Musings on the Women’s March: is Social Entrepreneurship, a Route Around Roadblocks and a Path Towards Wellness?

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Introduction

The “Women's March” in Washington D.C. highlighted the debate among feminists on various objectives, as well as their unity in the goal of improving the lives of women despite roadblocks that they might face [1,2,3,4]. Feminists often have diverse perspectives about the best route to take and which issues to spotlight – pointing the vibrancy of the women's movement [3,4,5,6,7,8]. Diversity that sparks the fire of examination and debate, as opposed to the stagnation of catechism, refines and cultivates knowledge [4]. What wisdom can be gained from the literature about getting around roadblocks? After taking time to contemplate the matter, here are some of my thoughts.

Sometimes there are Roadblocks

Although more women have entered traditionally male fields, such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), too often their talents are under-recognized and under-employed [9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21]. This is due, in part, to unconscious bias. Human brains are geared for quicklysorthing vast amounts of information via unconscious stereotyping [18,22,23,24]. Researchers at Harvard University, using fMRI, have studied this cognitive process [24]. This neurological thrust, common to all of humanity, can result in misclassification of individuals and unconscious, stereotype bias [18]. Even human-designed artificial intelligence (AI) employs stereotyping [25]. In some cases, stereotypes can lead to women’s voices being quashed and their talents denied the opportunity to flourish [9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21]. “Teamwork” has become a popular buzzword; however, sometimes it doesn’t go as planned [26, 27]. Bias can enter into teamwork interactions and supervision, muzzling women, suppressing their talents, and push them away from STEM fields [27]. From college to the workforce, too often women are tracked towards stimulating; unrewarding, mundane “chore” work [21,27]. Such underemployment (“status incongruity” based on educational status and income group) has been linked to higher cortisol levels in women [28]. Higher cortisol levels can have adverse health consequences [29]. How can women get around such roadblocks? Could taking a career detour, through social entrepreneurship, be a path towards real talent development?

The Journey: Exercising One’s Talents for Prosocial Good

As any gardener knows, living organisms strive for growth and development. Having aninvigorating sense of purpose in life, to which one can direct one's attention and develop one's talents, supports wellbeing and health [30,31,32]. A chosen vocation can be one of the routes toward exercising and growing talents [33,34]. Exercising your cognitive and creative talents reduces stress and helps promote healthy ageing [35,36,37]. Additionally, prosocial, other-oriented activity (exercising one’s talents to help other people) can give meaning and purpose to life [34,38,39,40,41,42,43]. Individuals whose vocations involve helping others and / or utilize creative talents often have greater job satisfaction and better health [41].

The Journey: The Need for Respite

Are bodies are designed for short bursts of activity in response to an immediate stressor followed by longer periods of relaxation [44]. However, in today’s society, many people feel constant social stress. Our health suffers when we don’t have sufficient respite. One chief form of respite is family time relaxation and play. Family time and ties (familial, affection bonding) is a fundamental...
Social capital of family time helps to keep us happy, healthy, and rejuvenated. Additional factors that provide respite include moderate, recreational physical activity and nature therapy. Sometimes a walk in the woods with family members, relishing the prescription needed.

The Journey: The Load We Carry (Allostatic Load)

Allostatic load is the wear and tear on the body due to chronic stress without respite. Stress is often the result of being overloaded with mundane tasks, and ordeals such as discrimination. Protective factors include: a perceived purpose in life, stimulating cognitive activities, physical activity, autonomy, social capital, and time for respite. Imbalances between stressors and protective factors contribute to a wide range of health disparities. The wisdom is to find a balance that promotes wellness.

Moving Ahead: The New Women’s Movement

Entrepreneurship has been called the “new women’s movement,” offering one of the avenues for achieving holistic balance for a part or the entirety of a career journey. Technological advances – such as small, affordable computers and high-speed internet – have lowered the barriers for entrepreneurial endeavors; this enables women to utilize their talents in pursuing their purpose in life, while also providing flexibility and autonomy.

A Path towards Healing: Social Entrepreneurship

St. Marianne of Molokai stated “For us it is happiness to be able to help … the sufferers.” Social entrepreneurship is a means by which women can help others while creating a sustainable livelihood for themselves. This strengthens the community as well as the entrepreneur.

Budget constraints limit the actions of government in creating social change; thus, free market social entrepreneurship is vital. One of the issues facing society is the aging of population, including older women who often face chronic health challenges such as poor eyesight, frailty or cognitive decline. Thus, there is the need for affordable gerontechnology to assist seniors in remaining independent and active in their communities. It is more than folklore that many game-changing advances in technology started in garages – such is the equity of American free market entrepreneurship.

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Proverbs 31


50. Murphy A (2017) I’m an anti-abortion feminist. I’ll walk at the Women’s March, whether organizers like it or not. Hot Air.

