

*The Business of Caring:*

*A Study of Young Social Entrepreneurs*

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## *Abstract*

Social entrepreneurs are individuals who approach a social problem with entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen. Social entrepreneurship is a genuine combination of the entrepreneurial and caring professions. Whereas business entrepreneurs make businesses, social entrepreneurs make change. Social entrepreneurs are problem solvers. Other caring professionals follow more traditional paths to do their work and operate within existing structures to help others. Like business entrepreneurs, who see a void, a need for a gadget, or the promise of a new product line, social entrepreneurs see a problem and present a solution. In this paper I examine the ways in which social entrepreneurs are similar to and distinct from business entrepreneurs and those in the helping professions.

Because social entrepreneurs appear situated between two distinct groups, this study uses two principal comparison groups. The seventeen social entrepreneurs in the sample are compared to fifteen business entrepreneurs and sixteen young healthcare workers involved in the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship Program.

My comparison of these three groups revealed the following. All three groups express a belief in the importance of giving back to society, or in making the most of opportunities they themselves have been given. The vast majority of each group identify themselves as spiritual or religious, yet the degree to which spirituality directly informs work varies across samples. Finally, the two groups of caring professionals express a belief in the human spirit, in the potential of individuals, and in the possibility of change.

Many social entrepreneurs and Schweitzer fellows experienced trauma at an early age. This is not true of the business entrepreneurs that we studied. Although business

entrepreneurs talk about transformative experiences, these experiences are usually quite different in nature from those described by the members of the other two groups. All three groups experience “outsider” status in one form or another. In each sample, significant numbers of individuals demonstrate early interest in their future work. Three strategic approaches help social entrepreneurs in their work: the ability to reframe challenges, the willingness to adhere to a sense of obligation, and the capability to discern measures of success. Two sets of challenges are shared across all three samples: (1) difficulty in managing the line between personal and professional and (2) ethical concerns. In assessing the value of their work, social entrepreneurs feel the challenges of other caring professions and face these challenges with businesslike organization and methods.

## *Introduction*

Recently, a new species of worker has appeared on the scene and been explicitly recognized. The social entrepreneur uses business insight and an entrepreneurial approach to address social problems and devise innovative solutions.

Linda Rottenberg is the co-founder and CEO of Endeavor. For her efforts, she has been named a Global Leader for Tomorrow by the World Economic Forum. Endeavor is a nonprofit organization that supports business entrepreneurship in emerging markets, to date mostly in Latin America, but its reach is rapidly expanding to other continents. Endeavor has developed a new model that helps incubate new business ventures: the model in turn creates jobs, expands opportunities, and instigates economic growth in emerging markets. The organization does not provide direct financial assistance to business entrepreneurs, but rather connects promising entrepreneurs with global networks, events and programs to help accelerate growth.

Gerald Chertavian is the founder and executive director of Year Up, a young adult training program located in Boston. The one-year program is geared towards educating low-income urban adults (ages 18-23). It offers a combination of hands-on skill development and real work apprenticeships in the IT/web development area. Competition to enter the program is stiff: students sign a work contract, and are paid to participate.

Aaron Lieberman is the co-founder of Jumpstart, a national non-profit educational program for preschool children and their families. Jumpstart recruits, trains, supervises, and supports college students to work with Head Start and other early childhood programs. Lieberman is working to improve the educational outcome of schools, to help

universities launch programs, and to train college students in working for change. He is hoping to help low income families to receive the benefits to which mid and upper income families are accustomed. At the time of our interview, Lieberman was President and CEO of Jumpstart. He has since moved on to become CEO of Acelero Learning. Lieberman was one of thirty national education leaders asked to serve on the U.S. Department of Education's Back to School Steering Committee.

Sara Horowitz is the Executive Director of Working Today, a national nonprofit organization that represents the concerns of America's independent workforce including freelancers, consultants, independent contractors, temps, part-timers and the self-employed. The mission of the organization is to make it possible for independent workers to gain access to financial services, benefits (health insurance, life insurance) and products previously available only to "traditional" --full time, long term --employees. Working Today does this by linking up with professional associations, membership and community-based organizations, unions and companies across the United States. Working Today also educates policymakers about the needs of the independent workforce, and advocates for policy changes that will benefit this new workforce. Horowitz received a MacArthur Prize Fellowship in 1999.

### *The Study*

My colleagues and I interviewed seventeen social entrepreneurs between the ages of thirty and forty-three. Interviews were conducted between March and May of 2002. The sample consisted of eleven men and six women, fifteen were Caucasians, and two were African-Americans. They were nominated by professors of entrepreneurship,

leaders in the world of social entrepreneurship, and veterans who themselves had started organizations. Organizations ranged from a for-profit company lending money to small businesses in South America, to a non-profit organization working with young children to end violence.

To illuminate the relationship between social and business entrepreneurs, I offer comparisons between the samples of seventeen social entrepreneurs and fifteen business entrepreneurs. Interviews with business entrepreneurs were conducted between October, 2001 and May, 2002. The business entrepreneurs ranged in age from twenty-four to thirty-six. The sample consisted of twelve men and four women, eleven were Caucasians, four were Asian Americans, and one was African American. Most of the subjects were American citizens; however there were two Canadian citizens, one Swedish citizen, and one Indian citizen. The individuals in our sample were nominated by professors of business and entrepreneurship and by leaders in the field of entrepreneurship. The businesses ranged from designers of innovative medical devices to manufacturers of all natural products for the home.

To understand the relationship between social entrepreneurs and other caring workers, I offer comparisons between the samples of seventeen social entrepreneurs and sixteen young workers involved in the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship Program. This program provides opportunities for graduate students in health and social services to work in local communities around the U.S. and in the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in West Central Africa. The study of Schweitzer fellows in the Boston area included eight current fellows (age twenty to thirty) who were nominated by Schweitzer staff and who were engaged in their projects at the time of the interviews and eight former fellows (age

twenty-six to thirty-six) who were selected based on final project reports and Schweitzer staff recommendations. The sample consisted of eight women and eight men, four were Asian Americans, one was African American, and eleven were Caucasians. Interviews were conducted between March and November of 1998. Their projects ranged from establishing nursing care for homeless people with HIV to working with the homebound elderly (Fischman, Schutte, Solomon, and Wu Lam, 2001).

### *Guiding Issues and Questions*

Who are these individuals? What is a social entrepreneur, and what, if anything, do these individuals have in common with their more familiar, profit-oriented counterparts in business? What do they have in common with their counterparts in the more traditional service-oriented or caring professions?

To understand these individuals and their role in today's constantly changing market, I begin with some background into the history of social entrepreneurship. Once I have laid this groundwork, I explore what it means to be a social entrepreneur. I examine their beliefs, backgrounds, strategies and compromises, considering each of these elements in comparison to business entrepreneurs and to the sample of Schweitzer fellows. I conclude with brief case studies, examining how four social entrepreneurs find meaning in their work.

### *Methodology*

My colleagues and I conducted an in-depth semistructured interview with each subject. Immediately following each interview, researchers wrote a narrative of the

conversation. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis. Researchers then developed a coding scheme to examine trends systematically. For more detail on methodology see Gardner et al (2001) and Fischman et al (2001).

### *Background and Recent History*

#### *What is a Social Entrepreneur?*

Social entrepreneurs are individuals who approach a social problem with entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen. Whereas business entrepreneurs make businesses, social entrepreneurs make change. According to the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship describes “an approach to a social issue. It is not a field of discipline that can be learned in academia.” It is an approach that “cuts across disciplines” ([www.schwabfound.org](http://www.schwabfound.org)).

The term “entrepreneur” is often associated with monetary success, and this terminology has led to some confusion. In a recent article on the subject, J. Gregory Dees, Professor of Social Entrepreneurship and Nonprofit Management at Duke University, stresses that social entrepreneurship is about “innovation and impact,” and not about generating income. The organizations formed by social entrepreneurs are most often not profit-oriented (though there are some interesting exceptions and some compelling arguments against this norm, to be discussed below). Social entrepreneurs are entrepreneurial in that they have “pioneered creative ways of addressing social problems and marshaled the resources to support their work” (Dees, 2003). In fact, how to measure achievement is an issue for some social entrepreneurs, who are often practical, business-

minded and used to quantification. When measuring success, social entrepreneurs find it difficult to quantify the achievements of their organizations. By contrast, monetary value, one major tool of assessment for business entrepreneurs, is easily measured.

### *Social Entrepreneur vs. Business Entrepreneur*

French economists first used the term “entrepreneur” in the 17th and 18th centuries. In particular, the beginnings of our current understandings of the term are attributed to eighteenth century French economist Jean Baptiste Say. In French, the word means “undertaking.” In its earliest uses, entrepreneurship involves the discovery or invention of something new, and the creation of value.

Writing in the 1940s, Austrian economist Joseph A. Schumpeter expands on this understanding. Schumpeter writes “the function of entrepreneurs is to reform or revolutionize the pattern of production by exploiting an invention or an untried technological possibility” (Schumpeter, 1942, p. 132). Schumpeter’s emphasis on pattern change is a theme we heard reiterated during our interviews. Social entrepreneurs are interested not only in the revolutionary idea or the timely invention, but also in the establishment of a replicable model for change.

Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs themselves continue to be of interest to economists, psychologists and to professors of business, in particular. By far the most influential thinker on the subject in this century is Peter Drucker, business philosopher and the father of modern management. Drucker’s definition of entrepreneurship is focused on change:

Entrepreneurs see change as the norm and as healthy. Usually, they do not bring about the change themselves. But – and this defines entrepreneur

and entrepreneurship – the entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity. (27-28)

What sets apart social entrepreneurs from the entrepreneurs described in the above definition is their relationship to change. Unlike the entrepreneurs Drucker describes (which include individuals from a variety of spheres including health care, education, and business), social entrepreneurs regularly bring about change. In fact, a desire for change is usually the impetus for the creation of their organizations. Although business entrepreneurs may bring about change (the services they develop may alter an industry or truly innovative products may change our way of life), this is not always the *reason* they start their businesses. Social entrepreneurs typically form organizations because they want to make change happen.

