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Rise Up: Understanding Youth Social Entrepreneurs and Their Ecosystems

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Abstract

This research focuses on youth social entrepreneurs who are leading ventures that address pressing societal problems including climate change, gun reform, and social justice. It answers *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*'s call for more research in marketing on social entrepreneurship. Consistent with the mission of Transformative Consumer Research to enhance individual and societal well-being, this research explores how the dynamic ecosystem of youth social entrepreneurs empowers them to rise up to transform people, communities, and the future for the better. The authors partnered with 20 established youth social entrepreneurs who have founded social impact initiatives as well as two organizations that support youth social entrepreneurs, Ashoka and Future Coalition, to develop a framework for understanding the ecosystem that encourages youth social entrepreneurs to enhance people's well-being and make the world a better place. This framework integrates the experiences of these youth social entrepreneur partners and extant literature in marketing and related disciplines to provide guidance that can help researchers, policy makers, educators, and parents design an environment to support the success of youth social entrepreneurs.

Keywords

mindset, social entrepreneurship, social impact, Transformative Consumer Research, youth social entrepreneur

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Social entrepreneurs are leaders of ventures who innovate solutions to alleviate society's most pressing problems (Ashoka 2016; Bloom 2012; Skoll World Forum 2013). In a 2012 special section on social entrepreneurship, *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing* (*JPPM*) launched the study of social entrepreneurship in the marketing field (Bloom 2012). This *JPPM* issue included articles focused on how to improve the effectiveness and impact of social entrepreneurs, explored personality traits that determine social entrepreneurial success, and provided normative advice to social entrepreneurs and policy makers (Bloom 2012; Epstein and Yuthas 2012; Newbert 2012; Weerawardena and Mort 2012; Wood 2012). As this collection of *JPPM* articles highlights, social entrepreneurs are "catalysts for social transformation" (Azmat, Ferdous, and Couchman 2015, p. 254) who provide positive transformative benefit to individuals and society (Bloom 2009, 2012; Martin and Osberg 2007). Consistent with the mission of Transformative Consumer Research (TCR), social entrepreneurs work to benefit individual and societal well-being, welfare, and quality of life (Mick et al. 2012). By innovating positive change that affects the well-being of people and communities, social entrepreneurs drive transformation (Pinheiro and Strickland 2016), thereby carrying out the TCR mission.

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In his introduction to the *JPPM* special section on social entrepreneurship, Bloom (2012, p. 74) calls for more researchers in marketing "to contribute to the body of knowledge about social entrepreneurship." While scholarship on social entrepreneurship continues to grow, it has focused primarily on adults. As Kruse (2019, p. 156) points out, academic study of youth social entrepreneurs is a "nascent field for inquiry," and there is a need for frameworks to advance understanding of youth social entrepreneurship. In particular, a framework for understanding the enabling factors that fuel the success of youth social entrepreneurs is missing. Our research innovates and builds that framework. We introduce a framework that explores the dynamic ecosystem needed to cultivate youth social entrepreneurs to rise up and transform people, communities, and the world for the better. Our framework, then, expands the social entrepreneurship and marketing literature streams by identifying the ecosystem that supports youth in their social entrepreneurial endeavors.

Although the study of youth social entrepreneurship has received little attention, the practice of youth social entrepreneurship is currently flourishing (Ashoka: Innovators for the Public et al. 2019; Kruse 2019). Youth today are launching social entrepreneurial initiatives to work toward "a common goal of making the future a better, safer, and more just place for everyone" (futurecoalition.org). In the tradition of youth-led movements that have changed the world by fighting for civil rights in the United States; eradicating corruption in Brazil; and ending dictatorships in Serbia, Tunisia, and Gambia (Stephen and Thompson 2018), youth are harnessing the power of social entrepreneurship to organize their transformational efforts. Perhaps the best known among these youth is Greta Thunberg, the 17-year-old founder of Fridays for Future, who led a climate strike on September 20, 2019 in 150 countries across the world and was named *Time* magazine's 2019 Person of the Year (Alter, Haynes, and Worland 2019). Across the United States, a growing number of youth concerned about a wide array of issues—climate change, gun reform, education, racial justice, health care, and civic action—are taking an active role in shaping the future through social entrepreneurship. This research presents a framework to enable more youth social entrepreneurs to succeed when they take action to create positive impact in our world.

Addressing youth social entrepreneurial initiatives, Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) António Guterres said, "Young people tend to have a fantastic impact in public opinion around the world. Governments follow" (Alter, Haynes, and Worland 2019). Social entrepreneurs—and, by extension, youth social entrepreneurs—influence individual and collective well-being not only through the direct impact of their initiatives but also by influencing laws, policies, and regulations (Bloom 2012). And, as Secretary-General Guterres points out, youth advocacy can have a significant influence on public policy. *Forbes* recognized this influence by naming Katie Eder, the 20-year-old founder of Future Coalition, as the youngest person on its 2020 "30 Under 30" list for Law and Policy, writing, "Eder's advocacy contributed to a record youth turnout across the country in the 2018 midterms [U.S. midterm elections]" (Coyne, Glusker, and Kreznar 2019). In turn, as our research makes clear, local, state, and national educational policy affects opportunities for youth to engage in social entrepreneurship.

Our research is grounded in the relational engagement approach developed by Ozanne et al. (2017). In keeping with the relational engagement methodology introduced by Bublitz et al. (2019), our team of authors collaborated with 20 established youth social entrepreneurs and two organizations supporting social entrepreneurship among youth, Ashoka and Future Coalition. Working with these partners, we gained a deeper understanding of the challenges youth social entrepreneurs face and the vital practices and enabling factors that contribute to their success. How and where youth become "agent[s] of social change may go against the grain" of the paths adults tread (Nga and Shamuganathan 2010, p. 265). Youth, and by association youth social entrepreneurs, are different from adults, as their outlook on life and goals are more idealistic and flexible; youth engage in less constrained thinking, and prosocial behaviors peak in late adolescence (Berk 2007; Blankenstein et al. 2020; Welford 1958).

We begin with an introduction to the academic literature on social entrepreneurship with an emphasis on contributions from marketing and a focus on how youth social entrepreneurs differ from adults. Next, we describe our relational engagement methodology for understanding the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem. We then explore that ecosystem, focusing on key influencers, access to resources, and the youth social entrepreneur mindset that can both foster and inhibit youth social entrepreneurship. This exploration of the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem integrates relevant concepts from marketing and its associated disciplines with the experiences of our youth social entrepreneur partners into a singular framework. Finally, we offer public policy recommendations for how to support youth social entrepreneurs and propose additional research to advance our understanding and cultivation of youth social entrepreneurs who are rising up to make the future a brighter place for everyone.

Social Entrepreneurship

In his introduction to *JPPM*'s special section on social entrepreneurship, Bloom (2012, p. 73) defines social entrepreneurs as "leaders of ventures that employ innovative approaches to address social problems." Social entrepreneurs address societal concerns and catalyze social change by mobilizing "ideas, capacities, resources, and social arrangements required for sustainable social transformations" (Alvord, Brown, and Letts 2004, p. 262) that produce small, short-term changes that subsequently lead to larger changes over time (Azmat, Ferdous, and Couchman 2015). Social entrepreneurship arises and ensues when an individual who is "opportunistic, persistent, and accountable" (Bloom 2009, p. 128) encounters social injustice (Pless 2012) and feels empathy for those experiencing this injustice (Saebi, Foss, and Linder 2019). Environmental and

societal forces, along with individual characteristics such as empathy, drive social entrepreneurs to pursue large-scale change that yields a "lasting transformational benefit" to individuals and society (Martin and Osberg 2007, p. 34).

Social entrepreneurship's value to underserved people and to society has been explored in TCR research focused on subsistence markets and championed by *JPPM* in a 2015 special section (Azmat, Ferdous, and Couchman 2015; Barrios and Blocker 2015; Kolk and Lenfant 2015; Venugopal, Viswanathan, and Jung 2015). As this research makes clear, the exploration of social entrepreneurship offers the potential for a contribution to both TCR and marketing. Conversely, Bloom (2009) argues that the marketing discipline has much to offer social entrepreneurship. For one, achieving large-scale social impact through social entrepreneurship requires the capacity to pursue constant innovation (Weerawardena and Mort 2012), support strong internal marketing (Epstein and Yuthas 2012), and maintain a market-orientated focus (Nicholls and Cho 2006). Insights from consumer research are also essential to social entrepreneurs in their work to modify problematic behaviors (Griskevicius, Cantú, and Van Vugt 2012) and better manage fundraising (Wood 2012).

Social entrepreneurs, in contrast to entrepreneurs who pursue for-profit ventures, are motivated by a social impact mission and are focused on providing societal value rather than creating private value (Dees 2001) or personal economic gain (Martin and Osberg 2007). The value social entrepreneurs aim to create is designed to positively affect the well-being of people and communities and to offer transformative benefits to society (Martin and Osberg 2007; Pinheiro and Strickland 2016). There are many unexplored opportunities for researchers in marketing to study social entrepreneurship and to enhance its potential to benefit individual and societal well-being (Bloom 2009). Our research explores one such area, youth social entrepreneurship, a nascent focus for academic research (Kruse 2019).

