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Article

Enriching the Typology of Social Entrepreneurs: The Transnational Dimension

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Abstract: Previous researchers developed a comprehensive typology for categorizing social entrepreneurship; however, their framework does not fully address some emerging forms. This paper offers a critical addition to their model by introducing the "transnational pragmatist", a type of social entrepreneur with a grassroots background who creates a community-centric social enterprise in a foreign context. Through insights gained from interviews with social entrepreneurs, this paper identifies and defines the transnational pragmatist as a distinct category that fills a significant gap in Abebe's framework. Our contribution broadens the typology to better capture smaller for-profit and nonprofit ventures operating transnationally, enhancing the model's relevance for international social entrepreneurs from humble origins.

Keywords: social enterprise; international social entrepreneurship; transnational entrepreneurship; transnational pragmatist; typology of social entrepreneurs

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1. Introduction and Background

Social enterprises (SEs) are organizations that create social value through innovative, market-based approaches (Zahra et al. 2009), contributing to social change and economic development worldwide (Chell et al. 2016). Extensive research in social entrepreneurship has explored the motivations for initiating social ventures, the factors influencing these decisions, and the frameworks for classifying various types of social enterprises (Bacq and Janssen 2011; Miller et al. 2012; Saebi et al. 2018; Schlaegel and Koenig 2014; Tucker et al. 2019; Yitshaki and Kropp 2016; Rwehumbiza and Hyun 2024; Claeyé et al. 2022). Abebe et al. (2020) created a typology of social entrepreneurs that makes a major contribution to organizing the diversity of social venture creators. By applying this model to a naturally occurring set of social entrepreneurs, we identified a possible new category to add to the Abebe et al. model.

Abebe et al. (2020) introduced a detailed typology that categorizes a broadly collected set of social entrepreneurs gathered from major organizations (e.g., Ashoka, Schwab, etc.) and entrepreneur lists into four groups based on their experiences and approaches to social change: seasoned champions, local pragmatists, corporate veterans, and social activists (see Table 1). They contend that the success and impact of a venture are heavily influenced by the entrepreneur's background, particularly their dedication to activism and business acumen. However, Abebe et al.'s (2020) framework has notable limitations, especially in its treatment of the global aspects of social entrepreneurship. The framework predominantly concentrates on individual and local scales and does not sufficiently capture the global dimension of social entrepreneurship. Addressing this oversight is crucial for deepening our understanding of how social ventures can effectively expand across borders.

Table 1. Adapted typology of social entrepreneurs by life experiences and scope of engagement.

		Entrepreneur's Life and Career Experiences	
		Disillusioned Careerists	**Grassroots Actors**
Scope of Entrepreneur Social Engagement	Problem focused (localized)	**Seasoned Champions:** Entrepreneurs with extensive career experience in non-business/corporate positions (e.g., public/government, not for profit) aspiring to pursue personally meaningful social ventures, often grappling with a lack of fulfillment in their careers.	**Local Pragmatists:** Entrepreneurs concerned with socioeconomic and environmental issues around their local communities without extensive formal career experience.
	Cause based (large scale)	**Corporate Veterans:** Entrepreneurs with extensive corporate/business experience who view social ventures as avenues of "giving back" to society for personal fulfillment. They are eager to apply their business expertise to launching and managing successful social ventures.	**Social Activists:** Entrepreneurs displaying strong passion for broader social and environmental challenges without extensive business or public sector career experience. They view social ventures as a means to achieve social objectives.

Source: adapted from Abebe et al. (2020).

This paper introduces a new category of social entrepreneur termed "transnational pragmatists". This classification builds upon the existing typology and variables established by Abebe et al. (2020), offering a refined perspective on social entrepreneurship's diverse and dynamic landscape, particularly in its cross-border dimensions. By expanding the framework, our study aims to build on an existing theoretical framework and deepen our understanding of social entrepreneurs operating across different contexts.

This paper begins by reviewing the typology of Abebe et al. (2020) and the relevant literature on international social entrepreneurship. We then provide an overview of our preliminary interview findings. Following this, we introduce our enhanced typology, supported by specific propositions. The paper concludes with an examination of its limitations and overarching findings.

1.1. Abebe et al.'s (2020) Typology

Abebe et al. (2020) categorize the life and career experiences of some social entrepreneurs as either "disillusioned careerists" or "grassroots actors" and define the scope of social engagement as either "localized" or "large scale". Disillusioned careerists are typically individuals with extensive experience in business or the public sector, often at managerial or leadership levels. Despite achieving high levels of success and financial security, they leave their careers seeking greater fulfillment in social or environmental causes. Conversely, grassroots actors are deeply passionate about social or environmental issues but lack extensive professional career experience. The authors note that this group includes "stay-at-home mothers, young college graduates (or dropouts) and longtime community activists" (Abebe et al. 2020, p. 514). Furthermore, the scope of social engagement can be problem focused (localized) or cause based (large scale). Missions with a localized scope address problems pertinent to the social entrepreneur's "immediate environment" (Abebe et al. 2020, p. 514), while organizations with a cause-based, large-scale scope aim to address issues across socioeconomic and demographic spectrums, focusing on scalability and broad impact (Abebe et al. 2020). Based on these distinctions, social entrepreneur groups are categorized as seasoned champions, local pragmatists, corporate veterans, and social activists (see Table 1).

