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Leadership, social responsibility & organizational identity: The case of the acquisition of Ben & Jerry’s by Unilever

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Abstract:

Relatively small, entrepreneurial sized firms with a “Socially Responsible Organizational Identity” are being acquired by large multinationals at a growing pace. Recent deals include the purchase of the Body Shop by L’Oreal, Tom’s of Maine by Colgate-Palmolive, Stonyfield Farm by Groupe Danone, and Ben & Jerry’s by Unilever. We postulate that a Socially Responsible Organizational Identity is a valuable, rare and tacit resource (Barney, 1986; 1991) which multinationals want to capture through M&A. This can create a paradox where a large acquirer will tend to impose its way of doing things on the firm it is acquiring, but in so doing potentially destroy the target’s Socially Responsible Organizational Identity—which was part of its motivation for acquisition in the first place!

Based on a longitudinal case study of the acquisition of Ben & Jerry’s by Unilever, this paper examines how a firm’s organizational identity is affected by an acquisition. This framing encompasses, in this case, shifts in leadership discourse as the company transitioned from its founding era to professional management through to its acquisition, subsequent integration into a parent company, and the aftermath. This longitudinal frame helps to uncover the changing nature and drivers of a firm’s SROI through a specific focus on how its leaders presented its mission and values (e.g., projected identity) to the workforce and to the public.

Key findings reveal that while Ben & Jerry’s Projected Identity endures over time and through the Unilever acquisition in that the three part mission remains a pillar of the firm’s identity, what does change is the way various leaders interpret and make their own this three part mission, thus supporting the idea that organizational identity can display both stability and change (Chreim, 2000). Secondly, our findings reveal that Ben & Jerry’s Projected Identity does not become increasingly instrumental and economic (and less normative) as predicted by Albert & Whetten (1985) of the evolution of normative organizations overtime. Finally, we find that the change over from the Founders to professional management (pre-acquisition) was a more significant turning point than the acquisition itself in terms of the evolution of Ben & Jerry’s Projected Identity.

Key words:

Leadership, corporate social responsibility, mergers & acquisitions

Leadership, social responsibility, and organizational identity:

The case of the acquisition of Ben & Jerry’s by Unilever

Relatively small, entrepreneurial firms with a "Socially Responsible Organizational Identity" (e.g., SROI, XXX, 2010) are being acquired by large multinationals at a growing pace. Recent deals include the purchase of the Body Shop by L'Oreal, Tom's of Maine by Colgate-Palmolive, Stonyfield Farm by Groupe Danone, confectioner Green & Black's by Cadbury Schweppes, and Ben & Jerry's by Unilever, among others. We postulate that a firm with an SROI[1] possesses intangible value which multinationals want to capture through M&A. This can create a paradox where a large acquirer tends to impose its way of doing things on the firm it is acquiring, but in so doing destroys facets of the target's socially responsible identity—which was part of its motivation for acquisition in the first place!

Based on a longitudinal case study of the acquisition of Ben & Jerry's by Unilever, this paper examines how a firm's organizational identity is affected by an acquisition. This framing encompasses, in this case, shifts in leadership discourse as the company transitioned from its founding era to professional management through to its acquisition, subsequent integration into a parent company, and the aftermath. This longitudinal frame helps to uncover the changing nature and drivers of a firm's SROI through a specific focus on how its leaders presented its mission and values (e.g., projected identity) to the workforce and to the public.[2]

A focus on leadership discourse and projected identity puts an organizational, as opposed to an individual, lens on questions of leadership and ethics in organizations. No doubt the psychological makeup, psychosocial characteristics, and personal histories of the particular leaders in this case were reflected in the ethical dimensions of their leadership style and relationships with employees (c.f., Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2008; Rehman Toor & Ofori, 2009). Our interests, however, turn to how these leaders embodied and expressed ethical content in their discourse about their firm and its organizational identity (Chreim, 2000). This highlights how factors of organizational growth, strategy, market conditions, and of course changes in circumstance impinge on how leaders define "who we are as an organization" and shape "insiders' interpretations of reality" (Brickson, 2005, 2007; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Smircich, 1983).

[1]Socially Responsible Organizational Identity (SROI) is defined as: *"The coherent and consistent articulation of a firm's managerial expression of mission regarding social responsibility (projected identity); with a firm's visible actions & manifestations of social responsibility (manifested identity) and with the perceptions of a firm's SR by its internal stakeholders (experienced identity). The communication and actions of SR must be grounded in the ethical motivation of corporate leaders/decision makers."*

[2] This paper focuses primarily on the first part of the organizational identity trilogy: the managerial perspective or leaders' official discourse ('projected identity').

While many theorists posit that organizational identity reflects self-reference to organizational life, a more complete picture of organizational identity emerges if it is viewed as a complex, multi-dimensional and multi-layered object of study to be observed from multiple viewpoints. Here we go beyond an employee interpretative perspective to include leadership's interpretations and pronouncements as signifiers of organizational identity (Bayle-Cordier, 2010; Moingeon & Soenen, 2002; Chreim, 2000).[3]

In undertaking this analysis, two questions are brought into focus. First, is organizational identity as expressed by leadership discourse stable or in flux? This has emerged as a key issue in the organizational identity literature with proponents for each point of view (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000; Corley & Gioia, 2004). By comparison, Chreim (2000) contends that organizational identity can display elements of both stability and change. This study examines which kinds of drivers (internal and/or external events) impact stability and change in projected identity. A second guiding question asks: does M&A by a large multinational contributes to a shift of the smaller, target firm's organizational identity over time (Albert & Whetten, 1985)? Mirvis and Marks (1992) argue that large acquirer's tend to "conform" acquired targets to their organizational identity; this often means a shift from a normative to an increasingly instrumental orientation. To the extent a firm's SROI is a non-tangible resource and expresses normative values, it follows that how a multinational crafts its M&A integration strategy may be crucial to determining whether or not the target will continue to create economic and social value.

