

The Power of One Entrepreneur: A Case Study of the Effects of Entrepreneurship

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This study examines the effects of entrepreneurship through qualitative case study methods. It examines the life and work of a single small-business entrepreneur in Tupelo, MS to discern how she affects her community both economically and non-economically. Results from the interviews, observations, and document analysis reveal the entrepreneur, an African American hairbraider, role-models entrepreneurship to others, creates new opportunities and expands markets, and creates social change. For the African American community in particular, these effects are significant. The results also demonstrate how for-profit entrepreneurs can use their businesses to achieve social goals.

An hour by car from the nearest interstate, two hours from the nearest international airport, and five hours from the nearest seaport (Roche, 2001), Tupelo, MS, is best known as the birthplace of Elvis Presley. In recent decades, it has also gained attention for economic development that has drawn more than 200 industries to the area, including Fortune 500 and large international companies (Martin, 1994; Maynard, 2007; Sloan, Wiebe, & Tosh, 1995). The economic effects of large international companies on small cities like Tupelo (population 35,297) are significant, but like countless cities across the United States, Tupelo is also home to hundreds of small businesses started and sustained by local entrepreneurs. According to County Business Patterns data drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 65 percent of Tupelo's businesses employ fewer than 10 people, and more than 82 percent employ fewer than 20 people. Such numbers parallel figures in the greater United States, where more than 73 percent of businesses employ fewer than 10 people, and more than 86 percent employ fewer than 20 people. As in the greater United States, small-business entrepreneurs represent the backbone of Tupelo's economy in the goods and services they provide and in the jobs they offer to the community.

But these entrepreneurs add more than economic capital. The power of entrepreneurship is that through business and social networks—that is, the activities and relationships inherent in their work and personal lives—entrepreneurs create invaluable social capital in the community (Thompson, 1999). Social capital is the trust, norms, resources, and networks developed among actors in a social setting (Bourdieu, 1997; Putnam, 2000). Such capital adds both economic and non-economic value to the community through greater productivity, increased social cohesion, and stronger democratic institutions (Portes, 1998). Although such an effect of entrepreneurship can seem a bit abstract, this qualitative case study illustrates how the effects are anything but. This research on a small-business entrepreneur in Tupelo, MS, demonstrates how one entrepreneur can significantly affect her community beyond her immediate network.

Defining "Entrepreneur"

The term "entrepreneur" originated in French economics in the 17th century and indicated someone who shifts economic resources out of an area of lower and into an area of higher productivity and greater yield (Peredo & McLean, 2006). This conventional view suggests the primary function of an entrepreneur is starting new profit-seeking business ventures, especially ones involving financial risk. More contemporary understandings posit that entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial behavior can be found in various different settings, so much so that terms such as "social entrepreneurship" and "civic entrepreneurship" have sprung up to describe entrepreneurial activities beyond the business setting (Thompson, 1999). Some now define entrepreneurs broadly as individuals who add value by spotting an opportunity and assuming risk to translate their vision of what is possible into reality (Jensen & Luthans, 2006; Kao, 1989; Thompson, 1999; Ufuk & Özgen, 2001).

Traditionally defined in the economic sense (Novaczek & Stuart, 2006), value added by entrepreneurs has been broadened to include social value. In the strictest sense, "social entrepreneurs" are driven by the desire to benefit society in some way by contributing to the well being of a given community (Korosec & Berman, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006). As such, social entrepreneurship is typically conceptualized in the non-profit world (Mort, Weerawardena, & Carnegie, 2003; Purdue, 2001).

However, scholars are beginning to recognize that for-profit entrepreneurs can also create social value (Thompson, 2002; Weerawardena & Mort, 2006), an example of which is TOMS Shoes, a company founded in 2006 that gives a pair of shoes to a needy child for every pair purchased (<http://cdn2.tomsshoes.com/default14.htm>). Thus, there appears to be a continuum of possibilities ranging from the requirement that social benefits be the only goal of the entrepreneurial undertaking to the idea that social goals are somewhere among its aims (Fowler, 2000; Peredo & McLean, 2006). According to Peredo and Chrisman (2006), the latter typifies ethnic entrepreneurs. Indeed, that is what we found in the subject of this case study, Melony Armstrong, an African American woman who owns a hairbraiding salon in Tupelo, MS.

