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DOI:

[10.1002/9781118970812](https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118970812)

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Stephan, U., & Drencheva, A. (2017). The person in social entrepreneurship: A systematic review of research on the social entrepreneurial personality. In *The Wiley Handbook of Entrepreneurship* (pp. 205-229). John Wiley and Sons Inc.. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118970812>

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**The Person in Social Entrepreneurship:
A Systematic Review of Research on the Social Entrepreneurial Personality**

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Abstract

We present a systematic review of 50 empirical studies on the social entrepreneurial personality. We aim to answer ‘who social entrepreneurs are’ to help understand why certain individuals but not others create social ventures and persist in their choice. The review findings reveal a focus on four distinct aspects of personality: motivations, traits, identities, and skills; and are based on three approaches: describing the personality of social entrepreneurs, comparing them to another group, and relating personality aspects to outcomes such as strategic choices or performance. The findings offer a multi-dimensional and refined account of who social entrepreneurs are. Social entrepreneurs are simultaneously driven by a range of motivations and values which include but are not limited to prosocial concerns. Certain extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are shared by commercial and social entrepreneurs. Social and commercial entrepreneurs also seem to exhibit similar ‘entrepreneurial’ personality traits and benefit equally from transformational leadership skills. Emerging research points to further distinct ‘social traits’ and identities. Important avenues for future research include paying attention to heterogeneity among types of social entrepreneurs, encouraging more theory-based research, research relating personality to personal and venture-level outcomes, research that considers more dynamic and contextualized perspectives, as well as research on a potential dark side of the social entrepreneurial personality.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, personality, identity, motives, values, traits, leadership, skills, abilities, human capital

Acknowledgement: The first author acknowledges financial support provided by the European Union through its Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development, and demonstration under the grant agreement 217622 (SELUSI project), which supported initial work on this chapter.

This is a pre-print version of the final accepted book chapter. The citation to the published chapter is

Stephan, U. & Drencheva, A. (2017). The person in social entrepreneurship: A systematic review of research on the social entrepreneurial personality (pp. 205-230), In G. Ahmetoglu, T. Chamorro-Premuzic, B. Klinger, & T. Karcisky (Eds.), *The Wiley Handbook of Entrepreneurship*. Chichester: John Wiley.

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurs are individuals who start, lead, and manage organizations that seek to create social value by addressing societal challenges such as environmental degradation, ill-health or social exclusion (Mair & Martí, 2006). Policy makers increasingly hail social entrepreneurship as a tool to address societal challenges in novel ways and to alleviate strains on government welfare budgets¹. Academics' interest in social entrepreneurship has grown dramatically over the past two decades as evident in a rising number of publications, including empirical studies (Gras, Moss, & Lumpkin, 2014; Short, Moss, & Lumpkin, 2009). Consequently, reviews of the social entrepreneurship literature no longer focus on mapping the entire field and definitional concerns (Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010), but concentrate on specific areas of inquiry such as the tensions inherent in hybrid organizing (Battilana & Lee, 2014). No review has yet systematized what we know and do not know about the personality of social entrepreneurs, including their values, motives, traits, identities, and skills. As research into social entrepreneurship matures, it is important to take stock of what we know about the individuals involved in it.

Research on the 'social entrepreneurial personality' to date is dispersed and seen by some as a niche area. This may be a reaction to early practitioner accounts of 'heroic' social entrepreneurs who ingeniously overcome a multitude of obstacles (Bornstein, 2004; Leadbeater, 1997). Or it may be a reflection of the wider debate about the relevance of personality for entrepreneurship (Gartner, 1989; Rauch & Frese, 2007). After decades of debate, several meta-analyses now provide robust evidence that 'personality matters' for business creation and the success of commercial entrepreneurs (for an overview see Frese & Gielnik 2014). As any behavior, entrepreneurial action can be understood as a result of

¹ Examples are the European Commission's "Social Business Initiative" (European Commission, 2014), or financial support to the sector, for example, through the creation of Big Society Capital by the UK government and the White House' Social Innovation Fund in U.S.A..

individual and situational factors – of both structure and agency (Davidsson, 2015). Thus, a ‘personality’ lens draws attention to stable character differences between individuals and can help to understand one of the key individual factors at play in social entrepreneurial activity.

We suggest that a personality lens can provide an important perspective on why certain individuals but not others create social ventures and persist in their choice. While we do not propose that such inter-individual differences alone explain entrepreneurial behavior, nor that they are the most important determinants of entrepreneurial behavior, applying Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) theory (Baron, Franklin, & Hmieleski, 2016; Schneider, 1987) to social entrepreneurship can help us understand the role of inter-individual differences. ASA theory outlines that individuals are *attracted* to specific occupational choices (such as starting a social enterprise) because they perceive their personality characteristics, motivations, and skills to align with the requirements of that occupational choice. They then self-select into this career if they find they have indeed the required motivations, traits, and skills. Others may reinforce this *selection* because they similarly perceive such a fit (e.g., social investors or social enterprise support organizations providing finance and support to an individual whom they see as having the potential to be a social entrepreneur). Yet being a social entrepreneur may involve different requirements than the individual originally thought, and hence they may withdraw from their choice (the *attrition* phase).

In this systematic review, we take stock of research on the personality of social entrepreneurs to encourage an evidence-based discussion of what might constitute a ‘social entrepreneurial personality’ and to stimulate future research. By outlining what we know and what we do not know about the person in social entrepreneurship, we seek to map particularly fruitful areas for future research. The review findings offer a refined account of ‘who’ social entrepreneurs are – moving beyond simply equating social entrepreneurship with prosocial

motivation. They shed light on the multitude of motivations at play in social entrepreneurship, on differences and similarities with commercial entrepreneurs, and suggest important heterogeneity within the population of social entrepreneurs that is typically overlooked in research to date.