Projected Identity and Social Responsibility

The function of leadership is to manage an organization's identity: "The role of the manager is to create meaning, to create an imagery, to master the symbolic" (Reitter & Ramanantsoa, 1985). Some authors argue that leaders will tend to "impose their own monological and unitary perceptions of truth" (Brown & al., 2005, p. 314) on organizational members in order to create "the active consent of dominated groups" (Brown & al., 2005, p. 315, citing Clegg, 1989). For this reason, leadership discourse is often criticized as projecting an ideal identity but not necessarily reflecting the "real" identity of a firm. In the case of organizational change, leaders are also said to be 'managers of organizational meaning' as

[3] This epistemological posture of embracing multiple paradigms is not frequent in organization studies as the field tends to be broken up into either functionalist or interpretative approaches to avoid the paradigm incommensurability issue (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Our perspective is that the use of multiple paradigms or 'paradigm interplay' may actually allow a more sophisticated and richer approach to analysis (Schulz & Hatch, 1996) so long as epistemologies are openly acknowledged and addressed in a conscious manner by scholars (Corley & al., 2006).

this is where power lies (Reitter & Ramanantsoa, 1985) and are thus actively engaged in identity management (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996). Such management of identity can lead top managers to engage in hypocrisy at worst or wishful thinking at best as leadership discourse ('Projected Identity') may tend to focus on desired rather than actual identity (Balmer & Greyser, 2002). Despite such constraints, top management remains in general the more influential actor in the representation of an organization's identity (Chreim, 2000, p.11).

'Projected Identity' refers to an organization's "talk" and what its leadership communicates officially about its vision and mission regarding a firm's organizational identity. We build upon Wood's (1991) notion of principles of social responsibility but with a focus on the principles of social responsibility which are claimed and expressed by an organization's top managers or founders through projected discourse.[4] Our definition of a firm's principles of social responsibility also builds upon Moingeon & Soenen's (2002) organizational identity model and more particularly upon their "projected identity" facet which "refers to the elements an organization uses in more or less controlled ways to present itself to specific audiences." (Moingeon & Soenen, 2002, p.17). We differ from Moingeon & Soenen (2002) and follow Wood (1991) in that we isolate discourse ('talk') from action (much like Wood differentiated 'principles' from 'processes'.)

In this study, the focus is deliberately upon a firm with a socially responsible organizational identity. Our conception of social responsibility builds on Wood (1991) who argues that "...the principles of CSR should not be thought of as absolute standards, but as analytical forms to be filled with the content of explicit value preferences that exist within a given cultural or organizational context" (Wood, 1991, p.700). We differ from Wood (1991) however, in that we add a normative element (in answer to Swanson, 1995) to our understanding of CSR. To qualify as a socially responsible firm, we argue that a firm's leadership must be ethically motivated and not simply engaged in CSR for instrumental reasons.[5] This entails that to be socially responsible, a firm must display two elements: responsible leadership and authenticity. Responsible leadership has been described by Thomas Maak and Nicola Pless as:

[4] We are not so interested in the legitimacy given by society or even in the principles of public responsibility as Wood defines them, but rather in the principles formulated by leadership and expressed as the firm's official discourse to be projected and communicated to both internal and external stakeholders.

[5] We consider that an organization's leadership may also have mixed (ethical and economic) motivations and still qualify as a socially responsible organization (see Bansal & Roth (2000) for an exploration of the three main motivations for firms engaging in ecological responsiveness).

> "building, cultivating and sustaining trustful relationships to different stakeholders, both inside and outside the organization, and in coordinating responsible action to achieve a meaningful commonly shared business vision."(Maak, 2007)

> "..values-based and ethical principles driven relationship between leaders and stakeholders who are connected through a shared sense of meaning and purpose through which they raise one another to higher levels of motivation and commitment for achieving sustainable value creation and social change." (Pless, 2007)

Authenticity has been defined as the alignment of one's actions and behaviours with internalized values and beliefs (Harvey & al., 2006). It has also been characterized as being internally driven and as "a response to internal desires to behave with integrity, not to societal pressures to conform to certain standards" (Erickson, 1995, cited in Harvey & al., 2006, p.2).[6] Of course, the authenticity concept may be socially constructed by a number of different actors (Peterson, 2005) for strategic and economic purposes (Beverland, 2005). In a study of the wine industry, one author argues that to attain and retain price premiums, wineries needed to protect their prestige status and that one of the means to do this was through a strategy to enhance perceptions of brand authenticity (Beverland, 2005).

The notion of authenticity can take both an ethical/normative orientation (e.g., an internal desire to behave with integrity; a 'post-egoic' conception of organizational self[7]) and also a more instrumental one (an authentic strategy to gain a price premium). While both ethical and instrumental elements contribute to Ben & Jerry's authentic identity, the decision to choose Ben & Jerry's and to consider it as a "CSR authentic" is its normative and ethical orientation. Such normative authentic orientation is revealed in the alignment of a firm's actions with its values and also by the mere fact of being a pioneer in the CSR field. One can argue that Ben & Jerry's developed CSR behaviours and values because of its authentic leadership motivated by ethics (doing what's right) and not as the result of societal pressures. Finally, Ben & Jerry's qualifies as an 'authentic leadership' organization (at least prior to being acquired) in that it's Projected Identity was self-aware, transparent and with an internalized moral perspective (see Toor & Ofori, 2009, p. 536).

The distinction between the CSR pioneer Ben & Jerry's and other firms is important because while many multinational firms today are adopting a CSR discourse and select

[6] Authenticity has also been described as a developmental process that promotes self awareness (Avolio et al., 2004 cited in Harvey & al., 2006, p.2). Some authors have gone even further, taking a post modern, psychoanalytic approach and arguing that a corporation is authentic or "post egoic" when it is not primarily economics driven but instead fosters multiple, even dissenting voices, is fluid, engaged in dialogue, and a place of reflection and learning (Driver, 2006).

[7] Driver (2005) describes a 'post egoic' organization as an organization which has a fluid organizational identity, interdependent stakeholder relationships, and a culture of reflection, learning and dissent.

practices, this is a recent and often imitative phenomenon.[8] By comparison, Ben and Jerry were among a set of social- and eco-entrepreneurs in the U.S. and Europe in the '60 s and '70s that were touting how to turn "values into value." An important idea here is that these leaders, while necessarily a product of their time and place, exhibited strategic foresight in establishing a business model that capitalized, variously, on growing interest in all-natural ingredients, eco-friendly products, and cause-related consuming; and while these may have been countercultural views in the 1960s and '70s, they have since been carried forward by baby boomers into the marketplace and passed on to their children. They also had a clear vision on how to use their companies to best effect social change. Ben Cohen remarks, "I think philanthropy is great. But there is a limit to how much you can just give away. If you integrate social concerns into day-to-day profit making, there's no limit to how much you can do."

