

Humanistic Entrepreneurship: The Pioneering Case of Frances Wright

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ABSTRACT

Based on the notion of entrepreneurship-as-emancipation, we develop a model of humanistic entrepreneurship intended to achieve social justice-related outcomes. Humanistic entrepreneurship is the process of discovering, assessing, and pursuing opportunities through social innovation to achieve just social change. We integrate theories of moral conviction and resource mobilization to propose that humanistic entrepreneurs are morally motivated agents who utilize entrepreneurship to stimulate collective action, mobilize resources, and change institutional environments. The goal of humanistic entrepreneurs is to protect human dignity and alleviate the suffering of people experiencing the consequences of social injustice. We apply the model of humanistic entrepreneurship to the historic case of Frances Wright, a social enterprise pioneer who challenged institutions of social injustice.

Keywords: Social Entrepreneurship, Social Justice, Moral Conviction, Frances Wright, Resource Mobilization, Compassion

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INTRODUCTION

Frances Wright was “the first woman in America to act publicly to oppose slavery ... the first woman in America to speak in public to a large secular audience of men and women and the first to argue that women were men’s equals and must be granted an equal role in all the business of public life (Morris, 1984, p. 1).

Entrepreneurship has been viewed traditionally as a context-sensitive nexus of individual and opportunity (Martin & Novicevic, 2010; Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). Contemporary research, however, is increasingly conceptualizing entrepreneurship as a phenomenon that transcends context (Grimes, McMullen, Vogus & Miller, 2013; Murphy, 2011; Wiklund, Davidsson, Audretsch & Karlsson, 2011). For example, Calás, Smircich and Bourne (2009) depict entrepreneurship as a phenomenon of social change that can engender a variety of outcomes that are positive for the human condition, such as humanistic social transformation (McMullen, 2011; Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). Although this explicit emancipatory view of entrepreneurship as humanistic has been advocated (Chandra, 2017), very few attempts of concurrent conceptualization have been fruitful, especially in the area of social entrepreneurship (Goss et al., 2011; Nicholls, 2010; Zeyen et al., 2013).

Social entrepreneurship entails “the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner” (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum & Shulman, 2009, p. 522). This broad phenomenon has attracted significant attention from scholars who focus on issues that emerge at the intersection of entrepreneurship, non-profit management, and a myriad of social issues and concerns (Bhowmick, 2011; Murphy & Coombes, 2009; Short, Moss & Lumpkin, 2009).

Nascent research on this type of humanistic social innovation is based on the integration of social and institutional entrepreneurship. This entrepreneurial approach begins with values-laden problems that entrepreneurs recognize in markets or communities (Murphy, Hood & Wu, 2019). Centered specifically on human dignity and societal outcomes that enhance human well-being, humanistic entrepreneurship explicitly encompasses social equity and social justice (McGaughey, 2013; Thekaekara & Thekaekara, 2007). Focusing on this particular domain, we conceptualize the humanistic entrepreneurship construct at the intersection of social and institutional entrepreneurial perspectives that address opportunities to resolve inequitable social justice violations, and thus protect and preserve human equity.

Given its early theoretic developmental stage, we follow Dacin, Dacin and Matear’s (2010, p. 37) recommendation that researchers should derive “valuable assumptions and insights from existing theories inherent in conventional, cultural, and institutional entrepreneurship frameworks, and [integrate] these insights in ways that address the unique phenomena that exist in the context of social entrepreneurship,” such as humanistic entrepreneurship. Accordingly, our conceptualization of humanistic entrepreneurship, which we ground in Kantian philosophy, integrates the theoretic lenses of social and institutional entrepreneurship. On those grounds, we develop a model of humanistic entrepreneurship focusing on the theoretical factors that influence

social venture success or failure, particularly when the venture entails emancipatory social innovations related to human dignity and welfare.

To test our model, we engaged in archival research of Frances Wright's humanistic venture that was pursued in the U.S. State of Tennessee during the years 1825-1828 (Murphy, Smothers, Novicevic, Humphreys & Kornetsky, 2018). This pioneering case of humanistic entrepreneurship, which occurred during the antebellum era of American history, was aimed at achieving social justice for slaves. Wright was an activist with an established national reputation for confronting social injustice (Follis, 1982). She defied societal norms and institutions by developing the Nashoba plantation where slaves were educated, treated with dignity, and motivated to work, because the income earned from the Nashoba plantation was to be used to repay their unjust debts and secure their freedom (Baderman, 2005). Because Wright's social change venture was recognized and acknowledged at the local, state, and national levels as a unique social experiment to restore human esteem (Egerton, 1977), we argue that her pioneering case provides a seminal example of humanistic entrepreneurship in American history.

Our research is organized as follows. First, we define humanistic entrepreneurship, outline its philosophical foundations and review the literature germane to the conceptualization of this concept. Second, we engage in theoretical development using the theories of moral conviction (Skitka, 2010; Skitka, Bauman & Lyttle, 2008) and resource mobilization (Van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009) to advance a formal model. Third, we test our model narratively by using the historical and pioneering case of Wright's humanistic venturing. Finally, we discuss our findings to put them into the context of the social entrepreneurship literature and derive valuable lessons that hold promise for informing future research of humanistic entrepreneurs.