While Abebe et al. (2020) do not specify the international dimension of SEs, they identify the localized versus large-scale impacts within the scope of social engagement. We can assume that those who are identified as having a localized scope (local pragmatists and

seasoned champions) would not venture beyond national boundaries, as this would be beyond the SE's immediate environment.

1.2. International Social Entrepreneurship: Literature Review

1.2.1. Transnational Entrepreneurs and Social Entrepreneurship

In their seminal work, Drori et al. (2009) delineate the concept of transnational entrepreneurs, exemplified by migrant entrepreneurs who establish business ventures across borders. These entrepreneurs maintain business connections between their country of origin and their adopted countries, thus straddling two distinct geographies. Koehne et al. (2022) explored the power dynamics of transnational social entrepreneurs, finding that to enhance their impact, they should minimize the social distance between themselves and members of the local communities. Most of the transnational social entrepreneurs interviewed by these authors were highly educated and had significant professional experience. Also studying transnational social entrepreneurs, Mafico et al. (2024) determined the transnational social entrepreneur's social class may change across borders, and this can be used as an advantage.

1.2.2. Motivations for Internationalization

Other researchers have identified motivations for international social entrepreneurs, such as transformative experiences that influenced a strong desire to create social change (Ascencio et al. 2022), internationalization out of concern for the well-being of others around the world (Zahra et al. 2008), and lived experiences that created internationalization intentions (Kundu and Katz 2003). Zahra et al. (2009) identify various types of social entrepreneurs, including social bricoleurs, who have a small local scope, social constructionists, who may have a small or large and local or international scope designed to fill institutional voids, and social engineers, who tackle large-scale problems. Similarly, Santos (2012) states that while an SE may have begun in a small, local context, upon seeing the applicability to other locations, a "global industry" is born, such as the case of the microfinance industry.

1.2.3. Characteristics and Tendencies Toward Internationalization

While few papers have investigated the internationalization of SEs, some have attempted to identify tendencies to internationalize based on SE characteristics or funding sources (e.g., De Beule et al. 2023). De Beule et al. (2023) evaluate the internationalization of SEs by identifying the business model characteristics of Indian SEs. They find that SEs whose clients and beneficiaries are different groups and who have no need for additional activities to realize the value of the product/service are more likely to internationalize. Additionally, the authors identify differences in beneficiaries, those who benefit from social activities, clients, or those who pay for the SE's products and services from its commercial activities (Benmamoun et al. 2021). De Beule et al. (2023) find that when an SE has these two distinct groups with no overlap and no need for additional activities to create value, those SEs are more likely to internationalize. Others have drawn conclusions about the scope of the organization without explicitly identifying whether it is global or not based on founder-related characteristics (Abebe et al. 2020).

1.2.4. Organizational Form and Internationalization

Some research examined SEs' internationalization through the lens of organization form. For instance, Sirisena and Shneor (2018) found that nonprofit SEs tend to internationalize to areas with medium levels of institutional strength and avoid areas with extremely dysfunctional institutions. Genç (2016) looked at the use of alliances and partnerships to assist in the nonprofit internationalization process. Others investigated nonprofit SEs' use of Internet communication and networking platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) along with crowdfunding sites to communicate and source funding internationally (Gálvez-Rodriguez et al. 2014; Schwienbacher and Larralde 2012). VanSandt et al. (2009)

pointed out that SEs face a natural limit to geographic growth because they do not have the profits to support substantial growth as for-profit companies do.

1.2.5. The Role of the Government in Internationalization

Some recent works in business journals have focused on the role of the government (ex., Veronica et al. 2020). Veronica et al. (2020) examined the interplay between the role of international social entrepreneurs and government support in emerging markets. The study focuses on social small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in China. Using behavioral theory dimensions of prevalence, relevance, urgency, accessibility, and radicalness, Veronica et al. (2020) propose that social SMEs in emerging markets respond to (1) the prevalent social problems when local governments support them, (2) the urgency of the social problems, and (3) the relevance of the entrepreneurs' pro-social motivations for international growth. According to Veronica et al. (2020), greater and more efficient support from local governments is paramount for the emergence of international SEs. International social SMEs will likely attempt to implement radical solutions without government support.

1.2.6. Scope of Social Impact and Internationalization Potential

While Abebe et al. (2020) do not specify the international dimension of SEs, they identify the localized versus large-scale impacts within the scope of social engagement. We can assume that those who are identified as having a localized scope would not venture beyond national boundaries, as this would be beyond the SE's immediate environment. This is also consistent with Zahra et al.'s (2009) conceptualization of social bricoleurs who have a small scale and scope and respond to local needs. Thus, we can infer that local pragmatists and seasoned champions would remain in a local (domestic) market. Alternatively, corporate veterans and social activists tackle large-scale problems, potentially extending their impact globally, and may be in line with Zahra et al.'s (2009) conceptualization of social engineers or social constructionists.