Youth as Emergent Social Entrepreneurs

Youth social entrepreneurship builds on the history of youth-led social change in the United States from the 1899 newsboys' strike to the 1957 Little Rock Nine (Kruse 2019). Although academic research focused on youth social entrepreneurship is "in its infancy . . . the practice [of youth social entrepreneurship] has been well under way" (Kruse 2019, p. xiv). Following the 2018 Parkland, Florida, high school shooting, student-survivors founded March for Our Lives to end gun violence. The efforts of 17-year-old Greta Thunberg's climate protests and founding of Fridays for Future also show how organized youth social action in the form of social entrepreneurship is growing (Kruse 2019; Rendon 2020). Relative to adults, youth are more uniformly positive about their ability to create social change and are more willing to take bold actions to achieve their goals (Berk 2007; Blankenstein et al. 2020; Welford 1958). Youth, relative to adults, experience an increased capacity to think abstractly and to empathize with others (Eccles, Wigfield, and Byrnes 2003), all while undergoing an intense process of self-discovery (Leslie et al. 2004). Youth's "capability for abstract thinking often causes them to envision severe social threats" (Pechmann, Catlin and Zheng 2020, p. 154; see also Clark and McManus 2002; Pine 2001; Spurr and Stopa 2002), which may assist them in thinking abstractly about solutions and increase their willingness to tackle societal problems that adults deem too large and complex to solve.

Because they are rapidly developing physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally, youth social entrepreneurs differ from their adult counterparts in some ways that may enhance their potential to lead social change efforts. Researchers frequently investigate the negative implications of youth's impulsive and risky behaviors (for a review, see Pechmann, Catlin, and Zheng [2020]). What has received less attention from researchers is how the risk-taking behaviors and reward-seeking tendencies that characterize youth may enhance their potential for prosocial behavior. As their brain develops, youth are more likely to explore their impulses and take risks (Hollenstein and Lougheed 2013) because they value rewards and discount the potential for future loss differently than adults (Dick, Adkins, and Kuo 2016; Kilford, Garrett, and Blakemore 2016). Research has demonstrated that youth are just as capable as adults at evaluating risk (Beyth-Marom et al. 1993), but their developing brains allow them to take risks that adults would not. This tolerance for risk may also provide an explanation for why prosocial behaviors, which can involve risk, peak in late adolescence (Blankenstein et al. 2020). Youth social entrepreneurs tend to break rules, but they direct their rule-breaking into productive action to benefit society (Obschonka 2016).

Research shows that self-efficacy is pivotal to social entrepreneurship (Venugopal, Viswanathan, and Jung 2015). However, for youth, self-efficacy—a belief in their own ability to perform behaviors needed to achieve an outcome (Bandura 1986)—is part of a broader set of developing social-cognitive skills. Youth develop abilities such as self-efficacy and explore their self-identities through curricular and extracurricular activities (Pechmann, Catlin, and Zheng 2020). Engaging youth in bringing new ideas and tactics to address an ongoing societal problem provides "developmentally constructive" activities that advance well-being (Pechmann, Catlin and Zheng 2020) and channel youth toward activities with the potential to create social change. Furthermore, youth "who know how to think critically are better participants in public affairs, better at identifying and solving important life problems, and are more likely to become productive citizens" (Reynolds 2005, p. 81). From a public policy perspective, youth who are actively engaged in social change at a young age stay engaged as adults and become active citizens (Rendon 2020). Finding a way to support youth social entrepreneurs by understanding the ecosystem needed for them to succeed is a vital research goal. We begin our exploration of the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem by describing our collaborative research process with youth social entrepreneurs.

Relational Engagement Research with Youth Social Entrepreneurs

The UN Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2019) defines youth as people between 15 and 24 years of age. Relying on this definition of youth, we worked with our research partners, Ashoka and Future Coalition, to identify youth social entrepreneurs, most of whom were age 18 to 24 with an average age of 19 years. Before beginning our collaborative research with these youth social entrepreneurs, our research team obtained Institutional Review Board approval, each team member at their own home institution.[1] We worked with our research partners, Ashoka and Future Coalition—a youth-led network and community for youth social entrepreneurs—to identify youth who have (1) founded a social impact initiative, (2) organized and led a team of youth to advance their initiative, and (3) implemented their initiative to create measurable social impact. Youth who met these three criteria were recruited to collaborate in this research. On average, these youth social entrepreneurs reported that they began to lead ventures at 15 years old. Following Bublitz et al. (2019), we view these youth social entrepreneurs as partners in the research process, rather than as units of observation (Eisenhardt 1989; Ravenswood 2011). All data, examples, and profiles of our partners' youth social entrepreneurship efforts are identified with their permission. In the relational engagement tradition (Ozanne et al. 2017), our youth partners' participation in this research was collaborative and iterative over a period of six to eight months as we gathered information, categorized themes, and synthesized our emerging data with related literature. We returned to these youth social entrepreneurs throughout the process of analyzing and synthesizing with clarifying questions or asked them to weigh in on patterns observed and conclusions drawn. We supplemented our initial 60- to 90-minute guided interviews, conducted by teleconference or phone (as our research partners were located across the United States), with other publicly available information (e.g., organizational websites, news coverage). Table 1 provides an overview of our youth social entrepreneur partners and the impact of their ventures. Web Appendix A provides a deeper look at the initiatives they have created.

We include youth social entrepreneurs working in a variety of cause spaces to provide more generalizable insights (Battistella et al. 2017), to cross-validate the patterns identified (Ravenswood 2011), and ultimately to develop a framework for the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem. We relied on an inductive approach for analyzing the interview insights to identify ecosystem features that support youth social entrepreneurs. Through this process, patterns emerged and were organized into a framework (Eisenhardt 1989) that highlights critical features of the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem. Before delving into this ecosystem, we offer an example to illustrate youth social entrepreneurship.

A Youth Social Entrepreneur: Merrit Jones

When Merrit Jones was a sophomore in high school, her family moved ten minutes across town. Prior to the move, Jones attended an underfunded Title I public school. After the move, Jones matriculated at a new, $120 million public school that was equipped with the latest technology and offered every conceivable extracurricular activity. Jones was struck by the stark difference between the educational experiences available at these two public schools geographically separated by only a few miles. One afternoon at her new school, while watching the *Corridor of Shame*, a documentary depicting inequities in public school funding in her home state of South Carolina, on a 52-inch, flat-screen monitor in her new school, Jones felt compelled to take action. As she put it, "There is a key moment when you realize this is what you are meant to do. A dedication to a cause. I couldn't *not* do what I do." Jones researched school funding and then met with the chief financial officer of her school district and with state legislators. She formed a coalition of like-minded young people to advocate for policies supporting equitable school funding. Jones founded Student Space, a nonprofit whose mission was to identify student-centric and student-created solutions to address the systemic inequity in South Carolina public schools. Today, as a college student, Jones continues that work nationally as the executive director of Student Voice, which works to empower youth in communities across the United States to use their voices to advocate for more equitable education policy.

Merrit Jones is a youth social entrepreneur. When Jones identified the problem of educational disparity, she did not simply worry about the inequity. She took action to enable positive change, including forming a team of like-minded peers. Jones possesses a genuine, heartfelt desire to bring equity to public education, and her subsequent actions have addressed educational disparity and influenced education policy for the good of all youth. As a result of Jones's motivated action, students across the country have a stronger voice in their education and understand how to advocate for education policy. To best support and cultivate the success of youth social entrepreneurs like Jones, a dynamic ecosystem is essential.

The Youth Social Entrepreneur Ecosystem

Through our relational engagement partnerships with youth social entrepreneurs, we identified a set of factors critical to their success. Given that these factors are dynamic, interactive, and interrelated and constitute a community around the social entrepreneur, we use the term "youth social entrepreneur ecosystem" to describe the environment these factors create. According to Martin and Osberg (2007, p. 35), social

[1] Approved materials included a description of our research plan, including notification that participants would be identified by name in the research, recruiting materials, informed consent documents, and our interview guide. One member of our research team obtained approval to interview youth social entrepreneurs under 18 years old using a modified research protocol, which also included parental consent and participant assent documents approved by their Institutional Review Board.

Table 1. Relational Engagement Partners: Youth Social Entrepreneurs.

