

Social capital built by social entrepreneurs and the specific personality traits that facilitate the process

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Social entrepreneurs are passionate, ethical individuals who introduce new approaches to solving challenging social issues. The hypothesis assumes that in pursuing their goals, social entrepreneurs apply specific methods leading to building social capital and, further, that they exhibit specific personality traits that help facilitate those methods. The building of social capital was studied by comparing methods used by social entrepreneurs and leading social activists. Moreover, seven personality traits deemed critical to building social capital were identified and their prevalence in society at large compared to their prevalence among leading social entrepreneurs and activists.

The research reveals that the personality traits of social entrepreneurs and social activists differ significantly from those found in the general society in all seven categories, and that the traits of the social entrepreneurs differ significantly from the social activists' in two of the seven. Both social entrepreneurs and social activists use methods that build social capital. However, social entrepreneurs tend to avoid all methods that do not lead to building social capital, whereas social activists use non-social-capital-building methods as well.

Key words: social entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship, social change, social capital, Ashoka, social activists

Social innovations can transform lives, even in communities where hopes for a better life are quite low if not

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nonexistent. For instance, in Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world, the sight of rural women actively engaged in conducting business, is not uncommon. It is the realization of the project initiated by the winners of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, by Professor Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank for their efforts to create economic and social development from below. Grameen's banking for the poor program offers microcredit to (mainly) poor women in the form of revolving loans, which enable them to launch their own small-business ventures. Conceived in 1976, the program has resulted in a proliferation of enterprises in rural areas, changing the lives of millions and spreading the microfinance system throughout the world, and ultimately empowering the poorest of the poor. Often the most profound and sustainable social changes are introduced in a bottom-up social process, starting with an individual who has a transformative idea.

As Bornstein (2004) indicates, we can point to numerous such cutting-edge social innovations, and we observe that behind nearly every one of them usually stand visionary individuals, whose passion, commitment, innovativeness, and spirit of entrepreneurship lead them to devise and spread solutions to seemingly insurmountable social problems. An analysis of cases like the Grameen Bank indicates that the most effective change process fosters the kind of transformation that is durable, that empowers societies, and that is the result of bottom-up dynamics. Certainly, not every great idea results in meaningful social change. On the contrary, most great ideas are never implemented. The question is: who are those who have the capacity to convert a promising idea into concrete action? In other words, what are the unique personality characteristics that enable some individuals to implement their vision into demonstrable social change?

Individuals who can bring about social change visible on a macro level in a bottom up process are usually referred to as social entrepreneurs. Martin and Osberg (2007) indicate that “the entrepreneur is inspired to alter the unpleasant equilibrium” (p. 33). The actions of social entrepreneurs differ from those of social activists, in that they trigger pronounced, durable, and sustained social change, whereas activists may make things happen, but more on the surface. Moreover, they change the basic properties of the social systems in which they operate. Social entrepreneurs are often not very visible and usually do not become charismatic leaders; rather, they concentrate on empowering others.

How do they do it? The hypothesis advanced in this study is that social entrepreneurs are highly effective in achieving lasting and substantial change through building social capital. Whatever their focus may be (health issues, the environment, unemployment, disabilities, poverty, education) social capital helps them pursue their goals but it also becomes an additional value in the newly empowered society.

This article raises the question: what personality traits enable the realization of such far-reaching results? Do social entrepreneurs differ from the rest of the society or from other social leaders?

In the research on social entrepreneurship, one of the most difficult tasks is the identification of, and access to, social entrepreneurs. According to Barendsen and Gardner (2004), social entrepreneurs are unusual in a number of ways: they are exceptional, for instance, in what they believe and in how their beliefs originate. They also exhibit an unusual passion and commitment. They operate on implicit knowledge rather than drawing on abstract knowledge of social issues, which most of them do not possess.

As estimated by one of the international organizations that foster social entrepreneurship, approximately one in ten million individuals meets the definition of a social entrepreneur. Finding social entrepreneurs, especially in the early stages of their activity, is a daunting task. They usually start locally and are not visible on a global scale. Their areas of activity are extremely diverse, from saving endangered species to providing electricity in remote rural areas. It is thus unclear even what kind of activity to look for when searching for a social entrepreneur.

