The drivers of social entrepreneurship: agency, context, compassion and opportunism

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Purpose

The paper refers to the drivers of social entrepreneurship and critically explores the notion that it is prompted by a personal mission to enable social or ideologically motivated altruism. It refers to Shapero's Entrepreneurial Event Theory and the adaptation of it for social entrepreneurship in Mair and Moboa (2006) and develops these so that both agency and context may be considered.

Methodology

Fieldwork comprised a qualitative study of 12 life-story narratives of social entrepreneurs in central Scotland. The location was chosen because of its reputation for support of social entrepreneurship, and the qualitative methodology allowed for a depth of inspection and analysis of complex and situational experiences.

Findings

Findings include observation of altruism but there are other drivers, including the appeal of the social entrepreneurship business model. Context emerges as a critical feature of social entrepreneurship too, including spurs for altruism and the human, financial and social capitals, skills and experiences of social entrepreneurs.

Originality

The paper finds that the social entrepreneurship process involves both agency and context and is complex, and for some, reflects a strategic approach similar to commercial entrepreneurship. The paper also proposes further adaptation to Entrepreneurial Event Theory to capture this complexity of the social entrepreneurship process.

Introduction

The outcomes of social entrepreneurship are widely understood to include and prioritize social contribution and social value (Brieger and DeClerq, 2019; Duncan, 2009). Connected to this, the motivations of the social entrepreneur are associated with social or ideological goals and compassion (Miller *et al.*, 2012; Petrovskava and Mirakyan, 2018). These key elements are broadly accepted as those that distinguish the social entrepreneur from the commercial entrepreneur. However, whereas the commercial entrepreneur has been the subject of much inspection of motivations and drivers, with many studies finding there are myriad and diverse influences (e.g. Carsrud and Brannback, 2011; Maalaoui *et al.,* 2020), in the social entrepreneurship context there is little exploration beyond the assertion of it as altruism. The most common interpretation is that an individual perceives a socially or ideologically-informed opportunity, and thereafter acts like an entrepreneur to build a social enterprise, and at both the opportunity identification and social enterprise creation stages, social entrepreneurship is regarded as a largely agential process (Miller *et al.,* 2012).

There is, however, some evidence emerging that suggests social entrepreneurship is more complex than just involving agential response to a social or ideological cause and subsequent social business development. First, Zahra *et al*. (2009) and Tucker *et al.* (2019) find that social entrepreneurs can be traditionally opportunistic, that some social entrepreneurs may act like commercial entrepreneurs *before* the realization of an opportunity. Second, Yitshaki and Kropp (2016) and Hu *et al.* (2020) find that, alongside agency, context is also an antecedent and ongoing influence on social entrepreneurship. These emerging lines of enquiry – querying the primacy of social mission and of agency – have implications in terms of questioning our established knowledge of the social entrepreneurship process more broadly, suggesting further scholarly inspection is required. This is the key purpose of this paper.

The paper reports an in-depth qualitative investigation of the drivers for enterprise creation of a sample of 12 social entrepreneurs in central Scotland. The central questions the empirical work

explore are:

a) What is the evidence for personally-informed altruism versus commercial entrepreneurial opportunism?

b) Are contextual factors evidenced in the drivers of social entrepreneurship?

From a theoretical perspective, we refer to Entrepreneurial Event Theory (EET) (Shapero and Sokol, 1982) and the version adapted for social entrepreneurship that is presented in Mair and Noboa (2006) because they allow for inspection of both agential and contextual influences on motivations.

Our contributions from this research are threefold. First, we examine the drivers associated with social entrepreneurship and find that while social mission and personal values are certainly evidenced, their expression is observably strategic and self-orientated in some cases. Second, through the lens of Mair and Noboa's adapted EET model we contribute data that shows that motivational drivers for social entrepreneurship may be both agential and contextual. Third, we contribute some development to the adapted EET model.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we review the literature on social entrepreneurship and associated drivers with a theoretical focus on activity in context. From this review, gaps in understanding are identified and these inform our two research questions. Following a description of the qualitative methodology applied to engage with these questions, findings are presented. We discuss these and present conclusions, including the theoretical contribution and implications for knowledge about social entrepreneurship.

The drivers of social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurs have been described as value-orientated individuals who create social change through the start-up of an enterprise (Certo and Miller, 2008), as innovators who achieve social change through enterprise (Newth, 2018; Zahra et al., 2008), and as individuals who are motivated by the opportunity to adopt an innovative approach to pull together resources and networks to satisfy needs

which the regular market or the state cannot, or fails to, provide (Thompson *et al*., 2000). Elsewhere in the literature, social entrepreneurship is used to describe a wide range of phenomena. For example, Austin *et al*. (2006) refer to social entrepreneurship as a non-profit initiative in search of alternative funding strategies and management structures that create or pursue social value. Elsewhere, Hockerts (2017: 1-2) articulates it as "the identification of opportunities to create social impact through the generation of market and non-market disequilibria". However described, the focus on social value is consistent, as is the notion that motivations for social entrepreneurship diverge somewhat from those for traditional, commercial entrepreneurship.

The general entrepreneurship literature includes much research on the intentions and motivations that precede entrepreneurial action (Carsrud and Brannback, 2011; Kautonen *et al*., 2015). Overall, empirical studies have shown various antecedents to motivations for entrepreneurship (Amit and Muller, 1995; Dawson and Henley, 2012; Maalaoui *et al*., 2020), most consistently including the desire to exploit an identified opportunity and to be one's own boss (e.g. Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Verduijn *et al.,* 2014). Yitshaki and Kropp (2016) propose that these do not vary particularly for social entrepreneurship, but that social entrepreneurship is also based on solving specific social needs. Germak and Robinson (2014) find similar, as do Miller *et al*. (2012), who suggest that social entrepreneurs perceive social ventures as desirable because of specific emotional and cognitive attitudes. Petrovskaya and Mirakyan (2018) and, more recently, Tiwari *et al.* (2020) explain compassion as a key motivator and suggest social entrepreneurs rate higher on altruism, humility, empathy, trust in others and integrity as compared to commercial entrepreneurs. Dickel *et al.* (2020) propose links between social entrepreneurship and direct or indirect experience of a problem or deficit in childhood as a strong influence. What all these have in common is that the social entrepreneur is found to be motivated by an opportunity to make some social improvement and that this may be personally meaningful to them.