### *Social Entrepreneurs vs. the Caring Professions*

Social entrepreneurs have a relationship as well to another group of workers: those who devote their lives to serving others. These individuals include those who work in soup kitchens or homeless shelters, or who dedicate careers to health and social services. Their careers are varied -- social workers, teachers, medical professionals: many work in familiar professions yet focus on underserved or otherwise ignored populations. In Some Do Care, developmental psychologists Anne Colby and William Damon study several moral exemplars, or heroes, who have devoted their lives to serving others. Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa provide two well-known examples of individuals whose lives revolve around helping mankind.

Why do some individuals become deeply committed to service work? Why do some spend their lives working to benefit others, while most others work towards self-

oriented goals? Literature on the helping professions points to several factors. Studies of the health and social service professions indicate that the desire to help others is a major motivating factor for individuals to enter these fields (Kutner, and Brogan, 1980; Powell, Boakes and Slater, 1987). Studies about what inspires and sustains commitment to service work indicate that role models are particularly important (Damon, 1995; Youniss and Yates, 1987). Several studies mention a “triggering event” or “crystallizing experience,” an event that brings about newfound awareness of purpose in life or a change in life choice (Feldman, 1971; Haste, and Locke, 1983; Walters and Gardner, 1986). Personal hardships, often experienced early in life, may also be responsible for motivating individuals to help others (Colby and Damon, 1992). In their study of moral exemplars, Colby and Damon are skeptical, however, of attributing too much weight to any single factor, either family background or early experience. Instead, Colby and Damon emphasize that “one of the characteristics of highly moral people is their ability to learn from their experience all throughout life” (p. 8).

Many individuals experience hardship. Only the exceptional few turn this hardship into something positive, and emerge from the experience with a newfound determination to help others. Colby and Damon refer to this characteristic as “positivity,” the ability to find hope and joy in even the most dismal circumstances (p. 16).

### *Recent History of Social Entrepreneurship*

Social entrepreneurs are not a new phenomenon. While the description itself may be relatively new, individuals who adopt entrepreneurial strategies to rectify social issues

are not. Historically, numerous individuals created innovative solutions to the social dilemmas of their time. William Lloyd Garrison founded the Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. Publisher of the first anti-slavery newspaper, the *Liberator*, Garrison campaigned tirelessly for abolition throughout his lifetime. Jane Addams, social worker and reformist, founded the social settlement Hull House in Chicago in 1889. Hull House provided a welfare house for the neighborhood poor, and offered a new model that was later replicated throughout the nation. In 1911, Addams co-founded and served as the first president of the National Foundation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers. She went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. Mary McLeod Bethune founded the National Council of Negro Women in 1935, and was a leader in the field of education and civil rights. Margaret Sanger founded the first American birth control clinic in 1916. The controversy surrounding her efforts to inform women about their reproductive rights at times forced her to move overseas. In 1921, she formed the America Birth Control League, which later became the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. These are just a few of many examples of early social entrepreneurs who created organizations to enact change and eradicate social pathologies.

Why is it that creative, socially minded changemakers are just now becoming commonly known as “social entrepreneurs?” Why has this terminology become the norm, and what is the impetus for the emergence of social entrepreneurship as a recognizable field? Most likely, there are a variety of factors involved, for example, current dissatisfaction with standard charities and foundations. The emergence of funding for social entrepreneurial ventures, the international recognition of a few individuals --suddenly, the term “social entrepreneur” is commonplace. A review of the

immediate relevant history helps to broaden our understanding of how social entrepreneurship has gained such momentum in recent years.

William Drayton, a MacArthur Fellow, is often credited with introducing the term “social entrepreneur.” In 1980, Drayton founded Ashoka in the belief that social entrepreneurs have the greatest potential for solving social problems. Ashoka was one of the first organizations to characterize social entrepreneurs, and one of the very first ventures to fund them. Its purpose was and still is to empower social entrepreneurs with financial resources and a framework within which they are able to disseminate ideas and solutions. Ashoka accomplishes this goal by identifying and supporting social entrepreneurs elected as Ashoka Fellows. These fellows are selected through an in-depth screening process: candidates are nominated and their work evaluated through a series of interviews. Today Ashoka is a thriving, highly regarded institution and Ashoka Fellows work to implement change worldwide. They have focused on a myriad of social efforts, from providing health care for HIV patients in South Africa, to creating environmental camps for young children in Nepal, to helping farmers in the United States. An in-depth history of Ashoka and profiles of many Ashoka Fellows may be found in David Bornstein’s recently published [How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas](#).

In 1998, the Schwab Foundation, affiliated with the World Economic Forum, established the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship. For the third year in a row, the Foundation has selected between 10-15 “Outstanding Social Entrepreneurs.” These individuals receive three years of financial and technical support, attend a Social Entrepreneur Summit, and attend the World Economic Forum. Since the 1980s, social

entrepreneurs, including Rosanne Haggerty and Sara Horowitz (mentioned above), have also been awarded the MacArthur Prize Fellowship Award.

Currently, several new initiatives, organizations, and foundations are helping to expand the field of social entrepreneurship. Ashoka has launched Changemakers.net, a website that records how social entrepreneurial organizations develop, analyzes organizations and makes this information available to other practitioners, potential funders, and the media. Venture philanthropists such as New Profit, Inc. partner with promising social enterprises to provide financial and other support. Jeff Skoll, the first president of eBay, has started the Skoll Foundation, which invests in social entrepreneurs around the world. Several foundations, such as the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and Echoing Green, offer funding to entrepreneurs. Other organizations and foundations address issues relevant to social entrepreneurship. Net Impact (formally known as Students for Responsible Business) works to inform a generation of leaders to promote socially responsible businesses. Co-Op America runs the Green Business Program, a Consumer Education and Empowerment Program, a Corporate Responsibility Program, and the Sustainable Living Program.

### *What is it Like to Be a Social Entrepreneur?*

Now that I have reviewed the general background for social entrepreneurs I turn to the major issues discussed by our subjects. In the following sections I first describe how the subjects we spoke with feel about the terminology used to describe their work, and then discuss what these American social entrepreneurs have to say about words like “democracy,” “equality,” and the “American Dream.” I then go on to outline their

beliefs, backgrounds, opportunities, challenges, and compromises made on the path to achievement. Beginning with the section on beliefs, I compare the social entrepreneurs to their counterparts in business and in the caring professions.

### *Defining Terms*

Social entrepreneurs have received a great deal of press lately and as a result, many are grappling with the label and several take issue with it. Our social entrepreneurs raise several hesitations. Chief amongst these are concerns about negative associations with the word “social,” and confusion about what a “social entrepreneur” is (a businessman or a social worker?) and what he is not (for example, Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield of Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream). Some embrace part of the title, while others offer their own definitions.

Aaron Lieberman, Co-Founder of Jumpstart, provides his own explication of social entrepreneurship, “social entrepreneurship is maximizing resource—existing resources for greater social gain, and [with] the typical entrepreneurship you’d say greater private gain.” Lieberman’s definition is very much in line with those offered by the Schwab Foundation and by Dees.

Linda Rottenberg, co-founder and CEO of Endeavor, embraces only part of the title:

I say I am an entrepreneur, but I am an entrepreneur who is motivated by social impact and, therefore, my enterprise is non-profit. But then when people hear what we are doing, they can see the impact. And plus I’m lucky because we can have, because we’re dealing with for-profit entrepreneurs that we are promoting, I can say, “In five years, we created a model that’s in five Latin American countries that has selected 100 entrepreneurs, that’s created 6,000 jobs and generated \$400 million in revenues, and that we’re creating the role models and helping to change

the mentality so that young people in these countries can think it's possible to start a business even if they're not from a wealthy family." So that connects with people. But when I say what I am, I am an entrepreneur. That's why I don't think you necessarily need even the social; I am just an entrepreneur. I just happen to be doing an enterprise with the tax status of non-profit.

In her self-description, Rottenberg touches on several issues that are common to social entrepreneurs. First, it is often difficult for outsiders to understand the work of social entrepreneurs. They are, after all, innovators, and often doing work no one has tackled before. As a result, their work is not always easy to describe or to understand. Because Endeavor promotes entrepreneurs, Rottenberg often describes her own work by describing the entrepreneurial businesses she helps to launch. In part because these are businesses with quantifiable numbers, these for-profit ventures are easier to understand than her own non-profit efforts. This brings us to a second recurrent theme: the difficulty faced by many social entrepreneurs as they attempt to trace the impact of their work. Businesses measure success by the bottom line; social organizations look for impact. Unlike some social entrepreneurial organizations, Endeavor can measure its impact, in part, by the monetary success of the companies it helps to establish.

Another social entrepreneur, founder of an organization working to end violence by early intervention in elementary school programs, voices concern about the rapid growth of the field.<sup>1</sup> Asked about his feelings about the term, "social entrepreneur," he replies:

I don't use that word to describe myself. I will often describe myself within that group as an oppositional force, mainly around issues of growth, because I am very conservative when it comes to growth, and I have a lot of concerns about where the social entrepreneur movement has pushed growth, and I mean replication. And so what I will often say to

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<sup>1</sup> Participants are identified by name only when they have given permission for us to do so. Subjects who request confidentiality are not mentioned by name and, if necessary, their organizations are disguised.

fundings is that I am an unusual social entrepreneur, or I am unusual among this cohort of social entrepreneurs in that I am not inherently a big fan of growth. That's a sentence I will use often. So I will often set myself in that group and then describe myself separately. I haven't found it terribly useful frankly, partly because there is a lot of stuff around race and class in terms of how that term gets used.

This subject voices two concerns. The first is that the rapid growth of what he calls a "movement" is not, in and of itself, progress. In fact, replication does not always mean that models are replicated well. He distinguishes himself from the majority of his peers in that most social entrepreneurs actively pursue growth.

The second concern mentioned above is one we heard several times during our interviews. The word "social" is sometimes understood as derogatory and connected to negative assumptions about race or class. In other words, assumptions are made that the population being served is somehow unable to help themselves or in need of "social work," when this is exactly the stereotype that social entrepreneurs are trying to combat.

