Recognising the regenerative impacts of Canadian women tourism social entrepreneurs through a feminist ethic of care lens

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Abstract

Purpose – *The overarching aim of this project is to understand the role women tourism social entrepreneurs (TSEs) play in contributing to regenerative practices in Canada.*

Design/methodology/approach – *Semi-structured interviews were carried out with women food TSEs with snowball sampling. This paper challenges the assumption that the masculine experience is the human experience. Accordingly, this research is informed by a feminist ethic of care lens to recognise the important role of Canadian women TSEs. Methodologically, the authors employed the strategies of a constructivist grounded theory to guide the analysis (Charmaz, 2011). This process involved carefully engaging in a close line by line reading of the transcripts, developing codes based on the authors' dealings with the data including summarising, synthesising and sorting the data (Charmaz, 2011).*

Findings – *The analysis revealed three categories: (1) Adopting a regenerative mindset and enhancing well-being, (2) Supporting the consumption of real food and (3) Educating communities for regenerative and just futures. The analysis revealed the importance of women TSEs in adopting a regenerative and caring mindset to enhance the well-being of their communities and beyond.*

Research limitations/implications – *The study focusses on the learnings from 11 entrepreneurs from Canada. There is a scope to expand the discussion with more interviews. The impact of this pandemic on the small businesses resulted in affecting the researchers' participation by presenting some unique challenges in participant recruitment. Maybe the studies in the near future will focus on grounding the research papers based on other sexual orientations and indigenous social entrepreneurs.*

Practical implications – *The authors hope future studies centre diversity and attend to the role of women in their communities to better under the diverse contributions. The work presented here is part of a broader study on the role and impact of women TSEs and so only reveals the tip of the Canadian iceberg. Forthcoming studies will attend to some of the gender-specific barriers faced by women TSEs and the supports required particularly in the wake of COVID-19. The authors hope other scholars continue to build on this work, adopting feminist approaches to enhance our understanding of the role women play in contributing to just, caring and regenerative futures.*

Social implications – *Contributing to Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga's (2021) in-depth case study using an ethic of care to examine an Australian events business supporting homeless individuals, the analysis of the 11 in-depth interviews with Canadian TSE provides evidence of alternative ways women are delivering social value. Using an ethic of care lens has elicited the impacts created by the informants and the ripple effects particularly in light of regenerative practices which are crucial in the tourism sector as borders and destinations reopen to tourism as noted by Ateljevic (2020).*

Originality/value – *There are few studies in the tourism social entrepreneurship literature that recognise the agency and centres the vocies of women. Kimbu and Ngoasong (2016) made a call for more research to understand how women engage in social entrepreneurial activities and benefit their local communities. There are limited analyses on regenerative tourism in practice in the scholarly literature. To respond to this gap the authors examine the regenerative practices of women TSEs in Canada.*

Keywords *Regenerative tourism, Regenerative mindset, Women, Tourism social entrepreneurs, Feminist ethic of care, Canada*

Paper type *Research paper*

Introduction

Several indicators have recently signalled responses to a much-needed radical reform in the way tourism is practiced. Specifically, scholars have engaged in important discussions on degrowth practices in tourism (Lundmark *et al.*, 2021) responding to the current climate crisis, and the important role of tourism social entrepreneurs (TSEs) in driving change in destination communities (i.e. Mottiar *et al.*, 2018; Sheldon *et al.*, 2017a). Appreciating the importance of social enterprises in sustainable community development (Aquino *et al.*, 2018) is captured in a redefinition of tourism centring the needs and interests of host communities (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.*, 2019). Offering a new definition of tourism led to offering new vocabulary to support social and ecological justice recognising the need to socialise tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga, 2021). Centring marginal voices draws attention to the importance of relationality and prioritising feminist and indigenous perspectives (e.g. Boluk *et al.*, 2021; Pritchard, 2018), such perspectives are crucial in regenerative tourism practices (e.g. Pollock, 2019) which is a future-oriented philosophy aiming to enhance destination communities.

The radical reform necessary in tourism underlines the importance of re-evaluating the role of communities and environments where tourism takes place. In the case of regenerative tourism, the emphasis lies in improving tourism communities which takes the central focus of this paper. Recent scholarship has signalled the pause in travel, due to the global pandemic, may be viewed as a silver lining given the inimical impacts generated by the sector (see Ateljevic, 2020; Everingham and Chassagne, 2020 for example). Accordingly, the time and space to rethink how we provide, offer and practice tourism is needed in consideration of regenerative practices which may serve as a radical pathway for more just and caring tourism futures.