THE PROCESS OF HUMANISTIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

We define humanistic entrepreneurship as the process of recognizing, assessing, and pursuing opportunities for social innovation and the facilitation of social change that promote just social environments that respect and promote the dignity of human persons in private and public domains (Hill, Kothari & Shea, 2010). This process, which emphasizes the need for humanistic and just change of social norms and institutions oriented toward dignity, is conspicuously missing from current conceptualizations of phenomena at the nexus of social and institutional entrepreneurship (Dacin et al., 2010; Roper & Chaney, 2005; Smothers, Murphy, Novicevic & Humphreys, 2013).

We address this void by unpacking the concept of humanistic entrepreneurship by revealing its intertwined public and private entrepreneurial aspects and its focus on novel activist and just institutional solutions. The intent underlying those solutions is to resolve salient public and social problems that infringe upon human dignity and therefore require humanistic and equitable socio-cultural change (Bernier & Hafsi, 2007). The solutions stem not only from the actions that are likely to influence humanistic changes in societal and institutional policies and practices, but also from the responses to status quo initiatives that are not perceived as serving community interests (Klein, Mahoney, McGahan & Pitelis, 2010). Thus, humanistic entrepreneurship involves discovering, evaluating, and pursuing two kinds of opportunities for social innovation and the facilitation of social change: 1) those concerning justice in the non-market public domain and 2) those that are in opposition to entrenched practices that threaten humanistic orientation of social justice (Edwards, Jones, Lawton & Llewellyn, 2002).

Distinguishing the Concept

We can begin by distinguishing humanistic entrepreneurship from social entrepreneurship more generally. Conflicting definitions of social entrepreneurship abound in the literature, many of which are helpfully collected in Dacin, Dacin and Matear (2010, pp. 39-41). These authors categorize different definitions by whether they explain social entrepreneurship in terms of the characteristics of the individual entrepreneur, the sectors in which the entrepreneur operates, the processes and resources that they marshal, and finally the nature of their missions and outcomes. Further categorization is possible, especially in accordance with whether the definition of social entrepreneurship is normative or non-normative (i.e., whether social entrepreneurship is to be explained in moral or non-moral terms), whether social entrepreneurship is understood as necessarily non-profit seeking, and so on.

There are, however, certain important commonalities between the definitions: the vast majority of the definitions of social entrepreneurship share a *general* orientation, which enables us to distinguish humanistic entrepreneurship on the basis of its narrower focus. Whereas social entrepreneurship is often explained in terms of creating “social value” and resolving “social problems” in general, or insofar as it promotes morally desirable goals specified in a similarly general way, humanistic entrepreneurship is more restricted in scope. Namely, the humanistic entrepreneur aims specifically to protect and promote the dignity of human persons, and her entrepreneurial endeavor will count as successful, as *humanistic* entrepreneurship, to the degree it effectively achieves this humanistic goal. Thus, we can understand humanistic entrepreneurship as a species of social entrepreneurship.

All humanistic entrepreneurship is socially-purposeful, but not all social entrepreneurial ventures are humanistic ones. In some ways, humanistic entrepreneurship serves to extend social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurial ventures geared for social problems, but not geared for respecting and promoting dignity, are not humanistic entrepreneurial ventures. Similarly, entrepreneurial endeavors enacted to address social problems on the basis of moral conviction, even if successful, may not thereby count as humanistic entrepreneurship. A utilitarian social entrepreneurial venture that brings about greater utility than disutility does not necessarily *thereby* uphold and promote the dignity of human persons. What counts as respecting and promoting the dignity and sanctity of human beings in entrepreneurial contexts will be a matter for further exploration but will often involve challenging unjust social institutions and norms, which unfairly subordinate persons.

Humanistic entrepreneurial impact

One peculiar characteristic of the process by which humanistic entrepreneurship unfolds is that potential entrepreneurial gains in this non-market domain typically take the form of innovative change in social policy and/or practice (Kupferberg, 1998). These changes are manifested through social innovations that are designed to modify how existing institutions operate (Teahanke, 2008). As the success of these social innovations is often uncertain, their initiation often produces conflict among community constituents affected by them. Therefore, the support for humanistic entrepreneurs depends on their ability to realistically assess the situation, mobilize the necessary resources, and gain sufficient financial support to ensure the success of their innovative undertaking (Klein et al., 2010).

When the acceptability of their social justice missions are challenged by official institutions, humanistic entrepreneurs typically exhibit resistance toward these institutions (Coye,

Murphy & Spencer, 2010) either individually or collectively by mobilizing their allies (Morris, 1984). Such resistance is expressed as a visible action undertaken overtly with a request to correct a specific social injustice and to initiate humanistic and just social change. As this request is often idealized to the utopian level (Hollender & Einwohner, 2004), the desired social change, aimed at changing unjust social norms and related policies, typically stands in contrast to the interests of the powerful authority figures that tend to prevent social change and maintain institutional *status quo* (Ginzberg, 1994). These contrasting interests often trigger “power rituals” (Goss et al., 2011) of constituent groups acting as either opponents or proponents of the proposed social change (Trethewey, 1997).