Elaborate methods of identifying social entrepreneurs in the early stages have been developed by the citizen sector organization Ashoka, Innovators for the Public. The mission of Ashoka is to make everyone in the world a changemaker, and one of the most important ways of doing so is to identify and empowering them in their efforts to effect positive social change. Ashoka has been in existence since 1980, and currently operates in 70 countries and has found and selected 2,200 Fellows throughout the world. The long-term affiliation (14 years) of one of the authors of this paper has facilitated the research on Ashoka Fellows.

Defining social entrepreneurs

Standing behind successful social innovation is usually a committed, creative, and entrepreneurial individual – in other words, a social entrepreneur. Peter Drucker (Gendron, 1966) said that social entrepreneurs change the performance capacity of the society. It is social entrepreneurs who trigger pronounced, durable, and sustained social change. Their unique knacks may be related to their personality characteristics.

There is an increasing interest in the field of social entrepreneurship among academics and social activists (Gentile, 2002; Leadbeater, 1997; Steyaert and Hjorth, 2006) as well as among many in the private sector (Brinckerhoff, 2000; Hill and Knowlton and Ashoka Form Precedent-Setting Global Partnership, 2002; UBS Visionaris Awards, Philanthropy at the Inflection Point, 2007). According to Mair, Robinson and Hockerts (2006, p. 1), “in the past decade ‘social entrepreneurship’ has made a popular name for itself on the global scene as a ‘new phenomenon’ that is reshaping the way we think about social-value creation”. Peter Drucker captured this social-value creation process in his statement that the “social entrepreneur changes the performance capacity of society” (Gendron, 1966), meaning that the impact of social entrepreneurs exceeds by far their specific areas of interest (e.g., disabilities, education, women’s issues, or the environment) by empowering societies to enhance their overall performance.

Dees (1998), Henton, Melville and Welsh, (1997), Alvord, Brown and Letts, (2004), Bornstein (1998) and Ashoka (2000) say that social entrepreneurs play the role of change agents in the social sector, by:

- undertaking a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value),
- recognizing and relentlessly seizing upon new opportunities to serve that mission,
- engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning,
- acting boldly, not limiting themselves to easily accessible resources,
- exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes reached,
- combining economic and social growth,
- being motivated by long-term social goals,
- produce small changes in the short term that reverberate through existing systems, ultimately effecting significant change in the longer term.

Martin and Osberg (2007) see social entrepreneurs as targeting underserved, neglected, or highly disadvantaged populations, aiming at large-scale, transformational benefits that accrue either to a significant segment of society or to society at large.

Bornstein (1998, 2004) considers the Ashoka, Innovators for the Public definition of social entrepreneurship to be the most comprehensive. The selection criteria for Ashoka Fellows are, according to Drayton (2002, 2005) and Hammonds (2005):

- having a new idea for solving a critical social problem,
- being creative,
- having an entrepreneurial personality,
- envisioning the broad social impact of the idea,
- possessing an unquestionable ethical fiber.

Ashoka, a citizen sector organization, is finding and supporting social entrepreneurs, who are seen as the engines of social change and role models for the citizen sector. Ashoka identifies and invests in leading social entrepreneurs and helps them achieve maximum social impact¹.

This organization is electing its Fellows through a rigorous, multi-stage process, as described in the brochure *Selecting leading social entrepreneurs* (2007); those procedures proved to be highly effective².

This paper has adopted the Ashoka definition for social entrepreneurship, and the research group comprises Ashoka Fellows.

The global population of Ashoka Fellows, $N = 2,200$ (for year 2008) according to Bornstein (1998, 2004) seems the best representation of social entrepreneurs, consisting of passionate individuals, totally committed to chal-

lenge such burnings social problems as unemployment, economic disenfranchisement, illiteracy, discrimination against women in the job market, educational gaps, lack of inclusiveness for the disabled, environmental threats, domestic violence, child abuse, and many more. Coming from diverse continents, countries and cultures they cover all possible levels of education, age and genders.

Bottom-up changes, social capital, and trust

Effecting change in a lasting way can only be achieved through the cooperation of the society by dint of multiple interrelationships (networks) built on trust and shared goals. This triggers active societal participation: people become interested and involved, taking a lead in bottom-up changes.

The power of the dynamics of bottom-up change is seen as a pivotal factor in introducing durable social change, e.g. Piven (2008). These dynamics are for instance shown to be most effective in promoting health care, e.g. Carey (2000) and Edwards et al. (2003) and in eradicating poverty in rural areas, e.g., in self-organizing communities in Bangladesh (Blair, 2005).

