

Addressing Inequalities in Mental Health Care by Utilizing a Social Entrepreneurship Model: A Proposal for an Honors Portfolio in Interdisciplinary Studies

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Introduction

Social entrepreneurship works to address rapid social change and create effective and meaningful solutions to target underserved gaps in the marketplace. When utilizing cross-cultural strategies, social entrepreneurship can be applied to the mental health field to address discrepancies and provide better services to support disadvantaged individuals. Social entrepreneurship is a viable solution to combat intercultural differences and provide more focused attention to areas of the mental health sector that are not adequately, or efficiently, meeting the diverse needs of those who are struggling. Applying these strategies can be a catalyst for creating systemic change in how mental health might be destigmatized and approached from a preventative standpoint. Social entrepreneurs are well-suited to take on this challenge given their flexibility to adopt and employ a multidisciplinary approach to building ethical, social ventures that consider aspects such as cultural competency right from the start.

Background

Entrepreneurship is an important contributor to economic growth and development. Social entrepreneurship, a sub-discipline, focuses more specifically on addressing issues often overlooked by other corporate businesses. In addition to contributing meaningful social impact, pursuing entrepreneurship has proven to be a feasible career path as demonstrated by research conducted by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) on indicators of growth and opportunity in this field for 2019/2020. From their most recent statistical analysis, they found

that the United States has grown its TEA (Total Early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity) from 11% in 2001 to 17% in 2019 (GEM, 2020, p. 59). As this number continues to increase, there are viable opportunities to leverage this trend to access start-up grants, accelerator programs, and various other forms of support in order to pursue social entrepreneurship successfully. Policies in the United States have also reflected this shift through an increase in support for individuals looking to take an entrepreneurial route. Recent tax cuts and ongoing deregulation at the federal level are examples of the types of encouragement available to support business growth and entrepreneurship (GEM, 2020).

In contrast to standard entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, as a field of study and work, is important as creative and socially conscious leaders look to address problems that are overlooked by business, governmental and non-governmental organizations (Zahara, 2009, pp. 519-532). As Alex Nicholls explores in his book *Social Entrepreneurship: New Models of Sustainable Social Change*, there is a demand for these change-makers in order to address issues such as inequality, government inefficiencies in the public service market as well as global crises in both the environmental and health industries. He states, “Driven by a new breed of pragmatic, innovative, and visionary social activists and their networks, social entrepreneurship borrows from an eclectic mix of business, charity, and social movement models to reconfigure solutions to community problems and deliver sustainable new social value” (Nicholls, 2006, p. 2).

By recognizing that individuals’ experiences are dependent on several factors, social entrepreneurs are well positioned to understand how services such as preventative health care can serve the people who need it most. My career vision is to start a new social venture that not only addresses these factors, but creates sustainable systemic change for the way mental health is perceived, treated and destigmatized. Social entrepreneurship in this field has the potential to

create space for positive change through previously overlooked techniques due to a lack of creative “cross-pollination.”

In the following example, standard models of mental health care show disparities among patients and the role ‘culture’ can play. This is just one example of how by taking a multidisciplinary approach, a deeper understanding can be gained in order to then proactively address the barriers facing distinct groups of individuals, and how this might be better addressed through a social enterprise (Carpenter-Song et al., 2009). In a recent analysis of disparities among Americans seeking mental health support, Hernandez et al. found that many racial-ethnic minority groups have less access to care compared to European Americans with similar needs. An important takeaway from this research was the solidification of how important the role culture plays in this outcome. “Cultural differences influence mental health help-seeking strategies, affecting variables such as problem identification, problem definition and treatment or provider choices” (Hernandez et al, 2015, pp. 1046-47). This impacts the definition and understanding of what a problem is and what solutions may be effective or acceptable. By not addressing these differences, misdiagnosis and mistreatment can occur.

New social ventures can learn from this, and can become a culturally competent organization from the beginning in order to adapt and respond to the needs of a particular community, creating services that are accessible, supportive and developed in conjunction with the community members themselves. This approach, further explored by Hernandez et al., “Avoids a tendency to exoticize culture by considering it only as a factor affecting the care of racial-ethnic minority populations rather than as a dynamic set of factors that have a pervasive influence on important aspects of all individuals’ everyday experience” (Hernandez et al., 2015, p. 1049). Throughout the iterative process of developing a social venture, social entrepreneurs have opportunities to communicate directly with niche markets in order to adequately deliver

programs and services that consider discrepancies and work to provide socially important services, like mental health care.