Name	Age at Interview (Years)	Organization and Website	Social Impact and Impact on Well-Being
Tatiana Washington	18	50 Miles More https://50milesmore.org/	Aims to keep the national spotlight on gun reform; works to change policy and law so no child has to live in fear of gun violence.
J.I. Cruz	22	Aceleradora de Cooperativas Eléctricas de Puerto Rico https://www.facebook.com/aceprcoop/	Aims to rebuild Puerto Rico's energy infrastructure, develop community solutions, and provide for basic human needs using sustainable energy sources.
Alex Francke	21	Adopt An Art https://www.adoptanart.org/	Increases access to arts programing in schools and creates equal opportunity in arts education, allowing for self-expression.
Jean Black	24	Black Camera Productions https://unitedrootsoakland.org/meet-the-fellows-jean-black-black-camera-productions/	Teaches youth to use media to interact with and influence community and tell their story.
Riley Damiano	17	Blue Lollipop Project https://www.ashoka.org/en-us/story/riley-spreading-joy-and-awareness-pediatric-cancer-through-blue-lollipops	Raises money for the Children's Brain Tumor Project and medical research; shares the bravery of kids with cancer to inspire gratitude and a positive outlook on life in all.
Elijah Nichols	19	Everytown for Gun Safety https://everytown.org/	Promotes working together to end gun violence and build safer communities, increasing safety.
Katie Eder	19	Future Coalition https://futurecoalition.org/	Provides tools and resources to engage more youth in social entrepreneurship initiatives and amplify their impact, offers leadership development.
Aakriti Agrawal	24	Girls Code Lincoln https://girlscodelincoln.com/	Aims to close the gender gap in STEM, enhance self-esteem of female programmers; and encourage women and girls to enter STEM fields.
Jaden Deal	18	Iowa Student Learning Institute https://www.iowasli.org/	Empowers students to use their voice to positively influence the education system.
Briana Spainhour	18	March for Our Lives https://marchforourlives.com/	Advocates for a comprehensive policy to end the gun violence epidemic; prompts policy conversations and media attention.
Dani Miller	18	MoCo for Change https://www.mocoforchange.org/meet-the-team-1	Provides a platform for student activists to fight for social justice on a wide-range of issues, enhancing well-being.
Natalie Hampton	18	Sit With Us https://sitwithus.io/#!/Home	Promotes a kinder, more inclusive school community using a mobile app to create positive connections between students.
Sara Miller	23	SODA (Student Organ Donations Advocates) https://www.sodanational.org/	Advocates for organ donation and uses personal stories to increase well-being.
Russell Agustin	17	Sole2Soul https://sole2soul.xyz/	Increases access to athletic gear, health, and wellness so that poverty is not a barrier to healthy activities and habits.
Merrit Jones	21	Student Voice https://www.stuvoice.org/	Empowers students to take ownership of their education, changing the future of education.
Adam Friedman	19	Team Enough https://www.teamenough.org/	Educates and mobilizes young people in the fight to end gun violence; advocates for safe schools and safe communities.
Alexandria Brady-Mine	19	The Human Projects https://www.thehumanprojects.com/	Empowers youth to address human rights issues in their community, enabling them to speak out and take action.
Lily Levin	18	Triangle People Power https://www.tripeoplepower.org/	Youth-led branch of the ACLU's People Power; fights for marginalized communities and provides for basic human needs.
Chanice Lee	16	Young Revolutionary https://chanicelee.com/	Author of *Young Revolutionary: A Teen's Guide to Activism*; teaches youth to proactively raise their voice as informed and engaged citizens.
James Wellemeyer	19	Young Voices https://youngvoicestext.org/	Aims to redesign civics education in the United States to build informed citizens and enhance participation in government

Notes: STEM = science, technology, engineering, and math.

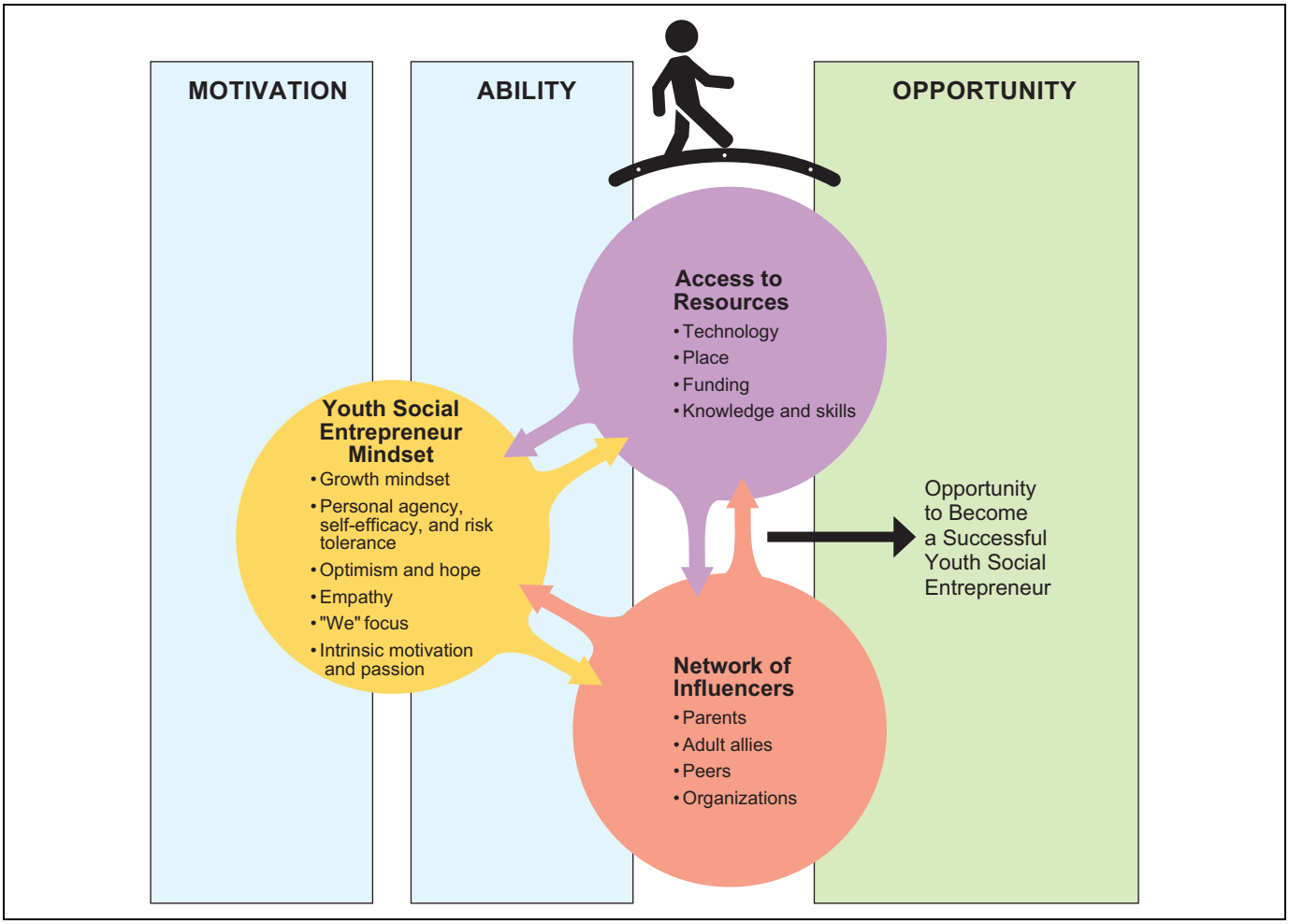

Figure 1. Youth social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

entrepreneurs operate within ecosystems and forge new paths by creating and changing ecosystems "ensuring a better future for the targeted group and even society at large." The ecosystem for youth social entrepreneurs is distinct from the ecosystem for adult social entrepreneurs because youth are high school and college students, frequently dependent on parental and familial support, and are developing their social-cognitive skills. Critical features of the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem, identified through our research, include (1) a network of influencers, (2) access to resources, and (3) the youth social entrepreneur mindset. In the following subsections, we explore these critical features of the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem, interweaving the experiences of our youth partners with findings from the extant literature. We depict this ecosystem in Figure 1.

Network of Influencers

Youth social entrepreneurs do not emerge or thrive in isolation. They are embedded in a network of influencers, which we define as those individuals who shape, nurture, and sometimes inhibit the youth social entrepreneur; these influencers include parents, teachers (and other adult allies), peers, and organizations (e.g., schools, religious institutions, other public and private organizations). These influencers can have a positive and supportive role, but they sometimes may impede the success of youth social entrepreneurs. Research has shown that children and youth's prosocial behavior is highly susceptible to social influencers (Barry and Wentzel 2006; Carlo et al. 1999; Darling and Steinberg 1993; Foulkes et al. 2018; Henry, Wilson, and Peterson 1989; Openshaw, Thomas, and Rollins 1984; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, and King 1979). Our youth partners discussed a wide array of influencers. Some (e.g., parents) had a prolonged and sustained impact on them throughout childhood and beyond; others (e.g., peers, adult teachers) became influential when they began to pursue their social change initiatives. Research in youth development has shown that these influencers are key to shaping a youth's value system (Carlo et al. 1999; Churchill and Moschis 1979; Henry, Wilson, and Peterson 1989).