The issues raised by social entrepreneurs as they consider this terminology are all issues I will revisit. Perhaps most common is the idea that others don't understand their work. Social entrepreneurs often define themselves by stressing what they are *not*. First of all, not all social entrepreneurs run non-profit organizations. Though the vast majority of these organizations are non-profit, there are some notable exceptions to this norm. Additionally, the for-profit social entrepreneurs with whom we spoke were adamant in their reasoning about why their work must be profit-driven. One subject we spoke with is founder and CEO of an internet services company dedicated to creating economic opportunities for urban communities. According to the subject:

I view us as a business. And what I think is radical or powerful about what we're trying to do is that we're legitimizing the talent and the potential of an unrecognized— group of people is too strong a word but— people who

come from areas, neighborhoods and so forth that are not associated with technology. We will have been successful at doing that when no one says “inner-city kids” anymore. And when people can actually— when it's not a surprise that somebody coming from Harlem has a job in technology... .

According to this subject, it is vital that this company is understood as an internet-services provider, not as an organization working for the economically disadvantaged. His organization is working to change preconceptions about urban populations, and this will only be possible if his company is able to compete “with the big boys.” Preconceptions will begin to change when his business is able to win clients, maintain high-quality work *and* employ a sizable number of individuals from inner-city neighborhoods.

David Satterthwaite, President, CEO and co-founder of Prisma Microfinance, takes these sentiments a step further. Prisma Microfinance operates primarily in Latin America and makes small loans to businesses that are otherwise ignored by the larger financial sector. According to Satterthwaite:

Because entrepreneurship is — I mean, well, it originates from the word “undertaking,” right? And in the days before a welfare state, that by definition meant a generation of revenue. To talk about entrepreneurship without really saying you have to be generating at least break-right-even revenue, I think, is problematic. And it is a shame too, because it's — I don't know, we have to make sure —. And that's why I proudly am one. I would say it with no negative connotations whatsoever, and the reason being is exactly what I would imagine is the hypothesis of this [GoodWork] study. We need to start to reconceptualize labor. And if for-profits identify and propel a positive social movement, that's how we are going to change the world. We have to harness the market.

Satterthwaite argues passionately that to have real impact, organizations must be able to see a profit.

Finally, some of the social entrepreneurs we interviewed define themselves against businesses such as Ben and Jerry's or The Body Shop, for-profit companies that are socially conscious but not working towards a social mission as a primary objective:

I think the whole "Ben & Jerry's are social entrepreneurs" is so detrimental, and it's detrimental not only to building up an identity in role models profession for the real social entrepreneurs, but it's detrimental in terms of the attraction of more capital.

Here and elsewhere, Linda Rottenberg emphasizes the importance of replicability. One additional issue of note. Companies like The Body Shop are very well known. Their work for social causes receives a great deal of attention from the media. Social entrepreneurs, whose work is less known, less understood, and has the potential for much greater impact, garner much less media attention. This is at least part of Rottenberg's point that these kinds of companies can be detrimental to social entrepreneurs who are also attempting to attract capital.

### *The American Dream*

Our sample is limited in that it is made up solely of American social entrepreneurs. Ashoka, in particular, has made obvious how truly global social entrepreneurial work is. There is inspirational work being done throughout the world. Ashoka, the Skoll Foundation, Echoing Green and other organizations are giving these individuals from diverse countries and the work they do the attention and support they deserve.

One benefit, however, to having a geographically limited sample, is the ability to think about issues that are particular to the American social entrepreneur. In looking at this sample, some themes emerge, unprompted. The entrepreneurial spirit is especially

American in that it exemplifies the “American dream”: that quintessentially American ideal of pulling oneself up by the bootstraps to achieve success. Social entrepreneurs recognize that all individuals do not begin life on an equal footing. They often confront the fact that the ideal of the American dream is not typically the reality. Perhaps because of this, many social entrepreneurs devote considerable attention to issues like democracy and equality.

One might expect that this theme also would be mentioned by business entrepreneurs. After all, “success” in this picture usually entails an estate (or a white picket fence), a luxury automobile; in short, wealth. In fact, business entrepreneurs do not mention the American dream or spend much time talking about the American economic system at all. Only five of sixteen business entrepreneurs make any mention of the American economic system, democracy, or capitalism. Of those who do discuss such broad-reaching issues, it is usually to assert the value of business, or to assert that business is valuable because it creates jobs.

By contrast, social entrepreneurs *do* discuss American ideals. Nine of the seventeen subjects interviewed have something to say about a vision of America or of our democratic system. These discussions fall into two basic categories: a consideration of what constitutes a “healthy democracy” and a reconsideration of the “American Dream.” According to Gerald Chertavian (mentioned above), a healthy democracy cannot exist when wealth is so unevenly distributed:

I would hope there are thousands of people who said, “you gave me an opportunity; I took advantage of it, and I have been able to take care of my family and live the American dream and provide and have a good career.” So the impact is a more sane country rather than one— right now, one percent of our country controls 40 percent of our wealth; 20 years ago, 1 percent of our country controlled 20 percent of our wealth. I think that

doubled, which is amazing. And now, money translates into political power, and just think about that— people controlling your political situation clearly coming from the most financially secure folks who, in many cases, are very out of touch with what is happening. Just paint the picture. Why do you think the French Revolution happened? You see the movies and you think, “that couldn’t be right,” well, it happened. To think that America would never face that situation I think is ignorant history.

Chertavian’s organization provides opportunities for young urban adults. He talks extensively about evening the playing field, and about narrowing the gap between the haves and have-nots.

Another subject, working within the public school system, considers schools and their capacity to become an agent for positive change. In the context of his philosophy about children, he explains his goals and describes an ideal:

So instead of looking at kids as problems, looking at them as problem solvers. And what if we systemically and systematically prepared every kid in this country with a tool belt to cooperate, to communicate, and to resolve conflicts without fighting, to take a stand against injustice. And then what if we did that by building a capacity of schools to be these engines for democracy?

Like Chertavian, this subject makes a direct connection between the work he does and the democratic system - a truly visionary goal.

A number of social entrepreneurs point to particular populations that are left out of the American dream. Consider the perspective of Earl Phalen, CEO of the B.E.L.L. Foundation, an African American who was adopted by a white family at the age of two:

So I think there is a part of me, as early as elementary school, [that] knew that I wanted to devote my life to helping out groups within society, become accepted, become fully human, become full participants in the American dream...full participants in their humanity. In our humanity. So I knew that very, very early on. And later experiences really helped resurface that and bring me to the place I am today. But I think that's the deep— the belief set. And also just feeling very blessed because at the time that I was adopted, there was some statistic that some 70 percent of

black boys in the foster care system ended up in the penal system by the time they were 21.

Another social entrepreneur, though not himself a member of a minority group, speaks to much the same issue: the fact that many are denied the opportunity American ideals promote:

I mean having a vision of America that is a bunch of affluent, semi-affluent people doing the daily grind, and then huge pockets that are totally left out and blocked inadvertently or not inadvertently from participation in the dream, is a totally dispiriting vision of the world. Just incredibly unmotivating. Yes. I just wanted to see what I could do to align myself with people who wanted to make changes like that in that series of problems.

The entrepreneurial mindset is all about equality, about creating or exploiting opportunity. Aaron Lieberman addresses exactly this issue:

We're always taught a set of beliefs, equal opportunity for all, everybody has a chance, there isn't racism in America it's colorblind, content and character, and all of these myths. And then get out into the world and are faced with confronting stuff that just does not add up to that bill of goods we were sold... .

Social entrepreneurs may talk more about this ideal because they confront the fact that the ideal isn't always the reality. And yet, in spite of these disadvantages, they are able to succeed, and able to play by these often unequal rules.

### *Beliefs*

I have discussed issues unique to social entrepreneurs: considerations of the label “social entrepreneur” and questions with respect to the American Dream. To continue the discussion of what it is like to be a social entrepreneur I offer points of comparison to both the business entrepreneurs and to the sample of Schweitzer fellows.

The social entrepreneurs in our sample believe deeply in their work. Often motivated by a particular cause, they believe in the cause but also in their own responsibility and their ability to make change happen. Their goals are varied: to combat youth violence, to combat poverty, to promote business in financially disadvantaged countries, to improve the American education system. The beliefs that motivate this work are also varied. I have already touched upon the beliefs that reference American society and the American dream, or the desire to bring together people to share in the American ideal. Other beliefs mentioned by the social entrepreneurs in our sample are equally far-reaching: to give back to society, to live life in accordance with one's values, to preserve parallel structure and make desirable change happen.

Many of these beliefs are shared by the subjects in the Schweitzer sample. Schweitzer fellows also believe in giving back to society and living life in accordance with one's religious or spiritual beliefs. Additionally, they mention serving others, a firm work ethic, and faith in human potential.

Some beliefs described by the business entrepreneurs are similar to those mentioned by their counterparts in social service. A number of business entrepreneurs mention religious beliefs. Like social entrepreneurs and the Schweitzer subjects, a number of business entrepreneurs talk about making the most of opportunities they have been given. Other beliefs, unique in this study, include creating value (that creating a valuable product in and of itself helps society, provides jobs and a good or service), and the importance of enjoyment of one's work.

All three groups express a belief in the importance of giving back to society, or in making the most of opportunities they themselves have been given. The vast majority of

each group identify themselves as spiritual or religious, yet the degree to which spirituality directly informs work varies across samples. Finally, the two groups of caring professionals express a belief in the human spirit, in human potential, or in the possibility of change.

### *Giving Back or Making the Most of Opportunity*

Many social entrepreneurs explain that they feel a responsibility to contribute to society, or to work towards change. One subject, working within the financial world, describes his own opportunities as a child and his own sense of obligation to “give back” to society:

I never attempted to separate my career from my values, and I believe that those who are given much in life have a greater responsibility to give back. And I am not necessarily talking about giving financially. I wouldn't describe myself as having a wealthy upbringing. I certainly would feel that I had a comfortable upbringing. But if you look at my opportunities for education, my opportunities to spread my wings and explore the world as a young man whether it is through travel, the blessing of having grown up in a very strong supportive family, those are all the things that I look at when I feel fortunate for what I have been given in life.

This sentiment is shared by some business entrepreneurs as well. One entrepreneur, still in graduate school, explains:

...whatever I've been given naturally I want to make the most of it. So it may not be much or it may be a lot; I am not sure and it's probably not worth focusing a lot of attention on that, but with whatever I've been given, make sure that I do the most with it. So that means you know to me that's basic— in a broad sense like wanting to do a lot of things. Not just wanting to take a normal job or do the normal things that someone would do. But, really stretch yourself to make sure that you are really trying to maximize what you've been given.