Before presenting the findings of our review, we define social entrepreneurship and personality. We then characterize the review method and present the findings of the review. We conclude by outlining avenues for future research.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Social Entrepreneurship

For the purpose of this review, we defined social entrepreneurs as individuals who lead and manage organizations that seek to create social value by addressing societal challenges such as environmental degradation, ill-health or social exclusion. We thus opt for a broad definition of a social entrepreneur emphasizing the goal to create social value (Mair & Martí, 2006). This is in line with occupational definitions of entrepreneurship, which include as entrepreneurs those who lead and manage an organization, or are self-employed (cf. Gorgievski & Stephan 2016). Our definition recognizes that social entrepreneurship can be realized either through commercial or non-profit ventures (Mair & Martí, 2006). We feel such a broad definition is useful as empirical research on social entrepreneurship is still in a relatively nascent stage. We hope future reviews may be able to define social entrepreneurs more narrowly emphasizing social value creation through market-based activities (Stephan, Patterson, Kelly, & Mair, 2016) and ‘new entry’, e.g., the creation of a new organization or market (Davidsson, 2016).

2.2. Personality

The term ‘personality’ is often used inconsistently in the literature and has been associated with motives, values, traits, and skills, and even socio-demographic indicators. Based on extant theory in personality and social psychology, we differentiate four aspects of ‘personality’. Characteristic of all aspects of personality is that they describe the tendency or disposition of an individual to behave in a relatively consistent manner across a range of different situations and over time (Mischel, 2004).

First, individuals exhibit differences in their *motivation*, i.e., what they find important and energizes their behavior. Broad differences in motivations are captured by human values, which refer to abstract and enduring life goals (Schwartz, 2012). They influence especially deliberate and thoughtful actions; whereas traits (see below) are more closely related to typical every-day and spontaneous behavior (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002). Specific motivations are described by constructs such as motives for entrepreneurship.

Second, in the *trait* perspective, personality describes differences between individuals in patterns of feeling, thinking, and behavior. General and specific traits may be differentiated. An example for the former are the Big Five personality traits (Goldberg, 1990). Specific traits typically associated with entrepreneurial behavior are proactivity, self-efficacy, and creativity/innovativeness (Frese & Gielnek, 2014).

Third, the *identity* perspective highlights that individuals differ in their sense of self and how they see themselves. Identity is related to the roles that individuals fulfil or take on (e.g., as a leader at work, a social change activist, or a mother at home) and the social groups they feel they belong to (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Fourth, individuals show stable differences in their *skills*, which are related to typical patterns of performing. Specific skills such as leadership and managerial skills have been highlighted as particularly relevant for social entrepreneurs (Thompson, Alvy, & Lees, 2000).

Our review retrieved studies speaking to each one of these four perspectives on personality. We present them clustered by these perspectives.

3. Review approach and overview of the reviewed studies

We conducted literature searches using Web of Science covering sources published between 1970 and February 2016. We searched for the following keywords in titles, abstracts and keywords of papers: one set of keywords specified social entrepreneur (“social entrepreneur”, “sustainab* entrepreneur”, “social venture”, “social enterprise”, non-profit, or not-for-profit) and was combined with a second set of keywords specifying personality (personality or trait or motiv*). This yielded 606 search results, which we coded for inclusion in the review based on reading the title and abstract of each paper. We complemented these results with (1) Google Scholar searches for which we scanned and coded the first 100 results, (2) searching the references of papers included in the review, and (3) scanning the table of contents of leading entrepreneurship journals (Journal of Business Venturing, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice). We also set up search alerts in Web of Science, which allowed us to include new studies published between February and September 2016.

Our coding identified a set of 50 papers that studied aspects of the social entrepreneurial personality. We included only empirical studies as our aim is to provide an overview of the existing evidence-base on the social entrepreneurial personality. With regard to the specific aspect of personality under investigation, our dataset included 37 papers presenting findings on motivation, 14 on traits, 4 on identity, and 6 on skills, especially leadership skills. Nine

papers included findings relevant to more than one aspect of personality. We classified studies based on the actual measures of personality that they employed and their conceptual fit with the four personality aspects presented above. At times this diverged from how the authors had framed a study.

With regard to the research approach, most studies utilized a cross-sectional (38 papers) or a retrospective design (8 papers), with three longitudinal studies and two (quasi-) experimental studies². Most findings were based on quantitative approaches (64 percent), while the 16 qualitative studies included case study designs, grounded theory, thematic, and narrative approaches. There were also two studies with mixed-method designs. We see three approaches: (1) research focusing on describing or mapping personality aspects of a sample of social entrepreneurs (21 studies), (2) comparing the personality of a sample of social entrepreneurs with another group (e.g. commercial entrepreneurs or the general population) (18 studies), (3) relating personality aspects to social entrepreneurship intentions or activity in a non-social entrepreneur sample (e.g., general population, students, commercial entrepreneurs) (12 studies). Our review suggests that the investigation of social entrepreneurs' personality is gaining momentum as evidenced by the fact that the majority of the studies are published after 2010. Recent studies pay increasing attention to motivations and skills and consider multiple personality aspects in combination.

4. Review findings

The review findings are summarized in Table 1.

--[insert Table 1 about here]—

² Total number is higher than 50 as one paper reported findings from a cross-sectional and a quasi-experimental study.

4.1. Motivation

Motivation is the aspect of social entrepreneur personality that received most research attention (37 sources). Fourteen sources explored general motivational tendencies through values, motives, and vocational interests. These studies were predominantly conducted as theory-based quantitative survey research. The majority of publications (23 sources) examined specific motives for engaging in social entrepreneurship. Research on specific motives contained roughly equal shares of qualitative, explorative, and quantitative research.

4.1.1. General values, motives, interests

At their most general level, stable motivational tendencies are based on individuals' values. Four publications used the Schwartz' theory of human values, which has been widely validated across 80 cultures and different research paradigms (Schwartz, 2012). One publication used the precursor to Schwartz' theory, the Rokeach value theory (Rokeach, 1973). The findings of these studies suggest that social entrepreneurs attribute great importance to other-oriented, prosocial values (self-transcendence values) and openness to change values (self-direction and stimulation, Bargsted et al. 2013; Egri & Herman 2000; Diaz & Rodriguez 2003; Stephan et al. 2010). Social entrepreneurs tended to endorse prosocial values more strongly than commercial entrepreneurs and employees, whilst at the same time de-emphasizing self-interested values (self-enhancement). However, openness to change values appear to be similarly important to social and commercial entrepreneurs, and were more important to both types of entrepreneurs compared to employees (e.g., in population-representative samples, Stephan, Huysentruyt & Van Looy, 2010). A similar pattern was observed for a study that investigated general entrepreneurial and social

entrepreneurial intentions in a Spanish population sample. Although unexpectedly prosocial values were also positively related to general entrepreneurial intentions, while conservation values (the opposite of openness to change values) were positively related to social entrepreneurial intentions (Sastre-Castillo, Peris-Ortiz, & Danvila-Del Valle, 2015).