Alternatively, however, recent studies argue that the good intentions of social entrepreneurs should not be taken for granted and, for some, social entrepreneurship can be driven less by personally-

informed altruism and more by traditional entrepreneurial opportunism (Kimmitt and Muñoz, 2018). To exemplify, there is empirical evidence that suggests that some social entrepreneurs are motivated by attractions such as personal enjoyment (Dey and Lehner, 2017), autonomy (Dey and Steyaert, 2016) as well as fame and recognition (Tucker *et al*., 2019). This suggests that social entrepreneurial intent may not necessarily, nor solely, arise from pro-social, altruistic motivators, and indeed, Zahra *et al.* (2009), find evidence, akin to commercial entrepreneurship, of s*canning* the environment for (social) entrepreneurship opportunities, as opposed to identifying an opportunity in response to a personally perceived need. Therefore, rather than social entrepreneurship being a vehicle by which to engage in a social agenda, in some cases at least, the motivation to become a social entrepreneur can *precede* the identification of a social goal. This latter motivation is relatively unexplored in the social entrepreneurship literature.

Elsewhere in the literature on motives for social entrepreneurship, the role of context and circumstances is similarly little explored. This is not unique to the social entrepreneurship literature of course, with critical studies of the role of context only appearing with regularity in the mainstream entrepreneurship literature relatively recently (Korsgaard and Anderson, 2011; Lee and Jones, 2015). In the social entrepreneurship area specifically, there is similar critical engagement emerging. Recent research into the drivers of social entrepreneurship identify both agential and contextual characteristics as determinants. Yitshaki and Kropp (2016), Hockerts (2017) and Hu *et al.* (2020), for example, note the importance of multiple key factors associated with the social entrepreneur, and critically, their background and current circumstances. Dickel *et al.* (2020) similarly describe how social entrepreneurial motivations occur within a social context, where actors within a social entrepreneur's family and community play a role not only in driving social entrepreneurship but also on the overall entrepreneurial process. Elsewhere in the literature, research has taken an institutional approach to focus on the context in which social ventures operate (Stephan *et al.*, 2015; Urban and Kujinga, 2017), suggesting environmental factors are important for the emergence and implementation of social entrepreneurship. These suggest that rather than being entirely agency-related, social

entrepreneurship is a socially and contextually embedded process and does not occur in isolation. This too requires further investigation.

The theoretical context

Research on the drivers of social entrepreneurship are theoretically rooted in the traditional entrepreneurship field (Bacq and Alt, 2018; Hockerts, 2017; Lehner and Germak, 2014). With reference to specific theoretical engagement, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) has been widely applied to social entrepreneurial intentions, including inspection of its components *perceived behavioural control*, *attitudes*, and *subjective norms* (Kruse *et al.*, 2019; Tiwari *et al.*, 2017). Ernst (2011) adopts TPB, and extends it subsequently to include traits and pro-social personality for the social entrepreneur. Elsewhere, Tran and Korflesch (2016) use Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent *et al.,* 1994) to suggest the formation of social entrepreneurial intention is predicated on *self-efficacy* and the *expected outcome* of engaging in a behaviour. There is also reference to Entrepreneurial Event Theory (EET) (Shapero and Sokol, 1982). Broadly, EET proposes that entrepreneurship is underpinned by the elements *perceived desirability* and *perceived feasibility* which determine the *credibility* and *potential* required to develop entrepreneurial *intention* in an individual. *Perceived desirability* refers to the attractiveness of entrepreneurship and is composed of two discrete intrapersonal and extra personal constructs, *attitude* and *social norms*, both of which are affected by contextual factors such as the structural environment and the capitals (financial, social and human) of an individual, including skills and experiences (Ajzen, 1991; Schlaegel and Koenig, 2014). *Perceived feasibility*, similar to the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), refers to the degree to which one believes him/herself capable of performing entrepreneurial behaviour and access to resources, again both of these are influenced by the experiences, backgrounds and circumstances of individuals (Shapero and Sokol, 1982). *Perceived desirability* and *perceived feasibility* combine to determine the *credibility* of entrepreneurship and this in turn influences an individual's *propensity to act* and the *potential* for entrepreneurship. According to EET, *potential* is realised in response to some *precipitating event*, a displacement that can be a single or ongoing stimulus that spurs the individual out of latent potential

and focuses the mind on the intention for entrepreneurship (Shapero and Sokol give the examples of redundancy, migration, and even subjective circumstances such as critical birthdays).

Drawing from these earlier theories of entrepreneurial intent, Mair and Noboa (2006) developed an adapted theory for social entrepreneurship specifically. Based on Shapero and Sokol (1982) and borrowing also from Ajzen (1991), Mair and Noboa (2006) draw upon the EET antecedents of *perceived desirability* and *perceived feasibility* and the three constructs of TPB in formation of social entrepreneurial intent. This is presented in Figure 1. Critical to this model is the distinction (from commercial entrepreneurship) that posits that, for social entrepreneurship, *perceived desirability* and *perceived feasibility* are based on *empathy* and *moral judgement*, and *self-efficacy* and *social support*, respectively.