Observing the 'Projected Identity' of an 'authentic' socially responsible leadership organization over a long time period, and through a major organizational change event (M&A), allows for a comprehensive understanding of the nature and drivers of an "authentic" socially responsible organizational identity.

Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted in this study is qualitative and case based as it is the most pertinent to investigate an unexplored research area: the notion of Socially Responsible Organizational Identity (SROI)) and its evolution in the context of a major organizational upheaval: a merger and acquisition by a much larger organization. Nascent theory research looks into 'developing insight about a novel or unusual phenomenon" (Edmondson & McManus, p.1162, 2007) and often calls for a grounded theory approach as "researchers do not know what issues may emerge from the data and so avoid hypothesizing specific relationships between variables" (Edmondson & McManus, p. 1162, 2007). The decision to focus on the acquisition of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream by the Unilever Corporation was undertaken because of Ben & Jerry's reputation of being a CSR pioneer and a CSR "authentic."

[8] Pedersen & Dobbin, 2006 and DiMaggio & Powell, 1983 show how isomorphism is associated with legitimacy.

Selection of Subjects & Data collection

To develop theory, theoretical sampling is appropriate: "Theoretical sampling means that cases are selected because they are particularly suitable for illuminating and extending relationships and logic among constructs" (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p.27). In terms of subject selection, the acquisition of Ben & Jerry's by Unilever is relevant as Ben & Jerry's is widely recognized as being a pioneer in the field of CSR.

To access top management's discourse, managerial expression of mission was operationalized by conducting a content analysis of CEO and Founders' Letters found in Ben & Jerry's annual Social and Environmental Reports from 1989 to 2007. Important to note is that managerial expression of SR Mission goes beyond a simple articulation of the company's mission statement. Longitudinal analysis of CEO Letters uncovered that while the company's mission statement was a central element of top managerial discourse, other topics emerged such as brand issues, restructurings, power dynamics between founders and professional managers, etc. Ben & Jerry's Mission statement is however a central pillar of the company's projected identity (see Appendix 1).

Data Analysis

To understand how the acquisition of Ben & Jerry's by Unilever impacted the Projected Identity of Ben & Jerry's, CEO/Founders' discourses as expressed in their annual letter within the Social & Environmental Report were analyzed. Initially, analysis was undertaken contrasting only the CEO Letters prior to the acquisition (Perry Odak) to the current Ben & Jerry's CEO Letters (Walt Freese). However, this provided a very limited understanding of how the acquisition had impacted Ben & Jerry's Projected Identity. It was soon realized that to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the acquisition's level of impact would require analyzing how the Projected Identity evolved prior to the acquisition. This led to a detailed longitudinal analysis of the CEO/Founders letter since the first years of the annual report's existence (1989) up until the present (2007). To analyze data, an inductive methodology was used to conduct a longitudinal content analysis year by year of each CEO/Founders' letter. As analysis progressed, various letters were compared to each other (first within one time period and then between different time periods), in order to find overarching umbrella themes.

Over time a classification into four main Eras emerged: (1) Founders Era; (2) Professional Managers' Era; (3) Yves Couette Era: Social Mission at the core again; (4) Walt Freese Era: from 3 part mission integration to globalization. Within each main Era, the company's mission (economic versus social) was found to be a central recurring theme over the years. This theme took different orientations depending on the Era. Under the Founders' Era, the three part mission was clearly articulated while the economic mission began to predominate during the Professional Managers' Era. After the acquisition, the Social Mission took centre stage.

Within each Era, subtle differences in the approach to the three part mission occurred. For instance, during the Professional Managers' Era, the economic part of the mission did not immediately dominate. During the Bob Holland years (the first professional manager hired as CEO after the Founders), the organization was clearly undergoing a period of turmoil and identity crisis—at this time the dominant theme which came up in the CEO Letters was the theme of 'family', leaving the three part mission theme as secondary.

As the study's analysis progressed, it was revealed that while the three part mission was an important leitmotiv throughout the years, other important themes emerged clearly under each CEO: 'family' (Bob Holland years); 'Employee voice' (Yves Couette); 'Brand spirit' (Walt Freese). For thoroughness, after having found these various themes, the CEO letters were analyzed a second time to find evidence of these themes for other time periods.

Longitudinal Frame

This study uncovered four distinct time periods of importance to understand significant phases of change in terms of Ben & Jerry's Socially Responsible Organizational Identity and more particularly for this paper, Ben & Jerry's 'Projected Identity'[9]:

(1) Founders' Era (1978-1993) : Ben Cohen & Jerry Greenfield

This Era corresponds to a 'post egoic' phase of the organization's evolving identity. The Projected Identity is fluid, dynamic, in a state of flux and there is a culture of reflection, learning and dissent. The orientation of the Projected Identity is mixed (both normative and economic) and the three elements of the mission are expressed (product, social and economic). Finally the main drivers of the Projected Identity are the Founders themselves (internal), the exponential growth of the firm (internal) and in 1993 the plunge of Ben & Jerry's stock market price (external).

[9] See appendix 2 for detailed summary chart.

(2) Professional Managers' Era (1994-1999) : Bob Holland & Perry Odak

This Era corresponds to a stabilization of the organization's evolving identity. The Projected Identity is labeled with particular characteristics for the first time under Bob Holland as being a 'family' organization. The orientation of the Projected Identity is mixed under Bob Holland (focus on all three aspect of the mission) and becomes entirely economic (focus solely on economic mission) under Perry Odak. The Founders' voice also progressively wanes to ultimately disappear under Perry Odak when the Chairman's Letter disappears (1999). The main driver of the Projected Identity is the transition to professional management (internal) and Ben & Jerry's increased notoriety and reputation as a CSR leader (external).

(3) Post Acquisition Phase I (2000-2004) : Yves Couette

This Era corresponds to a renewed emphasis on the social mission and on its link to the economic mission, leaving the product mission conspicuously absent. The Projected Identity is framed as both a process and an essence, displaying elements of change and attempts from the CEO at capturing Ben & Jerry's social mission. The orientation of the Projected Identity is mixed (both economic and normative) and the Founders' voice is no longer present. The main drivers of the Projected Identity are reorganization issues following the acquisition by Unilever (layoffs and closing of factory site at beginning of Mr. Couette's mandate and shifting supply chain relationships at the end of mandate).