Delineating the Process

To win supporters in this power struggle, humanistic entrepreneurs need to exhibit effective defiance of unjust public/institutional authority. Defiance requires the formation of alliances with powerful leaders who have capacity to mobilize the resources necessary to undertake collective action against unjust social norms and practices (Snow, 2004). It is critical that leaders have access to social and political resource networks and have established moral authority and social prestige among community constituents to mobilize necessary resources for successful collective action (Nepstad, Erickson & Bob, 2006). However, the effectiveness of resource mobilization for collective action depends on the extent to which stakeholders believe the entrepreneur’s humanistic goals are actually achievable. The dialectical interaction by which the humanistic entrepreneur tarries with unjust authorities, institutions, and norms, on the one hand, and stakeholders whose support they must win, on the other, resonates with Hegel’s (1988) view that social-historical change is animated by the clash (and the reconciliation) of conflicting normative outlooks. As such, we propose the aspects shown in Table 1 as key process elements of humanistic entrepreneurship.

Table 1. Humanistic Entrepreneurship Process Elements

Recognizing/Discovering Opportunity for Humanistic Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of values-laden problem in market or community related to human dignity • Activation of moral-based motivation related to problem
Assessing/Evaluating Opportunity for Humanistic Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situation assessment of existing institutions and potential resistance • Evaluating needs, available resources, and potential alliances with powerful leaders
Pursuing the exploitation of an opportunity for Humanistic Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing social innovations to modify existing institutions • Resource and constituency mobilization for collective action to modify existing institutions • Impact and success defined in terms of policy changes and effects on existing institutions.

In the following section, we provide the philosophical foundations of humanistic entrepreneurship to set the stage for developing a formal model that focuses on the motivational roots and accessibility of resources that need to be mobilized for effective humanistic entrepreneurship. We posit that humanistic entrepreneurs act as agents embedded in institutional environments and are morally motivated to mobilize the resources required to accomplish just social change and alleviate suffering of those experiencing the consequences of social injustice. From this perspective, it is the humanistic entrepreneur's moral conviction that makes his or her compassion an enduring prosocial motivation to recognize an opportunity to prompt collective action. We argue that Kantian moral theory provides not only a philosophical basis for humanistic entrepreneurship but is also a fecund resource for theorizing what is required for treating persons with the respect they are owed by virtue of their dignity.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF HUMANISTIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A natural philosophical basis for humanistic entrepreneurship is the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant. The concept of humanity plays a foundational role in Kant's moral thought: he says that humanity alone has absolute moral worth and is the ground of each person's dignity. For Kant, however, "humanity" is a term of art that refers to the rational nature possessed *by* human persons. Within the Kantian framework, the humanity of entrepreneurs and stakeholders alike consists in the possession of freedom, or pure practical reason (the humanistic entrepreneurs' ability to reason about how they ought to act in a way not exhaustively determined by the things they happen to desire). Applied to an entrepreneurial context, humanity consists of an entrepreneurs' innate rational capacity for morality and a capacity for autonomy, which they reason is shared by others (Kant, 1996, p. 557).

Kantian notions of humanity. In the Kantian approach, humanity is of absolute and incomparable worth wherever it is found (Kant, 1996, p. 528). In other words, humanity or rational nature cannot be understood to have value contingent on any person's (e.g., humanistic entrepreneur's) desires, affiliations, or creeds, nor does its moral significance vary on the basis of one's race, gender, or nationality. Rather, humanity is unconditionally valuable in and of *itself*. Accordingly, this implies that humanistic entrepreneurs must always treat persons (both themselves and others) as "ends in themselves" to be respected rather than as tools or instruments to "be used by this or that will at its discretion" (Kant, 1996, p. 79).

Within the Kantian lens, treating humanity as an end in itself, and never merely as a means, involves both positive and negative entrepreneurial duties. Negatively, humanity and its attendant dignity limits what entrepreneurs may do, implying that they may never compromise the dignity of rational nature for something of lesser value, even a socially desirable goal like widespread happiness. Kant sometimes puts this in terms of our humanity or personhood as being the source of our dignity, which requires respect. Kant (1996, p. 557) posits that:

... a human being regarded as a *person*, that is, as a subject of a morally practical reason, is exalted above any price; for as a person (*homo noumenon*) he is not to be valued merely as a means to the ends of others or even to his own ends, but as an end in itself, that is he possess a *dignity* (an absolute inner worth) by which he exacts respect for himself from all other rational beings in the world. He can

measure himself with any other being of this kind and value himself on a footing of equality with them.

Kant claims in this passage that persons possess dignity, or absolute worth, in virtue of their common “morally practical reason”, which may not be sacrificed for anything of merely relative value, or price. The humanity found in each person is the source of their strict and inviolable equality of status. Kant elsewhere claims that this equality of status is the ground of each person’s innate right to freedom, which ensures that each has the quality of “being her own master” (Kant, 1996, p. 394). For Kant, our humanity is an end in itself in a positive sense as well, which means that our rational capacity for morality is something that should be supported and developed. Accordingly, when humanistic entrepreneurs treat humanity as an end in itself in the positive sense, they take positive steps to promote conditions that enable persons to exercise their autonomy and rational nature on a free and equal basis.

