
THINK TANK: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO STUDENT LEARNING, ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT, AND COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS

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Abstract

This article focuses on a creative collaboration that began in late 2013 between The Ohio State University's Lawrence and Isabel Barnett Center for Integrated Arts and Enterprise Graduate Student Think Tank (TT) and Sweet Honey in the Rock (SHIR), the internationally acclaimed, female, African-American Grammy Award winning a cappella ensemble based in Washington DC. As the ensemble reaches 40 years of performing, producing, touring, and speaking out about social injustices, the TT worked collaboratively with the organization to assess their organizational and management structure with the intent to resolve critical issues facing the group. A focus of the collaboration was to develop and engage in an interactive approach for building an arts-specific entrepreneurial business model.

The TT is an interdisciplinary group of graduate students who work collaboratively on case studies to solve critical artist-defined issues and to develop new approaches to entrepreneurial management structures for artists and arts organizations. The processes of the TT forms a mutually beneficial system connecting the traditional case study model in higher education to the practice of business consulting for arts and cultural organizations.

The first part of the paper is intended to give an overview of community-based non-profit arts organizations in the United States originating in the 1960s, including a history of SHIR. The second part of the paper discusses the collaborative process of the case in progress and how the students participating in the TT facilitate transition and transformation for SHIR.

Introduction

This case study examines a two-year process that began in December 2013, initiated by The Barnett Center for Integrated Arts and Enterprise (The Center) at The Ohio State University (OSU), under the direction of associate professor and director of The Center, Sonia BasSheva Manjon. The process engages both relationship building with SHIR and collective development of the Think Tank methodology. It also forms a mutually beneficial system connecting the traditional case study model in higher education to the practice of business consulting for arts and cultural organizations. The Graduate Student Think Tank (TT), the inaugural program of The Center, worked collaboratively with Sweet Honey in the Rock (SHIR), an internationally acclaimed, female African-American Grammy Award winning a cappella ensemble, to explore development of a new approach to entrepreneurial management and structural development while addressing challenges and issues faced by SHIR. Collaboratively, the students and artists explored public policy, finance, and strategic planning issues that work to support the development and application of a different type of organizational structure that could support a sustainability plan.

This article will present a new method for solving artist- and organization-defined challenges using an authentic, interactive approach. The TT defines this approach as one that incorporates the tenets of entrepreneurial mindset, cooperative learning, trans-disciplinary collaboration, intrinsic values and emotional ties, ethical procedures, and heterogeneity. The process included meetings, workshops, presentations, social gatherings, and artistic production

and performance visits. The TT, working hand-in-hand with SHIR, engaged in processes that explored and uncovered historical tendencies. Analysis of these tendencies created current practices, encouraged new ways of looking at challenges, and set a path toward a new method of operations and business practices.

As a new process of engagement, authenticity, interaction, and interconnectivity were necessary for full participation. It was important for TT members to honor the historical relevance of SHIR as an organization, and the wisdom, voice, and vision of each individual member of the ensemble. Simultaneously, it was equally important for SHIR to engage the theoretical knowledge and new visionary perspectives that the students brought to the process. The task of The Center's director was to consider all perspectives equally in an attempt to manifest an entrepreneurial consciousness that would allow for both SHIR and TT members to collectively uncover new directions and outcomes so as to find that 'aha' moment new inputs that would produce desirable outcomes is realized. While the process continues to unfold, we attempt to document the strength in the process itself that will manifest a new organizational direction for SHIR. It was important to SHIR that its organizational structure incorporate both an artistic vision and a social justice voice for current civil rights issues, including Blue on Black crimes and immigration. The TT focus was to create a restructuring process that blends and bends with the quasi non-profit/music industry organizational structure of SHIR and that would include an entrepreneurial mindset. The task was not to create a new structure for the organization, but to collaborate with the artists to uncover new ways of thinking about and looking at their current structure in light of their artistic trajectories, challenges, and needs. If the end result changes the current organizational and management structure, the change would be the decision of SHIR.

The first part of the article is intended to give a brief overview of community-based non-profit arts organizations in the United States originating in the 1960s, including SHIR, whose identity is grounded in the Civil Rights Movement. We explore this from three perspectives: 1) SHIR's organizational status and their evolving identity; 2) the ecosystem and characteristics of community-based cultural arts organizations in the US; and 3) the emerging concept of arts entrepreneurship in expanding the capacity of cultural arts organizational structures.

The second part of the article examines the process used by the TT and how the TT supports transition and encourages organizational transformation. What is foregrounded is the relationship between artistic identity and the organizational structure. While the process is ongoing, we will discuss identified outcomes that are already being realized.

Sweet Honey in the Rock's evolving identity within a hybrid non-profit structure

Sweet Honey in the Rock (SHIR) began in the 1970s when a group of aspiring young actors attended a singing workshop led by Bernice Johnson Reagon at the Black Repertory Theatre Company in Washington DC. Created in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, SHIR became known for creating a sound rooted in various styles of music including, but not limited to, doo-wop, gospel, soul, jazz, blues, folk, rap, and traditional African and Caribbean music. The content of their music remains embedded in issues of democracy, freedom, racism, ableism, and economic and social justice. During a working session with the TT, Carol Mallard, a founding member of the group, described their music as a way to tell stories, "Our songs have a beginning, middle, and end, and take you on a journey. I believe that is why so many people are affected by our music."