(4) Post Acquisition Phase II (2005-2010): Walt Freese

This Era corresponds to a continued emphasis on the social mission and continued lack of focus on the product mission. The focus is on how the social mission is linked to the brand. The final year under Walt Freese shifts to focus heavily on the issue of Ben & Jerry's becoming a global brand. The Projected Identity continues to be framed as both a process ('social mission is a journey') and attempts to capture an essence ('brand spirit' and 'Ben & Jerry folks'). The orientation of the Projected Identity is mixed and Founder's voice reappears as Ben and Jerry (the people) have decided to play a role in the promotion of the brand again because the brand is moving in a direction which they approve of. The main drivers of the Projected Identity are globalization of the company and brand.

Question 1: Does Organizational identity change?

To understand how organizational identity changes in terms of the identity projected by the Founders, we observe three dimensions. First we look at the evolution of who is doing the speaking or who is projecting the firm's identity. Second, what are the speakers saying about 'who we are' and third, how the speakers are expressing organizational identity in terms of stability and change.

Who is doing the speaking?

Founder's vs. Professional Managers. The evolution of the Projected Identity of Ben & Jerry's reveals the gradual disappearance of the Founders' voice. Surprisingly this occurred prior to the acquisition and in an incremental way. By the time the last professional manager (pre-M&A) was leading the firm in 1997, the Founders' voice had completely disappeared. This finding puts into perspective the impact an acquisition may have on the organizational identity of a firm—contrary to much of the M&A literature which places heavy emphasis on the impact of an M&A on a target firm, the findings from this study reveal that events prior to the M&A such as firm growth issues may actually have more impact on the Projected Identity (in terms of Founders' discourse) than the acquisition itself.

TABLE 1[10]

	Founders Era pre 1993	**Founders Era Crisis year 1993**	**Professional Managers Phase I (Bob Holland)**	**Professional Managers Phase II (Perry Odak)**	**Post M&A Phase I (Yves Couette)**	**Post M&A Phase II (Walt Freese)**
Presence of Founders voice in Projected Identity	Founders Dominate Projected Identity	Founders continue to dominate	Founders voice still present in Founders' Letter	Founders voice disappears entirely through slow evolution	Founders voice completely absent	Founders are alluded to again as important

Related to the voice behind the Projected Identity is the notion of who drives organizational identity. The most significant identity change in terms of the drivers of the three part mission occurs during the switch over from Ben Cohen's leadership to professional management leadership. Under Ben's early leadership pre-acquisition, the driving force behind the three part mission is the Founders themselves—Ben does not allude to employees as an important driver of the mission. When professional managers take over, they attribute

[10] See appendix 2 for this and the other tables for a more detailed analysis of Projected Identity evolution.

the drivers of the firm's identity (and particularly its social mission) to employees themselves. The only exception occurs under Perry Odak who is so focused on the economic mission that 'employee voice' is not mentioned at all. Professional management seems to find it necessary for organizational identity to be carried and driven by someone other than themselves—in this case, employees—perhaps in an attempt to fill a leadership vacuum left by Ben and Jerry's absence.

TABLE 2

	Founders Era pre 1993	Founders Era Crisis year 1993	Professional Managers Phase I (Bob Holland)	Professional Managers Phase II (Perry Odak)	Post M&A Phase I (Yves Couette)	Post M&A Phase II (Walt Freese)
Attribution of Projected Identity Claims (which actor is said to be engine of socially responsible organizational identity)	Ben is engine of projected identity	Ben is the engine	Bob Holland attributes employees as engine of Ben & Jerry's identity	No mention of drivers of identity	CEO attributes employee spirit (2002) & managerial team (2004) as drivers	CEO attributes 'Ben & Jerry folk' & brand spirit as drivers

What are the speakers saying about 'who we are'?

Founder's orientation: Personal views of SROI. During the Founders Era, the Projected Identity of the Founders reveals responsible leadership (Maak, 2007, Pless, 2007) and authenticity (Harvey & al., 2006) as the Ben & Jerry's organization is a vehicle for their deeply held values and ethical principles. The Projected Identity of this time period exhibits characteristics of a 'post-egoic' organization/leadership: a firm with a fluid identity, a tolerance for self-reflection, learning and dissent. This period exemplifies a personal view of Socially Responsible Organizational Identity whereby the Founders use the firm as the means to express their values by constantly pushing the frontiers of CSR; the founders bubble with new ideas: the five to one salary ratio, the Vermont only public-stock offering, the crafting of the three part mission itself, working with socially responsible suppliers (Greyston Bakery), creating the Foundation, the eco-pint, and the list goes on. During this first period, it is CEOs Chico Lager Later and later Chuck Lacy who sustain the financial role while Ben Cohen fulfills the role of the social mission guru and driver.

Professional Management and Post Acquisition: Situational SROI. Under Professional Management, the Projected Identity becomes more 'contrived' and situation specific and no longer the direct expression of the leaders' values and ethical principles. The Projected Identity under Bob Holland (the first professional manager to take over after the Founders) reflects the theme of 'family' at a time when the organization is undergoing a crisis of leadership and loss of a family atmosphere—in evoking the 'family' theme, the CEO seems to attempt to solve an organizational issue in a reactive manner, abandoning the initial values and principles of the Founders.

Post-acquisition, the SROI continues to be more situational with leadership discourse projecting an identity that is 'required' (by investors and other stakeholders) and not necessarily one that is revealing of the leaders' personal values. A significant shift occurs under CEO Walt Freese when the Projected Identity continues to be situational and less personal than under the Founders' Era but where the CEO is able to resurrect Ben & Jerry's authenticity for the first time by re-engaging Ben and Jerry themselves (the people) and also able to introduce new authentic concepts such as 'MOM' (Managers of Mission) and other green and social initiatives. Such reconnection with the Founders' values allows the organization to display once again a 'post-egoic' Projected Identity for the first time since the mid 1990's.

These findings reveal that the organization began to change prior to the acquisition—the Projected Identity took on a more situational and contrived orientation with professional management. This entails that organizational growth and the switch over to professional managers perhaps had a greater impact on the Projected Identity of Ben & Jerry's than the acquisition itself. These findings also reveal a greater level of transparency in the pre-acquisition days as to the roles of key players (i.e.: Ben Cohen was responsible for the social mission while Chuck Lacy for the economic mission). The post acquisition Projected Identity expresses an identity which does not give voice to the greater Unilever Company and yet it is this greater entity which is responsible for the economic mission of the brand.