In Kant’s view, humanity has an absolute value beyond any price and is therefore not exchangeable with other valuable things that have mere price. The implication for humanistic entrepreneurship is that its value is grounded not only in economic exchange of the entrepreneur’s work (i.e. price) but in the dignity of the entrepreneur and those affected by the entrepreneur’s work, both of which are deemed priceless (Pirson, Dierksmeier & Goodpaster, 2014). When humanistic entrepreneurship is understood in terms of Kantian theory, this implies that humanistic entrepreneurial ventures are those undertaken not solely in order to generate profit, but with a goal of fulfilling both the negative and positive requirements of the humanity formula itself. Therefore, humanistic entrepreneurship must foster conditions of genuine equality, respecting the dignity and rational nature of all stakeholders.

Dignity as a Foundation of Humanistic Entrepreneurship

With their awareness of human dignity, humanistic entrepreneurs choose to act morally with the intent of protecting and promoting a life of dignity with liberty of choice for themselves and for others that they could affect (Pirson et al., 2014). While pursuing transformative social innovations aimed at achieving effective and just societal ends, they resist unconditionally any denial of dignity for anyone affected by their venturing. Insofar as they attempt to protect and promote dignity, humanistic entrepreneurs will also “focus their efforts on solving social problems and stewarding a humanistic agenda thought prioritization of human and societal well-being” (Pirson et al., 2019: 134). Humanistic entrepreneurship is thus more narrowly circumscribed, and in a way more demanding, than social entrepreneurship more generally.

Effective humanistic entrepreneurship requires from the entrepreneur and the stakeholders both their internal accountability toward their individual selves and their external accountability to others because they are free actors that choose their actions assuming these actions are governed by moral and legal codes. In the realm of humanistic entrepreneurship an entrepreneur is viewed, like all other stakeholders, as a moral agent in virtue of his or her humanity (Fisk et al., 2019). In the Kantian perspective, humanistic entrepreneurs’ exercise of choice to set reasonable goals requires their capacity to reason in a morally practical way, because humans have a duty to develop and sustain their moral character towards moral perfection (i.e., to be a moral person). In other words, acting for the sake of humanity as an end in itself implies setting goals regulated by moral codes in environments in which each stakeholder of a humanistic entrepreneurial venture has a dignity-based responsibility to respect each other.

The entrepreneurial environment reflecting humanity and dignity becomes realistic, rather than idealistic, when the ethos of transparent accountability permeates the stakeholder culture in which authentic reasoning and sincere justification are dominant modes of discourse. When this kind of accountable humanity is distributed with dignity horizontally across stakeholders, it is likely to prevent the emergence of hypocrisy and distrust that could corrode entrepreneurial community (Pirson, 2012).

A MODEL OF HUMANISTIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

When an entrepreneur acts on social injustice, he or she is essentially a potential humanistic entrepreneur who is compassionate about initiating collective action. A humanistic collective action is any action that aims to protect and promote dignity, as well as improve the suffering as a whole (Wright, 2009). This conceptualization of collective action refers not only to group-level action but also to individual-level action that involves responding to collective disadvantages (Becker, 2012) through reflections of individual moral convictions about humanity and dignity (Mullen & Skitka, 2006). Previous empirical studies have found that moral conviction about issues related to social justice is a significant predictor of individual involvement in humanistic activism and solidarity in the public domain (e.g., Van Zomeren, Postmes & Spears, 2012). These studies have provided the initial empirical support for the integrated theory of moral conviction (ITMC) (for a comprehensive review of this theory, see Skitka, 2010).

An “integrated theory of moral conviction (ITMC) posits that attitudes held with strong moral conviction likely differ from equally strong but non-moral attitudes” (Skitka, 2010, p. 268). People with strong moral convictions “tend to believe that their personal moral standards ought to apply to everyone” (Skitka, Bauman & Lyttle, 2008, p. 304). The basic assumption of this theory is that moral convictions are specific attitudes that are “experienced as a unique combination of factual belief, compelling motive, and justification for action” (Skitka, 2010, p. 270). In the domain of humanistic entrepreneurship, moral convictions refer the extent to which these entrepreneurs feel that some issue (e.g., social injustice) and the related situation (e.g., institutions of social inequity) overlap with their individual core moral beliefs, which the individual presumes are justified as if they were objective and universally shared.

The Importance of Moral Conviction

When the humanistic entrepreneur’s sense of moral conviction is strong, they are more likely to develop an enduring compassion for the suffering of others and engage in collective action by joining movements that promote activism promising a better and just world (i.e., dignity will be protected). As these entrepreneurs with strong moral convictions are compassionately invested in efforts of helping suffering communities, their strong moral convictions are likely to influence their humanistic entrepreneurial action, which is aligned with their compassion for social justice (Lodewijkz, Kersten & Van Zomeren, 2008; Subasic & Reynolds, 2009; Van Zomeren, Postmes, Spears & Bettach, 2011). Murphy et al. (2018, p. 112) suggest that, “social enterprise begins with moral conviction that one can scale to a societal level.”

We use the integrated theory of moral conviction (ITMC) as a framework to explain the factors that influence the success or failure of humanistic entrepreneurship. Based on ITMC theory, we propose that the psychological mechanism of a humanistic entrepreneur’s moral conviction influences his or her compassionate identification with the suffering disadvantaged

groups. Specifically, we posit that it serves as the primary motivator for compassionate humanistic engagement in collective action to protect the dignity and improve the wellbeing of the members belonging to these groups suffering from the consequences of social injustice.