Three studies investigated different types of values. One study found social entrepreneurs to be more likely to hold liberal political values compared to non-social entrepreneurs in a general population panel (Van Ryzin, Grossman, DiPadova-Stocks, & Bergrud, 2009). Two studies investigated pro-environmental values. One study found pro-environmental values associated ‘with radical environmentalist philosophies’ to be more strongly endorsed by leaders of environmental non-profit compared to environmental for-profit organizations (Egri & Herman 2000, p.593). The other study provided intriguing evidence from a conjoint experiment on the conditions (low self-efficacy, hostile market environments) under which entrepreneurs may exploit environmentally harmful business opportunities and thus act on opportunities that are diametrically opposed to their pro-environmental values (Shepherd, Patzelt, & Baron, 2013).

Two further studies related values to outcomes apart from business opportunity exploitation. Stevens, Moray, Bruneel and Clarysse (2015b) found that social entrepreneurs’ prosocial values correlate with a stronger emphasis on social goals for the organizations they lead. Stephan et al. (2010) related social entrepreneurs’ prosocial and openness to change values to the type and quality of ideas they generate in an innovation challenge.

Three studies investigated general motivational drives as conceptualized in McClelland’s and Murray’s work on motives³ (McClelland, 1987). Two studies found that social compared to commercial entrepreneurs are characterized by lower need for

³ We note that the motives, especially need for achievement, have also been treated as specific traits in the literature. We felt it most appropriate to present them as motivational concepts as they represent general goals (e.g. high performance) that give direction to behavior – consistent with the definition of motivation.

achievement (De Hoogh et al., 2005; Diaz & Rodriguez, 2003), while one study found no difference between the two groups (Smith, Bell, & Watts, 2014). Social compared to commercial entrepreneurs were also characterized by a higher need for autonomy (Smith et al., 2014). In the most robust study in this set (De Hoogh et al., 2005), social entrepreneurs (non-profit leaders) further exhibited similar power motivation compared to commercial entrepreneurs, but stronger affiliation (the need to relate to others in a positive way) and responsibility (a prosocial, moral motive) motives.

One study examined interests as set out in Holland's theory of vocational interest, a key theory in career psychology (Almeida, Ahmetoglu, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2014). In a convenience sample of the general population, social entrepreneurial activity correlated with social vocational interest (e.g., characterized by an interest to help others, provide care and nurture). While no particular dimension of interests corresponded to general entrepreneurial activity, artistic interests correlated with invention-oriented entrepreneurial activity.

Taken together the studies on general motivation support the intuitive assumption that social entrepreneurs are characterized by strong prosocial values or responsibility motives and share with commercial entrepreneurs the desire to seek out new situations and independence (e.g. as captured by openness to change values or need for autonomy). Evidence on whether social entrepreneurs also share the entrepreneurial drive for achievement and power (e.g. self-enhancement values, power and achievement motives) was more mixed, but generally suggested that social entrepreneurs score lower in this domain compared to commercial entrepreneurs. This in turn may hamper the growth and scaling of the ventures that they lead. Interestingly studies that measured both prosocial and self-interested values found that these correlate at zero at the individual level (Stephan et al., 2010; Stevens, Moray, & Bruneel, 2015a). This suggests that there is no immediate trade-off between the values that underpin prosocial and growth-oriented behavior, although the same

may not hold at the organizational level for the venture (Brown, McDonald, & Smith, 2013; Diochon & Anderson, 2011; Stevens et al., 2015a)⁴.

Studies investigating general motivation built more so than studies in other streams on established theory and more often employed robust research designs including validated measures and statistical analyses that control for confounds and correlation among measures, as well as larger samples. Studies that move beyond documenting mean differences and relate motivations to venture performance and personal outcomes for the social entrepreneur remain scarce, similar to studies that contextualize the effect of values. Yet such research can help to build a fuller understanding of why, how, and when motivations may matter in social entrepreneurship.

4.1.2. Specific motives

Studies on specific motives typically focus on mapping these motives in a sample of social entrepreneurs, and less frequently compare them with commercial entrepreneurs or other samples. They employ both qualitative and quantitative approaches, which means that insight on social entrepreneurial motives stems from thematic analyses of open-ended interview answers by researchers, as well as from social entrepreneur self-reports in response to specific motivation questions.

Either type of study reveals that there is substantial *heterogeneity in social entrepreneurs' motives*, that is, a range of different and co-existing motives drive social entrepreneurs' actions (Allen & Malin, 2008; Braga, Proença, & Ferreira, 2014; Cohen & Peachey, 2015; Lukes & Stephan, 2012; Ross, Mitchell, & May, 2012; Seiz & Schwab,

⁴ The way values or organizational goals are measured appears to play an important role too. Existing measures of organizational goals for instance often force trade-offs, e.g. by assigning 100 points across different social or economic values (Lepoutre, Justo, Terjesen, & Bosma, 2013; Stevens et al., 2015a).

1992b; Tigu, Iorgulescu, Ravar, & Lile, 2015; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016). All but five studies⁵ corroborated the importance of *prosocial* motives (helping others, creating a better life for future generations, a passion to give and change lives, etc.) for social entrepreneurs to start their ventures. Typically, prosocial motives were combined with *intrinsic* motives such as interest and passion for the work, profession or craft that a social entrepreneur engages in. Dissatisfaction with prior work and the opportunity to be independent also played a role.