Those networks generate capital, which is embedded “in the structure of relations between actors and among actors” Coleman (2003, p. 82) and as such are called “social capital” (e.g. Bourdieu, 2003, p. 51; Putnam and Gross, 2002, p. 8). Social capital is not only a critical factor in sustaining bottom-up mechanisms (Woolcock, 2004) but also is the best generator of society’s economic development and well-being (Maskell, 2000; Putnam, 1993).

Some authors indicate that bottom-up social-change mechanisms usually are triggered by specific individuals and leaders (Bornstein, 2004; Prabhu, 1999). Gittel, Ortega-Bustamante and Steffy, (2000) researched how American community-development organizations (CDOs) become powerful change agents. He found that the best CDOs are those where leaders focus on leveraging trust, social networks, and social capital – a formula that yields the most profound social change. Nowak and Vallacher (1998) confirmed this by simulating various change-disperse dynamics out of which they developed the so-called “bubble theory”. This concept posits that the best way to effect change is through “bubbles of new” in the “sea of old,” where each bubble arises around a strong leader.

However, it appears that no research exists on the methods used to foster social capital. It seems likely that one of the ways to build social capital is through increasing the level of trust (Bourdieu 1997; Coleman 1990; Durkheim, 1984; Fukuyama 1995; Parsons, 1972). Putnam (1993) said that trust mutually reinforces bottom-up economic and social development and that higher levels of trust

yield better results, which raises the trust level and then in turn further engenders other positive results. This paragraph is confusing as you state that there is no research on the methods used to foster social capital, and then you go one to cite the research!!! What am I missing?

It appears that other important building blocks used in developing social capital include increasing the following elements: level of cooperation (Knack and Keefer, 1997; Putnam, 2000), fostering optimism and self-reliance (Narayan and Cassidy, 2001; Uslaner, 1999), and enhancing connectivity and networking (Burt, 2001; Degenne and Forse, 1999; Lin, 2001).

On the other hand, we have found that some methods do not work in the effort to build social capital, especially when the “builders” increase people’s dependency on external resources (Maskell, 2000; Putnam, 2000; Wacquant, 1998).

Personality characteristics

In order to foster this sort of durable bottom-up change individuals who pursue that should have specific personality traits enabling this sort of approach. The personality traits that are essential to the building of social capital were identified through case studies and analysis of the literature.

The first two of these traits were *trust* and *optimism*. The passionate way social entrepreneurs bring new hope and new possibilities to the society can only be effective if accompanied by their own optimism and high level of trust in people and societies. Uslaner (1998) indicates that optimism and trust are the foundation for introducing change to the society and that these two attributes are closely related: “optimism shapes trust, which in turn plays a powerful role in affecting civic activism”, though both factors should be considered separately.

The sample questions related to trust in the questionnaire we constructed (see The Research Tools section below): “I usually trust people”, opposite: “Everybody ultimately is driven by self-interest”.

Optimism – Facing new challenges: “I know that this will be a success”, opposite: “In five years I will be worse off than I am today”.

The next personal characteristic, *cooperation*, can be considered the keystone of societal bottom-up transformation. Individual leaders, even if charismatic, usually bring only short-term change, which is mostly based on his or her personal energy and commitment. According to Elkington and Hartigan (2008), social entrepreneurs “are willing to share their innovations and insights for others to replicate” (p. 5). Building social capital empowers others and is achieved through cooperation.

Samples: “Teamwork is more beneficial than working alone”, opposite: “Better to work alone than in groups”.

The “Lone Ranger” approach disregards the need for support from others, and is therefore doomed to fail in the long run. On the other hand, social entrepreneurs usually have their own strong *individual social networks* which help them attain their complex mission. This kind of personal social capital is also perceived by Ashoka Fellows as a source of support and “battery loading”, which in many cases is critical to a successful outcome, considering that they usually act against all odds, struggle with many obstacles, and pursue a seemingly impossible mission.

Samples: “There are people who would help me in difficult situations”, opposite: “I think that if I were in need of help, everybody would abandon me”.

Introducing new solutions involves moving against the mainstream, which is usually a continuous, overwhelming struggle. Social entrepreneurs have the knack of turning those obstacles into opportunities and find innovative solutions in the most difficult circumstances (see Bornstein 2004; Elkington and Hartigan 2008). Their success, however, depends on their own *adversaries coping mechanisms*.