Mobilization and Collective Action

To explain the means by which humanistic entrepreneurs trigger collective action in pursuit of social justice based on their moral convictions and compassion, we integrate ITMC with resource mobilization theory (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). The main rationale of this theoretical integration is the assumption that “resource mobilization plays a fundamental role in the process of entrepreneurship” (Desa & Basu, 2013, p. 26). It should be noted, however, that resource mobilization theory posits that the considerations of moral conviction about and compassion against social injustice and the related collective action “do not take into account individuals’ more instrumental concerns about perceived costs and benefits of collective action ... and instrumental cost-benefit expectations of available resources” (Van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009, p. 649). Therefore, these expectations should be approached with the understanding that they can be either realistic or unrealistic.

We argue that compassionate humanistic entrepreneurs have both realistic and unrealistic control beliefs about the availability of resources that could be effectively mobilized for their collective action aimed at achieving social justice. Murphy et al. (2018) touch on this when they explain that “education and awareness that go beyond a social enterprise’s cause to also include specific aspects of the operational model help ensure realistic shared beliefs about supply-side and demand-side resources that enhance the quality of relationships with a fuller diversity of supporters” (p. 115). This line of reasoning is grounded in the research conducted by Zuckerman, Knee, Kieffer and Gagne (2004), who claim that individuals may be realistic in perceiving control over controllable events and, at the same time, be unrealistic in perceiving their control over uncontrollable events. High realistic control beliefs help them discriminate between controllable and uncontrollable situations and to act appropriately, while high unrealistic control beliefs prevent this discrimination and engender illusion of control and propensity to distort reality. Empirical studies have shown that the constructs of realistic and unrealistic control beliefs are independent; implying that these beliefs can be held simultaneously but need to be balanced (Zuckerman, Knee, Kieffer, Rawsthorne, & Bruce, 1996). Accordingly, we argue that the relationship between the humanistic entrepreneur’s moral conviction about social justice and the success of the social justice activity depend on the extent to which an entrepreneur’s realistic and unrealistic expectations about venture resource mobilization are balanced.

Entrepreneurship as Emancipation

The integrative lens of this argument underscores the entrepreneurship-as-emancipation perspective (Goss et al., 2011; Henry, Dana & Murphy, 2018; McMullen, 2011). This perspective “views entrepreneurial endeavors as change-creating efforts through which individuals or groups seek to break free from (and potentially break up) existing constraints within their economic, social, technological, cultural, and/or institutional environments” (Jennings, Jenning & Sharifian, 2016, p.81). Emphasizing the emancipating aspect of the entrepreneurship points to the relevance of the entrepreneur’s capacity to mobilize resources required for collective action to remove institutional constraints that suppress the suffering community’s autonomy. In other words, for the transformational and social change, in the form

policy changes and effects on existing institutions, to occur as a result of humanistic entrepreneurship, it is necessary for the entrepreneur’s embedded agency to trigger an organized process of emancipatory collective action (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). To model this process, we use moral conviction and resource mobilization theories of humanistic entrepreneurship. These theories hold that the success/failure of the entrepreneurship-as-emancipation process aimed at achieving social justice is influenced by the entrepreneur’s moral convictions and compassion. Moreover, as Figure 1 shows, the process is driven further by one’s realistic capacity to mobilize resources for effective collective action as well as the mobilization of constituencies (Murphy & Coombes, 2009) as a means to engage social injustice and to safeguard human dignity and well-being.

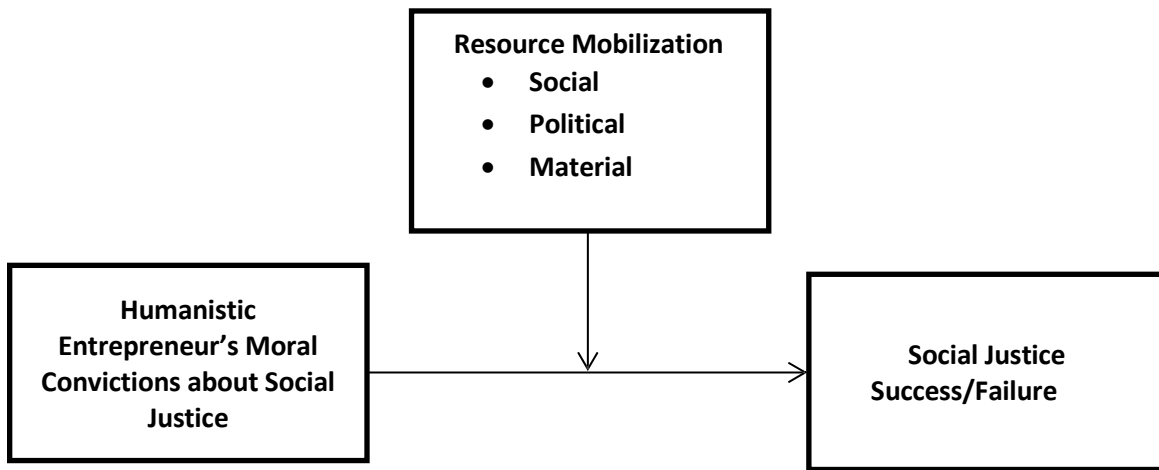


Figure 1. A Model of Humanistic Entrepreneurship

TESTING THE MODEL

We engaged in an intentional search for an exemplary case of humanistic entrepreneurship (Siggelkow, 2007). Several criteria were important to case section. First, we looked for a pioneering historical case that would meet our criteria of depicting emancipatory change pursued through humanistic entrepreneurship focused on addressing the universally salient social-justice issues. Second, we sought a case that richly and concretely depicts the embedded entrepreneurial agency engaged in the struggle to help emancipate slaves from the institutional power of others that controlled critical resources and hindered social change. Third, we required a case allowing for the full scrutiny of the humanistic entrepreneur’s moral conviction about, and compassion for, social justice, as well as capturing the mapping of the others’ power onto the constraints to resource mobilization for collective action supporting the emancipatory intent. We selected the historic case of Frances Wright to test our proposed model because it met all of these criteria.