Figure 1 here

Empirically, studies that have applied traditional models of entrepreneurial intent to social entrepreneurship have tended to add cognitive and affective factors such as empathy, personal values and moral obligation as antecedents, with affirmative results. Tiwari, *et al.* (2020), for example, evidence a direct relationship between individuals engaging in social entrepreneurial behaviour and high levels of empathy and moral judgement (also Ernst, 2011 and Hockerts, 2017). Bacq and Alt (2018) find further that empathy indirectly affects social entrepreneurial intention through two mediating factors of self-efficacy and social worth. Kruse, *et al.* (2019) find that perceived behavioural control and attitudes towards the perceived desirability of social entrepreneurship mediate the impact of subjective norms. Further, they suggest that personal values influence the dimensions and formation of social entrepreneurial intent. These studies have expanded our understanding of the social entrepreneur, but they are not without limitation. In particular, in most cases, emotional and moral drivers are still given primacy over contextual and situational influences. Consequently, they overlook the importance of the embeddedness of agency to inform social entrepreneurial behaviour. Emerging recently in response to this are new studies that seek to combine both agentic and

contextual influences to investigate social entrepreneurship motivations (Brieger and DeClerq, 2019; Grimes *et al.,* 2013, Hockerts, 2017; Hu *et al.*, 2020). These few new studies are largely underpinned by theoretical development presented in Mair and Noboa (2006) with some promising outcomes for understanding. Hockerts (2017), for example, finds past experience with social problems a strong antecedent of social entrepreneurship intent. This is supported by Kruse (2020) who evidences previous experiences of working in a social enterprise affect social entrepreneurial intent through empathy and self-efficacy.

Interestingly, while Mair and Noboa (2006: 126) do recognise the importance of situational context, they do not include it directly within the model presented in Figure 1 though. While *perceived feasibility* does involve contextual factors, Mair and Noboa's antecedents to *perceived desirability* are largely agential, comprising personal responses to underlying contextual and experiential influences. Critically, the context and experience-based precipitating event in Shapero and Sokol's original theory is not mandated for social entrepreneurship by the adapted model. Instead, emotional and moral drivers are given primacy, and while these may have been informed by a preceding 'event' or experience of course (e.g. Dickel *et al.*, 2020; Hockerts, 2017), Mair and Noboa's model implies this happens *prior* to the intention formation process, if at all. This removal of context as an influence on desirability and the potential for a displacement event to spur action, reduces the ability to explore the effects of a social entrepreneur's circumstances, experiences and capitals on social entrepreneurship, resulting in the potential for circular reasoning: since these are not explored, they may be rendered not important.

Methodology

The empirical work reported here is based on a qualitative, exploratory methodology, involving individuals in central Scotland who had created and operate a social enterprise defined as per the Scottish Government (2020) criteria as "businesses with a social or environmental purpose and whose profits are re-invested into fulfilling their mission". Central Scotland was chosen as the location of this

research specifically because the contribution which social entrepreneurs make to Scotland's social, economic, cultural and environmental economy has increasingly been recognised in the last two decades (Jenner, 2016). In 2016, the Scottish Government released 'Scotland's Social Enterprise Strategy' setting out a long-standing commitment to stimulate social enterprise activity, develop stronger organisations, and realise market opportunity (Scottish Government, 2016). Consequently, a 2019 report estimated that there were 6,025 social enterprises across the country, representing a sixteen per cent growth in numbers since the social enterprise census in 2015 (Social Value Lab, 2019). Based on the conductivity of this institutional environment (Urban and Kujinga, 2017), it is reasonable to suggest that social entrepreneurs may be drawn to create social businesses there.

To explore, testimony and opinion of those who are engaging in social entrepreneurship activity was required, including some depth of explanation of motivations. According to Bertaux (1981) and Smith and Elger (2014) the most appropriate means of accessing this type of data is by allowing actors to relate in their own words their experiences, reflections and opinions; their stories. In-depth life history narratives were therefore sought that would allow participants to reflect on the immediate and longer-term antecedents of and influences on their social entrepreneurship. As such, long interviews were conducted with few participants (12 people) using techniques that encouraged narrative histories, as used elsewhere for entrepreneurship research (Gartner, 2010; McCarthy *et al.*, 2014). The participants were recruited to the study using two approaches. First, a call for participants was made within the 2018/2019 cohort attending the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE), itself a social enterprise which provides training and support for social enterprise start-ups. Five of these self-selected to participate in the study. To include some more established social entrepreneurs, a second 'networking' approach was taken too that asked the initial five participants to name social entrepreneurs who had inspired them. More than 30 names were generated by this process, of which 21 were within the geography of the research. These were contacted and seven agreed to take part. Outline details about participants in the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 here

Interviews were conversational to afford depth of testimony, but one specific item was included to engage direct with EET and the research agenda. This was the question: "Was there any specific thing that prompted you to start your social enterprise?". This question allowed for a negative answer – that there had been no specific catalyst – but also allowed direct investigation of the incidence, as recalled by participants, of what Shapero and Sokol (1982) refer to as precipitating events (via the follow-up question "Can you describe this?"). Thereafter, as per Stake (1995), interviews were semi-structured using only an interview guide with thematic prompts, to encourage extensive relating of experiences and reflections to allow for rich exploration of themes identified in the literature, and also to enable and prompt issues not previously identified to emerge. All ensuing narratives were recorded and transcribed verbatim and itinerant issues, experiences and challenges associated with each participant's motives and experiences of social entrepreneurship were explored with reference to the adapted EET model in Mair and Noboa (2006) but including also inspection of any precipitating event(s) as per the original theory in Shapero and Sokol (1982). Analysis applied the technique described in King and Brookes (2016) with support from NVivo software. To reduce subjectivity and individual bias, analysis was conducted in the first instance by three of the four researchers independently, and consensus on themes emerging was achieved via consultation. This process included the development of an initial template from which both a-priori and unanticipated themes could emerge (Waring and Wainwright, 2008). Thereafter, King and Brookes' six stages of template analysis were stringently adhered to: (1) familiarisation, (2) preliminary coding, (3) clustering, (4) initial template production, (5) template development, and (6) final template. Once the final hierarchical list had been formulated, the researchers scrutinised patterns. The agreed template of hierarchical themes and expanded examples of evidence, are given in Appendix 1.

