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**STATUS-DRIVEN SOCIAL ISSUE EMPHASES: THE IMPACT  
OF LEADER STRATA POSITION ON SOCIAL ENTERPRISE STRATEGY**

**Patrice Perry-Rivers and Doris L. Edmonds**

**ABSTRACT**

This paper analyzes the impact of social enterprise leaders' social strata on their enterprise strategies. Significant findings indicate leaders' social strata impacts their social issue emphases, and suggest stratification impacts how leaders prioritize social problems, and the social problem redressing strategies they champion organizationally. Specifically, higher strata leaders express greater concern than lower strata leaders about "distal" and international social problems, and lower strata leaders express greater concern for poverty, a "proximal" social problem, than higher strata leaders. This illuminates the impact macro-environmental conditions, like stratification, can have on leaders' sense of social responsibility and firm strategy.

**Keywords:** social entrepreneurship; social stratification; race; social enterprise; leaders

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## INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship has in many ways been advanced by the capitalist cause of business strategists (Piety, 2004; Korzeniewicz & Moran, 2005; VanSandt, Sud & Marme', 2009). The global market expansion of firms, and the resulting economic growth these firms' nations have experienced, has increased wealth disparity within developed and developing countries throughout the world (Korzeniewicz & Moran, 2005). This increase in economic inequality has given rise to significant social problems and the need for social entrepreneurs, whose organizations leverage resources to address social problems (Dacin, Dacin & Matear, 2010) often by innovatively employing business expertise and market skills to create social value (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2006; Peredo & Mclean, 2006; Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004).

Much research has analyzed the motivations of entrepreneurs who choose social vs. commercial entrepreneurship. A significant amount of this work has focused on the micro-level characteristics of these entrepreneurs which drive them to pursue the creation of social rather than economic value (Grimes, McMullen, Vogus & Miller, 2013; Miller, Grimes, McMullen & Vogus, 2012; Koe & Shamuganathan, 2010). Little of this research, however, has focused on macro-level conditions that may cause entrepreneurs to develop sensitivities to particular social issues in the first place. This paper is an effort to fill this void.

Social enterprise leaders are products of their environment and are influenced, as all humans are, by the social structure of the culture into which they were born (Lazarus, 1982; Granovetter, 1985; Perry-Rivers, 2014). At the macro-institutional level, every nation possesses a social structure with its own unique social stratification system (Massey, 2007). Such systems allow for clear delineation of which groups in each society will be the primary benefactors of

social and economic progress and which groups will not by the erection and maintenance of social barriers that allocate power and resources to some groups and restrict power and resources from other groups. This results in differential wealth-levels and living arrangements between strata groups in a society (Mills, 1997; Massey, 2007; Tilly, 1998). Consequently, social stratification systems can create different social and cultural values, exposure-levels to social problems, and affective concern for social problems between groups of people who live within the same society but who are members of divergent, salient strata groups (Lazarus, 1982).

Social stratification also impacts the strategies of entrepreneurs (Perry-Rivers, 2014). My theory is that a social enterprise leader's social strata position within his or her society is an antecedent to their affective concern about and affective prioritization of social problems. This will inevitably be reflected in the strategies they implement within their organizations. We analyze how leaders' expressions of affective concern for social problems could have been shaped by the environmental stimuli to which they have been exposed, and the socialization-driven cognitive appraisals they have developed as a consequence of their social strata. Then, via quantitative content analysis and statistical mean and median testing, we seek to establish whether or not their strata leads to different affective prioritization of and affective responses to particular social problems within social enterprises.

For the purposes of this paper, affective concern refers to the "emotional judgments that indicate the degree of worry or troublesome feelings people have about some matter" (Larson, Wutich, White, Munoz-Erickson & Harlan, 2011; Dunlap & Jones, 2002); affective prioritization refers to the emotionally-laden assessment of the significance of events (Goette & Huffman, 2006), or the differential emotional reference value individuals assign to stimuli (Stine-Morrow, Miller & Hertzog, 2006); and affective response is an evaluative reaction to a stimuli which

includes “feelings, preferences, intentions, and favorable or unfavorable judgments” (Lambin, Chumpitaz & Schuiling, 2007). A key notion in affective response is the concept of attitude, a classical definition of which is: “the mental process by which an individual – on the basis of past experience and stored information – organizes his perceptions, beliefs and feelings about a particular object and orientates his future behavior” (Allport, 1935; Lambin et al., 2007).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Social problems are entirely constructed from the social realities of the environments in which claimsmakers are embedded (Weinberg, 2009). In fact, the premise of social problems theory in sociology literature is that social problems are the *definitional* activities of humans around “conditions and conduct they find troublesome” (Schneider, 1985). As such, the subjective nature of the identification of social problems and the commitment to redress such problems is highly evident. However, what drives the subjective nature of social problems has rarely been addressed in social entrepreneurship literature, though the field’s debate about what the formal definition of social entrepreneurship should be and what organizations should be deemed social enterprises based upon the type of activities in which they are engaged comes close (Nicholls, 2006; Jones et al., 2007; Peattie & Morley, 2008; Williams & Nadin, 2012). In this paper, we investigate how one defining element of the environment in which all social enterprise leaders are posited, their nation’s social stratification system, can directly influence leaders’ subjective considerations regarding social problems and their direction of organizational resources. In the review that follows, we draw from key academic disciplines addressing social problems as well as management literature in order to frame our analysis.

### **Affective Influences on Managerial Action**

The discussion that economic actors are driven by emotional or affective motivations is not novel in management literature. In fact, it was mentioned by Adam Smith in 1759 who writes: “How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others. . . Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which I feel for the misery of others, when I either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner.” The impact of emotion on the plight of others is the entire concern of the field of business ethics and CSR, especially when one considers that managers’ emotional responses to human need are what drive socially responsible firm actions (Bowen, 1953; Carroll, 1999).

