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SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

Social Entrepreneurship: Femininity in Transformational Change



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ABSTRACT

Social entrepreneurs are transformational change agents. Using learning-by-doing as a tool, these entrepreneurs look to solve social challenges that provide long-term benefit for the environment and people. This can include helping to eradicate homelessness, poverty, human trafficking, bad water sources, pollution, and other issues that plague communities around the world. In order to solve these types of social challenges, a cooperative and caring environment focused on people needs to be instilled to shift societal norms. However, not all entrepreneurs choose to solve these types of problems, and, instead, look to shift industries through consumer-oriented products. This article purports that social entrepreneurs embrace certain femininity attributes, such as cooperation and caring, in order to instill the necessary learning that creates transformational change in people and raises resiliency levels in their communities.

KEY WORDS: *social entrepreneurship, change agent, learning, innovation, community, resilience, transformation, femininity*

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Communities in Crisis

Crisis in communities is not uncommon. Whether addressing flooding in Norfolk, Virginia or cholera outbreaks in Accra, Ghana, resilience is required by residents to solve and overcome these pressing and potentially life-threatening challenges. Cities that do not have resiliency, risk meeting their demise. Cities, such as New Orleans, Louisiana facing Hurricane Katrina or Ashkelon, Israel facing terrorism threats (The Rockefeller Foundation, 2015). In addition, urbanization continues to grow, adding people to already large population centers. According to the 2014 World Urbanization Prospects from the United Nations, “by 2050, 66 per cent of the world’s population is projected to be urban.” This is a change of 30 per cent since 1950 (United Nations, 2014). For example, Mexico City is the eighth wealthiest city and home to eight million people. It is, however, at risk of disaster with “the city's proliferation of informal employment, the lag in infrastructure, strong social inequality, severe weather, and the sheer size of its population—social disaster, political disaster, and environmental disaster” (The Rockefeller Foundation, 2015). Furthermore, no longer can cities attract residents based on a central focus, such as car manufacturing in Detroit, Michigan. Instead, cities must embrace the diversity of its many people and become resilient. It is this resiliency that emboldens city survival and propels cities into the future.

Resilience, by definition, is “the ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something happens” as defined in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. Furthermore, a community that shows resilience indicates its inherent adaptability to create positive and functional outcomes in times of crisis (A CARRI Report, 2013). One of the reasons resiliency is not inherent in some cities is because they have become dependent—dependent upon a specific industry, traditional establishments, or hierarchical power structures with the unwillingness of the people to make transformational change (Tidball & Stedman, 2012). If these cities do not set an environment for resiliency, these cities face the risk of becoming obsolete.

Resiliency continues to garner the attention of global initiatives, such as The Rockefeller Foundation program, 100 Resilient Cities. This program helps cities such as Norfolk, Accra, New Orleans, Ashkelon, and Mexico City to overcome the shocks and stresses that can break down the social and economic fabric of their communities. Whether suffering from chronic food shortages or endemic violence, the 100 Resilient Cities plan is to help the

city respond and become more resilient to meet these challenges head-on and adapt (The Rockefeller Foundation, 2015). Part of establishing resiliency resides in taking deliberate action to solve problems through diverse and innovative thinking. This means developing the residents' adaptive thinking skills in order to help transform the city into an interdependent culture.

Transforming the Community Culture from Dependence to Interdependence

Interdependence is being mutually reliant on one another for reciprocal benefit as defined by Dictionary.com. This differs from being dependent and seeking aid from another or being independent and functioning in complete autonomy. Globalization has increased interdependence as indicated by international trade (Streeten, 2001). People come together and form relationships to share ideas and resources; not seek aid or work alone (Weinstein, 2013). Furthermore, with globalization and the proliferation of technology, people from various cultures have opportunities to more readily meet, resulting in the blurring of cultural lines to form common ground.

Common ground means people from different cultural backgrounds desire to have conversation with one another and seek familiar discussion topics (Fast, Heath Wu, 2009). The challenge lies in accepting self as well as another person's culture within this conversation for social acceptance and personal well-being (Gudykunst, 2003). This is the underpinning of forming interdependent relationships. Although culture is comprised of people and their social norms, beliefs, and behaviors, culture is also inherent in cities. Over time, the people reinforce the culture and the culture solidifies the behavior of the city. As one researcher puts forth, culture means "the way we do things around here" (Martin, 2006).