Table 2 organizes the existing literature using Abebe et al.'s (2020) typology. By doing so, we relate the previous literature to variables demonstrating important findings within the SE internationalization stream. These include aspects of the underlying business model, such as the use of commercial activities, the integration of clients and beneficiaries, conditions for higher social impact and expansion, and the reach of the resulting social ventures. We propose a distinct group of social entrepreneurs that diverges from conventional classifications. These entrepreneurs, with varied backgrounds and grassroots origins, address local challenges with a global outlook. The subsequent section discusses preliminary interview findings that refine this typology.

Table 2. Typology of social entrepreneurs adapted from Abebe et al. (2020).

	Seasoned Champions	**Corporate Veterans**	**Local Pragmatists**	**Social Activists**
Scale	Local (Abebe et al. 2020)	Large scale (Abebe et al. 2020; Zahra et al. 2009)	Local (Abebe et al. 2020; Zahra et al. 2009)	Large scale (Abebe et al. 2020)
Life/career experiences	Extensive (Abebe et al. 2020; Mafico et al. 2024)	Extensive (Abebe et al. 2020; Mafico et al. 2024)	Minimal (Abebe et al. 2020; Mafico et al. 2024)	Minimal (Abebe et al. 2020; Mafico et al. 2024)
Business model commercial activities	No commercial activities (De Beule et al. 2023);	Commercial activities (De Beule et al. 2023; Erpf et al. 2019); no added activities (De Beule et al. 2023)	No commercial activities (De Beule et al. 2023)	Commercial activities (De Beule et al. 2023; Erpf et al. 2019); no added activities (De Beule et al. 2023)
Client–beneficiary integration	Integration of clients and beneficiaries (De Beule et al. 2023)	Different clients snd beneficiaries (De Beule et al. 2023);	Integration of clients and beneficiaries (De Beule et al. 2023)	Different clients and beneficiaries (De Beule et al. 2023)

Table 2. *Cont.*

	Seasoned Champions	Corporate Veterans	Local Pragmatists	Social Activists
Expansion and growth		Scalability (Santos 2012); government support (Veronica et al. 2020); international partners (Veronica et al. 2020)		Scalability (Santos 2012); international partners (Veronica et al. 2020)
Social impact	Added activities needed (De Beule et al. 2023); social service providers (Erpf et al. 2019)		Added activities needed (De Beule et al. 2023); social service providers (Erpf et al. 2019)	
Reach		International/global (De Beule et al. 2023; Erpf et al. 2019; Mafico et al. 2024)	Domestic	International/global (De Beule et al. 2023; Erpf et al. 2019; Mafico et al. 2024)

2. Method

Our research initially involved conducting interviews to investigate the internationalization of social entrepreneurship. The main research question guiding this study arose from a gap identified in the existing models. Specifically, we found that the framework provided by Abebe et al. (2020), which categorizes social entrepreneurs, does not include a significant category for what we refer to as "transnational pragmatists". This group of social entrepreneurs employs a distinct transnational approach that does not align with the current typology. After identifying this gap, we formulated our core research question: What are the defining characteristics of transnational pragmatists in the field of social entrepreneurship, and how can their inclusion improve existing models? To answer this question, we revisited our previously collected data, which included nine contacted social entrepreneurs, six of whom agreed to participate in in-depth interviews. During our analysis, we examined whether our cases aligned with the categories in the Abebe model, ultimately discovering that several did not fit (three failed to align with the Abebe categorization). This discrepancy, wherein a model fails to accommodate nearly half of the cases within a limited sample, is noteworthy. Consequently, we determined that more investigation was necessary. Thus, by leveraging a dataset originally collected for another inquiry, we conducted a fresh analysis within the Abebe framework.

We interviewed six social entrepreneurs to compare the backgrounds and motivations of domestic and international SEs. The interviewees were identified through the snowball sampling method using the author's immediate community networks to facilitate in-person interviews. While we acknowledge the potential selection bias with this approach, we found it necessary to reach hard-to-access social entrepreneurs. Furthermore, this potential bias does not influence the findings of the research regarding a new type of social entrepreneur. The interviewees were selected based on their domestic or international focus. The interviewees were contacted via email or mobile messenger app, and interviews were conducted in person, by phone, or via Skype from July to August 2019. Half of the sample was domestic and half international, consisting of two for-profit and four nonprofit SEs. The managers were evenly split by gender, being aged mid-twenties to early sixties. The organizations varied in age and sector, including healthcare, immigrant assistance, diverse books, clean water, conservation, and faith-based university student formation (see Table 3 for sample details). Table 3 shows variation in several dimensions of experience and organizational characteristics, which would increase the chance of finding variation in model attribution. The results of the analysis of these individuals are given below and summarized in Table 4.

Table 3. Descriptive information of interviewees.

	Sarah *	Jenn	Tom	Carlos	Linda	Adela
Background	Growing up in NYC, various positions of employment	High school student, church mission trip	Jesuit education, worked with marginalized communities	Jesuit education, former business owner, son of Cuban immigrants	College education, daughter of Japanese immigrant	Daughter of Syrian immigrants, ostracized as a child
Mission	Conservation	Water	Student development, accompaniment of the poor	Health care	Immigrants and refugees	Diverse books
Type of enterprise(s)	2 nonprofits, 1 for profit	Nonprofit, for profit	Nonprofit	Nonprofit	Nonprofit	For profit
Year founded	2005, 2018	2010, 2015	1999	2010	1919	2015
Country of operations	Guyana	Panama, Belize, Haiti, Dominican Republic	El Salvador	USA	USA	USA

* Names have been changed for anonymity.

