

Stanford SOCIAL INNOVATION REVIEW

Review

Survival of the Deviant

By Richard Pascale, Jerry Sternin, & Monique Sternin

Review by Dean Karlan

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Climate Soldiers

Review by *Stephen H. Schneider*

THE CLIMATE WAR: True Believers, Power Brokers, and the Fight to Save the Earth

Eric Pooley
481 pages, Hyperion, 2010

Business beat correspondent and editor Eric Pooley parlayed his inside-the-tent contacts in Eastern U.S. power establish-

ment circles to be a fly on the wall for many of these Beltway insiders, and he observed and reported on the good, the bad, and the ugly of the climate debate in those circles. That alone gives important insight to the machinations of spin, message control, and dirty politics—as well as the bright side: those working tirelessly for honest messages and policies to right our sinking ecological ship. From that perspective there could hardly be a better reporter than Pooley, and indeed he witnessed a climate war and reported it quite accurately.

Here is what his publisher's own blurb says to frame his book, which (despite the obvious self-hype) describes his objectives well: "Pooley [deputy editor of *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*], the former managing editor of *Fortune* and chief political correspondent for *Time*, spent three years embedded with an extraordinary cast of characters: from the flamboyant head of one of the nation's largest coal-burning energy companies to the driven environmental leader who made common cause with him; from leading scientists warning of impending catastrophe to professional skeptics disputing almost every aspect of climate science; from radical activists chaining themselves to bulldozers to powerful lobbyists, media gurus, and advisors in Obama's West Wing. He also gained unprecedented access to former Vice President Al Gore and his Alliance for Climate Protection.

"Pooley captures the quiet determination and even heroism of climate campaigners who have dedicated their lives to an uphill battle that's still raging today. He asks whether we have what it takes to preserve our planet's habitability,

and shows how America's climate war sends shock waves from Bali to Copenhagen. ...

The Climate War is the essential read for anyone who wants to understand the players and politics behind the most important argument in America."

OK, fair enough description of his objectives, which were in my view accomplished well, despite the over-heroic hype one expects from self-assessments and "inside baseball" reporting.

Now for some true confessions from me—I too have a dog in this show of the climate wars, but it is a 40-year sweeping history, is international in perspective, deals with the poverty and sustainability dimensions that dominate international negotiations, and frankly, sees the last four years of Eastern U.S. establishment machinations as virtually trivial in the scheme of this problem over its half-century history. (My book, *Science as a Contact Sport: Inside the Battle to Save Earth's Climate*, was released by the National Geographic Society in November 2009.)

That Pooley seemed unaware of it was a bit personally disturbing to me, having been in at the creation, so to speak, of this issue; but then there are hundreds of climate books out there by now, so why should any one get particular attention, I suppose.

Not that Pooley is wrong in his insights or that they are not worth knowing, but this problem was so far along when his reportorial fly went on the walls of power places east of Carthage, Tenn.—Al Gore's abode—that the climate debate train had already left the station back in the 1970s. If you want a balanced history, you could not conceivably find it in the fights of the Eastern U.S. power establishment starting 10 years after the Kyoto

Protocol was negotiated! To be fair, given the critical importance of the U.S. position at international negotiations, and that our position does depend on the Eastern inside-the-Beltway establishment, one should read Pooley's book for that alone. It has very important insights on how the United States will or won't get meaningful climate policy, policy that will have a major influence on the international negotiations, a process built up haltingly over the past many decades (for that, naturally, I suggest you see my book).

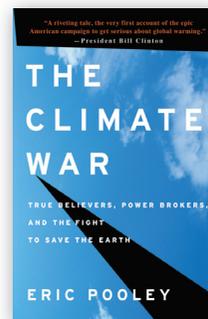
Let me briefly give an insight on the

sweep of time I discuss in *Contact Sport* that underlies what Pooley brings us up to date on in *The Climate War*.