The pre-acquisition Projected identity is more authentic during its early phase in that internal organizational issues are revealed to the public—As the firm becomes increasingly professionalized, the Projected Identity takes on a more situational and contrived voice, perhaps as a signal that things are under control. The organization becomes more authentic again post acquisition under Walt Freese as he is not afraid to reveal weaknesses in the organization and his desire to take the social mission to the edge again.

TABLE 3

	Founders Era pre 1993	Founders Era Crisis year 1993	Professional Managers Phase I (Bob Holland)	Professional Managers Phase II (Perry Odak)	Post M&A Phase I (Yves Couette)	Post M&A Phase II (Walt Freese)
Thematic content of Projected Identity	Spiritual dimension of business (Ben Cohen) Economic performance (Chuck Lacy)	Organizational growth issues—both voices converge to a pragmatic stance on issue of need to go inward to solve organizational issues	-'Family' or employee voice; -Internal organizational issues; -Power struggles between new CEO and Founders	Economic mission central part of Projected Identity -issues of financial performance and later reputation building	Three part mission central; focus on social mission to detriment of product mission; focus on organizational lay offs and brand	Initial focus on integration of three part mission: later focus on social mission and its link to brand issues; final years: focus on globalization

How are speakers expressing organizational identity change?

Findings reveal that while the Projected Identity endures over time and through the acquisition in that the three part mission remains a pillar of the firm's identity, what does change is the way various leaders interpret and make their own this three part mission. Findings support Gioia & al. (2000) who argue that organizational identity is a socially constructed phenomenon made up of both stable and instable elements—these authors argue that identity (labels) may endure over time (in this case, labels are the three part mission) but that interpretation of these labels (social mission here) is what is subject to change. Thus findings support the idea that organizational identity can display both stability and change (Chreim, 2000).

Three part mission endurance. The three part mission reveals identity endurance in the sense that it has been central to the Projected Identity both pre and post acquisition. The succeeding periods show a continued focus of the CEO/Founder on the importance of the mission and on preserving this valuable mission which is at the core of the organization's identity.

Three part mission changes. The interpretation of the three part mission reveals continuous instability and change as various leaders attempt to understand and make their own the firm's three part mission. The interpretation of the three part mission shifts in three ways. First, leadership's conception of the three part mission evolves from a purely constructivist approach during the Founders Era (where the mission is seen as a work in progress and a continuous process of learning) to the Professional Managers Era (both pre and post acquisition) where the three part mission becomes an entity that displays both core essential characterisitics but is also viewed as a journey to be experienced.

Secondly, leaders' interpretation of the three part mission evolves in terms of which part of the mission they choose to focus on (social, economic or product), and thirdly in terms of the relationships between each aspect of the mission (how well the overall mission is integrated or not).

During the Founders' Era, the three part mission is attended to with a heavy focus on the social mission. The social mission is the 'raison d'être' of the organization as Ben Cohen has decided to make business a vehicle for social change and for his personal values. The Professional Managers' Era is more situational and changes from one leadership cycle to another. Under Bob Holland, the social mission is interpreted from a human resource perspective as the organization is undergoing leadership and HR growing pains. Under Perry Odak, as the CEO is preparing the sale of the organization, it is no surprise that the economic mission dominates. Post acquisition, the social mission plays a major role again as Unilever leadership attempts to reassure stakeholders (both internal and external) that the core of Ben & Jerry's has been preserved despite the acquisition.

Interestingly while the social and economic missions are continuously attended upon by leadership pre and post acquisition, the product mission wanes under the Professional Managers era to the point of almost disappearing in the post acquisition era. This may be because projecting a product mission identity is not a very differentiating discourse to have, whereas the social and economic mission are more innovative and paradoxical concepts to project to the public.

Finally, in terms of how well the three part mission is integrated by leadership, there is more visible change between each leadership cycle than there is between the pre and post acquisition organization. Pre-acquisition under Ben Cohen in the early years, there is an integrated three part mission followed by a period of intense economic focus (1993 when the stock price drops) and then a mixed focus under Bob Holland and finally a purely economic focus under Perry Odak. Post acquisition the three part mission has a mixed social/economic focus and the product mission is left to the periphery or altogether absent from the Projected Identity.

Overall, we can conclude that while the Projected Identity displays elements of continuity, it also changes based on the evolving interpretations of leaders. This supports the idea that official leadership discourse must seek a balance between giving the appearance of a stable but also fluid organization (Gioia, 1998).

TABLE 4

	Founders Era pre 1993	**Founders Era Crisis year 1993**	**Professional Managers Phase I (Bob Holland)**	**Professional Managers Phase II (Perry Odak)**	**Post M&A Phase I (Yves Couette)**	**Post M&A Phase II (Walt Freese)**
Nature of Projected Identity (stable or constructed nature)	Dynamic, process	Dynamic, process	Stable core concept (family) but also a process	Not a focus	Process and an essence: 'progressive values' and 'employee spirit'	Stable core concept ('brand spirit' and 'Ben & Jerry folk') but also a process: "social mission is a journey"

Question 2: Normative versus utilitarian orientation

Albert & Whetten (1985) proposed that over time normative organizations will become more utilitarian. This is attributed to the increase in the size of the firm, bureaucratization and routinization of charisma (Weber, 1968 cited in Albert & Whetten, 1985). Furthermore, young, normative organizations are generally founded upon the ideological vision of a charismatic leader (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p.278). Over time, professional managers are necessary to ensure that the entrepreneur's initial vision is incorporated into organizational routines.

TABLE 5

Projected Identity	**Founders Era pre 1993**	**Founders Era Crisis year 1993**	**Professional Managers Phase I (Bob Holland)**	**Professional Managers Phase II (Perry Odak)**	**Post M&A Phase I (Yves Couette)**	**Post M&A Phase II (Walt Freese)**
Normative vs. Instrumental	Mixed (normative: Ben; economic: Chuck Lacey)	Pragmatic with focus on economic	Mixed (both normative 'family' & economic: 'consumer franchise'	Economic only	Mixed	Mixed

Findings from our study indicate that the Projected Identity evolves from an explorative quest during the Founders' Era to a situational identity during the Professional Managers Era both pre and post-acquisition.