Wright was a social venturing pioneer with a humanistic orientation that openly challenged institutions of social injustice. “Intense moral conviction was a key part of her leadership style” (Murphy et al. 2018, p. 106). We argue that her case, which is reflected in her life story (Morris, 1984), holds significant insights regarding the concept of humanistic entrepreneurship aimed at pursuing social justice ideals. While pursuing her ideals, Wright was

interested in creating both an economic and social value from her ventures because she allocated the economic gains from her plantation to paying for the freedom of the slaves that she had leased to work at her plantation.

Most of all, she wanted her plantation to serve as a viable and sustainable community-centered solution for the emancipation of slaves. In the following section, we explain how we captured the insights about her social mission by using a case study approach (Siggelkow, 2007) and conducting a form of narrative analysis (Rowlinson, Hassard & Decker, 2014) to examine how the thematic patterns of her moral convictions and her expectations about resource availability for collective actions of solidarity matched the modeled relationships.

Methodology

We test our theoretical model following Yin's (2009) proposed method of designing a single case study to analyze the constructs and their relationships in the proposed theoretical model shown in Figure 1. In sampling the material for our case study, we used the purposive sampling method informed by our theoretical development because our primary research goal was to understand the construct of humanistic entrepreneurship and to explain its likelihood of success or failure in achieving the goals of social justice. Specifically, we used the purposively sampled case data to examine this evidence and assess whether the thematic patterns derived from the data match the relationships of the proposed model. We follow Yin's (2009) suggestion that the higher the extent of this matching the stronger is the support for the predictive power of our theory. As the primary data used for our purposive sampling were textual documents, the main concern was to assess their validity using source criticism (see Novicevic et al., 2019). To provide this assessment, we corroborated these documents with the data from the other sources prior to conducting rich narrative analysis (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2004).

Multiple authors (e.g., Harvey et al., 2011; Humphreys et al., 2015; Novicevic et al., 2019) have utilized historic narrative analyses to successfully inform theory (Decker, 2016), as historical evidence can be used to “develop, modify, and ... test theories” (Kipping & Usdiken, 2014, p. 572). Our narrative analysis was grounded in the “logic of historical sense-generation” by exemplary thinking (Rosen, 2012, p. 48). Exemplary thinking posits that, “events in the past ‘teach’ general rules that can be applied to the present” (Rosen, 2012, p. 53). The primary purpose of the narrative analysis using exemplary historical thinking is to discern the thematic patterns and match them to the proposed relationships by juxtaposing the sampled evidence and the constructs of the proposed model. The goal of the narrative analysis is to develop an explanation based on the comparison of the case data and the proposed relationships. The findings of narrative analysis resulting from this comparison will support our model if they provide not only a credible explanation and evaluation whether the sampled evidence matches the proposed model (Humphreys et al., 2015), but also an in-depth understanding of the humanistic entrepreneurship construct (Perren & Ram, 2004).

Narrative Analysis

We conducted a narrative analysis (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009) of Wright's humanistic entrepreneurship-as-emancipation. By examining the sequenced frames that narrate her life (Shamir & Eilam, 2005), individual actions, and social interactions (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995), we analyzed how they unfolded to create subsequent sequenced opportunities for emancipating collective action that she triggered. In particular, we examined how her social interactions,

motivated by her moral convictions, contributed to the initial success and later failure of her plantation venture that she had undertaken with the humanistic mission of emancipating slaves. We investigated how her social networking initially contributed to the emergence of emancipating collective action, but later failed to trigger a process of transformational social change because she was unrealistic about the resources that she could mobilize for her venture of emancipating slaves. The data that we used for this narrative analysis is sampled not only from the books and articles written about Wright and her humanistic venture aimed at social justice, but also from biographical sources (e.g., letters) and archival data from Wright's activities. When analyzing these data, the primary focus of our analysis was to capture and examine the emancipatory nature of her humanistic entrepreneurial action.

In our narrative analysis, we used a four-step socio-historical procedure (Novicevic, Harvey, Buckley & Adams, 2008; Novicevic, Humphreys, Buckley, Cagle & Roberts, 2011) of examining archival data. Our first step was to delineate the dimensions of humanistic entrepreneurship as the primary concept that guided our analysis of the archival and secondary data (Hill, 1993). Our second step was to organize, list, and sample the archival and other documents for our narrative analysis, such as her letters, books and articles. The sampling and listing of these documents are conducted with the objective of determining the feasible scope of the archival data that should be used for the narrative analysis (Brooks, 1969). Our third step was to establish correspondence between the materials sampled from the key archives, books, and articles and the dimensions of the guiding construct (Stieg, 1988). Our final step was to synthesize the findings to assess the extent to which they mapped onto the construct (i.e., humanistic entrepreneurship) and supported the model that guided our archival research (Conway, 1986).