In the 1970s, when I was often in Congress and even the White House on, yes, climate change science and policy issues, the debate was bipartisan, informational, and cordial. Fears of climate change dangers were not omitted

in our presentations, but back then it was mostly theoretical inference from science, not yet the directly observed damages we have seen lately, such as unprecedented wildfires in the western United States, polar ice melting well beyond prediction, killer heat waves, air pollution events, and much more. In fact, the biggest factor since our early warnings is that "nature has cooperated with theory," as I explain in *Contact Sport*; so now a compelling case for policy hedging is no longer just theoretical, but ethical, economic, and ecological. But, perhaps ironically, the more evidence we get, the louder and more distorted the opposition has become—and most of the time the mainstream media dutifully report with equal credibility all claimants of truth in a false dichotomy misapplication of the political

balance doctrine (get the Democrat, then equal time to the Republican)—a pernicious framing for complex science where end-of-the-world and good-for-you extreme positions are the two lowest probability outcomes. See *Contact*



STEPHEN H. SCHNEIDER died July 19, three days after submitting this review. (The review remains unedited.) Schneider was a Stanford University biology professor and climate scientist who gathered evidence for global warming and advocated policies to combat climate change for four decades. He advised the administration of every president from Richard Nixon to Barack Obama, won a MacArthur Foundation "genius" award in 1992, and was part of a United Nations panel on climate change that shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore.

Sport if you want many examples of false balanced reporting without fact-checking.

So where and when did we switch from cordial to ugly, as Pooley and I are compelled to report?

I first saw the ugliness arise in the United States after Reagan's inauguration in 1981, and I put the blame on that administration. U.S. Rep. Al Gore was also a major player; in fact, the contention began at his congressional hearing in 1981—for which I was a witness.

In brief, the Reagan administration, applying the ideological principle of not supporting behavioral or environmental research, eliminated on those ideological grounds a major interdisciplinary Department of Energy study on the impacts of global warming on nature and society run by Roger Revelle, Gore's Harvard environmental teacher. (I co-ran the study with Revelle and others, which is why I was at the hearing.) When Gore challenged the cuts, the administration responded that they couldn't support "alarmism." That was the opening ugly shot. It got mega-ugly from then until now, especially in the Congress and the media op-ed pages.

What underlay this loss of cordiality and honest information exchange from the earlier decade? The most environmentally oriented presidents of the past century, in my view, were Republicans: Richard Nixon—who created the EPA—and Teddy Roosevelt. After all, what is a more conservative word than "conservation"? But to the Reaganites, the very admission of global warming was an ideological no-no. It represented the collective planetary-scale footprint of personal, corporate, and national decisions to use the atmosphere as a convenient, free sewer to dump our smokestack wastes, tailpipe emissions, and side effects of land-use changes like deforestation. To admit that we were harming the planetary commons was to admit that we needed regulatory solutions, some internationalist—the ultimate no-no to ideologists of American hegemony and economic power. So denial of global warming became *de facto* government policy, since the ideology of protecting entrepreneurial rights over public amenities was Reaganite doctrine. The Gore hearing was the first public gun battle in the Congress.

So the message, dear reader, is look un-

demeath the hype and spin out there and try to separate out what aspects of the debate are legitimate remaining scientific uncertainties—still plenty of those left to go around—and what fraction is simply an ideological protection of world views in drag as "sound science." That separating job is a real tax on public understanding of how to first understand, and then deal with, very complex topics that have a high bar of information needed to even enter the debate intelligently. In the last chapter of *Contact Sport*, I ask a scary question: "Can democracy survive complexity?" My National Geographic Society editors thought that too much of a downer as my final chapter title and substituted "What Keeps Me Awake at Night." Either way, for a representative democracy to function well, both the public and its representatives have to understand what is at stake: Risk equals what can happen multiplied by the odds it will happen.

Next is the public policy choice part—risk management. This is the public values aspect over what to do about it, given all the calls in society for governmental use of limited resources. That type of complexity is becoming commonplace now as debate over climate policy, health care, education, national defense, etc., are all topics of enormous confusion and spin from special interests and ideologists. The public and its representatives need to put all this hype and spin in context—ergo my sleepless nights.