Findings

What is the evidence for personally-informed altruism versus opportunism?

Data relating to this question is elaborated in Appendix 1, but summary outcomes include that motivations that are broadly in line with commercial entrepreneurship were evidenced in the sample; personal income, flexibility and autonomy were cited by almost all. Beyond these, there were other key factors specific to social entrepreneurship that emerged. Among these, there was clear evidence of altruistic drivers of social entrepreneurship among participants, and sometimes these were deeply personal. R8 for example, had experienced violence and bereavement in her family and was acutely aware of the lack of support available, which then spurred her to start a social enterprise focused in this area. She explains:

"We got started because our family went through a trauma and we realised that there was no support services to help people at the stage that they needed the help" (R8).

R4 was similarly idiosyncratically influenced. He made a direct connection between his social entrepreneurship and his experience of becoming ill in Nepal from drinking dirty water. He felt fortunate to be able to come home and use the NHS, and so he wanted to help those in Nepal who were less fortunate. In another example, R3's experiences as a child shaped his motivation to start a social enterprise that delivers employment skills training for ex-offenders. His testimony is illustrative:

"My stepfather was in prison repeatedly… So yes, it's probably deeply personal and sort of strange solution to solving my own problem" (R3).

Some participants' motivations were more ideological. R10's primary motives, for example, were based on changing current structures in place in the support of the third sector itself. Influenced by her previous experiences, she explains:

"It was, and it still is, trying to create an alternative to mainstream supply streams. I think in the UK particular it [business support] *is just an example of sort of the worst of capitalism."*(R10).

R10 expresses here a personal and values-based mission to contribute to the social and charity sectors in the face of the commercial market system that she feels ideologically opposed to.

These examples testify to the fact that, for some, the desirability of social entrepreneurship was informed by personally-meaningful mission, including compassion and altruism. But this was not consistently the case. R6, for example, started an artisan bakery social enterprise and explains her motives thus:

"We have an adult autistic son… We decided that we were changing how we were doing things, changing our lifestyle. We were motivated by doing something that we could do with our son" (R6).

In this case the motivation was not underpinned by a particular concern about bread quality or manufacture (ie., the social outcomes of the social business itself). Instead, the motivation here was the opportunity to provide employment and support for this family in the context of their specific circumstances.

Elsewhere, there was some evidence it that it was the alternative business model of social entrepreneurship itself that was the main driver. Several participants had identified a commercial business opportunity but had chosen a social enterprise business model as they believed it aligned with their values better than traditional business models. The testimonies of R11 and R12 are illustrative:

"*We said from the get-go that we wanted to work in an ethical way, and I think it's a really good business model*" (R11);

"*I needed to make a living… and I really liked the model that was emerging at that point which was social enterprise*" (R12).

In these cases, the social entrepreneurship was influenced by values, but not necessarily underpinned by a personal or experiential mission.

Departing further still from the influence of personal and ideological drivers, R1 had started her business with the general desire to create a social enterprise, but without any particular social mission. Pragmatically – indeed, entrepreneurially – she had systematically explored the environment for a feasible opportunity:

"I put out a community survey and asked people what they wanted… The survey came back about co-working, and physical activity and group activity. So, I've written a business plan based on that." (R1).

In this case, R1 was not a social entrepreneur in response to a specific personal or ideological altruism, but instead sought to be a social entrepreneur and *thereafter* scanned for an opportunity to that end.

Broadly, therefore, there was evidence of participants driven by altruism in this sample, but this was observed along a spectrum, with some in the sample placing more importance on the business opportunity identified than by a specific personally-driven social mission or the needs of particular beneficiaries. For some in the sample it would appear that they were motivated to entrepreneurship similar to commercial entrepreneurs but with some key personal or ideological underpinning. In some of these cases, the motivation was to become a social entrepreneur, either because it aligned with the values of the participants, as for R11 and R12, or because it facilitated some other opportunity, as for R6's family. For R11 and R12 the socially contributory idea came first and the choice of business model followed. For R6 on the other hand, the business model came first and the social contribution opportunity was identified afterwards. Departing further from normative understanding, R1 actively sought to be a social entrepreneur and thereafter systematically investigated ways by which she might achieve this.

Are contextual factors evidenced in the drivers of social entrepreneurship?

Again, Appendix 1 provides elaborated data, but summary outcomes include that context emerged as a strong influence on the process of creating the social enterprises in this sample. First, the particularly supportive environment in Scotland does seem to have played a part in terms of the feasibility perceived among participants. There was broad consensus that a strong supportive social context exists within Scotland, with all participants expressing praise for its support of social entrepreneurship and the opportunities available for those wishing to engage in social business venturing. Related to this, seven out of the twelve social entrepreneurs in the sample were not originally from Scotland and among these were references to having been attracted there for social entrepreneurship specifically.

R6, for example, originally from Australia, stated explicitly that once she had identified the opportunity to start the bakery social enterprise, she moved to Scotland because of the availability of funding there. R3 shared a similar story, she moved from London to Glasgow, as she perceived Glasgow to have fewer competitors and cheaper start-up costs. Therefore, in these cases, Scotland was the pragmatically selected location for the social enterprise.

The second notable evidence of the impact of context was that every participant replied in the affirmative to the question about a precipitating event. These are presented in Table 2. Responses varied enormously, from specific personal issues, as experienced by R3 and R4 for example, to broader references to compassion, ideology or values, such as R7 and R11 who wished to conduct their businesses in an ethical way. They included also quite pragmatic spurs, such as having an opportunity to create a subsidiary business, as was the case for R9 who subsequently chose to operate it as a social enterprise, or to manage work and life after becoming ill, as was the case for R12, who also elected to start-up via a social enterprise business model.

