



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**  
**John H. Takamura Jr.**

Will defend his prospectus

**Vittu: The Linkages Between Indigenous Crafting, Sustainable Livelihood, and Concepts of Wellbeing in the context of Social Entrepreneurship**

**Abstract**

The Mazahua of Lajoya, one of several indigenous Mazahua communities in the state of Mexico, use the Mazahua word “vittu” for the artisan crafted clothing venture they aspire to create for their community because it has cultural significance. The linkages between the cultural identity of indigenous artisans and the success of their social entrepreneurial activities of crafting revolve around their collectivistic worldviews and how these worldviews shape and inform their livelihood objectives and activities towards maintaining and or improving wellbeing. As more indigenous peoples begin to take on the challenges of sustainable community development for themselves, more research will be needed to study how social entrepreneurial activities like artisan craft production effects Indigenous wellbeing in terms of the social, cultural, and economic factors specific to poverty alleviation and livelihood options. Cavanagh & Mander (2004) in their book titled *Alternatives to Economic Globalization: a Better World Is Possible* state that “in indigenous societies, the majority participate in activities that offer sustenance but are often not integrated in the national or global market. In rural areas, most make a living off the land, often engaged in subsistence agriculture or small-scale entrepreneurial activities that do not offer regular incomes” (pg. 97). These “small-scale entrepreneurial activities” can be seen as “economic alternatives” (Cavanagh & Mander, 2004) to traditional forms of subsistence. Coulthard (2012) refers to these as ‘alternative livelihoods’ which are “conceptualized as different capability sets from which people have to choose” (pg. 5). This proposed research focuses on the act and process of indigenous crafting (social relationships, making a living, gender roles, creating/designing, and

functionings/capabilities + material harvesting, materials prep, production, selling, etc.) on household and individual scales within an Indigenous community. In order to assess the potential impact (both negative and positive) of the artisan crafting alternative livelihood option as a social entrepreneurial intervention for decreasing indigenous community poverty, this research will analyze an indigenous community through asset mapping (Jasek-Rysdhal 2001, Robeyns 2003) whereby measurements will be taken of the current levels of Natural, Physical, Financial, Social/Cultural, Human and Spiritual capital to provide a current snapshot of individual and household livelihood functionings and capabilities (Robeyns 2003) prior to the development of a social entrepreneurial crafting venture. This data will then serve as a baseline to be used to compare to future data collected after the indigenous community develops the social entrepreneurial crafting venture so that steps can be taken to reduce negative impacts and increase the positive.

Additionally, as key components of livelihood and wellbeing, this research will investigate how indigenous women artisan crafters in the community perceive indigenous wellbeing otherwise known as Buen Vivir (Gudynas, 2011) through their material cultural activities (social relationships, making a living, gender roles, and cultural/indigenous/ethnic identity) resulting in an ethno-aesthetic analysis (Tice 1995, Flores 1985, Hedlund 1988, Hirschfeld 1977) of the relationship of Indigenous crafting to Indigenous Identity as its contribution to the body of knowledge regarding artisan craft production. Extensive structured and semi-structured interviews and surveys as well as participant observation will be conducted within a community of Mazahua indigenous crafters in an attempt to understand the nature of the relationship between the act and process of indigenous crafting, indigenous livelihood, and indigenous wellbeing. This research will provide a better understanding of the livelihood functionings and capabilities of indigenous crafters in order to identify any potential risks or vulnerabilities to artisan livelihood as artisan communities transition from internal household craft consumption to craft sales as a business. This research will also develop a framework for understanding indigenous concepts of wellbeing in the context of indigenous artisan craft production in a bid to improve the social innovations associated with social entrepreneurship as well as to increase understanding about indigenous crafting and its particular role in indigenous concepts of wellbeing.

Wednesday, February 6, 2019

1:00 pm

Wrigley Hall, room 323

Faculty, students, and the public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Shauna BurnSilver, Co-chair

Dr. David Manuel-Navarrete, Co-chair  
Dr. Nalini Chhetri, Member