The Schweitzer fellows also speak about this idea of giving back to society. One describes this belief as something she learned from her parents:

I've always been taught, I mean I was taught it, it's not something I just have I don't think but, my parents really have always instilled in us the understanding that we're very fortunate to have the education that we do. And so I've always been involved in some sort of community service, from like age 11 or something, and I think that, that it's like, I don't know how you would call the—what you would call the value but, like attempts to make links that create opportunity or that—where you can transfer what you kind of were given.

Yet another subject from the Schweitzer sample describes the idea of giving back as an obligation: “I think feeling the sense that I've been blessed with some strengths and that I have an obligation to work on developing them and sharing them, and putting them to good use in the most effective way.”

### *Spiritual Beliefs*

Strikingly, spirituality or religious beliefs of some kind are something all three groups share. Of the social entrepreneurs, almost all (n=16) identify themselves as religious or spiritual. One social entrepreneur plans on becoming a Unitarian Universalist Minister. Fourteen of the business entrepreneurs say that religious or spiritual beliefs are important to them; twelve of the Schweitzer fellows mention that faith strengthens their service work.

### *Spiritually-Based Responsibility*

Some subjects say that they actively follow their faith and believe that a greater power has a plan in mind. Corey Ackerman, a business entrepreneur who at the time of

our interview was in the midst of starting his second major venture, describes himself as very religious:

I think that the purpose of life for me is to fulfill whatever God's plan is for me. It is to do what He would have me to do. And it's not to go off and do whatever makes me happy in the world. So, that's where my, I think my biggest responsibility or obligation is. Am I the greatest in perfectly holding that up? No. I do stray. But I'm working to be the person that will be obedient and be able to listen to Him and what His word is in comparison or in contrast to listening to what Corey Ackerman wants to do for himself, which some, a lot of times are not far from each other. But there may be differences. And so I feel a responsibility and an obligation to find out what it is I'm supposed to be doing for Him, get there, which, and do something that is going to better the world as a whole.

Ackerman's work is described more explicitly below, but in brief, he sells the work of African American artists on the Internet. Unlike the Schweitzer fellows or the social entrepreneurs in our study, he is not working directly in a service profession. Nonetheless, Ackerman understands his work to be in service of his religious beliefs.

Some social entrepreneurs' beliefs stem directly from spiritual or religious upbringing. As he describes his own work, Aaron Lieberman refers to the Judaic ideal of "tikkun olam," or the "repair of the world". According to Lieberman, "we're here to repair the world." A social entrepreneur, who describes himself as "spiritual," but not following any religion formally, describes his beliefs as follows, "I believe that...we all come from a higher power and that, while even though society is very segmented, that there's a responsibility to reach out to those and pockets of society that are less served."

This sentiment is very similar in spirit to the beliefs described by many of the Schweitzer fellows. For example, one subject, who describes himself "as a Christian and believing in Christ," describes everything as secondary to these beliefs:

And, essentially because I believe that everything else is pale in comparison to doing what I believe I should be doing, and that would be serving the poor. So, because of that, that's the main motivating factor. And, so oftentimes people ask you is it going to be dangerous down there, you know? I work among pimps and drug addicts in the streets and whatnot. And, I think people have to be – when you go into this area working with street – child prostitutes, and police oftentimes rape and beat the kids, that you have to be very confident in what you're doing and really believe what you're doing is worth the sacrifice. And, I truly believe that it's worth the sacrifice.

Individuals in each of these groups describe themselves as spiritual, and act on these beliefs. The degree to which these beliefs inform the content of work varies across samples.

#### *Possibility of Change or Belief in Human Potential*

A belief shared by both groups in the caring professions but not expressed by the business entrepreneurs interviewed is the belief in human potential, or the possibility of change. Social entrepreneurs not only believe that they should make change, they believe, as well, that they are able to make this change happen. As Gerald Chertavian explains:

American society is not going to be better for my son than it is for me today because you're looking at some major demographic changes and socioeconomic changes. And it's going to make a very uncomfortable place to live. I refuse to accept it that this is the case, and recognize that I can make a difference. I see a situation that I don't accept and believe that I can change it.

Perhaps part of this belief in the possibility of change may be a belief in the basic potential in humankind. This belief is mentioned by both groups in the caring professions. Glynn Lloyd is the Co-Founder of City Fresh Foods, a specialized food distribution company that aims at developing youth in his community while being

environmentally conscious. City Fresh Foods works with local schools to provide opportunities to students, purchases from organic farmers, uses non-polluting trucks, and employs from within the community. Lloyd expresses a basic belief in human spirit and in human potential:

I have still hope in the basic human spirit of folks. Of folks who, when there is something wrong, or something that is unjust or--people want to do something to change it, and they do want to make it better...I also believe that, we all have each and every one of us has amazing talents, so sometimes, the vehicles are not there for them to come forth.

A Schweitzer fellow, an occupational therapist and award-winning author, expands on this concept:

But, along with the whole medical model or analytical model, I also really believe that everyone is whole, no matter what struggle they're going through. They're still- there's still either potential or wholeness or other roots to explore with someone than just what a label tells us. And that I like about working with nature and animals as it tends to bring forth the better attributes in people; it tends to call up people's curiosity; tends to evoke a desire to engage in the world through that curiosity and wonder. And through that avenue, I find that there are, oftentimes, where people's potentials really come forth in a really beautiful way.

So, in terms of my own belief system, I guess I would say that I have a natural resistance to labels and that I really believe in the facility of the mind and spirit to always learn and grow. I guess I believe that the human spirit deserves equal weight in this world as does the mind, and that we spend an awful lot of time educating the mind and testing the mind. And that - I feel it's vital to look at how other ways are that we can acknowledge the whole person and take a holistic approach to either education or healing.

Social entrepreneurs and Schweitzer fellows alike describe this belief in the human spirit, in the potential of individuals, and in the possibility of change.

### *Background and Early Life*

What is the source of these beliefs? Two factors emerge as prominent across all three samples: religious or spiritual beliefs and life experiences. Spiritual beliefs have been mentioned above but it should be noted that some subjects describe religion itself as a belief while others explain that religious faith informs other beliefs (in human potential, for example). Life experiences include traumatic events, experience as an outsider of one kind or another, or early involvement in work.

Many social entrepreneurs and Schweitzer fellows experienced trauma at an early age. This is not true of business entrepreneurs. Although business entrepreneurs talk about transformative experiences, these experiences are usually quite different in nature from those the other two groups describe. All three groups experience “outsider” status in one form or another. In each sample, significant numbers of individuals demonstrate early interest in their future work.

### *Traumatic Life Experiences*

Several social entrepreneurs (n=6) experienced some kind of trauma early in life. These experiences include the death of a parent (or parents), divorce of parents, being the victim of violence, and one subject whose father moved the entire family from a “pristine” campus environment to a housing project. This subject’s father was the headmaster at a prestigious prep school, and decided to give up his career to become a volunteer and an activist for the disadvantaged.

One subject, the victim of violence at a very early age, describes his reaction as follows:

And then as I mentioned, just some of my own experiences with violence growing up, and without going into details, just not feeling safe for significant parts of my life to the point where I wasn't sure if I wanted to be alive. So just this real sense of helplessness and anger at a fairly young age, and that is really interesting. I was ten, and had really decided that life just wasn't so great. So I was sitting there contemplating not living anymore, and I remember sitting there and thinking that life is like this big equation and that for everything bad that happens on this side, something good is going to happen on this other side and I wasn't going to check out until I got to the other side of the equation. And, this again, I was in fourth grade so I must have been nine or ten. This really strong feeling, not of entitlement because I didn't feel I was like someone else owed me something, but it really turned into the sense of righteous anger that this isn't okay, that this is not my fault, and that things have to be different because it is wrong.

Often, the victims of violence grow themselves to become perpetrators.

According to this subject, it is in part with the help of very committed and sensitive mentoring that he did not follow this more typical route. It is also clear from this passage that, in spite of his trauma, he maintained a belief that good existed in the world and he had an early determination to find it.

Of those social entrepreneurs who do not experience extreme trauma, seven said that they have had an experience that they found to be transformative. These experiences include living abroad and gaining perspective, combating depression, alcohol or drug use, or working at a camp for troubled youth. Earl Phalen was transformed by a visit to Jamaica. During the summer following his first year at law school, he was working with the Jamaican Counsel for Human Rights. He was asked one day to volunteer at an orphanage and soon found that he was going to be solely responsible for working with thirty children, aged five through eighteen:

And so I went in there my first day a little girl went up to me and said, "Mr. Phalen, how do I add one plus one?" And honestly, I kept saying, "One plus one is just two." I guess it was just all of that time in the law books or what it was. I just could not conceptually get it across to her. And

so then this older girl came up to me and she was like, "No. You just take one pen, you take one crayon and you add them together and you get two." So the little girl did that, and had the experience. And just like her excitement, I left then. I called my parents collect. I said, "I'm dropping out of law school. I'm going into education. This is where I am meant to be." So it was really that experience that crystallized I was going to do something directly with children to make a difference.

Aaron Lieberman describes a parallel experience during his time as a camp counselor working with troubled youth. He asked about a half-moon shaped scar on the shoulder of a young camper. With a matter-of-fact tone, the child explained that he was hurt when his mother was beating his brother with an extension cord. Lieberman describes himself as permanently changed by this encounter.