Samples: “I usually don’t lose my heart in the face of difficulties”, opposite: “Difficulties are a signal to stop the operation”.

Risk-taking is seen as another important ability. Elkington and Hartigan (2008) say that social entrepreneurs “jump in before ensuring they are fully resourced”. Although McClelland (1967) indicated that an entrepreneur has only an average tendency to engage in risk-taking behavior, this assessment was made long before the dramatic worldwide escalation of the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship and long before Drucker’s (1993) observation that “entrepreneurship is risky” (p. 29). Social entrepreneurs often risk their professional career, family life, and financial resources in order to pursue their passion.

Samples: “I tend to put all my eggs in one basket”, opposite: “I tend to think things over multiple times before I act”.

They do it because they are mission driven and because they believe in the potential of people and the world to change (see Lachowicz-Tabaczek, 2004). This belief – that people and the world can be amenable to change – accounts for their persistence, tenacity, and commitment in pursuit of their mission. Based on Dweck’s concept (2000, 2006), the last personality trait to be identified was the belief in the malleability of people and the world.

Sample: “Everybody is as he is, and there isn’t much you can do about it”.

Several other personality traits have also been considered, e.g., locus of control. However, Brockhaus and Horwitz (1986) report no difference in the locus of control between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs (managers.) Also pilot interviews with social-sector activists indicated that most have an internal locus of control similar to that of social entrepreneurs, what indicated that this wouldn't be a discriminating factor.

Two other important personality traits – creativity and entrepreneurial skills – were not considered, as they are part of the Ashoka selection criteria and as such are considered here as independent variables.

Hypothesis

Building social capital involves *using* specific methods based on social empathy, which are empowering the society and enabling a bottom-up process. But it also means *avoiding* disempowering methods, which focus on external resources and on top-down actions. Following this path of reasoning, two separate hypotheses were drawn:

- Hypothesis 1: Social entrepreneurs use methods that build social capital.
- Hypothesis 2: Social entrepreneurs avoid methods that are not aimed at building social capital.

It also involves specific personality characteristic:

- Hypothesis 3: Social entrepreneurs have a high level of optimism, trust, willingness to cooperate; they have their own strong social networks, have a high level of ability for coping with adversaries, and readiness to take risks; finally they believe in the potential for people and the world to adapt to change.

Methodology

Target and comparison groups

The social entrepreneurs that are the subject of this research are Ashoka Fellows elected in Poland. The two comparison groups comprise leading Polish social activists who are not Ashoka Fellows and a representative sample of the society at large in Poland.

The target cohort, GB

For this research the target cohort was narrowed down to a pool of all Ashoka Fellows elected in Poland from November 2004 (when the program was launched) to the end of 2005. The group of 52³ individuals comprises 18 females and 34 males. Figure 1 shows the number of selections broken down by years.

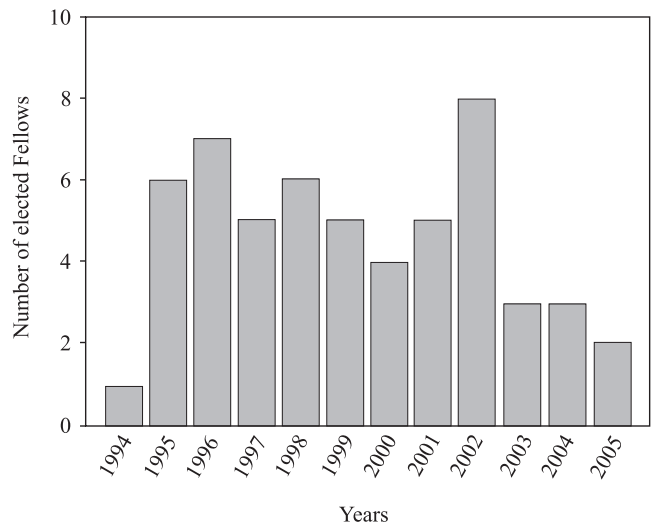


Figure 1.
Number of Fellows elected to Ashoka by years

Comparison group 1. GP1: leading Polish social activists

This comparison group was chosen from the social sector's database in three steps:

Step 1: from the existing 90,099 nonprofits, 4,087 were selected based on the following criteria:

- The founder of the organization is its current leader, which permits to compare leaders, not organizations.
- The organization has a high status (in Poland one has to meet several criteria and undergo a screening process to achieve this status). These criteria set a high bar in the comparison group, so that Ashoka Fellows are compared with the best social activists.