Extrinsic motives, especially financial motives and reputation, were considered almost equally as often as prosocial motives. Many studies suggested the extrinsic motives were less important to social entrepreneurs than prosocial motives, yet they still played a role in motivating their actions both to start a business and to continue leading it (e.g., Lukes & Stephan 2012; Seiz & Schwab 1992b; Greco et al. 2014; Koe et al. 2014). One study exploring the day-to-day work motivations found that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations co-existed (Chen, 2014).

Some studies suggested that within a sample of social entrepreneurs, the consideration of the relative balance of extrinsic/financial and prosocial motives can help to distinguish *different types of social entrepreneurs* (Campin, Barraket, & Luke, 2013; Migliore, Schifani, Romeo, Hashem, & Cembalo, 2015; Ruskin, Seymour, & Webster, 2016). Indeed, several in-depth studies mentioned at least one social entrepreneur who was primarily extrinsically motivated by financial gain (Ross et al. 2012; Tigu et al. 2015; Wong & Tang 2006). Two of these studies suggested that being a social entrepreneur and seeing the positive impact of their work led to changes in motivation towards greater emphasis of prosocial aspects and the social mission (Parris & McInnis-Bowers, 2014; Tigu et al., 2015).

⁵ These are (Chen, 2012, 2014; Chen & Bozeman, 2013; Wong & Tang, 2006; Yiu et al., 2014).

A number of studies pointed to the importance of *context and personal experience* for the motivation to start a social venture. This ranged from personal experience with a social need, e.g., experience of a traumatic event, lack of care for own elderly parent, visit to impoverished areas in childhood (Cohen & Peachey, 2015; Shumate, Atouba, Cooper, & Pilny, 2014; Wong & Tang, 2006; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2016), to relevant work experience in a specific industry sector, and supportive contexts in terms of role models, family traditions of volunteering, and fiscal incentives (Braga et al., 2014; Greco et al., 2014; Shumate et al., 2014; Wong & Tang, 2006). A study of commercial entrepreneurs in China suggested that reputational concerns and personal experience of disadvantage enhanced the likelihood that these entrepreneurs engaged in social entrepreneurial activities (Yiu, Wan, Ng, Chen, & Jun Su, 2014). One study explored what may be a possible mechanism through which context and personal experiences influence prosocial and self-interested, extrinsic motivations to set up a social enterprise. Specifically Ruskin et al.'s (2016) qualitative research suggested that the repeated experience of self- or other-oriented emotions (e.g., passion and frustration or empathy and sympathy) acts as precursor to developing self- and other-regarding entrepreneurial motives. This aligns with conceptual arguments made by Miller et al. (2012).

Studies that compared motives of *social and commercial entrepreneurs* found the expected differences but also similarities. Social compared to commercial entrepreneurs were more likely to report to be driven by prosocial motives, while the opposite was true for extrinsic (especially financial) motives (Campin et al., 2013; Lukes & Stephan, 2012; Migliore et al., 2015). Yet there were also similarities in the emphasis put on intrinsic motivations such as work enjoyment, desire to be creative and to perform well (Lukes & Stephan, 2012).

Three studies compared motives of *social entrepreneurs and employees* in the same industry sector. One study suggested that social entrepreneurs hold to a higher degree

‘entrepreneurial’ motives (independence and income) than employees. They also exhibited stronger motivations to help their clients with psychological problems, but held lower general prosocial motivations to help the poor than their employed counterparts (Seiz & Schwab, 1992b). Two papers, seemingly based on the same study, investigated the day-to-day work motivations of social entrepreneurs (non-profit leaders) compared to managers in the public sector (Chen, 2012; Chen & Bozeman, 2013). Drawing on self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), they found that social entrepreneurs experienced relatively higher levels of intrinsic and lower levels of extrinsic motivation and amotivation. Social entrepreneurs also reported lower public service motivation and experienced generally higher levels of work satisfaction than employed managers in government organizations (Chen, 2012).

With regard to the *consequences of motives*, studies investigated the success in creating a venture, venture survival, choice of legal structure for the venture, and the personal work satisfaction of the entrepreneur. A longitudinal study based on the U.S. Panel Study of Entrepreneurial Dynamics found that entrepreneurs who reported prosocial motives at the beginning of the start-up process were less likely to have succeeded in creating an organization four years later compared to those reporting financial motives (Renko, 2013). The odds for the social entrepreneurs’ succeeding in creating their organization were further lowered when they also engaged in innovation. In a Spanish study, social compared to commercial entrepreneurs did not differ in the likelihood with which their ventures survived three and six years after they were started (Simón-Moya, Revuelto-Taboada, & Ribeiro-Soriano, 2012). Necessity- as opposed to opportunity-motivated commercial entrepreneurs had lower survival rates, but there were no differences between necessity- and opportunity-motivated social entrepreneurs. The relative strength of prosocial and extrinsic motives was linked to the choice of legal form (for-profit vs. non-profit) for fair trade social entrepreneurs (Child, Witesman, & Braudt, 2015). However, personal work histories and experience of

previous work in the non-profit vs. for-profit sector appeared to be further influences on the choice of legal form. With regard to the satisfaction that social entrepreneurs derive from their work, intrinsic work motivations showed generally positive and extrinsic motivations negative relationships (Chen, 2014).

Overall, existing research has mapped both quantitatively and qualitatively the motives driving social entrepreneurs. Whilst prosocial motives are a key impetus for social entrepreneurs to start and lead their ventures, it is also clear that motivational explanations centering solely on these motives will fall short of providing a realistic account of why individuals pursue social entrepreneurial activity. Existing research shows that multiple motives are at work. Owing to the explorative nature of much of the research on motives, a conceptual framework to make sense of the multiple motives is still lacking. However research on general motivations reviewed in section 4.1.1. suggests that content theories of motivation such as Schwartz' theory of human values may offer useful guidance in terms of the type of motives to investigate and to conceptualize potential tensions between different motives. In addition, process theories of motivation such as self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) may be useful guides for understanding how and why motivations may change over time or sustained by ongoing work at the social venture.