The number of business entrepreneurs who experience trauma is much less (n=2). Eleven business entrepreneurs do discuss moments that they found to be transformative. The nature of these experiences is quite different from those of the social entrepreneurs, however. Some discuss starting and building a company, one mentions the intellectual “epiphany” of attending MIT. A few mention foreign travel as transformative. One subject explains that his intense workload was in part responsible for the break up of a long-term relationship; he was transformed by this experience and hopes to apply lessons learned to his current relationship. Robert Dandaraw, a student working on his MBA at the time of our interview, worked for Gore (a chemical company and maker of Gore-tex). Dandaraw was working with a team to develop a filter that would go into incinerators to fight pollution. While he was in Japan promoting the product, a woman approached him, told him that she had an incinerator in her backyard and asked if it was unsafe. The experience transformed the way he marketed the product and the way he plans to do business in the future:

Prior to that I would go into a sales call and if you were the decision maker, I would be talking about how this would affect your bottom line financially and – you have to understand that this industry is a difficult industry because most people who are running these companies, if they are for profit don't want to spend a dime unless the government requires them to. So it's a very government driven industry. But after that...we were able to come up with some innovative ways as we began to talk to people about, "How are you seen in the community right now?" ... I think it changed a lot of my team as well. I had about twenty people on this team and they all started coming to these meetings and feeling more connected and the team began to grow because more people felt like, "I'm doing good. I'm connected here."

Dandaraw's experience seems to be more the exception than the rule, however.

As evidenced by the types of experiences outlined above, although business entrepreneurs do mention experiences or moments that altered their perspectives, these differ in scope and context from those reported by the social entrepreneurs.

In this case, social entrepreneurs have more in common with their counterparts in social work. Five Schweitzer fellows discuss the impact of losing a parent or close friend early in life, while four subjects grew up with troubled family members. One subject describes how the death of his father changed both him and his family:

I remember being a sensitive kid, even before then. And friends of mine laughed at me about that. But I think having had that experience early in my life, I was twelve, it made me sort of ultra-sensitive to, I guess to life, in a way. And feelings. And living a certain way. Life can be short. It can be short-lived, which I experienced. And thinking that, okay. How do I want to let this affect me, or move me? Do I ignore it, or do I let myself really feel what it's like? And if I really let myself feel, then a-ha, my behavior changes. It becomes important to feel in the moment.

The experiences described by both social entrepreneurs and Schweitzer fellows might also have had very negative effects. These individuals could also have distanced themselves from others experiencing pain to avoid reliving difficult memories. They

might have considered themselves justified in seeking happiness above all else. Instead, they focus their work on helping.

### *“Outsider” Status*

Six of the seventeen social entrepreneurs interviewed specifically mention feeling isolated or never “fitting in.” Aaron Lieberman was born with a bone condition that caused his legs to be much shorter than they should be. He could not play sports as a child, which made him feel “different.” Feeling isolated does not always mean, however, that subjects felt excluded in school; in fact, most of our subjects report that they were popular growing up and often leaders in their schools. Rather, because they are moved by or attracted to issues that are relatively unusual in their peer groups, they express a sense of isolation. Linda Rottenberg talks about this issue in relation to her early friendships outside of the U.S.:

I’ve always been friends with people internationally. My oldest friend growing up was Uruguayan. We became pen pals. Our parents had us at the same time and then she moved away and we became pen pals. In college, my good friends were from Turkey and Greece and Ghana and South Africa...And I always felt, even growing up, even though I was captain of this, captain of this, I never felt quite at home. I always felt like there was something else. I was part of another world.

As we have seen, Rottenberg’s work is currently focused in Latin America.

Some subjects still experience “outsider” status today. One subject describes the difficulties he has had since graduating from college and starting his organization, feeling that he does not have peers with whom he can consult. He realizes that this has been true throughout his lifetime, “and that is a pretty consistent theme of not feeling like I had a

peer group. High school and college were similar in that I had a lot of people who respected me but didn't understand me."

For some social entrepreneurs, such as Sara Horowitz, this outsider status is the result of the unique nature of their work. Horowitz's organization, Working Today, is forging new territory. As mentioned above, Working Today represents the concerns of America's independent workforce and works to help them gain access to the same benefits available to more traditional employees. Horowitz's father and grandfather worked in this world and its philosophies were part of her upbringing. She was raised in the labor movement. Nonetheless, she feels excluded from it:

I have a huge chip on my shoulder that I really wish I could get over. But I was trying to explain this to somebody and I put it this way: my grandfather was a pizza maker, my father was a pizza maker and I'm a pizza maker. But what I do isn't recognized always as being part of the labor movement so I have like these kids who let's say came out of the Central American movement or anti-globalization protesters or something sort of saying well, this isn't labor... But I find it, it really hurts me, and it hurts me more than it ought to. And it was really horrible five years ago because I grew up on the left and so it's just how I identify. And so to have people who A) I don't necessarily respect or think have a degree of depth sort of saying, "You know what? You're not really in this club." That was above anything else the most painful thing I had to deal with.

For many social entrepreneurs, feeling like an outsider begins in childhood and inspires or explains identification with a particular cause. As the organization is established and work begins, that outsider status is often exacerbated. There are few if any peers to consult and few in the outside world understand the work being attempted.

Several Schweitzer fellows (n=7) also saw themselves as outsiders during childhood. Some identify themselves as marginalized because they are immigrants, racial minorities, homosexual, or poor. One subject explains that her experiences as an immigrant help her empathize with others:

As a child growing up, I think that I did experience a lot of insecurity about being new...And I think it made me be really sensitive and respectful of people that I meet, especially the people that I work with because I work with the disadvantaged. I feel like that's really crucial and I'm always conscious of it.

Other Schweitzer fellows describe similar experiences.

Business entrepreneurs also see themselves as outside the norm: however, "outside" status takes on a different sensibility in this group. They distinguish themselves from "regular" businesspeople and from peers who have chosen professions with more directed paths (the typical MBA recipient, lawyers, doctors). According to one subject, business skills can be learned, whereas the entrepreneurial mindset can not. Subjects express a need for freedom to set their own rules and pace (versus following a clearly delineated path of graduate school, internship, residency, etc.).

### *Early Involvement*

Some of each sample mention early involvement in either social or entrepreneurial work. The numbers (see below) are greater with the two samples involved in service professions. The nature of this early involvement and its probable impact are also distinct. We might infer that an individual working with Amnesty International at an early age has her eyes opened to a particular cause; someone who starts a business in high school may catch an entrepreneurial "bug."

Many of the social entrepreneurs (n=10) were involved with social issues at an early age. Several had role models or parents who were themselves activists. Others were involved in groups such as Amnesty International, the Lutheran Volunteer Corps,

Big Brother, or other local groups. One subject started an organization in his school to help students with disabilities.

Most of the Schweitzer fellows (n=14) also describe early participation in some kind of service work. These include volunteer work at hospitals, visiting nursing homes once a week, helping out at homeless shelters, or one subject who regularly helped elderly neighbors with household chores. One subject was involved in protests and marches for various causes.

Seven business entrepreneurs mention early evidence of their entrepreneurial tendencies. A few subjects started businesses in high school. One subject collected golf balls and then sold them at the local golf course. Another picked her neighbor's flowers and then sold them back to her. Two had parents who were themselves entrepreneurs.

### *Strategies*

Three strategic approaches help social entrepreneurs in their work: reframing challenges, adhering to a sense of obligation, and discerning measures of success. Although all three samples describe themselves in spiritual terms, the degree to which these beliefs impact the content of work is more extreme in the caring professions. Those who have experienced trauma – social entrepreneurs and Schweitzer fellows – demonstrate an ability to reframe these challenges into opportunities for growth.

Individuals in each cohort express a strong sense of obligation to their work and to the people it affects. Schweitzer fellows feel responsible to the communities or causes they serve; business entrepreneurs speak about responsibilities to investors and

employees. Social entrepreneurs feel all of these obligations, and in some cases this leads to the feeling that they have no alternative but to continue in their work.

Social entrepreneurs regularly evaluate their work. Many describe standards by which they measure success. Measuring impact on a particular population or on behalf of a particular cause is not always easy, and the social entrepreneurs share this challenge with the Schweitzer sample. For-profit social entrepreneurs face this challenge in a very businesslike manner, by looking at their financial profits. Other, non-profit social entrepreneurs create clear, programmatic methods of assessment that are very much like business plans.

### *Reframing Challenges*

Some social entrepreneurs have the ability to see that something positive, such as a commitment to a cause or to working with an underserved population, can emerge from a painful or tragic situation. This method of “reframing” challenges is a common quality of highly creative individuals (Gardner, 1997). One subject’s mother was depressed through much of his childhood. She eventually committed suicide. The subject is a social entrepreneur working to improve the public education system. He refers to his experience by making clear connections to his current work but also frames his understanding of that experience as an opportunity, as strengthening:

I think it was transformative to have all the support that I had throughout growing up so it wasn’t an event but it was a context that I think was transformative without which I think I wouldn’t have a lot of the qualities I’ve got now. I wouldn’t be able to do what I’m doing now. Definitely, in terms of an event, my mom’s – but it wasn’t just that. It was actually her depression and her death in different ways, which were transformative. Her depression probably brought out in me what I was interested in and

focused on helping other people get through things. I probably refined my skill and understanding where somebody was emotionally and trying to help them with that. Her death definitely, other than being at that age devastating, obviously, but more permanently, it made me profoundly appreciative of what we have in life.

Because I saw actually what happened to somebody who in retrospect for clearly chemical reasons that could have been dealt with today by medications, I'm sure, but nonetheless, for whatever reason for somebody who didn't, and so it's just made me take nothing for granted and makes me appreciate every opportunity I have, the importance of helping others, for what a great time we have here but what a relatively short time it is and it's time just to take advantage of it and enjoy it richly and contribute.

Like the social entrepreneurs, the Schweitzer fellows express an awareness of how early trauma alters their life choices. For example, a nurse explains how her mother's illness gave her the desire to help others:

I really would take on the totality of the problem that was handled or experienced by, certainly first my mother, and then second any other person I might try to help. I had a conception that I should be able to help them. That was overwhelming, but it left me with a pleasure and an attachment to acts of helping.

Predictably, this is not a phenomenon described by business entrepreneurs. As discussed above, business entrepreneurs have not reported trauma to the same degree as their counterparts in the socially-oriented professions.

### *Obliging Convictions*

Others subjects might argue that they have no choice, they do what they do because there is no alternative. Using Colby and Damon's terminology, we would call this "certainty from conviction." In writing about Susie Valadez, who works with the poor and hungry population in Mexico, Colby and Damon (1992) describe her conviction in the face of conflict:

Her commitment may at times have come into conflict with other things she felt she had to do, but the mission did not seem to be an optional activity that could be dropped if the cost was too great. This is the sense of certainty and conviction that we have seen in all our moral leaders...in the midst of the conflict and anguish a basic conviction remains, a conviction that makes it impossible to turn one's back on the problem (p. 45).