SHIR was originally registered as a 501(c)(4) organization in 1990, but did not use this

non-profit status as a funding mechanism. In fact, the organization has always operated within the for-profit sector, with a booking agent and manager, generating earned revenue from ticket sales. The (c)(4) designation as a social welfare organization is an alternative to the more common 501(c)(3) designation, intended to allow for political activism, freedom of speech, and to give voice to the historical and political relevance of the Civil Rights Movement. A 501(c)(3) corporation was later established in 2006 under the name SHERA, as a foundation for educational and archival purposes. However, like the 501(c)(4), was used neither to attract foundation or government funding nor to establish a traditional non-profit structure with an executive director and staff. In December 2007, their final structural addition was implemented: a for-profit business entity. The hybridity of this organizational structure is contained both in the appearance of being a non-profit organization with official IRS designation while operating within the for-profit platform of the music industry by generating all revenue through recordings, bookings, performances, and residencies. Meyer and Rowan (1977) describe this plurality: "...organizations in search of external support and stability incorporate all sorts of incompatible structural elements" (p. 356). Due to the complexity of the organizational structure it is hard to locate them financially within the non-profit paradigm. While they could be compared to a mid-size non-profit organization, the hybridity allows for freedom from developing a dependency on grant funds while creating another set of challenges in managing such a complex structure. Additionally, challenges in establishing an organizational identity, structure, and strategy based on either a non-profit or for-profit structure is further complicated due to this hybrid nature (Greenwood et al., 2011; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Pache & Santos, 2010).

The identity of SHIR as African-American women and their mission to educate and to empower allows them to enlarge the capacity of their voices to address issues of social inequity and foster activist communities of African-American women. The energy from the Civil Rights Movement combined with the talent of the women in SHIR sculpted the a cappella group into a storyteller of social and political issues guiding the formation of intervention and social change.

With SHIR's timely messages intertwined into soulful contemplations, they have consistently created material relevant to the current state of daily life and the legacy of struggle, determination and self-reliance ushered by the age of the Civil Rights movement. In 1980, an American Sign Language interpreter accepted the challenge of accurately interpreting SHIR's songs for deaf and hearing-impaired audiences. This commitment incorporated a wider range of audience members, which also increased the capacity of their own identity. As stated in a SHIR interview on March 25, 2014 conducted by the TT, "We are an ever-evolving entity. We are not just a cappella, not doo-wop, not gospel. Whatever you see on stage at the moment is what we are... We don't want the music or the movement forgotten. We were and are connected to the civil rights emotionally." In addition to deep roots of the African-American music tradition, Civil Rights Movement, and the identity of African-American women, a variety of communities across the spectrum of "black cultural nationalists, feminists, gay men, lesbians, whites, and women's activists" (Hayes, 2006, p. 73) found their space and convergence in SHIR's music and performance. SHIR possess a soul of diversity while working with themes of humanity and recurrent issues relevant to every individual and community, with which a global audience could identify.

In an earlier interview with the TT on December 15th, 2013, one of the Honey Ladies explains that when writing music as a group, each woman has "an awareness of who [she is] in the world, as so many different things, as African American, as spiritual people, sometimes as, you know, fervently religious people, as mothers and daughters and lovers and breadwinners,

and pet keepers, and all kinds of things, whatever it is” she continues, “So, we just bring out who we are and put it down there, so it comes out in our writing, our arranging, our choice in material.” The identity of SHIR continues to evolve with their care of and responsibility to various communities in their 40 years, which also enables them to connect the cultural legacy of Civil Rights Movement to current issues of democracy, freedom, racism, and economic and social justice.

As SHIR has always been dedicated to building a sense of community and broadening their spectrum of communities by telling stories that address social issues, it was crucial for the TT to understand the non-profit cultural arts ecosystem where SHIR and other community-based arts and cultural organizations were created and fostered. This ecosystem is also subject to internal and external changes in the socio-economic environment dealing with policy dynamics. It is important here to understand the evolving ecosystem of community-based cultural arts organizations.

The Ecosystem of Community-Based Cultural Arts Organizations

Government and charities jointly provided for the cultural functions of American society before the modern nonprofits of the US emerged in the early years of the 20th century “amidst the rise of great wealth resulting from the Industrial Revolution” (Worth, 2012, p. 20). The foundation of the current social welfare system was grounded in decisive public action represented by New Deal policy in response to the Great Depression of 1930 (Salamon, 1993). The Works Progress Administration (WPA) of the federal government also created The Federal Arts Project to employ unemployed artists. During the 1960s, under the administration of President Lyndon Johnson, grants from the federal government were provided to non-profit organizations to carry out the government’s social welfare policy (William, 2003; Salamon, 1993). With the support of new government ideology, federal agencies were established to help formulate and implement these policies.

The establishment of National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in 1965 assisted the growth of non-profit organizations in arts and cultural services at the local, state, and national level. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s sparked African-American and allied communities to take active part in political self-expression through the arts and cultural activities. The spirit of these activities was also rooted in Harlem Renaissance (1919-1929) activist arts. The NEA’s Expansion Arts Program and Folk Arts Program highlighted the significance of nurturing arts excellence and improving arts accessibility as a national theme of cultural planning. Communities representing different ethnic groups, cultures, and socio-economic statuses were encouraged by these programs to actively participate in arts activities as both audience and creators.

Jan Cohen-Cruz (2005) examines the field of artists and ensembles supported through NEA and NEH initiatives; these initiatives supported the emergence of community arts or community-based performance, the communal context that connects vision with practice and encompasses the community relational experience. These performative relationships affirmed under- or mis-represented communities and cultures. “Community-based artists use their aesthetic tools in concert with a group of people with lived experience of the subject and with whom they work to shape a collective vision” (Cohen-Cruz, 2005, pg. 92).

The most talented artists of the time used their creativity and commitment to civil rights and social justice in their artistic activism. The voices of Bernice Johnson Reagon, Pete Seeger, Nina Simone, Joan Baez, Sam Cooke, Amiri Baraka, and The Last Poets, as well as the voices of

the masses in Black churches across the country sang out in spirituals against segregation and inequity and developed art as a weapon for change in the nation. The lyrics of freedom songs and the brush strokes of canvasses created artistic narratives and imagery that envisioned freedom for African Americans and other oppressed communities silenced by disenfranchisement. Marginalized communities of all kinds and colors embraced the plight of African Americans that, in part, reflected their own marginal experience as they also sought legal standing as full-fledged Americans. Communities of color and poor White Americans understood the call for full legal equality and equity, and the role of the arts in spearheading the message and call to action as various historical protest movements utilized artistic advocacy for social change. Protest art was one vehicle artists used to join the movement.

