

Creating Value for Others: An Exploration of Social Entrepreneurs' Motives

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurs are catalysts for job creation, wealth creation and community development, so understanding their motivations is critical. But what motivates entrepreneurs to create social and economic value for themselves and others? We address this question by proposing a conceptual model for understanding social entrepreneurial motivations and rewards. We evaluate the model using data gathered from in-depth interviews with social entrepreneurs. Results show that social entrepreneurs identify with their target communities and generally are motivated by a commitment to social justice. Social entrepreneurs attain intrinsic rewards such as pleasure and participating in activities consistent with their values. By contrast, extrinsic rewards, including positive feedback and monetary compensation, appear to contribute to continued satisfaction with the venture

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, motivation

Entrepreneurs are important catalysts for job creation, wealth creation and community development, so their motivations for starting and growing businesses are important to the broader economy. Many studies focus on understanding financial motivations of entrepreneurs. Some evidence suggests that entrepreneurs have the potential to achieve higher net financial worth over their careers (Carter 2011). Other research, however, indicates that entrepreneurs often earn lower salaries (Van Praag & Versloot 2007), work longer hours (Cooper & Artz 1995), and take on greater personal financial risk (Acs & Phillips 2002). Clearly, entrepreneurs are driven by more than just financial rewards.

Recent work suggests that a combination of financial and social motivations better explains why some individuals decide to take on the risks associated with new business ventures (Ruskin, Seymour & Webster 2009). The balance of social and financial motivations likely differs among sub-sets of entrepreneurs, including those who establish family businesses (Mahto, Davis, Pearce II & Robinson Jr 2010), commercial entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs. Our understanding of the social motivations that encourage entrepreneurial activity currently is quite limited and requires far greater attention (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern 2006). While all entrepreneurs are motivated to create value for others, the defining characteristic of social entrepreneurs is that they establish ventures

primarily to create social value for target communities in need (Haugh 2006; Martin & Osberg 2007). As such, social entrepreneurship offers an ideal context for exploring social motivations. The aims of the paper are twofold: 1) to distinguish the different reasons that social entrepreneurs are motivated to create value for others, and 2) to identify the benefits social entrepreneurs receive from ventures that are not necessarily intended to reap substantial economic gains.

To address these issues, we begin with a brief review of recent literature on social entrepreneurs and motivations. Next we propose a conceptual model identifying potential factors that motivate social entrepreneurs and the possible rewards that encourage them to continue investing in their ventures. Theories from psychology, including Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and Ryan and Deci's (2000b) self-determination theory, form the basis of the model. A set of in-depth interviews with social entrepreneurs provides evidence to assess the relevance of the model. Understanding social entrepreneurs' motivations and the rewards they receive is important to explain why people become and remain social entrepreneurs.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS AND MOTIVATION

The field of social entrepreneurship is in its infancy (Bacq & Janssen 2011; Dorado 2006) and social entrepreneurial motivations have not been investigated thoroughly (Austin et al. 2006). Nonetheless, findings from research in related areas offer some insights into social entrepreneurial motivations. Social enterprises balance a combination of social and economic goals (Townsend & Hart 2008), but social entrepreneurs place higher priority on the social goal of creating value for the target community (Austin et al. 2006; Dees 1998; Martin & Osberg 2007; Prabhu 1999). Further, social entrepreneurs tend to measure success by the benefits they offer the communities they serve (Dees 1998). While acknowledging such apparently altruistic motives of social entrepreneurs, some scholars suggest that social entrepreneurs may experience a drive for self-fulfilment as well (Mair & Noboa 2006).

Evidence indicates that people who work for social enterprises benefit personally from increased independence, satisfaction and self esteem, as well as economically from employment income (Haugh 2006). Notwithstanding some economic returns, social entrepreneurs' drive to create social change supersedes any motive for personal financial returns (Dorado 2006; Mair & Martí 2006; Perrini & Vurro 2006), and financial returns are largely reinvested in the social venture (Bacq & Janssen 2011). Thus, recent social entrepreneurship research indicates that social entrepreneurs may be motivated to create both social value for communities in need and social returns for themselves.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATION

Motivation is about understanding the needs that drive individuals to act. A useful distinction often made within the motivation literature is between needs that require external fulfilment and needs that are satisfied within the individual (Guay, Vallerand & Blanchard 2000; Ryan & Deci 2000a).