Step 2: The 4,087 organizations were reduced to 130; the criteria were: relevant contact information were in the database, the NGO was registered as operating in the nationwide (similar to social entrepreneurs, for whom national scope is one of the selection criteria); the entries were updated the earliest in 2006; and the leaders were not Ashoka Fellows.

Step 3: out of the short-listed 130 social leaders, 52 were randomly selected.

The comparison group, $G_{P1} = 52$, did not differ significantly from the research group $G_B = 52$ in terms of gender and educational level.

Comment: in the selection process, the comparison group G_{P1} is referred to as "leading social activists", which is positioned relatively close to the group of social entrepreneurs. The downside is that there may be fewer differences than if the comparison group were to be identified by a simple random selection without additional

conditions. However, should any differences appear, this method would sharpen the picture of the specific variables associated with social entrepreneurship.

The comparison group 2, GP2, representative sample of the society

A representative sample of Polish society, $N = 1,002$, was randomly selected by a company specializing in conducting national surveys⁴.

The research tools

The pilot studies and interviews revealed that social entrepreneurs as well as social activists are extremely busy and stressed out, which limits their availability. The time limit was a true challenge for the research team, and as a result the decision was to discontinue using the set of existing questionnaires and instead to construct new comprehensive questionnaires, resulting, for instance in one for all seven personality traits. The new questionnaire, however, needed to be piloted and verified for their discriminating power and reliability.

In order to meet the challenges of this unique group by applying the discipline of comparative research, two separate questionnaires were developed – one measures personality traits, and the other weighs the hypothesis that social entrepreneurs are building social capital.

Personality traits

- Questionnaire: Social Entrepreneur’s Personality Characteristics⁵.

1st step: The 72-question questionnaire was initially constructed by associating several categories with each of the seven personality traits.

2nd step: The questionnaire was piloted with a group of university graduate students, $N = 50$ (39 female, 11 male; ages 22–24) in order to verify its discriminating power and reliability.

3^d step: The questionnaire was standardized on a 1,002-person probe, randomly selected sample of Polish society (482 male i 520 female), in age between 16 to 90 years old ($M = 48,35$; $SD = 18$). The statistical analysis of the results are pictured in Table 1.

All scales do not diverge from normal distribution (skewness and kurtosis near zero).

After post-pilot modifications, the reliability improved: α -Cronbach’s reliability factor varied between .62 (risk-taking) and .83 (adversaries coping mechanisms.) Individual social networks: around .8, trust and belief in the malleability of people and the world over .7, whereas trust, cooperation and risk-taking – over .6. None of the scales went below .6.

Factor analysis was applied for verifying the factor validity. For extraction Maximum Likelihood method was applied with the use of Oblim rotation. The delta parameter, which measures the skewnesity was defined as zero, because there was no expectation towards the strength of the correlation between global factors. Both results: Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin test made for normalized data ($KMO = .89$) and the significant value of Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity, $\chi^2(1326) = 13\ 613$, $p < .001$, justified applying the factor analysis.

Table 1.

Basic psychometric parameters after normalization, comparison to pilot research, SE’s Personality Characteristics questionnaire (PS)

Scale		M	SD	skewness	kurtosis	reliability
Risk-taking	Pilot research	20.51	4.06	.063	2.861	.48
	Normalization research	17.63	4.43	.380	.042	.62
Optimism	Pilot research	24.29	4.57	-.594	.543	.56
	Normalization research	22.07	4.33	.045	-.152	.69
Trust	Pilot research	23.19	4.47	.258	.150	.67
	Normalization research	20.17	4.04	-.082	-.010	.76
Individual social networks	Pilot research	31.69	5.80	-.787	.061	.79
	Normalization research	26.88	5.44	-.241	-.439	.80
Cooperation	Pilot research	19.51	4.46	-.455	.415	.65
	Normalization research	21.66	4.19	-.046	-.037	.68
Adversaries coping mechanisms	Pilot research	36.12	7.34	-.334	-.064	.89
	Normalization research	35.55	6.45	-.335	.138	.89
Belief in the malleability of people and the world	Pilot research	19.02	4.19	.313	-.516	.69 / .72
	Normalization research	14.41	4.40	.453	-.048	.72

The results partially confirm the theoretical expectations. As expected, a seven-factors solution was achieved (40.9% variance). However, only three out of the seven factors are easily identifiable: factor IV (individual social networks), V (belief in the malleability of people and the world), and VI (cooperation). The remaining factors are not as clear and require a follow-up, more in-depth.