Methods

Although attention has been paid to the contributions of small-business entrepreneurs to their communities under a more economic-centric focus, comparably less has been devoted to how such entrepreneurs affect their communities more broadly, both economically and socially. Therefore, we used qualitative case study methods to expand the study of entrepreneurship. The research was guided by the following question: In what ways does an entrepreneur affect her/his community?

Consistent with case study procedures and the concept of triangulation, this research relied on three kinds of data collection: interviews, observations, and written documents (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). We used a networking design to organize and guide our efforts. Research using networking has become a popular means of examining entrepreneurship (O'Donnell, Gilmore, Cummins, & Carson, 2001). It is an approach that

focuses on the linkages between units (Larson & Starr, 1993), emphasizes the exchange processes between actors, recognizes both the economic and social aspects of these exchange relationships (Etzioni, 1988), and views actors in their environmental context (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). Regarding the unit of analysis, most studies of entrepreneurial networks have viewed the network as all relations extending from, or converging on, the entrepreneur. This was the approach we used.

Sample

This network design meant the sample included individuals with whom the subject interacts personally and professionally. Thus, the sampling plan took on elements of both purposive and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2004). The sample included Melony's immediate family, friends with whom Melony has been acquainted for a varying number of years, colleagues and competitors within her industry, former employees, clients, mentors, and professional contacts in the community.

Procedures

Most interview data were collected in Tupelo either in Melony's salon or in other locations to suit the participants' needs and preferences. Telephone interviews were conducted with those not living in Tupelo. All interviews were semi-structured and most lasted from one to two hours. All participants were instructed on the nature and purpose of the research and given the option of ending the interview and declining participation at any time. They were also given the option of being identified by pseudonyms for reporting purposes. Observation data were gathered primarily in Melony's salon, at church, and in other informal settings. Consistent with participant-observer data collection methods (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 1990), the researcher spent considerable time in the salon interacting with Melony and her clients and watching and learning about the hairbraiding business. Analysis of documents included historical works on Tupelo; newspaper and other accounts of Melony that focused on her business and her efforts in deregulating hairbraiding; and contemporary information concerning Tupelo's economic and social environment.

Analysis

Consistent with standard qualitative analysis procedures (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Straus & Corbin, 1998), we used a constant-comparative method to analyze field notes and written documents. This produced an index of codes that were organized into the themes and sub-themes discussed below. Obviously, the inductive nature of both the procedures and the analysis precluded a proactive literature review of these themes, but once identified, we researched the extant literature related to these themes to provide a greater context for the results. That literature is discussed below with the relevant themes and sub-themes.

Results

Melony's Route to Entrepreneurship

After moving to Tupelo in 1993, Melony became aware of the business potential of hairbraiding, sometimes referred to as African hairbraiding. Although largely frowned upon as an adult hairstyle in the United States for many decades, braiding and other natural hairstyles enjoyed a gradual reemergence in the African American community beginning in the 1960s. By the mid-1990s, professional braiders were offering their services in salons to meet a growing demand. However, professional braiding salons operated primarily in large cities, which meant those who lived in smaller communities or rural areas and who were interested in availing themselves of such services had to travel. This included residents in and around Melony's new hometown of Tupelo. Following a 1995 braiding appointment in a Memphis, TN, salon, Melony saw the opportunity braiding presented for the Tupelo area, which had no professional braiding salon.