Table 4. Interview results according to Abebe typology.

Name	Life/Career Experience	Scope	Abebe Classification	Quote
Carlos	Extensive	Localized	Seasoned champion	"And so it gives me great satisfaction to now have a role to play here in people who's, who the basic elements of their story are very much like my family's story".
Linda	Limited	Localized	Local pragmatist	". . .through a personal observation of my mother and her adjustment process, I came to understand some of the challenges that people of other linguistic and cultural backgrounds have, in terms of being able to make a successful adjustment to America".
Adela	Limited	Large scale	Social activist	"I was pregnant with my first child, and I was like, 'Listen, I don't want her to not have access to the same diverse stories that I didn't.'"
Sarah	Limited	International, community centric	N/A	"Well, no, cloning doesn't work. And what works in Yupukari is not going to work in Kotoka".
Jenn	Limited	International, community centric	N/A	"But I went to this community and just saw firsthand the need, and was like, 'I can't. I can't leave this place and not do something about it".
Tom	Limited	International, community centric	N/A	"I was in, at Fairfield, when the Jesuits were killed, and you know, remember that time significantly at all of our Jesuit schools, it was a real big deal. And you know, they continue to inspire those of us connected with Jesuit higher education. They continue to inspire and, kind of, animate what we're trying to do. So I think, you know. . . so Central America, in some way, is kind of called, called us, you know, in our in our work and stuff".

Following grounded theory guidelines (Strauss and Corbin 1998), the questions were open ended and unstructured to encourage detailed responses. The sample questions included inquiries about decisions to become international and key influences on the entrepreneur and organization. A complete list of the questions can be found in Appendix A. After the interview, the researcher summarized the key points, checked for missing infor-

mation, and invited additional comments (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). The recordings were transcribed and provided to the participants for review.

Transcription was conducted using NVivo's service, followed by manual corrections by the researcher to ensure accuracy. The interviews were grouped by internationalization and organization type for comparative analysis. The grounded theory analysis followed an iterative data analysis spiral, involving open, axial, and selective coding to identify patterns and relationships. Validity was ensured through extensive documentation and peer review.

In contextualizing our findings, we draw comparisons with similar studies that examine the diverse characteristics of social entrepreneurs with transnational dimensions, such as those of Koehne et al. (2022) and Mafico et al. (2024). Unlike these studies, however, our focus highlights grassroots social entrepreneurs who localize their ventures in foreign settings: a profile that aligns with, but also extends, current scholarship.

3. Results

Our findings reveal a clear alignment between our domestic interviewees and the typology proposed by Abebe et al. (2020). However, this alignment does not extend to our international interviewees, where discrepancies emerge. In the subsequent sections, we describe each interviewee and identify the typological category from Abebe et al. (2020) that best matches their profile. These categorizations and supporting quotations from the interviews are also detailed in Table 4. We start with the profiles of the three domestic interviewees, followed by the three international interviewees.

3.1. Domestic

3.1.1. Carlos—Seasoned Champion (Abebe et al. 2020)

Carlos leads a nonprofit healthcare facility dedicated to serving the local foreign-born community. His parents immigrated from Cuba in the 1950s, instilling in him a profound sense of identity and purpose. Shaped also by a Jesuit education spanning from high school to his master's degree, Carlos embodies principles of compassion and social responsibility. Prior to his current role, Carlos enjoyed a successful fifteen-year tenure as a business owner and held esteemed leadership positions within local nonprofit organizations. Over the past eight years, Carlos has steered the social enterprise to remarkable success, filling a critical void within the community and establishing partnerships with diverse stakeholders, including fellow nonprofits and corporations in the region. The SE has a mission with a localized scope, as the healthcare facility serves only the local community. Carlos' background best aligns with a "disillusioned careerist" with his fifteen years as a former business owner and nonprofit leader. Thus, according to the Abebe typology, Carlos represents a *seasoned champion*.

3.1.2. Adela—Social Activist (Abebe et al. 2020)

Adela, born to Syrian immigrant parents, was raised in a quaint Midwestern town. Her formative years were shaped by her family's Syrian culture and Islamic religion and the feelings of being ostracized in school growing up. Now in her thirties with a master's degree and as a mother of two young children, her journey through motherhood inspired her to establish a for-profit company dedicated to curating diverse literature particularly tailored for Muslim families.

The beginning of the organization stems from Adela's upbringing, where her family's distinct language, attire, and faith set them apart within their community, a reality she intensely felt growing up. Fueled by a shared vision with a friend, they embarked on the venture, driven by the aspiration to provide their children with books where they could find reflections of themselves in the characters, something that she did not have as a child. The SE's mission of providing access to diverse books has a large-scale scope, supported by its online commercial platform, whereby anyone within the country could order books. Adela does not have extensive corporate experience or other leadership experience despite many years of working in nonprofits. The issue that inspired this SE was a personally

meaningful issue that she had a strong passion for and sense of urgency with her growing family; thus, her background best aligns within the category of grassroots actor. This SE was a personally meaningful issue that she felt passionate about but had the potential for a large-scale scope. Thus, in the Abebe typology, Adela fits the *social activist* category.