We see this type of understanding in the work of social entrepreneurs as well. The founder of an organization, dedicated to the financial empowerment of low-income residents in New York City, explains:

As a founder, you feel so invested that it is not a job that you can just quit. I really couldn't just quit and walk away and say, "Well I did my best, and whatever happens, happens." I don't have that luxury, and there are probably many days where if I did, I would have. But it's a situation where you've got an extraordinary burden on your shoulders that you just can't turn away from under any circumstances.

The sense that the individual must continue in his work is compounded by the fact that the work is supported and maintained by an organization, or sometimes, a business. The community served is not the only population effected by the social entrepreneur's work. Employees, investors, and other stakeholders may also enter into his feeling of immense obligation.

Individuals in the caring professions express a sense of obligation to the communities they serve. Business entrepreneurs speak about responsibilities to investors, employees, and other stakeholders (including, sometimes, family members). Social entrepreneurs feel all of these obligations. It is important to recognize, however, that although individuals may say they have "no choice" but to continue in their work, they of course choose to do so. Because of their deep convictions, these individuals are *willing* to respond to and act on their obligations.

## *Assessing Value*

As we have seen, “social entrepreneur” means different things to different people and, as a result, these individuals are free to set their own standards and rules. Remarkably, this freedom does not result in lawless enterprise. Rather, the young leaders we interviewed have detailed standards that guide them as they evaluate progress, products, and mission fulfillment. In assessing the value of their work, social entrepreneurs feel the challenges of the other caring professions and face these challenges with businesslike organization and methods.

The for-profit social entrepreneurs with whom we spoke argue that one of the benefits of answering to a bottom line is that it provides a clean and easily-measurable method by which achievement can be judged. One of these subjects describes the differences between measuring business and social success:

Many of the good people or people who are committed or people who are activists mindlessly go into non-profit activities, which is awful because it's so hard to be successful in non-profits. There is no customer. There is no capital market. And there is no way to measure your success. Talk about an impossible organizational environment to work in. The great thing about working in a business is that at the end of the day you know where you stand. That helps you make decisions and it help everybody make decisions. And it helps you reduce complexity, increase focus, and all those things that are important for making an organization successful. So we know if our revenues are growing and we know if our profits or losses are growing. That's a very convenient measure.

For us, in addition to those traditional measures, we obviously want to stimulate employment in urban areas. That's our goal. That's the social aspect of our mission. We judge that by the number of people we have been able to employ and the amount of money and benefits that have flown through the organization into the neighborhoods in question or the people in question, from neighborhoods in question. So that's the direct measure of that mission. Then, the indirect one is whether or not we can

challenge enough assumptions in the mainstream and, through creating legitimacy around this possible hiring pool, stimulate others to do the same kind of employment.

Many social entrepreneurs speak to the difficulties in assessment that the above subject describes. They talk about judging themselves by “impact,” yet admit that impact is difficult to measure.

However, some social entrepreneurs manage to set measures for themselves that are very similar to business models. For example, one social entrepreneur describes the detailed measures by which he and his colleagues judge their level of accomplishment:

We’re working to put in place, and we have in some cases, very clear measurements. There are short-term, medium-term and long-term measurements. Long-term, we won’t see these benefits for a few years and therefore we’ve got to have indicators to help us understand how we’re tracking our progress toward that. In the long-term the question is are the schools led by [our] graduates helping kids from all backgrounds, in every socioeconomic status, in every academic quartile, making significant progress toward rigorous academic standards. It includes but is not just limited to test scores. So it will include level of student motivation, it will include college placement and high school graduation, other factors relating to success of kids.

...In the interim, before that, it will take a few years to see those kind of gains, so medium-term we’re going to look at what changes have happened in schools led by [our] graduates... We’ve got a bunch of more operational measures of success. We’ve got five to ten goals each year. This year it’s signing on forty phenomenal fellows ... Having an outstanding curriculum. Raising two and a half million dollars. Renewing our partnerships with our school district, the charter school partners as well as one new multi-site partner and a few others.

This subject is not unique in the detail with which he scrutinizes his organization.

There are other measures: some subjects assert that they will have achieved success when their organization can exist without their leadership, and one says he will have reached his goal when his organization becomes obsolete. Still others concede that they will never feel satisfied with what they have achieved but always push further.

When asked how they measure success, some business entrepreneurs, predictably, mention profit. But this is a surprisingly small number (n=4). Other measures include level of happiness, ability to learn new skills, continued passion for work, by comparison to others whose work they admire, and by public or formal recognition. One entrepreneur considers financial success but then also includes other measures:

I would say that I have reached personal success when I stop comparing myself to others, stop judging myself, stop judging others...success is when you wake up happy everyday with what you are doing. And sometimes that is the case for me and sometimes it is not.

Business entrepreneurs acknowledge the importance of financial success but assert that this is not a primary concern. They insist their passion lies in the process of creation, in building a company; they acknowledge the importance of money as *one* measure of a business's success.

The Schweitzer fellows were not asked how they measured success. However, some subjects do speak to this issue unprompted. Like the social entrepreneurs, the Schweitzer fellows are trying to assess impact. The techniques they use to attempt to do so included setting and meeting small, manageable goals, including the learning process itself as progress ("I learned something"), giving weight to having impact, however small. One Schweitzer fellow, who works with street children and prostitutes in Bolivia, talks about achievement in terms of every child he manages to get off the streets.

### *Compromise*

Two sets of challenges are shared across all three samples. These involve 1) separating out the personal from the professional realms; and 2) ethical concerns. Social entrepreneurs share more challenges with their counterparts in business. Individuals

across all three samples cite a variety of ethical dilemmas. Social entrepreneurs share business-related concerns with business entrepreneurs. These include concerns about their own inexperience, issues with employees and the compromises sometimes necessary when running an organization. The ethical conflicts described by the Schweitzer fellows most often involve issues particular to the communities they serve or to the medical profession (for example, the necessity of particular medical procedures or passing out condoms to high school students). Although social entrepreneurs may consider similar issues, they do not typically mention them as challenges.

### *Blurring the Line Between Professional and Personal*

All three groups describe the intersection between personal and professional as a challenge. Discussions of this particular challenge again demonstrate that social entrepreneurship is a combination of entrepreneurship and the caring professions. Business entrepreneurs are very personally involved in their professions; their companies are their “babies.” Schweitzer fellows become personally attached to the individuals they serve. Social entrepreneurs feel both of these pulls.

What is at stake for each cohort is distinct. When faced either with a difficult ethical decision or some other challenge to his business, the business entrepreneur weighs the consequences to his business, stakeholders, and employees. There are also, of course, personal consequences: his business is his livelihood and a very personal endeavor. When faced with a challenge to accomplishing work, someone working in the service professions also weighs consequences. The consequences are not only to self, however, but involve the individuals who are served by the cause he champions. A Schweitzer

fellow, a nurse working with the homeless, describes one such situation. She worked extensively with “Mike” to help him stop drinking, move to a clean, safe environment:

But it’s exhausting because he’s still actively drinking, and he’s older, and he’s frail, and he gets physically sick. And I’ve sort of come to the point: where is it enabling? ...But I think that’s a real risk in doing this kind of work. I mean I love [Mike] dearly. He’s like part of my family. And it makes me really sad that I’m not in touch with him the last few weeks, but I felt like it was taking such a toll on me, and making me so sad so much of the time, and almost feeling like it was making me crazy. How many detox trips and—anyway...

So, it’s been quite a journey; I mean life is quite a journey for all of us, but-...so I think that’s a real risk of—maybe that encapsulates knowing what your limits are, what you can do as a person, what your boundaries are, how much to empathize, and when do you start overempathizing, or taking on other people’s pain as your own.

Social entrepreneurs face all of these consequences. They have established organizations, some of which are for-profit ventures. As that organization suffers, they feel negative consequences quite personally, much in the way that a business entrepreneur might. Their livelihoods are also intimately connected to the success of the organization, and they, much like their counterparts in business, have worked to build the organization from the ground up. Additionally, they are particularly aware of the causes they work for. Gerald Chertavian explains:

[The students] are at the center of everything we do so when we draw visual pictures of our program and we think about our program, we always say that our primary constituent is our student. We have a staff, we have our corporations, we have our funders, but you always have to keep your eye on the students. We want to touch at least 10,000 people, so everything you do, you have got to be thinking about the 10,000 students. So decisions you make today may not be right for your current situation, but [it may] bring you closer to that goal.

For some social entrepreneurs, it becomes difficult to discern between professional and personal goals. Questions of balance between work and life become

moot as the lines between the two blur. Earl Phalen offers one such perspective. When asked about his responsibilities, he replies:

I feel most responsible to our children and to our ancestors. So for everybody who laid down their lives to open up opportunities for me and for everybody else around I feel a very, very big responsibility. So I often ask myself, "What would Harriet Tubman do in this situation?" And it's an easy guide, it makes the question so simple especially when folks talk about life/work balance and keeping a balance and maintaining. And I just don't think some of our ancestors were focused on balance. I think they were focused on freedom and understood the price of freedom. I don't at all live up to that standard, but that's the standard that I have.

Agreement between personal and professional values has been mentioned by some social entrepreneurs as crucial to their belief systems. This intersection becomes more difficult as it relates to the consequences of these beliefs. For some like Earl Phalen, concern about balance between professional and personal is no longer important, because the cause takes precedence. Others become personally involved with deeply troubled or ill individuals and experience painful consequences.

### *Ethical Concerns of Social Entrepreneurs*

As we have seen, the goals social entrepreneurs set for themselves – eradicating poverty, ending youth violence, giving the underprivileged a share of the American dream - are substantial. Meeting these goals is not easy, and, as might be expected, there are many challenges along the path to success. At times, individuals are faced with difficult ethical decisions and are forced to make compromises. Although social entrepreneurs face other challenges (see above), the financial pressures involved in keeping their organizations running are their greatest challenge.

Most social entrepreneurs depend on the financial assistance of individuals and on private and government foundations to fulfill the needs of their organizations. While social entrepreneurs express excitement about their work and passion for the various causes they embrace, many describe the fundraising process as restrictive and frustrating, and typically, view it as their biggest obstacle.