After a series of workshops, classes, and endless hours of practicing, Melony began working on clients in her home in late 1995—first for free to gain experience and then for a fee. Beginning in 2001, Melony's business began to grow such that she hired other stylists, and in 2005, interest in braiding had grown so much that she began offering braiding classes to aspiring hairbraiders. By 2007, Melony's business had grown to a regular clientele of 10 to 15 customers per week just for her, with other stylists seeing additional clients. Because many of the styles require several hours to complete (and some multiple days), a clientele of 10 to 15 people represents a comfortably busy workweek. Although most are local, some clients travel up to four hours for regular appointments, which can mean every two weeks to once every three months. She even sees some on a semi-regular basis who live in other regions of the country. Sixty percent of her clients are women, forty percent are men, and ages range from young children to senior citizens. Most of her clients are African American, but she also serves a small clientele of non-Blacks as well.

Using demand as the indicator, Melony provides a valuable service to individuals in the Tupelo area (and beyond). But the effect of one entrepreneur on her community transcends the direct service she provides and comes in many forms. In Melony's case, it takes the form of role-modeling, creating opportunities and expanding markets, and creating social change.

Role-Modeling

According to perceptions of those within Melony's network, serving as a role model is most often mentioned as one of her greatest influences, particularly among the African American community. As Roberta Matthews, a 63-year-old African American client of Melony's remembered, "When I was young, we didn't see many examples of people who made a lot of their talents. But Melony provides an example of using your talents to make something."

One of the central features of the process Roberta described is risk-taking, which is characteristic among entrepreneurs generally and one that Melony models to her

community's significant benefit. To begin, Melony faced some high hurdles in opening her business because of both her gender and her race. Toni Bradley, an African American woman who owns a traditional hair salon in Tupelo, describes the business climate there as "horrible" for women entrepreneurs and "very difficult" for Blacks, which is evidenced by the comparably low numbers of women and African American business owners in the area. According to data drawn from the 2002 Survey of Business Owners from the U.S. Census Bureau, only 18% of businesses in Tupelo are owned by women (compared to 25% for the state of Mississippi), and only 6% are owned by African Americans (compared to 13% for the state).

In the African American community specifically, Melony is helping raise awareness of business ownership, rather than simply working for someone else. In the Tupelo area, this is significant. Gary Bradley, an African American man who is a native of the area and who currently manages a local restaurant, remembers a time when Blacks interested in entrepreneurship were not encouraged to pursue their interests:

"As a high school student, I wanted to pursue business as a career, but I was told by a counselor to work in a factory. I had no one to guide me in how to achieve my goals. So I went into the military where I learned lessons and information that helped me get into management."

But the challenges Melony faced in opening her business were not only social barriers outside of the African American community, they also came from within. According to Melony's husband, Kevin, "People in the Black community just did not see it as legitimate." As one of Melony's clients, Diane Moore, explained, "We have been braiding our hair forever; it's part of our culture." Therefore, because Melony offers a service that is a cultural mainstay, people in the Black community did not see the value of braiding as a business. But once established, others recognized not only the worth of Melony's services but also their own ability to open a business by using [their] talents to make something."

As a model for others in her community, Melony's efforts are not passive. Rather, she deliberately models and teaches entrepreneurship to others. Such work is particularly important in promoting entrepreneurship in historically disadvantaged communities where barriers to business ownership include a lack of business knowledge and skills (Raheim, 1997). In her case, Melony holds regular meetings with stylists who work in her salon to talk about business issues and discuss innovative braiding methods. When a new technique emerged in the industry, Melony invested resources into training both herself and women who worked in her salon. For those who research female entrepreneurship, this is no surprise. Generally, women's social orientations are more focused toward relationships, which means they adopt a facilitative style to encourage participation in their business (Levent, Masurel, & Nijkamp, 2003). This enables employees to learn valuable skills and knowledge that can be applied to their own businesses should they strike out on their own.

This is also consonant with Easterly's (2001) discussion of "knowledge leaks," which itself is based on endogenous growth theory (Romer, 1994). According to Easterly, useful knowledge acquired by entrepreneurs "leaks" to those who work for or around the entrepreneur, thereby increasing the knowledge of the workers. That knowledge can then be used by workers to start their own businesses, resulting in economic growth. In Melony's case, the leaks are entirely intentional. She shares her knowledge, such as newly acquired techniques discussed above, with an eye toward a day when stylists leave her salon and start their own business.