3.1.3. Linda—Local Pragmatist (Abebe et al. 2020)

Linda leads a nonprofit dedicated to aiding immigrants and refugees in their integration into local communities, fostering inclusivity and offering vital resources. Born to a Japanese immigrant mother and an American father, Linda's journey with the organization commenced fresh out of college and spanned over four decades. Over the years, Linda has cultivated numerous community partnerships. Despite her extensive tenure in managing the organization, she maintains a steadfast focus on serving the local community, with no aspirations for international expansion. Thus, this SE's mission has a localized scope. Prior to joining the nonprofit, Linda did not have professional career experience but did have longtime local community involvement, indicating that her background best aligns with a "grassroots actor". Thus, according to the Abebe et al. (2020) typology, Linda represents a *local pragmatist*.

3.2. International

3.2.1. Sarah—Emergent Transnational Pragmatist

Sarah was raised in the culturally and socially diverse landscape of 1960s New York, an experience that deeply shaped her social awareness. After graduating from Yale University with an intellectual history degree, she worked in a variety of areas including cataloguing art, working for a movie star, and other theater positions, in addition to working in a maximum-security prison and in social work before her husband's work led her to Guyana. There, she founded two nonprofit organizations: one focused on literacy and the other on eco-tourism. Building on her passion for preserving cultural heritage, she established a for-profit company that markets authentic home décor crafted by Indigenous artisans to customers in North America, which she continues to oversee despite no longer living in Guyana. Sarah hopes that someday her venture will evolve into an online platform supporting nonprofits globally. Sarah's background best aligns with that of a "grassroots actor" due to her lack of extensive professional career experience and her passionate activism for conservation. However, the scope of the SE mission does not fall into a category in the Abebe typology, as it is centered on an Indigenous community in Guyana rather than "the entrepreneur's immediate environment" (Abebe et al. 2020, p. 514) in the United States. Thus, due to this difference in scope, Sarah fits neither the "local pragmatist" nor the "social activist" categories of the Abebe typology.

3.2.2. Jenn—Emergent Transnational Pragmatist

At the age of sixteen, Jenn initiated a nonprofit aimed at ensuring global access to clean water through well repairs: a cause she has championed for nine years, spanning her college years and beyond. Reflecting on her journey, she acknowledges her initial naivety and hints at potential alternative approaches, yet remains determined to uphold the organization's original mission, wherein every donation directly fuels project implementation. With a master's degree in public health, Jenn commented on the necessity of a business education, as she established her SE based on extensive time "googling" answers to many of her questions.

Her inspiration stemmed from a transformative church mission trip to Panama as a high school student, which began the organization that she would eventually form as a nonprofit, albeit without a concrete long-term strategy. In 2015, she established a for-profit coffee enterprise in the United States, leveraging its proceeds to sustain the nonprofit; however, familial obligations prompted her recent divestment from the venture. Operating across several locales in Latin America and the Caribbean—including Panama, Haiti, and Belize—the nonprofit continues to serve communities in need of clean water solutions

despite Jenn's lack of time and personal salary. Like Sarah, Jenn's background also best aligns with a "grassroots actor", and the scope of the SE mission does not align with the "local pragmatist" nor the "social activist" categories of the Abebe typology. The scope is centered on specific communities in countries other than Jenn's immediate environment. Thus, Jenn also does not adequately fit into the Abebe typology.

3.2.3. Tom—Emergent Transnational Pragmatist

Tom's education includes master's degrees in college student development and theology, and he draws upon a wealth of social justice expertise cultivated through his Jesuit upbringing and extensive volunteer experiences, such as a trip to Kingston, Jamaica, and working for an impoverished parish in Belize. Deeply influenced by his Catholic faith, he and his wife co-founded a study abroad initiative in El Salvador in collaboration with the network of Jesuit universities from the United States, where American university students undertake a unique praxis-based global learning experience, deeply rooted in spirituality, solidarity with the marginalized, academic reflection, and community support. The program was inspired by the legacy of the six Jesuit martyrs and their companions who were killed at the University of Central America in 1989 and embodies a profound commitment to social justice. Tom's background also best aligns with a "grassroots actor" given his strong passion and lack of extensive formal career experience; however, like in Sarah's case, the scope of the SE mission does not fall into a category in the Abebe typology. The scope is centered on a specific area of El Salvador, a country that is not Tom's home country. Thus, Tom also does not adequately fit into the categories of "local pragmatist" or "social activist" in the Abebe typology.

The interviews with international social entrepreneurs highlighted a recurring theme: significant life events often inspired them to establish SEs abroad despite lacking business or leadership experience. Mainly, each international leader had experienced an awakening to the suffering and humanity of people around the world through international travel and work with underserved populations that triggered a call to action and the development of SE operations in a foreign country. While the Abebe typology offers valuable insights, it overlooks a significant group: SEs tackling local issues in foreign contexts. We propose expanding the typology to include "transnational pragmatists" who address social and environmental challenges abroad with a pragmatic background. Details comparing the transnational pragmatist with variables from the Abebe model and from the literature are provided in Table 5.