Building on previous work considering the roles of TSEs (i.e. Mottiar *et al.*, 2018; Aquino *et al.*, 2018) we centre women in our analysis. Centring women TSEs is important given scholars have recently called for improved understandings of how women engage in social entrepreneurial activities which bring benefits to their local communities (Kimbu and Ngoasong, 2016). Sheldon *et al.*'s (2017b) call for engaging with theory to better our understanding of TSEs led us to draw on a feminist ethic of care lens to recognise the important role of Canadian women TSEs. This work contributes to the limited tourism scholarship drawing on feminist perspectives (Pritchard, 2018) and a paucity of research on TSEs that draw on a feminist ethic of care (see Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga, 2021 as an exception). The overarching aim of this project is to understand the role women TSEs play in contributing to regenerative practices and futures in Canada.

Regenerative tourism

Regeneration is well documented in agricultural practices emphasising the need to move beyond mechanistic methods and the use of pesticides and fertilisers in agriculture deterring soil health (e.g. Brown, 2018; LaCanne and Lundgren, 2018). Regenerative thinking and practices have infiltrated into the field of business and leadership (e.g. Hutchins and Storm, 2019) and more recently tourism stemming from the thought leadership of Anna Pollock (2019). Regenerative tourism offers a remedy to the current fragmented way tourism is practiced, thus encouraging interconnectivity (Cave and Dredge, 2020) and the practice of higher levels of care (Pollock, 2019). Adopting a regenerative approach supports a mindset shift, pushing beyond linear thinking to adopting whole systems thinking approaches, with an eye on creating value for entire ecosystems and stakeholders (Hutchins and Storm, 2019). Importantly, regenerative travel seeks to leave ecosystems, communities and economies better off than they were before the tourism encounter (Cave and Dredge, 2020). Driven with the goal to enhance communities, and adopting a systems approach, regenerative tourism is dependent on all participants to act as stewards.

Building on contemporary sustainability definitions, is the emphasis placed on proactively giving back to communities, cultures, heritage, places and landscapes (Duxbury *et al.*, 2020); thus,

improving the nature of communities through tourism. To do so, requires a holistic process in which the host community's priorities become paramount and take precedence over the desires of travellers and profit-oriented ambitions determined by governments and businesses (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.*, 2019). To action regenerative practices requires meaningful and authentic dialogue, transparency, co-creating partnerships with each other and other living systems, drawing on feminist perspectives and indigenous ways of knowing, being and interacting with the world which has been largely ignored and disregarded in tourism.

Some scholars advocate that the tourism sector needs to be led by cultivating regenerative travels post-pandemic (e.g. Ateljevic, 2020), countering irresponsible tourism practices (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.*, 2019). Pursuing a regenerative approach in tourism requires a level of maturity and realism regarding the destructive pathway of tourism (Sheldon, 2021). There are limited analyses on regenerative tourism in practice in the scholarly literature, as such to respond to this gap in this paper we examine the regenerative practices of women TSEs who will be discussed below. To pursue a regenerative tourism pathway requires co-imagining and co-creating a holistic approach for COVID-recovery alongside stakeholders by engaging in authentic dialogue and communication. One tourism stakeholder contributing to regenerative and caring pathways are TSEs.

Tourism social entrepreneurs

TSEs are recognised as "change agents in a destination's social entrepreneurship system; the people who bring their vision, characteristics and ideas to solve the social problem and bring about the transformation of the tourist destination" (Sheldon *et al.*, 2017a, p. 7). Clearly documented in the literature, the tourism sector presents plenty of opportunities for social entrepreneurs to positively impact destinations and improve the sector considering its inimical impacts (Dredge, 2017; Sheldon *et al.*, 2017a). The crucial roles of social entrepreneurs in tourism are beginning to be realised in the literature. Specifically, TSEs contribute to community sustainability (e.g. Aquino *et al.*, 2018; Boluk, 2011a,b; Dredge, 2017), formulating networks and catalysing change (e.g. Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga, 2021; Mottiar *et al.*, 2018) and spearheading sustainable and inclusive destination development (e.g. Kimbu and Ngoasong, 2016; Mottiar and Boluk, 2017; Sakata and Prideaux, 2013).

Restaurants serve an important function of social connection and can provide social value (Mottiar *et al.*, 2018; Warner *et al.*, 2013). The literature has revealed an interest in the greening practices of restaurants contributing to the betterment of the local community (e.g. Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.*, 2014) further supporting political decision-making regarding food choices (Higgins-Desbiolles and Wijesinghe, 2018). The role of local food tourism in building socio-cultural sustainability, environmental awareness and elevating regional identity has been advocated by Everett and Aitchison (2008). Higgins-Desbiolles and Wijesinghe (2018) demonstrated the growing involvement of Australian restaurant operators in the education of community and consumers about healthy food choices, social sustainability issues, values and ethics enhancing well-being. Specifically, the author's data highlighted a variety of ways women entrepreneurs take-up the training and development of their staff, as well as the ecosystem comprising of suppliers, consumers, residents/community members and K-12 school children (Higgins-Desbiolles and Wijesinghe, 2018). The importance of personal development, motivational training and other interventions is particularly important in addressing work-related pressures given the high levels of stress among employees in the hospitality sector who often experience burn-out and mental health issues (e.g., Kotera *et al.*, 2018).