Culture can find equilibrium between diverse people for societal transformation or it can be divisive and support whatever status quo the city is dependent on. This is where communities begin breaking down and societal and environmental challenges rise up (Tidball & Stedman, 2012). At this juncture, people make choices to remain dependent, avoid the challenge, or become part of an interdependent solution. This interdependence is the middle ground that encourages diversity in thinking and inclusion in action—key components in developing resiliency and

transforming community culture (Weinstein, 2013). Ghana is an example of people and the government forming an interdependent solution.

Cocoa farming in Ghana was influenced by a traditional three-tiered class system and the government in the early and mid 20th century (Kolavalli & Vigneri, 2011). Over time, the cocoa industry fluctuated and the farmer ended up with the economic brunt of supporting the cost of an overvalued exchange rate. The farmers and the land were suffering due to the lack of available resources to use toward reinvestment into the infrastructure or into basic needs for the people. Over-inflation began to rise and poverty resulted. However, in the 1990s it started to transform when the government and its people began to establish an equilibrium between their roles. According to Kolavalli & Vigneri (2011), the appropriate policies were put into place by the government to adjust the exchange rates. This means that a greater share of the price was passed on to the farmers. The private sector was then able to improve on its responsibilities. The output was jobs and the economic impact was that poverty decreased from “51.7 percent in the 1990s to 28.5 percent in the mid-2000s (Kolavalli & Vigneri, 2011). Although the government solved a pressing macro-economic challenge in Ghana, the farmers were still dependent on the government through a state-owned company, Cocoa Marketing Company, the single exporter of Ghana cocoa (Divine Chocolate, 2011). Therefore, resiliency was not necessarily embedded in the cultural norms of the people. However, a visionary farmer saw an opportunity to make a shift in how the farmers sold their cocoa. This visionary was a social entrepreneur who wanted to help farmers become more interdependent through learning how to do business differently, ultimately creating a more resilient community.

Social Entrepreneurs as Transformational Change Agents

Social entrepreneurs look to create wide-scale transformation “by changing the system, spreading the solution, and persuading entire societies to move in different directions...change agents for society” (Ashoka, n.d.). Whereas business entrepreneurs look to shift industries through innovative products and services; social entrepreneurs look to help communities take action on pressing social and environmental challenges, such as homelessness, pollution, and bad water (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Social entrepreneurs create and nurture a learning-by-doing environment to shift people’s mindsets—mindsets steeped in dependent or independent

thinking—to one of interdependent behaviors. Nana Frimpong Abrebrese was this type of social entrepreneur.

Nana Frimpong Abrebrese cared about the Ghanaian cocoa farmers and influenced them to pool their resources and set-up the Kuapa Kokoo cooperative to trade with the Cocoa Marketing Company. Rather than being dependent on one source, the state-owned Cocoa Marketing Company, Kuapa Kokoo created an interdependent balance among the farmers as well as with companies in other cultures. According to the Divine Choocolate website:

Kuapa Kokoo - which means good cocoa growers - has a mission to empower farmers in their efforts to gain a dignified livelihood, to increase women's participation in all of Kuapa's activities, and to develop environmentally friendly cultivation of cocoa. It doesn't cheat the farmers by using inaccurate weighing scales, as other buying agents often do, and because it operates so efficiently, it can pass on the savings to its members. After seeing the benefits Kuapa gains for its members, more and more farmers want to join and the association now has upwards of 65,000 members organized in approximately 1400 village societies.

This shift in the societal norms allowed the marginalized cocoa farmers to achieve a quality of life that liberated people (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Trapped potential was unlocked for the people in a cooperative and caring environment. Within this environment, the farmers learned how to accept each other as well as do business in other countries. The impossible turned into the possible and resiliency began to take root—the community culture started shifting to one of interdependence.