Some of the more surprising insights of existing research on social entrepreneurial motivation are arguably (1) findings of change of motivation over time, implying the need to differentiate start-up from continuance or ongoing work motivation, (2) the finding that prosocial start-up motivations may be associated with a lower likelihood of creating an operational venture; as well as (3) findings highlighting the importance of context – external, place-based and social context, as well as personal biographical context. This calls for future research to adopt more process-based and contextualized research approaches and to explore situational triggers (cf. Shumate et al. 2014) that lead individuals to act on longstanding

motivations and values. This echoes developments on research on entrepreneurial motivation more generally (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Stephan, Hart, Mickiewicz, & Drews, 2015).

4.2. Traits

Of the 14 studies that explored personality traits all did so in a cross-sectional research design. Except for one study, all research was quantitative, survey-based. Two studies explored general traits (the Big Five). Most studies (80 percent) focused on specific ‘entrepreneurial’ traits. However, the traits that were included under this label varied considerably across studies. In addition, five studies included what could be seen as traits specific to *social* entrepreneurship (see Table 1 for an overview).

Over half of the studies explored *mean differences in the level of traits between social entrepreneurs and other samples* from commercial entrepreneurs to volunteers or social activists to the general population. The pattern of results indicates that the comparison group matters. Trait differences between social and commercial entrepreneurs appear to be much less pronounced compared to differences between social entrepreneurs and other groups. More specifically, of the two studies investigating the general *Big Five personality traits*, one suggested that social entrepreneurs show higher levels of extraversion compared to a general population sample (U.S. Civic Panel, Van Ryzin et al. 2009), while the other study found that social and commercial entrepreneurs did not differ significantly on these traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, Lukes & Stephan 2012).

With regard to differences in *specific ‘entrepreneurial’ traits* the findings are more complex. Three studies compared social entrepreneurs to the general public, those in wage employment in the same sectors, or other groups of volunteers and philanthropists (Bargsted et al., 2013; Praszkie, Nowak, & Zablocka-Bursa, 2009; Seiz & Schwab, 1992a). These

studies suggest that social entrepreneurs are characterized by higher levels of entrepreneurial traits such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, risk-taking, persistence, and optimism. Findings for internal locus of control were mixed and varied depending on the specific comparison group.

Studies comparing commercial and social entrepreneurs tend to find few differences and suggest that both types of entrepreneurs share ‘entrepreneurial traits’. The two types of entrepreneurs seem to exhibit similar levels of general and entrepreneurial self-efficacy, risk taking, internal locus of control, fear of failure, personal initiative, and willingness to take responsibility (Bacq, Hartog, & Hoogendoorn, 2016; Bargsted et al., 2013; Diaz & Rodriguez, 2003; Lukes & Stephan, 2012; Smith et al., 2014). However, one study each also reported that social entrepreneurs showed lower entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Bacq et al., 2016) and internal locus of control (Diaz & Rodriguez, 2003) compared to commercial entrepreneurs. Yet another study reported that social entrepreneurs exhibited higher levels of creativity and risk-taking compared to commercial entrepreneurs (Smith et al., 2014).

Another set of studies investigated the propensity to engage in social entrepreneurial activity; either through reports of intentions to become a social entrepreneur in the future (Hockerts, 2015; Koe et al., 2014) or reports of social entrepreneurship related activities (Almeida et al., 2014). These studies provide further evidence that entrepreneurial traits, including entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Hockerts, 2015; Koe et al., 2014), are important for the engagement in social entrepreneurial activity.

A few studies pointed to traits that were suggested to help social entrepreneurs to deal with the specific requirements of their work. These may be considered *specific ‘social entrepreneurial traits’*. Amongst these were empathy and moral obligation (Bargsted et al.,

2013; Hockerts, 2015)⁶. Other traits were the belief that people and the world can be changed, and traits that may support the building of social capital (trust, propensity to cooperate). Social entrepreneurs scored higher in all of these compared to a general population sample (Praszkier et al., 2009). Finally, a scale development study suggested that specific ‘entrepreneurial’ traits (proactivity, risk-taking, innovativeness) relate positively to traits associated with social entrepreneurship, specifically empathy and social responsibility (Rahman & Pihie, 2014).

Two studies explored what appear to be ‘*implicit theories*’. In one study, leaders of commercial and non-profit environmental organizations were asked about their beliefs about the personality characteristics needed to successfully lead their organization. Both types of leaders pointed to largely similar traits and indeed motives (need for achievement, need for affiliation, self-confidence, need for power, perseverance, spiritual orientation and patience) with the exception of emotional maturity (Egri & Herman, 2000). Another study reported that students’ implicit theories of social entrepreneurship (i.e., what they regard to be typical behaviors for social entrepreneurs) correlated with their own personality traits (Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010).

In summary, we observed many studies that use small samples and that do not appropriately control for confounds when exploring differences between social entrepreneurs and other groups. Hence the conclusions in this section are very tentative. The pattern of findings to date suggests that by and large commercial and social entrepreneurs are similar in the way they typically think, feel, and behave – i.e. the overall picture is one of similarities in both general and specific entrepreneurial traits. Recent studies have started to explore specific social entrepreneurial traits related to empathy and moral obligation. These appear fruitful

⁶ In the Bargsted et al. (2013) study social entrepreneurs scored lower on the specific trait of empathic distress than a range of comparison groups including commercial entrepreneurs – all of which were small samples. By comparison Hockerts (2015) found in large samples evidence for the expected relationship of empathy with social entrepreneurial intentions.

avenues if they can be anchored in robust theory. What is striking is the absence of studies in our review that link traits to social entrepreneurial outcomes – do traits influence strategic decisions, access to capital, and perhaps even performance? Future research could also employ a person- compared to the current variable-centric approach (Cervone, 2004; Zyphur, 2009) and ask whether it is perhaps the specific combination or profile of social and entrepreneurial traits, more so than each trait individually, that allows individuals to succeed as social entrepreneurs.

4.3. Identity

The third perspective on the social entrepreneurial personality focused on examining how individuals see themselves, either in relation to their roles or in relation to others. As an emerging stream of research, this perspective was used in only four studies. Two of these studies were qualitative in nature (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Jones, Latham, & Betta, 2008) and two were quantitative with cross-sectional designs (Bargsted et al., 2013; Sieger, Gruber, Fauchart, & Zellweger, 2016).