During the 1970s, international cultural exchange programs were sponsored and promoted by the NEA. These programs shed light on multiculturalism and cultural equity among American artists and academics (Chew, 2009). The different streams of cultural and conceptual trends converged and created the synergy of the blossoming scene of community-based arts activities and institutions nationwide, most of which aspired to become non-profit organizations.

The 501(c) designation is a series of codes identified by Internal Revenue Service (IRS) of the US federal government to categorize different types of tax-exempt non-profit organizations. Organizations could obtain federal income tax exemption, which provided the opportunity for donors to make tax-deductible contributions. The different section numbers indicate the classification of organization in accordance to purpose and allowance of services. The 501(c)(3) designation is the most commonly utilized for public charities, private foundations, and private operating charitable organizations and foundations that have purposes encompassing “religious, educational, charitable, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, to foster national or international sports competition or prevention of cruelty to children or animals” (Greg, 2011). However, these organizations are prohibited from participating in substantial political activities. The 501(c)(4) category is for organizations attempting to advocate, lobby, endorse political candidates, or take other political actions. Civil leagues, social welfare organizations, environmental organizations, homeowners’ associations and various community associations are commonly 501(c)(4) organizations. As noted earlier, SHIR first organized as a 501(c)(4) corporation.

The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) was established in 1973. CETA provided an alternative for individual artists to be paid for their work and for non-profit organizations to establish administrative staff and youth programming. CETA was a U.S. government program designed to assist economically disadvantaged, unemployed, or underemployed persons. Block grants were provided to state and local governments to support public and private job training and youth programs. Full time jobs were funded through this program for a period of 12 to 24 months in both public agencies and non-profit organizations. CETA provided funding for artists and youth for a decade before the Job Training Partnership Act, which established the Office of Job Training Programs, replaced it. Elba Cabrera, former chair of the board of trustees of Association of Hispanic Arts (AHA) recounts, “It was a different time then. We also had the CETA artist project going on which gave us some staff and gave our member organizations staff. The CETA artist project was the best. It helped cultural organizations and individual artists work together” (as cited in Manjon & Moreno Vega, 2012, p. 30).

While CETA provided funding for both artistic and administrative functions at many cultural organizations and art centers, it created a dependency on public government funding that

left devastating gaps in organizational operational structures when the program dissolved. The San Francisco Art Commission's Neighborhood Arts Program used CETA funding to establish many of the neighborhood art centers in South of Market, Mission District, Chinatown, Bayview Hunters Point, Western Addition, and many of the neighborhood festivals and parades. The loss of CETA funds severely crippled some organizations, causing a significant loss of both administrative and artistic staff. With funding trends shifting in the 1980s and 90s, organizations were forced to re-invent and re-establish their mode of operation. The cultural arts field has evolved to include concepts and terminology like art and social justice, social innovation, and cultural equity, but continue to receive limited resources to address the legacy of underfunding and defunding of community arts organizations. These organizations serve communities that have a multiplicity of social conditions created by the nation's neglect and the placing of "band aids" on systemic issues rather than employing long-term funding commitments and other resources to assure positive change.

Community-based non-profit arts organizations add diversity and dynamics for activism around core social issues (Chew, 2009). They are critical alternatives to mainstream art and culture institutions and provide a public understanding of "the demographic shift and how it [is] much more nuanced than simply black and white" (Chew, 2009, p. 8). They also provide positive impact to communities from various perspectives and at different levels. Individuals, neighborhoods, and communities that are not recognized in mainstream culture benefit from the increasing social capital, the growing sense of collective identity, and improving economic vitality through participating in community arts and cultural activities (Guetzkow, 2002; Cohen-Cruz, 2005).

Through the 1970s and 1980s, while overall public spending on social service and escalating support of healthcare and other key middle-class oriented programs were facing sharp cut backs (Salamon, 1993), a national network of community arts centers fostered through NEA's programs (i.e., Expansion Arts, Folk Arts, Design Arts) and other community-centered projects in various disciplines started taking shape. In addition to support from the NEA, other foundations, including Ford, Lila Wallace, Rockefeller, Doris Duke, and Nathan Cummings, have also invested significantly in small and mid-sized arts organizations that work at the intersection of diversity, community empowerment, and social issues in the past decade (Chow, 2009).

However, as evidenced in the study by Manjon and Moreno Vega (2012), the funding trend in the US has always been guided by Eurocentric aesthetic and discipline. Community-based arts organizations are faced with barriers to growth due to funding inequities. In a supporting study by Holly Sidford (2011), she reports among the 100,000 nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in the US, thousands of groups are committed to serving the communities of African, Asian, Latin American and the Pacific Rim, Native American tribal, underserved populations and preserving and developing their arts and cultural heritage. Groups with budgets greater than \$5 million represent less than 2 percent of the total population of arts and cultural groups, yet in 2009 these organizations received 55 percent of arts and cultural funding. The funding distribution does not reflect the diversity of these organizations (p. 8).

Many of the community-based organizations with national reputations have a history spanning 20 to 30 years. They have struggled to build systems, financial stability, and appropriate staff to ensure quality of programming. However, heavy reliance on public funding and foundation support causes hardship, sometimes crisis, for many of these organizations. These community-based arts organizations have begun to explore new funding models to

diversify their revenue streams and expand their funding base. Therefore, arts entrepreneurship is stirring heated discussion in the blurring boundaries of nonprofit and for-profit business worlds serving communities through arts and social services.

Edges of Arts Entrepreneurship

In the U.S., individual artists working in the creative sector at the community level may form small or medium sized non-profit enterprises. However, compared with for-profit organizations, non-profit organizations are challenged by their need for growth, changes in the marketplace, and financial and organizational constraints.

Arts entrepreneurship encompasses small and medium sized community-based arts enterprises and related nonprofit organizations. Their programs serve artist's career development and financial needs, and include arts, culture, and business related educational institutes. The broad range of entities where arts entrepreneurship takes place have not reached a consensus on a fine-tuned definition or typology of arts entrepreneurship, nor has a curriculum with a framework of relevant outcomes been developed for students who are likely to work outside the traditional arts and culture career path.