Cooperative and Caring Environment for Learning

Geert Hofstede, a social psychologist, introduced the concept of dimensions in culture (The Hofstede Centre, n.d.). Dimensions that provide a scale of how a culture functions, such as how the people of that culture embrace uncertainty (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Hofstede went so far as to provide a mapping of these dimensions and their scales for each country. One of the dimensions is that of masculinity and femininity. According to the Hofstede Centre (n.d.), the masculinity dimension “represents a

preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life.”

Societies with a leaning toward masculinity are more competitive, and those that are on the femininity dimension are more consensus-oriented (Hofstede Centre). “A society is called masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct. A society is called feminine when emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, p. 120). An example of social entrepreneurship embracing femininity attributes is Artesanas Campesinas, a cooperative helping to eradicate poverty in Mexico.

Rural locations in Mexico suffer from extreme poverty. In order to escape this poverty, many Mexicans cross over the US border in hopes of a better life. However, this causes problems within the US borders as well as rifts within Mexican families (Walser et al., 2011). Social entrepreneurs formed a women-owned cooperative that makes silver jewelry to support women and children in the region. The cooperative “introduces new methods, materials, and machinery to compete in the highly competitive jewelry market...the artisans have become business women” (Artesanas Campesinas, n.d.). The cooperative provides food, healthcare, and a means of support. It has developed a resilience, surviving through highly competitive challenges. This cooperative cares about the quality of life for these rural families. The people have developed fortitude in a learning-by-doing environment.

Learning Creates Fortitude

Fortitude is the “strength of mind that enables a person to encounter danger or bear pain or adversity with courage,” according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. This strength of mind is developed by knowing something is possible, controlling fear, and taking action on it (Titus, 2006, p.147). The opposites, self-doubt, self-preservation, or egotism, breaks down this strength of mind and creates fear (Robbins & Friedman, n.d.).

Self-doubt in people is negatively reinforced by societal norms. In turn, the self-doubting people reinforce societal norms. To break this cycle, concept of self needs to change and fortitude developed. “Our ‘self’ is a life-long accumulation of impressions. How we see and evaluate our ‘selves’

and others' selves has a tremendous impact on self-acceptance, self-control, and acceptance of others” (Tucker-Ladd, 1996). An example of women achieving a mindset of self-acceptance and overcoming slavery is through Malia Designs, social entrepreneurs who started a business to help eradicate human trafficking.

Human Trafficking is a multi-billion dollar industry that affects millions of people (Malia Designs, n.d.). Women and children are vulnerable from the combination of widespread poverty and lack of state support systems (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012). According to Malia Designs, “Human Trafficking is today’s most widespread human rights violation and crime against humanity.” Social entrepreneurs formed Malia Designs to help victims caught up in the illegal trade of human trafficking. The company formed a cooperative to help victims learn-by-doing a new trade to earn a sustainable income and have a quality of life. Malia Designs makes products, such as tote bags, from recycled materials. In addition, Malia Designs also assists with the women’s daily living challenges, such as providing for childcare and education. This caring and acceptance has helped women to break the cycle and gain their freedom.

Self-doubt impressions are steeped in learned frameworks that have been negatively reinforced over time by family, friends, and experiences (Belmont University, n.d.). To develop self-acceptance and accept others, the “learned” frameworks need to be “un-learned” and new ones set into place through positive experiences (Argyris & Schön, 1974). According to Ambrose, et al., “learning is a process; learning involves change in knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, or attitudes; learning is something students themselves do.” (Ambrose et al., 2010, p. 3). Learners acquire knowledge through rationale or experiences that then shape people’s beliefs and their truths (Importance of Philosophy, n.d.). Learners must be provided these types of positive learning environments to develop a strength of mind—a strength of mind for people to shift from a mindset of apathy to one of courage, knowing they can achieve a life of liberation once thought impossible. An example is Mata Traders.

Mata Traders is a cooperative in Nepal. Nepal struggles with the deep roots of child labor. Thirty-three percent of the population are children ages 5-14—victims of child labor (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). “Every year thousands of children migrate to the megacities of India to find work and send money back to their families” (Traders). Mata Traders is

helping to eradicate child labor at its root cause by providing a means for women to earn a wage and educate their children. The change can be seen not only in the life of the woman employed by the co-op, but especially in the next generation, and the children the woman can afford to educate.