Studies explored the content of social entrepreneurial identity by identifying and differentiating individuals' career or social identities. Social entrepreneurs seem to be characterized by career identities of service and entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurs reportedly have stronger autonomy identity compared to philanthropists and stronger service identity compared to commercial entrepreneurs, yet there seemed to be no significant career identity differences between social entrepreneurs and volunteers (Bargsted et al., 2013).

Another approach differentiated and developed a scale to measure the social identities of firm founders based on their social motivations and relationships (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Sieger et al., 2016). These studies differentiated between Darwinian founders, who resemble our view of the self-interested and competitive commercial entrepreneur, and two types of

socially-oriented entrepreneurs. The socially-oriented founders express a communitarian social identity as they support and are supported by their communities or a missionary social identity as they aim to advance a particular cause and view society as their reference group. While differentiating between self-interested and socially-oriented founders, the study also showed that some founders exhibit hybrid social identities by combining aspects of the pure types (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011).

Studies also examined how identity is shaped and crafted. One study examined how a social activist entrepreneur constructed his identity through dividing (e.g. rejecting mainstream or institutional principles, practices and philosophies), undividing (e.g. endorsing local, participative, grass-roots and community initiatives), and suppressing discourse practices (non-discourses to sideline or underplay issues and practices) (Jones et al., 2008). Focusing on social identities, Fauchart and Gruber (2011) suggested two routes of how hybrid identities are shaped. First, founders' backgrounds may combine business and community experiences, which shapes their social motivations and relationships. Second, external pressures, such as demands from investors, can influence founders to combine social and self-interests.

Finally, the identity perspective also explored the relationship between identity and strategic decisions. Founders' social identities were argued to shape strategic decisions in relation to market segments, customer needs addressed, and capabilities and resources deployed. Socially-oriented founders (i.e. those with communitarian or missionary social identities) were suggested to address novel customer needs and focus on the activities with the highest potential for social change with artisanal production methods and best practices to share with others or inspire change in the industry, instead of self-interested founders who focus on increasing profitability through cost efficiency (Fauchart & Gruber, 2011).

In summary, an identity perspective is emerging in research on the social entrepreneurial personality, similarly to a trend in the broader entrepreneurship literature. While there is only a small number of studies currently, through diverse approaches these studies have investigated the content of identities, the process of developing identities, and initial links to firm outcomes, such as strategic decisions.

4.4. Leadership and managerial skills

All six studies that explored skills investigated either the concept of transformational leadership, the closely related concept of charismatic leadership or vision (one of the facets of transformational/charismatic leadership). The studies investigated differences in leader behavior for social compared to commercial entrepreneurs and also explored relationships with outcomes, such as performance and organizational cultures (see Table 1 for an overview). All studies were cross-sectional quantitative, survey-based. One study also incorporated a qualitative analysis of social and commercial entrepreneurs' implicit theories about the managerial skills necessary to succeed in their work (Egri & Herman, 2000). The study reported that commercial compared to social entrepreneurs in the same sector viewed interpersonal and technical skills as more relevant for success in their jobs. There were no differences in political, time management or conceptual skills.

Interestingly, employees' perception of charismatic leadership displayed by social and commercial entrepreneurs leading voluntary and for-profit small and medium-sized organizations respectively, did not differ (De Hoogh et al. 2005). However, there was an interaction with leader motives: social entrepreneurs who combined high power motivation with responsibility motivation were perceived to be more charismatic by their employees, while the same did not hold for commercial entrepreneurs. One study of non-profit leaders and their middle-management subordinates suggested that their perceptions of visionary

transformational leadership may largely converge (Taylor, Cornelius, Casey, & Colvin, 2014) – although this finding is at odds with extant evidence in leadership research that shows only modest overlap between self- and other-ratings of leaders (Fleenor, Smither, Atwater, Braddy, & Sturm, 2010).

Three studies investigated differences between social and commercial entrepreneurs' self-reports of their leadership styles. Egri and Herman (2000) found that North American social and commercial entrepreneurs (non-profit and for-profit environmental leaders respectively) reported similar levels of transformational leadership, although commercial entrepreneurs reported to make more use of transactional leadership (especially using contingent rewards and instrumental behavior). Similarly, Sarros et al. (2011) found no differences in the use of leadership vision comparing samples of Australian for-profit and non-profit leaders. Ruvio et al. (2010) examined the content of entrepreneurial visions and found very few differences across 26 specific vision characteristics. The visions of the non-profit entrepreneurs tended to be somewhat more purposeful, long-term and action oriented.

Four studies related social entrepreneurs' transformational leadership behaviors to outcomes, including perceptions of organizational culture, effectiveness, and performance, as well as social value creation. They found mostly positive relationships. Sarros et al. (2011) reported a positive relationship between visionary leadership and more innovation-supportive organizational cultures. While neither the level of visionary leadership nor the extent of innovation-supportive culture differed between for-profit and non-profit firms, the relationship between the two appeared to be mediated by different mechanisms. The findings suggested that visionary leadership may lead to innovation-supportive cultures via stimulating socially responsible cultures in social enterprises (non-profits) but via stimulating competitive cultures in for-profit businesses. Ruvio et al (2010) found vision associated with venture performance and growth among their sample of social enterprises (non-profits) but

not in their sample of for-profit businesses. Studying only non-profit organizations, Taylor et al. (2014) reported a similarly positive link between visionary leadership behavior and several dimensions of perceived organizational effectiveness. However, a study by Felício et al. (2013) suggested a more nuanced picture. Social entrepreneurs' transformational leadership was more important for organizational performance and value creation in unfavorable contexts. This aligns with broader leadership research suggesting that transformational leaders may be particularly effective in times of uncertainty and crisis (Davis & Gardner 2012).