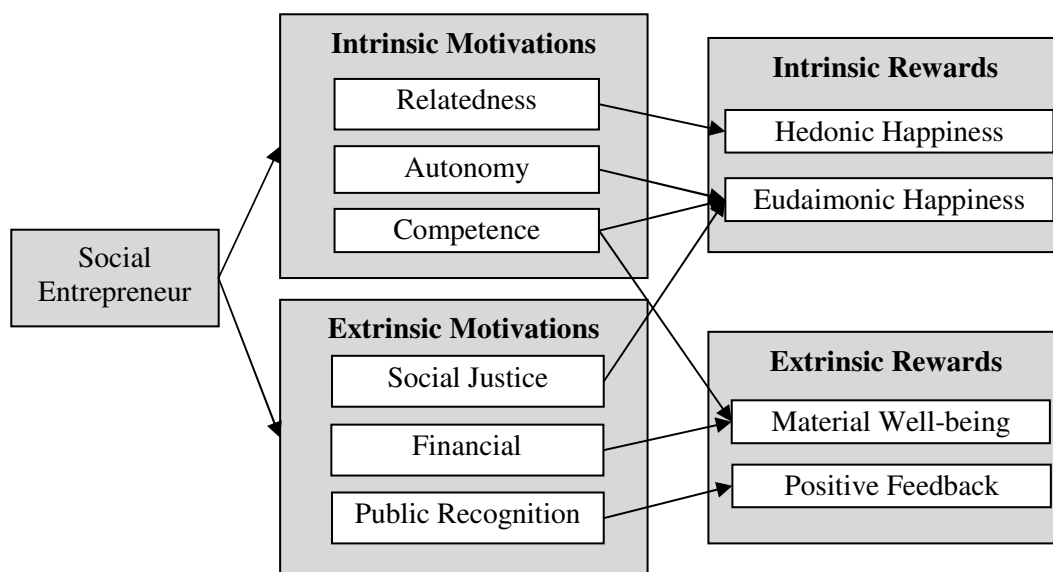
Extrinsic motivation is the propensity to be driven by external rewards (Grouzet et al. 2005; Schmuck, Kasser & Ryan 2000). External rewards can be either tangible or intangible—money is the reward for seeking wealth, and positive feedback is a reward for wanting recognition. By contrast, intrinsic motivation is the tendency to seek internal rewards obtained by participating in challenging activities (Deci & Ryan 2002). Intrinsic rewards tend to be less tangible—personal satisfaction can be the result of seeking independence, and a feeling of exhilaration can be the reward for overcoming a challenging task. Arguably, social entrepreneurs experience both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Ruskin et al. 2009), but it appears that we need more than one theory of motivation to explain why social entrepreneurs are motivated to create value for others.

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a prominent theory of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci 2000b). SDT argues that individuals are driven to enhance personal well-being by fulfilling three psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. The need for autonomy is met by having

control over one's behaviour, competence is fulfilled by having the opportunity to 'exercise and express one's capacities,' and relatedness is satisfied by feeling connected to others both at the individual and community level (Deci & Ryan 2002: 7). SDT appears consistent with social entrepreneurship in the sense that social entrepreneurs' activities are expected to fulfil the psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. For example, we anticipate that social entrepreneurs' drive to work independently (Shaw & Carter 2007) is associated with the psychological need for autonomy. When social entrepreneurs use personal skills and expertise to identify opportunities and build programs, they presumably meet their psychological need for competence. It seems likely that the psychological need for relatedness is behind social entrepreneurs' drive to bring about change either by having or building a relationship with members of their target population.

While SDT seems suitable, it is specifically a model of intrinsic motivation and thus does not explain any of the possible extrinsic aspects of social entrepreneurial motivation, such as 'social justice,' financial returns and public recognition. Social justice is a socially constructed concept of a fair distribution of opportunities and resources (Tyler 2000). Social entrepreneurs perceive an unfair outcome for a target community and take action to help the community in need (Martin & Osberg 2007), thereby demonstrating a commitment to social justice. In the motivations literature, social justice is similar to the concept of 'idealism,' working to improve society (Reiss 2004), and 'community feeling,' helping people and seeking to create a better place (Kasser & Ryan 1993). Pursuing social justice is an extrinsic motivation in that the desired change occurs outside the self. While monetary rewards may not be a driving force for social entrepreneurs, presumably most social entrepreneurs need some financial compensation from their ventures to support ongoing involvement. Many social entrepreneurs also receive public recognition in the form of awards and public speaking opportunities. The extent to which any of these extrinsic motivations, social justice, financial rewards or public recognition, motivate social entrepreneurs has yet to be explored.