Table 5. Adapted typology with transnational pragmatist.

	Seasoned Champions	**Local Pragmatists**	**Transnational Pragmatist**	**Corporate Veterans**	**Social Activists**
Scope	Localized	Localized	Community centric	Large scale	Large scale
Life/career experiences	Extensive	Minimal	Minimal	Extensive	Minimal
Reach	Domestic	Domestic	International	International/global	International/global
Business model	For profit	For profit	Nonprofit or for profit	For profit	For profit
Expansion and growth	Scalability unlikely	Scalability unlikely	Limited scalability	Scalability likely	Scalability likely

3.3. Proposition Development

Previous studies have identified a subset of social entrepreneurs originating from modest professional backgrounds and entrepreneurial skills who typically exhibit a passionate commitment to social or environmental causes, often catalyzed by local community issues (Abebe et al. 2020; Sophie Bacq et al. 2016). Termed "grass roots actors"

by Abebe et al. (2020), these entrepreneurs reflect a profile consistent with our interview findings, which indicate that many social entrepreneurs commence their ventures with limited prior professional experience. Specifically, five out of the six interviewees in our study lacked formal business education or prior business experience before initiating their enterprises.

However, our interviews diverge from the scope of social engagement outlined in the Abebe model. According to Abebe et al. (2020), grassroots actors primarily establish organizations within their local communities. Other research supports this idea, such as that of De Beule et al. (2023), especially concerning financial reliance on local resources like grants and donations. However, our data challenge the assumption that grassroots actors exclusively operate within their immediate locales. Notably, three out of our six interviewees (50% of the sample) established social enterprises beyond their local communities, even in different countries.

Although our sample size is modest, the substantial proportion contradicting this aspect of the Abebe model warrants attention. We therefore propose the emergence of a new category of social entrepreneurs, termed "transnational pragmatists", drawing upon the transnational entrepreneur conceptualization by Drori et al. (2009) and the pragmatic orientation highlighted in the Abebe model. We posit that these social entrepreneurs exhibit the following characteristics:

> P1: Transnational pragmatists leverage their grassroots life experiences to establish and develop international social enterprises.

To support this proposition, we refer to studies that emphasize the importance of personal, grassroots experiences and transformative life experiences in shaping entrepreneurial intentions and approaches and motivate social entrepreneurs to establish impactful ventures with a global or transnational focus (i.e., Koehne et al. 2022; Mafico et al. 2024; Ascencio et al. 2022).

The individuals, categorized as grassroots actors, address challenges within their immediate environment or community, such as crime, homelessness, or food security. This characterization aligns with broader scholarly consensus, exemplified by De Beule et al. (2023), who indicate that SEs with a mission for locals (e.g., healthcare and well-being), local problems (e.g., waste management and water purification), or eradicating societal problems (e.g., homelessness and mental illness) have a low propensity for internationalization. However, our investigation reveals instances where grassroots actors maintain a community-centric scope, albeit in communities distinct from their own. For example, Sarah is dedicated to supporting an Indigenous community in Guyana, while Tom focuses on community development efforts in El Salvador. This observation finds partial corroboration in the extant literature, notably De Beule et al. (2023), who classify organizations prioritizing "delivering products and services for clients benefiting communities and beneficiaries" (p. 10) as possessing a moderate propensity for international expansion. Nevertheless, this assessment primarily hinges on the operational structure and financial resources of these enterprises rather than the scope of their mission.

Additionally, Erpf et al. (2019) identify SEs engaged in commercial activities as more likely to be regional or international compared to those focused on social service provision, which tend to remain local. Santos (2012) identifies SEs with a propensity for international expansion based on potential for scalability, regardless of the scope of the original mission. Finally, Koehne et al. (2022) examine different types of transnational SEs, including foreign SEs; however, they do not have the same pragmatic background, but rather most have high-ranking business or entrepreneurial experience. While the abovementioned authors do not explicitly address the background of the SE, they underscore the feasibility of maintaining a community-centric scope within an international context. Thus, we propose a second proposition:

> P2: Transnational pragmatists focus on community-centric social engagement initiatives within countries other than their own.

4. Discussion

We were eager to apply the Abebe et al. (2020) typology as an organizing framework for our studies of international social ventures and had begun to connect their typology to key existing models in the social venture and internationalization literature. When analyzing, we quickly realized that individuals who start SEs in foreign countries driven by unique personal experiences do not completely align with the typology proposed by Abebe et al. (2020), which overlooks the global dimension of social entrepreneurship. The Abebe framework, with its focus on individual background and either a localized or large-scale scope, overlooks those SEs that fall in between, particularly on an international level, such as the community-centric international SEs.