As a burgeoning concept in the field of arts and culture non-profits, arts education, and arts policy, arts entrepreneurship can be regarded as a universal form of human action that involves the social interaction of artist and audience or market as well as a transdiscipline ranging across social science and humanities disciplines and creative endeavors in terms of both perspectives and methodologies (Essig, 2012). Arts entrepreneurship is not only about individual artists starting a new venture; it also encompasses the education and pedagogy of preparing artists with "tools for artist self-efficacy and self-actualization; provision of environments for artistic exploration and innovation" (Essig, 2012, p. 3).

These subjects touch upon both the practice of artists at the individual level and policy formulation for arts entrepreneurship in a friendly environment. The "tools for artist self-efficacy and self-actualization" Essig refers to mean more than business knowledge and skills, they also include a set of attributes of entrepreneurship, such as identifying the niche for one's own talent, career opportunities, needs of the market, and the wisdom of taking responsible risk. The "provision of environments for artistic exploration and innovation" emphasizes the public policy incentives cultivating and facilitating small enterprises and relevant education for artists. The environment is interpreted as an integration of the structure, culture, and policy of an organization, which enables artists within the organization to realize the institutional innovation and their self-actualization at the same time.

The word "entrepreneurship" is often conceived in the context of the for-profit world; however, the intrinsic value of the word is actually not bounded by the nature and service of the entity. As Drucker (1985) notes, entrepreneurship should be a practice allowing both kinds of entities to innovate without threatening their missions. The concept of social entrepreneurship has been widely used in the field of social service and demonstrates that this concept helps bridge the mission-driven nature of the non-profit and the business traits and attitude of operating for-profit organizations to increase their capacity.

The Center's TT process explores the concept of arts entrepreneurship in a university setting with artists and community-based arts organizations employing a transdisciplinary cooperative research approach. The working premise is to develop a process for solving artist and organizationally defined challenges using an authentic interactive approach to establishing an entrepreneurial mindset that explores and values cultural identity, economic self-reliance, and

sustainability within a community arts context. The TT process seeks to introduce an authentic, collaborative and interactive framework that facilitates organizational transition based on establishing an approach of arts entrepreneurship.

The Think Tank process

To truly understand the concerns, needs, insights, and expectations that artists have about their organization, the TT needs to acknowledge and value the identity, motivations, talent, and communication methods of each individual within the organization and the group as a whole. The TT process was grounded in engaged learning and collaborative inquiry, and defined by the philosophical and methodological agenda of participatory action research. TT participants were always attentive to issues of power distribution and cultural identity in the interaction process. Participatory research has a theoretical root in critical theory, which connects the TT process to the history and identity of SHIR in advocating for social equity. Hence, the process can be taken as an emancipatory social process for TT members to collectively transform the practice of management and inform entrepreneurial issues in nonprofit arts and in professional education in arts administration.

The organic process of the TT is conceptualized by the frameworks exhibited in Figures 1 and 2 through an ex post facto analysis between group members. The first figure describes the four phases of the TT's ongoing process with a focus on collaborating with and assisting the arts organization. Each phase has individual outcomes and strategic goals. In the first phase, the TT process with SHIR began by becoming familiar with the personalities of each individual artist, identifying the assets of the organization and understanding stagnating factors affecting the organization. The second phase focused on learning basic business practices and knowledge and generating collaborative creativity. This phase prepared the artists to enter into the third phase by having them envision the future of their organization and understanding their emergent and specific concerns and needs for future transition. This introduced them to organizational structure options so they could begin to envision a different way of operating, thus moving from a nonprofit mentality into an entrepreneurial paradigm. The second and third phases overlap in order to create a shift in the artists' mindset. The interactive learning in phase two encouraged confidence before the collective visioning process in phase three, during which the artist-thinking pattern starts shifting into an entrepreneurial mindset leading towards transitional actions as a group. Moving into a different mindset, the artists found direction for transition, recognized actions needed, and identified resources necessary to work on an action plan with timelines and specific steps required for phase four. The fourth phase emphasized the growth of the artists' skills in rationalizing their choice of a transitional strategy thereby giving them the ability to identify the characteristics of a qualified management team and their responsibilities as the leaders of their team.

In pursuance of the goals of each phase, the TT collaborated with the artists in the core actions of each phase. TT members designed thought-provoking and interactive processes for each of the four sessions in order to conduct an integrated assessment of the organization's current structure. The four sessions effectively facilitated the exchange of ideas between SHIR and TT members and enhanced the artists' comprehension of substantive knowledge of entrepreneurship via interactive games, lectures, and discussions.

For example, to understand the financial and managerial structure of SHIR, the TT engaged a series of collaborative working sessions with the Honey Ladies (SHIR's core members/performers) in April, June, September, and November 2014. During these sessions, we

co-constructed interactive sessions that included a thorough examination of the use of nonprofit status versus working with a fiscal agent, brand versus mission, artist/producer versus management team, and the benefits and challenges of each. One member of the TT, Jason White, developed a business entity card game that contained nine separate structures to give the Honey Ladies a way to understand their own structures and other structures. The card game structures included: LLC (limited liability company), 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), L3C (low profit limited liability company), C-Corporation, LLP (limited liability partnership), S-Corporation, Hybrids, and Sole Proprietorship. The back of each card contained a description, advantages, and disadvantages of each tax status. The sessions were presented using a combination of traditional didactic discussions and artistically engaging exercises such as visioning, drawing, singing, and movement.

The April sessions concluded with ten preliminary recommendations presented to SHIR about organizational structural change. During the June sessions, we collectively developed a plan for an alternative structure and incorporated visioning sessions that included benefits and trade-offs of suggested options and connecting vision to product. June sessions concluded with transition planning. September sessions focused on action plan development and buy-in, and caused both the TT and SHIR members to evaluate individual and personal assumptions, attributes, and challenges in developing an authentic interactive approach towards entrepreneurship or the process of getting involved with new ventures or ideas. November produced a major break-through for both the TT and SHIR: a four-point succinct action plan was created by the Honey Ladies that was part TT coaching and part self-realization based on what had emerged during the various sessions, workshops, discussions, and relationship building exercises between and within the groups.