The specific circumstances of each social entrepreneur in the sample were found further to be influential too. For some there was reference to the supportive social enterprise community. Previous experiences, and a social entrepreneur's human and social capital were also observably influential. R3, for example saw her business background as central to her social entrepreneurship:

"*My talent is for numbers and for understanding the market and being quite adept at business. I see my role as growing a business, and that business is as fiercely competitive and determined as the next one*" (R3).

R1 similarly drew from her previous business experience:

"*I've started a business before so I had enough skills in terms of what is required to run your own business. And when I discovered social enterprises, business savviness combined with the social aims... the model was really perfect*" (R1).

Several in the sample had previous work experience specifically in other social enterprises and social enterprise support organisations. For those with this experience, they were able to apply skills and knowledge learned to their social enterprise, as well as draw upon their existing networks.

Alongside business and social enterprise-specific experiences and circumstances were also all the other contextual influences identified already – those circumstances that led to the personal or ideological mission, or the values-based preference for a social enterprise business model, or even the pursuit of social entrepreneurship for other reasons. Each and all point to an agent acting in context, with this interaction influencing both the desirability and the feasibility for social entrepreneurship for these individuals.

In all cases explored, whether relating to personal or business experiences, the contexts of the social entrepreneurs in this sample, their experiences and circumstances, had influenced and continued to influence the motivation to become a social entrepreneur. With reference to EET theory, each respondent was also able to identify particular key factors – entrepreneurial displacement events – that had acted as triggers to their engagement in social entrepreneurship. Some were personal, others more broadly values-based, others less so, but underpinned by antecedent desirability and feasibility, all prompted action. Thus, contextual influences were observable as antecedents in all of the life histories of participants in this research and their motivations could not be understood separate from these.

Discussion

Results in this research suggest that motivations for social entrepreneurship are highly complex, involving personal values and experiences, backgrounds and circumstances of individuals. Altruism and compassion, much-asserted virtues of social entrepreneurship, were clearly evidenced, but were certainly not the only drivers. Other, more classic entrepreneurship drivers were observed too, including that even the opportunity may be systematically identified – as was the case for R1. This

suggests that drivers of social entrepreneurship, while involving altruism and compassion, do so in a complex and inconsistent way.

Table 2 summarizes key information that emerged from the narrative testimonies in terms of the antecedents to participants' social entrepreneurship. First, two clear modes of motivation emerged among this sample of social entrepreneurs. These are labelled P and B in Table 2 to signal *personally informed mission* (P) and ideological preference for the social enterprise *business model* (B). In this latter type, some broad ideological opposition to commercial forms of business and capitalism may spur social entrepreneurship, with specific cause less of a prompt than the attraction of an alternative business model. These findings complement evidence from Yitshaki and Kropp (2016) suggesting, among other factors, ideological motivation as a key factor for becoming a social entrepreneur. There is additional evidence, notably from R1 and R6 in our sample, that the motivation to become a social entrepreneur can also precede identification of the specific opportunity. Consequently, supporting Zahra *et al*. (2009) and Tucker *et al*. (2019), we find that the identification for social entrepreneurship opportunity *can* resonate with that for commercial entrepreneurship, in that a broadly interpreted mission to engage in an ethically-informed cause through social entrepreneurship may be the driver and *thereafter* a specific focus is sought.

In each interview, clear precipitating events were identifiable too, critical events that catalyzed actions, but which were informed also by the cumulative effects of background and experiences. Table 2 shows the displacement events identified and reported by each participant. These findings support findings in Dickel *et al.* (2020) on 'critical incidents', suggesting childhood experiences can provide a positive influence in social entrepreneurial intentions, and we extend this further to include critical events later in life too.

Other findings that mirror commercial entrepreneurship include the processes of realizing the social entrepreneurship observed. To elaborate, Scotland has a highly supportive and well developed institutional framework for the development and sustainability of social enterprises. This infrastructure is internationally celebrated and has been described as the best in the world. It is

unlikely to be coincidental therefore that more than half of the social entrepreneurs in this sample did

not come from Scotland, and instead had moved there in order to pursue their values-based mission.

While the social issues with which the social enterprises included in the sample engaged were not

peculiarly Scottish, the social entrepreneurship – the engagement with the cause and the contribution

to social value – was being played out in a Scottish context. While this does not preclude altruism and

values, it does suggest influence on the feasibility of engaging in social issues via an environment

where that will be enabled and supported as per Urban and Kujinga (2017). We contend that this

resonates clearly with classic notions of entrepreneurialism. More broadly, analysis supports the

contention in Yitshaki and Kroppp (2016), that context is an influence on social entrepreneurship, as

it is in commercial entrepreneurship. In this study, motivations were observed to be influenced by

myriad factors, including agential, emotional and values-based ones, influenced by circumstances, and

other contextual factors such as the capitals of the social entrepreneurs, their backgrounds and their

experiences.

Implications for theory

From a theoretical perspective, by viewing the findings of this research through an EET lens, there is

evidence of the nuances to perceived desirability and perceived feasibility added by Mair and Noboa

(2006). In terms of *perceived desirability*, as extrapolated in Appendix 1, we find evidence of empathy

and compassion emanating from previous personal experiences. Additionally, personal moral values

were observed to play a strong part in the formation of motivations to start a social enterprise, notably

a desire to operate business ethically, alongside more traditional factors such as autonomy, flexibility

and desire for income.