Social entrepreneurship is well-suited to address the niche market of mental health care, as according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, “Mental disorders account for one of the largest and fastest-growing categories of the burden of disease with which health systems must cope, often accounting for a greater burden than cardiovascular disease and cancer” (OECD, 2016, para. 1). Through innovative and creative ways of approaching both global and local issues, social entrepreneurs have the ability to address this gap.

An example of a social venture in this field is Chris Underhill’s organization BasicNeeds which was founded in 2000 and is based out of the United Kingdom. Underhill, a serial entrepreneur, founded BasicNeeds after experiencing first-hand a lack of mental health services within developing countries. He created a renewable model that focuses on “Training primary care doctors, nurses, traditional healers, and community health workers to diagnose and treat mental illnesses in areas where there are no psychiatrists” (Skoll, 2013, para. 3). Underhill’s model also works to destigmatize mental illness by providing health workers with additional training on how to support patients’ reintegration back into society productively through employment programs. BasicNeeds is both innovative and sustainable by working to address economic, social, and medical wellbeing for these communities and empowers individuals with tools and training they can utilize in order to thrive and be successful independently.

The need for social entrepreneurship in the mental health field has been justified through various levels of research and scholarly publications. A recent study done by The World Economic Forum and the Harvard School of Public Health found that by 2030 the largest economic burden will be mental illness, as projected total global costs will go from US\$2.5

trillion in 2010 to US\$6.0 trillion by 2030 (Bloom et al., 2011, pp. 26-30). In addition, the World Health Organization (WHO) found that there is a rising demand and urgency for social entrepreneurs in the health sector, stemming back from the establishment of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion in 1986. Health promotion is “The process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health” (WHO, 1968, para. 3). Due to challenges including urbanization, social and demographic changes to work, learning, family and community life, as well as public health emergencies, the need has increased significantly for social innovators to use cross-pollination techniques from different sectors to create meaningful social change.

“Challenging the health sector in their inventive, opportunistic way, social entrepreneurs are particularly good at identifying and engaging the entire cast of characters necessary to effect change on a scale that develops its own momentum and staying power” (Drayton et al., 2006, para. 7). Further, author David Bornstein confirms the benefits of social entrepreneurship in his book *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*. He says, “Decades of failed development policies and discouraging wars on poverty, drugs, and crime have led many to conclude that, while governments must be held responsible for translating the will of the citizenry into public policy, they are not necessarily the most effective vehicles, and certainly are not the sole legitimate vehicles, more the actual delivery of many social goods, and they are often less inventive than entrepreneurial citizen organizations” (Bornstein, 2007, p. 8).

Social entrepreneurship can be defined as the pursuit of an individual or organization utilizing business prowess in an innovative way to “Improve the situation of segments of the population that are excluded, marginalized, or suffering and are themselves not capable of changing this situation” (Saebi, 2018, para. 1). The characterization of social entrepreneurship stems from two core missions of social and economic value creation. While there are countless iterations of this in practice, the most common understanding of social entrepreneurship in action

combines these in a hybrid nature in order to create meaningful and sustainable positive change and social value.

Providing social value most often relates to fulfilling basic and long-standing needs. Certo and Miller explore this concept further, particularly how certain niche businesses gravitate towards social entrepreneurship as a way of innovatively finding creative solutions to address the unmet needs of certain members of society, for example, focusing on things like food, water, shelter, education, and medical services (Certo & Miller, 2008, p. 267). Social entrepreneurship is designed to serve these people through the nature of their independent agency, attention to filling unoccupied social gaps, and utilization of creative resource allocation strategies in order to proactively address specific needs.

While contributing in many positive ways to communities locally and globally, a challenge that faces social entrepreneurs is balancing social wealth with the desire to make profits and maintain economic efficiency. While some social ventures choose a non-profit or charity route, others opt to also create economic value through income generation. A social entrepreneur will still be defined as such, as long as their mission continues to put social value first and private gains second, and there are a wide variety of ventures that balance these varying configurations throughout the world. In addition, performance measurement is another way to distinguish social from commercial entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurs use creative and often qualitative data, such as surveys, in order to gage the value and reach of a venture. This can pose as a challenge for social entrepreneurs seeking to find funding (for example through “angel investors”), prove their performance, and overall justify the need and benefit of their particular work. While this can be daunting for some, perseverance and resilience is key in order to overcome challenges and continue doing incredibly important work.