Managers’ affective reactions can shape firm behavior (Banerjee, 2002). Managers’ affective responses and attitudes—which are both affectively and cognitively-based (Zajonc, 1980; Zajonc & Markus, 1982)—toward social issues can have observable firm-level effects (Banerjee, 2002). For instance, managerial attitudes that promote demographically-biased performance evaluations can replicate these same attitudes amongst subordinate employees and result in the replication of inequality throughout entire organizations (Castilla, 2011). Positive managerial attitudes toward the natural environment increases managers’ consideration of “non-financial metrics.... when making strategic decisions” as it relates to environmental issues and “can be credited to transforming attitudes” throughout the firm (Dibrell, Craig & Hansen, 2011). Rodrigo & Arenas (2008) also find that managers’ attitudes toward social problems are influential in transforming employee attitudes. Their research demonstrated that, after managers enacted CSR programs, many employees who “did not previously show great concern for social issues ... or took it for granted that it was the State that should concern itself with such issues....

expressed ... that ... the private company has a responsibility beyond its immediate and traditional business sphere” (Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008).

Scherer and Brosch’s research on the appraisal theory of emotion (2009) demonstrates the significance of emotion in all individuals’, including managers’, response to stimuli. In particular, they find a relationship between affect derived from one’s socio-cultural context and action. Their research indicates “systematic cultural biases in the evaluation of events of high significance to the individual” could result between groups of individuals who emerge from different national cultures, or between divergent ethnic groups posited within the same national culture. In such cases, “the same environmental information. . . can result in different affective responses” between people from different cultural groups since culturally-based “goal, belief, and value systems can produce appraisal biases. . . affecting the perception of events and the criteria used in their evaluation” (Scherer & Brosch, 2009).

### **How Social Enterprise Leaders’ Social Strata Position Can Impact Their Affective Concern**

As with other managers, social enterprise leaders’ emotional reactions to social problems are inevitably affected by their social contexts (Lazarus, 1982). “Society . . . provides a kind of template . . . of human relationships and meanings on which the appraisal of the significance of an encounter for one’s well-being depends” (Lazarus, 1982). Consider this student’s telling narrative from *Walls and Bridges: Social Justice and Public Policy* (Cortese, 2004):

*“I am a white female whose father’s income is above average. Although money or social class can’t buy happiness, it has brought me a lot of opportunities to influence me to view the world as just. . . my neighborhood consists of middle class, white families. . .there is little rebellion, crime, anger, or revenge. I was not exposed to the neighborhood like the inmates [at the New Mexico State penitentiary (class field trip)] where I had to protect myself or my property. . .*

*..my father's income allows me to have material items, as well as, opportunities. I have never had to struggle or save to buy something and I have never known a bill that wasn't paid. . . I know I have lived in a bubble, but ....you become naïve to what is happening in the rest of the world. . . . I have never experienced racism. . . . Although others are struggling, my social class and experiences lead me to believe that this is a just world."*

As in the case above, the social environment in which social enterprise leaders are posited and their social position within it can greatly impact their view of the world, including their empathetic response to social problems primarily affecting others (Waldman et al., 2006; Kelley, Whatley & Worthley, 1987). Waldman et al. (2006) support this premise with their finding that “cultural dimensions . . . predict social responsibility values on the part of top management team members.” Status position can also influence managerial attitudes, as demonstrated by Kelley et al. (1987). They find, in contrast to the “convergence hypothesis,” which asserts “individuals—irrespective of culture—are forced to adopt industrial attitudes and behavior,” that distinct cultural effects are displayed in the attitudes of American managers of Mexican, Chinese, Japanese and Anglo-American heritage (Kelley, et al., 1987). Further, their results showed that attitudes and practices of managers from the most “economically unsuccessful” background demonstrated the greatest divergence from that of other managerial subjects (Kelley et al., 1987). Thus, prior research provides support for our premise that social enterprise leaders of variant strata will have different emotional responses to social problems leading to different social issue emphases and social problem remediation strategies within their organizations.

The effect of social context on managerial affect is made clearer when one considers that, in every nation, cultures operate within a salient categorization system that is context-specific and ensures similar socialization processes for all members of the same group (Hughes &



Johnson, 2001). This categorization system, called social stratification, is a macro-level environmental context in which society is divided into socially constructed groups which are structurally advantaged or disadvantaged in their access to social and economic resources (Robinson, Blockson & Robinson, 2007; Massey, 2007). Social and economic resource access division and status designation in socially stratified systems are enacted based upon achieved traits (like economic status in the U.S.; caste in India; or religion in Arab nations or Ireland) which are more dynamic and permeable, or ascribed traits (like race or gender in the U.S.) which are static, and impermeable (Massey, 2007; Tilly, 1998; Mills, 1997). Because membership in an ascribed strata category is permanent, it has enduring effects on social and economic resource access and socialization of members which can be readily observed (Massey, 2007), and is the type of strata category upon which this study is focused.

Stratification is relevant to understanding managerial affect because one's socially designated strata position determines the socialization processes to which her or she is exposed (Rosenbaum, 1975). These "developmental and socialization factors [drive] underlying appraisal patterns and the subjective experience of...emotions" (Scherer & Brosch, 2009). Furthermore, appraisal patterns and emotional experiences can be expected to be most similar in lower strata groups, as "lower status settings...homogenize their members" (Rosenbaum, 1975).

Several studies demonstrate that a shared view of the world held by lower status groups manifests in individuals' responses to social problems that are different from those of higher status groups (Miller, Bersoff & Harwood, 1990; Mathur, Harada, Lipke & Chiao, 2010). Miller et al. (1990) find that socio-economic group impacts moral judgments of obligation and emotional responses to those in need of aid. In their study, East Indians, who are from a society with an overall lower socio-economic level than America and who are more often exposed to

social problems and people in great need (Poverty, 2016), were more inclined than Americans to conceive their social responsibilities in terms of moral obligations. Even within Indian culture, socio-economic group effects significantly impacted considerations about social concerns as low socio-economic class Indians were more inclined than middle-class Indians to categorize the needs as something they had a moral obligation to redress. The authors attribute this difference to “higher socioeconomic status [being] . . . associated with a change in orientation toward social responsibilities, from a moral to a personal-choice perspective” (Miller et al., 1990).