One gap recently recognised in Boluk and Aquino's (2021) critical analysis of the impacts of TSEs, is the limited scholarship attending to diversity. Specifically, the scholars point out the absence of women in the literature and how women explicitly extend care for others (Boluk and Aquino, 2021). Informed by this gap, the aim of our analysis is to explore how women may lead change in their communities to foster regenerative tourism futures. There are few studies in the

tourism social entrepreneurship literature which recognise the agency of women. Specifically, Kimbu and Ngoasong (2016) made a call for more research to understand how women engage in social entrepreneurial activities and benefit their local communities. Responding to this call, Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga (2021) highlighted the work of women social entrepreneurs in an event business focussed on mitigating social inequity by supporting vulnerable women in Australia. Such research is imperative given women are recognised as essential change agents in communities and "are generally more purpose-driven than men," more likely to initiate businesses with the intention of making a difference (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2021, p. 16), and place a high importance on community well-being (Tajeddini *et al.*, 2017).

Our work responds to Pritchard's (2018) concern regarding the lack of tourism scholarship critically engaging with feminist perspectives. Furthermore, we build on Kimbu and Ngoasong's (2016) call for more research exploring how women engage in social entrepreneurial activities benefiting their communities and Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga's (2021) work exploring the role of social entrepreneurs in Australia. Contributing to the latter study, we too will take up a feminist ethic of care to examine how Canadian women may contribute to just, caring and regenerative tourism futures. While the feminist notion of care may be an inherent attribute of social entrepreneurs and women are importantly seen in the role of caring, there is a stark contrast as to how women are side-tracked from the mainstream of scholarly discourses and lack representation (see Boluk and Aquino, 2021; Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2020; Pritchard, 2018). Accordingly, we endeavour to refocus the lens and lean into the role of Canadian women TSEs to improve our understanding of how women contribute to just, and regenerative tourism futures. The following section will detail our theoretical framework supporting this paper an ethic of care.

Theoretical framework: feminist ethic of care

The notion of care has been discussed in multiple fields including moral psychology (Gilligan, 1982), labour rights (Robinson, 2006), political theory (Held, 1993) and social policy (e.g. Hankivsky, 2004). The origins of care theory can be traced back to Carol Gilligan's (1982) influential book entitled *In a Different Voice*. Importantly, Gilligan's (1982) work drew attention to a preference for listening to, and attending to the masculine experience. Realising the tendency to naturally lean on the male experience, has recently encouraged us to pay attention to the silenced experiences of women and attend to the tension between responsibilities and rights (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan (1982) argues,

> In the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility and the origins of aggression in the failure of connection (p. 173) [...] The failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation. (p. 174).

Gilligan's (1982) work is guided by questions about voice, relationship and psychological processes and theory, particularly those theories in which men's experiences reflect all human experience. Gilligan's (1982) analysis and portrayal of adult work and family and community relationships underscores the preference of males to pursue an ethic of justice based on the principle of equality and the female tendency towards an ethic of care based on the principle of nonviolence. Critically, Gilligan (1982) emphasises that care is an activity of relationship responding to individual needs. This is maintained by Noddings (2012) who asserts, "in care ethics, relation is ontologically basic, and the caring relation is ethically (morally) basic. Every human life starts in relation, and it is through relations that a human individual emerges" (p. 771). Noddings' (2012) ethic of care work is premised on the mutual nature of care between the one who provides care and the one who receives care. An ethic of care is an approach to morality emphasising a complex web of interdependence with others (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 2012; Tronto, 1993).

Robinson's (2006) work argues that an ethic of care requires "attentiveness to details, responsiveness to particular others, and responsibility over the long-term" (p. 337). And these values, Robinson (2006) argues, conflict with a contemporary emphasis supporting capitalist markets and neoliberal ideology supporting individualism, reciprocity and profit. This paper challenges the assumption that the masculine experience is *the* human experience. Accordingly, this research is informed by a feminist ethic of care lens to mutually recognise the important role of Canadian women TSEs and understand how their work reflects care and contributes to regenerative practices. Employing an ethic of care lens is important because limited research in tourism has adopted care ethics (see Carnicelli and Boluk, 2021; Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga, 2021; Jamal and Camargo, 2014 for exceptions) and thus this work contributes to the scholarly debate.

Methodology

The overarching aim of this project is to understand the role women TSEs play in contributing to regenerative practices in Canada. With this in mind, we employed snowball purposive sampling involving initially locating a few women operating food related social enterprises (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). We identified our initial informants in the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH) database. Several interviews were cancelled and/or postponed because of lockdown and/or provincial reopening mandates due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 11 semi-structured interviews were carried out with women food TSEs. The social enterprises included restaurants, events and catering, and bakeries. Specifically, we interviewed seven women in Ontario, two in British Columbia and two in Alberta and notably two of our informants identified as Indigenous. General questions pertained to why the entrepreneurs started their businesses, what kind of sustainability activities they engaged in, how the entrepreneurs work with their communities and their visions for the future. Interviews were carried out between May and July 2021 and lasted between 50 and 75 min. The interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, interviews were recorded and transcribed with the participant's consent.

