings and determined that the missing information was an artifact of student implementation, rather than a reluctance to adopt the animal metaphors. Using the remaining pairings, we examine the breakdown of twenty-five total pairings, from which we derive initial observations before recommending further testing and extensions to this study. Appendix 1 provides the question protocol implemented by the students to investigate these two dimensions.

RESULTS

Table 2 provides an extended table of the sample and results. For this analysis, we mapped the pairings of the twelve respondents with complete pairings. As this is a preliminary investigation, we allowed a few of these respondents to provide multiple animal respondents, providing a total of twenty-five pairings.

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Table 2: Entrepreneur's Responses and Analysis

Entrepreneur and demographic information	Entrepreneurial Identity Animal	Categories	Organizational Identity Animal	Categories	Assessment
Ent #1 | male |white	White Dove	[1]Collective$_1$ and Non-Predator$_1$	Orangutan	[1]Solitary$_1$ and Non-Predator$_1$	Overlap$_1$
Ent #2 | male |white					Insufficient information$_1$
Ent #3 | male | white					Insufficient information$_2$
Ent # 4 | male | white			Bull	[1]Collective$_1$ and Non-Predator$_2$	Insufficient information$_3$
Ent #5 | male | white					Insufficient information$_4$
Ent #6 | male | white	Lion	[1]Collective$_2$ and Predator$_1$	Swan	[2]Collective$_2$ and Non-Predator$_3$	Overlap$_2$
Ent # 7| female | white	Cat	[1]Solitary$_1$ and Predator$_2$	Cougar	[1]Solitary$_2$ and Predator$_1$	Coherence$_1$
Ent #8 | female | black	Chameleon	[2]Solitary$_2$ and Predator$_3$	Wolf in sheep's clothing	[1]Collective$_3$ and Predator$_2$ [3]Collective$_4$ and Non-Predator$_4$	Overlap$_3$ Dissonance$_1$
Ent #9 | male | white			Lion	[2]Collective$_5$ and Predator$_3$	Insufficient information$_5$
Ent #10 | male | white					Insufficient information$_6$
Ent #11 | male | black			Polar Bear	[2]Solitary$_3$ and Predator$_4$	Insufficient information$_7$
Ent #12 | male | white	Wolf	[2]Collective$_3$ and Predator$_4$	Tortoise	[2]Solitary$_4$ and Non-Predator$_5$	Dissonance$_2$
Ent #13 | male | white	Alligator	[3]Solitary$_3$ and Predator$_5$	Chicken	[4]Collective$_6$ and Non-Predator$_6$	Dissonance$_3$

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Table 2: Entrepreneur's Responses and Analysis

Entrepreneur and demographic information	Entrepre-neurial Identity Animal	Categories	Organiza-tional Identity Animal	Categories	Assessment
Ent # 14 | male | white	Tiger	[4]Solitary$_4$ and Predator$_6$	Oyster	[5]Collective$_7$ and Non-Predator$_7$	Dissonance$_4$
Ent #15 | male | black	Badger	[5]Solitary$_5$ and Predator$_7$	Bear	[3]Solitary$_5$ and Predator$_5$	Coherence$_2$
Ent #16 | male | white/ hispanic	Ant	[2]Collective$_4$ and Non-Predator$_2$	Bee	[6]Collective$_8$ and Non-Predator$_8$	Coherence$_3$
Ent #17 | male | white			Ant Bees Mosquito Tiger	[7]Collective$_9$ and Non-Predator$_9$ [8]Collective$_{10}$ and Non-Predator$_{10}$ [3]Collective$_{11}$ and Predator$_6$ [4]Solitary$_6$ and Predator$_7$	Insufficient information$_8$
Ent #18 | male | white	Dog	[3]Collective$_5$ and Predator$_8$	Dog Cougar	[4]Collective$_{12}$ and Predator$_8$ [5]Solitary$_7$ and Predator$_9$	Coherence$_4$ Overlap$_4$
Ent #19 | female | white	Jaguar	[6]Solitary$_6$ and Predator$_9$			Insufficient information$_9$
Ent #20 | male | white	Lizard	[7]Solitary$_7$ and Predator$_{10}$	Cougar	[6]Solitary$_8$ and Predator$_{10}$	Coherence$_5$
Ent #21 | male | white	Dove Pheasant Tortoise Oyster	[3]Collective$_6$ and Non-Predator$_3$ [4]Collective$_7$ and Non-Predator$_4$ [1]Solitary$_8$ and Non-Predator$_5$ [5]Collective$_8$ and Non-Predator$_6$	Pheasant Owl Zebra	[9]Collective$_{13}$ and Non-Predator$_{11}$ [7]Solitary$_9$ and Predator$_{11}$ [10]Collective$_{14}$ and Non-Predator$_{12}$	Coherence$_6$ Coherence$_7$ Dissonance$_5$ Coherence$_8$ Coherence$_9$ Dissonance$_6$ Overlap$_5$ Overlap$_6$ Overlap$_7$ Coherence$_{10}$ Coherence$_{11}$ Dissonance$_7$