When people act on their motivations, they anticipate certain rewards. Social entrepreneurial activities that meet psychological needs are expected to contribute to personal well-being, which has been conceptualised in different ways. Aristotle (1982/c. 350 BCE) was the first to distinguish hedonic from eudaimonic happiness as two aspects of well-being. Hedonic happiness refers to relatively accessible pleasures such as enjoying oneself, while eudaimonic happiness is associated with having clear goals, feeling challenged, and investing substantial effort (Waterman 1993). People drawn to entrepreneurship by a motivation for independence, for instance, expect the freedom to work in the way that suits them best. Most likely social entrepreneurs attain both eudaimonic and hedonic happiness through their ventures. Having relationships with people in the target community might be enjoyable, while behaving autonomously may result in a sense of personal achievement. Some motivations, for example demonstrating competence, seem likely to result in both intrinsic rewards, such as feeling satisfied, and extrinsic rewards, including monetary compensation. Similarly, pursuing social justice can lead to both extrinsic rewards for the community in need and intrinsic rewards for the social entrepreneur. Only rewards to the social entrepreneur are considered here. Figure 1 is the conceptual model derived from the review of SDT, social justice and intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of social entrepreneurial outcomes.

Figure 1: Social Entrepreneurs' Motivations and Rewards

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

We used a set of qualitative interviews to explore social entrepreneurial motivation (Stake 2006). Thirteen social entrepreneurs participated in the study. All participants were members of one of two agencies that support social entrepreneurs in Australia. Some of the social entrepreneurs provided additional documentation including brochures, product information and web profiles. In several cases, follow-up emails provided further clarification. We transcribed all of the interviews and used NVivo 8 (QSR International 2008) to code passages relevant to the motivations and rewards of social entrepreneurs. After initial coding, we returned to the interview transcripts and recoded all comments (Spiggle 1994) to ensure we analysed the data twice from different perspectives (Patton 1999). In an iterative process, we categorised the coded data into themes and sub-categories (Corbin & Strauss 1990; Spiggle 1994). Comments by theme and sub-category were entered into a matrix format and reviewed to identify patterns and linkages across themes (Miles & Huberman 1994; Spiggle 1994).

RESULTS

Consistent with previous empirical papers on entrepreneurship, most participants are venture founders (Van Praag & Versloot 2007). One social entrepreneur's social enterprise exists within an established not-for-profit organisation. The social entrepreneurs are primarily in the greater Sydney region or Melbourne, although they serve communities throughout Australia and internationally. Some of the social entrepreneurs are members of a founding team of two or more individuals, and all are the current managers of their ventures. Table 1 offers an overview of the fields of work, organisational structures, gender, age and years of involvement of participants and their ventures. Participants are identified with code numbers to protect their confidentiality.

Table 1: Overview of Interview Participants

SE	Field of Work	Region Served	Org. Form	Founder	Gender	Age	Years of Operation
SE1	career development	Sydney, Melbourne	NFP	individual	M	<30	1
SE2	community development	W. Sydney	NFP	team	M	>30	9
SE3	nutrition	W. Sydney	NFP	individual	F	>30	1
SE4	career development	Sydney, Brisbane	FP	team	F	<30	3
SE5	financial services	Victoria	NFP	team	F	>30	15
SE6	health care	Aus, NZ	NFP	individual	F	>30	6
SE7	career development	W. Sydney	NFP	team	F	<30	<1
SE8	cultural awareness	international	FP	individual	F	>30	2
SE9	environmental educ.	international	NFP	team	F	>30	18
SE10	arts education	international	NFP	individual	F	>30	6
SE11	youth leadership	Melbourne, Sydney	NFP	individual	F	<30	7
SE12	domestic violence	NSW	FP	team	F	>30	2
SE13	nutrition, career development	Sydney	FP	team	M	>30	<1

Notes: Org. Form = organisational structure, NFP = not-for-profit, FP = for profit, Age = age at venture founding

Social Entrepreneurs' Motives

Analyses of the interviews reveal three types of motivation: autonomy expressed as a desire to be in control, commitment to the target community including a drive for social justice, and two types of unanticipated emotional motivations (Table 2). The findings that participants are intrinsically motivated to express their autonomy and extrinsically motivated to achieve social justice for a target community are consistent with our conceptual model.