Overall it cannot be said that Ben & Jerry's Projected Identity is increasingly instrumental and economic (and less normative) as predicted by Albert & Whetten (1985) of normative organizations. This is perhaps because Ben & Jerry's was never a purely normative organization and that from the start it had a dual mission (actually triple: economic, social and product mission). While the longitudinal analysis undertaken reveals periods of greater emphasis on one aspect of the mission (economic under Perry Odak; more normative in early years under Ben Cohen), overall there is a focus on both aspects of the mission both pre and post acquisition. Interestingly the Projected Identity post acquisition has not lessened in the importance it devotes to the social mission—quite on the contrary the two CEOs post acquisition have focused primarily on the social mission, attempting to define it in relationship to the economic mission so as to better capture and institutionalize it into the processes of the firm. The economic mission also continues to take an important place in the Projected Identity discourse—but again the Projected Identity is not more instrumental than it was pre-acquisition. If one looks at the Projected Identity under the Perry Odak mandate, it was much more utilitarian than the Projected Identity under Walt Freese or even under Yves Couette. If one looks into the nature of the economic mission, the evolution from the pre acquisition days to the present does mark a shift from a focus on the notion of pure financial matters to a focus on more marketing and brand issues. This shift began under the Professional Managers' period with Bob Holland pre acquisition.

A significant shift in the Projected Identity orientation (normative vs. utilitarian) is its increasingly ambiguous nature. The current Projected Identity of Ben & Jerry's under Walt Freese is both more instrumental than in the past (brand becomes core identity attribute) and yet also more normative (explicit call for ethical motivation in social mission actions undertaken). The instrumental notion of brand has become central to the Projected Identity of the company and yet the Projected Identity also expresses an ethical motivation for social mission actions: "We do it because it's the right thing to do!" While the Projected Identity has always been somewhat ambiguous both pre and post acquisition, it takes on an even more ambiguous nature post acquisition. This may be because an increasingly dynamic and changing environment impels leadership to demonstrate its coping capabilities with such turbulence and thus tends to maintain ambiguity in the discourse projected (Gioia, 1998) so as to project both stability and change. Such ambiguous discourse serves to reassure stakeholders that despite adaptation to a changing environment (some level of change) the organizational identity will maintain sufficient stability. Ben & Jerry's will keep on being Ben & Jerry's just as it was under Founders' leadership. The increasingly ambiguous nature of the Projected Identity regarding its normative and utilitarian orientation also comes from the new governance structure itself. Since the acquisition by Unilever, Ben & Jerry's is now part of a large multi-national corporation that must answer to its stockholders who expect strong economic returns. At the same time, one of the reasons that Ben & Jerry's became such a successful company in the first place and the target of a takeover bid is precisely because it had differentiated itself through its triple mission (product, economic and social)—a difficult balancing act which defies the free market paradigm (see Friedman, 1970 for a virulent attack of the idea of corporate social responsibility going beyond economic responsibility).

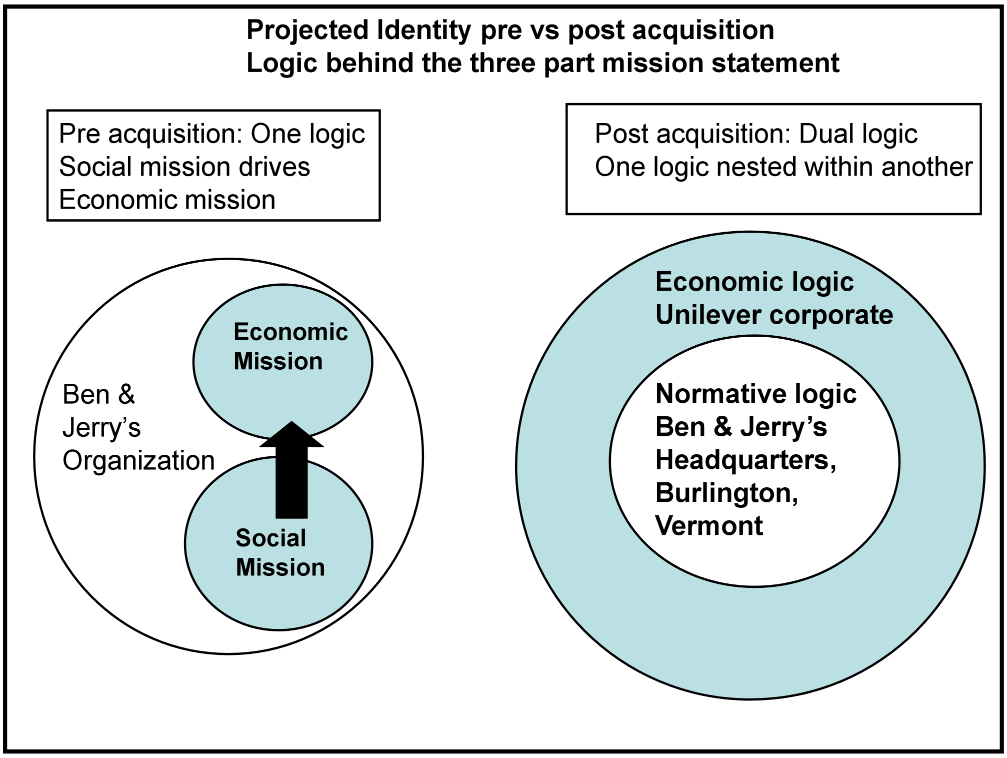
Redefining "Who we Are"

A significant change regarding the orientation of the triple mission is the way top managers articulate the relationship between the three terms. Pre-acquisition, the Founders attempted to convince stakeholders that the firm's social mission could drive the economic mission. This reflected a time when Ben & Jerry's was a CSRS pioneer and one of the only publicly traded firms with a social mission as part of its core identity. Post acquisition, the Projected Identity reveals an organization nested within a larger one where two spheres co-exist: the Ben & Jerry's sphere at the central headquarters in Burlington, Vermont and the Unilever sphere at a more abstract corporate level. Within the Ben & Jerry's sphere, social mission actions can be ethically driven because there is a cocoon whereby these very social mission actions have been acknowledged as vital to the identity of the Ben & Jerry's brand. These social mission actions are authentic and genuine and the Ben & Jerry's employees are social mission missionaries, convinced of their social role and participation in making the world a better place. This "ethical sphere" constituted by social mission missionary employees feeds the power of the brand at a more global level. It is precisely because employees believe in the goodness of what they are doing and the fact that the social mission marketing activities are genuine and not cynical that the brand can be authentic and powerful.