Table 2.
Factor loadings for seven variables on the components after Oblimin rotation

question	Factor						
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
52.	.644						
25.	.625						
46.	.608						
37.	.602						
48.	.557						
42.	.515						
50.	.463						
12.	.442						
20.	.434						
31.	.405						
45.	.401						
05.							
26.							
36.		.667					
19.		.607					
35.		.595					
40.		.553					
41.	.468	.516					
29.		.477					
28.		.425					
34.							
09.			.687				
04.			.618				
24.			.606				
02.			.602				
08.			.590				
23.			.435				
47.			.431				
11.			.405				
07.							
13.							

Table 2 – cd.

question	Factor						
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
44.				.711			
43.				.701			
38.				.669			
32.				.602			
06.					.622		
21.					.605		
39.					.546		
27.					.508		
01.					.463		
16.							
30.						.572	
15.						.522	
10.						.508	
49.						.445	
14.							
51.							
33.							
17.							.677
18.							.649
22.							
03.							

The results presented in Table 2, though not totally compatible with theoretical expectations, are not surprising. First, orthogonality wasn't assumed when constructing the questionnaire. Second, the questions' content analysis reveals that some questions should be related with two factors: in some cases there seems to be co-occurrence within one-factor questions related to adversaries' coping mechanisms, individual social networks, trust and risk-taking. Apparently, individuals with stronger social networks will have a feeling of potential support and backing, which may result in a better ability to cope with obstacles and a greater readiness for risk-taking. Correlation between cooperation and individual social networks is understandable as well: persons with potential support from their social networks may be more ready to cooperate; in that case trust may serve as the mediating factor.

The normal distribution for the Polish population was done taking into consideration the correction for discontinuity (Hornowska 2003). The sten system was selected to present the results. Between 1–3 stens should be interpreted as low; 4–6, medium and 7–10, high. Table 3 presents the norms for the Polish population.

Table 3.
Norms for the Polish population in stens

sten	Risktaking	optimism	trust	individual social networks	Cooperation	adversaries coping mechanisms	belief in the malleability of people and the world
1	< 10	< 13	< 11	< 15	< 12	< 20	< 6
2	11	14–15	12–14	16–18	13–15	21–25	7–8
3	12–13	16–17	15–16	19–21	16–17	26–29	9–10
4	14–15	18–20	17–18	22–24	18–19	30–32	11
5	16–17	21–22	19–20	25–27	20–21	33–36	12–13
6	18–19	23–24	21–22	28–30	22–23	37–39	14–16
7	20–22	25–26	23–24	31–32	24–26	40–42	17–19
8	23–25	27–29	25–26	33–35	27	43–45	20–22
9	26–27	30–31	27–28	36	28–30	46–47	23–24
10	> 28	> 32	> 29	> 37	> 31	> 48	> 25

Building social capital

• Questionnaire: Working with groups⁶
 A questionnaire, “Working with groups”, was constructed and piloted with university graduate students, *N* = 65 (46 females, 19 males; ages 20–37). There were 10 questions, which related to building social capital (e.g., enhancing trust, increasing spirit of cooperation), mixed with 10 questions related to methods not aimed at building social capital (e.g., bringing experts from outside, teaching how to present oneself to the public). All 20 questions were positively verified in the pilot.

The statistics related to this questionnaire are presented in Table 4.

The α -Cronbach’s reliability factor of this questionnaire is .78, which is considered as quite strong. A higher reliability relates to the second variable: “Using methods that do not create social capital”, and equals .83.

The normal distribution tests (Kolmogorow-Smirnow) revealed that the first scale “Using methods that create social capital” differs from the normal distribution, *Z* = 1.43, *p* < .05, whereas the second scale is close to the normal distribution, *Z* = 1, *p* > .05. This was additionally confirmed by the skewness and kurtosis analysis.

Results

Building social capital

The group of Ashoka Fellows did not differ from the group of social entrepreneurs in terms of choosing methods that build social capital. However, they *did* differ significantly when it comes to *not* choosing methods that *do not* build social capital (Table 5): Ashoka Fellows compared to social activists avoided choosing methods that do not build social capital.

