

A view to entrepreneurship and women from institutions theory perspective

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Summary

This conceptual paper aims to present entrepreneurship and women through the lens of institutions and organizations theory (Scott, 2008). Organizations theory is an excellent frame of theory to interpret entrepreneurship as an institution and how it has evolved considering the gender roles changes that occurred in the United States and within the Puerto Rican context.

Keywords: women, entrepreneurship, institutional theory

Entrepreneurship as an institution

According to Scott (2008), institutions are “multifaceted, durable social structures made up of symbolic elements, social activities and material resources” (p. 48). Given this definition, we consider entrepreneurship an institution for two main reasons. The first one is because entrepreneurship is a social structure. Entrepreneurship is defined as “a powerful force to create economic and social mobility” (Timmons & Spinelly, 2009, p. 7). The second one is because it is durable. Entrepreneurship existed since the need to provide a product or service existed. Entrepreneurship is then, more than an option for self-employment. It is an institution by itself. Following Scott (2008) definition of institutions, we can identify the symbolic elements that compose entrepreneurship. Symbolic elements are comprised in three main categories: regulative, normative and cultural cognitive. The regulative aspects of entrepreneurship are clearly established, since entrepreneurship serves to fulfill a need and at the same time promote economic growth. There are a variety of rules related to new venture creation such as permits, legal structures, labor legislation, taxation, etc. that potentiate, restrict and legitimate entrepreneurship as an institution. The normative elements are marked by a moral standard. We

tend to visualize the entrepreneur as a moral entity and honorable person, and we see the virtue of providing value to people. On the normative side, there are many standards of conduct and related associations that serve as a benchmark for conduct. The cultural and cognitive elements refer to the specific images, portraits or icons and general understanding of what an entrepreneur should be and how it should behave. This is the entrepreneur as actor with a script in a stage. For example, we tend to describe entrepreneurs as charismatic leaders, motivated, who take calculated risks, energetic, and creative (Schermerhorn, 2011). The social activities related to entrepreneurship are innovation, production and intermediation processes, this is, the entrepreneur creates a new concept, produces it and serves as intermediary to deliver it. The material resources employed to deliver the entrepreneurial activities are human resources, capital, knowledge and experience, among others.

Gender issues in entrepreneurship

Gender is a major consideration that polarizes entrepreneurship in two types of institutions: men entrepreneurship and women entrepreneurship. This is, from a society's perspective there are two different types of institutions, one fostering men and another one fostering women. This is, there are two institutional forms to entrepreneurship: women and men. The entrepreneurship institution has a socially constructed, stereotyped categorization and archetype for the entrepreneur roles. This is because men entrepreneurship and women entrepreneurship are seen as having distinctive symbolic components, social activities and resources. In the following section, I make an analysis, based on current theories of the normative, regulative and cultural cognitive elements applied to women entrepreneurship institution.

Normative elements- Values and norms

The normative pillar includes values and norms that define goals and objectives. Some values or norms are applicable to all members of a collectivity, whereas other applies to selected types of actors or positions, giving rise to roles. Roles are conceptions of appropriate goals and activities for particular individuals or specified social positions. Those are prescriptions on how to behave (Scott, 2008). The Social Roles and Labor Division Theory explains in great extend the roles polarization in entrepreneurship for women. This theory states that the work environment reproduces the same social culture from homes where men remain as the absolute power (Cabrera, Sauer & Tomas-Hunt, 2009). For example, in Puerto Rico the prototype of employment for women is nurse or secretary (US Census, 2009), also, women engage as entrepreneur mainly on service business or food related business (Santiago Castro & Pisani, 2010, Meléndez & Rodríguez, 2013). These roles have been deeply internalized by women. For example, the motherhood and sacrifice discourse (Stone 2007) and the super woman construct (Steiner & Adair 1986, Melendez, 2011), where women have high expectations in a multiplicity of roles. Women not following the prescribed stereotype tend to feel remorse (Barnett, 2007; Melendez, 2011).

Cultural-cognitive elements

The specific image, portrait or icon of an entrepreneur is a man. Entrepreneurship is still mainly viewed as a men's activity (Watson & Newby, 2007, Carter & Marlow, 2007, Díaz & Jiménez, 2009). But for women entrepreneur the image change. There's a gender related biased, stereotyped template (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The general understanding or taken for grantedness is that women behavior is different from men and that idea is applied to entrepreneurship converting women entrepreneurship in a distinctive, separate category from men

entrepreneurship (Furst & Reeves, 2008). The archetype for men is strong, energetic, autocratic (paternal) and the archetype for women soft, delicate, participative and nurturing (maternal). (Cook, 2009). There's also a phenomena of stereotype confirmation. Our mind sees what we are programmed to see and uses templates as filters (Barnett, 2007; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007).

Contextualization to Puerto Rico

In the regulative aspects, Puerto Rico is governed by the same constitution and laws of the United States, but our penal code is based upon Spain tradition. Regarding the normative pillar, Puerto Rico has a deeply religious fundamental background, based on Catholic Church tradition. Values are very conservative and traditional, in particular what respects to women's roles. Like the rest of the Caribbean, Puerto Rican society is considered a patriarchal one (Safa, 1998).