These social entrepreneurs from Kuapa Kokoo, Artesanas Campesinas, Malia Designs, and Mata Traders have provided a learning-by-doing, interdependent environment for people to develop fortitude; an environment with a foundation of cooperation, caring, and acceptance with a focus on quality of life through knowledge; an environment that embraces “The natural desire to know truth...overcoming timidity and fear through acts of fortitude” (Titus, 2006, p. 160). People within these cooperatives have the opportunity to shift their minds from the impossible to possible and spark resiliency in their community culture. This type of environment embraces characteristics based on femininity attributes.

Social entrepreneurs, such as Kuapa Kokoo, Artesanas Campesinas, Malia Designs, and Mata Traders function as transformational change agents for their communities to develop new mindsets and become sustainable. They create a learning-by-doing environment that engenders femininity characteristics of cooperation, caring, and acceptance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). These social entrepreneurs use cooperative business as an equilibrium for people to have a better quality of life and raise resiliency within their cities and communities (Robbins, 1994).

Conclusion

Cities must embrace the diversity of its many people and become resilient for survival in the future. People’s attitudes and behaviors must transform as along with shifts in societal norms. This requires deep change within a person’s beliefs. Learning-by-doing allows for this type of deep change within a person. It is a process the person is willing to undertake because they envision the possible and a new quality of life. They are provided a learning and supportive environment to overcome self-doubt. During the transformation, self-acceptance is experienced and fortitude developed. This is positively reinforced within the new environment of cooperation, caring, and acceptance. A confidence is embraced and adaptability ensues, going beyond the plan, creating a nimbleness and the courage to act on it. The result is a shift in community culture and the rise of resiliency.

If these are the types of attributes necessary to bring resilience into communities, this paper purports that women in entrepreneurial leadership roles can influence masculinity-based cultures. According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), “women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.” (p. 120). However, it is not necessary for women to change the dominant culture as much as work within it to transform the heart and belief of the people within the community. Women can bring forth their natural femininity characteristics to help create a cooperative culture through social entrepreneurship that brings an equilibrium to masculinity attributes and traditional norms. This same equilibrium encourages an adaptable mindset for cities to be resilient through its people. “The degree to which minds are changed, suffering is alleviated or injustice is reversed represents...success. Wealth is simply a tool the entrepreneur uses to effect social change” (Uhlig, n.d.).

This paper is not without its limitations, in which it needs further investigation. For instance, there are many perspectives and research studies regarding the role of gender in entrepreneurship as well as the attributes of transformational learning environments. Finally, there are a number of determinants that were not considered in this analysis due to data limitations of outputs, outcomes, and impacts made by social entrepreneurs.

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Socijalno preduzetništvo: ženske vrednosti u transformacionim promenama

APSTRAKT

Socijalni preduzetnici su katalizatori transformacionih promena. Koristeći učenje kroz rad kao alat, ovi preduzetnici pokušavaju da rešavaju socijalne izazove kako bi obezbedili dugoročnu korist za životnu sredinu i ljude. Naime, reč je o pomaganju u iskorenjivanju beskućništva, siromaštva, trgovine ljudima, loših izvora vode, zagađenja, kao i drugim izazovima koji muče zajednice širom sveta. U svrhu rešavanja pomenutih vrsta socijalnih izazova, neophodno je uključiti kooperativno i brižno okruženje fokusirano na ljude u proces pomeranja društvenih normi. Međutim, nisu svi preduzetnici spremni da rešavaju takve probleme, već, umesto toga, pomeraju proizvodnju prema potrošački orijentisanim proizvodima. Ovaj članak ukazuje na to da socijalni preduzetnici prihvataju određene ženske vrednosti, kao što su saradnja i briga, kako bi se usadili neophodni principi učenja koji stvaraju transformacione promene u ljudima i podižu nivo otpornosti u njihovim zajednicama.

KLJUČNE REČI: *socijalno preduzetništvo, katalizator promena, učenje, inovacije, zajednica, transformacija, žene*

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