Striking a balance between serving an organization's mission and pleasing funding sources is a difficult task. Because the ultimate goal for the social entrepreneurs is a socially responsible one, it might seem that navigating ethical tensions would be straightforward. In reality, social entrepreneurs find it just as difficult as others to make sense of the moral and ethical issues they face.

Despite a focus on positive social change and a desire to do good, some social entrepreneurs question whether their personal ethical standards may actually stand in the way of organizational success. Social entrepreneurs pride themselves on having a vision of society in which individuals behave in responsible ways in order to achieve a healthier, more equitable world. Ironically, in the course of pursuing socially desirable ends, they sometimes undermine the very principles in which they believe.

Because of financial pressures one social entrepreneur reports “spinning” the truth in a way that funders might find attractive, “I’m a salesman. I’m taking the information and lining it up in a way that I know you will like.” Another subject refers to “mission creep,” or what happens when an entrepreneur revises the goals of her venture to satisfy a funder’s expectations. Other subjects describe the tension between service to the community they serve and the preservation of the organization.

One social entrepreneur combats violence in young people. The victim of violence himself as a child, he has had friends die under violent circumstances. Given these experiences, he reasons that principles are expensive, and admits that he has looked into ways of raising money that do not fit in with his value system.

This subject finds that ethical tensions arise especially when resources are difficult to procure and there are constraints on his time. He offers an example:

We needed to raise some money fairly fast. I talked with a woman about doing a challenge grant. We sent in the proposal, but she never said yes. Then she went [away] for a couple of weeks. So I started fundraising, and [the challenge grant] helped us raise probably \$20,000 we would not have raised otherwise. [Then she called us and said that] she is not doing a challenge grant. Do I go back and tell those folks that she changed her mind? I probably should. I am not going to. I just don't have the time, and it's not worth the energy, and it's hard. So there are a lot of things like that that govern my day-to-day work.

A focus on funding outcomes can lead a social entrepreneur to question personal standards and to forsake professional values in the face of organizational growth.

There are also examples of social entrepreneurs who face these tensions, grapple with their principles, and make choices that are more in line with the beliefs and values they espouse. One social entrepreneur is the co-founder and CEO of an organization that works to improve urban public school systems. He considers honesty and integrity to be important professional values, and in turn believes that his organization will only succeed if he himself acts on these principles. He believes "acting ethically" means being ethical in all circumstances and interactions, not just when it is easy. He sums up his point of view, "The way that you really are ethical or not ethical is whether you are--every day, every interaction--applying an ethic to it--or do you lose that war and just do what you do in order to advance."

Nonetheless, this subject acknowledges that ethical tensions arise, especially with regard to funding decisions. Although he admits that being less than candid is not illegal, he views it as a form of dishonesty and believes it crosses the ethical line. While the subject understands this distinction, he has had problems with young staff members who do not grasp the implications of their actions. In such situations he has made his standards and those of the organization very clear:

It was so important for me to make it really explicit that [being dishonest] was a line that we will not cross - for me as an individual, for this person as an individual, for us as an organization. That no marginal gain of a small amount of money was worth the compromise of integrity as an organization and as individuals. It's just clear-cut.

Social entrepreneurs are not unlike business entrepreneurs in the financial conflicts they encounter. However, those that do cross ethical lines – and in our sample these are not a majority – might believe they are doing so as a form of civil disobedience, breaking a law to support a higher ideal.

### *Ethical Concerns of Business Entrepreneurs*

Business entrepreneurs worry about the treatment of their employees, the “Darwinian” nature of business and its consequences. They argue with themselves: is it better to fire employees and keep the company healthy, or to keep them and force the company to falter? They worry about rushing to get a product to market before it has been tested properly, or meeting a shipment deadline when the product is perfectly safe, but not up to company standards. One expresses concern about issues such as child and slave labor; another mentions the testing of products on animals.

There is a point at which the emerging company starts to become larger and faces issues that young businesses are able to overlook. This is a particularly difficult time for many entrepreneurs, who are used to operating on their own. One business entrepreneur speaks to this difference between working on his own and being part of a larger organization:

There is a huge conflict there, especially when you get big and you have other stakeholders. That's something that I'm going to struggle through personally and I'm not sure if I'm alone as an entrepreneur because I think often an entrepreneur has different goals than the venture capitalist or the shareholder which is very much bottom line focus, where as the entrepreneur is, "I'm building a company."

Another entrepreneur is concerned about how his product might impact racial stereotypes. At the time of our interview, Corey Ackerman was in the process of starting a new organization called Leroi Productions. This new venture grew out of his previous interests in African American art. As the founder of myfineart.com, Ackerman saw his website become the eighth largest African American retail site. This website sells artwork to department stores and other large chains. Ackerman expresses concern about taking art to the retail market and in turn de-valuing it or making it less exclusive. He believes that African-American artists have never gotten the respect in the art world that they deserve and he is fearful of perpetuating this problem. He focuses on getting artists fair competitive market rates for their work.

### *Ethical Concerns of Schweitzer Fellows*

The ethical conflicts described by the Schweitzer fellows most often involve issues particular to the communities they serve or to the medical profession. They

wonder about the wisdom of passing condoms out to high school students (does this enable protection from STDs or encourage early sexual activity?). They worry about counseling people as budding medical professionals, questioning their own level of expertise. Others describe situations in which they have questioned senior medical professionals who have performed surgical procedures that might not have been necessary, or have pushed patients in ways they cannot support. One subject refuses to perform abortions because the procedure is in direct conflict with his personal beliefs. Another Schweitzer fellow, who at the time of our interview was about to graduate from Boston University's School of Public Health, expressed concern about governmental funding:

I think that there's just an inherent problem, and anybody in the field will say this but, you're tied to, I mean your staple funding comes from the US government and you're tied to everything that comes along with that. And just in knowing the history of the US in developing countries, it is kind of ethically challenging to—the work wouldn't be getting done if the government wasn't giving the money, but a lot of times what they're funding is not really based on what the needs of that, those communities are, its perceived needs.

Or it might be the needs of a few, but it doesn't make sense for—like an example in Sub-Saharan Africa, where there's AIDS through the roof, a lot of funding from international donors is for condom distribution and education about condoms. But in a lot of Sub-Saharan African countries, condom use is like complete aberration of their cultural set of beliefs, and so I have this horrible image of condoms just being dropped on all these countries basically, without looking at the cultural underpinnings that are preventing people from using them. You know, and it's not, it can, it's just, I don't know, that's a challenge for me and in thinking about my next job, you know and trying to really figure out a way that I can not have, I can feel comfortable you know in where the moneys come from and where it's coming and why it's coming in and where it's going. But it's hard too, like I said the work, none of it would be happening, so you have to find a balance there.

Although social entrepreneurs consider similar issues, they do not typically mention them as challenges. Their primary concerns involve challenges to running their organizations. The organizations are then able to grapple with and address these larger issues.

#### *Four Case Studies*

In addition to working on behalf of their various causes, some social entrepreneurs explicitly recognize that they are driven by the desire to be a part of something meaningful:

There is meaning in the work that I do because fundamentally, that is what we are all looking for is meaning. When you talk to doctors, lawyers, investment bankers, whomever, I hope that what they talk about, and I am sure they use different language, not the hermeneutical lens of whatever, but they make meaning out of what they do. And what they do helps to make meaning out of their life. When you ask me how I got into this, and I described how I make meaning of my life, now my work helps me do that. So that is an important part of a belief is that my work helps me understand myself and the world around me.

This individual explains that his work helps him to understand himself and to make meaning out of his life. There is a particular drive – exhibited by individuals across all three samples – that seems to carry some through regardless of current conditions. For the social entrepreneurs in this study, passion and purpose come together to create meaning in work.

Let's revisit the four individuals whose stories introduced us to social entrepreneurship. Each one combines elements of both the caring and business professional. Each one describes the role of meaning in work.

*Linda Rottenberg*

Growing up in Newton, Massachusetts, Linda Rottenberg never felt quite “at home” in her school and community. Her best friend was from Latin America, and her close friends in college were all expatriates with one foot in this country and one in another. When asked about early indications of her social awareness and entrepreneurial inclinations, Rottenberg said that she always enjoyed being around people with ideas and getting people motivated about new ventures.

She went to Yale Law School from 1990-93, because she wanted to “finish” her education, and because Yale had the reputation of training public policy leaders. Although she connected with many professors, she felt separate from many of her peers because she wasn’t interested in competing with them and had no interest in practicing law. Rottenberg was searching for a profession that had social impact. She wondered why there wasn’t more in the way of private sector development, and wondered where to find the entrepreneurs in developing countries. This was the beginning of Endeavor.

Rottenberg believes that real entrepreneurs are driven by change, not by money. She doesn’t connect with many in the non-profit world. For her, the work is not about “doing good” but is instead about impact and change. She describes a drive to create a non-profit model, and feels like a pioneer.

At once she feels she has already achieved success and will never really be successful. Endeavor has received much in the way of recognition, but she will never be satisfied until every country has opportunity. She measures success in part by entrepreneurs who have given back to the organization (one recently donated \$200,000).

This is the kind of “virtuous circle” Rottenberg hopes to encourage, and she credits the quality of people her organization attracts and recruits for this success.

When asked about beliefs that guide her in her work, Rottenberg talks about passion and people:

I wouldn't do what I am doing if I wasn't passionate about it. I think people are key—working with the people that we're helping, the people that we attract, that's key. I think that seeing results—I'm driven very much by seeing results. I think that the network we're building—the people I would say it's more individual. The network is really more the community. And then I think that the—I don't know how to say it, because it's different in results, but the change you can see in people's mindsets...that change is harder to demonstrate than two jobs or ten people or thousands of people coming to your conferences.

But to me when that light bulb goes off and people can say, “I can do it,” that, to me, is what excites—that's what I look for is when somebody who thought that every obstacle, that it was impossible because they are not from the family, no one will support them, when they suddenly think, “You know what? I can make my dreams come true. I can do it,” that is what motivates me.

