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Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Exploring the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience among the Boruca Indians of Costa Rica

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Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Exploring the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience among the Boruca of Costa Rica

Abstract:

Purpose
We explore the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience in an indigenous context. Our overarching research questions are: what are the mechanisms that link entrepreneurial thought and action to resilience in a marginalized context; how can entrepreneurial thought and actions lead to building economic, community, and cultural resilience?

Design/methodology/approach
We used an exploratory-naturalistic case study methodology to examine the entrepreneurial journey of the Boruca. Data were collected from in-depth semi-structured and unstructured interviews among 10 informants over a five year period. Constant comparative method was used to analyze the data.

Findings
Due to the need to survive, the Boruca engaged in entrepreneurial thought and action, which, in turn, led to the development of community, cultural, and economic resilience. We developed a conceptual model to illustrate how individual resiliency gained through entrepreneurial thought and action led to community, cultural, economic resiliency of the Boruca.

Research limitations/implications
We examine the entrepreneurial journey of one of the eight indigenous tribes of Costa Rica. Future research should expand their sample to include the other indigenous contexts.

Practical implications
From a practical standpoint, our paper suggests the need for entrepreneurial training among indigenous businesses as a key factor in developing resiliency. This is applicable for non-profit, for-profit, and public organizations interested in preserving world ethnic cultures and empowering indigenous people.

Social implications
Gaining deeper and richer insights into the linkages of resilience and entrepreneurial success is important for supporting efforts of those seeking to forge pathways out of poverty**.**

Originality/value
This paper suggests a different view of the relationship between resilience and entrepreneurship when the context is outside of the resource-rich context of the developed world.

Keywords: Indigenous Entrepreneurship, Resilience, Costa Rica

Article Classification: Case Study

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Introduction

Our view of entrepreneurship and resilience in an indigenous context is shaped by the dominant Western literature, which suggests that the resilience of entrepreneur is a key factor that explains entrepreneurial success. Resilient entrepreneurs, individuals who are willing to work hard to achieve goals, show a high degree of tolerance for ambiguity and adapt quickly to change (Cooper *et al*., 2004; London, 1993), may be better prepared to succeed. Despite scholars suggesting resilience as a predictor of entrepreneurial success (Ayala and Manzano, 2010; Markman and Baron, 2003; Markman *et al*., 2005; Stoltz, 2000), the empirical research is inconclusive.

Entrepreneurial resilience is a burgeoning topic, and scholars are seeking to develop a theoretical understanding of the area. According to Hedner, et.al. (2011, p.1), "resilience is best understood as a process" of interactions with the resources in the external environment that promote well-being or protect against the overwhelming influence of risk factors (Zautra *et al*., 2010; Gartner, 1985). Moreover, the accepted connection of resilience to successful entrepreneurs has been formed in a first world context often replete with cumulative protective factors- political, social, economic resources- in the external environment. A limitation of the literature is that the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience does not account for environments challenged with isolation, marginalization, and poverty, nor does it consider the impact of culture on defining success (Unger, 2007). Without accounting for cultural and contextual differences in how people express resilience, the accepted understanding of the linkage between resilience to entrepreneurship is limited in its scope.

We put forward the idea that in highly marginalized contexts, entrepreneurship leads to resilience, a reversal of the accepted proposition. In other words, we re-ask the question, whether

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the chicken (i.e., resilience) or the egg (i.e., entrepreneurship) comes first? It is especially important to examine the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience in an indigenous context since indigenous communities worldwide, account for over 300 million of the world's population and face critical issues of high levels of poverty, at disproportionate levels (World Bank, 2014). Entrepreneurship has the potential for rebuilding indigenous communities and is central to economic development (Anderson *et al*., 2004). Gaining deeper and richer insights into the linkages of resilience and entrepreneurial success is important for supporting efforts of those seeking to forge pathways out of poverty.

This paper examines the entrepreneurial journey of the Boruca, one of the eight indigenous tribes of Costa Rica. We explore the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience in an indigenous context. Our overarching research questions are: what are the mechanisms that link entrepreneurial thought and action to resilience in a marginalized context; how can entrepreneurial thought and actions lead to building economic, community, and cultural resilience? Using an exploratory-naturalistic case study methodology, we demonstrate that in a marginalized context, the community's resilience was made possible by entrepreneurship. Due to the need to survive, the Boruca engaged in entrepreneurial thought and action, which, in turn, led to the development of community, cultural, and economic resilience. The resulting resilience moved the community to adapt and create new economic structures.

In the sections that follow, we first discuss indigenous entrepreneurship as it relates to the dominant Western context. Secondly, we present concepts of resilience in the indigenous context. Next, we describe our methodology. In our findings, we then explore the linkages between entrepreneurial endeavors and the community's economic and cultural resilience. From this, we suggest a model of the mechanisms that link entrepreneurship to resilience. We conclude

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by providing practical and theoretical implications. Below the literature on indigenous entrepreneurship is discussed.

Review of Indigenous entrepreneurship

In the past decade, a new stream of research in the entrepreneurship literature has emerged that focuses on business concepts intertwined with cultural aspects in the context of marginalized communities, a form of which is referred to as "indigenous entrepreneurship". No universal definition of the term "indigenous people" exists (Frederick, 2008, p. 185); however, agreement exists that indigenous people are distinct cultural groups with each group having its own historical continuity with a geographical region dating before colonization, and who continue to live independent or isolated from the influence of the dominant culture within the larger nation-state wherein they are situated. People who have maintained (at least in part) their distinct linguistic, cultural, and social/organizational characteristics (Martinez Cabo, 1986; Frederick, 2008), or self-identify with a distinct cultural group, are considered indigenous (United Nations, 2012).

Indigenous entrepreneurship differs from other forms of entrepreneurship with respect to the context, types of goals and outcomes, and/or the form and organization of the enterprise (Cahn, 2008). The most encompassing understanding of entrepreneurship focuses on any type of entrepreneurial initiative, including self-employment, and is not limited to formally starting a business or organizational entity (Borch *et al*., 2008; Morris and Jones, 1999). In exploring indigenous entrepreneurship, there is a particularly distinctive feature, an orientation toward the community, rather than the individual (Hindle and Landowne, 2005; Peredo and Anderson, 2006). The focus is placed on sustaining the social and cultural fabric of the tribe, the community, not solely an individual.