The TT analyzed the materials used and the information gained in each session as data to understand the business structure, organizational identity, and management challenges faced by SHIR. Continuous feedback from each phase further defined the process in order to reach goals and continue to the next phases.

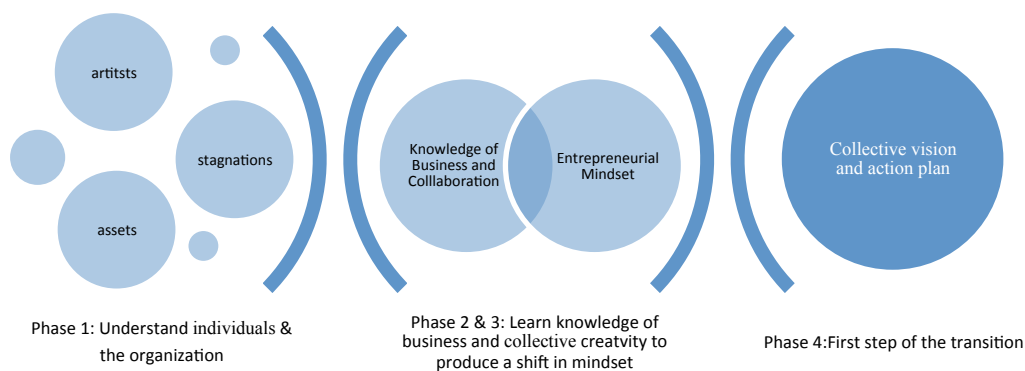


Figure 1. The Phases and Aims of the Ongoing TT Process

Figure 1 describes the primary TT activities and key impacts that resulted from the events throughout the process. The second figure focuses on displaying the essential value orientation of the TT process by coding the values generated from the interaction between the TT and SHIR.

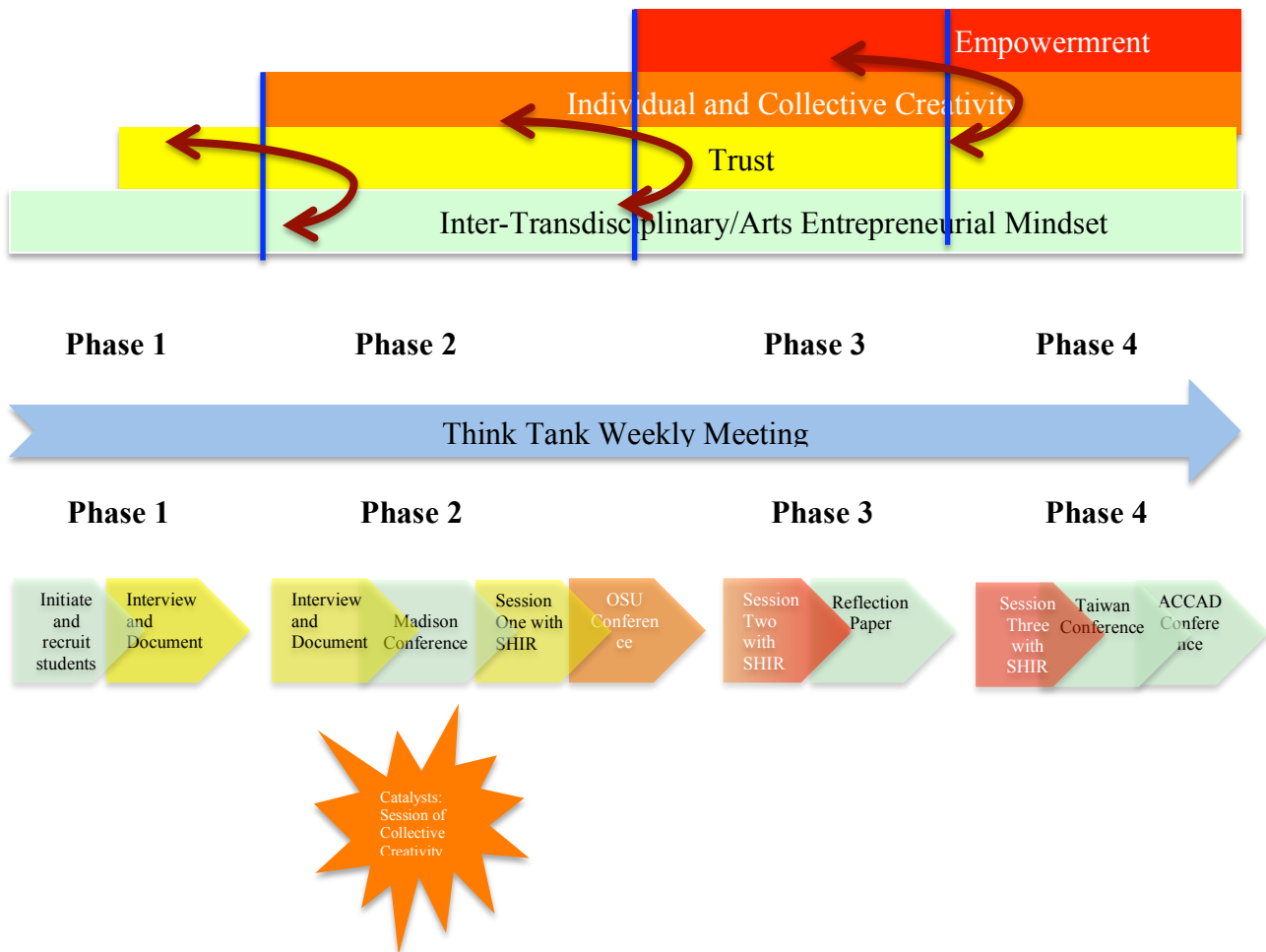


Figure 2. The Spectrum of Value Orientation of Think Tank Activities

The color blocks at the top of Figure 2 are the long-term impacts on both the TT and SHIR, engaged by the collaboration and also represent the value and belief orientation of the TT process. These color blocks are divided into the four phases referenced in Figure 1. Each of the impacts or values is realized by activities signaled by the pointers in the four phases at the bottom of the graph. The activity in the pointers share the same color with the block representing the impact it attempts to reach. The open loops indicate that all the impacts and values established in one phase pave the way for the next phase. They also reinforce each other and accumulate a foundation for the sustainability of the whole project.