I do not connect with many people in the non-profit world, I will be honest; I think that people who are just connected by the mission and by the sense of doing good and feeling good about yourself and helping people is not what motivates me. I think to me, it's a much more concrete, it's either the tangible results or when I can see the change in people, but it's much more driven. I would go batty if I was just doing something where I felt like I was doing good and I want to see the impact, and I think that social entrepreneurs absolutely, they are very pragmatic and they are very much driven by seeing something grow.

Inasmuch as she is describing the entrepreneurs with whom she works, Rottenberg is also describing herself in the above paragraphs. She is motivated by making the impossible possible, and by seeing impact.

Linda Rottenberg refers to herself as an “entrepreneur,” with no need for the “social.” Although she might not require this second part of the title, the work she does is clearly on behalf of a socially-motivated cause. She works to instigate economic

growth in emerging markets. Endeavor has already received requests and proposals to take its model into Turkey, South Africa, Morocco, Egypt, Costa Rica, and Southeast Asia. Rottenberg is not simply growing companies. She focuses on replicability of design and thinks big: she considers her work in terms of its global potential.

### *Gerald Chertavian*

Prior to founding Year Up, Gerald Chertavian co-founded and ran an Internet strategy-consulting firm based in London. He sold his firm in 1999 for millions of dollars. He put \$500K of his own money into starting his training program and currently works without a salary. Although he is modest about his financial attainment, it is clear that Gerald Chertavian is extremely successful.

Chertavian believes he may be more conservative than other social entrepreneurs. He is very focused on results, and believes that his business background has been extremely helpful. According to Chertavian, most business skills are highly transferable to the non-profit world; the only difference is how capital is retained. In the profit world, you work hard to sell; in the non-profit world you work hard to gain investors. Like many entrepreneurs, Chertavian pictures at least a few other ventures in his future. He imagines that at some point there will be less opportunity for him to participate in all aspects of the organization, something he now enjoys. He loves the thrill of starting something new and making it grow, and once Year Up becomes established, he expects to move on to another project.

Chertavian's grandfather was a cobbler and worked well into his old age so that his four children could go to college; his own father went on to become a dentist. In his

life, Chertavian feels a need to honor his parents and grandfather because they worked hard to make life better for him and his brother. He believes that the potential of young adults is limitless. When talking about his long-term involvement with Big Brother, Chertavian mentioned that he doesn't believe in selfless acts. Likewise, he believes that his involvement with Year Up "fulfills an emotional need."

I get to live my dream. I get to do on a daily basis what most excites me both intellectually and emotionally, which is to enable people to realize their potential. That is something that really drives me whether it was through Big Brothers, or whether it was through my for-profit company where we hired 150-plus people and developed them and helped them go into careers, I was always a very people focused managing director, or people focused executive director in this case. And, therefore, I really just get a high of seeing someone grow and develop, whether it is a baby, or a student, or staff people. The reality is that our society is bifurcating in a direction of have and have nots, which is not only dangerous but also a potential threat to the democracy within which we live.

I am an eternal optimist. I don't see glasses half empty, I don't; I recognize that if you want to get there, you're going to take the punches. You're going to have to get up each time, but the fight or the cause is so worthy that you can't ever focus on what you don't like, focus on what, you've got to get to that goal. So it is not in my nature to focus on what I don't like. Yes, sometimes, it can be a little tough to manage, and my job is to keep smiling, then getting them to make sure they're working altogether and happy, but it comes with the territory.

Chertavian finds meaning in watching people grow, and in helping them to do so. A visionary, he sees through-lines from his work with young adults to the inequalities in our supposedly democratic system. He believes that our country was founded on the principle, "work hard, get ahead." He describes his grandfather's up-by-your-bootstraps story and recognizes that this type of hard-work success story isn't possible in today's world. Chertavian's goal is to help everyone to get in the game.

*Aaron Lieberman*

Aaron Lieberman spoke at length about his experience as a camp counselor at Ramapo Anchorage Camp in New York, terming it transformative. At one time the camp was for troubled Jewish children; today it caters mostly to African-American children from New York City. (Jumpstart's curriculum was borrowed from the curriculum that was used at Ramapo.) Lieberman worked at Ramapo, with the preschoolers, for five consecutive summers (his parents also worked at the camp when they were teenagers). Once he had had the experience of being an active influence in an individual's life, he was "hooked."

Lieberman expresses a particular sense of responsibility to his grandfather, who passed away a few years ago. His grandfather fled the pogroms to work on the streets of NYC. Throughout his lifetime he did a lot of volunteer work, and his retirement was spent acting as Lieberman's daycare provider. Lieberman continually imagines how his grandfather would perceive things, and as a result tries to work hard, focus, and honor his memory.

Lieberman's mother is a pre-school teacher, his father a social worker, and his sister takes in foster children. He acknowledges that there must be some connection between these influences and his work. He never remembers anyone sitting him down and telling him it was his duty to give back, yet he can't remember not feeling this way.

Lieberman finds the term "social entrepreneur" self-involved and self-promoting. He believes that what he is doing makes a difference in the communities he serves. At the time of our interview, his frustration with funding was visible and since that time (and like many business entrepreneurs) he has moved on to try and accomplish his goals at

with another organization. Though the nature of his goals hasn't changed over the years, the level of impact he seeks has. He describes this as the difference between being a teacher and working to change the system. Like many social entrepreneurs, Aaron Lieberman works long hours under difficult circumstances. He nonetheless considers himself lucky:

I definitely feel like I've been the luckiest person in the world to have the job that I've had to get to where I am and be able to do this and that. I'm hopefully well regarded in a lot of different circles and so could have—do a whole bunch of things. So that there's a set of things that are kind of nice and cool. "Made it," has the kind of implication of you can kind of coast or rest or you don't have to keep killing yourself, and that's just not our world or kind of how I view it. Another piece of that is though kind of just this larger search for meaning.

Lieberman considers himself lucky in part because he is able to work in service of his beliefs. He recognizes that achievement is not always measurable. His work is valuable because it serves a public need while also satisfying a deeply rooted personal need.

### *Sara Horowitz*

Quaker school had an enormous impact on the formation of Sara Horowitz's beliefs. From second grade on, she felt a commitment to "something higher." As a result of this education, she has come to believe that "dreams really matter," they "have legs" and are at the "root" of many accomplishments.

Growing up, Horowitz thought everyone was union-oriented. Although she never met her grandfather, his work as a union organizer has been influential. During her freshman year in college, she was interested in labor, wrote to the union her grandfather worked for, and became involved. In addition to her grandfather, her father was a union-

side labor lawyer as is her husband. Working Today is not always recognized as part of the labor movement, and this is particularly painful to her.

When Horowitz was twelve her father was diagnosed with lung cancer. This incident changed the family. The loss of both parents several years ago was the most transformative time in her life and she describes their deaths as “epiphanies.” Building Working Today has also been transformative in that everything she traditionally believed in had to be taken apart and refocused. In essence, she had to get rid of all of her “extraneous, ideologically loaded” concepts. She views the creation of Working Today as a “clarity of mind”.

Asked to describe her work, Horowitz usually says, “I head a non-profit.” Horowitz criticizes the “do-gooder left” non-profit as naïve, unschooled, and often motivated by “sloppy” ideas. She holds herself to a higher standard. Horowitz distinguishes between entrepreneurs who are doing social things and those who are “the real thing.” She refers to what she calls a “love theory:”

My mother was very ill and had a terrible accident and ten months later my father had died so I think when you lose both parents like that it sort of changes you... When you have these horrible experiences you get these crazy blessings of a profound understanding of what life is about and right after that mark it is like a —and so it was like a whole cycle of life. It has made me have almost sort of perspectives about things and I sort of call it the way that it translates for me is I call it the “love theory.” It is that people are overloaded by love and it doesn’t mean like the love like everybody loves one another, but it is the love of the thing that you do or the love of a belief. It is the love that is extra juice, that makes you do what you do.

At the time of our interview, Working Today was just beginning in earnest to operate a “portable benefits network,” modeled on the entertainment industry. The organization offers benefits to professional skilled workers who are mobile; a minimum

number of hours of work per week are required. Beginning with the high tech industry, there are plans to expand later to labor. Horowitz wants to create a new labor organization that has staying power and offers a safety net for how people work. Her goal is for Working Today to outlast her tenure. Horowitz has thought about becoming involved in politics. Current political thinking is, in her mind, “ahistoric.” She describes herself as a “new deal leftist,” and very much admires Eleanor Roosevelt. In fact, when asked about philosophies that guide her work, she quotes Roosevelt, saying, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” She wants to talk about these issues in a real way and very well may become politically active at some point in the future.

### *Conclusion*

There is no single path one travels to become a social entrepreneur. Although a number experience trauma in childhood and turn this experience into commitment and drive, many others make the most of positive early experiences. Still others begin in the business world and turn those earnings into organizations with a social purpose. There is no one “type” of social entrepreneur. Some are truly charismatic speakers, full of energy, polished, well dressed and at home in the boardroom. Others are more soft spoken and quietly persistent, describing their work in pragmatic, matter-of-fact tones; it is the scope of their work, the deeds themselves, that speak most eloquently.

In spite of these differences, all social entrepreneurs share a passion for work. This passion, often the result of deeply held beliefs, drives the individual and garners

support from others. Their professional paths are determined, at least in part, by a desire to adhere to personal beliefs.

Social entrepreneurs think and work independently. They set their own standards and operate by their own set of rules. This makes sense in that they are working within a profession that is not yet established; if they seek guidelines, they must create them. Although they are in so many ways independent-minded, they understand and describe themselves as part of a greater whole. Social entrepreneurs express a great sense of obligation not only to a cause but also to the people it represents. They are driven to do what they do, and will find a way to continue no matter what the economy does.

Social entrepreneurs are independent operators, creating a space for themselves in response to a need or an opportunity they have discerned. Often their goals are the result of personal interests: the victim of childhood violence founds an organization to teach peace; the recipient of a quality education recognizes the difference it's made in his life and wants others to have the same opportunity. Social entrepreneurs take the personal and make out of it something professional. They are able to see possibility in addition to recognizing problems, able to recognize lessons learned in their personal lives and apply them to their professions. Although the line between the professional and the personal is often blurred in our over-worked society, this amalgamation is especially true with respect to social entrepreneurs, who are quite literally investing themselves in their organizations. The true visionary recognizes an opportunity and transforms it into a mission.

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