The main outcome of our narrative analysis, which was conducted by applying the socio-historical procedure to Wright's life-story (Shamir & Eilam, 2005), is a narrative explanation (Humphreys et al., 2015) of her actions and their impact on the success and failure of her venture. To construct this explanation, we explored Wright's beliefs and attitudes that brought about her actions and identified the thematic patterns in her life-story. This analysis addresses our proposition that her actions stemmed from her moral convictions on which she decided to act by mobilizing resources necessary for the implementation of her social venture.

EXAMINING THE HISTORIC CASE

Frances Wright was born in a wealthy Scottish family in 1795. Frances lost her parents as a young child and went with her brother and her sister to live with relatives (Eckhardt, 1984). In 1818, a substantial inheritance that Wright and her siblings received from her uncle allowed her to travel with her sister across the United States for several years. Her memories from this trip inspired her to write her first book, which was widely read when published upon her return to Europe. Wright's visit to America proved to be instrumental in her quest for social justice, as it engendered her strong moral convictions that changed her view of the American reality and inspired her entrepreneurial venture in the Antebellum South (Palmer, 1973).

Recognizing a Problem

Wright viewed slavery as a stain on American democracy, which she perceived as closest of all to the utopian ideal of a socially equitable society in terms of freedom. "Not only had she written in high praise of the republic, she had also published two books, of which President Thomas

Jefferson had spoken admiringly. In her view, “the sight of slavery is revolting everywhere, but to inhale the impure breath of its pestilence in the free winds of America is odious beyond all that the imagination can conceive.” (Wright D’Arusmont, 1972, p. 267).

Wright’s moral conviction was that privileged people were given an inequitable share of societal benefits. Specifically, she believed that social justice could only be achieved through just social change. Therefore, Wright moved to the United States in 1825 to advocate for the emancipation of slaves and thus became the first female humanistic entrepreneur in the U.S. She began her advocacy efforts by writing a proposal to congress on how to abolish slavery. Her proposal encountered weak congressional acceptance (Stiller, 1972), but she met Robert Owen while in Washington D.C. and was inspired by the religious commune he had established in New Harmony, Indiana (Morris, 1984). She subsequently invested her family inheritance into purchasing a 1,000 acre plantation in Tennessee where she founded a cooperative labor commune called Nashoba, to educate and employ former slaves who could eventually buy back their freedom.

Taking Entrepreneurial Action

Wright formed a partnership with Owen’s manager George Flower to manage the Nashoba plantation (Baderman, 2005). As a radical humanistic idealist, she was convinced that her venture would flourish in the environment of autonomy and its constituents (i.e., leased formerly enslaved persons) would achieve complete freedom within five years (Wright, 1844, p. 29). During that time period, these free persons would be given a basic education, “a real moral, intellectual and industrial apprenticeship, to prepare them to use that freedom well” (Morris, 1984, p. 101).

Wright’s commitment to her humanistic entrepreneurial venture was bolstered by letters of support that she received from several iconic historical figures of American antebellum politics who were eager to observe the implications of Wright’s endeavor (Madison, 1865). When she published her plan for the settlement, it attracted national attention, including that of Jefferson and Madison. (Morris, 1984). With access to the leaders of exceptional political power, Wright assumed she had mobilized sufficient resources to carry out her vision for racial equality by establishing a self-sustaining commune in Tennessee.

However, several of Wright’s assumptions were unrealistic. Without U.S. congressional support and governmental funding, Wright’s plan for the abolition of slavery had to be implemented with scarce resources as a self-sustaining entrepreneurial venture. Furthermore, Wright’s financial plan was unrealistic – not only that she neglected the facts that the price of cotton dropping due to the growth of textile mills that emerged due to the industrial revolution, but also that the land where Nashoba was located lacked fertile soil (Murphy et al., 2018). Therefore, although the number of people on new plantation was growing, Wright’s land could not produce a sufficient crop to maintain financial viability. Wright’s assumption regarding her ability to mobilize material resources was also very unrealistic, as she expected a portion of her support to come from charitable donations that would supply former slaves and money for her settlement (Wright, 1827).

Wright expected that she could easily persuade enslaved individuals to work in her Nashoba plantation like Harmonists in New Harmony with the notion “that their labor was for their personal redemption, the relief of their race, and the practical education of their children” (Morris, 1984, p. 104). However, her humanistic entrepreneurial undertaking was so radical in envisioning social justice, that not only did her contemporaries doubt the viability of the venture,

even the people she was trying to free were hesitant to commit to the endeavor. Only Wright's educational plan was implemented with success, as "the Education Society had almost four hundred students, most of them from the community but some from other parts of the country" (Morris, 1984, p. 120).