The “explosion” in the second phase represents a design thinking session that the TT members engaged in with Dr. Elizabeth Sanders from the Department of Design at The Ohio State University. Her expertise is in fostering collaborative creativity through a design approach. This session acted as a catalyst for boosting tacit communication between TT members. The methods for engaging collaborative creativity used by Dr. Sanders also introduced alternative

methods for oral communication with the artists, which helped reveal more aspects and dimensions of the artists' personalities and thoughts.

Weekly meetings of the TT were one of the important components among all the activities. In these meetings, TT members discussed their understandings and research on critical issues of SHIR's organizational and management structure, assessed the ongoing process and outcomes of the TT, prepared for sessions with SHIR and presentations for conferences, and uncovered knowledge generation from the practice. The following sections explain impacts and values and their corresponding activities in detail. TT members keep abreast of current trends and get feedback from experts and colleagues in the field through conferences at which TT participants have had opportunities to articulate their experiences and present preliminary findings.

Mindset

While the mindset of arts entrepreneurship has been explained in the previous section, the TT process also explores forms of and curricula for arts entrepreneurship in higher education. The theories of inter- and trans-disciplinarity integrate arts entrepreneurship in research, education, and practicum as the very foundation of the TT processes it established.

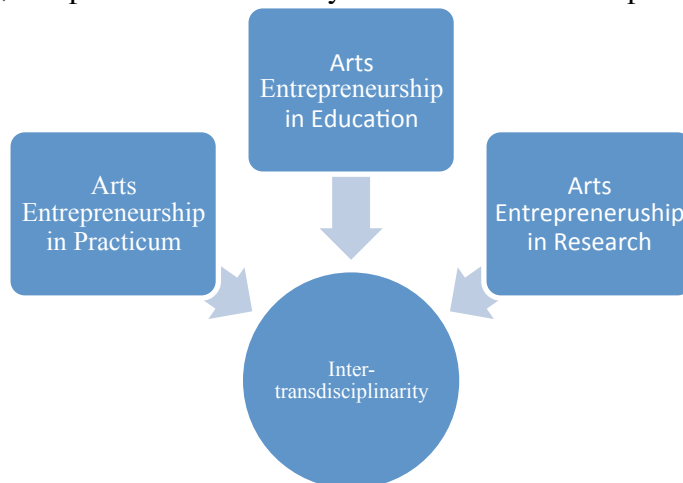


Figure 3. The Integration of Arts Entrepreneurship in Practicum, Education, and Research

The four students in the TT have studied and worked in fields ranging from arts administration and cultural policy, social work and public administration, finance and economics, acting, vocal music, dance, to journalism. They have different cultural backgrounds, including African-American, Chinese, Indian, and Latin American. Therefore, the profile of participants of the TT represents and actualizes a mindset of inter-transdisciplinarity in the globalizing world of arts. Managed by culturally sensitive leadership, the diversity of regional, functional, organizational, and individual contexts and cultures conveyed by individual TT members created synergies of comprehensive perspectives leading to thriving collaborative creativity and rapid innovation (Gassmann, 2001).

The processes of TT form a mutually beneficial system connecting the traditional case study model to the practice of business consulting for arts and cultural organizations. Differentiating from the case study and consulting model, the TT model was created and implemented based on the inter-transdisciplinary paradigm to expand and explore the application

of the emerging concept of arts entrepreneurship in helping artists transform their current organizational structure into one equipped with greater capacity.

Interdisciplinarity focuses on integration of knowledge across boundaries of disciplines. The graduate students in the TT come from different academic backgrounds and have experience working in various practical fields. Their different nationalities and ethnicities as well as their varied undergraduate studies bring diverse perspectives and thinking patterns that complement each other in understanding the complex organizational issues of SHIR. The integration of skill sets and types of knowledge and perspectives create “a universal vantage point and methods, over and above all disciplines” (Godemann, 2008, p. 268) for solving complicated problems in the context outside academia.

Transdisciplinarity “stresses the transgression of boundaries between academia and society, and is intended to be participatory research” (Godemann, 2008, p. 627). This interpretation of transdisciplinarity captures the TT activities in terms of communicating the academic conceptions of arts entrepreneurship with the real-life situation of arts policy and administration through collaboration based on interdisciplinarity.

Transdisciplinarity also means reinforcement between academia and practice via collaboration. The TT took the initiative of analyzing the artists-defined issues and engaging the artists’ participation. Analogously, the artists also invested their time, trust, and experience as practitioners to enrich and ground the students’ research practicum. Thus, the TT process is not designed *for* the artists but *with* the artists by keeping the process open and flexible enough for both artists and students to contribute, develop, and adjust based on what they have learned from each other and from outside resources during any phase of the process. The communication process was delicately and democratically framed without imposing field-specific jargon to avoid mentally distancing the two parties. As Sanders (2012) indicated, “collective creativity in strategic thinking will lead to ownership of the ideas and strategies by the people who were involved in their creation” (p. 18) The ownership of knowledge and skills allowed both groups to sustain the outcomes and impacts endogenously and independently.

Trust Building

MacAllister (1995) proposed affective trust and cognitive trust as two paths to team trust building. Affective trust is built through creating a feeling of interpersonal caring and empathy between team members; cognitive trust is based on the authority and reliance of one’s expertise and familiarity with certain issues. Barczak, Lassk, and Mulki’s (2010) research demonstrates the effective emotion management of individual team members and the ability of managing others’ emotions produces a larger degree of affective trust. Furthermore, the reliance on the professional and competent behaviors of team members creates cognitive trust leading to higher levels of team creativity. The two types of team trust are positively associated with team creativity.