In fact, when a few of the stylists left to open their own salon, they took Melony's training with them. Jackie Spates, a 34 year-old hairbraider, worked in Melony's salon in 2006 before partnering with her sister, Chervy Lesure, to open a salon in a neighboring community. She identified "the business side of running a salon" and professional braiding technique as among the most important things she learned from Melony. Jackie is among scores of people Melony has trained. Although some have worked in her salon after taking the classes, Melony receives little direct benefit from sharing her skill and knowledge. Instead, it is part of her desire to teach entrepreneurship to others, particularly young women, and inspire them to pursue business ownership.

According to Roberta Matthews, Melony's influence in teaching, modeling, and inspiring others toward entrepreneurship is one of her greatest contributions:

"Most people think they have to work for someone else and are afraid to work for themselves. The perception is a job equals security; owning a business is seen as too risky. But Melony provides an example of how people can work for themselves and own their own business and be successful. I admire people who take a risk like that—it's something I've never done."

Creating Opportunities and Expanding Markets

Part of Melony's risk was also the chance that she would not be able to overcome resistance to the alternative hair style she offered, but prevailing over the reluctance also meant she would create new opportunities and expand the market in her particular economic and service sector. As a result, she would reap economic benefits for herself and produce new opportunities and markets for others, particularly young Black women, to pursue business ownership. As Melony describes:

"At first I think it was surprising for people to see a young Black woman in business for herself, but because of the nature of what I did, it required a lot of education in what going natural meant and its advantages."

"Going natural" means hairstyles that do not use methods of straightening naturally curly African American hair. There are various methods for doing so, but chemicals (called "perming") are the most common. Although straightened hair is often considered easier to manage, the process can come with some disadvantages (i.e., perming can cause serious scalp irritation). According to Melony and numerous clients, the advantages of natural styles include the lack of skin irritation, manageability

commensurate with straight hair, and comparably lower costs. Moreover, natural hairstyles are not limited just to braids and Afros.

Melony's challenge was educating the community to all of this and convincing them of the advantages of going natural, which (as discussed below) was no small task given the decades of history she had to overcome related to African American hair. Melony remembers just a decade ago when she wore her hair naturally she received ~~a~~ lot of stares. One day while eating out in a restaurant, another woman came up beside me and whispered, "I like your hair, but I could never wear it that way." As the decade passed, attitudes changed from "It's just braids" to "You can actually make a living at this!" But Melony's creation of new opportunities was not limited to opening people's eyes to natural hair and its business potentials. Melony also fought to ensure that those who wanted to take advantage of those new opportunities were not shut out by needless state regulations that imposed onerous licensure requirements on aspiring hairbraiders.

On April 19, 2005, Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour signed legislation enabling hairbraiders to practice their occupation without earning a cosmetology or wig-specialist license, which required completing courses at an accredited cosmetology school of 1,500 hours or 300 hours, respectively. Because the training requirements had nothing to do with braiding, anyone interested in the entrepreneurial opportunities afforded by it had to waste valuable time and money on classes, essentially shutting out those who had the talent and interest in braiding professionally but lacked the resources necessary to complete the requirements. The legislative change was initiated by an August 2004 lawsuit Melony brought against the state. At first glance, Melony's actions seem irrational. Because she already earned a wigology license that enabled her to practice her occupation legally, the state's regulations benefited her by reducing the number of competitors in the market. But Melony's desire was to build her own business and enable others to do so by teaching them how to braid professionally.

She discovered, however, that to teach others, the state required that she must first obtain a cosmetology license (another 1,200 hours of classes in addition to the 300 she completed for wigology), then a cosmetology instructor's license (another 2,000 hours of class), and then apply for a school license. Fed up with all the red tape, Melony joined Margaret Burden and Christina Griffin, aspiring braiders who wanted to learn the business from Melony, to break down the regulatory walls. Weekly trips to the state capital of Jackson (a seven-hour round trip from Tupelo) to convince legislators, organizing potential braiders to contact lawmakers, responding to opposition from traditional cosmetologists, and other grassroots efforts meant countless hours away from her family and her business. But for Melony it was important to create opportunities for others—most of whom she will never meet.