The manner in which high and low strata groups have been socialized to prioritize social problems or evaluate the relevance of social problems to their immediate well-being can vastly differ (Lazarus, 1982; Waldman, De Luque, and Washburn, 2006; Scherer & Brosch, 2009). Further, attribution of causes for social problems is also often markedly different between members of powerful and less powerful groups with the former attributing social problems most often experienced by lower status groups to what they deem as lower status group members’ inherently inferior personal characteristics or own behavior, and the latter attributing their exposure to social problems to collective victimization and system wide, structural bias (Loseke, 1999). Over time, these attributions become salient “cultural feeling” rules that drive behavior of members of these groups even within organization settings (Loseke, 1999).

Thus, we theorize that managers’ affective concern for social problems is based upon their strata group’s level of exposure to social problems and the emotional response their strata position has socialized them to adopt in response to social problems (Hughes & Johnson, 2001). As each manager in this study is a member of one of two distinct, ascribed strata groups and since managers develop their attitudes and values largely based upon their strata membership (Manis, 1974), we anticipate strata position will have a significant impact on the affective

concern that managers express *generally* toward social problems, and on the affective concern they express toward *specific* social problems in their organizational contexts.

### **The Relationship of Entrepreneurs' Emotions, Values & Social Enterprise Strategy**

Research on entrepreneurship has confirmed that entrepreneurs' emotions can impact their opportunity evaluation, which is a component of their initial strategy (Welppe, Spörrle, Grichnik, Michl & Audretsch, 2012). Entrepreneurship research has also demonstrated that values and attitudes of entrepreneurial managers can derive from their societal "positions." Welter & Smallbone (2011) find, for instance, that the behavior of individual entrepreneurial actors can be heterogeneous for actors posited in different positions within the same macro-environmental context. Further, entrepreneurial leaders' strategic responses depend largely on their "situational configuration" within their institutional context, the enterprise's characteristics, and the background of key leaders within the venture (Welter & Smallbone, 2011).

Webb, Tihanyi, Ireland & Sirmon (2009) have also found that institutional context frames entrepreneurs' collective identities. These identities can differ between groups of entrepreneurs when there are institutionally-perpetuated differences in groups' social and economic resource access, socialization processes, and, consequently, in the different perceptions they develop. They can also drive entrepreneurial actors from different cultures and social positions to engage in different entrepreneurial strategies (Webb et al., 2009). Ultimately, the strategies of social enterprises themselves are impacted by the values and priorities of organizational members, including leaders (Moss, Short, Payne & Lumpkin, 2011). Thus, we anticipate being able to detect that the institutional context of stratification in which social enterprise leaders in this study have been socialized will result in divergent emotional responses by strata to social problems, which will be reflected in leaders' speeches to organization members.

## **How Differences in Proximity Impact Leaders' Prioritization of Social Problems**

Much academic literature confirms that the lower one's status or degree of powerlessness in a macro-level social context, then the greater one's exposure to social ills. The converse is also true (Pratto, Sidanius & Levin, 2006; Massey, 2007; Tilly, 1998; Mills, 1997). As such, typically the degree of proximity to all social problems will be greatest for those of lower strata in any society (Pratto et al., 2006; Massey, 2007; Tilly, 1998). Yet, regardless of one's degree of physical proximity to social problems generally (i.e. living near where they occur), an individual will feel greater concern about social ills based on their perception that these ills are more threatening, immediate, or emotionally proximal (Swim, Clayton, Doherty, Gifford, Howard, Reser, Stern & Weber, 2010; Swim, Stern, Doherty, Clayton, Reser, Weber, Gifford & Howard, 2011; Tamir & Mitchell, 2011).

This perception of proximity develops because members of all strata groups evaluate the relevance of environmental stimuli to their own well-being (Lazarus, 1982; Scherer & Brosch, 2009). Emotional reactions tend to be most extreme for events for which individuals can vividly imagine an outcome proximal to themselves or to a close other, regardless of experiential familiarity with the event (Tamir & Mitchell, 2011; Liberman, Trope & Stephan, 2007; Liberman & Trope, 2008). In converse fashion, "when events occur at a spatial or temporal distance," perceivers often decline to imagine experiencing them firsthand and, instead, represent such events in an amorphous, abstract," or distal manner (Tamir & Mitchell, 2011).

Based on this conceptualization, we have categorized social problems as proximal or distal based on the extent to which they would likely be perceived as capable of inflicting direct and eminent harm on an individual's well-being (Swim et al., 2010; Swim et al., 2011; Tamir & Mitchell, 2011; Liberman et al., 2007; Liberman & Trope, 2008). Poverty, health, inequality and

discrimination, crime, and family/relationship issues, because of their perceivable capacity to cause immediate harm to one's self or those with whom one has affective ties, are classified as proximal social problems. Education, environmentalism, and international problems are classified as distal social problems because their immediate adverse impact is not as readily perceived (whether the impact of these social problems is actually more immediately harmful or not.) Since lower and higher strata group members—by virtue of social position in a stratified macro-environment—are more or less likely to be exposed to proximal and distal social problems (Pratto et al., 2006), we anticipate finding differences in affective concern about proximal, distal, and all social problems between managers from high strata and low strata groups.

### **HYPOTHESES**

Stratification results in the socialization of higher and lower strata members in environments with differing levels of social and economic resource access (Massey, 2007; Tilly, 1998). In addition, human suffering and consequently social market failures are more inclined to emerge in environments in which there are resource deficiencies (Dacin et al., 2010; Alvord et al., 2004), where members of lower strata rather than higher strata groups are more inclined to be posited. Thus, we anticipate that managers emergent from lower strata and higher strata groups will express divergent overall affective concern levels for social problems because of their divergent exposure levels to social problems, with lower strata leaders expressing greater affective concern for social problems than higher strata leaders.