Table 4.
The basic psychometric parameters of the questionnaire „Working with groups” (PrGr)

Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	skewness	Kurtosis	Reliability
Using methods which are creating social capital	3.5	.35	-1.8	6	.78
Using methods which are not creating social capital	3.2	.46	-1.2	4.5	.83

Table 5.
Comparison of Ashoka Fellows with social activists on measures of building social capital

scale	group	M	SD	df	T	p
build social capital	Ashoka	3.79	.26	100	.8	.391
	social activists	3.83	.21			
do not build social capital	Ashoka	3.26	.51	100	2.3	.022
	social activists	3.48	.42			

It can be therefore safely concluded that social entrepreneurs only choose to use methods that *exclusively* build social capital, whereas social activists also tend to use methods that do not build social capital.

Personality traits

In order to compare the social entrepreneurs and social activists with the representative sample of the society on the personality traits, a sub-sample of 220 participants, demographically similar to social entrepreneurs and activists, was selected from the representative sample ($n = 1002$). The one-way ANOVA test was used along with the post hoc contrasts to test differences between groups.

The three groups differed significantly on all personality dimensions (Table 6). The post-hoc contrasts (Bonferroni test) revealed a number of significant differences between the subgroups. The Ashoka Fellows were more willing to take risk than both social activists and the representative sample, while no differences were found between social activists and the representative sample. The Ashoka Fellows and social activists did not differ significantly on the level of optimism but both activist groups were sig-

nificantly more optimistic than the representative sample. The same pattern of results was found for the personality characteristics of trust, individual social networks, cooperation, and mechanisms of coping with adversaries. In all cases the two active groups (the Ashoka Fellows and social activists) did not differ between themselves but both groups scored significantly higher than the representative sample. The belief in malleability of people and the world differentiated all three groups, with the Ashoka Fellows scoring the highest and the representative sample the lowest. The main difference between social entrepreneurs (Ashoka Fellows) and social activists thus consists in readiness to take risk and in the shared belief that people and the world have the capacity to change.

In the next step we run factor analysis on seven first-order scales using the sample of Ashoka Fellows and social activists ($n = 104$). The two-factor solution was obtained (Table 7). The first second-order factor, with the highest factor loadings for this variable, were: trust, cooperation, individual social networks and optimism. After analysis of the items and the factor solution this scale was labeled as measuring the level of social capital. The second second-order factor, with the highest factor loadings for this

Table 6.

Comparison of Ashoka Fellows with social activists and with the representative sample of the society on personality characteristics

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	Differences between groups (Bonferroni test)
Risk-taking	1) Ashoka	21.49	4.19	17.29***	2,319	1 & 2 1 & 3
	2) social activists	18.96	4.06			
	3) representative	17.77	4.09			
Optimism	1) Ashoka	27.70	3.22	37.28***	2,319	1 & 3 2 & 3
	2) social activists	27.07	3.53			
	3) representative	23.31	4.19			
Trust	1) Ashoka	26.03	4.72	43.57***	2,319	1 & 3 2 & 3
	2) social activists	24.49	3.96			
	3) representative	20.76	3.99			
individual social networks	1) Ashoka	33.25	4.99	33.86***	2,319	1 & 3 2 & 3
	2) social activists	31.94	4.62			
	3) representative	27.67	5.17			
Cooperation	1) Ashoka	25.45	3.76	30.26***	2,319	1 & 3 2 & 3
	2) social activists	26.21	3.74			
	3) representative	21.86	4.50			
adversaries coping mechanisms	1) Ashoka	43.17	5.21	38.95***	2,319	1 & 3 2 & 3
	2) social activists	43.39	4.82			
	3) representative	36.82	6.55			
belief in the malleability of people and the world	1) Ashoka	21.21	4.24	62.45***	2,319	1 & 2 1 & 3 2 & 3
	2) social activists	19.21	3.97			
	3) representative	14.80	4.15			

*** $p < .001$.

Table 7.
Factor loadings of personality characteristics included in the study after Oblimin rotation

	Factor	
	1	2
Trust	.833	
Cooperation	.749	
individual social networks	.712	
Optimism	.356	
adversaries coping mechanisms	.217	
belief in the malleability of people and the world	.522	.618
Risk-taking		.399

variable, were: belief in the malleability of people and the world, risk-taking and adversaries coping mechanisms. The items’ and the factor solution analysis allowed to identify this scale as measuring self-confidence in own effectiveness. It’s worth mentioning that the scale “belief in the malleability of people and the world” loaded on both second order factors.