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Unlike the mainstream focus of entrepreneurship that largely uses the dominant Western lens, indigenous entrepreneurship focuses on entrepreneurial action with respect to a sense of communal well-being and "enterprise-related activities of indigenous people in pursuit of their social cultural self-determination and economic goals" (Lindsay, 2005; Anderson *et al*., 2006, p. 57). Earlier working definitions acknowledged the desired and achieved benefits of venturing can range from the narrow view of economic profit for a single individual to the broad view of multiple, social and economic advantages for entire communities (Hindle and Landowne, 2005). Finally, another important distinction of indigenous entrepreneurship is the context in which the entrepreneur functions (Hindle, 2010; Overall, *et al*., 2010).

In the indigenous context, issues of marginalization challenge communities worldwide. Marginalization theory has gained traction as a framework to explain and understand the systematic marginalization of indigenous communities, including being disenfranchised from participating in the mainstream systems of the dominant culture (United Nations, 1981; Frederick, 2008; Young, 2000). Dimensions of the disenfranchisement include: lack of facility in the language of the dominant culture; limited access to education and health care; geographic disadvantages (isolation, high intergenerational unemployment); cultural disadvantages (language barriers, racism); and social and individual disadvantages (literacy, stress, substance abuse, domestic violence) (European Commission, 2003).

In moving forward to discuss entrepreneurship in the indigenous context, it is important to remember that indigenous entrepreneurs, by extension, are operating in the conditions of their communities. The constraints on indigenous people greatly impact the resources available for leverage, such as economic, political and social capital. In contrast to the constraints faced by potential indigenous entrepreneurs, the Western (i.e., first world) view of entrepreneurship

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makes assumptions about the availability of abundant resources. In a review of Western thought on the foundations to the definitions of entrepreneurship, Dana (2007) highlights that these definitions generally include risk, decisions about resources, functions of innovation, and profit, concluding with the admonition that these concepts have implicit assumptions that may be in conflict with the culture of indigenous peoples. For example, self-employment may be seen as a risk for those individuals in a developed world who have options of being employed by various companies. Conversely, for the indigenous, self-employment may be the only option to escape poverty. Another difference revolves around the understanding of the profit motive and measures of success (Foley, 2003). Rather than profit or gain for the individual, there are multiple stakeholders offering a sense of community in the indigenous context. The sense of community, as well as individual well-being seem integral to the understanding of indigenous entrepreneurship (Mapunda, 2007).

In addition, the motivations or precursors, to the actions of entrepreneurs may be different for the indigenous, many of whom would be classified in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor as "necessity" due to having no other work options, nothing to lose, and needing a source of income (GEM Report, 2012). Motivations of an entrepreneur -- note the reference to a single person, as in "the entrepreneur"-- from a Western perspective include: self-determination or self-sufficiency, and financial gain or stability (Wadhwa *et al*., 2009). In a quest to find the characteristics, habits, and behaviors of the entrepreneur, Sarasvathy (2001) posits that the best entrepreneurs prefer to use effectual reasoning over causal reasoning despite the emphasis on causal reasoning in Western business programs. Effectual reasoning does not begin with a specific goal but rather starts with a given set of means and allows goals to emerge contingently over time from imagination and aspirations of the founders. From the indigenous perspective the

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motivation for sufficiency and financial viability serves as the means to the success rather than the ends. In the indigenous context, with its emphasis on the wellbeing of the community, the end goals are: respect and protection of traditional values and practices; the decrease of poverty; advancement of living conditions; and employment creation (Dana and Anderson, 2007). These differences in perspectives of entrepreneurial motivations and success shape the frame by which opportunities are recognized and actions are taken (Dana and Anderson, 2007). Although not examined in the indigenous context, one would expect the importance of and effectual reasoning since effectual logic does not assume pre-existent opportunities, but rather builds on the idea that opportunities are created and shaped by the people we are able to bring together, suggesting a collectivist perspective (Lindsay, 2005), which is more in line with the indigenous entrepreneurial attitude.

One can see that the indigenous context impacts our understanding of entrepreneurship and the types of goals and outcomes of the enterprise, as well as the form of an organization. Indigenous entrepreneurship is largely concerned with entrepreneurial action in relation to a sense of communal well-being. Due to the systematic marginalization of indigenous communities, entrepreneurship is needed and holds potential for breaking the poverty cycle (Wadhwa, 2009; Acs, 2006). Engaging in entrepreneurial thought and action may build the community, cultural and economic resilience in an indigenous context. We discuss the role of resilience in entrepreneurship and particularly focus on conceptualizing resilience in an indigenous context.

The role of resilience in entrepreneurship and the indigenous context

Resilience has been suggested as a key success factor for entrepreneurs who face ongoing risk and failure (London, 1993). Although there is no universally understood definition of the

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term resilience (Herrman *et al*., 2011), Grotberg's (1997) definition is most frequently cited, and also used by the International Resilience Project, defines resilience as a universal capacity that allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimize or overcome the damaging effects of adversity. Resilience is a dynamic adaptation process that allows entrepreneurs to continue to look towards the future despite harsh market conditions, and destabilizing events they must continually face. Resilience is the capacity an entrepreneur has in order to overcome particularly difficult circumstances.

This capacity for adaptation and bouncing back in the face of adversity depends on the individual's resources and the interaction with the environment (Windle *et al*., 2011). Resilience is identified and made known only when a response to an exogenous shock, or personal adversity, is seen, thus demonstrating an ability to overcome, bounce back, and regain one's original form (Oxford, 2010). Research suggests that the three dimensions of resilience are: (1) hardiness, which refers to control of oneself, not being controlled of by the actions of others; (2) resourcefulness, which refers to the resources, capabilities and skills the entrepreneur possesses in order to control the adverse events they have to face; and, (3) optimism, which refers to the capacity of the entrepreneur to maintain a positive attitude in difficult situations (Alaya and Manzano, 2014).