Table 2: Overview of Social Entrepreneurial Motivations

Commitment to Community		
Sense of obligation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a choice—destiny, call to action • Reciprocity—‘I’m using a tool that changed my life to change other people’s lives’ • Responsibility—‘It’s alright to be thinking about it for me, but wow, what about this beautiful being that I’m now responsible for?’ 	Social justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social equality—‘unbelievable inequity between people currently living here on the earth...I just find that gap irreconcilable and obscene.’ • Equal access to education, employment, financial services • Fair deal for producers (farmers) and consumers 	Identify with the community or issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy, personal experience • Sympathy, affected by observation • Acquired experience by living or working in the target community
Emotional motivation		
Enjoyment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Have fun’ • ‘Doing exactly what I love’ 	Frustration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with the issue—disheartened, helpless • with prior role 	
Desire to be in control		
Autonomy	Promote own values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace • Environmental sustainability 	

Desire to be in control

Social entrepreneurs are motivated to be in control both to express their autonomy and to promote their values. SE1 exhibits a drive to control his own behaviour when he says, ‘this allows me to run my own business, set up my own business, make my own mistakes.’ It appears he is drawn to social enterprise, at least in part, to fulfil his psychological need for autonomy. SE9 reports beginning to formulate values while participating in a peace movement as a youth that continue to guide her

actions as an adult. She calls it a 'wake-up call' which is a 'driving force' to find a different 'way of living and being in the world.' Her social enterprise is an opportunity to promote her values. Both of these examples demonstrate the social entrepreneur's effort to establish some control over how things move forward, either personally or for the wider community.

Commitment to community

Three aspects of social entrepreneurs' commitment to the communities they serve emerge from the interviews: a sense of obligation, striving for social justice and identification with the target community. Some social entrepreneurs feel obligated in the sense that they do not perceive their entrepreneurial decision as an active choice; rather they feel drawn to fulfil their 'destiny' (SE8) or a 'call to action' (SE9). Others feel obligated to reciprocate an advantage they received earlier in life. For example, SE1 comments 'I'm using a tool that changed my life to change other people's lives.' Social entrepreneurs also feel a responsibility to themselves, their families or their communities to engage in the work they do. For example, SE3's social enterprise offers the tools necessary for a lifestyle change to resolve her son's health problem, which she feels compelled to pursue as an alternative to putting him on medication.

Social entrepreneurs also express a strong drive for social justice as a foundation for their commitment to the community in need. SE9 comments that the 'unbelievable inequity between people currently living here on the earth...I just find the gap irreconcilable and obscene.' Thus, social entrepreneurs are motivated to establish social enterprises in an effort to achieve a more equitable distribution of opportunities and resources.

Identifying with the community or issue addressed is a third foundation for being committed to the target community. Many, if not most, social entrepreneurs are members of their target population, i.e.,

they experience empathy toward the community in need. SE6, for instance, says that prior to founding her social enterprise, she knew there had to be ‘other women out there who feel like this.’ Other social entrepreneurs have some experience that arouses sympathy for their target population. SE8, for example, observed racism for the first time as a young adult, and she was ‘horrified...it was a really strong response for me.’

These different types of commitment to the community are interrelated. Some social entrepreneurs identify with the target population and feel an obligation to right a wrong facing the community. For other social entrepreneurs, it is their commitment to social justice that leads them to find a way to identify with the community in need. SE7, for instance, chooses to live in her target community, and SE13 ‘became a farmer’ to experience the challenges they face. The understanding of the community’s perspective that results from these acquired experiences appears to reinforce the social entrepreneur’s sense of commitment.

Emotional motivation

In an unanticipated finding, social entrepreneurs discuss two types of emotional motivation: enjoyment and frustration. Enjoyment is evident from words like ‘fun’ (SE4), ‘love’ (SE7, SE8, SE11) and ‘joy’ (SE8) when social entrepreneurs talk about why they do what they do. SE8 explains, ‘I’m doing exactly what I love, love it, love every aspect of it.’ As, perhaps, the antithesis of enjoyment, social entrepreneurs also experience frustration as a motive. Some are disturbed by the issue they address and others are frustrated with former jobs. SE5, for example, says she was ‘getting sick of seeing exported goods and mass-produced fashion being sold off cheap’. Speaking of his prior employment, SE1 says he ‘just got really fed up with the unfulfilling nature of what I was doing.’