As a result of this analysis, we have come to find that this type of SE does exist. We reached out to experts in the SE community who nominated SEs that fit this type of transnational pragmatist. For instance, Noora Health, the recipient of the 2022 Skoll World Forum Award, exemplifies this concept by providing caregiver training to the families of patients with healthcare needs in India, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. Founded by Stanford University students Edith Elliott and Shahed Alam, the initiative addresses challenges such as inadequate information and poor medication adherence that lead to adverse health outcomes. The organization began as a class project in response to challenges rooted in the Indian context, clearly within the grassroots actor classification, and cultural background, a community-centric problem in a country other than the founders' home country. Eventually, the SE gradually expanded to encompass regions facing similar issues, such as Bangladesh and Indonesia.

Another prominent SE is Project Schoolhouse, founded by Thomas 'Tab' Barker in 2004 (Project Schoolhouse n.d.). A recent college graduate and recipient of a transformative volunteer experience in Costa Rica showcases Barker's life background as a transnational pragmatist. Furthermore, his decision to start an SE in a community in Nicaragua, a country other than his home country, also indicates his application to the transnational pragmatist classification through the international yet community-centric scope.

These examples of famous SEs that exhibit transnational pragmatist characteristics, beyond the modest sample size of our research, reinforce our belief that there is a fifth type of SE that has yet to be accounted for.

Additionally, alongside these gaps, our research finds several consistencies with Abebe et al.'s research. First, our domestic interviewees adequately fit within the four types of SEs provided by the typology. Second, we also found support for the importance of "passionate activism" in the early stages of the SE, indicated by Abebe et al. (2020). This is particularly true for the local pragmatists and social activists, who tend to have higher levels of passion and awareness of issues than the other groups and who have the most similar backgrounds to our interviewees. This emphasis on passionate activism is consistent with other SE research that describes social entrepreneurs as driven by passion and personal experience (e.g., Ruskin et al. 2016; Sophie Bacq et al. 2016; Zahra et al. 2009), as well as research in internationalization, which has found that lived experiences create internationalization intentions (Ascencio et al. 2022; Kundu and Katz 2003; Drori et al. 2009).

Parts of our research support the existing variables in the Abebe framework; however, there was a need to differentiate them slightly, including adjusting the scope from "localized" to "community centric", to accommodate transnational pragmatists. Thus, this research suggests the need to build off the existing Abebe framework rather than introducing an entirely new model for understanding social entrepreneurs. Additionally, our literature review suggests that there may be other types of SEs based on factors such as the business model (Erpf et al. 2019; De Beule et al. 2023) and propensity for expansion and growth (Santos 2012; Veronica et al. 2020) that are demonstrated in Table 5, as well as factors that were not able to be explored in this research, such as the SE's client–beneficiary integration (De Beule et al. 2023) or the need for additional activities to reach the desired social impact (Erpf et al. 2019; De Beule et al. 2023). The Abebe model's richness allows for

the inclusion of these additional types, offering a flexible framework for further exploration and classification.

4.1. Implications and Future Research

The incorporation of the transnational pragmatist into the typology of social entrepreneurs has implications for theory and practice. Primarily, this updated taxonomy signifies a more precise and inclusive depiction of this distinct cohort of entrepreneurs. Over the years, scholars have tried to better understand the characteristics of individuals who undertake social or environmental objectives along with economic goals. This research contributes to a refined understanding of such individuals. Notably, transnational pragmatists have remained overlooked in the SE literature. While Drori et al.'s (2009) work and those who have built on it (e.g., Koehne et al. 2022; Mafico et al. 2024) present a comparable classification through their identification of transnational (social) entrepreneurs, these individuals typically encompass migrants who hold simultaneous affiliations with one or more countries.

In contrast, in our definition, transnational pragmatists do not begin their entrepreneurial activity because of migration to a different country as transnational entrepreneurs do. Rather, their involvement stems from transformative experiences that inspired their engagement with the community within a different country, such as through travel or mission trips (Ascencio et al. 2022), and being focused on social or environmental impacts. Future research could connect the research on transnational pragmatists with transnational social entrepreneurs, such as the work by Mafico et al. (2024), by investigating the role of social class in how transnational pragmatists access resources and understand their beneficiaries. Other areas might focus on the "dark side" of transnational pragmatism, such as the power relations and potential to be seen as a neocolonial influence in the Global South (Romani et al. 2020), or the challenges of cross-cultural communication.

Additionally, our interviews with international SEs suggest that a promising avenue for future research may center on the funding dynamics specific to transnational pragmatists, such as when home-country donations and grants support international community-centric work. As one interviewee noted, "...after the grant period ended...I was like, 'How are we gonna make this more sustainable,' because fundraising is...not very sustainable... so we ended up starting a coffee company". Expanding on this theme, an in-depth exploration into the funding mechanisms and financial strategies adopted by transnational pragmatists could offer valuable insights into the sustainability and scalability of their ventures, particularly by building on the existing knowledge regarding social venture failure (e.g., Muñoz et al. 2020) and funding obstacles (e.g., Wesemann and Antretter 2023). By delving deeper into this aspect, researchers can elucidate the diverse sources of funding utilized by transnational pragmatists, ranging from traditional grants and philanthropic contributions to innovative financing models such as impact investing and crowdfunding. This line of inquiry holds the potential to inform practitioners, policymakers, and investors alike, facilitating the development of tailored support mechanisms and investment frameworks to bolster the growth and impact of transnational pragmatists in addressing global social and environmental challenges.