According to Deborah Nutall, a hairbraiding salon owner in Memphis, TN, Melony's fight against the licensing regime had several important implications. "She put up a fight, and that gives others courage to believe in themselves. By standing her ground, she created an opportunity for others to lead a successful life—they don't have to wait for a handout." That final implication receives particular attention among others as well.

Chervy Lesure believes, "The results of the lawsuit have given an opportunity to people who had the talent to braid but couldn't and were on public assistance." "As a result," Jackie Spates says, "other braiders now know they can open their own business and take care of themselves." Toni Bradley observed, "There's no doubt that what Melony did has meant more jobs for the community. Traditional salons are now hiring braiders to work in their shops alongside traditional cosmetologists."

Some of them have come from Melony's salon. She has employed more than two-dozen women in her salon and taught more than 125 individuals, a number of which have gone on to other shops. Further, more than 300 hairbraiders have registered with the state since the 2005 legislative change. Although exact numbers are unknown, some were likely already braiding in Mississippi as part of the informal economy, which means Melony's actions helped move hairbraiders out of the informal and into the formal economy. The informal economy is typically defined as that sector of economic life not systematically recorded and regulated by political units (Nelson, 1999), which includes work activities that occur outside of the conventional market economy (Hoyman, 1987; Kim, 2005; Snyder, 2004). Informal economies are typically tied to the unique political, historical, and economic context of an area (Snyder, 2004), and the informal economy in Mississippi has a long history (Brown et al., 1998).

Although the informal economy functions in all types of settings, it is a prominent and persistent feature of rural life (Nelson, 1999). Moreover, researchers argue that women work in the informal economy more so than men (Brown et al., 1998; Hoyman, 1987; Nelson, 1999; Snyder, 2004). Although the reasons tend to be individualistic, there are trends in what motivates someone to pursue entrepreneurial activity in the informal rather than formal economy. One is to avoid onerous costs of labor regulation (e.g., occupational licensure) typically borne by the individual worker (Schneider & Enste, 2000). Second, women specifically find that working in the informal economy enables them to stay home and earn money while fulfilling domestic responsibilities (Snyder, 2004). This is particularly true for women of limited means who find barriers such as lack of childcare and transportation, low levels of education, and few job skills limit their employment opportunities (Hagen & Lurie, 1993; Miller, 1990; Raheim, 1997).

As Table 1 indicates, some of these factors describe a comparably greater percentage of African American women who live in Tupelo. Data from the 2000 census show African American women as compared to White women consistently head a greater percentage of single-parent households, complete less education, are more often unemployed, and more often live in poverty (Comparisons are not made to other groups because Whites and Blacks make up 97% of the population of Tupelo). Thus, it would be consistent with prior research to find robust participation by African American women in Tupelo in the informal economy, something Melony seeks to change.

In so doing, Melony "plays against type." According to Easterly (2001), those with comparably higher skills and greater knowledge tend to "match," or cluster together as they seek to benefit from the knowledge leaks of others with high skill or knowledge. But Melony did the opposite. Early in her entrepreneurial process she sought out

successful salon owners to acquire knowledge that “leaked” from those individuals, but rather than live in metropolitan areas where successful braiders cluster, Melony chose to live in a comparably low-skilled area in order to invest in others around her.