There are many places where you can get into the set of details that are credible in the case of the climate debate, but *Contact Sport* is, if you forgive the shameless self-service, a place to start, with its balanced sweep of how we got to where we are in this debate of more than four decades. Good luck if you wish to join us in the bloody, muddy trenches of the climate wars—we need the assistance of all who want to help. But before you go to battle, go to boot camp—read and be informed. It is much easier to fight when you know how to use your weapons.

Restoring a civil public dialogue would, to me, be the most important first step we could take to heal the climate and the public rift over protecting our common heritage. We are already well into this dangerous experiment we are performing on "Laboratory Earth"—with us and all other living things along for the ride. ■

Survival of the Deviant

Review by Dean Karlan

THE POWER OF POSITIVE DEVIANCE: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World's Toughest Problems

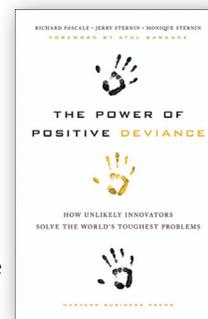
Richard Pascale, Jerry Sternin, & Monique Sternin
256 pages, Harvard Business Press, 2010

In *The Power of Positive Deviance*, authors Richard Pascale, Jerry Sternin, and Monique Sternin take their readers on a fascinating tour to learn about "positive deviance"—an ap-

proach to solving social, and even some business, problems.

The approach, which the authors developed from work done by Tufts University nutrition professor Marian Zeitlin in the 1980s—has roughly three steps. First, engage the people needing change in the process; they must take part in discovering answers to their problems to adopt changes. Second, identify "positive deviants"—people who seem to have succeeded compared with others, despite having the same resources. Finally, work with communities to pinpoint what the positive deviants do differently, and figure out how the whole community can adopt these successful practices.

The authors' tour starts in rural Vietnam, where they explore how households there might use existing resources to feed their children more nutritionally. Then it's on to Egypt, where they look for ways to change opinions and practices on female circumcision. Back in Pittsburgh, they examine how doctors and nurses working in hospitals might wash their hands more often. And all the while you feel like you're sitting at a dinner table as three engaging people recount their round-the-world adventure and quest to improve the quality of life around them. The authors describe their locations won-



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derfully and keep their prose crisp and to the point.

I'm always happy, too, when advocates for a particular policy are realistic about its limitations, and these authors put forward two clear limitations: Positive deviance works only to change existing behaviors—not to introduce new technologies; and specific lessons learned in one place sometimes don't work elsewhere.

By the end of the book I felt hopeful of positive deviance's future success and glad that the authors reached thousands of people during their journey, possibly starting them on a trajectory of success. And yet I was left hungry for more. I wanted to stay at that dinner table even though the stories were over, and say, "We can take this to the masses and get more facilitators doing this only when you've shown that positive deviance truly works."

The evidence the authors put forward typically consists of "here is where folks in our study were before" and "here is where they are afterward" (sometimes referred to as before-and-after studies). Other things are happening at the same time that can cause trends to occur, and the people who participate in programs often tend to be different: They are likely striving to succeed and searching for ways out of their problem. In social science, we call this a selection bias, and we are certain that it wreaks havoc on knowing whether the positive deviance approach worked, or if the individuals who participated would have experienced better outcomes anyhow—because of either their environment or their spirit to succeed.

To illustrate this evaluation challenge, let's go to the opening story on nutrition in Vietnam. Some parents, just as poor as everyone else, were feeding their kids crabs and shrimp that they collected daily from rice paddies and added to the soup. These kids were not malnourished. And so the authors identified them as the positive deviants, others adopted their practices, and then lots more children escaped malnourishment. But this was part of a larger program, run by the same organization, in which parents and caretakers were also given tofu and eggs to feed their children. So what caused the reduction in malnourishment—the little shrimp and crabs that positive deviance told them to feed their chil-

dren, or the free handouts of tofu and eggs?