In terms of *perceived feasibility*, as per Hockerts (2017) we find previous experience enables the

perceived feasibility of some in the sample. We also find the influence of the availability of social

support, as added by Mair and Noboa, relating to national support from government and other

support organisations. Again, evidence of this is extrapolated in Appendix 1. Departing from Mair and

Noboa (2006) though, this research does find evidence of precipitating events as key influences of social entrepreneurship, as detailed in Table 2. As such, we propose development of Mair and Noboa's adapted EET model as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 here

This revised model of social entrepreneurship intentions takes account of drivers of social entrepreneurship that set it apart from commercial entrepreneurship, but allows that these might be mission-based in ways that include both personally-meaningful and also more opaque forms of social contribution. We assert that EET is a useful lens through which to view social entrepreneurship drivers, and that Mair and Noboa's work refines this for social entrepreneurship. We go a step further though and add two further elements. First, we assert context remains a key antecedent to perceived desirability and the wider circumstances of a social entrepreneur's experiences, skills, and capitals are as much an influence on social entrepreneurship motivations as any other type. Second, we observe in this research that precipitating events, as per the original EET theory, still prevail as drivers of social entrepreneurship, but that they may be flavoured by a particularly social or personal experience or ideological position. Thus rather than understand social entrepreneurship as entirely values-driven and agential, the developed EET presented in Figure 2 affords us a more nuanced view of the influence of social and personal antecedents to the pursuit of social entrepreneurship.

Implications for practice and support

Findings here evidence that the drivers of social entrepreneurship are myriad and complex, and while they may involve compassion and mission, in fact these are not mandated and in isolation are unlikely to be sufficient for social enterprise creation and operation. Other drivers, including contextual ones, are clearly implicated as important too. A central feature for more than half of our small sample was the attractiveness of the institutional environment, including the support available. This illustrates that policy and support can be instrumental in terms of the perceived feasibility of social entrepreneurship. Where there is specific need not met by market provision, the fostering of an

environment conducive to social enterprise-based alternatives might be fruitful. In addition, the evidence in this research that the choice of social enterprise business model may be as strategically generated as values-based has implications in terms of support for such enterprises. It certainly suggests a heterogeneity amongst practitioners, in turn implying variation in support, training, and resourcing needs.

Conclusion

This paper concludes with the observation of two types of key drivers of social entrepreneurship. For some the driver was a personal, social or philanthropic mission, pre-identified as a social entrepreneurship cause and opportunity. For others the driver was the social enterprise business model, used to conduct commercial business in a socially and ethically-informed way, and within this group was evidence of social entrepreneurship involving scanning the environment for an opportunity just as a commercial entrepreneur would. In all cases, empathy and values were observable, as per Mair and Noboa's refinements to EET theory in terms of perceived desirability, but this altruism was inconsistently expressed, pointing to a heterogeneity of social entrepreneurship motivations, rather than a common type. Certainly, the choice of some of the social entrepreneurs in this research to locate in the social enterprise-friendly environment of Scotland is suggestive of a social entrepreneurship process that is calculated and strategic rather than emotional and responsive – though these are not mutually exclusive. Further, in terms of motivations, it is clear that some participants had started their social enterprise to respond to a personally-informed cause while others had scanned the environment to find one. Thus, while social mission and values did appear to have an influence on drivers, their expression was observably strategic in some cases, and this has implications for further research on the things that motivate those who would make social contribution through social entrepreneurship. In addition, further exploration of the critical events that spur social entrepreneurship is likely to be revealing, particularly where these are understood in terms of the

social and personal circumstances of the individuals who start social enterprises and the social contexts in which they operate.

The research reported in this paper has some key limitations. Common to small qualitative studies, data relates to a particular environment and is not generalizable. In addition, methodological approaches to both sampling and analysis do not eliminate the risk of subjective interpretation or bias regardless of the measures taken to mitigate these. Further, the paper cannot claim to have exhausted the possibilities of scrutiny of extant knowledge and theory. Notwithstanding these limitations though, we propose three key contributions of our work. First, we provide evidence that non-altruistic drivers of social entrepreneurship are possible and observable. Second, we demonstrate that motivations for social entrepreneurship include both agency and context and in fact arise as an embedded process amongst agents and their circumstances. Third, influenced by the findings and analysis in this study, we propose a refined EET for social entrepreneurship. This includes the importance of context, and in particular, reinstates Shapero and Sokol's *precipitating event* as central in the theory.

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Table 1: Sample Information

| Respondent	Age	Gender	Sourced via SSE or Network	Business	Social Mission	Employees
R1	30-40	Female	SSE	Coworking space	Community support	4
R2	30-40	Male	Network	Food and Drink	Health	55
R3	30-40	Male	SSE	Food and Drink	Employment for ex prisoners	4
R4	30-40	Male	Network	Food and Drink	Clean water in Nepal	7
R5	41-50	Male	SSE	Psychology	Mental health	3
R6	41-50	Female	SSE	Food and Drink	Health	4
R7	41-50	Female	Network	Coworking space	Supporting arts and community	16
R8	41-50	Female	Network	Media	Mental health	3
R9	51-60	Male	SSE	Housing	Community support	6
R10	51-60	Female	Network	Coworking space	Social Enterprise Support	16
R11	30-40	Female	Network	Housing	Community support	20
R12	30-40	Female	Network	Horticulture	Work skills for disadvantaged groups	7

Table 2: Contextual backgrounds to social entrepreneurial motivations

Respondent	Business	Contextual Background	Precipitating Event	Social Mission
R1	Co-working space	B*	Worked for social enterprise support organisation and decided to start a social enterprise	Community support
R2	Food and Drink	B	Saw social enterprise as a means to generate income to fund charitable projects	Health
R3	Food and Drink	P**	Childhood experience of parental recidivism	Employment for ex-prisoners
R4	Food and Drink	P	Becoming ill in Nepal	Clean water in Nepal
R5	Psychology	P	Left previous employment due to an accident	Mental health
R6	Food and Drink	B	Having an autistic son	Health
R7	Co-working space	P	Artists' need for affordable studio space	Supporting arts and community
R8	Media	P	Family went through trauma and recognised lack of support from public services	Mental health
R9	Housing	B	Subsidiary of a commercial enteprise	Community support
R10	Co-working space	B	Worked in third sector and saw the need for people to have a place to network	Social Enterprise Support
R11	Housing	B	Wanted to start a business in an ethical way	Community support
R12	Horticulture	B	Left previous employment due to ill health	Work skills for disadvantaged groups