Findings in natural science research, in addition to those in social science referenced in our literature review, support the premise of our hypothesis. Neuroscientific research using electromagnetic brain imaging on U.S. subjects has found that affect and corresponding action to alleviate human suffering can be derived from subjects' race (a common measure of social strata

in social science, and our measure of social strata in this study) (Mathur, Harada, Lipke & Chiao, 2010). Both empathy—the ability to share the emotional states of others, and altruism—the propensity to direct time and/or money toward a cause—are distinct by race in U.S. subjects and are impacted by shared group identity. Further, lower strata individuals are more inclined to demonstrate “extraordinary empathy” and strong “altruistic motivation” in response to human suffering affecting *members of their group above all others* (Mathur et al., 2010).

**H1:** Higher strata leaders express lower overall affective concern for social problems than lower strata leaders.

Divergent social positions in the U.S. context have resulted in distinct “cultural feeling rules” between high strata and low strata groups leading to different evaluations of whether or not those experiencing more proximal social problems are themselves the culprits or victims of socially-imposed and enforced limitations (Loseke, 1999). As such, we anticipate lower strata leaders will be more inclined than higher strata leaders to demonstrate affective concern for proximal social problems, and higher strata leaders will be more inclined than lower strata leaders to express affective concern for distal social problems—those less inclined to cause (or be evaluated as causing) immediate and debilitating human suffering.

**H2a:** Lower strata leaders express greater overall affective concern for proximal social problems than higher strata leaders.

**H2b:** Higher strata leaders express greater overall affective concern for distal social problems than lower strata leaders.

Since members of lower strata groups are most inclined to be adversely affected by poverty and inequality and since they are considered root cause social problems for other proximal social problems like crime and health issues, lower strata leaders will express greater affective concern than higher strata leaders for poverty and inequality (Belle & Doucet, 2003; Pratto et al., 2006; Massey, 2007; Tilly, 1998). Further, since the social station of lower strata group members has resulted in them being disproportionately adversely impacted by crime and health-related issues, then we anticipate that lower strata leaders will express greater affective concern for these social issues than higher strata leaders.

**H3a:** Lower strata leaders express greater affective concern for poverty than higher strata leaders.

**H3b:** Lower strata leaders express greater affective concern for inequality than higher strata leaders.

**H3c:** Lower strata leaders express greater affective concern for crime than higher strata leaders.

**H3d:** Lower strata leaders express greater affective concern for health issues than higher strata leaders.

As higher strata leaders have been socialized as members of a group affected by fewer proximal social problems, they have the luxury of focusing on issues beyond their own well-being. The converse is true for lower strata leaders (Kleinman, Das & Lock, 1997). Consequently, higher strata leaders will express greater affective concern for environmental and international issues than lower strata leaders.

**H4a:** Higher strata leaders express greater affective concern for environmental issues than low strata leaders.

**H4b:** Higher strata leaders express greater affective concern for international issues than low strata leaders.

Though we anticipate differences between higher and lower strata groups' affective concern for other social problems, we do not anticipate this will be the case regarding family and relationship social problems. In nearly every human culture, family and intimate relationship bonds represent the strongest affective ties within groups (Ellison, 1990; Hwang, 1990; Miller et al., 1990, Loseke, 1999). Families are seen as one of the strongest social mechanisms for behavioral control (Loseke, 1999), and the development of affective behaviors (Ellison, 1990; Hwang, 1990), despite distinct differences that exist across cultures in the value attributed to members of the family (Loseke, 1999). As such, we anticipate that social problems impacting families, children, and intimate relationships, which would be perceived as proximal for both higher and lower strata groups, will engender comparable affective responses between leaders of different strata groups.

**H5:** There is no difference in the affective concern expressed by lower and higher strata leaders for family and relationship social problems.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The social enterprise leaders in this study are the senior pastors of U.S. non-denominational megachurches. The majority of them are the founders of these organizations. We analyzed the sermon messages these leaders delivered to their congregations since these speeches are typically



affirmations of organizational strategy (Thumma, 1996; Thumma & Bird, 2009). Megachurches' tax-exempt legal status requires them to engage in public inurement (or activities to benefit society and/or redress social problems), and limits their ability to generate exclusively self-benefitting profit (Brown, 1990). Further, they are novel organizations who engage in innovative, market-seeking behaviors (Thumma & Bird, 2009). Consequently, these organizations are social entrepreneurial by definition (Dacin et al., 2010). Megachurches are unaffiliated with traditional denominations which are laden with decades of institutionalized responses to specific social issues. In addition, leaders of megachurches function much like CEO's, as they are often the organizations' founders, or hand-picked successors of founders (Thumma & Bird, 2009). Because the choices of these leaders are not institutionally constrained, their affective responses could have substantial impacts on their social enterprises' strategies.

Race, gender, and economic status are the three categories upon which the U.S. social stratification system is based, and from which social and economic resource access and socialization of strata members stems (Massey, 2007; Mills, 1997; Tilly, 1998; Perry-Rivers, 2014; Perry-Rivers & Edmonds, 2015). However, the primary stratification category saliently determining resource allocation in American society is race (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). For this reason, it is the strata category upon which we have focused our study's data analysis (our measure of strata.)

Descriptive data on the leaders and organizations in this study is derived from the Hartford Institute's study on megachurches (Thumma & Bird, 2009), megachurch research developed by Warf & Winsberg (2010), and primary research. We established the primary strata of leaders (their race) from information on the enterprises' websites.

We organized the universe of social enterprise leaders into three groups by total organization membership size: small- 2500 to 3999 members; mid-sized- 4,000 to 6,999; large- 7,000+. This controlled for the potential effect of size (a proxy for economic class, which is also used to measure strata) on final results since we used race as the primary measure of strata (Massey, 2007). The large, observable differences in terms of resources, marketing activities, operations scope, and other revenue-based activities between leaders' enterprises in the three different size categories affirmed the size categories' accuracy. We obtained 21,180 speeches from 35 low strata and 141 high strata leaders. As a result, 74% of the total universe of megachurch leaders with 2500+ members are represented.