Our youth social entrepreneur partners acknowledge the role of influencers—parents, adult allies, peers, and organizations—who acted as mentors, providing professional and psychological support (Bozeman and Feeney 2007; Eby 1997) and

role models "who set examples to be emulated by others and who may stimulate or inspire other individuals to make certain (career) decisions and achieve certain goals" (Bosma et al. 2012, p. 410). Our youth partners also identify the vital role of influencers they termed "allies." Allies act as mentors (encouraging and supporting them) and role models and advocate on behalf of a youth social entrepreneur and build connections to needed resources and influential others who can assist them (Pittinsky, Rosenthal, and Montoya 2011). As our youth partners clarified, parents, adults, peers, and organizations can be allies. Eli Nichols (Everytown for Gun Safety) explained that his allies are his high school government teacher and school librarian. Nichols further explained, "They were the first ones to listen to me and take me seriously. [They made me think] 'Maybe I can do this.' On the third day [after we met], Mr. Vincent gave me a whole stack of information about how to run for office and said, 'When you're 21—old enough to run—you should run.' I still talk with them. They still have my back." In the following subsections, we discuss parents, other adult allies, peers, and organizations in turn and explore the impact these influencers have on our youth social entrepreneur partners as they work to create positive social change.

Parents. Adult influencers typically originate from two sources: familial roles, such as parents (or guardians) and nonfamilial roles (Russell 2011). Parents (or guardians) constitute youth's primary support systems (Maccoby 1992). Parents both model and influence their children's prosocial behavior (Fletcher, Elder, and Mekos 2000; Law, Shek, and Ma 2013), and this is evident among our youth social entrepreneur partners. Lily Levin (Triangle People Power) explained, "My mom is the biggest influence so far. [She] is really interested in being politically active [and] has been supportive about whatever I decide to do. When I was in third grade, my mom gave me Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. I was passionate about climate change, and I memorized facts from the book and talked to everyone about them." Levin's social entrepreneurial initiative, Triangle People Power, is focused on climate change and related social justice issues. Many of our youth partners mentioned that, at an early age, their parents included them in their social justice and activism. Natalie Hampton (Sit With Me) described how she became an activist "before I could even hold a sign" when her parents took her to protests. Adam Friedman's (Team Enough) mother, a rabbi, is involved with social justice work and encouraged her son to participate in youth-focused social justice initiatives.

Parents also support our youth social entrepreneurial partners by creating environments in which youth are encouraged to express themselves, and are provided with a strong launching pad to explore and overcome challenges (Peterson, Stivers, and Peters 1986). Alexandria Brady-Mine (The Humans Project) noted, "I have privilege some don't have. I wasn't concerned about my safety. I have a stable family. I didn't have to work to support my family. [I had] freedom to wonder, time to work on my passion." Similarly, James Wellemeyer (Young Voices) credited his parents with providing him with educational opportunities that fueled his drive to become a youth social entrepreneur. Furthermore, parents or guardians and siblings play an instrumental role in supporting youth social entrepreneurs by providing them with operational support. Dani Miller's (MoCo for Change) mother helped her write press releases and apply for permits, while Russell Agustin's (Sole2Soul) executive team includes his siblings, with his older brother overseeing finances, one of his older sisters handling social media, and another sister managing Sole2Soul's website and blog. Finally, parents and siblings often provide our youth partners with psychological and emotional support by believing in them and their ideas. Sara Miller (SODA), for example, stated, "My parents and my sister are my biggest supporters."

Despite these examples of positive support, there are instances when influencers have inhibited the work of our youth social entrepreneur partners. Consider, for example, Briana Spainhour (March for Our Lives), who pointed out that "a common challenge in this movement" is "parents [who] aren't really supportive." Spainhour noted that she and her parents "have different political beliefs" and that her parents are "not fully supportive" of what she is trying to accomplish. For Spainhour, adult allies in her high school were vital supporters. Next, we explore the role of these nonfamilial adults as influencers.

Adult allies. In addition to parents, nonfamilial adult influencers—teachers and other individuals connected to our youth social entrepreneur partners by their value systems, such as faith-based, political, or community leaders (Russell 2011)—played a key role in supporting our youth partners. For Briana Spainhour (March for Our Lives), who experienced limited parental support, having an ally in a high school teacher was critical to her success. She explained, "I've been mentored by him. I had him [as a teacher] multiple times in high school and have gone back since [graduating] to tell him what I've been doing with March for Our Lives." Similarly, J.I. Cruz (ACE PR) describes an adult ally, a high school teacher who "encouraged me to think big and bold and to pursue my ambitions with a foundational moral compass to 'do good while doing well.'" Adam Friedman (Team Enough) identifies adult allies among Team Enough's organizational and community network who supported his efforts, in part by making sure he was included in planning calls and that his input was treated "as legitimate and valuable." Friedman advises, "[My] biggest challenge was being taken seriously as a young person . . . . There were adults who had my back, . . . adult allies who asked, 'What do you think?'"

Although Friedman described supportive adult allies, he, along with many of our youth partners, also identified adult influencers who inhibited their efforts. Research identifies the dampening effect adult influencers can have on youth. According to Bell (1995), underestimating youth simply because they are young leads to behaviors that disrespect youth, a phenomenon Bell termed "adultism." Negative statements by adults harm adult–youth relationships and make youth feel that they are not taken seriously, discouraging their efforts and

undermining their confidence and self-efficacy (Bell 1995). Many of the youth we partnered with discussed adultism, describing situations in which adult influencers treated youth social entrepreneurs as too young and inexperienced to enact social change. Chanice Lee (*Young Revolutionary*) defined adultism as "[when adults] underestimate young people—they think youth don't care enough or are not capable." But Lee has learned to "lean on the supportive adults and leave the others be." Alexandria Brady-Mine (Humans Project) noted that even when adults' intentions are good, they may unintentionally detract from youth social entrepreneurs by exerting too much control. She advised adults to "let youth go down different paths, let them . . . learn from their mistakes."

As our youth partners make clear, although adults can play a supportive role, they can also unwittingly restrict youth social entrepreneurs' growth. Next, we explore the influence peers play as allies, team members, and supporters of youth social entrepreneurship.

Peers. Peers constitute a key influencer group for youth (Eisenberg, Damon, and Lerner 2006; Rigby 2000; Weiss and Ebbeck 1996) and become more important in adolescence as teens spend more time with peers (i.e., in school) and are less supervised by their parents or other adults (Brown and Larson 2009). For example, youth respond to the prosocial actions of their peers with prosocial behaviors of their own, resulting in virtuous cycles of prosocial exchanges (Bukowski and Sippola 1996; Eisenberg 1986). These prosocial cycles are "more likely to occur between peers than between adolescents and adults because of the more equal social status between adolescent peers" (Carlo et al. 1999, p. 137). Peers can be highly relatable and trustworthy (Weiss and Ebbeck 1996) and can be particularly inspirational to youth social entrepreneurs. As Katie Eder (Future Coalition) said, "When I finally had the opportunity to talk to [other youth social entrepreneurs] with similar experiences, it was transformational." Peer allies provide our youth partners with critical emotional support. According to Merrit Jones (Student Voice), "[Youth] are in the fight together and [we] understand the battle." By contrast, youth social entrepreneurs' focus on their social change initiative sometimes put them at odds with peers in their high schools and local communities. In fact, several of our youth partners reported a lack of support from friends in school because they were "going against the status quo." According to Katie Eder (Future Coalition), "This can make you feel ostracized [at school]. They [peers] don't understand why you are so focused."

While peers were primarily mentioned in ally roles, some of our youth partners reflected on how they became involved in social entrepreneurship through the actions of their friends, suggesting that their friends' prosocial behavior was instrumental in fostering their own involvement in youth social entrepreneurship. James Wellemeyer (Young Voices), for example, initially became involved in his friend Ziad's organization, Redefy, as a member of Redefy's leadership team. It was Ziad's passion and "permission to care" that ultimately influenced Wellemeyer to found Young Voices. A friend had a more serendipitous influence on Jaden Deal's (Iowa Student Learning Institute) initial interest in social change. Deal decided to attend an event after a friend posted about it on social media, ultimately leading to Deal's involvement with the Iowa Student Learning Institute, where he subsequently served as executive director.

All of our young partners assembled teams of peers to lead and operate their initiatives. As an example, Chanice Lee (*Young Revolutionary*) organized and led a youth summit in south Florida. She contacted teen activists across the region and assembled a team of youth to plan the summit, forming committees to divide up tasks such as finances and outreach to obtain sponsorships. Lee advised youth social entrepreneurs that "you can't do it alone" and "assembling a team is essential to success." J.I. Cruz (ACE PR) further noted, "Your team can cover your weak spots and be good at what you're not good at." Several of our youth social entrepreneur partners discussed how organized groups they were connected to (e.g., faith-based groups, schools, community centers) provided opportunities to engage with social change. Next, we explore how these organizations influence and support youth social entrepreneurs.