Two schools of thought have linked resilience with successful entrepreneurship. The first school of thought focuses on the individual, unique, person-specific attributes of the successful entrepreneur (McCellen, Alaya and Manzano, 2010; Markman and Baron, 2003). There is a belief that resilience is a critically important determinant for entrepreneurial success, yet empirical research has not been conclusive, likely due to the difficulties in determining, operationalizing and developing scales to measure it. However, a well-supported study suggests

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that three dimensions of the resilience trait (hardiness, resourcefulness and optimism) seem particularly important for entrepreneurs, with resourcefulness being the key factor (Ayala and Manzano, 2014). Adding to this list of attributes are: flexibility, problem-solving intelligence (Masten, 2007), self-identify, self-efficacy, initiative, trust, attachment, autonomy, and humor (Cooper *et al*., 2004; Lamond *et al*., 2008). These constitute a blend of interpersonal characteristics, believed both innate and learned (Maclean, 2004). Researchers suggest the activities and actions of resilience changes over time and can be promoted, developed, and encouraged (Brewer and Hewstone, 2004; Mahoney, 2000).

The second school of thought linking resilience with successful entrepreneurs is from a social behavior perspective. In this work, resilience is shaped as a result of the interaction between the entrepreneur and the available resources in the external environment. The interactions with the resources in the external environment that either promote well-being or protect against the overwhelming influence of risk factors (Zautra *et al*., 2010). Resilience is developed as a result of the interaction between the entrepreneur and the available resources in the external environment.

Both schools of thought share the concept of resource. The first focusing on the personal resourcefulness of the entrepreneur, as in resiliency, and the latter on the social context in which the entrepreneur must navigate the networks and social systems, the resources available in the external environment. When the context changes, to the community level, rather than individual, the emphasis shifts to processes of orchestrating social support networks in the case of a trauma, and processes of navigating governmental agencies, in the case of disaster, or coordinating governmental and political agencies for economic development after an devastating economic event.

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Whether examining resilience at the individual, community, or business organization level, there is a generally accepted conceptualization of resilience and there is agreement that its function is a precursor or determinant of successful entrepreneurship made possible due to the presence and availability of "cumulative protective factors" in the external environment. Protective factors range from social capital to institutional factors, such as banking, physical infrastructure, political, legal and regulatory systems (Abouzeedan, 2003; Mair and Marti, 2009). One can see from the above that the understanding of the relationship of resilience to entrepreneurial success has been considered from a Western context, and what is required to be successful in that specific context. In an indigenous context, there are limited institutional factors, such as banking and infrastructure.

Varying socioeconomic and cultural contexts must be considered to more fully understand the theory and discipline of entrepreneurship (Abouzeedan, 2003; Hedner and Adli Abouzeedan, 2011). In a mixed method study of 11 countries, Ungar and colleagues (2007) demonstrate that cultural and contextual factors exert a great deal of influence on the factors that affect resilience. Their findings suggest that resilience encompasses more than just the capacity for individuals to cope well under adversity. Resilience may be better conceptualized as both the capacity of individuals to manage their psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being (Masten, 2001; Ungar, 2008; Werner, 1995) and the capacity to "individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways" (Hedner and Adli Abouzeedan, 2011, p.1). This perspective of resilience more closely resembles the nature of resilience in an indigenous context.

Although not discussed in the context of entrepreneurship, Kirmayer *et al.*, (2011) proposed that the resilience construct in the context of Inuit, Métis, Mi'kmaq, and Mohawk

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indigenous communities in Canada more generally included processes that related to the re-visioning of collective history by focusing on forming a collective identity by revitalizing language and culture as resources for narrative self-fashioning, social positioning, and healing. Resilience in an indigenous context also encompassed the development of both the individual and collective agency through political activism, empowerment, and reconciliation. In line with the interactional perspective of the resilience literature, these sources of resilience emerge from the dynamic interactions between individuals, their communities, and the larger regional, national, and global systems that locate and sustain indigenous agency and identity.

While the Kirmayer *et al.*'s (2011) study sheds light on conceptualizing resilience in an indigenous context our understanding of the dynamics of resilience and indigenous entrepreneurship is still limited. Given that the context of indigenous entrepreneurship is vastly different than that of the developed, particularly westernized world, we explore the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience among the Boruca indigenous tribe.

Methodology

We used an exploratory-naturalistic case study methodology to investigate entrepreneurship and resilience in a marginalized context among the Boruca. An exploratory analysis can be used to uncover multi-dimensional impacts, discover unanticipated patterns in data, and consequently gain new insights in understanding natural phenomena (Berg, 2009). We embraced an interpretive social science paradigm with a constructionist viewpoint (Anderson, 1986;), which supports naturalistic inquiry. Next, we discuss the research context.

Research Context

Our research was set in the context of the Boruca tribe, one of the eight indigenous tribes of Costa Rica. The Boruca pre-Columbian society developed technology for molding gold and

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stone sculpting for everyday life, religious ceremonies, status symbols, and trade. Gold and jade, not present in Boruca territory, were transported across Central and South America. Men were accomplished sculptors and goldsmiths and women were famed for textile work. Women were integral to the society beyond childrearing and domestic work; they held positions of responsibility including being healers (Museo de Oro Precolumbiano, 2012).

Living on their land for over 3000 years with the proud history of successfully defending themselves against the Spanish conquistadors in the 1500-1600s, the Boruca, like other indigenous peoples, became marginalized over time by the dominant culture and their industrious way of life eroded into poverty, isolation, and risked extinction with no economic base in the community (Stone, 1968; McInnis-Bowers and Galperin, 2013). Post colonization by the Spanish led to the decline of the industrious culture of the Boruca as disease and the dominant European culture decimated their indigenous way of life. The Boruca took protective residence in the Costa Rican jungle and rainforest of the Talamanca mountain range; an area that remained isolated for centuries with no physical infrastructure granting efficient access from the growing European descended population in the valley.