The trust of the TT process is built between five sets of relationships: 1) relationship between SHIR’s members (SSM), 2) relationship between the TT members (TTM), 3) relationship between TT members and instructor Dr. Manjon, 4) relationship between SHIR and instructor Dr. Manjon, and 5) relationship between TT members and SHIR (see Figure 4). Cultural shocks and disagreement challenged us initially because of the diversity of cultures and disciplines, but it provided an opportunity to propel us towards realization and acceptance of new ideas and shared values. The possibility of building swift trust between the TT members was a result of the latent trust rooted from shared institution engagement, the learning experience,

beliefs in pluralism and multiculturalism, inter-related fields of study, and common tacit knowledge between peers. The trust between SHIR members was rational trust based on the long-term collaboration and interpersonal interaction between them at both the affective and cognitive level. Different combinations of affective and cognitive trust forged the five sets of relationships between parties and individuals. They were interconnected and interdependent with each other, allowing both parties and individuals within the parties to build a collective trust in a relatively short time.

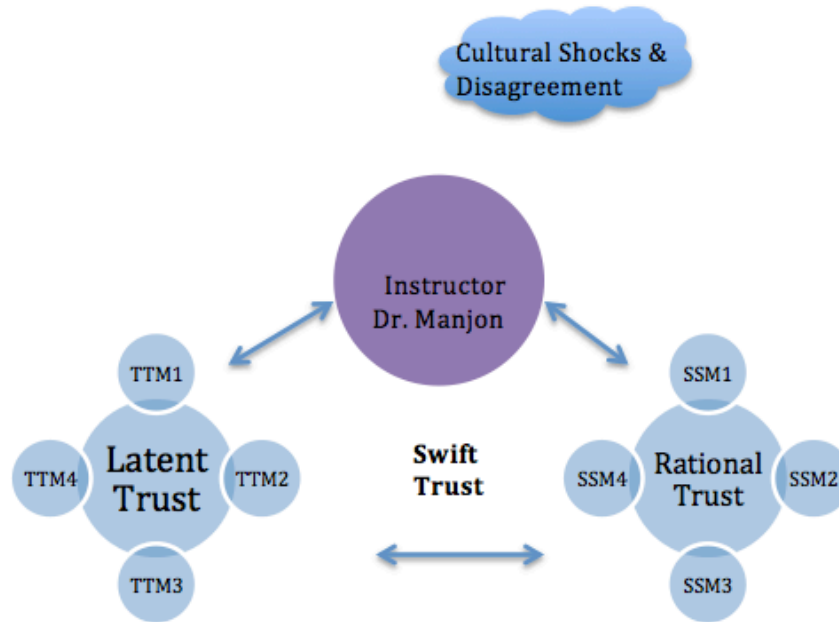


Figure 4. The Diagram of Trust Relationships of Think Tank Process

Trust was significant and important in administrative issues of the organization and it was particularly sensitive in the field of arts, because in the close-knit community of arts, information and reputation spreads very quickly and the impact of disclosure is hard to predict and measure (McCarthy, 2006). SHIR's members have been extremely cautious in sharing information about their organization and themselves because of the apprehensive nature formed in an arts sector where "building trusting relationships under conditions that do not enable trust to flourish" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 47). Traditional trust assets such as time, familiarity, and successful experience of collaboration do not exist in a project-oriented environment, so it takes patience and strategic thinking to build swift trust for the success of the project (McCarthy, 2006).

The trust between the Honey Ladies was successfully built through 40 years of collaboration as a group. The affective trust between them, which was based on traditional assets of their relationships, is quite strong. The emotions of one member usually infects the others, so the engagement of one member can help the others feel safe and significant. Therefore, the TT invested significant attention to constructing a safe environment and intimate atmosphere for artists to express and communicate their emotions without mental constrains.

The relationship between the TT members was formally built in the project through the recruitment process and group gathering. In addition, the similarity in institutional context, career and academic interest and goals, and shared understanding of collaboration in a

multicultural situation established potential for successful trust-building. The recognized communication skills and open mindedness of the TT members allowed them to deal with challenges of communication and role identification within the group. Furthermore, Dr. Manjon, core leadership of the TT, was perceptive in tapping the capacity of TT members without utilizing an intrusive or authoritative manner. The characteristics of her leadership give open space for students to explore their own abilities and enact their ideas without fears.

As process convener, Dr. Manjon amalgamated the relationship between the TT and SHIR and facilitated swift trust-building. She utilized the affective and cognitive trust she had built with a member of SHIR over many years to introduce the TT process to the group by creating meaningful and consistent interaction demonstrating the intellectual ability and emotional enthusiasm of the TT members.

In the first two months, TT activities focused on familiarity with artistic product, organizational history, and current challenges of SHIR, with particular focus on personalities and working styles of each individual artist. The TT became familiar with SHIR by watching live performances, analyzing a documentary film, and participating in the development process of the creation of their 40th anniversary production. Activities that built an in-depth understanding of SHIR included interviewing members about their identity, creation process, interpretation of their music, understanding their mission and vision statement, reviewing media presentations, and analyzing their financial reports. At the end of the first phase, the TT engaged a professional work ethic and respect for the privacy of SHIR by agreeing to confidentiality of any information considered exclusive and privileged.

Individual and Collaborative Creativity

The activities of trust-building and emerging a mindset of arts entrepreneurship and intertransdisciplinarity laid the groundwork for the effectiveness of the techniques we utilized from Dr. Sanders' *Design for Collaborative Creativity* workshop. The TT encouraged the artists to talk about their dreams and concerns openly in each of the three critical TT sessions, June, September, and November 2014. The research that we conducted for and with SHIR accumulatively added layers of understanding about the assets of the organization, useful information, methods of communication, and the role the TT should play. The three sessions successfully produced useful information that supports an entrepreneurial mindset and constructed a four-point action plan of organizational transformation and transition.

Table 1 exhibits the specific techniques adjusted from the model of The Art of Hosting (Sanders, 2012, p. 18) for fostering collaborative creativity during the evaluative and educational sessions with SHIR. During the second session, SHIR clearly reached a consensus on how to better utilize their organizational status to fulfill their social mission and artistic vision and to simultaneously maintain their financial stability.