Furthermore, future research should examine this group in greater detail, such as in the specific mechanisms through which transnational pragmatists operative effectively. Our research points to limited business experience of the social entrepreneurs; thus, understanding how transnational pragmatists secure resources and their operational decision-making would provide important insights into this unique group.

We see that the transnational pragmatist type is an extension of the Abebe typology. Using the existing elements of the Abebe model, specifically a community or local focus for a social entrepreneur from another country, we have identified a distinct type in addition to the four types that Abebe et al. (2020) posited. Such people appeared in our sample, but when we asked experts in social entrepreneurship research about the proposed types, the experts immediately responded with examples that fit the type, such as Noora Health or

Project Schoolhouse mentioned above. With the inclusion of the transnational pragmatist, even more social entrepreneurs can be recognized and analyzed in the future. Although we see our work as extending the coverage of the Abebe framework, a key distinction between our research and that of Abebe et al. (2020) lies in the sampling criteria. These researchers utilized secondary data from prominent SE organizations, such as Ashoka, the Skoll Foundation, and the Schwab Foundation, as well as biographical pieces from major newspapers, magazines, and lists like Forbes 30 Under 30. Thus, the Abebe et al. (2020) sample is limited to SEs that have been identified as very successful and typically on a larger scale. This leaves out smaller social ventures that were not built to scale or that have not received prominent media attention.

In addition, Abebe et al. (2020) focused on SEs that are for-profit only. While the inclusion of nonprofit organizations as SEs has been a focus of discussion for many years (Dees 1998), we utilized the definition of SE that includes nonprofit organizations due to the nature of the social needs addressed, the resources needed, the scope of raising capital, and the ability to capture economic value (Mair and Marti 2006). Furthermore, through the abovementioned recommendations for future research directions, the SEs that we interviewed indicate a change in the business model over time; however, the nonprofit beginnings of the SE are important to understanding the perspectives of the entrepreneurs at their start and could lend valuable insights into understanding the role of the SE business model in meeting its financial and mission-related goals.

We also recognize the potential existence of additional SE types yet to be identified. For instance, does the spectrum of social entrepreneurs' backgrounds truly adhere strictly to the dichotomy of grassroots actors versus disillusioned careerists? It is plausible that individuals may lack extensive managerial or public sector experience while possessing other significant qualifications beyond those attributed to grassroots actors. For instance, within our subset of international social entrepreneurs, many demonstrated extensive volunteer experience, whether through participation in mission trips, immersive engagement in other forms of volunteering, or long-term involvement in social justice activities.

Abebe et al. (2020) suggest that grassroots actors may encompass individuals such as stay-at-home parents, college students, or dropouts impassioned by issues affecting their communities; however, such instances may represent a more circumscribed form of activism compared to others with more extensive volunteering backgrounds. Social entrepreneurs span the entire world in various countries, sectors, and communities. Thus, there must be more ways to think about, classify, and organize these individuals.

4.2. Conclusion

Despite recent research on SEs and the people behind them (e.g., Abebe et al. 2020; Ascencio et al. 2022; De Beule et al. 2023; Erpf et al. 2019; Koehne et al. 2022; Mafico et al. 2024), there remains a subset of social entrepreneurs not classified by existing typologies. We conclude that SEs exist with characteristics such as grassroots backgrounds and community-centric social engagement in an international context, not captured in current typologies (Abebe et al. 2020). Therefore, we suggest the incorporation of the transnational pragmatist classification, which represents a significant stride toward achieving a comprehensive understanding of social entrepreneurs. Due to the smaller sample size of only six interviews for our study, we encourage continuous discourse and empirical inquiry by scholars and practitioners to collectively contribute to the evolution of the typology, ensuring a comprehensive representation of social entrepreneurs across varied contexts and paradigms. Moving forward, interdisciplinary discussions and cross-sectoral collaborations will be instrumental in explaining the multifaceted nature of social entrepreneurship and its transformative potential on a global scale. We anticipate further engagement and collaboration within academic and practitioner circles to foster the ongoing development and refinement of the typology, thereby enhancing our understanding of social entrepreneurship and its impact on society.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Tell me about yourself, such as where you grew up, family life, education, or any other key people or issues that had a deep influence on you.

Tell me about how you came to (SE name).

What was going on in your life then?

[If so,] what was it like? If you recall, what were you thinking then? Who, if anyone, influenced your actions? Tell me about how he/she/they influenced you.

How has your experience before joining/starting (SE name) affected how you handled major strategic decisions (such as organization structure, internationalization)?

Could you tell me about how your views [and/or organizational decisions] may have changed since you have gone international?

After having these experiences, what advice would you give to someone who wishes to begin a(n) [international] social enterprise?

How would you describe how you viewed (mission) before joining/starting (SE name)?

Could you tell me about how your views [and/or organizational decisions] may have changed from the time you joined/started the enterprise?

What contributed to the decision to make (SE name) a nonprofit [hybrid] organization?

Could I ask you to describe the most important lessons you learned through experiencing running a hybrid [nonprofit] organization?

What contributed to the decision to (move services/sell product) internationally?

Has (SE name) ever considered going international? Why or why not?

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