Throughout my undergraduate career, I've had to define my purpose when curating my own path in Interdisciplinary Studies. By having the opportunity to follow my interests and be open to my own curiosity, I have been able to define my values as a student and individual. Bringing a variety of disciplines together has led me to ask more questions and become increasingly curious about the current gaps and needs in the market for services such as preventative mental health care. I believe that my personal experience as an international student at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa has also inspired me to observe my surroundings and look more closely at how culture plays a role in an individual's experience when it comes to preventative mental health care. I have come to appreciate and understand how important access to this type of support truly is and believe that by taking a holistic approach and merging disciplines, aspiring social entrepreneurs like myself, can solve challenging global problems in a creative, innovative and sustainable way.

This experience has been incredibly important to me as I've been able to see the culmination of my studies come together throughout this process. Without foundations in Anthropology, I would not be able to consider the ways in which culture contributes to discrepancies in fields such as mental health care. Through self-directed reading and research in Sociology and Ethnic Studies, I have been able to develop a critical lens through which I can view societies as a whole and question how systems oppress some individuals over others. And through practical and hands-on experience in the development of business and entrepreneurial models, I am able to see how social ventures can create meaningful impact on an individual, community, and global level.

The Portfolio and its Components

The purpose of my portfolio is to demonstrate my understanding of the value social entrepreneurship can bring to address barriers and create positive change in the mental health care field. A portfolio format is suitable as it is informed by the knowledge and skills I have developed throughout my Interdisciplinary Studies BA degree in *Intercultural Marketing*, which is the synthesis of Entrepreneurship, Marketing, Anthropology, Sociology, and Peace Studies. In the future, I plan to use this portfolio as a component of my application for graduate studies in the field of Clinical Psychology and Social Entrepreneurship.

In particular, my passion lies in improving access to preventative mental health care through models such as creative resource allocation and wealth redistribution to address inequality and injustice. The three components outlined below reflect a theme of social entrepreneurship and mental health care through their cross-pollination approach to considering both social needs and business foundations in order to address current gaps in the market. All components will fall within the scope of this theme and demonstrate my ability and understanding of these concepts through a hands-on manner.

Components

1. *Social Enterprise Business Model*

For this component, I will work with a mentor in the entrepreneurship field on further developing and refining a business plan and marketing model that I have already begun to draft. The social venture looks to utilize resource allocation strategies in order to provide counselling services for youth and young adults in Canada through a more accessible and consolidated platform. Currently, there are discrepancies between individuals needing services and registered counsellors looking to fill their availability, and the goal of this venture is to bridge that gap. In

addition, utilizing AI-enabled software will make it easy for pre-calculating insurance coverage, offering sliding-scale rates for most at-risk individuals, and optimizing the overall benefits coverage for each client will be at the core of this business model. As I am currently in the process of developing a funding pitch for this venture, I will document this process. My experience taking BUS 312: Principles of Marketing, MKT 372: Marketing for New Ventures, and MGT 320: Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship provided a solid foundation of knowledge for this project and I will use skills from Anthropology, Sociology and Peace Studies to create a model that aligns with ethical and social considerations which define its role as a social venture. This is important because businesses have an impact on culture, and personal bias can often inadvertently lead to discrepancies in levels of service or care. By focusing on a more inclusive approach and prioritizing the voices and issues of minorities and disadvantaged individuals, new ventures have the power to become a catalyst for social change.

This component will include a write-up of the business plan, organized by an ethical framework to encourage thoughtful reflections on how this business will address the issues currently most prominent in the preventative mental health sector.

The model will aim to answer these fundamental questions

1. What is the purpose of this business and who does it serve?
 1. Target market
 2. Market segment
 3. Current trends in business
 4. Gaps in the market
2. What is an ethically appropriate social entrepreneurship strategy that will ensure results that contribute to positive social change?
3. How does this business challenge ideas of capitalism while functioning and being a sustainable model?
4. What value does this business offer to clients, staff and the surrounding community?
5. How does this new venture consider diversity and inclusion when establishing its values?

6. What are the major components of this business? (ie. staff training, equipment/physical space, funding, etc.)

2. Analysis of a Successful and Impactful Social Venture

This component will consist of a written analysis of a successful social venture and its impact on social change. Through the use of theoretical frameworks I will offer a critique and in-depth deconstruction of its business model and mission. This analysis will aim at gaining a better understanding of the barriers and challenges new social entrepreneurs face when establishing a new venture. It will also include research on the possible repercussions of this model, and any corresponding data available on its ability to uphold social and cultural values while contributing to economic growth.