While Costa Rica has earned the highest ranking in literacy and national incomes, the eight indigenous tribes of that represent 1.4 percent of the total population, approximately 60,000 people (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, 2011), are still without adequate infrastructure and, in many cases, potable water. The tribes are located in the indigenous reserves and the people living in these areas suffer the economic, health and social issues attributed to poverty (Hurforth, 2007). Until the early 1980's, the path of the Boruca was the same as the other tribes living without an economic base in the community and plagued with issues of poverty (Sévenier, 2003).

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Sample and data collection

Data were collected over a five year period (2008 to 2013). Given the exploratory nature of the topic (Jonker and Pennick, 2010), various methods were used to explore indigenous entrepreneurship among the Boruca including: participant observation, in-depth semi-structured and unstructured interviews with 10 informants. These methods contribute to the process of familiarization and discovery (Hampton, 1999), and the opportunity to gain insights into the historic and contemporary dimensions of the research context. Informal observation began in 2008, and continued in 2009-2010 during cultural visits to the Boruca community organized by a CPI Spanish Immersion School, Costa Rica. In 2012, the first author with support of a Boruca community leader gained permission from the community to launch a formal study. This is important given qualitative interviews are influenced by the rapport established in that context (Lincoln and Gobi, 1985). The first author conducted site visit observations and interviews during the May and June of 2012, and followed those by additional follow-up observations and in interviews in the summer of 2013. Respondents were interviewed and asked to suggest other potential respondents, thus creating a loop of purposive snowball sampling by identifying participants who may have otherwise been overlooked (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method designed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which consist of unitizing data, categorization, and identifying patterns. Data analyses interacted with data collection as each interview guided the collection of information from the next respondent. The longitudinal approach allowed each respondent the opportunity for an informal member check, which allowed each participant to amend, verify, and extend constructions. During the development of this study, the perceptions and experiences of each

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participant were crucial in detecting and understanding recurring regularities in the data that emerged as themes, which suggested a shared reality among the tribe members. Member checks with all participants and triangulation measures enhanced credibility. Transferability was achieved by the first author keeping a reflective journal that provided a contextual narrative that was used to examine the degree of similarity between observations and interviewees' insights (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In order to improve reliability, the second and third authors, who were not involved in data collection, served as auditors and reviewed all codes, analyses, and interpretations (Erlandson *et al*., 1993).

Findings: The entrepreneurial journey of the Boruca

Four and half centuries after colonization, the Boruca community reached critical levels of poverty, as well as, faced extreme social and political marginalization. In an effort to make a better life for themselves and their families, two young women had a defining moment that started the entrepreneurial journey for the Boruca. After first having success as individual entrepreneurs they developed attributes of resilience, including, resourcefulness, hardiness, self-confidence, and optimism. Their newly established sense of resilience enabled them to tackle an even bigger challenge: how could they improve life for the Boruca? Their next step was creating a business entity, a cooperative. Entrepreneurial thinking and resulting action were the start of community, cultural, and economic resilience for the Boruca.

Below, we describe the entrepreneurial journey of the Boruca, focusing specifically on the 20 year time period of the late 1970s through the late 1990s, and prior to the Boruca men reviving and repurposing the cultural heritage ceremonial masks for tourist mementos of their time in Costa Rica.

The marginalization: precursors to Entrepreneurship

Due to the lack of economic opportunity and a break down in traditional ways of life, the 1970's were a time of crisis for the Boruca. As recalled by a community member, "there was a lot of poverty, and also a lot of discrimination toward women." There were issues with malnutrition for children. Many of the young Boruca migrated out of the village community to seek employment. Notably, the Boruca men left the village to work in the plantations and as migrant workers, which left the Borucan women "to figure everything out with no money" since they were dependent on the men's income. Another community member recounts, "Women were like slaves… Women's opinions were not respected, there was a lot of machismo." The women faced gender inequality within the Borucan community.

Further limiting the women's potential options to improve their lives was the isolation of the Boruca community. The tribe was located in a region that lacked infrastructure. The access in and out of the community consisted of mountainous trails with one steep gravel road, which required hours to travel and had limited accessibility during the rainy season. Thus, there could be days were there was not access in or out of the community. Despite laws passed in 1977, which gave the Boruca self-determination over a portion of their previously vast territory and the programs designed to improve health, the poor living conditions remained largely unchanged. The Boruca viewed the government as being ineffective in addressing the issues of the indigenous tribes. A member of the tribe noted, "We were invisible." In addition to concerns over infrastructure and over financial viability, the Boruca traditions and culture were at risk of being lost. Another member of the tribe stated, "Boruca had no culture. It was dormant." Unfortunately, only a few elders spoke Brunka, the language of the Boruca. The Boruca's external resources were limited as they lacked economic, political and social resources. The combination of being exploited and marginalized for years culminated in a time of crisis.

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The defining moment: "to make a life for our daughters"

Between 1978 and 1980, two women, Sonia and Marina, childhood friends, returned to the Boruca reservation from San Jose, the largest city in Costa Rica. Following the path of others before them, these women traveled outside their community to find work with an income to care for their children.

Unfortunately, they returned with the same results as other women who tried before them-- jobless without a means to support themselves let alone their children. Employment in the city for indigenous women, with no education or job experiences, was limited to caring for other peoples' children or cleaning houses. Neither option was feasible since they would need to leave their own children with no one to care for them.

Due to the limited opportunities, they felt defeated and depressed upon their return to the Boruca reservation. In sharing their humiliating city experiences they described their efforts of trying to change how they spoke, dressed, and even cut their long black hair in order to assimilate into the dominant Costa Rican culture. They made all the effort to blend in until they did not know themselves, yet they never assimilated. The women agreed, "We must make a life for our daughters so they won't need to leave Boruca." These words and realization were the defining moment for the two Boruca women.

From entrepreneurial action to personal resilience

Aware of their limitations, Sonia and Marina pondered the question: “What could we do?” After sharing their experiences of a failed city life, six other women joined the conversations and recognized the need to change their situation. Now, eight Boruca women were committed to a future that would different. One respondent recalled: "We asked ourselves what we could do in Boruca?" The group of women had an idea: “We could make and sell Boruca textiles.” These

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words demonstrated entrepreneurial thought among the Boruca women.