Table 1 Socio-Economic Indicators Comparing Black and White Women in Tupelo

Tupelo Socio-Economic Indicators	Black	White
Female single parent households	28%	6%
Females with less than a high school diploma	36%	14%
Civilian females in labor force unemployed	13%	2%
Single mothers below poverty	20%	2%
Mothers in civilian labor force unemployed	14%	0%
Females below poverty	16%	3%

Creating Social Change

A significant part of creating opportunities and expanding markets is changing how people view Black hair. For many years, natural (not straightened) Black hair carried significant negative connotations. Beginning in the Civil War era, African American hair was seen as a mark of inferiority (White & White, 1995), which created an attitude of shame among African Americans about their hair. As a result, they assumed the habit of hair straightening (Dias, Baby, Kaneko, & Velasco, 2007). Roberta Matthews remembers:

“In my day, there was a lot of social pressure to straighten your hair. You didn’t go out with nappy hair. People would say, ‘Oh girl, your hair is nappy—do something about it.’ We were ashamed of our hair. Do you know a white woman once told me that she thought Black men had kinky hair and Black women had straight hair? We contributed to that by hiding our natural hair.”

This began to change in the 1960s when natural hair became an important symbol of Black pride. As scholars note, hair can be used to accommodate or resist cultural expectations regarding place in the social structure (Weitz, 2001), thereby symbolizing individual and group identity (Synnott, 1987). Consistent with this, African Americans began to adopt (or readopt) the styles of cornrows and braids, decorated with chevrons, beads, and mirrors. Likewise, Afros and dreadlocks challenged the White aesthetic that had long made curly and kinky hair a symbol of inferiority (White & White, 1995).

Yet, Afrocentric hair is still seen with skepticism and viewed as unprofessional. Those who choose to wear their hair a certain way as a challenge to the dominant ideology about “superior” and “inferior” appearance norms find it can come with a cost, such as losing out on jobs (Weitz, 2001). It is no different in Tupelo. Deborah Harvin, a prominent African American leader in Tupelo, describes: “In Tupelo, there are lots of expectations around what people should and should not look like....Black parents tell

their children not to wear braids to a job interview.” Diane Moore agrees: “If you wear your hair naturally, people say you look like Aunt Jemimah.” When Diane’s sister saw her hair, which Diane wears naturally, her sister asked, “Surely you don’t wear your hair like that to work?” Darin Moss, a law school student and client of Melony’s, wears his hair in locks but will likely cut them off when he prepares to enter the legal profession. “They’re seen as hip-hop and not professional,” he explains.

Yet, Gary Bradley sees changes occurring, albeit slowly, and credits Melony for playing a part in that: “Things are changing, mostly for women right now, and Melony was a change agent in that. She helped people to look at it differently.” That contribution was no accident. Melony sought to use her business to change the historical social norms around Black hair, and that change is occurring. Roberta Matthews now wears her hair in Sisterlocks, which, a decade ago, would have been frowned upon in professional settings, but when Roberta started her job as an occupational therapist in 2006, her locks were a non-issue.

As important as these changes are to Melony, it is only the beginning of her desire for significant change in her community. She has now set her sights on changing the lives of young African American women. In 2007, Melony began bringing young women into the salon, particularly during the summers, and training them as professional braiders. The idea is to redeem the teens’ unstructured time with a productive experience that will instill responsibility and a positive work ethic while creating a family-type ethos where the girls learn about entrepreneurship. As Melony describes: “Teens will likely see working in the salon as an opportunity to earn some money, but it will give me an opportunity to mentor them.”

But mentoring young women in her salon is only the prelude to a project of even greater scope that she has been exploring. In 2006, she ran an ad for braiders on a local hip-hop radio station. “Originally I expected responses from young adults, but unexpectedly I received this huge response from high school dropouts.” In classic entrepreneurial fashion, she saw an unmet opportunity. Her idea is to open a non-profit residential school in which young women learn about running a business and how to braid professionally. The target population would be at-risk 15-20 year olds. She would model it on the current experience of African braiders who come to the United States, live together, and work in the same salon. Only in Melony’s school, the teens would live in housing provided by the school, spend two years learning about entrepreneurship and braiding, finish their GED, and then leave to start their own businesses or work in a salon. On the continuum of social to economic entrepreneur, such an endeavor clearly leans to the social side. Consistent with the synthesis of social and economic entrepreneurship (Fowler, 2000; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006), Melony’s economic activities were always somewhat secondary to what she sensed as her real calling: “Braiding is a means to an end—to a higher purpose.”

