



# Women's Livelihood Creation and the Affiliation Capability: A Critical Programmatic Analysis

By Monet Gonneman  
Santa Clara University



## Abstract

This study analyzed the practical utility of the capabilities approach advanced by scholar Martha Nussbaum as an alternative to GDP for the measurement of development. Specifically, the study explored the value of using the affiliation capability in interpreting pro-women, community-based enterprises.

Expanding on Nussbaum's two-pronged definition of affiliation, this study proposed and evaluated a tripartite typology of the affiliation capability: the establishment of personal dignity, the ability to live successfully in community with others, and intentionally living in community for others. This original research demonstrated the application of Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach as an indicator of development using an expanded description of the affiliation capability.



*Case Study 1. El Salvador Craft unites women's artisan cooperatives and sells their products*



## Methodology

The study operationalized Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach and tested her theory using empirical case studies. The research deployed participant observation, interviews, and the field notes collected by interviewees to examine the capability of affiliation in five different enterprises. The enterprises worked with women in El Salvador, the Philippines, Uganda, Tanzania, and India. Four of the five organizations studied were social enterprises that were mentored through the Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship's Global Social Benefit Institute (GSBI) at Santa Clara University.

## Research Question

What structures and circumstances exist in pro-women enterprises that facilitate or hinder the affiliation capability? How can the affiliation capability be more clearly defined in order to improve its use as a tool for analyzing enterprises for the degree to which they further women's development?

## Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach

Nussbaum presented ten capabilities as indicators of development, a range of freedoms that contribute to a healthy, well-rounded life. Capability is a combination of inherent abilities and an environment conducive to acting on those abilities. In order for Nussbaum's theory to be useful, capabilities must be applied as a lens through which to examine a range of situations. To develop a clear picture of the variability within a single capability, this study focused on one capability: affiliation. Nussbaum separated affiliation into two main components. One part of the definition described a person's capacity for self-respect and desire to be treated with personal dignity. The other part referred to a person's ability to live with others.



*Case Study 2. Rags2Riches, Philippines, trains women to weave up-cycled scrap cloth*

## References

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6. Interview Notes. Collected by Interviewee 3, June – August 2015, Kolkata, India.

## Ten Central Capabilities

Nussbaum's ten capabilities are: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses/imagination/thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play, and control over one's environment. This study defined affiliation as having a sense of personal dignity, living successfully in community with others, and intentionally living in community for others.



*Case Study 4. DREAM trains women in Kolkatta, India to tailor and loans them materials to start their own business*

## Findings

This study found that the three dimensions of affiliation were present and enhanced in each of the five case study enterprises but were manifested differently. Personal dignity was enhanced through employment opportunities, skills development, and respectful treatment of women. Living in community with others was promoted through a communal work environment or through connections with customers both locally and globally. The enterprises also allowed women to live for others by providing them with an income or a product that benefited their families and their community as a whole.



*Case Study 5. iMerit is a technology service provider in Kolkata, India that works contracts for IT projects*

Monet Gonneman  
Sociology major, International Business and Mathematics minors

Mentor: Dr. Keith Warner, OMF  
Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship

Reader: Dr. Laura Nichols  
Sociology Department