Although, the women knew of the traditional textiles once produced by their ancestors they did not know how to make them. Unfortunately, very few older women were left who still possessed the knowledge of Borucan textiles, and the complicated processes involved in making the products. The process includes: cultivating, harvesting, and preparing the cotton; making dyes from a variety of plants and snails; making and maintaining looms; weaving the five signature Boruca stiches; and, forming the traditional carry-bags or large flats out of the woven textiles. The traditional textiles were historically used for clothing; however, the women believed there to be an opportunity to make the traditional items, and smaller items in various sizes, designed for the tourists to purchase as mementos of their time in Costa Rica.

Soon after the decision to embark on this entrepreneurial journey, they met with the elder women who taught them the indigenous knowledge and processes. They learned textile making, and then started producing items, they hoped, to sell to the tourists on the roadside of the beach town of Quepos. The effort to come and go from Boruca reservation to where tourists visit was an arduous task. The women describe their life as, "long hard days". Housework was done at night and continued to accumulate. In addition, life with the men became difficult with increasing domestic violence, in some cases. According to the Boruca tradition, women were to stay at home, use their time farming and caring for children, not making products to sell, much less go into town every day. However, these once traditional women were transforming as they thought and acted like entrepreneurs by making the woven textiles made in the tradition of their cultural heritage and selling them to realize their goal of making " a life in Boruca for their daughters", their children.

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Women were primarily responsible for caring for their children and desired that they have the have options in life that education provides. Rather than going to school to learn, children, especially the boys, were expected to go into the fields to work. A Boruca woman noted, "My children's father thought school was a waste of time." However, Boruca women disagreed with this perspective and worked hard so that their children were able to study. The income they made through the textiles brought money into the home so children didn't have to go into the fields. In order to continue their entrepreneurial venture, the small group of women supported each other by rotating caring for children and going out to sell. They would bundle their products together and disperse the earnings upon return.

Each day, this group of Boruca women entrepreneurs were advancing their understanding of the preferences and buying behaviors of customers, as well as, learning the difference between direct sales to tourists and wholesale pricing for shop owners. They had established channels of distribution for their textiles. In addition, they had gained experience in communicating with tourists, and vendors of souvenir shops in both the coastal communities and the larger cities. The women were learning the necessary skills to become successful entrepreneurs.

Overtime, money was coming into their households abating the domestic tensions. These women experienced success and were financially independent and were able to keep their children in school rather than working in the fields. Most importantly, engaging in various entrepreneurial action helped the women learn resilience. First, the women demonstrated increased hardiness. They felt more in control of themselves largely due to the increased financial freedom. Rather than only being financially supported by their husbands, they were in charge of making and selling products. Second, the women developed resourcefulness. While their first days of their entrepreneurial venture were long and hard, they sought resources and

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developed the necessary skills to become successful entrepreneurs, while continuing to meet their traditional responsibilities. Finally, as their entrepreneurial venture grew, the women became more optimistic. As they achieved success they no longer spent their time focusing on their lack of opportunity, but rather on maximizing the opportunities they had created. After they overcame their first instincts of hesitation, due to fears of unknown and lack of confidence, they developed a positive attitude and belief in themselves, despite their challenging situation.

Other women in the community started to copy their actions, and began weaving. However, they experienced similar obstacles and resistance from their husbands resulting in a need for additional support. Due to the recently developed resilience among the original group of Boruca women, they were determined to help the other women in their tribe. The women had a new sense of self-identity, they were respected, and they now believed that they could change life in the Boruca. These eight women, originally united by the defining moment to make a life for their daughters in Boruca had transformed their idea into a larger community initiative.

From personal resilience to community resilience

The initial entrepreneurial action of eight women fostered a sense of community, first with each other and then, it broadened. A member of the group noted, “We wanted to organize, to be more than a group of women weaving." As time passed their individual resilience grew and so did their desire to help others bounce back. The momentum eventually reached the wider community, and led to developing community resilience.

In1983, the eight women who had been leading the repurposing of the textiles formed the Association de La Flor, a cooperative. A Boruca woman noted, "The men were all working in agriculture. Thought it a waste of time." Although the women of the cooperative supported each other to foster entrepreneurship among women within the community, the men provided very

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little social, physical, or financial support. Their first goal was making a place to gather together and weave, away from their homes where domestic tensions were often present. This space also created a place to teach other women to weave. Next, they started thinking about changing life in the community-- specifically for female tribe members.

The second goal of the cooperative was to help address the challenges that the women entrepreneurs faced by not having a legal organizational form through which to conduct business; not having this thwarted their potential. As the women developed knowledge and confidence selling textiles at the roadside, then progressively gained the courage to approach store owners. A member of the cooperative said, "We decided to go into the hotel and talk to the shop owner to sell him our textiles." They quickly learned that selling to retail stores encompassed far more complex governmental rules and regulations than roadside selling. Consequently, they began to search for a lawyer who would agree to work with them, but many refused. They were indigenous women, and had limited funds. In order to afford a lawyer they sold raffle tickets for one year to raise the money. Finally, they were able to pay a lawyer in the city who agreed to get and fill out the forms to create a legal entity, in compliance with the governmental regulations. An organization with legal status provided them a tax identification number, which allowed them to engage in a variety of business transactions, as well as, the ability to apply for and receive community development grants from the government.

Now with legal status their success continued. La Flor, the cooperative, became the point of contact for vendors outside Boruca seeking to buy textiles, and later other items were resurrected from their cultural heritage. Shop owners were actively seeking authentic Costa Rican products to sell to the growing number of eco-tourists who desire products produced by indigenous locals. These tourists did not just want the products, but wanted to learn more about

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the artisans producing items of indigenous cultural heritage. This consumer demand led to the tour operators, from the new luxury hotels located two to four hours from Boruca reservation, to contact the cooperative to make arrangements to bring tourists to the Reservation for cultural programs. Next, schools and churches, across Costa Rica, hosting community fairs contacted La Flor to arrange for indigenous cultural demonstrations of weaving, and gourd carving.