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Entrepreneurial Identity. As shown in Table 1, entrepreneurial identity favored collective animals over solitary animals 15 to 10, although the two groups were fairly even in number (68 and 65). With the predatory|non-predatory dimension, 11 predators were identified as compared to 14 non-predators, which maps fairly close to the sample pictures, with some favoring of predators over their initial distribution.

In the theory section above, we were interested in whether this set of respondents would reflect the sole hero depiction prevalent in the literature. To our surprise, the collective animal metaphor was more prevalent for entrepreneurial identities than the sole predator. Importantly, though, when we limit our review to those entrepreneurs who identified only a single animal, our numbers indicate that the solitary animal may be more prevalent (6:4). This provides some evidence that the method should "force" limits onto a single animal in future research.

Organizational Identity. Of the twenty-five pairings, ten were for solitary animals and fifteen (15) for collective animals, matching the favoring of collective animals found in the entrepreneurial identity. The predatory|non-predatory dimension also closely mapped in representation to that found with entrepreneurial identity (10/15), still showing some bias toward the predator category over their sample representation.

We wondered whether we would see any pattern differences in entrepreneurial identity choices made by women and men. When we reexamine Table 2 the entrepreneurial identity choices of women (we had three women) we find three (3) solitary|*predators*. Continuing to eliminate any responses that had more than one animal metaphor, we find seven (7) solitary-or-collective-*predators* and two solitary-or-collective|non-predators. We were interested in whether these dimensions are being activated subconsciously by women, or whether they are drawing on other characteristics to make their choices. Certainly, such consistency toward this entrepreneurial identity may indicate that women overcompensate due to their low representation in the entrepreneurial community, or alternatively, only women with this type of characteristics eventually enter into entrepreneurship. We believe it offers some interesting questions to pursue.

Pairing Analysis

Table 3 provides the final pairing mapping from this pilot study. Of the twenty-five (25) pairings, eleven represented coherent pairings (44%); seven (7) overlapped (28%) and seven (7) were dissonant (28%) (see Table 2). This indicated a fairly powerful tendency to select coherent pairings: while only 28% of possible pairings were coherent (4,692/16900), respondents provided 44% of their elicited pairings as coherent.

Examining these numbers, coherent pairings do indeed seem to be overrepresented in the sample, indicating that entrepreneurs may indeed favor inculcating identities that will provide consistent guidance on collaborative approaches and success goal objectives. In answer to our first two questions, then, whether taken together or varied separately, entrepreneurs favored pairings which would offer coherent guidance. Conflicting or dissonant pairs (cases where both dimensions of the two identities disagree) were represented in this sample consistent with their representation. Given the literature's emphasis on coherence, we were surprised that such pairings occurred at all.

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Table 3: Identity Coherence and Animal Metaphors
*Small numbers indicate pairing universe

		Entrepreneurial Identity			
		Collective and Predator 19	Solitary and Predator 29	Collective and Non-predator 49	Solitary and Non-predator 33
Organizational Identity	Collective and Predator 19	**1** 361*	**1** 551	931	627
	Solitary and Predator 29	**1** 551	**3** 841	**3** 1421	**1** 957
	Collective and Non-predator 49	**1** 931	**3** 1421	**7** 2401	**2** 1617
	Solitary and Non-predator 33	**1** 627	957	**1** 1617	1089

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

We examined small and micro-sized enterprises to determine if there was coherence across levels of identity in such organizations. In these firms, there was more coherence than could be accounted for by chance. This reinforces the idea of potentially optimal variation in coherence along identities as well as along other intangible resources in very small firms.

This pilot implementation of the animal metaphor approach in the entrepreneurial context indicated that respondents were very receptive to the method. Some of the initial findings indicate that such an approach may allow investigators to uncover associations which would suffer from either confirmation or response bias if asked more directly.

We see some important directions for extending the research. First, we will examine the videotapes to help determine what animals to keep in the four categories and which ones to remove so as to create four equal categories. Respondents tended to favor returning and reviewing certain cards, and may be able to provide some insight into which animals were most likely to elicit a thoughtful response.