In another story, the authors used positive deviance to help identify why some salespeople at a pharmaceutical company sold a lot of one particular drug while others didn't. The authors tell us that a sign of positive deviance's success was that sales increased on average for everyone. But three tidbits give me pause. First, the drug was upgraded, so perhaps sales increased in response to the upgrade. Second, even in the later time period, the positive deviants were still deviating. Maybe positive deviants kept some ideas to themselves or discovered new ones, or the mimicry didn't work: Sometimes an apprentice can mimic but still doesn't get it quite right. Last, we learn that the pharmaceutical company did not continue with the positive deviance approach, despite the before-and-after increase in sales. I had to wonder: Would the pharmaceutical company have been more likely to adopt this if it were faced with evidence more akin to randomized trials—what companies usually use to determine if something works or not?

I also wanted answers about how to truly identify the behavior that *causes* the positive deviation. This identification may not be simple in many settings, and in the book, it felt as if community members were being asked to conduct complicated econometric, analytical, or theoretical exercises that would establish causal relationships between behaviors and outcomes.

And last but not least: What will positive deviance cost if implemented on a large scale, such as an entire region or a country? How many failed attempts occurred (e.g., when no positive deviant behavior was identified or adopted) for each of the success stories we heard about? I want answers not because I'm an accountant or an economist, but because I want to support the ideas that are the most effective per dollar donated or invested.

Ultimately, I'd recommend that proponents of positive deviance apply a bit of positive deviance to positive deviance itself—a meta-study, so to speak. Is positive deviance the approach that works best, compared with other approaches? Setting up randomized evaluations and comparing positive deviance with other methods (or nothing at all) would help us know if positive deviance

is indeed a positive deviant.

With clear, concrete evidence, people hoping to solve social problems could listen, learn, and adopt positive deviance themselves. In which case this book can serve as a great starter kit, whetting their appetites and generating the enthusiasm for further exploration. ■

Hear, Hear for Profits

Review by Rodney Schwartz

BUILDING SOCIAL BUSINESS: The New Kind of Capitalism that Serves Humanity's Most Pressing Needs
Muhammad Yunus
256 pages, PublicAffairs, 2010

To change the world once is remarkable. A second attempt invites deification. But Muhammad Yunus, the founder of

Grameen Bank and pioneer of microcredit, has embarked on yet another crusade: to foster a new kind of organization, the "social business."

In his new book, *Building Social Business*, Yunus devotes many pages to narrowing down the existing definition of a social business—many people precede him in defining it, since the form first cropped up in the Victorian era—but he considers it a new form of economic organization that links a social, ethical, or environmental objective with a commercial or financial one. He also lays out a road map for how these new firms can grow and prosper. Indeed, I found much to admire here and in the man, whose work I have long respected.

The book is a refreshingly easy read. Yunus might have started life as a professor, but he certainly doesn't write like an academic. Instead he fills his book with practical examples, tactics, ideas, and insights—especially in his chapter on launching a social business, where he repeatedly stresses the need for social business to be "at least as well managed as any profit-maximizing business" and notes the importance of speed, planning, regular reevaluation of plans, and understanding one's market. He also provides

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many glimpses of the compelling genius behind Grameen Bank, which, together with Yunus, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.

We meet Yunus “the master salesman,” astutely aware of the brand he has created and its value—especially to large corporate partners. We peer into the mind of a visionary thinker who sees boundless possibilities and constantly enables and energizes those around him—he was one of the first to see the untapped potential of those living at the bottom of

the pyramid. But we also gain access to the practical genius who understands that every long journey begins with “a small step.”