We identified and removed outliers based on size and tested for normal distribution of observations, which resulted in a final N of 155 (n=126 high strata; n=29 low strata) with power of .96. All speeches analyzed were authored by each church's founder or senior pastor(s), and delivered in the same time frame, 2008-2011. This helped ensure parity between observations.

Finally, we utilized quantitative content analysis followed by a Mann-Whitney U test to test our hypotheses. A Mann-Whitney U test focuses on median and spread of score differences between groups. Unlike a t-test, it is able to detect whether or not statistically significant differences exist between groups when data is not normally distributed (Ruxton, 2006; Nachar, 2008), even in cases where medians are similar (Hart, 2001), and was an ideal test for this paper.

I employed conceptual or quantitative content analysis to identify, quantify and analyze the presence of specific words and/or concepts (Neuendorf, 2002; Krippendorf, 2004) using Tropes, a high performance, semantics-based content analysis software (Tropes, 2011). We coded each speech by creating customized queries to search for the words and concepts semantically associated with our variables. We then supplemented Tropes' dictionaries with

words associated with the concepts we measured using WordNet, a lexical database of English words grouped into cognitive synonym sets developed by linguistic researchers at Princeton (What is WordNet, 2011) (See Figure 3). Next, we converted our textual data into quantitatively-measurable form (Neuendorf, 2002; Krippendorf, 2004), recorded the frequency of our dependent variables in the speeches, and converted this frequency data into percentages for each observation. Finally, we compared the means between the high and low strata groups, and performed a Mann-Whitney U-test to test our hypotheses.

As our data analyzes group averages themselves (and not individual leader's scores), our unit of analysis is the strata group of social enterprise leaders (high or low). My observations for each strata group are aggregately comprised of all speeches and speech summaries (sermons) available for 2008-2011 made by high and low strata top managers (senior pastors) that were delivered to their enterprise members (congregants). We use a dichotomous, independent variable, social strata position, which was depicted in this study by race (0-Higher [white], 1-Lower [black]). In order to classify a leader as high strata or low strata, both his or her strata and the primary strata composition of the enterprise he or she led had to match. Primary strata composition was verified directly with churches' main offices and based on information and pictures of congregants and leaders on churches' websites. This enabled us to control for effects a diverse congregation (not overwhelmingly high or low strata) could have on leaders' expressed concern about certain social problems, as such organizations were eliminated.

We constructed dependent variables for each social problem category based upon macro-level social issues monitored by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Society, 2011). We designed social problem constructs (Total Social Problems; Poverty; Crime; Health and Health Care; Inequality and Discrimination; Family, Divorce,

Children and Relationships; Education; Environmentalism; and International Issues) to measure words associated with the social issues monitored by the OECD, including poverty, homelessness, racial/ethnic inequality, gender discrimination, pollution and environmental issues etc. (Society, 2011), as well as social-problems considered putative in Western-developed contexts, like divorce, domestic violence, abuse and family issues (Jennings, 2012). Then, we categorized social problems as proximal or distal based upon the analysis on proximity in the literature review. (See Figure 3).

## RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the mean values and other descriptive statistics for all variables for higher and lower strata groups. Figure 2 shows the results of the Mann-Whitney U test. Figure 4 displays a summary of which hypotheses are supported. Figure 5 graphically illustrates which social issue categories are emphasized by high and low strata leader groups. Some of our hypotheses are supported, and the results indicate a leader's strata position affects their social issue emphases, though there are notable divergences from some of our predictions. H1 is not supported. There are not statistically significant differences between the total social problem emphases of leaders from the two groups based on the Mann-Whitney test ( $p=.640$ ), though a means comparison for high ( $\bar{x}_0$ ) and low strata ( $\bar{x}_1$ ) leaders ( $\bar{x}_0=.024514$ ,  $\bar{x}_1=.026750$ ) was in the direction predicted. Likewise, H2a is not supported, and there are not statistically significant differences between the proximal social problem emphases of leaders from the two groups based on the Mann-Whitney test ( $p=.545$ ); however, comparing the means for high ( $\bar{x}_0$ ) and low strata ( $\bar{x}_1$ ) leaders ( $\bar{x}_0=.015415$ ,  $\bar{x}_1=.017176$ ) demonstrates a difference between the groups in the direction predicted. H2b is supported by moderately significant results from the Mann-Whitney test ( $p=0.067$ ), which indicates a difference exists between the two groups in regards to distal

social ills and in the direction predicted. This difference is not observable when comparing the means for high ( $\bar{x}_0$ ) and low strata ( $\bar{x}_1$ ) leaders ( $\bar{x}_0=.009066$ ,  $\bar{x}_1=.009619$ ).

H3a is supported with moderately significant results on the Mann-Whitney test ( $p=0.074$ ) and via a means comparison in the direction predicted ( $\bar{x}_0=.001323$ ,  $\bar{x}_1=.001638$ ), indicating there is a difference in the affective concern expressed for poverty between high and low strata groups. H3b is not supported by the Mann-Whitney test ( $p=0.160$ ), though these results are trending towards significance and comparing the mean emphases on inequality of high ( $\bar{x}_0$ ) and low strata ( $\bar{x}_1$ ) leaders ( $\bar{x}_0=.000931$ ,  $\bar{x}_1=.001911$ ) demonstrates a difference in the direction predicted, as well.

H3c is not supported as there are not statistically significant differences between the emphases of leaders from the two groups based on the Mann-Whitney test ( $p=.198$ ); though these results are trending toward significance and a means comparison demonstrates a difference between the emphases on crime between the two groups in the direction predicted, as well ( $\bar{x}_0=.001068$ ,  $\bar{x}_1=.001122$ ). H3d is not supported by the Mann-Whitney test ( $p=.993$ ) which demonstrates near equality on the focus on health and health care between the two groups, though comparing the means for high ( $\bar{x}_0$ ) and low strata ( $\bar{x}_1$ ) leaders ( $\bar{x}_0=.005275$ ,  $\bar{x}_1=.005871$ ) is suggestive of a difference between the groups in the direction predicted.