Organizations. Public and private educational organizations, schools, and after school programs can play an influential role in the lives of youth (Chaplin, Hill, and John 2014; Montoya and Scott 2013; Morrissey and Werner-Wilson 2005; Roth and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Certainly, our discussion of adult allies demonstrates that individual teachers within schools championed our youth partners. As our youth partners make clear, schools, in general, can also provide needed organizational support for their work. Lily Levin (Triangle People Power) noted that her school was flexible in allowing her time during the school day for organizing. Merrit Jones's (Student Voice) school recognized that "pursuing [social entrepreneurship] constituted a learning opportunity in and of itself." Some of our youth partners attended schools that created an environment conducive to fostering social entrepreneurship, such as a focus on social justice. Adam Friedman (Team Enough) explained, "My high school valued social consciousness. It gave me the tools to think about social issues." None of our youth partners attended schools that provided social entrepreneurial educational programs, though such programs do exist (Ashoka 2020).

Schools can be allies by providing youth social entrepreneurs access to resources that allow them to pursue their social change goals. Other organizations within the youth social entrepreneur's community can do the same. Aakriti Agrawal (Girls Code Lincoln) noted that the tech-related and startup orientation of organizations in her community helped her secure space and funding for her initiative. A dynamic and supportive youth social entrepreneur ecosystem starts with the influencers—people and organizations who surround emergent youth social entrepreneurs. However, youth social entrepreneurs also need access to key resources to succeed. Next, we discuss the importance of youth social entrepreneurs' access to resources.

Access to Resources

Accessing and managing often-scarce resources is an essential part of nearly all forms of entrepreneurial activity (Stevenson and Jarillo 1990). Having access to necessary resources expands the opportunity for entrepreneurship and significantly increases the likelihood of success for those who are starting a new venture (Gorman, Hanlon, and King 1997). For our youth social entrepreneur partners, it is clear that access to four classes of resources are particularly critical: technology, place, funding, and knowledge and skills. In the following subsections, we discuss the role of access to these resources in youth social entrepreneurship and explore how our youth partners leverage access to these resources.

Technology. Technology plays a vital role in supporting youth social entrepreneurs. In particular, it is their social media fluency that separates youth social entrepreneurs from previous generations and distinguishes them from adults (Rendon 2020; Roberts 2013). Tatiana Washington (50 Miles More) highlighted the positive impact of social media on youth social entrepreneurship: "Social media is a useful tool for building relationships with other [influential] people, which has been the biggest contributor in terms of growing 50 Miles More. We do a lot of Instagram stuff, [using] hashtags, reaching out to anyone we know, because you never know whom they know." Yet, as Katie Eder (Future Coalition) pointed out, while technology can build bridges and connect geographically dispersed youth, the flip-side is that it makes organizing inaccessible for aspiring youth who do not have access to it. Eder noted, "For a 13-year-old to have a laptop comes with a certain degree of privilege." This underscores how access to resources such as a computer bridges the opportunity gap, the disparity in access among youth who aspire to be social entrepreneurs.

For nearly all of our youth partners, access to technology is critical to organizing and promoting their initiatives, marketing, sharing resources, and building community among their team members. *Young Revolutionary*, a book written by Chanice Lee, one of our youth social entrepreneur partners, spotlights the role technology plays in youth organizing, one encompassing everything from conducting research and contacting legislators to recruiting a team of like-minded youth. Lee emphasizes the importance of technology as a marketing tool, for example, creating a website and leveraging social media to garner support.

Because much of the work of youth social entrepreneurs spans geographical, temporal, and organizational boundaries, technology plays a crucial role in enabling them to collaborate virtually (Markus, Manville, and Agres 2000; Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009). Tatiana Washington (50 Miles More) provides an example: "Because not all of our team members are in one location, we cannot just meet up for coffee to plan things. We have to communicate over the phone and use social media and technology to manage and distribute work." For youth social entrepreneurs, file-sharing services such as Dropbox and Google Drive as well as Slack, a messaging platform for communicating among teams, are essential for collaborating and sharing resources remotely. Even when working on a local level, many of our youth social entrepreneur partners do the bulk of their work remotely due to busy schedules that do not always allow for meeting in person. "School is a full-time job, and on top of that people can be involved with multiple activities," explains Dani Miller (MoCo for Change).

In addition to managing operations within their organizations, youth social entrepreneurs also rely on technology to form online communities for sharing resources and collaboration. Such online communities serve as venues for offering knowledge to others as well as adding to and integrating knowledge that others have contributed (Faraj, Jarvenpaa, and Majchrzak 2011). Social entrepreneurship is, in many ways, a collaborative and collective endeavor, drawing on a broad array of support, cooperation, and alliances to build awareness, gain resources, and, ultimately, make change (Sud, VanSandt, and Baugous 2009; VanSandt, Sud, and Marmé 2009). Sarah Miller (SODA) and Riley Damiano (Blue Lollipop Project) both emphasized how having access to a wide network of youth social entrepreneurs enables them to pool knowledge, offer advice, and support other youth social entrepreneurs through challenges.

Place. Place is a critical resource for youth social entrepreneurs to interact directly with their clients in that it serves as the venue for delivering products or services to the intended recipients. For example, Alex Francke (Adopt An Art) delivers an art-oriented curriculum to students who do not have access to such classes through their schools. Her work requires access to school grounds or a community center as a venue for teaching art classes. Our youth social entrepreneur partners also emphasized the critical importance of having a designated place for managing their day-to-day tasks. Katie Eder (Future Coalition) explained that "it's important to have a specific time and place to get together [with your team] and just do the work." For youth social entrepreneurs, such meeting places often reflected what Oldenburg (1989) terms "third places": neutral grounds that play host to regular, voluntary, informal gatherings of people and foster a sense of community, camaraderie, and social engagement. A benefit of third places is that they are situated outside the spheres of home (first place) and school or work (second place).

Jean Black (Black Camera Productions) learned firsthand the importance of physical place, as she moved several times during childhood. Jean explained, "Community centers in every city I lived in offered programs, ways to get involved in community" to build connections to peer and adult allies. Through Black Camera Productions, Jean creates space for youth to learn about the power of media, teaches technical digital media, and connects "kids to other kids with similar interests so they understand they are part of a bigger world." Jean's efforts offer a good example of how third places function as a source of attachment and support for people who do not find such support in other settings (Rosenbaum et al. 2007).

While youth, in general, challenge rules and expectations, youth social entrepreneurs convert this tendency into positive social action (Obschonka 2016). Because challenging the status quo is an inherent part of being a youth social entrepreneur, many of our youth partners recounted instances when their efforts resulted in pushback in their homes and schools. Merrit Jones (Student Voice) explained how, early on in her social entrepreneurship journey, Google Hangouts—an online communication platform where individuals can message each other and conduct video chats—served as a supportive third place, a venue for collective identification. Jones noted that online communication filled a void, given that she "didn't have a ton of peers in my own school community who were super supportive of what I was doing." Jones's story also illustrates that "place" is not limited to the brick-and-mortar realm (Steinkuehler and Williams 2006) and can be located online. In fact, as Katie Eder (Future Coalition) explained, "So much of organizing happens online, over video calls; but having a place is still necessary in an abstract sense. I don't think you need a physical space, but rather a place in time where everyone [in your leadership team] can get together and say, 'This is what we're doing now.'"

Funding. Social change organizations operate in an increasingly competitive funding environment (Smith, Cronley, and Barr 2012). In addition, only a few grant-giving organizations that support social change initiatives offer repeat funding, further compounding the financial challenges of these organizations (Dees 1998). Virtually all of our youth partners reported that obtaining needed funding is one of the key challenges they face. As Katie Eder (Future Coalition) explained, in youth organizing, "Everything revolves around money. Everything costs money, from applying for a permit to organize a protest, to the day-to-day costs of running an organization. And it's so sad how it can definitely become a barrier for a lot of kids. Particularly if you're under 18, it can be very hard to raise startup money."

For social change organizations, revenue typically comes from diverse sources such as government grants, donations, and sponsorships. Crowdfunding is also a common source of funding, as donors frequently exhibit a preference for funding social entrepreneurs over commercial-only enterprises (Calic and Mosakowski 2016). A distinct advantage of crowdfunding platforms is that they create financial opportunities for early-stage ventures with limited track records (Mollick 2014; Ordanini et al. 2011). Alex Francke (Adopt An Art) was one of several of our youth partners who ran successful campaigns on Kickstarter and GoFundMe to fund their organizations. Yet, as Francke pointed out, although such campaigns provide a vital injection of cash, they do not represent sustainable sources of funding. To sustain and grow their efforts, youth social entrepreneurs need access to stable funding sources.

Another common way of supporting fundraising activities and managing costs is by incorporating a venture as a nonprofit organization and attaining 501(c)(3) status. Many of our youth partners had either successfully attained nonprofit status or were planning to apply for it in the near future. From a financial standpoint, 501(c)(3) status carries many benefits for youth social entrepreneurs, such as the ability to apply for a broad range of federal, state, and local grants; tax-exempt status when purchasing operational supplies in some states; and the ability to pursue donations that provide tax deductions to supporters. While incorporation as a nonprofit requires the founder of the organization to be at least 18 years old, some of our youth social entrepreneur partners arranged for a legal guardian to apply on their behalf, providing further evidence of the connection between parental support and youth social entrepreneurs' access to resources and highlighting the opportunity gap for aspiring youth. Alternatively, several of our youth partners obtained fiscal sponsorship for their initiatives from an existing nonprofit. According to the National Council of Nonprofits, fiscal sponsorship allows established nonprofits to confer their legal and tax-exempt status onto ventures or projects (www.councilofnonprofits.org), with the potential added benefit of mentorship and nonfinancial support for youth social entrepreneurs.