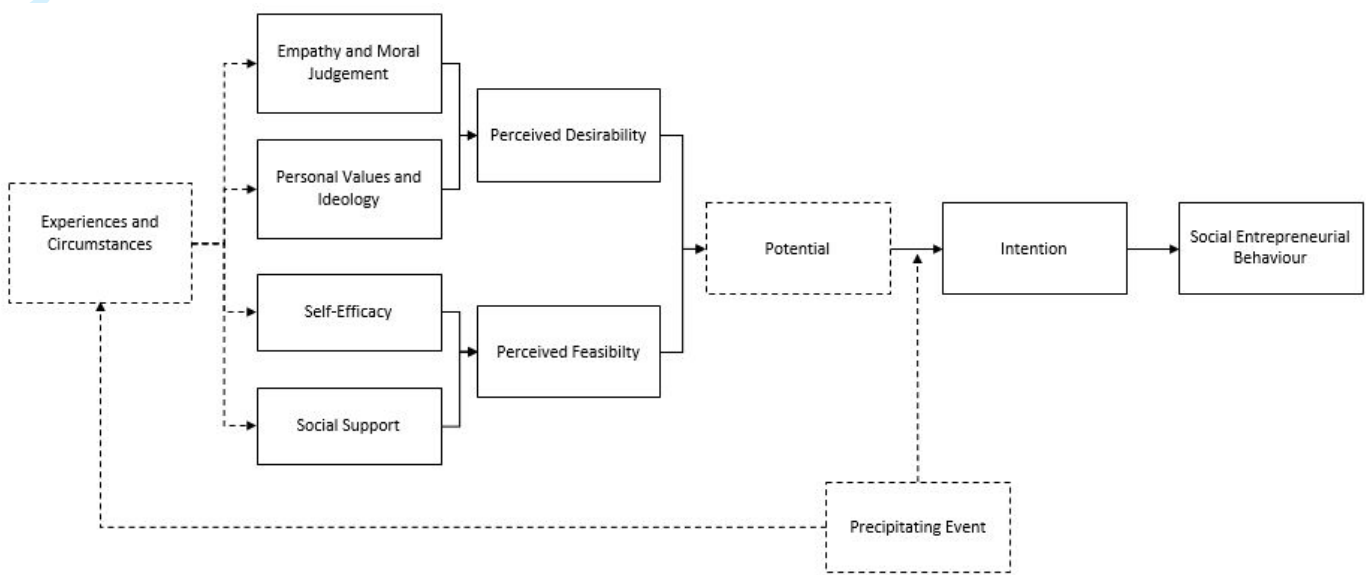*** B- ideological preference for social enterprise business model**
**P-personal informed missions

Figure 1: Mair and Noboa (2006) Model of Social Entrepreneurial Intention.
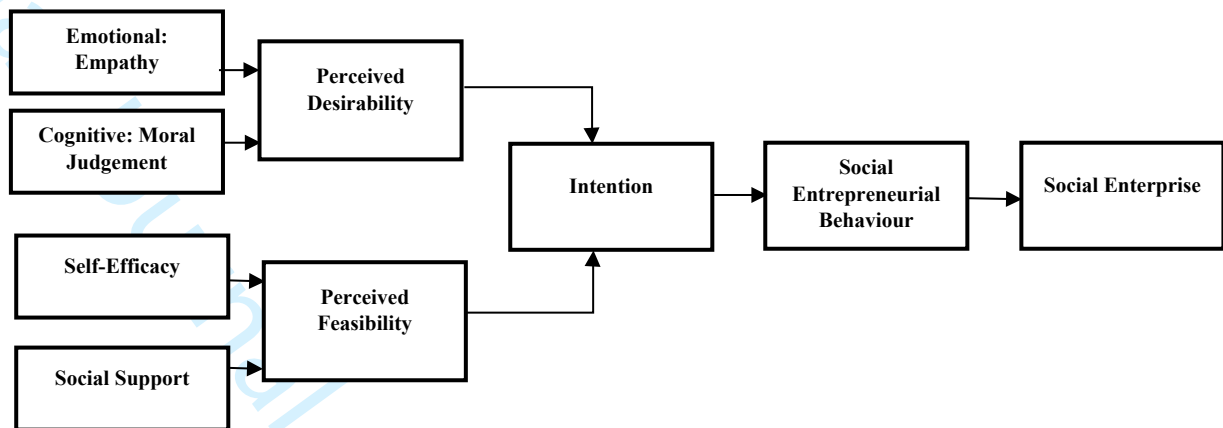
Figure 2: Developed model of social entrepreneurship motives

Appendix 1: Hierarchical Analysis Examples of Social Entrepreneurship Motivations

Broad Theme	Sub-theme (1)	Sub- theme (2)	Sub- theme (3)	Evidence
Perceived desirability	Attitude towards the behaviour	Emotional and cognitive drivers	Empathy	"I was in an international development project and… I got quite sick and I came back home and went to the doctor who gave me a prescription and I was fine. But for me that stayed with me because, it came to me through the notion that I could be born in the exact same time and date somewhere else and not have access to water and access to the NHS and access to common medications and my life would be very, very different." (R4)
				"We realised that there was no support services to help people…So ….we decided that the best thing that we could do was to go from using the video production that we knew how to use, and combine it with a service that would actually help other people who found themselves in the same kind of situation as ourselves, and so what we did was we felt that the best way, the best thing that helped us was basically talking to other people who had gone through a similar thing." (R8)
			Moral judgement	"We use the profits to invest into clean drinking water projects and that could be anything from well drilling to waterhole rehabilitation or wash projects around hygiene and sanitation… and so on. Lots of different stuff but the idea is basically that you drink beer and you give water, a philanthropic act through drinking beer." (R4)
				"These are kids that don't matter but they should matter to everyone in society" (R5)
				"We believe that we have a duty and a responsibility to support individuals, families in communities, in which are some of Scotland's most disadvantaged areas." (R9)