Methodologically, we employed the strategies of a constructivist grounded theory to guide our analysis (Charmaz, 2011). This process involved carefully engaging in a close line by line reading of the transcripts, developing codes based on our dealings with the data including summarising, synthesising and sorting our data (Charmaz, 2011). We recorded memos throughout our entire process of analysing the data. The two authors met regularly throughout the data collection and analysis process, which led to the tentative analytical categories. Constant communication and analysis led to the refining of the categories as we advanced our analysis with more focussed data generation (Charmaz, 2011). This process reflects a blended analytic process leading to a "systematic rendering of data analysis" as prescribed by Creswell (2013, p. 35). We adopted an ethic of care lens and centred our analysis to highlight the women's contributions towards regenerative and just tourism futures. The following section will detail the three categories emerging from our analysis.

Results

Adopting a regenerative mindset and enhancing well-being

One notable trait to drive change is to lead the process of change. Our analysis revealed our women entrepreneurs believed in sustainability and regenerative practices on a personal level and such beliefs and values reflected a mindset impacting how they conducted their businesses emphasising enhancing well-being. Specifically, our analysis revealed intentionality in the way our informants interacted with their colleagues and staff, suppliers, their environments, the choices they made in developing products, sourcing and buying raw materials and serving customers which demonstrated regenerative practices.

A commitment to enhance well-being was visible in our data, specifically around providing support for employees, providing safe and healthy choices for those with food allergies, supporting

suppliers, land, animals and entire ecosystems. Several of our informants were part of the Living Wage Network supporting employee well-being. Lauren for example, stressed the importance of investing in holistic development of human resources for business which she positioned as important for just and regenerative futures. She explains "We are leaving our community and our province and our country and our world in a better spot from many different facets. So, we are ensuring sustainability of our industry by training, hiring and developing well-rounded humans who have good business ethics and good personal ethics".

Enhancing well-being was described by another informant in the way her business catered to vulnerable populations with food sensitivities. Elaine explains, "the cornerstone of our business is about the safety for our clientele, the whole reason we exist is to create a safe product and a safe environment for people who feel like they're at risk in normal settings". Further support for vulnerable populations was evident in our analysis of Carol's interview who demonstrated a commitment to enhance a sense of community taking an emphatic view on issues like drugs and homelessness. Specifically, Carol made a conscious decision to open her business in her own community because,

> I am aware of where my business is located, in terms of the socio-economic factors that contribute to the way our neighbours struggle, survive and live. Don not open up a business that is going to push the people who live there away [. . .] It is the same issue as a settler on native land. Like be aware of your privilege [. . .] and make sure that you are doing what you can to mitigate your existence.

Further to supporting staff and recognising the importance of where one's business is situated, many informants revealed the importance of working with like-minded suppliers who share the same values regarding distributing profits and earning opportunities within communities. For example, Lauren put it like this,

> We give our business to people who share our values, trying to lift other small businesses off the ground, we work a lot with really small unheard of producers, who we think are doing great things, and we promote them and we try our best to like, we say all the time, we want to make money with our suppliers, not off of our suppliers [. . .]

Supporting small businesses and suppliers who complement her business philosophy was also important to Sophie who said "we have strong integrity when it comes to the products that we bring into the store. We support small producers, or people who have similar philosophies in terms of the ingredients and we support local, Ontario, produce growers". Another informant, Jess, demonstrated her values in sharing a personal commitment to supporting local when she said "I do not have a Costco membership and I do not buy things off Amazon, and I do not shop, or eat from chain restaurants". This orientation favoured sourcing locally produced ingredients and supporting small businesses who prioritised environmental and social commitments. Jess further emphasised this when she said,

> Our company values have been firm since I started our catering company [. . .] our goal is to always be the most environmentally sustainable [. . .] the most socially responsible food service in the region. And that helps guide all our decisions. So, whether it is, you know, what ingredients are we bringing in or whether it is how we are sending this message out on social media. Every decision comes back to those factors. [. . .] we look for the Ontario products.

Like Jess, our analysis revealed Zoe considered regenerative practices in every aspect of her business. Specifically, she demonstrated respect for land and ecology and engaging in regeneration dialogues. This was particularly apparent when she said this,

> It is super important to have that understanding [. . .] the reverence and respect for the land, and for each and every bush and, you know, for the birds, that means some of those berries too. I do not need 500 tons of them, you know, I need enough to get me through another year. So, to me [. . .] I think it all starts with one person.