Consequently, the successes of La Flor came back to the community as whole. Over the years, the personal resilience among a small group of women fostered community resilience. The initial entrepreneurial thought and action of eight women, and their successes along the way helped them to develop their personal resilience. Later, their shared experiences and personal resilience increased their sense of hardiness, resourcefulness, and optimism that enabled them the courage, skill sets, and resources to extend their entrepreneurial knowledge to the greater community, specifically helping other Boruca women become think and act as entrepreneurs.

From community resilience to cultural resilience

Forming the cooperative was a major step toward the preservation of the Boruca culture. The entrepreneurial women, through La Flor, led the revival of the Boruca culture. Through the cooperative, they developed an infrastructure to support the Boruca culture, such as: the Boruca Cultural Museum, built in conjunction with the Costa Rican National Museum, and a multi-purpose community plaza used for both sport (i.e., football) and community events. In addition, cultural identity was also integrated into the school with curricula on Boruca language, culture, and the teaching of the process of making the traditional heritage items for which the tribe had become famous.

Later in the entrepreneurial journey of the Boruca, La Flor opened its membership to the men; these were the same men who had worked in agriculture and were unsupportive of the

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women's initial entrepreneurial action. By the late 1980s, ten to twelve years after the women's entrepreneurial journey began, the Boruca men started to resurrect other cultural heritage items that had a traditional significance to the male tribal roles, such as ceremonial mask, drums and bows and arrows. Eventually, a second cooperative formed uniting other members of the tribe. The original eight women who began La Flor started to resign their leadership positions and turned the organization over to the younger women, who continued the legacy of passing on and promoting the Boruca culture.

Overtime, the entrepreneurial thoughts and actions of a small group of Boruca women and their developed sense of resilience grew into community resilience, and the led to cultural resilience among the Boruca. The relationship of entrepreneurial action and thought and resilience in an indigenous context also incorporates the development of economic resilience.

From community resilience to economic resiliency

When examining the broader impact of economic resilience in the Boruca context today, the creation and sale of the revived and repurposed cultural heritage items provide the majority of families with an income. The Boruca entrepreneurial ventures have allowed families to remain in Boruca to make a living and not rely on migratory lifestyle for the men and subsistence farming for the women, which is still the case for the neighboring indigenous tribes.

Entrepreneurship has become a part of the Boruca community. Today, family-kin groups band together in the production of the cultural heritage items. Men are renowned for the mask carving and some have entered sustainable agricultural businesses replenishing the natural materials used in the production of the masks and other items. The women, particularly, have garnered courage to create new economic ventures for their families such as, starting workshops that promote sustainable tourism, such as, textile dyeing and weaving, mask carving, and

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traditional cuisine. In addition, the Boruca offer overnight stays in typical accommodations called ranchos and organize outdoor activities, including hikes to the waterfalls and the surrounding areas. More recently, two small grocery stores and one restaurant-cantina have opened. Vendors from the city in the valley make their way up the mountain, walking door to door, take meat orders from the Boruca families. Some members of the Boruca reservation have also opened small businesses in eco-tourism providing areas tours and programs for tourists. It is not uncommon to see cars parked next to the traditional ranchito (grass hut) structures, laptops, and cell phones. Having available household incomes to purchase cell phones, laptops and Internet connection have changed the business model; the women conduct business by sending large shipments of an assortment of items directly to vendors in the cities.

The increased economic resilience in the Boruca reservation have enabled more children to complete secondary school, and some Boruca children are going on to universities. Costa Rica does not have a scholarship program or additional funding for indigenous youth to attend institutions of higher education. The tribe's artisan and craft work provides support to help cover tuition and related expenses of education. Interestingly, the generations of children, supported by repurposed cultural heritage items, have become professionals. Whereas, many have returned to Boruca to start new initiatives or continue the production of the cultural heritage items, which has helped reduce some of the outmigration of the Boruca youth.

The narrative of the Boruca's entrepreneurial journey and its linkages to resilience can be described as multi-faceted. When examining the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience, it is important to consider the impact of entrepreneurial thought and action on personal resilience, as well as the evolution of personal resilience into community, cultural, and economic resilience. Based on our findings, we then propose a model of entrepreneurship and

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resilience in an indigenous context.

Proposed conceptual model linking entrepreneurial thought and actions to resilience

In integrating the findings we developed a conceptual framework to describe how entrepreneurial thought and action in a marginalized context can build individual, community, cultural, and economic resilience. The conceptual framework starts with the contextual environment of a community, and therefore, its individual members. In the case of the Boruca, as well as a majority of indigenous around the world, their contextual reality is a state of marginalization and gender inequality. As a consequence of the contextual environment the community lacks economic, political, and social resources. Next, the model demonstrates how the contextual environment resulted in members of the community responding to the extreme adversity out of necessity to support them. The individual response (i.e., processes) began with a defining moment, an actionable motive to change and then entrepreneurial thought and action. These individual processes led to the following individual impacts: development of broader identities beyond traditional roles of women; establishment of the belief women can be entrepreneurs; and, building personal resilience. These individual impacts led to community development, such as, uniting women in entrepreneurial action; commitment to helping others grow; building a more stable community in Boruca reserve; re-claiming of the traditional Boruca culture; and, ultimately, building a resilient community. The model ends with the overall outcome of building cultural and economic resilience. See Figure 1: Conceptual model of the mechanisms linking entrepreneurial thought and action to resilience in a marginalized context.

Insert Figure 1 about here.

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Discussion

Our study suggests that in a highly marginalized context, entrepreneurial thought and action lead to resilience, which is a reversal of the accepted proposition in the literature (Ayala and Manzano, 2010; Markman and Baron, 2003; Markman *et al*., 2005; Stoltz, 2000). In the Western literature, resilience is generally viewed as a precursor to entrepreneurial thought and action. However, the Boruca case has enabled us to rethink the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience and question whether the chicken (i.e., resilience) or the egg (i.e., entrepreneurship) comes first. Our case study illustrates that in marginalized context resilience maybe a consequence of entrepreneurship not an antecedent, which aligns with the social behavior perspective of resilience (Zautra *et al*., 2010).