However these social mission endeavours do not exist in a vacuum—they exist because they feed the Ben & Jerry's brand which is itself one among many brands under the Unilever corporate umbrella. The motivations at the Unilever level are however not ethics based (or at least not solely ethics based) as Unilever answers to stockholders and must therefore have sound economic justifications for any of their social mission actions undertaken. The Projected Identity post acquisition (and particularly recently) reveals two different logics, nested within each other. A pure ethical logic (Ben & Jerry's headquarters in Vermont) nested within a more economic and global logic (Unilever corporate). This perhaps marks the appearance of a new organizational identity form that may be increasingly present in the future as companies become part of global corporations yet wish to maintain their authenticity within this global context.

The above discussion can be summed up in the following diagram (figure 1):

FIGURE 1



Theoretical Implications

Five theoretical implications can be drawn based upon the above analysis. The first theoretical implication is the natural life cycle approach to the growth of the firm. Evolving from a small Founders' led business to a larger professionally managed entity, a firm's identity needs to be sustained by the efforts of professional managers in order to 'routinize charisma' (Weber cited in Albert & Whetten, 1985). This 'routinization of charisma' in the

Ben & Jerry's case translates into the attempts by the various CEOs to understand, capture and make the social mission their own. This process is evident in all periods identified above but does seem to intensify post-acquisition.

The second theoretical implication to understand the drivers of Ben & Jerry's Projected Identity is the nature of CEO character or CEO competencies. Hambrick & Mason (1984, p.193) have argued that "...organizational outcomes are...reflections of the values and cognitive bases of powerful actors in the organization." Studies of top management teams have identified the importance of CEO character and emotions in influencing firm strategy (Kisfalvi & Pitcher, 2003). In the Ben & Jerry's case, it is clear that the character of each leader/CEO has played a role in shaping the organization's strategy and the Projected Identity. Ben Cohen's desire to change the world shaped his firm's strategy and in turn its Projected Identity. During Ben's leadership period, the Projected Identity reveals a search for meaning as Ben is trying to invent a new way to conduct business. Ben Cohen also had no formal management training. He had great intuitions and is considered by some to be a marketing genius but he did not know how to balance his own check book so that financial issues escaped him. This aspect of his competencies is also reflected in the Projected Identity as Ben relegates financial matters to Chuck Lacy, keeping the social mission talk for himself.

The CEOs who followed, Bob Holland, Perry Odak, Yves Couette and finally Walt Freese have each had very different character traits and personalities which have also played a role in shaping the Projected Identity. The point here is not to delve into psychoanalysis of each CEO's character but simply to note that top management character, competencies and career experience can play a role in shaping a firm's identity and more specifically, it's Projected Identity. Authors have argued that career experience can shape top managerial actions (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Taking a look at each CEO/leader, one finds that career experience plays a key role in orienting each leader's perspectives, actions and in turn the Projected Identity of the firm. Ben Cohen had eclectic career experiences prior to entering Ben & Jerry's—he had been a potter, a social worker, a college drop out. Bob Holland had worked for McKinsey as a consultant. Perry Odak had worked for an arms manufacturer and was known as a firm turnaround specialist. Yves Couette had spent his entire career at Unilever. Finally, Walt Freese had worked for other social businesses prior to entering Ben & Jerry's.

A third influence of the Projected Identity is internal organizational issues. Under Bob Holland's mandate, the organization was under tension as the transition to new leadership was occurring. This was reflected in a Projected Identity which tried to present an ideal vision of the organization as a 'family'—quite the opposite of what was actually going on. When layoffs occurred under Yves Couette, the Projected Identity honed in on the extraordinary spirit of Ben & Jerry's employees as an integral part of the firm. While painful internal organizational issues tend to be transformed into positives by the CEO, they nonetheless do appear as shapers of the Projected Identity.

A fourth influence is external marketplace business challenges. Under Ben Cohen, this occurred in 1993 when the market sanctioned Ben & Jerry's stock price for the first time. As a result of this external signal, the Projected Identity looked inward, trying to find ways to improve the organization and Ben Cohen no longer spoke of interconnectedness and lofty ideals, focusing instead on the importance of the three part mission. Under Perry Odak, marketplace business challenges appeared again as the pressure from competitors intensified, orienting a strategy (and a Projected Identity) focused almost exclusively on the financial mission.

M&A and identity

Finally, we arrive at the influence of the M&A itself on the Projected Identity. While the findings from the longitudinal analysis of CEO/Founders' discourse reveal that the change over from the Founders to professional management was a more significant turning point than the acquisition itself in terms of the evolution of Ben & Jerry's Projected Identity, the acquisition did have a strong influence on the expression of the three part mission.

First, there is a significant shift in the expression of the product mission pre and post acquisition. Although the product mission discourse waned during the professional managers' era, it nearly disappears from post acquisition CEO Letters. The "loss of product 'talk'" post acquisition can be explained by several factors. Firstly, Unilever is a multinational that manages brands, not necessarily businesses, which implies primacy of marketing/branding over other issues (product itself). Secondly, towards the end of Yves Couette's mandate, the Ben & Jerry's factory was splintered away from the control of Ben & Jerry's headquarters to be controlled directly by Unilever supply chain. This shift in reporting relationship is also reflected in the Projected Identity. Finally, Unilever's focus on improving operating margins may have impacted the quality of the product (although this may have begun during the Perry Odak years when the financial mission took primacy) thus creating a sense of shame or at least the unwillingness to discuss such issues in the annual reports.

Second, the acquisition seems to have had a significant impact on social mission messaging. While the social mission was present in CEO discourse pre-acquisition (to a bigger extent under Ben Cohen and to a lesser extent under Perry Odak), there is an intensification of the attention given to the social mission post-acquisition. This heightened focus is true both for Yves Couette and for Walt Freese who both place the social mission as a centre piece of their discourse. While both CEOs are authentic when they speak about the social mission of Ben & Jerry's (Yves Couette revealed during an interview that his time at Ben & Jerry's had a profound influence on him and Walt Freese explained that working for Ben & Jerry's was practically a calling), the intensification of their social mission discourse as expressed in the Projected Identity also points to Unilever's desire to capture the non-tangible asset it has acquired: a Socially Responsible Organizational Identity. Post acquisition discourse is very focused on capturing and capitalizing upon this non-tangible asset, perhaps indicating an increasing commercialization of Corporate Social Responsibility

Again, one must highlight the importance of situational organizational identity present in managerial discourse both pre and post acquisition. While both Yves Couette and Walt Freese focus their discourse on the social mission, it is important to note that the different functions of each CEO impacts the way they interpret and project the social mission. Yves Couette is given by Unilever the difficult task of closing a manufacturing plant and bringing Ben & Jerry's profitability up to Unilever standards while Walt Freese's role is to help re-build the company's culture back to its original authenticity from the Founders' Era. This explains why the Projected Identity under Walt Freese begins to look more like the original Founders' Identity under Ben Cohen: the identity of a responsible (Maak, 2007; Pless, 2007) and authentic leadership organization.