Regenerative values were further echoed by Karen in her interest in purchasing from suppliers who support fairtrade and organic raw material. However, she signalled there is still a long road ahead given a regenerative mindset is still largely absent.

> I feel like a lot of businesses use that word [sustainability] to market themselves or offset things. And I do not think there is like an actual real buy in, in terms of actually turning it around and regenerating the earth. I guess it is, it is just not good enough. And we need more of like a regenerative mindset like a holistic circular economy mindset.

Further to the mindset required to implement regenerative practices enhancing their communities, it was also clear, our informants were invested in supporting the consumption of real food.

Supporting the consumption of real food

Food production including the modification, mistreatment of animals and the mass distribution of food was notably expressed as a concern by all informants. Recognising the harm created by commercial animal farming led one informant to partner with a local farmer to procure meat. Adele shared the following,

> I am very against commercial farming, I think that itis literally the place where the devil lives [. . .] So my big requirements partnering with a farm included the conditions the pigs were in. One, the pigs needed to be able to be indoors or outdoors at their own leisure and two, they were fed no corn, soy, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Adele's partnership was born out of a mutual interest to ensure the well-being of the animals she procured and provide the best quality products to her clients. Carol, similarly, shared concerns and care for the treatment of animals, as well as workers and those who live in the communities where the supplies are produced. She put it like this, "When you start thinking about veganism and animal rights issues you start getting into issues of factory farms and how workers are treated and where those farms are located". Accordingly, considering the use of pesticides that may harm employees, animals and produce was concerning. This analysis clearly demonstrates the research and learning that has informed our TSEs' decisions, demonstrating care within and well beyond their communities.

One informant, Naomi posed a challenge to sourcing and supporting real indigenous food. She suggested that indigenous food cannot be commercially produced and sourced and if it is then it is not allowed to be sold. She explained "There is a whole bunch of different levels of indigenous food, a lot of it is not commercially sourced but if it is commercially sourced, we are not allowed to serve it because that deceives the purpose of indigenous food and its trustworthiness". The notion of trust was clear in Marlene's data specifically in supporting real food in her vegan café. She said, "It has been my experience that our guests and our staff members trust us because we provide fresh, reliable products. I am partnering with local farmers, because a lot of our produce does come from local farmers rather than mass distributors". The trust earned by Marlene and other TSEs reflects the care that their customers and the broader community demonstrate by supporting their businesses.

Our analysis clearly revealed our informants' work resisting contemporary food production practices particularly in response to harmful food production tensions including how farmers are treated and the lack of care towards the food that is produced. Specifically, Zoe highlighted the problems with the current food system when she said,

> What we pay farmers, it is just absolutely sad. I think our food system is sad [. . .] like go to the farmers market get some real food! [. . .] GMO products and clear-cutting forests are not sustainable practices. You need to move your crops so that the soil has time to recharge itself. It is like a battery right? You drain it, you need to let it grow again and soak up those nutrients so, what you plant there is good.

Zoe argued that regenerative practices are necessary to support soil health and foster the production of real food. Further supporting producers who care, Karen noted that to support real food, it is necessary to pay close attention to how the food is grown. While sourcing tea for her business Karen sought tea that is grown organically with biodynamic processes and fairtrade certified. This criterion made it difficult to source locally, therefore, she partnered with a Sri Lankan

farm following a site visit ensuring she knew the farmers and their cultivation processes. Karen explained,

> Tea is our major ingredient [and] it does not grow here it grows in Sri Lanka, in India, so I actually visited Sri Lanka [. . .] They foster a regenerative growing cycle there, they do not use pesticides on the tea leaf, instead, they are actually fermenting a fertilizer to increase microbial growth for the soil. So, our teas are coming from that source.

Another example of farm to table partnerships supporting regenerative practices was evident in our analysis of Lauren's interview and her partnership with the Prairie Farm Project. The Prairie Farm Project provides nutritionally dense and ethically raised food and other farm products to families. This partnership demonstrates the promotion of local food stories and associations with local families which produce food intergenerationally supporting local real food consumption and education. Lauren explains the central philosophy of their partnership emphasising the regeneration of land and food production when she said:

> We work hard to find, likeminded farmers, suppliers and artisans who share common goals. We work with a really great group called the prairie farm project, and it is anywhere from three to fifth generation farmers [. . .] and we try to source as much of our proteins as possible, because their mantra is that they are preparing the land for the future seven generations of their family.

Demonstrating care for future generations was also apparent in our analysis of Karen's data particularly in her work advocating real food. Karen's work demonstrated a commitment to participate in coalitions and support a policy level initiative encouraging and incentivising GMOs free quality ingredients. Specifically, she said this,

> We also donate to an organization called CBAN, the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network. In terms of sustainability, they advocate for policy against GMOs in our food system [. . .] So, you know, down the road thinking about future generations in a way where we are trying to give them support for this policy action".

The Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (2015) provides evidence that GMO foods in the market are not healthier, fresher, cheaper or environmentally friendly and are not allowed in grocery stores without government testing, constructive public opinion and animal feeding studies. Correspondingly, Jess highlighted pursuing specific certifications in line with her commitments,

> We are Feast On certified through the Culinary Tourism Alliance. So that means that we submit our all of our receipts from the [...] ingredients that we bring in to a third party, it is all verified, they are making sure that we are using a certain percentage of locally grown ingredients. So locally raised meats, locally laid eggs, you know, all of our dairies local within Southern Ontario and then, of course the produce when we can get it.

Evident in our analysis so far is that our informants clearly demonstrated their values which were reflected in their relationships with their staff, suppliers, animals and customers reflecting care and a commitment to regenerative business practices. In this second category our analysis demonstrated the importance of supporting practices that allowed our female entrepreneurs to supply real food, confronting the various issues with contemporary food production. Our informants also demonstrated support for and participation in networks and coalitions supporting caring and regenerative practices. Our analysis revealed a third category emphasising the importance of education to support regenerative practices and just futures.

Educating communities for regenerative and just futures

To facilitate regenerative practices and the potential for positive future impacts education emerged as an important component influencing our entrepreneurs' interactions with staff, customers and the broader community (including younger generations) where they operated their businesses. Our informants showed care in the many ways through the training and education they provided to their

staff, clients and broader community. Such education and training was in reference to the quality of ingredients they used, their decisions to support natural food production, the connection between food consumption and overall health, engaging with children, supporting inclusive workplaces, providing training around equity and providing mechanisms to support their staff's mental health. The interest and concern for the education of future generations is of utmost importance to the informants, reflecting positive impacts on their communities.

Evident in the presentation of our results so far is that our informants showed care in the way they purchased and created food, challenging the unsustainable nature of contemporary food production. Many of our informants considered education as an essential process particularly in supporting the cultivation and consumption of real food. One informant specifically shared her philosophy regarding passing her knowledge onto her customers. Specifically, Elaine led her decision-making with the following, "Why are we using particular ingredients?" Elaine advocated the need for education to enhance appreciation for healthier alternatives. Elaine explained,

> For us, it is about just making sure that our community is aware when they come in and buy a loaf of bread, it is not going to last a week and a half, it is going to last three days. And if it starts going bad after three days, well, that is a good thing. Because that is healthy. People need to stop purchasing products that cannot be broken down. One of the biggest reasons why there is such a rise in autoimmune disorders, and especially in celiac disease, is because we have created hybrids of wheat.

Another informant described the importance of educating her clients regarding her regenerative practices as "a standard operating procedure". Specifically, Marlene explained a "sort of a mandated greeting that we all have, if we know someone is new, then we give them the whole spiel, we just inform them that, you know, everything is made in house and from scratch, etc." Similarly, another informant, Lexie, identified the term 'delicious' as an important foundation to her business leading to imparting knowledge to her clients and younger generations regarding what makes her food taste good. Lexie offered "delicious, is like another pillar of our business and we need to train the next generation on how we create the food, because these skills have to be passed on, they have to be taught". Further to educating her clients Lexie spoke to the importance of teaching children about where their food comes from, supporting an additional layer of care to a stakeholder group her business would not receive direct and/or immediate benefits from. Lexie said, "some of the most rewarding things I have done are like activities with kids, you know, like just giving them a little understanding of like, where does that little carrot stick in the bag in your fridge come from?"

Beyond food related education, and protecting the environment for future generations, our informants showed care through training and development about equity, diversity and inclusion supporting regenerative and just futures. One of our informants, Adele had a clear equity and equality lens when explaining her business philosophy. Adele put it like this, "for me, a main driver, [is] I fiercely believe in equality. I believe in females [...] I think that we are still getting the short end of the stick and I want my/our, equal 50%" (Adele). Our analysis revealed that training and education was also important in Lauren's work specifically in her support of ethics education for staff and the development of value-driven human resources ensuring sustainability of the hospitality industry. Supporting this she said, "We hire, train and develop well-rounded humans who have good business and personal ethics [. . .] we want to make sure that when somebody sees us on a resume, they know that they are hiring somebody with incredible values and great training".

Enhancing and improving supports for employees was also recognised in a non-profit organisation Silvia set up. Specifically, she explains "We started a non-profit organisation geared at improving mental health in the hospitality industry. We have raised $35,000, to educate hospitality owners on why it is in their best interest to have a happy, healthy team. The funds raised also support free counselling for workers in crisis". The broad sector-wide education around mental health and the supports in place for employees demonstrates how this informant is improving current conditions and this work could have ripple effects into the future. The following section will present an analysis of our key findings in relation to the literature and the feminist ethic of care theoretical framework adopted.