Taken together, the reviewed studies suggest that even if transformational leadership is not necessarily more pronounced among social entrepreneurs, it appears to be linked to desirable organizational outcomes in social ventures. However, a few caveats are in order. All studies are based on self-report and conducted cross-sectionally. Thus the reverse relationships may also hold true, that leaders learn to be more transformational over time or/and that past performance strengthens transformational behaviors. More sophisticated designs using multi-source data and conducting longitudinal or experimental research would allow to disentangle causality. Such designs are already common in leadership research and social entrepreneurship researchers may draw inspiration from that field. Furthermore, it is striking that existing research solely focuses on transformational aspects of leadership, which may be another reflection of the 'hero' bias in social entrepreneurship, and a more general bias to attribute heroic, charismatic, and visionary characteristics to leaders (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). By contrast, emerging research suggests that leadership for social change might require collaborative, power-sharing, i.e. 'connective leadership' skills (Stephan et al., 2016). Social network approaches to leadership and connective leadership skills may thus be fruitful areas for future research in social entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, social

entrepreneurship researchers keen to explore transformational leadership should be aware of recent critiques of the concept (Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013).

5. Discussion and Opportunities for Future Research

Our review of empirical research on the personality of social entrepreneurs shows an increasing interest in this topic judging by the rapidly increasing number of publications. Our systematic search identified 12 empirical papers up to and including 2010, and 38 papers between 2011 and 2016. The reviewed studies shed light on ‘who social entrepreneurs are’. They suggest that social entrepreneurs are simultaneously driven by a range of motivations and values. They typically, but not always, are primarily motivated by prosocial concerns. Yet the enjoyment of their work, creativity, and even financial aspects among other motivations also play a role. Social entrepreneurs appear to share many personality traits with commercial entrepreneurs (self-efficacy, risk taking, internal locus of control, proactivity) as well as benefit from similar transformational leadership skills. Yet they are also characterized by distinct ‘social traits’, such as empathy and moral obligation, and develop distinct identities.

It is encouraging that a substantial body of empirical work on the social entrepreneurial personality is developing, because social entrepreneurship research is often seen to lack empirical and quantitative work based on larger samples (Gras et al., 2014; Short et al., 2009). At the same time, however, there is much scope for future research. We summarize our recommendation in Table 2 and start by outlining three recommendations directly relating to the methodological quality of existing research on the social entrepreneurial personality.

--[insert Table 2 about here]--

First, we encourage future research to pay more careful attention to the operationalization of social entrepreneurship. Future research will benefit from paying more attention to the hybrid nature of social entrepreneurship. For instance, if non-profit organizations are the sampling frame, then their engagement with ‘entrepreneurial’ activities should be ascertained. This can be in the form of requiring trading in the market through selling products/services (Stephan et al., 2016) and ‘new entry’ through the being the founder of an organization or creating new markets (Davidsson, 2016). Similarly, measures to capture the quality and extent of the social engagement and social change ambitions of social entrepreneurs may help to build more nuanced theories of social entrepreneurship.

Second, the quality of empirical studies in the review was extremely heterogeneous ranging from large sample quantitative studies or quasi-experimental studies to small sample quantitative studies conducting multiple simple group comparisons without controlling for confounding factors or single-case studies of an individual entrepreneur. Important insights can be gained from both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and indeed the qualitative studies provide in-depth insights into motivations and identities. To generate generalizable findings, more large-scale quantitative studies embedded in robust theory, using validated scales, and conducting appropriate statistical tests (e.g., in the simplest case multivariate analyses of covariance to ascertain mean differences between groups instead of multiple t-tests) are needed. Especially comparative studies need to control – at a minimum - for socio-demographic confounds. This is because, relative to commercial entrepreneurship, for example, a higher share of women and the highly educated engage in social entrepreneurship (Estrin et al. 2016). Similar systematic differences exist relative to employees.

Third, one trend in the reviewed studies is the increasing attention to connect social entrepreneur personality to outcomes, with encouraging results. For instance, motivations showed links to start-up success, strategic choices and innovation, as well as personal

satisfaction. More theory-driven research that connects personality to venture-level outcomes (financial and social performance) but also to personal outcomes for the entrepreneur can help to build a deeper understanding of how and when personality matters. Useful theoretical lenses range from person-environmental fit to strategic decision-making research, upper echelons, and strategic leadership lenses to social influence, leadership research, and process theories of work motivation, among others.

5.1 Building on strengths and insights of the current research

The reviewed studies pointed to substantial *heterogeneity among social entrepreneurs* in terms of their personality. For instance, findings indicated diversity in motivations and identities consistent with different types of social entrepreneurs who are likely to take different strategic decisions about organizational goals, legal forms, accessing resources, growth strategies, markets, clients and beneficiaries (e.g., Fauchart & Gruber 2011). This is consistent with past research in entrepreneurship more generally that connects personality characteristics to different types of strategic decisions (Gorgievski, Ascalon, & Stephan, 2011; Simsek, Heavey, & Veiga, 2010), as well as with emerging research drawing attention to the different types and organizational forms of social enterprises (Mair, Battilana, & Cardenas, 2012; Mair, Mayer, & Lutz, 2015). So called person-centric or profile approaches to personality (Cervone, 2004; Zyphur, 2009) would be particularly useful to define ‘social entrepreneur types’ through constellations of high/low scores on particular values, motives, and traits.

How does becoming a social entrepreneur change identity, skills, motivations, possibly even traits? How does personality change over the life course of the venture? Existing research on the social entrepreneurial personality is largely static and assumes that motivations and traits, and to a lesser extent identities and skill, are entirely stable. Yet a few

findings in the review suggest a more dynamic view as specific motivations and identities can change through the social entrepreneurial activity itself (Braga et al., 2014; Fauchart & Gruber, 2011). Such a view is consistent with the notion of ‘occupational socialization’, i.e., the very nature of the work we do, over time, shapes our motivations, even traits, and identities. Indeed, specific as opposed to general motives and traits are known to be malleable (Rauch & Frese, 2007). Emerging research suggest that even general traits may change, albeit slowly, depending on the work situation individuals find themselves in (Li, Fay, Frese, Harms, & Gao, 2014; Wu, 2016). These findings invite longitudinal and process research to explore how and when aspects of social entrepreneurs’ personality change through being a social entrepreneur. They also invite more research on the day-to-day activities that social entrepreneurs’ engage in from a work design perspective (Parker, 2014) to understand the very nature of social entrepreneurs’ work.