Knowledge and skills. Entrepreneurial competence is often associated with business proficiency or the ability to run an organization in a business-like context. Certainly, youth social entrepreneurs acquire needed and essential business knowledge and technical skills, as Dani Miller (MoCo for Change) explained, "None of us know how these things work–how to apply for permits, how to write press releases. . . . [We're] learning along the way." However, research on social change leadership demonstrates that other skills and knowledge are more important than business skills (Smith, Cronley, and Barr 2012). Neck and Greene (2011) identify a broad set of soft skills central to social entrepreneurial education that include empathy, leveraging a sense of moral and social responsibility, managing life–work balance, and understanding how to learn from failure in ways that advance a social entrepreneur's goals and ability to create impact. It is important to note that these essential social entrepreneurial soft skills can be taught and cultivated through formal curricula (Gordon 2005; Kusché and Greenberg 1994) and informal interactions (Bandura 1993). Next, we explore what the essential soft skills are for successful youth social entrepreneurs and call this set of shared characteristics the "youth social entrepreneur mindset."

The Youth Social Entrepreneur Mindset

Youth social entrepreneurs genuinely desire to make the world a better place and, to that end, take action, organizing and leading efforts to address social problems. Consistent with this notion, the young social entrepreneurs we partnered with share a set of characteristics that we term the "youth social entrepreneur mindset," including a growth mindset; personal agency, self-efficacy, and risk tolerance; optimism and hope; empathy; a "we" focus; and intrinsic motivation and passion for making the world a better place.

Growth mindset. A defining characteristic of youth social entrepreneurs is their growth mindset—the underlying belief that they can improve their intelligence, abilities, and future success through hard work. (For a review of the growth mindset and, by contrast, the fixed mindset—the belief that improvement and success cannot be controlled—see Yeager and Dweck [2012].) Adherence to a mindset characterized by growth improves youth's achievement over time (e.g., Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck 2007; Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht 2003; Paunesku et al. 2015; Yeager et al. 2016). Consistent with a growth mindset, our youth partners view mistakes and failures positively. As Russell Agustin (Sole2Soul) noted, "I've learned that there is success in failure. As long as you learn and grow from a failure, that becomes a success, too. It's a process." In fact, youth social entrepreneurs consider effort and learning signs of being on a trajectory toward success. Katie Eder (Future Coalition) stated, "Recognize what you don't know and be willing to learn." Similarly, Sara Miller (SODA) described how asking questions is a critical skill to help "learn from the past and change to improve future processes."

Youth social entrepreneurs expressed willingness to test out their ideas. As Briana Spainhour (March for Our Lives) put it, "We have a solid idea of what we want to do and we're willing to go all in and do it. We don't care if it works; we know it's important that we try. We learn a lot along the way." Our youth partners' willingness to act when success is uncertain, accompanied by comfort in learning by testing out new ideas, highlight the workings of a mindset characterized by growth. Confidence in their abilities and their belief that they can control their success in uncertain situations is also consistent with youth social entrepreneurs' high degree of personal agency, self-efficacy, and risk tolerance, which we discuss next.

Personal agency, self-efficacy, and risk tolerance. Youth are learning social and emotional skills, invoking personal agency, and developing their self-efficacy (Schunk and Meece 2005). Personal agency gives individuals the capacity to make their own choices (Bandura 2001). This capacity is influenced by both one's actual skill and self-efficacy (Zimmerman and Cleary 2006), an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviors necessary to achieve an outcome (Bandura 1986). Many of our youth partners shared experiences that fuel their self-efficacy in an additive way. For example, Katie Eder (Future Coalition) discussed an early experience staging a sit-in during her fourth-grade gym class. She explained how this experience laid a foundation, noting that "it created an understanding that I could make a difference," which then gave her confidence to pursue other social change activities. More generally, self-efficacy offers our youth partners the confidence not only to act but also to build on their experiences to improve their work.

Eli Nichols (Everytown for Gun Safety) explained that youth social entrepreneurs are different from adults because "youth are not afraid to take bold action." This tolerance for risk relative to adults (Hollenstein and Lougheed 2013)—combined with a developing sense of mastery via personal agency and self-efficacy and viewing mistakes as learning opportunities (i.e., a growth mindset)—creates a sense of flexibility and freedom that contributes to youth social entrepreneurs' success. Our youth partners see their flexibility and freedom to act when success is uncertain as an advantage that youth have over adults. Yet, according to Dani Miller (MoCo for Change), "Young people have more at stake. We're inheriting this country. More at stake for young people means more motivation to make change." Having so much on the line while also having a greater tolerance for risk relative to adults allows youth social entrepreneurs greater freedom to act when success is uncertain. As Alexandria Brady-Mine (Humans Project) explained, "The young have flexibility to fail harder. Older people running a nonprofit as a career can't take as many risks—they depend on a paycheck." This view that youth have greater freedom to take risks because they have fewer constraints, which then serves to create an environment conducive to social change, was echoed by many of our youth partners.

Optimism and hope. Research indicates that self-efficacy is positively related to optimism (Gillham and Reivich 2004). Our youth social entrepreneur partners displayed a high degree of both self-efficacy and optimism. Optimism refers to a tendency or disposition to expect a good outcome (Baldwin, McIntyre, and Hardaway 2007; Gillham and Reivich 2004) and serves as a psychological resource that enhances mental health (Seligman 1998) and leads to an achievement orientation (Peterson 2000). Our youth partners connect and work with others, and they have collective goals, two factors that contribute to optimism (Gillham and Reivich 2004). Furthermore, optimism fosters greater success and perseverance in the face of obstacles (Gillham and Reivich 2004). Our partners described how optimism is critical to their work. As Briana Spainhour (March for Our Lives) stated, youth social entrepreneurs "need passion to succeed, [and to succeed you] have to have a positive outlook."

Hope, a positively valenced emotion that arises in response to goal-related outcomes that are uncertain but possible (MacInnis and de Mello 2005), is a spark that our youth social entrepreneur partners deemed essential. As Tatiana Washington (50 Miles More) explained, "Hope is believing that things are going to get better . . . . You need that mindset, that positivity." Traits such as optimism, hope, and self-efficacy work in concert to contribute to youth social entrepreneurs' mindset to "go for it" and "be all in," according to Briana Spainhour (March for Our Lives). Optimism and hope are associated with lower depression, higher self-worth, and higher competence (Baldwin, McIntyre, and Hardaway 2007; Gillham and Reivich 2004; Peterson 2000). Optimistic individuals are more persistent (Dweck 1975) and more likely to stick with something to find a solution. As a result, optimism and hope not only build youth social entrepreneurs' confidence to take action but also help them persist when they face challenges.

Empathy. Often, youth social entrepreneurs display hope, optimism, and a commitment to making the world a better place because they deeply feel and are moved by the injustices and problems experienced by others. That is, youth social

entrepreneurs have a high degree of empathy, the capacity to understand what others are thinking, feel the same emotions as others, and respond with kindness and concern. Empathy is widely accepted as a key determinant of prosocial behavior (e.g., Eisenberg and Miller 1987; Williams, O'Driscoll, and Moore 2014) and intentional social entrepreneurship (Venugopal, Viswanathan, and Jung 2015). Our youth partners expressed empathy with other people's pain and acknowledged the vital role of empathy in their work. Eli Nichols (Everytown for Gun Safety) recalled, "I felt the injustice [others were experiencing] . . . . You need to understand [people]. Empathy is very important. Empathy is really the most important part of organizing." Briana Spainhour (March for Our Lives) described her commitment, noting, "You don't reach this point without possessing a high degree of empathy."

"We" focus. Consistent with possessing empathy toward others, youth social entrepreneurs exhibit a "we" rather than a "me" focus. In other words, their focus is on others, not themselves. As Katie Eder (Future Coalition) explained, "It's not about me. It's not about any one individual person . . . . It's about all of us." Lily Levin (Triangle People Power) reflected on her changed focus: "Early on, I was trying to find my unique place in the world—advocacy was more about me—I did not know what my voice was. Now I [try] to be 100% focused on other people." Our partners' "we" focus, combined with empathy, fuel their intrinsic motivation and passion.