Entrepreneurial Exit

A major loss for Nashoba was George Flower's return to his wife and Wright's contraction of malaria. As a result, she delegated oversight of the plantation to her sister Camilla and a few others. Unfortunately, by this time the venture had gained an immoral reputation and had begun to fall apart (Morris, 1984). Wright acknowledged that Nashoba failed as a cooperative communal experiment aimed at ending slavery, both in economic and social terms. Recognizing formally the failure of the community, Wright, her sister, and several community leaders moved to Robert Owen's New Harmony (Ironically, slavery never seemed to be a significant problem to Owen - see Humphreys et al., 2016), leaving Nashoba to its trustees (Payne-Gaposchkin, 1975; Trollope, 1832; Wright, 1827). She did not abandon the formerly enslaved persons at Nashoba, but instead transported them to Haiti (Miller & Bridwell-Bowles, 2005). In the late 1840s, Wright settled in Cincinnati, Ohio and lived the rest of her life before she died in 1852 (Egerton, 1977).

DISCUSSION

We used Wright's pioneering venture as an exemplary case to test our proposed theoretical model of humanistic entrepreneurship because she stated compassionately that her moral mission was to influence radical social change that would end the social injustice of slavery. Wright understood that she needed to mobilize both social and material resources for the viability of her venture. By building a broad social network of access to influential public figures such as Jefferson, Madison, Jackson and Lafayette, Wright initiated significant political, but modest material, support for her social venture.

With her social venture, she wanted to prove that a humanistic venture could model exemplary social change if unjust constraints were removed. Unfortunately, Wright had persistent unrealistic control beliefs leading about her ability to garner sufficient resources and mobilize vital constituencies to form a viable operation. As a result of her utopian idealism, her humanistic social venture eventually failed in spite of her exceptional compassion for the suffering community of enslaved people in antebellum America.

Wright's humanistic entrepreneurship was based on her exploration, creation, and exploitation of a promising opportunity to pursue a unique form of social venturing. She opposed the extant practices that in her view unfairly affected "broader structures of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender" (Gooden & Portillo, 2011, p. 170). Wright was aware that her pursuit required diverse resource mobilization from leaders who were powerful, yet tolerant toward social change. Wright's act of defiance was embedded in the collective action embodied by her social venture, which challenged the entrenched interests of a more powerful group of constituents. As "Frances Wright always chose the path of most resistance" (Travis, 1993, p. 392), her venturing never compromised her strong moral conviction about the supremacy of social justice. Her rigid convictions and enduring compassion sometimes enabled and in other times unfortunately limited her ability to recognize the constraints at work and take a more

flexible action when mobilizing resources thus preventing collective inaction and engendering indifference about social inequity that she targeted (Nichols, 2010).

Frances Wright was a compassionate pioneer of humanistic entrepreneurship who pursued collective action against institutionalized social injustice. She was convinced that social power was unfairly distributed within American society during the early decades of its independence due to the unjust institutionalized practice of slavery. At the individual level, Wright faced the risk of failure associated with her social acts to confront unjust policies and societal norms to bring about divergent change. At the collective level, she was compassionately concerned not only with the need to improve the overall well-being of people discriminated within the society, but also with the need to implement equitable practices that could sustain the solutions for improved societal welfare (Snow, 2004).

CONCLUSION

Our model posits that the humanistic entrepreneur's moral conviction about social justice triggers his or her prosocial and emotional compassion for those that he or she perceives are suffering from the outcomes of social injustice. The humanistic entrepreneur's perceptions may be realistic or unrealistic relative to his or her ability to mobilize the necessary resources for collective action aimed at alleviating suffering from social injustice. This sense of reality depends on the entrepreneur's assessment of the cues in the institutional environment signaling the pragmatic and moral legitimacy of the intended social-justice venture.

The concept of humanistic entrepreneurship contributes to our understanding by underscoring the complementarity of social justice and social entrepreneurship as a means of targeting social transformation. It serves as a distinct way to extend the domain of social entrepreneurship into the realms of dignity, justice, and the institutions that are germane to those aspects of civilized society. This mission of humanistic entrepreneurs revolves around ending the institutionalized injustice to create social value and improve the overall well-being of their community and society through policy and/or practice amendment. However, bringing about social change of a broader scope often requires overcoming resistance of powerful others and exhibiting defiance toward the institutions within which they are situated. Future research should investigate additional moderators (i.e., institutional resistance, entrepreneur's experience) of the relationship between the humanistic entrepreneur's moral conviction about social justice and social justice success/failure.

The case of Frances Wright defiantly admonished the oppressive institution of slavery in the U.S. during the antebellum era provides valuable lessons regarding how realistic and unrealistic control beliefs about collective action can undermine success and contribute to failure of social justice pursuits. She was realistic concerning the difficulties that she would face in her attempts to end slavery by providing what she had expected to be an exemplary practice of social justice. In retrospect, it is evident that she needed to balance her unrealistic and realistic control beliefs about diverse resources that needed to converge to enable her actions.

Wright's inability to balance the realistic and unrealistic expectations about the social support needed challenged her identity as "an idealistic biographer of America, to a failed utopian reformer, to a vociferous advocate for the changes she saw necessary in American society" (Crawley, 2007, p. 49). Her exemplary case teaches that humanistic entrepreneurs should resist the temptation of extreme idealism, which can lead them to underestimate the power of institutionalized social norms. Rather, humanistic entrepreneurs should leverage shared moral convictions, which "are vital to their propensity to lead risky ventures" (Murphy et al.

2018, p. 115), with realistic expectations about adequate mobilization of social, political, and material resources to successfully achieve their mission of social justice.

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