Components	Meanings	Think Tank Process
Participants	The people involved in the collaborative sessions range from artists/students/faculty to community and audience members. The diversity of people in these sessions increased over time.	Think Tank sessions with SHIR, Think Tank sessions with professors Manjon & Sanders, conference presentations, performance rehearsals, concert observations, and artist interviews.
Physical Spaces and Places	The World Café method puts emphasis on the arrangement of physical environment where the visioning activities take place.	Open space provided room for creative activities and trust building, round tables allowed for collaboration between participants, meeting spaces that provided for privacy allowed for trust building.
Social attitudes, activities and rules for engagement	Open Space and the Art of Hosting placed a lot of emphasis on describing the principles that are needed to support and enable the collaborative session.	Individual and collaborative engagement, session framing, individual coaching between TT and SHIR members.
Tools, techniques and materials	The World Café allowed for a variety of tools, techniques, and materials that are needed to support and/or facilitate the visioning activities.	Card game, visualization, journal exercise, acting game, word wall exercise, blue print exercise, elevator speech, community sing-along, and pray.
Follow-through	Scenario Planning and Blueprint exercise, explicitly addressed the decision-making stage that followed the visioning stage.	Transitional strategic plan development, blueprint revision and decision-making, “burning the worries” exercise, track the artists’ action, action plan.

Table 1. Components of the Art of Hosting (Sanders, 2012)

Empowerment

In Phase Three, we focused on assisting the artists in a transfer of their artistic creativity into assets for business innovation. In other words, the artists need to be entrepreneurial in conceiving of how to control and sustain their business proactively and innovatively. Thinking entrepreneurially does not require an MBA degree. It takes courage, patience, and collaboration

to navigate the value propositions of art works, identity, and brand into the right channels towards the organizational goals. For entrepreneurs, trust-building, knowledge of business, and bold imaginations do not constitute the courage to change. Nurturing a mentality and mindset of arts entrepreneurship calls for specific guidance to enable the artists to utilize their talents in proactively evaluating administrative decision-making issues.

The collective vision and determination to make changes that allow for entrepreneurial structures was carefully constructed from feasibility discussions leading to action plans. This case study and working relationship was based on collective trust, new paradigms and possibilities, and collaborative creativity accumulated and integrated in twelve months of dedicated work between the TT and SHIR. The result: clarity of actions and timing needed to best transition the organization at a critical development point in their 40th anniversary year and in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of passage of The 1964 Civil Rights Act.

TT Output

In the final session, SHIR and TT crafted a detailed plan with goals that included creating a new product associated with a new brand, analyzing and articulating the value propositions of their new product as a united voice to different stakeholders, and identifying a list of friends and investors who would support them during their transition either as advisors or investors.

The Honey Ladies are working on new material in the studio using an improvisational approach to recording. Each singer takes the lead on starting a song and the other singers incorporate unrehearsed sound and words. This method of new material development is new to the singers, an exciting approach to composing and is producing a new sound while staying connected to their social justice theme. The TT encouraged the artists to be bold in establishing a new approach to artistic development and then focus on establishing a brand to articulate what's new in their approach and musical output.

One of the sessions with SHIR was on branding and marketing. One of the members of the TT, Allison Hoyle, developed a vision vocabulary activity that lead SHIR through a process of connecting vision to product and understanding what it means to create and market a brand. A component of organizational restructuring includes examining current positions in relationship to new goals such as new material development. The need for a publicist and the establishment of a new brand are priorities that are being worked out.

The most challenging outcome is analyzing and articulating the value proposition of new product. In honoring the brand that SHIR has successfully created over the past 40 years, they didn't want to completely disconnect from it; however, they are looking forward to re-identifying who they are as women and artists moving into a new decade. To help them explore new possibilities, an advisory board is being identified that will focus on transition and new opportunities in touring and product development.

The final and current phase is an opportunity for the TT to decipher lessons learned, clearly articulate the process of this work, and document final outcomes as SHIR navigates through this transition phase based on their work with TT. The TT will continue to meet as a group, although not as frequently, working on data analysis and follow up interviews with SHIR specifically focused on transition and goals. The focus of the next stage of the TT process and research is to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of the process in helping artists redistribute their creative assets and identify themselves with an entrepreneurial organizational mindset. We will explore what that means to the artists and what it looks like in application.

Conclusion

While the initial work of the TT with SHIR focused on identifying organizational changes needed that would support employing an entrepreneurial mindset towards future sustainability and growth, the TT process also gave birth to an experimental pedagogy of engagement within an arts administration and policy context. The collaboration further gave birth to what we are calling an authentic interactive approach to organizational transformation and capacity building. This type of capacity building incorporates individual and collective work in a cooperative modality and requires collaborative working relationships between artists, students, and organizations. Institutional resources and support are needed to carry out, at minimum, 12-24 months of engagement if the process is to be realized as a catalyst for change. TT presentations at conferences and in academic settings are important for students to test models and findings and acquire feedback from academics, scholars, artists, practitioners, policy makers, and others.

The TT will continue to analyze data amassed from SHIR sessions and workshops and test the hypothesis on smaller case studies and in less time-consuming environments. For example, two students from TT will further explore components of the TT process in China and Czech Republic, summer 2015, in an effort to further understand how the arts entrepreneurial mindset model can assist production development in international cultural exchanges and in the process of career building for young international artists. Simultaneously, Think Tank 2 has launched, working with a cultural arts organization in Columbus, Ohio to develop an entrepreneurial organizational and management structure that features new enterprising ways to: generate and increase earned income; assess relationships with the local and greater Columbus communities, with special attention to displacement and gentrification; focus on branding; and maintain the organization's connection to its cultural and historical legacy while identifying and training the next generation of arts administrators and artists.

This second iteration of TT will incorporate a cooperative inquiry process, experiential learning objectives, collaborative skill building for artists and students, a transdisciplinary approach to generating knowledge, enriched practice for real world application, and focus on mission-driven sustainable change.

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