Returns to Social Entrepreneurs

Returns to social entrepreneurs include several aspects of intrinsic well-being and extrinsic rewards (Table 3). Consistent with the conceptual model, intrinsic benefits of being a social entrepreneur include both hedonic and eudaimonic happiness. An unexpected finding is that social entrepreneurs perceive competence and relatedness as additional intrinsic rewards of social entrepreneurship. As anticipated by the conceptual model, social entrepreneurs receive a mix of tangible and intangible extrinsic rewards.

Table 3: Overview of Social Entrepreneurs' Benefits

Intrinsic rewards		
Self-determination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatedness, part of target community • Competence, new knowledge 	Eudaimonic happiness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction—sense of accomplishment, satisfaction with outcomes • Doing something consistent with values • Fulfilling life purpose • Achieving change is worth the sacrifice 	Hedonic happiness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasure
Extrinsic rewards		
Tangible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial compensation—minimal is okay, need to increase • Gifts, privileges • Same benefits as target community—‘use the [healthy, affordable food] packet for my own family’ 	Intangible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition, positive feedback • Same benefits as target community—‘doing this kind of work...[is] building my confidence again’ 	

Intrinsic rewards and personal well-being

Social entrepreneurs enjoy being social entrepreneurs—they benefit at the relatively superficial level of hedonic happiness. Asked what he gets from being a social entrepreneur, for example, SE13 responds ‘it’s cool! I just enjoy it.’ Similarly, SE10 comments ‘I get all these amazing experiences.’ Interview responses suggest that social entrepreneurs also benefit from several aspects of the relatively deeper eudaimonic happiness: feeling satisfied, doing something consistent with their values and fulfilling their life purpose. Social entrepreneurs appear to have two sources of

satisfaction. They are satisfied with the outcomes of their venture and they feel a sense of accomplishment from their achievements. SE6 comments that for her 'satisfaction in life is not about my personal circumstances. It's about growing better communities.' SE3 says that 'stopping and taking action on one of [my many ideas] is a huge feat for me.' SE11 indicates that she's fulfilling her life purpose through her work when she says 'I love knowing now that I have purpose, and that I'm living with my own truth.' SE8 discusses the benefit of doing work that is consistent with her environmental values: 'I know that we're not harming the environment in any way whatsoever...That's a pretty good feeling.'

Intrinsic motivations perceived as rewards

Competence and relatedness are motivation constructs in SDT, but social entrepreneurs identify acquiring new knowledge (competence) and feeling part of a community (relatedness) as intrinsic benefits of their ventures. Social entrepreneurs enjoy relationships with members of the target community, whether they are motivated by sympathy, empathy or acquired experience with the target community. SE6, who is a member of her target community, says 'I also get love in spades...the support shown to me and my family as part of this community has been incredibly beautiful and very touching.' SE7 acquired experience with her target community and says 'I've never felt more loved than I do by these people. I feel more loved and accepted by these people than I do by my family.' Competence as a reward is evident in comments from SE1 and SE4, respectively: 'I've really learned a lot personally,' and 'I'm learning so much about business.'

Extrinsic rewards

Many interviewee comments refer to the tangible, extrinsic reward of financial compensation. Some participants appear to be at peace with expected lower financial returns, as is evident in SE2's comment that his partial stipend is 'our choice; that's our lifestyle.' When SE3 comments that 'the wage part of it is not so important as the change,' she indicates the higher value she places on intrinsic

over extrinsic rewards of social entrepreneurship, which was a sentiment expressed by several participants. For social entrepreneurs who establish their ventures with a minimal or absent salary, however, it appears some reach a point when being paid becomes important. SE10 says, 'I can't afford to run it any longer without having an income,' and SE4 says 'we always saw ourselves as volunteers...until...we were getting burnt out and said "we can't do this all for free."' Regardless of when financial compensation for the social entrepreneur is built in, it appears that many social entrepreneurs can earn more money doing something else. SE9 puts it succinctly: 'I don't earn anywhere near what I could if I'd stayed teaching, for example, but certainly we do draw a living wage.'