H4a is not supported by the Mann-Whitney test ( $p=.246$ ), which shows no statistically significant differences between the emphases of leaders from the two groups on environmental issues; nor is a difference observable in the direction predicted via comparing the means for high ( $\bar{x}_0$ ) and low strata ( $\bar{x}_1$ ) leaders ( $\bar{x}_0=.004208$ ,  $\bar{x}_1=.005434$ ). H4b is supported and statistically significant based on the Mann-Whitney test ( $p=0.048$ ), and a comparison of the means for high ( $\bar{x}_0$ ) and low strata ( $\bar{x}_1$ ) leaders ( $\bar{x}_0=.002832$ ,  $\bar{x}_1=.002220$ ) also demonstrates a difference in the

affective concern for international issues expressed by the two groups in the direction predicted. H5 is supported by the Mann-Whitney test ( $p=.435$ ) and there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups' emphases on family and relationship issues. Comparing the means for high ( $\bar{x}_0$ ) and low strata ( $\bar{x}_1$ ) leaders ( $\bar{x}_0=.006818$ ,  $\bar{x}_1=.006634$ ) demonstrated notable similarities as predicted.

<b>Figure 1: Means and Descriptive Statistics for Higher and Lower Strata Leaders</b>					
	<b>STRATA (RACE)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Std. Error Mean</b>
<b>TOTAL SOCIAL PROBLEMS</b>	0	126	.024514	.0425810	.0037934
	1	29	.026750	.0387269	.0071914
<b>CRIME</b>	0	126	.001068	.0014189	.0001264
	1	29	.001122	.0020269	.0003764
<b>EDUCATION</b>	0	126	.002026	.0044974	.0004007
	1	29	.001964	.0032054	.0005952
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	0	126	.004208	.0081135	.0007228
	1	29	.005434	.0133375	.0024767
<b>FAMILY</b>	0	126	.006818	.0142799	.0012722
	1	29	.006634	.0053112	.0009863
<b>HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE</b>	0	126	.005275	.0076355	.0006802
	1	29	.005871	.0078565	.0014589
<b>INEQUALITY</b>	0	126	.000931	.0019870	.0001770
	1	29	.001911	.0047201	.0008765
<b>INTERNATIONAL</b>	0	126	.002832	.0050407	.0004491
	1	29	.002220	.0031592	.0005866
<b>POVERTY</b>	0	126	.001323	.0020116	.0001792
	1	29	.001638	.0019017	.0003531
<b>TOTAL PROXIMAL</b>	0	126	.015415	.0261432	.0023290
	1	29	.017176	.0205984	.0038250
<b>TOTAL DISTAL</b>	0	126	.009066	.0168430	.0015005
	1	29	.009619	.0184752	.0034308
<b>Strata measured by race. N=155; Low Strata n=29; High Strata n=126</b>					

**Figure 2: Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test Table**

(Difference Between Groups ≠ 0)									
	STRATA	N	Median	Mean Ranks <sup>+</sup>	Mann-Whitney U	Std. Error	z	Sig. (2-tailed)	
<b>TOTAL PROBLEMS</b>	<b>SOCIAL</b>	0	126	.020598	78.81	1725.00	217.95	-0.468	.640
		1	29	.019551	74.48				
<b>CRIME</b>		0	126	.000814	80.23	1546.50	217.83	-1.288	.198***
		1	29	.000647	68.33				
<b>EDUCATION</b>		0	126	.001186	78.65	1745.00	217.91	-0.376	.707
		1	29	.001143	75.17				
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>		0	126	.003163	80.10	1574.00	217.95	-1.161	.246***
		1	29	.002995	69.28				
<b>FAMILY</b>		0	126	.005376	76.65	1997.00	217.94	0.78	.435
		1	29	.004952	83.86				
<b>HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE</b>		0	126	.004341	77.98	1829.00	217.95	0.009	.993
		1	29	.004182	78.07				
<b>INEQUALITY</b>		0	126	.000642	75.57	2133.00	217.68	1.406	.160***
		1	29	.000805	88.55				
<b>INTERNATIONAL</b>		0	126	.001874	81.42	1395.00	217.92	-1.98	.048*
		1	29	.001038	63.12				
<b>POVERTY</b>		0	126	.000946	74.90	2217.00	217.92	1.79	.074**
		1	29	.001293	91.45				
<b>TOTAL PROXIMAL</b>		0	126	.013224	76.95	1959.00	217.95	0.606	.545
		1	29	.013453	82.55				
<b>TOTAL DISTAL</b>		0	126	.006831	81.17	1428.00	217.90	-1.831	.067*
		1	29	.004774	64.24				

Strata measured by race. N=155; Low Strata n=29; High Strata n=126; \*\*\*p ≤ .20 \*\*p ≤ .10 \*p ≤ .05; <sup>+</sup>Mean Ranks column determines direction of results in cases of statistical significance. Ad Hoc Power = .959 and Effect Size = .7

**Figure 3: Content Analysis Categories/Variables**

Variable	Detailed Variable Construct
<b>Total Social Problems</b>	Poverty, Crime, Education, Environmentalism, Family and Relationships, Health/Health Care, Inequality and Discrimination, and International Social Issues
<b>Proximal Social Problems</b>	<p><b>Poverty</b> Aid and assistance, Be without*, Community development, Economic development, Go without*, Homeless, Housing, Hunger, the Hungry*, the Hurting*, Outreach*, the Needy*, the Poor, Poverty and lack (beggary, deprived, indigence, insufficiency, marginalized, etc.), social insurance and welfare, Social organization (caste and class, class struggle), Refugee, Sanitary conditions, Shelters, Social security, Soup Kitchen*, Unemployment, Welfare, Without food</p> <p><b>Health and Health Care</b> Diseases, death and casualties, Abnormalities, Birth Defects, Medicine and Health, Mental health, Nutrition, Sick and handicapped persons, Smoking and tobacco</p> <p><b>Inequality and Discrimination</b> Discrimination, Segregation, Race, Culture and Racism, Slavery, Sexism, White supremacy, Homophobia, Gender-Bias, Slavery</p> <p><b>Crime</b> Crime, Drug(s), Law and justice (courts, police, sentencing, prison(s), etc.), Prostitution, Terrorism, Urban, Violence</p> <p><b>Family and Relationship</b> Child abuse and neglect, Children, Divorce, Family, Genealogy, Juvenile delinquency, Kin, Marriage, Offspring, Orphan, Pornography, Relationships, Senior citizens, Sex/sexual (adultery*), Widow, Young, Youth</p> <p><i>Includes other unlisted conceptually-linked words and phrases.</i></p>