Intrinsic motivation and passion. Intrinsic motivation involves engaging in activities because they are personally meaningful and enjoyable. In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in activities for instrumental reasons, such as a reward (Eccles and Wigfield 2002). Youth social entrepreneurs are intrinsically motivated by a deeply experienced passion for a social issue, which often emerges because the issue touches their lives. For example, Tatiana Washington (50 Miles More) explained that she was motivated to act because she was "personally affected by gun violence" and also, more broadly, not seeing people who look like her ("a black girl") in politics. Sara Miller (SODA) explained that she became an advocate for organ donation after speaking with a woman who had received an organ from her sister: "We saw firsthand how her life was saved . . . . I knew I had to do something—share my story and the impact of organ donation and provide a platform for others to get involved in organ donation advocacy." Stories and volunteer experiences also generated deep passion for a social issue. For example, Riley Damiano founded the Blue Lollipop Project after hearing the story of a two-year old child undergoing treatment for pediatric cancer. These youth social entrepreneurs are not working toward external rewards such as money or notoriety; instead, they are intrinsically motivated to make the world a better place.

This drive to make the world a better place, steeped in intrinsic motivation and passion, creates conflicts for youth social entrepreneurs. Although the youth social entrepreneur mindset is inherently positive—from viewing challenges as opportunities for growth to having optimism and hope that young people will make the world a better place for everyone—social entrepreneurship is demanding. Our youth partners make tough choices about priorities, deal with emotionally draining issues, and operate in uncertain environments where they are, in effect, learning on the job. As Dani Miller (MoCo for Change) observed, "[It's a challenge] having to choose activism over other things. Balancing life outside the organization. I need to go to school, eat and sleep, have a social life." Adam Friedman (Team Enough) spoke to the same challenges, "There is a lot of pressure internally to address social issues. If we are not taking action, we are complicit—it can be hard to find the right balance between activism and the rest of your life." Social impact work is a journey with potential challenges. As J.I. Cruz (ACE PR) advised, "[You have to] find happiness in that you're doing the work and not depend on the outcome of the work to be happy."

The youth social entrepreneur mindset is not exclusive to any particular set of youth. The network of influencers, including parents and teachers, can foster this mindset broadly among all youth to encourage and empower them to take action. However, today most youth do not have the opportunity to engage with youth social entrepreneurship programs or school curriculum. While many youth may be motivated, they need a supportive and robust ecosystem to develop their abilities and create opportunities to become successful youth social entrepreneurs. Policy-making entities, education systems, and foundations and funders are often not aware of the benefits to youth offered by social entrepreneurship, as exemplified in the youth social entrepreneur mindset, and its potential to engender lifelong civic commitment and well-being (Kruse 2019; Rendon 2020; Reynolds 2005).

Interplay in the Youth Social Entrepreneur Ecosystem

While the critical features of the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem—a network of influencers, access to resources, and the youth social entrepreneur mindset—are distinct, in reality, these elements are dynamic, interactive, and influence each other. The critical features of the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem create an interrelated system that both promotes and inhibits the success of youth social entrepreneurs. To understand the dynamic interplay of these features, first consider the interaction of the characteristics within the youth social entrepreneur mindset. For example, without intrinsic motivation and passion, a characteristic of the youth social entrepreneur mindset, there is no spark to motivate youth to undertake social change. As our youth partners describe, this spark often emerges from empathy, another characteristic of the youth social entrepreneur mindset. Natalie Hampton (Sit With Us) described how empathy, which emerged from her intrinsic motivation and passion, enabled her to better connect with others and to construct and communicate messages that motivated youth to join her cause, ultimately influencing her success as a youth social entrepreneur.

Next, consider the interaction between two features of the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem: the youth social entrepreneur mindset and access to resources—more specifically, the knowledge and skills critical for youth social entrepreneurs to succeed. While our partners largely honed these mindset characteristics organically, many aspects of the youth social entrepreneur mindset can be cultivated through both formal education and informal interaction. For example, several curricula exist for teaching empathy, such as Roots of Empathy (Gordon 2005) and PATHS (Kusché and Greenberg 1994). Other essential features of the social entrepreneur mindset, such as personal agency and self-efficacy, can also be enhanced through formal (e.g., classroom instruction) and informal (e.g., socialization processes, modeling) means (Bandura 1993). While we outline these characteristics in the youth social entrepreneur mindset, it is important to recognize that this mindset, and its associated knowledge and skills, can be taught. To this end, Alexandria Brady-Mine (Humans Project) highlights the vital policy issue of access in making "opportunities [to be social entrepreneurs] accessible" to more youth.

There is also dynamic interplay between a network of influencers, access to resources, and the youth social entrepreneur mindset. The network of influencers—parents, adult allies, peers, and organizations—often introduce youth social entrepreneurs to this practice through their own social engagement, projects at school, or by exposing youth to social entrepreneurial initiatives. These experiences, particularly when combined with the developing youth social entrepreneur mindset (i.e., empathy, intrinsic motivation, and passion) lead youth to pursue social entrepreneurship. The network of influencers also interacts with a third ecosystem feature, access to resources, by helping youth social entrepreneurs obtain access to funding and learn the skills needed to run an organization. Access to resources, in turn, interacts with the youth social entrepreneur mindset, as gaining needed fundraising skills and then obtaining funding contribute to the development of mindset characteristics such as personal agency and self-efficacy.

As this interplay of features in the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem suggests, for youth to become successful social entrepreneurs, they need motivation, ability, and opportunity. The motivation, ability, and opportunity (MAO) model is frequently used as a framework for the interplay of factors that influence human behavior (Grunert, Hieke, and Wills 2014) and has been applied to explain a variety of consumer behaviors from how we process information (e.g., MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski 1991) to why we engage in environmentally friendly and prosocial behaviors (e.g., Olander and Thogersen 1995; Pieters 1991; Wilson and Dowlatabadi 2007). Similarly, the dynamic interplay in the youth social entrepreneurship ecosystem reflects the interaction of motivation, ability, and opportunity. Characteristics of the youth social entrepreneur mindset, for example, capture both motivation, or goal-directed arousal (Park and Mittal 1985), and ability, the proficiencies needed to attain a goal (MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworkski 1991). Opportunity, the external conditions that influence behavior (Olander and Thogersen 1995), are often created by a network of influencers and access to resources. Yet, for many youth, access to resources and a network of influencers are limited. Even for those youth who possess motivation and emergent ability, this opportunity gap—a lack of access to resources including funding, place, technology, knowledge and skills, as well as guidance and assistance from a network of influencers—inhibits their success as youth social entrepreneurs.

In the United States, the so-called "land of opportunity," the gap in opportunity for youth social entrepreneurship is prevalent in disenfranchised communities among youth of color and underserved youth (Carter and Welner 2013; Kruse 2019). Access to resources and influencers can bridge this opportunity gap, enabling youth social entrepreneurs from all backgrounds to be successful. Educational policy to support the inclusion of youth social entrepreneurship programs in schools can provide increased opportunity for youth aiming to create change, enhance well-being, and ultimately better society.

Discussion

In introducing Youth 2030, the UN strategy for supporting youth to turn their "ideas into action," Secretary-General António Guterres acknowledged that youth are "a vast source of innovation, ideas, and solutions" who are providing vital change and leadership on the global climate crisis, social justice, and technology (United Nations 2018). As this UN initiative acknowledges, youth social entrepreneurs have great potential to lead positive change in the world today. Our research contributes to understanding how to realize the potential and success of youth social entrepreneurs by identifying the support they need. In doing so, we answer Bloom's (2012) call in *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* for more research in marketing focused on social entrepreneurship. We also contribute to TCR by investigating the role of youth social entrepreneurs who drive transformation and impact the well-being of people and communities.

We explore the dynamic ecosystem, including key influencers, access to resources, and the youth social entrepreneur mindset that provide youth the opportunity to rise up to transform themselves, the world, and the future. Many features of this ecosystem are unique to youth social entrepreneurs. Because youth differ from adults with regard to their societal roles, power dynamics, propensity to engage in prosocial behaviors, outlook on life, and patterns of thinking (Berk 2007; Blanchet-Cohen and Brunson 2014; Blankenstein et al. 2020; Nga and Shamuganathan 2010; Welford 1958), the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem is distinct from the adult social entrepreneur ecosystem. Perhaps this is most evident in the role influencers such as adult allies, peers, and parents, as well as resources such as access to technology and place, play in bridging the opportunity gap for youth social entrepreneurs. By exploring the experiences of established youth social entrepreneurs and building on the extant research, we provide a framework for understanding how to enable the success of youth social entrepreneurs.

Indeed, there are those who view youth as lacking actionable ideas and requiring extensive instruction before becoming social entrepreneurs. Yet as our research makes clear, youth have powerful ideas and can put those ideas into action to create positive change. Furthermore, some of the behavioral tendencies of youth that have been viewed through a negative lens—risk taking, challenging authority and status quo, and reward seeking—may help them to approach and pursue difficult societal challenges through social entrepreneurship. As the Greek philosopher Plutarch noted, working with and supporting youth is not the filling of an empty pail, but rather the lighting of a fire (Sweeney 1968). In fact, the passion, fresh perspectives, and positive outlook of youth often spur them to take action to create social impact. So, what can adults do to fuel the fire in youth social entrepreneurs? Adult allies can help youth develop the personal agency to act on what they know, what they think, and what they feel. Many of our youth social entrepreneur partners credited parents or teachers with encouraging them. As Tatiana Washington (50 Miles More), recounted, "My parents have always told me that if there's a problem, you can do something about it. I was raised with the mentality to take action now." Similarly, Jaden Deal (Iowa Student Learning Institute) described how when he would "tell [an ally] about an idea, [they] would say 'go for it' instead of thinking about limitations."