An analysis will help me to better understand the current economic climate in which I hope to contribute to in my future research and entrepreneurial endeavors. I will pull critical-thinking skills and strategies from my previous coursework, particularly from ANTH 429: Anthropology of Consumer Cultures, SOC 418: Women and Work, and MGT 320: Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship. My knowledge from this eclectic mix of courses will allow me to draw upon my understanding of both social science practices and business foundations in order to approach the analysis in a unique and well-rounded way.

This research will be conducted in conjunction with HON 496: Senior Honors Project and HON 499: Honors Directed Reading / Research in order to collaborate with my academic advisors and professors. The purpose of this paper will be to use existing literature to analyze what aspects of this social venture contribute to its success and overall impact on the economy and surrounding community. I will also research the existing climate this venture operates in to better understand potential barriers and challenges I can be aware of before pursuing my own

business goals. The paper will be 10-12 pages in length focusing on a mental health social venture which will be decided upon by the start of the Spring 2021 semester.

3. *Internship Project: Preventative Mental Healthcare Resource Handbook for International Students*

This component will be done in conjunction with the International Student Services (ISS) office at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. I have interned at the ISS office for four years and have had the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and challenges international students face when coming to the United States for school. In particular, the additional burden cultural difference can have on international students as they attempt to navigate and become more familiar with a new environment and/or language.

As an international student myself, I feel I have a unique perspective that I can use to help create an insightful handbook for students. This component will aim at creating a tool that addresses the cultural, physical, and mental barriers preventing students from accessing needed preventative mental healthcare in Hawai‘i, and provide information about what resources are available to them. My goal is to create a handbook that will be an easy to read and concise manual, made in collaboration with the ISS office that looks to address the preventative mental healthcare needs of international students. This handbook will be provided to ISS with the recommendation to make it accessible to students in an online format so that the information is available to both existing students and those planning to attend the university in the future.

I believe that this information will provide students with a better sense of support and allow them to feel capable and comfortable making choices that contribute to their overall wellbeing while attending the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. It is my hope that this component

will also open a dialogue between university services and students so that they can better understand the challenges that international students face.

Proposed Handbook Component Element

1. Information about the campus Counselling and Student Development Center (CSDC)
2. List of considerations when accessing off-campus options (ex. explanation of health insurance coverage)
3. Outline of confidentiality and privacy protocols for counselling in the U.S. and addressing possible stigmas associated with mental health
4. Addressing culture shock, homesickness, social expectations and proactive measures students can take to mitigate challenges they face
5. Mentorship programs / on-campus clubs available to build community / wellness workshops or mindfulness classes, websites, tips, etc.

Timeline

Timeline	To Accomplish			
	Component 1: <i>Social Enterprise Business Model</i>	Component 2: <i>Social Venture Critical Analysis</i>	Component 3: <i>ISS Internship Handbook</i>	Honors Requirements
Fall 2020	<p>Continue refinement on existing business model</p> <p>Meet with advisor to ensure accuracy and quality of model</p> <p>Complete component by end of Fall 2020 semester</p>	<p>Begin research on social ventures that might be of interest for analysis</p> <p>Compile literature and begin review</p>	<p>Continue ISS internship</p> <p>Meet with ISS to propose handbook project</p> <p>Create timeline to begin work on handbook in January 2021</p>	<p>Take HON 499</p> <p>Complete honors portfolio proposal</p> <p>Turn in advisor form</p> <p>Confirm and turn in committee form</p>
Spring 2021	<p>Make necessary adjustments if needed</p>	<p>Work with academic advisor to create timeline for component</p> <p>Focus research on chosen social venture</p> <p>Begin analysis paper</p> <p>Finish full first draft of paper</p>	<p>Continue ISS internship</p> <p>Begin research and compile resources for handbook</p> <p>Handbook formatting</p> <p>Complete bulk of component in conjunction with HON 496 (WI)</p>	<p>Take HON 496</p> <p>Take HON 494</p> <p>Begin final reflection paper</p>
Summer 2021	<p>Make necessary adjustments or revisions if needed</p> <p>Submit completed component</p>	<p>Revise and edit paper with support of advisor(s)</p> <p>Submit completed component</p>	<p>Final edits of handbook</p> <p>Present to ISS</p> <p>Submit completed component</p>	<p>Edit, revise and complete final reflection paper</p> <p>Meet with Honors advisor and academic mentors</p> <p>Submit completed portfolio</p> <p>Present at showcase</p>

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