<b>Distal Social Problems</b>	<p><b>Education</b> Academic, Degree(s), Educational institutions, Higher education, Scholar, Student, Teacher, University/universities</p> <p><b>Environmentalism</b> Natural disasters, Environmental Conditions, Nature, Pollution, Weather, Animal Welfare*, Wildlife, Ecosystem [<i>*Animal welfare is included in Environmentalism based on the perspective of ecological inclusion (Bennison, 2010).</i>]</p> <p><b>International Social Issues</b> Apartheid, Africa, Haiti, Latin-America, Other non U.S. nations; International outreach, Mission(s), Missionary, Overseas <i>Includes other unlisted conceptually-linked words and phrases.</i></p>
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**Figure 4: Results Summary Table**

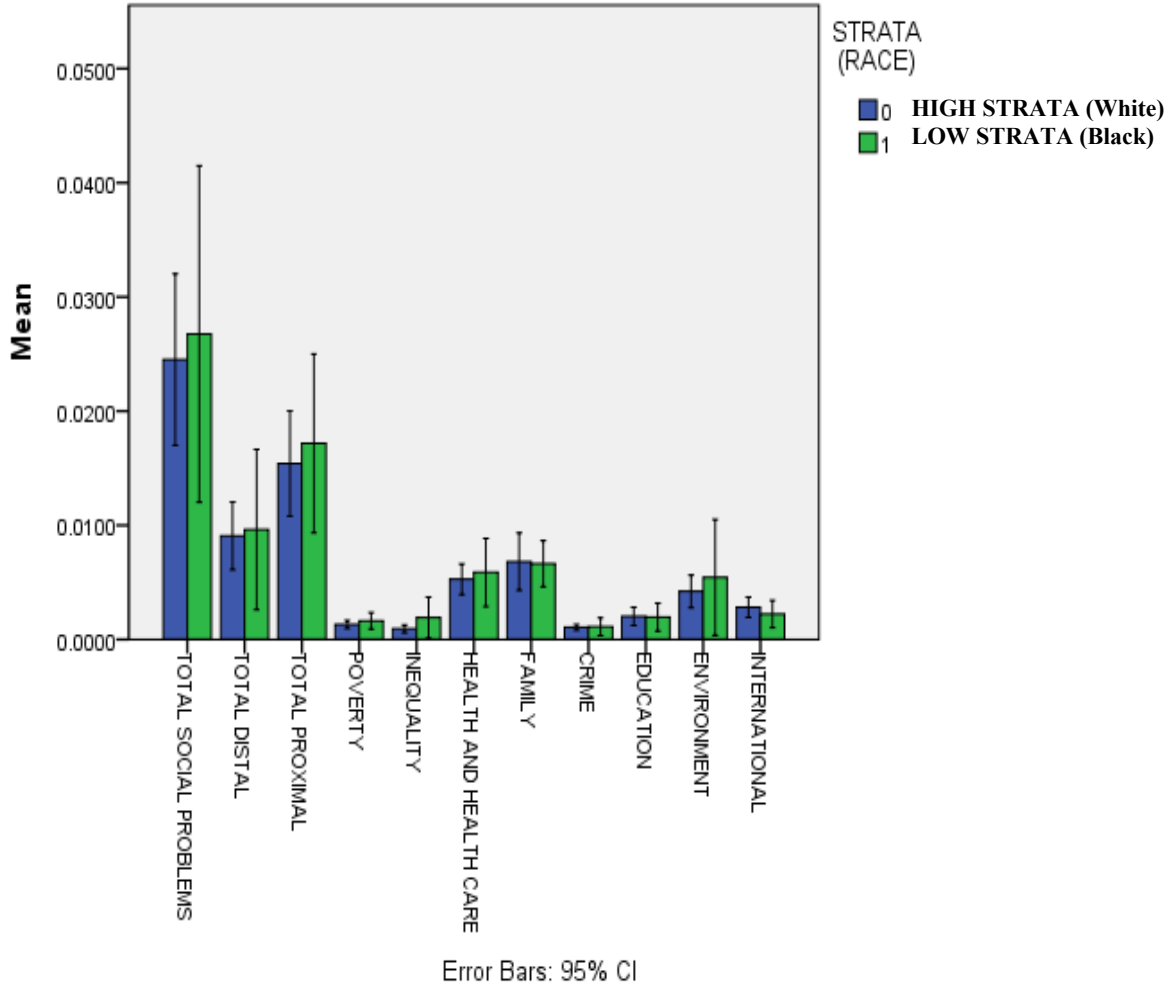
Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Statistic	Hypothesis Supported?*
H1	Social Strata	Total Social Problems	Mann-Whitney U	No
H2a	Social Strata	Proximal Social Problems	Mann-Whitney U	No
H2b	Social Strata	Distal Social Problems	Mann-Whitney U	Yes <sup>+</sup>
H3a	Social Strata	Poverty	Mann-Whitney U	Yes <sup>+</sup>
H3b	Social Strata	Inequality	Mann-Whitney U	No <sup>**</sup>
H3c	Social Strata	Crime	Mann-Whitney U	No <sup>**</sup>
H3d	Social Strata	Health & Health Care	Mann-Whitney U	No
H4a	Social Strata	Environmentalism	Mann-Whitney U	No
H4b	Social Strata	International Issues	Mann-Whitney U	Yes <sup>++</sup>
H5	Social Strata	Family & Relationships	Mann-Whitney U	Yes

\*Based on statistical significance +p≤.10 ++p≤.05; \*\*Trend toward significance in direction predicted.  
\*\*Significant in opposite direction.