Our research with youth social entrepreneurs suggests that their faces and voices are diverse. The youth social entrepreneurs we partnered with were from varied backgrounds and their work was motivated by a wealth of passion and purposes. Thus, parents, teachers, youth organizations, and other allies aiming to encourage youth to become social entrepreneurs should be open to a variety of models of what a youth social entrepreneur might "look like." The fact is, all youth have the potential to create positive social change as long as we as a society bridge the opportunity gap by providing them with the ecosystem they need to fulfill their potential.

Public Policy Implications

Creating a robust ecosystem where more youth are supported as they develop and grow as social entrepreneurs is our greatest hope for a better future. Effectively addressing societal issues such as climate change, gun reform, racial injustice, and building healthy, inclusive communities requires a quantum leap—a societal moonshot (Bahcall 2019). However, as Bloom and Dees (2008) explain, to innovate and spark change, we need not only social entrepreneurs but also an environment where laws and policies facilitate, rather than inhibit, new ideas. We need policy makers to invest in youth social entrepreneurs and their innovative ideas. We need funding entities to acknowledge the potential of youth social entrepreneurs to achieve meaningful impact. We need lawmakers to fight for positive social change. Youth social entrepreneurs need a public—people and communities—that supports their ideas and prioritizes public resources to fund ventures that make the future better.

Many of the youth social entrepreneurs who collaborated in this research come from families and school systems (public and private) with the means and resources to encourage them to explore ideas for social change. Our youth partners recognized and proactively expressed how advantages they had access to made space for them to explore social entrepreneurship and succeed. However, the youth social entrepreneur ecosystem should not only be for the elite. We need to bridge the youth social entrepreneurship opportunity gap. Our research suggests that a supportive ecosystem can spur more youth to become social entrepreneurs. Specifically, this means surrounding youth with influencers that encourage them to take creative actions to solve social problems, as well as providing them access to needed resources. It is imperative that policy makers make this supportive ecosystem accessible to more youth. The social, emotional, and community advantages of youth social entrepreneurship benefit all youth but offer enhanced benefits to marginalized youth from low-income settings (Carter and Welner 2013; Delgado 2004; Kruse 2015). Education systems, organizations that offer youth programing, foundations, and policy makers need to better support all youth to become social entrepreneurs.

Policy makers must be aware of their potential role in facilitating and inhibiting youth social entrepreneurship. As an example, evaluation standards used to select which social entrepreneurial ideas to fund need to evolve as funding requirements and outcome standards are not well-suited to funding youth-led initiatives. The benefits of youth social entrepreneurship extend beyond societal impact to include the social and emotional development of youth (Kruse 2015) as well as the knowledge and skills that prepare youth for the future (Delagado 2004). These criteria should be included in determining funding for youth social entrepreneurs.

Finally, education funding at the local, state, and national levels should support policy solutions that create an accessible and robust youth social entrepreneurship ecosystem. For example, entrepreneurship incubator programs in schools should be expanded beyond for-profit ventures to include social change initiatives. These incubator programs need to be widely available, particularly in low-income school districts, which are at a disadvantage as they may lack the resources and influencers needed to host a robust youth social entrepreneur ecosystem.

Directions for Future Research

This research is only a starting point for understanding youth social entrepreneurs. To begin, we call for more interdisciplinary research to expand opportunities for youth social entrepreneurship. Researchers in marketing, together with education researchers, can build on existing research in consumer choice to investigate how emergent youth social entrepreneurs make choices among the plethora of options competing for their time. Policy makers, together with academic researchers, could investigate the impact of educational policies and curriculum on social entrepreneurship literacy.

Table 2. Directions for Future Research to Advance Youth Social Entrepreneurship.

Network of Influencers	
Parents	• What are the critical elements required to convert early involvement in volunteerism into engaged activism and leadership?
Adult allies	• What are the best methods for teaching adults to become role models in leading change, allies who empower, and mentors who support? • Even when acting with the best intentions, a natural tendency may be paternalism and protectionism that can stifle a youth social entrepreneur's development. How can adults balance the different roles they play in the lives of youth?
Peers	• What social dynamics encourage positive peer support and involvement in youth social entrepreneurship efforts and social movements more broadly? • How does the role of peer allies and peer social entrepreneur networks differ from adult allies?
Organizations	• Which formal/informal programs and pedagogy can organizations adopt to teach and support youth social entrepreneurship efforts? • How can organizations convert service involvement requirements into active leadership and encourage more youth to lead in creating social change?
Access to Resources	
Technology	• Which technology tools are critical to fueling social entrepreneur success? • When does technology help and when might it hinder social entrepreneurs as they advance their organizations and initiatives?
Place	• What are the differences in both the depth and breadth of networks developed in physical versus virtual spaces among this generation of social entrepreneurs? • How can virtual social entrepreneur networks and coalitions spark others to join the movement and start their own social entrepreneur journeys?
Funding	• What strategies are most effective in expanding early crowdfunding campaigns beyond a youth social entrepreneur's own personal network, to expand their access to external funding and resources?
Knowledge and skills	• How can soft skills such as hope, optimism, empathy, and personal agency, which are critical components of a social entrepreneur mindset, be infused into a curriculum to develop more social entrepreneurs in the future? • Which skills are most transferable/teachable? • Where (e.g., home, school, religious institutions) and when (e.g., at what ages), are teaching social entrepreneur skills most effective?
Social Entrepreneur Mindset	
Growth mindset	• Social entrepreneurs do not fear failure or setbacks but, rather, view them as opportunities to learn. What are the positive and negative implications of this dimension? How does it undermine social entrepreneurs' future efforts? Can they learn to balance this tendency in a way that maximizes positive aspects while minimizing the potential negative effects?
Personal agency, self-efficacy, and risk tolerance	• How can adult allies empower youth with agency to act and space to learn leadership skills? • How can adult allies strike the right balance between supporting and protecting youth social entrepreneurs?
Optimism and hope	• In response to big problems in the world (e.g., injustice, inequity, climate change), why do some maintain optimism and hope for the future, whereas others become discouraged? What can we learn from how youth social entrepreneurs see the future to transfer their optimism and hope to other youth and adults? • What are the long-term personal and psychological effects of maintaining hope and optimism in the face of a complex and sometimes very dark world that is slow to change?
Empathy	• Are there psychological risks to the depths of social entrepreneurs' empathy for others? How can we better prepare youth social entrepreneurs to deal psychologically with the risks they may face? • Can youth social entrepreneurs better help peers learn to feel empathy as a way of spreading their impact and creating change on a larger scale?
"We" focus	• What factors are most effective at shifting someone who starts for one reason (e.g., required service hours, belonging to a group) to more altruistic reasons (e.g., empathy for others, heartfelt desire to create change)?
Intrinsic motivation and passion	• How do you fairly compensate team members but also continue to attract team members who are intrinsically motivated by the cause? • What are the characteristics of youth social entrepreneurs and the transformational way they lead? How are they different from their peers?

Research should explore how policy makers authentically, rather than superficially, include the voices and experiences of youth social entrepreneurs in policy decision processes. Researchers, along with organizations that engage youth social entrepreneurs, might explore the operational strategies and practices that help them design programs to meet the needs of youth social entrepreneurs. In Table 2, we suggest additional future research for researchers in marketing, policy makers, and practitioners.

Although the school day for most is full, research should investigate how to weave in critical instruction and curricula that teach skills such as empathy. Policy-oriented research should explore creative ideas to make space within the school day to deliver a balance of domain-specific knowledge and skills (e.g., math, science, language), together with broader critical thinking and decision-making skills, as well as the social and emotional skills needed to navigate a complex world. The spillover of teaching skills that build well-being offers potential benefits to youth beyond social entrepreneurship. Youth trained with these skills become more informed and engaged citizens (Reynolds 2005). In conclusion, we must continue to conduct additional research to further understand how youth social entrepreneurs make decisions, how public policy contributes to creating robust youth social entrepreneurship ecosystems, and how we can equip these youth to lead positive social change. In doing so, we can continue to find new ways to support the well-being of youth and society.

Youth Social Entrepreneurs: What Is Their Future?

Civic engagement during youth is associated with an enhanced level of well-being derived from having a sense of purpose and, in adulthood, with better academic and financial outcomes (Ballard, Hoyt, and Pachucki 2019). Yet, high school students in the United States consistently report feeling tired, stressed, and bored (Toppo 2015). We contend that it is because many of our schools are not providing an environment conducive to engagement, active learning, and purposeful social action. Converting schools into ecosystems that encourage and support youth social entrepreneurs is one path to transform not only our schools but also our communities and our world. According to our partner, Future Coalition, young people are "25% of the population but they are 100% of the future." Sparking more youth to rise up to become social entrepreneurs will make that future a better place for all.

Associate Editor

Martin Mende

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