Managerial Implications

The following managerial implications can be drawn based on this study's findings. The attempt by acquiring companies to capture a firm's Socially Responsible Organizational Identity (SROI) may be illusory as such identity is both made up of fixed and dynamic elements. As SROI is a constantly evolving essence, preserving it means actively engaging in the dynamic action of embedding the social mission into the very organizational routines and processes of the organization. Indeed our findings support recent suggestions given by scholars to acquiring companies to 'not homogenize [the target firm] into your organizational systems, structures and practices' (Austin & Leonard, 2008). The idea is instead for the acquiring company to focus on embedding the social icon's processes into its own processes to engage in mutual learning. Such a process is not about capturing but rather about mutual learning. Indeed if acquiring companies want to preserve the social icons they have acquired, they must engage in a posture of active learning and organizational wisdom (Brown & Starkey, 2000). Acquiring firms may take time to learn but in the Ben & Jerry's/Unilever case, despite a period of significant culture clash when Ben & Jerry's reported directly to Unilever's North American Ice Cream Division, Unilever has shown recent signs that it is now willing to learn from Ben & Jerry's, thus making it potentially a transformative acquisition (Mirvis, 2008).

This study's findings also reveal that the growth of the firm may be the most important factor which hinders a firm's SROI, and not necessarily a major change event such as an M&A. This implies that managers seeking to preserve or develop a firm with a SROI must be vigilant with regards to how they grow, both in terms of firm size and governance structure. As Waddock (2008) argues, the growth paradigm may need to be revisited as it is no longer appropriate in a context of diminishing natural resources. This calls for present and future social entrepreneurs to "learn whatever lessons of independence and self-regulation...to be able to sustain their multiple bottom line approaches indefinitely" (Waddock, 2008, p.108).

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APPENDIX 1

Ben & Jerry's Official Three Part Mission Statement

(Source: Ben & Jerry's website)

Product Mission: To make, distribute and sell the finest quality all natural ice cream and euphoric concoctions with a continued commitment to incorporating wholesome, natural ingredients and promoting business practices that respect the Earth and the Environment.

Economic Mission: To operate the Company on a sustainable financial basis of profitable growth, increasing value for our stakeholders and expanding opportunities for development and career growth for our employees.

Social Mission: To operate the company in a way that actively recognizes the central role that business plays in society by initiating innovative ways to improve the quality of life locally, nationally and internationally.

APPENDIX 2

Summary of Projected Identity evolution pre and post acquisition and the influencers of change

	Founders Era pre 1993	**Founders Era Crisis year 1993**	**Professional Managers Phase I (Bob Holland)**	**Professional Managers Phase II (Perry Odak)**	**Post M&A Phase I (Yves Couette)**	**Post M&A Phase II (Walt Freese)**
Thematic content of Projected Identity **(3 part mission, employee voice, organizational events..)**	Spiritual dimension of business (Ben Cohen) Economic performance (Chuck Lacy)	Organizational growth issues is addressed—both voices converge to a pragmatic stance on issue of need to go inward to solve organizational issues	-'Family' or employee voice; -Internal organizational issues; -Power struggles between new CEO and Founders	Economic mission central part of Projected Identity -issues of financial performance and later reputation building	Three part mission central part of Projected Identity; heavy focus on relationship between three part mission; heavy focus on social mission to detriment of product mission; focus on organizational lay offs and brand	Initial focus on integration of three part mission: later focus on social mission and its link to brand issues; final years: focus on globalization
Presence of Founders voice in Projected Identity	Founders Dominate Projected Identity (Founders Letter placed before CEO Letter)	Founders continue to dominate Projected Identity (Founders Letter)	Founders voice still present in Founders' Letter	Founders voice disappears entirely through slow evolution (in 1997, Founders' letter placed after CEO Letter in annual report; 1998, Ben's signature disappears	Founders voice completely absent	Founders are alluded to again as important for Ben & Jerry's to connect to its founding identity in the context of

				entirely; 1999: Chairman's Letter disappears altogether)		globalization
Nature of Projected Identity (stability or process approach to social mission)	Dynamic, process	Dynamic, process	Stable core concept (family) but also a process	Not a focus	Process and an essence: 'progressive values' and 'employee spirit'	Stable core concept ('brand spirit' and 'Ben & Jerry folk') but also a process: "social mission is a journey"
Normative vs. Economic orientation of Projected Identity	Mixed (normative: Ben; economic: Chuck Lacey)	Pragmatic with focus on economic	Mixed (both normative 'family' and economic: 'consumer franchise'	Economic only	Mixed	Mixed
Attribution of Projected Identity Claims (which actor is said to be engine of socially responsible organizational identity)	Ben is engine of projected identity	Ben is the engine	Bob Holland attributes employees as engine of Ben & Jerry's identity	No mention of drivers of identity	CEO attributes employee spirit (2002) and managerial team (2004) as engine of projected identity	CEO attributes 'Ben & Jerry folk' and brand spirit as engines Ben & Jerry's identity
Internal change events (potential influencers of Projected Identity change)	Exponential growth of the firm	Organizational growth stalls for first time	Transition to professional management for first time; Internal organizational issues; leadership issues	Firm continues exponential growth—potentially CEO is prepping the firm for an acquisition	Beginning of mandate: substantial lay-offs at headquarters and closing of one factory. Towards end of Mr. Couette's mandate: supply chain reports to Unilever's North American Ice Cream	Global expansion of Ben & Jerry's; Towards end of Walt Freese's mandate, NAIC is dismantled and Ben & Jerry's now reports to Unilever corporate;
External change events (Potential influencers of Projected Identity change)		Negative market signal: Ben & Jerry's stock market price plunges		Reputation becomes key: Ben & Jerry's named #1 for Social Responsibility in Wall Street Journal poll in 1999 (up from #20 in 1998)	Unilever acquires Ben & Jerry's	Pressure from NGOs for Ben & Jerry's to use cage free eggs Ben & Jerry agree to act as advocates for social mission campaigns for the company again