			"The basic background was that I wanted to make effective social change happen." (R10)
Personal values	Business ideology	Business model	"When I discovered social enterprises, business savviness combined with the social aims... the model was really perfect." (R1)
			"We said from the get-go that we wanted to work in an ethical way, and I think it's a really good business model because we want to provide social impact, but to provide that social impact we need to be a working profitable company." (R11)
			"It was, and it still is trying to create an alternative to mainstream supply streams. I think in the UK particular it's just an example of sort of the worst of capitalism." (R10)
			"So [I] got interested in social enterprises, saw it as sort of a solution to doing a lot of the good stuff that we were doing through charitable projects but in a way, which brings in money as well." (R2)
			"I feel quite passionately that people deserve to be paid for their work, and they deserve to be paid well, and I felt that at that moment social enterprises allowed that. To deliver social benefit and provide a decent living for people, where those involved were going to be paid properly for their contribution."(R12).
	Traditional factors	Saw an opportunity	"I put out a community survey and asked people what they wanted. I thought I was going to build artist studios and do events, and then the survey came back about co-working, and physical activity and group activity. So, I've written a business plan based on that. Just kind of what people wanted locally" (R1).
			"It was all about economics. It was going to be a lot cheaper starting up here and a lot cheaper to live here, particularly if it all went wrong and I didn't have any income at the end of it. So there was a bit of risk aversion, it was a bit of…there's an opportunity here because I sort of saw the market as underdeveloped

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				compared to where I lived before in London" (R3).
			Income	"So yeah, I needed to make a living… and I really liked the model that was emerging at that point which was social enterprise" (R12).
				"My talent is for numbers and for understanding the market and being quite adept at business. I see my role as growing a business, and that that business is as fiercely competitive and determined as the next one" (R3).
			Career alternative	"I wanted to change careers…I'd just finished in Cambridge then I ended up getting a job in a shop, packing up cardboard and chucking it into a dumpster. That was my work." (R3)
				"I handed in my notice and I left and to be honest, I was happy to leave because I had got to a point where the manager and myself weren't in a great place with each other." (R10)
				"I actually missed working… and I was thinking of ways in which I could bring together my horticultural passion and passion for working with folk." (R12)
			Flexibility	"So I'd previously been running a software development company, and we're both programmers, both project managers. So we decided that we were changing what we were doing, changing our lifestyle."(R6)
Perceived feasibility	Social support	Personal social support	Family	"The main resources I had were people who I had met who had either worked in the field already, or who had sort of transferrable experience, and it was very much predicated on small networks of people like that. So for example in London through a family connection I knew a guy that has quite a large food business." (R3)

	Local community	"Well, I was quite involved in the local community, so I was the chair for a city council of a local senior school and had been involved in local primary school councils when my kids were younger, I was on their board of the local rugby club, so I had quite good community presence and relationships. So, that all helped, and I knew people in a local development trust… had good relationships there. I didn't really have any financial support at all, but I was able to tap in fairly quickly into community funds in a small scale and that got me started and that mean that somebody was willing to come on board." (R12)
	Friends	
Wider social support	Support organizations	"I think that the landscape in Scotland at the moment and in the UK is quite open to social entrepreneurs. I think it's greater in Scotland than in England. As long as you have a clear and concise idea of what you want to do then you can get there." (R11)
	Funding availability	"There's lots of opportunities financially I think and there's lots of money that's coming into the sector in terms of investment, which I think is unlike what it may have been 10 or 20 years ago for people who may have started out during earlier editions of social enterprises." (R4)
	Governmental support	"I think social enterprises have opened up. I think there's more opportunities in social enterprise [in Scotland] than there is in private, commercial." (R6).
		"I think the government has a fantastic strategic view of the importance of social enterprises and what they can contribute particularly in a time when you know there are big financial constraints nationally. And I think that the policies that come out of that are really great." (R12)
	Support from social enterprise network	"Scotland is a great place to be a social entrepreneur because there's all sorts of ecosystem support out there if you've got an idea." (R10)
		"I think Scotland's done a really good job to cultivate a very supportive social

				enterprise network area….I think it's a really good culture here particularly in social enterprises… I have to say credit to however that is, why ever that is. I feel it's quite unique." (R1)
	Previous work experience	Social enterprise and third sector	Support organisation employee	"I worked for [social enterprise support organisations]. So, I did social enterprise and health and community food. And then before that I worked for a big charity… and I set up a social enterprise through them."(R1)
			Charity employee	"I came back to Glasgow and stuck with a charity and then the social enterprise, I'd only been out of university a couple of years so, I've got very little experience with anything else." (R2)
			Social enterprise employee	"I first started with [social enterprise] which is a café and restaurant in Edinburgh…so, I got that exposure…and I wanted to contribute to something that was quite personal to me." (R4)
				"I've worked in the third sector my whole life. I understand that things happen because of relationships that people have." (R10)
Contextual background	Precipitating event	Past personal event	Childhood trauma	"My stepfather was in prison repeatedly…what I wanted was stability and to do well... So yes, it's [starting a social enterprise] probably deeply personal and sort of strange solution to solving my own problem" (R3).
			Family trauma	"We got started because our family went through a trauma and we realised that there was no support services to help people at the stage that they needed the help" (R8).
			Health problems	"I wanted to contribute to something that was quite personal to me, I was affected by the lack of clean water access. I was sort of affected by that when I was in Nepal when I was younger." (R4)

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On-going personal event	Caring responsibilities	"We have an adult autistic son… We decided that we were changing what we were doing, changing our lifestyle. We were motivated by doing something that we could do with our son." (R3).