Discussion and Conclusion

Over the past several decades, policymakers have come to recognize the microeconomic value entrepreneurs add to their communities (Herring, Bennett, Gills, & Jenkins, 1998), and researchers also demonstrate how entrepreneurs like Melony affect communities economically (Bates, 2006; Novaczek & Stuart, 2006). As this study suggests, the value entrepreneurs add to their communities includes social value as well. Such contributions are not necessarily quantitatively measurable in the way that products, services, and financial capital normally are, but the social value, or social capital, created by entrepreneurs very likely contributes to greater economic vitality. Given what we describe herein and other diverse research on entrepreneurship (Flora, 1998; Johannisson & Monsted, 1997; Thompson, 1999; Weinstein, 1999), we suggest there is a circular relationship between entrepreneurs, social capital, and economic value.

For example, Melony builds social capital in her network of friends, colleagues, and employees. The trust, norms, resources, and networks Melony creates inspire and enable others to seek their own entrepreneurial activities that will contribute greater economic value. As Melony's entrepreneurial progeny build their own businesses, they will create social capital through their own networks, replicating the process observed with Melony. In communities with comparably greater percentages of individuals living at or below poverty, dependent on social welfare, or on unemployment benefits, inspiring and enabling others to pursue entrepreneurship is particularly powerful (Bates, 1989; Butler, 1991; Cobas, 1985; Horton, 1988; Levent et al., 2003; Light & Sanchez, 1987; Sullivan & McCracken, 1988).

So, too, are non-economic social effects. Take, for example, prominent entrepreneurs such as Henry Ford, Bill Gates and Ray Kroc. Their economic effects are obviously beyond question, but their work also in some way, or ways, fundamentally changed the social fabric, that is, how we live our lives. Microentrepreneurs can also create such change, just on a different scale. In Melony's case, one example is how both Blacks and non-Blacks view and treat themselves and others based on appearance. As noted above, some scholars believe such changes penetrate down to essential issues like social consciousness and self-identity (Sekayi, 1997; Smith, Burlew, & Lundgren, 1991; Synnott, 1987; Weitz, 2001; White & White, 1995).

Of course, realizing benefits like these depends on the ability of entrepreneurs to pursue their visions unencumbered by needless burdens that restrict entrepreneurial activity. An example of such is illustrated here in the form of occupational licenses. Such regulations are typically justified as a way to protect public health, safety, and welfare, but they are more often pursued by those already working within an occupation to shut out new entrants into the industry, creating an economic advantage for current practitioners (Cox & Foster, 1990; Kleiner & Kudrle, 2000). This can be particularly disadvantageous in occupations well suited for low-income, entry-level entrepreneurs who typically lack the financial capital or education required for other professions (Federman, Harrington, & Krynski, 2006; Hazlett & Fearing, 1998).

Occupational licenses are not the only forms of regulation hindering greater entrepreneurship. The red tape entrepreneurs must penetrate just to start a business, let alone sustain one, is overwhelming to even the savviest individuals, let alone those with little experience and few resources (Berliner, 1997; Bolick, 1997; Bullock, 1997; Dranias, 2006; Keller, 2003; Petersen, 2004; Summers, 2007). Given the enormous role small business owners play in the economy and the perpetual quest to stimulate economic growth at local, state, and national levels, reducing regulatory burdens and restrictions to free up the power of entrepreneurship would be low cost, high return investment.

As Melony's entrepreneurial activities demonstrate, the power of this one entrepreneur transcends her ability to create material wealth. It is evident when she models entrepreneurship to her community, teaches entrepreneurship to aspiring braiders, expands markets and creates opportunities for others, or works to break the cycle of poverty among at-risk teens. The power of this one entrepreneur is that by pursuing financial capital measured by dollars and cents, she greatly expands and enriches human capital.

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