The Boruca women lived in a marginalized context and faced gender inequality started their entrepreneurial journey without social, economic, and political resources. Whereas, in the Western literature the assumption is personal attributes interacting within the context of the environment enable the entrepreneur to navigate available recourses like financial institutions and political systems (Abouzeedan, 2011). No new resources had been introduced to improve the women's contextual environment. If their resiliency had been dependent on the interaction of personal attributes with available recourses, it is reasonable to believe that changes in women's life, and later, the well-being of the community, would not have occurred. Likely, they would have continued to repeat the shared history of tribal members over centuries, marginalized with a subsistence economy. However, instead of accepting their contextual environment, these women who were personally exhausted and lacking resources began to think and behave like entrepreneurs, and through their action began to build personal resilience. This highlights that "innovative activity, culturally and historically situated, can emerge as the result of the self-

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organization acts of entrepreneurs" (Tapsell and Woods, 2010 p. 543). Learning through entrepreneurial action built resilience. As the women's actions met with success, they began to learn and exhibit characteristics of resilience, such as: hardiness, resourcefulness, and, optimism (Alaya and Manzano, 2014; Cooper *et al*., 2004; Lamond *et al*., 2008).

Interestingly, these entrepreneurial indigenous women displayed effectual reasoning, a characteristic that is often seen in experienced entrepreneurs in developed countries. Encompassed in the early stages of entrepreneurship is the challenge of creating something from nothing, entrepreneurial (Baker and Nelson, 2005 Di Domenico *et al*., 2010). This is the first key factor for successful entrepreneurs, as described in theory of effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001). Similar to expert entrepreneurs, the Boruca women began a process of entrepreneurial thinking with themselves as a primary resource, "We are Boruca women, what could we do?" Their behavior mirrored an effectual approach, which starts by answering the following three questions: who are we, who do we know, and what can we do? First, the women connected with who they were--Borucan women. Next, they acknowledged whom they knew--elders with knowledge. Lastly, they explored what they could do given their first two means (i.e., who they were and who they knew), their answer became returning to their cultural heritage to bring forward traditionally- made Borucan textiles and repurposed them as souvenirs for tourist. These actions were in keeping with entrepreneurial bricolage as they used underdeveloped resources to construct new combinations thus resulting in value creation, newly purposed heritage textiles for tourists. They sought like-minded women, shaped and reshaped their opportunities, developed a belief that it was through their actions that their future would change, all are encompassed in the theory of effectuation. Our case study suggests that the women's actions changed their own future, which later led to improving the well-being of their Boruca community.

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Much of the literature describing the characteristics of indigenous entrepreneurship suggests a primacy of the community, which assumes the goal of furthering the needs of the community is present at the start and remains a critical enduring motivation to all actions. However, our case study illustrates entrepreneurship in the indigenous context started with individual motivations to support themselves and their families not the greater community (Foley, 2012; Fredericks and Foley, 2006). The initial motivation of the women began with a goal of improving their personal situation. As they sought a solution (i.e., by applying the effectual process), they reconnected with the Boruca culture, history, and traditions. Rather than being required to leave Boruca and assimilate into the Costa Rican culture by changing their mode of dress, the way they spoke in order not be seen as indigenous, holding on to their Borucan identity had become central to their entrepreneurial success. This reconnection to culture was a consequence of the following entrepreneurial actions: learning the traditional weaving process from cultivating, harvesting, and preparing the cotton; dye and loom making; weaving and forming the traditional carry-bags and, most importantly, the retelling, or re-visioning, of the Boruca story. Over time the women gained individual resilience and, eventually, a wider community resilience resulted, which later helped to foster cultural and economic resilience. Indigenous entrepreneurs force "social change in pursuit of self determination and economic stability" (Foley, 2003). Intertwined in the theory of indigenous entrepreneurship is the primacy of the community and heritage obligations (Lindsay, 2005), our case illustrates the initial entrepreneurial actions were aimed at providing food, shelter and an economic life, with cultural and heritage preservation intertwined, but secondary. As personal efforts of the women met with success, the cultural preservation of Boruca soon emerged, unifying the community. A shown in Figure 1, our proposed model depicts this process, which

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provides further support for Kramer *et al*.'s (2011) findings that resilience in an indigenous community came from processes that allowed for the re-visioning of their collective history by focusing on collective identity. Retelling and re-visioning of the Boruca history was an entrepreneurial action; it was offered to customers at the point of sale. A key element of building resilience was the positive interchanges between the women and the customers, who sought not only their products but also wanted to hear the history of Boruca. Our findings indicate there is a linkage of entrepreneurial thought and action to building resilience: individual, cultural, community and economic.

Theoretical and practical implications

This study has several theoretical implications. First, this study provides insight into the entrepreneurial activity and its role in building resilience in an indigenous context, characterized by marginalization, as well as, gender inequality. Contrary to research largely conducted in the Western context that suggests that resilience is a precursor to entrepreneurship (Ayala and Manzano, 2010), the journey of the Boruca illustrates that resilience, learned and shaped through entrepreneurial action of a few has enabled an the indigenous community to reassert its cultural identity, rebuild its community, and create new economic structures. In other words, the human response of entrepreneurial thinking and action lead to resilience in a marginalized context. This case study contributes theoretical our understanding of indigenous entrepreneurship among the Boruca Costa Rica. Since most of the literature focus on indigenous groups in North America, this study has important implications in better understanding indigenous entrepreneurship in Central America.

Second, this study contributes to the theory on resilience. The study further highlights the challenges in operationalizing the construct of resilience (Luther, Cicchetti, and and Becker,

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2000). Our findings suggest the need to rethink the construct of resilience in an indigenous context. In line with Kirmayer *et al.*'s (2011) study of resilience among indigenous communities in Canada, resilience encompasses processes that regulate emotion and support adaptation in relation to the collective. Moreover, resilience includes processes that revitalize language and culture. This case illustrates linkages between learning processes that result in personal, and ultimately, community resilience, from entrepreneurial actions (Masten, 2007; Wang and Chugh, 2014).