In that vein, future research should consider whether freely elicited animals may be an improvement to trigger pictures. Our aim in using pictures reflects the sense that we did not want the respondent to spend much rational calculative time on deriving an "appropriate" animal. Indeed, such an approach, in our view, could lead respondents to seek out societal "paragon" animals, rather than lead to the more unconscious picture response. This assumption, though, may

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be worthy of future examination. For instance, even with triggers, we had two respondents identify mythical/inappropriate metaphors (a wolf in sheep's clothing/a coat of many colors).

From this initial test, we did not see indications that entrepreneurs in a specific locale shared in either identities or pairings. The one exception is that we found twice as many coherent collective non-predator/collective non-predator pairings than we would expect from chance (7, or 28% of pairings, versus 14% of the pairing universe). As the beach community may inordinately draw experience-seeking entrepreneurs, there seems some reason to believe geographical effect may be at work.

This recommends assuring future studies consider to what extent differences in pattern in a particular locale are likely to indicate that geography does drive patterns, versus the importance of controlling for founding time in understanding this effect. Indeed, Stinchcombe's (1965) initial imprinting observation was in direct reaction to the idea that firms do not change with their environment, but rather maintain their responses to founding conditions. To the extent that firms range widely in their founding date, we may have diluted the geographical impact with this sample.

Quite a few theoretical issues were raised by this issue as well. Certainly pairing coherence and dissonance is not of interest unless it belies some sort of performance implication. We believe economic performance dependent variables could range across accounting data, survival measures, and perceived economic success. On the other hand, much of the reason for being concerned about dissonant identities is its potentially harmful effects on employee morale, as they face more ambiguity about appropriate strategic actions. Future studies might focus on these differing performance implications.

Certain anomalies also raise important questions. For instance, "Why do some people feel comfortable with fully dissonant pairings for their own and their organization's identity?" Further, we wondered, "Are there unique pairings which indicate something about the type of culture that will emanate from the company?" For instance, if an entrepreneur's identity is that of a solitary predator with a vision of a collective non-predator company, does this translate into a strong controlling style of management? Or does the converse situation indicate a manager that feels his organization is not controllable?

A further extension may consider the issue "Do certain categories seem to be unworkable for organizations?" For instance, solitary non-predators are under-represented for their sample pairing opportunities and may reflect a default assumption that a firm must either aggressively compete or collaborate, but that trying to survive without such compromises is untenable.

This preliminary study indicates that we may be able to pursue some useful and intriguing insights with a fairly simple approach for entrepreneurial respondents. We see some likelihood that our entrepreneurs have flocked together, and that they value coherent identities.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Janice A. Black has her Ph.D. from Texas Tech University. She is a Management professor at Coastal Carolina University. This stream of work examines how entrepreneurs and companies achieve coherent strategic stories and identities. Her other work looks at the development of a context-for-learning. Her work has been presented around the world and cited by many. Her most cited article has just over 1000 citations. Dr. Black teaches Strategic Management, Entrepreneurial Leadership, Creativity and Innovation, and General Management courses.

Carol Megehee earned her Ph. D. from the University of Texas, Austin. She is a Marketing Professor at Coastal Carolina University. She has much work in the area of reaching customers including the impact of the visual picture on customers. This work utilizes the word picture or metaphor. She has over 30 articles and continues to be a prolific author as she teaches Marketing Research, Consumer Behavior, and Services Marketing. She often presents her work around the world.

Frances H. Fabian earned her Ph. D. from the University of Texas, Austin. She is an associate professor from the University of Memphis. Much of her work focuses on determining the impact of intangible resources on performance. She has an emerging stream of research in the entrepreneur's impact on entrepreneurial behaviors. She has several articles in the Academy of Management Review, Strategic Management Journal, and the Journal of International Business. She teaches Strategic Management, Entrepreneurship, and other management courses as needed.

APPENDIX A – REPRESENTATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

The respondent was asked to select animals for five organizational aspects: the organization itself, its competitor, customer, service providing employee, and the manager self. We provide the questions below.

Interviewer:

You will be shown 129 color pictures of animals and asked to identify your firm, your main competitor, your best customer, a customer that came to the business one time and did not return, a front-line (service provider) employee, and yourself in terms of being one of these animals. You will then be asked to tell a story about each one of these entities as an animal. Do you have any questions about what we will be doing?

Interviewer: "I am going to hand you a deck of cards that depict different animals. I want you to sort through these cards—take your time—and find the animal that best represents your firm. As you go through the sorting and selection process, please think out loud. In other words, describe the process of sorting, elimination, and selection as you go."

Interviewer: Can you tell me a story about how the [name animal] represents your company?

Interviewer: Now, go back through the deck and find the find the animal that best represents you. Again, please think out loud when describing the process.

Interviewer: Tell me a story about how the [name animal] represents you.