Discussion

Our analysis revealed the importance of our women TSEs in adopting a regenerative and caring mindset to enhance the well-being of their communities and ability to thrive in the future. This adopted mindset supported their communities in mutually producing and consuming real food and fostered educational opportunities between a host of stakeholders further encouraging regenerative and just practices. Our data revealed how our informants lead with an ethic of care through their conscious decision making in their daily business operations. Specifically, informants reflected on where they sourced their ingredients prioritising local, in some cases indigenous, organic and fairtrade products. Such commitments emphasise the importance of building relationships with producers and suppliers, as well as supporting regenerative practices that may benefit communities well into the future. Gilligan's (1982) care theory establishes that care is an activity of relationship responding to individual needs, this was verified in our data. The importance of relationships was apparent in some of the programmes endorsed by our informants (e.g. farm to fork, Prairie Farm Project) and certifications (e.g. Fair Wage Employer, Feast On, Canadian Biotech Action Network advocating for policy against GMOs). Such examples build on the relationships our informants nurtured particularly with their suppliers, and both local and broader communities including provincial, national and international networks.

Anna Pollock's (2019) examination offers regenerative tourism as a remedy to the fragmented nature of tourism demonstrating higher levels of care considering interconnectivity. Higher levels of care were recognised from a regenerative perspective based on the importance of building intergenerational relationships with farmers who prepare the land for their future generations. In one unique case, an informant visited producers on a farm in Sri Lanka to experience first-hand how the tea leaves were produced, ensuring their practices were aligned with the entrepreneur's mindset. This visit and their subsequent relationship building demonstrates a higher level of care we think Pollock (2019) was referring to. Specifically, our informant demonstrates care towards producers who remain largely invisible to western retail outlets and consumers purchasing their products. This example and the others attending to the importance of relationship building reflect what Robinson (2006) points out as being important in an ethic of care demonstrating attention to detail. Such examples of care shared here underscore the complex web of interdependence with others (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 2012; Tronto, 1993) bridging geographical borders.

Further to the importance of relationships, an ethic of care requires "responsiveness to particular others, and responsibility over the long-term" (Robinson, 2006, p. 337). Beyond an interest in attending to relationships with suppliers, it was evident in our analysis that our informants were attentive to the needs of their employees, and broader communities. Specifically, strong philosophies regarding sustainability, and regenerative practices drew attention to their commitment and the lengths they were willing to go to supporting just futures. Clearly, some of these values shared were in direct conflict with operating a contemporary business in a capitalistic system supporting neoliberal ideology underscoring individualism, reciprocity and profit (Boluk *et al.*, 2021) acting in tension to regenerative practices (Ateljevic, 2020; Cave and Dredge, 2020; Sheldon, 2021). Instead, our informants practiced and demonstrated care towards their networks including their employees and wider communities.

Notably, our informants provided training and education to their staff, clients and broader communities about the quality of ingredients they used, their decisions to support natural food production and the connections between food consumption and overall health. Such education supports Higgins-Desbiolles and Wijesinghe's (2018) work drawing attention to the role of women TSEs' play in educating an ecosystem in Australia. Importantly, our data revealed that an unintentional outcome of informal training (casual overview of operating believes at the counter) and/or formal training (outreach programming with children, community talks, or mental health programming) was potentially educating for the mindset shift required to support regenerative and higher order caring practices within and beyond one's community. Accordingly, the informal and formal educational training provided by our informants may lead to strengthening individuals, their communities and relationships with one another in the present and well into the future, supporting

regeneration. Attending to the importance of education and training to cultivate regenerative and caring mindsets has not been attended to in the literature.

An important nuance in our analysis was the role of altruism. Specifically, time was invested in educating groups such as children about the importance of real food, and hospitality businesses about the importance of mental health. Such education and training could be viewed as altruistic, given that in the former example some of our informants may never receive benefits from the children trained (via increased sales or employment). In the later example, the non-profit set up to provide educational support and care for other hospitality owners in the sector, reveals the importance of a regenerative mindset and focus on enhancing well-being. Such a mindset is incongruent with competition. This mindset may reflect another example of what Pollock (2019) referred to as higher order care. The non-profit providing resources for those needing mental health support established by one of our informants, demonstrates her responsiveness to not only the needs of her staff, and additional burdens living and working through a pandemic, but also the necessity of educating the broader hospitality sector to enhance the visibility of an invisible condition. Such altruism challenges the understanding of an ethic of care being reciprocal between the one providing care and the one on the receiving end (e.g. Noddings, 2012). This finding is also important because altruism has not been attended to in the tourism social entrepreneurship literature (see Boluk and Aquino, 2021). Responding to the needs of others is inherent in Robinson's (2006) contributions to an ethic of care. Our findings on training and improving support for the hospitality sector are also important because action is needed to address work-related pressures and attend to the stress of hospitality workers, who often experience burn-out and mental health problems (Kotera *et al.*, 2018).

