

Our Own Worst Enemy: A Case Study of the Etsy Craft Entrepreneurship Program
in Rockford, Illinois

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore handcraft enterprise in Rockford as an alternative sustainable approach to self-sufficiency by investigating the piloted Etsy Craft Entrepreneurship program as well as to explore the relationship between Etsy, the Rockford Housing Authority Etsians, and the leadership community of Rockford. The overarching research question was: How does the creation of social capital and strategic networks affect individual handcraft enterprise and therefore the overall success of the Etsy Craft Entrepreneurship program? After utilizing a qualitative intrinsic case study approach of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and a focus group to explore the dual perspectives represented in the Etsy Craft Entrepreneurship program, leaders in the program (i.e. Mayor of Rockford and CEO of the Rockford Housing Authority) and Rockford Housing Authority resident participants, ten emergent themes were identified. Implications derived from the results offer several important opportunities for both research and improvement for continuation of the program. The findings of this study, presented in a conceptual model, depicted the Etsy Craft Entrepreneurship program as a funnel process that could potentially serve in the identification of future candidates for participation in the program, help leaders improve various struggles for future classes, and provide direction for areas to be explored in other cities where the Etsy Craft Entrepreneurship program has been employed.