Other extrinsic rewards of social entrepreneurship that accrue in some cases include gifts, privileges and the same benefits as the target community. SE1 mentions a gift his target community gave him, and SE2 talks about complimentary beverages from his enterprise. SE3 benefits from the same access to healthy, affordable food for her family that she offers her target community. In some cases, social entrepreneurs also receive the same intangible rewards as the target community. For example, SE4 comments that 'doing this kind of work has given me a lot more faith and hope in what I do. It's building my confidence again,' which is similar to the outcomes she pursues for her target community.

Other extrinsic, intangible rewards include positive feedback, much of which comes from the target community. SE2 comments that hearing 'statements like, "where I'm at musically today is because of [the social venture]," that's sweet.' SE3 recalls receiving recognition via an award within the regional community of social entrepreneurs.

DISCUSSION

The results of the case study confirm some of our expectations about social entrepreneurial motivations and reveal several aspects of our conceptual model that need refinement. First, social entrepreneurs perceive competence and relatedness as rewards rather than motivations. To explain this discrepancy, study participants indicate that although they did not enter into their venture because of a need to gain knowledge or to improve their social relationships, they see learning and being part of a community as rewards in and of themselves.

A second aspect of our model that needs refinement is that social justice appears to be only one of three foundations for commitment to a community in need. In addition, social entrepreneurs may feel a sense of obligation to, and identify with, the target community. A social entrepreneur's past experience with the target community may be just as important for motivation as it is for spotting the opportunity (Corner & Ho 2010) and assembling the necessary resources (Di Domenico, Haugh & Tracey) to establish a viable social venture.

A third limitation of the conceptual model is that social entrepreneurs do not mention money as a motivation. Perhaps this is not surprising given the primacy of social entrepreneurs' focus on social value. Interestingly, if social entrepreneurs do not build personal financial rewards into their ventures, it appears to have a negative effect on their long-term satisfaction with the enterprise. This finding mirrors Herzberg's (1965) theory that the factors that motivate people in their work, such as having responsibility and enjoying the work, are distinct from those factors, like a low salary, that lead to dissatisfaction with work. While this idea is not new, it has not previously been considered in the context of social entrepreneurship. Perhaps some attention to social entrepreneurs' need for financial compensation is warranted.

A fourth limitation of the conceptual model is that public recognition is not identified as a motivation, but interview respondents discuss the motivating force of positive feedback from the community in need. It appears that social entrepreneurs appreciate confirmation from the target community regarding the efficacy of the intervention. An entrepreneur's motivation to continue as an entrepreneur is thought to be linked to the extent to which actual venture outcomes align with expected outcomes (Naffziger, Hornsby & Kuratko 1994). It may be that a social entrepreneur's satisfaction with the social venture is influenced by whether or not the intervention is successful for the target community. Thus, some of the social entrepreneur's intrinsic rewards of social entrepreneurship may depend on the target community's receipt of extrinsic rewards. A revised conceptual model might integrate a feedback loop of social entrepreneurial motivation. A feedback loop would illuminate the motivating force of confirmation that social value has been created, receipt of necessary financial returns, and hedonic and eudaimonic happiness.

CONCLUSION

Using self-determination theory and some types of extrinsic motivations and rewards, we can begin to explain why social entrepreneurs help others. Our conceptual model is useful for understanding why social entrepreneurs create value for others. Social entrepreneurs are intrinsically motivated by a drive for autonomy and extrinsically motivated by their commitment to the target community. The process of resolving challenges for the target community results in intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Social entrepreneurs appear to place more value on intrinsic rewards, such as hedonic and eudaimonic happiness, while extrinsic rewards seem to contribute to continued satisfaction with the venture.

This paper contributes to the social entrepreneurship literature by synthesising several motivation theories with our understanding of social entrepreneurs and offering a foundation for a model of social entrepreneurial motivation. The paper is limited by a small sample size. In addition, the scope of the

paper only allowed us to consider rewards received by the social entrepreneur, not benefits received by the target community. Future research may build on the conceptual model and test it with a bigger sample of social entrepreneurs. Other areas to explore are social entrepreneurs' needs for financial compensation and the possibility of a link between target community outcomes and benefits derived by social entrepreneurs.

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