The mindset adopted by our Canadian women informants guiding the way they engage with their businesses, and communities, demonstrates that indeed they are essential change agents, and have initiated their businesses with the intension of making a difference (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2021). Our analysis illustrates our women informants place a high importance on community well-being (Tajeddini *et al.*, 2017); this was evidenced in the various partnerships they supported, and the education they provided to their communities supporting real food. Several of our informants reflected on the notion of reverence which is a deep respect for land and ecology. This was particularly brought to our attention in our analysis of our Indigenous entrepreneurs' data and their reflections on how they interact with their environment, borrowing only what is needed, not taking too much. A challenge brought forth by one informant was the absence of a regenerative mindset among the broader tourism sector. This frustration mutually underscores the importance of a regenerative mindset education, as well as recognising that a regenerative path is not a quick fix and indeed will be an arduous path requiring buy-in and work on behalf of all those who participate in tourism now and in the future. Acknowledging the inimical impacts generated by tourism allows us to understand why regenerative tourism is not only needed but imperative.

Further to the value and business alignment supporting regenerative practices, it was also clear our informants were invested in supporting the consumption of real food and broader equity concerns in the hospitality sector. The farm to fork programmes, partnerships with local farms, seeking indigenous ingredients or fairtrade ingredients and advocacy for mental health demonstrated this commitment and mindset. The education and training our informants engaged in demonstrated the importance of trust in the provision of real food, attending to the specific dietary needs of customers, staff, broader needs of the community and hospitality sector. This contrasts the untrustworthy and uncaring approach in the capitalist system. Further, what our analysis uncovers is the importance of engaging in informal and formal regenerative dialogue to generate benefits in a sector which desperately needs change.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to understand the role women TSEs play in contributing to regenerative practices in Canada. Focussing on this group was important given the paucity of scholarship on

women TSEs (see Boluk and Aquino, 2021; Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga, 2021; Kimbu and Ngoasong, 2016 as exceptions). Accordingly, by attending to the voices of women TSEs we confront the omission of their voices. We hope our work encourages others to also lean into the contributions of women TSEs attending to their unique contributions contributing to just, caring and regenerative tourism futures. In response to Pritchard's (2018) concerns regarding the limited work in tourism taking up feminist perspectives we employed a feminist ethic of care (e.g. Gilligan, 1982) (see Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga, 2021 as an exception). This seemed fitting given the literature reveals the work of TSEs challenges the unjust systems of capitalism (Boluk, 2011a; Dredge, 2017; Sheldon *et al.*, 2017a). Adopting this lens allows us to listen to the nuances regarding the contributions of women TSEs particularly in support of just and regenerative futures. Drawing on a feminist ethic of care also responds to Sheldon *et al.*'s (2017b) call for more theory to help us better understand TSEs.

Importantly, our work challenges the dominant masculine economically informed understanding of success (Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2020), uncovering alternative ways women create benefits and impacts to their communities which are regenerative in nature, caring and future-oriented. As such, our work here, supports recent work adopting an ethic of care such as Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga (2021) and Carnicelli and Boluk (2021) deviating from masculinist framings regarding how impacts are understood in tourism. Contributing to Higgins-Desbiolles and Monga's (2021) in-depth case study using an ethic of care to examine an Australian events business supporting homeless individuals, our analysis of the 11 in-depth interviews with Canadian TSEs provides evidence of alternative ways women are delivering social value. Using an ethic of care lens has allowed us to see the impacts created by our informants, supporting new mindsets which focus on being in relation with others, contemplating one's contributions to their community (however this is defined, sometimes beyond country borders), reverence (taking less, and giving more), and work to enhance opportunities in the future. Furthermore, their decisions and actions in line with regenerative practices have led to ripple effects which are crucial in the tourism sector as we begin to reopen our borders and doors as noted by Ateljevic (2020). Such ripples, have the potential to make waves as more people adopt a regenerative mindset.

We hope future studies examine the role of TSEs who engender regenerative mindsets and examine how they work to improve the conditions of their communities with the intent to enhance their communities into the future. We have had our moment of pause in tourism, now it is time to raise the profile of social entrepreneurs who are truly creating transformational change in their communities and beyond. Specifically, future research may respond to the following questions: Who are the change makers? What supports do the change makers need? How does their work challenge capitalism? And what may we learn about their work and improvements to systems, on a local and global level? Moreover, our work here centres diversity in attending to the role of women in their communities demonstrating regenerative mindsets. Making the diverse contributions of women visible will hopefully serve to change the way women are recognised in the tourism sector. The work presented here is part of a broader study on the role and impact of women TSEs and so only reveals the tip of our Canadian iceberg. Our forthcoming studies will attend to some of the gender-specific barriers faced by our women TSEs and the supports required particularly in the wake of COVID-19. We hope other scholars continue to build on this work, adopting feminist approaches to enhance our understanding of the role social entrepreneurs play in contributing to just, caring and regenerative tourism futures.

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