All that said, I was troubled by the book. One of Yunus’s core ideas—his definition of a social business—is simply too rigid and dogmatic; it may cause unintended harm to objectives Yunus holds dear. Too many organizations fall outside Yunus’s definition of a social business. He dismisses cooperatives founded in the United Kingdom in the mid-1800s, for instance, though many people, including me, consider them prime examples of social businesses. No, “[a cooperative is] not ... social business,” he writes. “Some people think that a social business is a kind of non-profit organization. This is not correct.” But the highly successful and well-known Ben & Jerry’s and The Body Shop aren’t social businesses either, according to Yunus. Yet I am certain that The Body Shop’s founders, Anita and Gordon Roddick, saw it very much as a social business. And should Yunus’s definition influence tax policy, some social businesses would lose out.

Yunus would also exclude the Ethical Property Company, a U.K. firm lending only to social change organizations—even though it works hard to strike the right balance between shareholders, clients, and staff interests. Isn’t this balance precisely what we should encourage in our currently unbalanced economy? JustGiving, a profit-seeking social business that facilitates charitable giving, would be out, too—even though it has proven more successful in raising money for charity (more than £500 million) than all its competitors combined. So are we to ignore the benefit of this firm’s contribution and strike it from the roster, merely because it also generates returns for

its management, staff, and equity investors? Perhaps this incentive has helped bring about the social benefits. And the results should still matter.

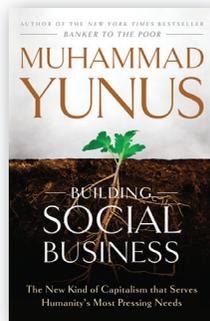
Yunus’s definition of social business does not withstand scrutiny, either. He includes large corporate partners who have created social business joint ventures with Grameen merely because they receive no direct financial return (not even 1 percent—a Yunus rule). But to suggest that they get no financial reward is misleading.

They receive substantial corporate social responsibility benefits (an expenditure thus avoided), and one partner, the French company Veolia Water, even derives substantial research and development and market research benefits from its work. I do not begrudge Veolia these gains and am delighted that they work with Grameen, but let us not pretend that these returns differ in any substantive way from dividends, interest, or capital gains. Huge multinational corporations

can also forgo current income on certain investments, but struggling social enterprises may need to raise capital from investors who insist upon a financial return. Why penalize these organizations merely because they lack Yunus’s exceptional access to large corporations?

Furthermore, Yunus’s brand of social business allows profits to be earned, but only if totally owned by the poor. But he doesn’t say how poor these “poor” must be, and isn’t clear about what happens if the social business succeeds and the owners become less poor. Are these social businesses then disqualified? There is some problem with a model when success leads to disqualification.

My last objection to Yunus’s definition: His limitations will severely constrain activity and discourage innovation. By insisting only on nil-return-seeking capital, he greatly restricts the available capital sources. This handicaps those of us who seek to encourage more capital into the sector. Even without Yunus’s rules, the pool seems far too



THE ESSENCE OF *Strategic Giving*

A Practical
Guide for
Donors and
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“Peter Frumkin has long been one of our leading big picture thinkers in the world of philanthropy. In this terrific short book, Frumkin marries his vision of great philanthropy—strategic giving—with myriad real-world case studies. It is Frumkin at his best.”

**Rob Reich, faculty
co-director, Center on
Philanthropy and Civil
Society, Stanford University**

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small—why on earth should we further limit the capital available to them?

My company, ClearlySo, seeks to build a broad church within the sector—not to exclude the many wonderful and innovative ventures on what feel like technicalities. Perhaps that is why I take such umbrage at Yunus’s definition. Still, I consider the book a vital contribution to the exploration of social business. ■

Put the People to Work

Review by Chris Jarvis

SERVING COUNTRY AND COMMUNITY: Who Benefits from National Service?

Peter Frumkin & Joann Jastrzab
310 pages, Harvard University Press, 2010

American society has long benefited from the work of volunteers. President Franklin D. Roosevelt even institutionalized the opportunity to

serve in 1933, when he created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), part of his New Deal, to combat the Great Depression. This public work relief program enlisted men age 18 to 24 and paid them a small wage along with food, shelter, and clothing. Through the program, Roosevelt was able to help 250,000 destitute men while achieving historic strides for environmentalism: CCC volunteers developed more than 800 parks and planted 3 billion trees.