**Figure 5**

Graph of Social Issue Emphasis



## DISCUSSION

Finding no support for hypotheses 1 indicates that strata has no impact on the overall level of emotional concern that social enterprise leaders have for social problems, as is appropriate, since their organizations exist to redress social market failures (Kickul & Lyons, 2012), and they are required to positively contribute to society in the U.S. if they have tax-exempt status (Brown, 1990). Yet, stratification has some impact on the social issue emphases of enterprise leaders, and there appear to be differences in the emotional concern for social problems between leaders from high and low strata groups. This is demonstrated most notably by the significant findings herein that higher strata leaders express greater affective concern for international issues and distal social problems as a whole than lower strata leaders, and that lower strata leaders express greater affective concern for poverty issues than high strata leaders. The results trending toward significance for inequality also suggest lower strata leaders are more inclined to focus on inequality than higher strata leaders.

The findings on poverty and inequality are in line with what existing theories on social stratification, social context and affect would predict. Those in lower social strata are systematically more inclined to be impacted by “negative social value” (Tilly, 1998) and proximal social problems (Massey, 2007; Pratto, Sidanius, and Levin, 2006) and develop affective concern based on their context (Scherer and Brosch, 2009; Lazarus, 1982). Similarly, the finding that higher strata leaders express greater concern for international issues was anticipated based on theory, as those of higher strata are more removed from social problems generally, and are better able to focus on issues beyond their immediate well-being (Becker, 1966; Becker, 1995; Pratto, Sidanius, and Levin, 2006). These differences could be further explained by research indicating that, in the U.S. stratification system, higher strata group

members are more likely to perceive those of lower strata as responsible for their own state and less worthy of assistance (Loseke, 1999). That higher strata leaders were more focused on crime than lower strata leaders (at the 80% confidence level, though this is not significant) at first seemed contradictory since lower strata group members are actually more likely to be exposed to this social problem. However, their concern is rational since any individual would perceive crime as proximal, or potentially threatening to their well-being (Swim et als, 2010).

Considering the inevitable affective estrangement that stratification and its consequent divergent socialization causes between members of strata groups, research is warranted on what strategies may increase social problem concern amongst enterprise leaders of all strata. This is especially important since the most powerful claimsmakers in any society will be those of higher strata (Becker, 1966). Because of their designated social position, higher strata group members get to be the “moral entrepreneurs” who define which social problems matter most and have the greatest “legitimacy” to direct societal responses toward or against social ills, or ignore them (Becker, 1966; Schneider, 1985; Becker, 1995). Increasing high strata social enterprise leaders’ concern for social problems that neither they nor their immediate associates have ever experienced will help prevent social problems from proliferating and adversely impacting all of society (Becker, 1966; Porter and Kramer, 2006).

Further research on the role institutional settings play in dictating societal-level responses to social problems is important in social entrepreneurship research since societal norms can also infiltrate social enterprises. Overall, these findings suggest, at the least, more research should be conducted to further our understanding of social context’s impact on social enterprise strategy since notable differences exist between groups of higher and lower strata social enterprise leaders in terms of social issue emphases.

## **LIMITATIONS**

There are limitations to this study. First, there were differences in the quantity of publicly available data for analysis between the groups of higher and lower strata social enterprise leaders analyzed in this study. Though we are confident we used a sample with high representation from both groups and had ample power to provide useful insights, higher strata enterprises both had higher quantities of publicly available speeches from their top managers to analyze, as well as speeches with lengthier content [words] to analyze than lower strata enterprises. As such, caution should be exercised in terms of generalization of this study's findings. Additionally, as strata was operationalized as race in this study and since this strata category only exists in the U.S. social stratification context (Massey, 2007; Tilly, 1998; Mills, 1997), caution should be exercised when utilizing these results to study enterprises in countries where there are different stratification systems. Ethnicity, for example, though one could assume it to be a proxy for an ascribed strata category like race, could very well be a more permeable category in other stratification contexts with less extreme associated social and economic consequences than in the U.S.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings in this study have implications for the management and entrepreneurship fields. First, the findings affirm existing management research demonstrating individual-level managerial characteristics can impact firm-level action. However, these findings demonstrate uniquely that the individual managerial characteristic of social status derived from a macro-environmental context can impact the social performance of social enterprises, as managers' social strata positions impact their affective propensities toward social problems, which is, in turn, operationalized in their organizations.

Identifying that social issue bias may naturally manifest itself within organizations based on leaders' backgrounds, even amongst well-meaning social enterprise leaders whose direct missions are to redress social problems, is an important contribution to entrepreneurship research. Social enterprises are increasingly responsible for distributing social services and goods to redress market failures around the globe (Kickul & Lyons, 2012). If differences exist based on social position and/or background in what social enterprise leaders decide to address with enterprise resources, the result could be the persistence of social problems that may have otherwise reduced, overfunding of higher-status preferred social causes, and redistribution of domestic wealth via social enterprises to redress distal rather than proximal social problems.

*“Suffering is inextricably embedded in a social world” where affective concern or the lack thereof is less an issue of moral failure but “the outcome of a structural position” one “cannot help but occupy” (Kleinman, Das, and Lock, 1997).*

This paper's findings shed light on the potential amorality of the development of affective concern for social issues. Yet, the fact that divergent social issue emphases by strata may emerge amorally without malice does not negate the subsequent moral responsibility social enterprise leaders have to mitigate social issues about which they may not be naturally concerned. As such, this paper may indicate the potential usefulness to social enterprises of stakeholder management strategies typically employed by commercial firms (Agle, Donaldson, Freeman, Jensen, Mitchell & Wood, 2008). Exposure of managers to objective, cognitively processable information about the impact of social issues across groups could help mitigate potential strata-group derived bias influencing the allocation of enterprise resources. When employed by social or commercial enterprises, normatively-grounded evaluation procedures for social issues can lead to long-term sustainability in social performance for social enterprises and

improved social conditions for diverse groups of stakeholders in the societies in which these important enterprises are posited (Bowen, 1953; Agle et al., 2008).

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