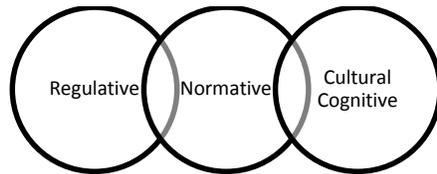
Puerto Rican and the United States entrepreneurship institution share similar characteristics because of the economic-political dependence relationship of Puerto Rico with the United States. But, between Puerto Rico and the United States there are important differences in power structures. For example, *padrinazgo* (godfather-ship) is still very present in the entrepreneurship institution, even against the principle of merit. Also women's role seems to be different in many respects. In the United States women are more present in different types of power granting institutions.

Historical transfiguration

All institutions suffer changes through time. Some are more resistant than others, depending on the stability of their symbolic elements. As Scott (2008) states "institutions provide stability and order, but also undergo change, incrementally and revolutionary" (p. 79). Prior to women's

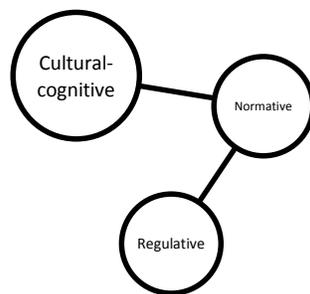
rights movements regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements were aligned and linked as a chain, providing great stability to the structure (see Figure 1). Entrepreneurship is seen as a men's exclusive activity and all elements provide support to one another.

Figure 1: Representation of symbolic elements prior to women's movements



Once social changes call for a different perspective of entrepreneurship, pillars structure change. Entrepreneurship is still seen as a men's activity, but with changes to the stability of the institution. I hypothesize that in time, the support shifted to cognitive- cultural and normative elements, since women's legal circumstances changed. This created confusion and provided conditions for institutional change (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Representation of symbolic elements after to women's movements



Regulative elements

The regulative element changed boldly with the 19th amendment to the constitution, granting rights to women. Also, anti-discrimination laws changed the landscape of entrepreneurship institution, since Civil Rights act (1964), but it is well documented that gaps remain.

Normative elements

The first Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, N. Y. in 1848, was the portal to posterior constitution amendment. Universal rights like suffrage and higher education for women, followed. For example the fifty-year campaign of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, to achieve that goal. Likewise, women's incorporation to important Higher Education institutions such Harvard, Yale and Princeton (1963) are very important, since access to education broke the "concrete wall". Finally there is a surge of women networks, entrepreneurship related.

Cultural-cognitive elements

In this element, there are stagnant scripts written in solid rock. Even though the regulative and normative pillars changed, cultural- cognitive aspects remain essentially the same and overweight the other two elements. There are two theories that intend to explain this. The first one is the religious beliefs. The second one is the social reproduction mechanisms in place.

We share a common background starting with Aristotle's (384 AC – 322 AC) ideas, which stated men superiority over women by rationalizing that women are "a privation of a man". Also is documented that women's place is home according to Greek constitution, so politics and "biology" are aligned. According to Aristotle (384 AC – 322 AC), it is a virtuous act for men to submit women to obedience and reprehensive to treat her as his equal (Lange, 2003). Finally, our religious belief based upon Judeo-Christian tradition inherits this conservative background.

Strong webs among other institutions prevent them from changing. Two social reproduction mechanisms are of particular interest. First, family as primary social reproduction mechanism: feminine and masculine behavior (Elkin & Handel, 1978) and second, the educational system as a secondary social reproduction mechanism with stereotyped curriculum and books that perpetuates gender polarization (Martínez Ramos & Tamargo López, 2003). This in turn, may have impact upon the same views on other institutions. For example, it has been established that financial institutions, tend to limit access to capital for women entrepreneurial activities.

Legitimation process, power structures

From the above analysis, it is seen that legitimacy on pillars, once intact, now is in conflict: cultural- cognitive and some normative views of gender issues remain more or less the same, even when regulation changed and some normative aspects are changing. The entrepreneurial institution and its generalized procedures to reproduce it are being used to maintain power structures, but now power is asymmetric (Sewell, 1992). The old “men entrepreneurship” structure persists because is regarded as appropriate by cultural authorities, although its legitimacy is been challenged by other, less powerful constituencies, for example, women’s movements. This is why antique entrepreneurial structures are being contested.

Structuration

Some actors, in this case women’s movements and networks, are change agents, since they have some effect on the social world. Those movements are altering rules, relational ties and distribution of resources. Other actors, men and women extremely conservative, fundamentalists, engage in perpetuating the status quo. They do so by following rules, utilizing

resources as they engage in the ongoing production and reproduction of social structures. In conclusion, some actors operate to reproduce and others to contest entrepreneurial systems of power and privilege. Those two forces are still wrestling on the institutional arena.

Carriers

Old views of entrepreneurship are still strongly attached to the cultural cognitive element of this institution because the carriers convey a strong, traditional message. First, language is a very strong reproduction mechanism, since roles learning is produced through concrete contacts when reproducing social behavior using language. (Elkin & Handel, 1978). And as we've seen, roles for entrepreneurship (men and women) are still very much stereotyped. There is a strong element of routines, tacit knowledge and habits that remain in our unconscious system and prevents us from changing our view regarding women and entrepreneurship. But, these carriers are being contested and the relational systems are changing because of the appearance of women's networks. This will make a great difference in the future to gradually change the strong cultural cognitive biased content of the entrepreneurial institution from within.

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