Although the program was discontinued in 1942 when the United States entered World War II, America had enjoyed her first taste of national service. President Clinton revived the form in 1993 when he established AmeriCorps. This program requires volunteers to commit 20 to 40 hours a week, typically in local programs that provide services such as building, tutoring, and cleanup of public areas. Some volunteers receive modest living stipends, and most are eligible for grants to help pay for college or student loans. President George W. Bush expanded AmeriCorps, and the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, passed last year, promises to mushroom its size. Already AmeriCorps has provided volunteer opportunities for

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more than 500,000 citizens.

Given this legislation, write Peter Frumkin and Joann Jastrzab in *Serving Country and Community*, one might assume that “the slated expansion of national service is grounded in a deep and penetrating understanding of how service works and how it shapes the lives of young people.” But no such understanding exists, they say.

Indeed, despite racking up millions of volunteer hours and billions of dollars in expenses, the true value of AmeriCorps remains unexamined by both the federal government and the Corporation for National and Community Service, a public-private partnership charged with delivering national service in America. “It is still unclear,” the authors maintain, “who benefits from national service, under what conditions these programs work best, and how exactly they contribute to the strengthening of communities.” And so they wrote the book, hoping (quite rightly) to discover who exactly benefits from massive investments in national service.

Frumkin and Jastrzab begin their examination of national service’s value by identifying the visions people have of the purpose and impact of national service. After conducting a good number of interviews with leaders in the field, four distinct visions emerge: citizenship and civic engagement, personal growth, social capital, and public work. The authors define and explore each thoroughly, and name the main potential benefits in each category. They also research several national service programs, compare the data collected from those who served against similar groups who did not serve, and tick off which visions are fulfilled by each program.

The results of this study are, as the authors put it, “nuanced and at times unexpected. Positive effects are intertwined with negative effects, right alongside findings of no effects at all. Short-term and long-term effects at times coincide and at times conflict.” But in the end, national service seems to achieve all four visions in one way or another. And by the end of the book, the authors had provided one of the clearest and most concise examinations of volunteerism I have yet come across. Given the nation’s multiple programs, each with distinct yet

overlapping objectives and politicians demanding various outcomes as proof of the program’s value, we need this book.

Yet I was left wondering if the authors hadn’t sidestepped the larger question facing national service: “Is it worth the expense?” Compared with the unpaid voluntary service of millions of Americans each year, who really benefits, and to what degree, from paid national service?

The authors answer this question only by setting aside the vast quantities of evidence they collected and reviewed and estimating “in a different way what the value of service might be on a national level.” They multiply a rather simplistic ratio of volunteer hours by the “conservative independent sector rate for the hourly value of vol-

unteering” (\$20). They then divide this number by the actual amount each program costs, concluding that “the benefits of national service outweigh its costs.” This summary argument is suspect at best, and at worst may actually argue against programs such as AmeriCorps. For many, national service programs offer “cheap” labor at too high a cost

to the taxpayer. Unlike Roosevelt’s CCC, AmeriCorps is not combating the Great Depression, and it lacks the singular focus of environmentalism. It appears to be paying Americans to volunteer to work in communities—something that happens without government intervention or expense.

National service’s cost wouldn’t be a problem if it could achieve something above and beyond what traditional volunteering achieves. According to Frumkin and Jastrzab’s own research, however, this is not the case. Their conclusion that AmeriCorps’s greatest value is cheap labor seems to undermine the book’s original premise and may, in fact, arm AmeriCorps’s critics with the ultimate argument: National service costs too much and achieves too little when compared with the greater army of unpaid volunteers in America.

As the book concludes, the question remains: Who benefits from national service? I began reading *Serving Country and Community* as a strong advocate of AmeriCorps and other national service programs. Now I am not so sure. ■