Although some aspects of resilience may differ in an indigenous context as seen above, some processes are cross-culturally transferable. In concurrence with Foster (2007), building resilience from one kind of challenge, such as personal adversity, may foster resilience in other areas, such as the ability to overcome civic or social challenges. In the process of building resilience, there was also the development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2000) among the Boruca women. As the women developed personal resilience after their entrepreneurial ventures, they started to believe that they could impact a larger change in the community.

Finally, this study contributes to our understanding of women in leadership and entrepreneurship. Research suggests (2014) that women are opportunity driven, strategic and purposeful, meaningful, and focus on traditions and family and often use a participative approach when compared to men who favor a task orientation (Eagly, 1990; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Llopis, 2014). The journey of the Boruca women illustrate these orientations. In addition, the research in resilience found that the influence of optimism on the success of their businesses was greater for women than men (Ayala and Manzano, 2014). In the Boruca context, we also saw the importance of optimism both in the belief that they would change their lives and latter in their ability to conceptualize how to transform the community through culture

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revitalization.

Despite these theoretical contributions, as with every study, our study has its limitations. While our exploratory study suggests the impact on entrepreneurship on various forms of resilience (e.g. cultural, economic), there is a need to better understand the specific contributing factors that helped in the development of various forms of resilience. In identifying entrepreneurial thought and action can lead to resilience, our case study highlights the need for further research to explore and understand how entrepreneurship can stimulate individual, community, culture, and economic resilience. Second, this study has a limited number of respondents due to the nature of the study. We were interested in interviewing the entrepreneurs who were the change agents in the community to further explore the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience. Even though we conducted participant observation, in-depth semi-structured and unstructured interviews over a period of five years, which provided us with a good understanding of the phenomenon, future researchers should expand the number of participants. Finally, our study highlighted the perspectives of the Boruca women as the pioneers of the Association de La Flor, the cooperative in the community. Since this only provides one perspective, future research should include the men's perspective and contributions to the Boruca entrepreneurial journey, which began a decade after the women's.

Our study also has important practical implications. First, our findings suggest that resilience can be fostered and developed over time. Organizations interested in revitalizing marginalized communities, as well as, those interested in improve gender equality should offer educational opportunities that not only teach entrepreneurship but also, more importantly, use and connect entrepreneurial actions to self-efficacy and self-confidence. Enabling someone to have an appreciation and awareness of their small successes can have a transformative effect, as

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seen in this case (Foley, 2012). Non-profits, for-profit, and public organizations interested in preserving world ethnic cultures can work on the development of resilience in indigenous people which can be a critical factor in empowering indigenous people. In addition, an interesting finding in the case is that the effectual approach came naturally among the Boruca women. Consequently, this suggests that there is an opportunity to teach entrepreneurial mindsets and skill sets to support those seeking their paths out of poverty.

Entrepreneurship can be liberating and emancipating (Verdun *et al*., 2014) in marginalized contexts. Resilience may be a critical factor for economic development (Williams and Vorley, 2014), and cultural revitalization and our case suggests resilience can be developed through actions, entrepreneurial actions. If entrepreneurial thought and action leads to self-employment through innovative approaches (Henrekson and Sanandaji, 2011), researchers and practitioners should explore how to foster innovation in the area of self-employment. Exploring the dimensions of effectuation (Perry, et.al., 2011) in an indigenous context is warranted and may hold potential to understanding how best to structure educational programing. In addition, we need to continue to explore the interactions between communities, families, and individual entrepreneurs (Peredo and Chrisman, 2006) in marginalized contexts to enable others to replicate and build on successes in other communities.

In conclusion, our study explores the relationship between entrepreneurship and resilience in an indigenous context. Our findings suggest that in highly marginalized contexts, entrepreneurship leads to resilience, a reversal of the accepted proposition. Due to the need to survive, the Boruca engaged in entrepreneurial thought and action, which, in turn, led to the development of personal, community, cultural, and economic resilience.

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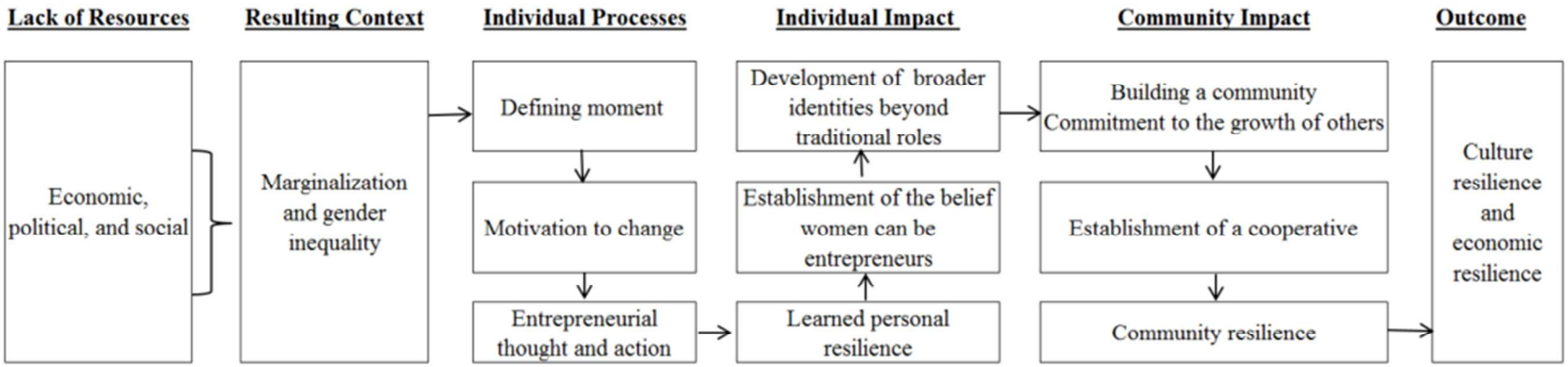
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Figure 1: Proposed conceptual model of the relationship between entrepreneurial action and resilience in an indigenous context



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