Future research would also benefit from developing more contextualized perspectives on the social entrepreneurial personality. Most studies were squarely focused on aspects of social entrepreneurs’ personality without consideration of context. A few studies on specific motives, however, highlighted important drivers in the personal or wider social and spatial context of the entrepreneur: from traumatic experiences, exposure to a family tradition of volunteering, to lack of social service provision for close others in a region. They further pointed to the interplay of personality with skills and human capital (education, experience in an industry sector, experience of working in a non-profit). Future research could explore such associations more systematically to discern how the environment interacts with personality to shape social entrepreneurial actions. What trigger points may exist that ‘activate’ existing personality traits and motivation such that individuals start working on a social venture? Process research approaches would allow to develop a more contextualized view that also pays attention to how events unfold dynamically. In addition, a more contextualized

perspective and life history research may allow to shed more light on the very *antecedents* of social entrepreneurs' personality, how they develop specific motivations, identities, and skills.

Finally, the existing research focuses on the many positive aspects of social entrepreneur personality – but might there also be a ‘dark side’ to it? For instance, the study by Renko (2013) suggests that prosocially motivated entrepreneurs face greater difficulties in the start-up process. Such a finding aligns with recent research suggesting that very high levels of traits that typically have beneficial consequences for the individual and organization can have detrimental effects for both (Kaiser, LeBreton, & Hogan, 2015). Research could explore not only positive but also potential negative outcomes of the strong prosocial stance and high levels of empathy that seem to characterize social entrepreneurs. For instance, over time these may incur costs to the social entrepreneurs' well-being or family life if his/her efforts to create positive social change are thwarted, or simply due to the sheer scale of the social need that their work addresses and which is unlikely to be resolved by one or even multiple social entrepreneurs (Stephan et al., 2016).

6. References

* Indicates a source included in the systematic review.

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Table 1. Overview of Review Findings

Construct	Characteristic Profile of Social Entrepreneurs	Social Entrepreneurs compared to Commercial Entrepreneurs	Social Entrepreneurs compared to other Groups (general population, employees)
Motivation			
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-transcendence values ▪ Openness to change values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher self-transcendence values ▪ Lower self-enhancement values ▪ Similar openness to change values ▪ Stronger radical environmental philosophies ▪ Similar implicit spiritual orientation[†] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher self-transcendence values⁺ ▪ Lower self-enhancement values⁺ ▪ Higher openness to change values⁺ ▪ Stronger liberal political views[‡]
Work Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intrinsic motivation ▪ Extrinsic motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower extrinsic motivation ▪ Similar intrinsic motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher intrinsic motivation[*] ▪ Lower extrinsic motivation[*] ▪ Lower amotivation[*]
Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social vocational interests 		
Entrepreneurial Motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Independence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower need for achievement motive[±] ▪ Higher need for autonomy motive ▪ Similar power motive ▪ Similar implicit need for achievement, affiliation, and power[†] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher independence motive⁺ ▪ Higher income motive⁺
Social Entrepreneurial motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prosocial, other-oriented motives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stronger affiliation motive ▪ Higher responsibility motive ▪ Higher prosocial motives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stronger motivation to help clients with psychological problems⁺ ▪ Lower general prosocial motivation to help the poor⁺ ▪ Lower public service motivation[*]
Traits			
Big Five Traits		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No significant differences in openness to change, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and emotional stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher extraversion[‡]
Entrepreneurial Traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Entrepreneurial self-efficacy ▪ Risk taking ▪ Persistence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Similar general self-efficacy ▪ Similar entrepreneurial self-efficacy[±] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy^{&#} ▪ Higher risk taking^{&+‡} ▪ Higher persistence⁺

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Optimism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Similar risk taking[±] ▪ Similar internal locus of control[±] ▪ Similar fear of failure ▪ Similar personal initiative ▪ Similar willingness to take responsibility ▪ Higher creativity ▪ Similar implicit self-confidence, perseverance, and patience[†] ▪ Higher implicit emotional maturity[†] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher optimism[±] ▪ Internal locus of control[±]
Social Entrepreneurial Traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empathy ▪ Moral obligation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Higher empathy[±] ▪ Stronger belief that the world can be changed[±] ▪ Higher trust[±] ▪ Higher propensity to cooperate[±]
Identity			
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Career identity of service ▪ Career identity of entrepreneurship ▪ Communitarian identity ▪ Missionary identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stronger service identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stronger autonomy identity[#] ▪ No significant differences in career identity^{&}
Skills			
Managerial Skills		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implicit view that interpersonal and technical skills are less relevant[†] ▪ Implicit view that political, time management and conceptual skills are similarly relevant[†] 	
Leadership Skills		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Similar employees' perceptions of charismatic leadership ▪ Similar self-reports of transformational leadership and leadership vision ▪ Visions more purposeful, long-term, and action-oriented ▪ Lower self-reports of transactional leadership 	

Table Key:

* Compared to managers in the public sector.

Compared to philanthropists.

& Compared to volunteers.

+ Compared to employees.

⊥ Compared to the general population.

± Conflicting evidence.

^t 'implicit' refers to *perceptions* of what traits/motives people *believe* to be associated with being a successful social entrepreneur.

Table 2. Recommendations

Recommendation	Research Criteria and Questions
Pay attention to the operationalization of social entrepreneurship	How are the ‘social’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ characteristics defined and measured?
Generate more generalizable findings	How and when are there opportunities to conduct large-scale quantitative studies embedded in robust theory, using validated scales and appropriate statistical tests?
Conduct more theory-driven research to build a deeper understanding	How is personality connected to venture-level and personal outcomes? How and when does personality matter?
Consider the substantial heterogeneity among social entrepreneurs possibly using personality profile approaches	What types of social entrepreneurs are under investigation? How and why are they different from each other?
Develop dynamic and process approaches	How may being a social entrepreneur change some aspects of personality? Over what time scales?
Investigate more contextualized perspectives	How does the environment interact with personality to shape social entrepreneurial actions? What trigger points may exist?
Towards a holistic perspective	Is there a dark side to the social entrepreneurial personality?