Both groups, social entrepreneurs and social activists, were compared using the two new scales. The Independent-Samples Test *t* revealed that the two groups did not differ in the level of social capital, $t(100) = 1.16, p > .05$. However, self-confidence in own effectiveness was significantly higher among social entrepreneurs than among social activists, $t(100) = 4.00, p < 0.05$.

Conclusions and discussion

Both groups – social entrepreneurs and the leading social activists – differed significantly from the rest of society in terms of seven specific personality traits; this makes them best equipped to pursue their social missions. They have had a higher level of optimism, which allows them to believe in the success of their mission. They trust others more than the average person, which enables them to delegate and share responsibility. They were more willing to take risks, which enables them to survive in the shaky social market. They all had wide individual support networks. They believed that change is possible, which bolsters their change-making mission. Their tendencies and abilities to be cooperative were above average, which opens the door to teamwork, cooperation, and dialogue. Finally, they were equipped with a higher ability to cope with adversity, which allows them to overcome the many natural obstacles usually associated with a social mission.

The social entrepreneurs differed from social activists in two dimensions:

- They had a higher readiness for risk-taking. This seems logical considering the definition of social entrepreneurship, which includes passion and total commitment to disseminate innovative ideas nationwide and region-wide (in many cases worldwide). Social entrepreneurs often put their own quality of life and private wealth at risk; they also often risk their professional development as they abandon their professional identity (e.g., doctor or teacher) and take on a new role in the society – the role of a social entrepreneur.

- They had a much deeper belief that “things can certainly change”, so that the effectiveness of their mission is backed by their profound convictions.

It may be interesting, however, to compare the seven personality traits with a less rigorous sample of selected social activists; the “leading social activists” selected in this research as a comparison group are positioned relatively close to the group of social entrepreneurs.

It would also be interesting to compare the seven personality traits between the two groups with a sample of business entrepreneurs.

- Social entrepreneurs and social activists used methods that build social capital by enhancing trust, optimism, and cooperation. They use several techniques that empower the society. Whether it is the environment, disabilities, poverty, unemployment, women’s issues – whatever their focus – they build social capital. This means that their impact goes far beyond the original idea – in a kind of ripple effect, it also empowers the societies in a generalized way, so that they also perform better in other areas of society that are not directly connected to the seminal idea. Social capital built by social entrepreneurs and their projects remains a long-term asset for society.

Additionally, compared to “regular” social activists, they do not use top-down methods or those based on external resources; they instinctively understand that this sort of approach threatens to maintain the society’s dependence on external forces. For example, they tend to minimize reliance on external experts to “come and preach”, and they avoid top-down aid. They aim their techniques at increasing the unexploited (sometimes latent) potentials of the communities, and convey the value of drawing from and building on the communities’ own resources.

It remains to be seen whether those findings can be replicated if applied to social entrepreneurs from diverse cultures other than the target research cohort that is the subject of this paper. To determine the answer, further research is necessary.

A fully descriptive picture, however, of the personality traits of social entrepreneurs should include the independent variables (the Ashoka selection criteria) of creativity

and entrepreneurial skills; this comprehensive picture allows understanding how social entrepreneurs seem to be “cut out” for successfully addressing the most critical social needs of the day and for bringing lasting and sustainable solutions.

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FOOTNOTES

1. See more on the selection criteria at: <http://www.ashoka.org/support/criteria>.
2. See measuring effectiveness at Ashoka: <http://www.ashoka.org/impact/effectiveness>.
3. 56 were elected, 4 passed away.
4. TSN OBOP.
5. Authored by Praszkier, Zabłocka-Bursa, Nowak, 2006. Warszawa: ISS UW.
6. Ibidem.

Kapitał społeczny tworzony przez przedsiębiorców społecznych i specyficzne cechy osobowości umożliwiające ten proces

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Streszczenie

Przedsiębiorcy społeczni dzięki nowatorskiemu podejściu i dużej pasji odnoszą sukcesy w rozwiązywaniu trudnych i palących problemów społecznych. W artykule stawiana jest hipoteza, że swoje cele osiągają poprzez budowanie kapitału społecznego, a ponadto – że posiadają specyficzne cechy osobowości, które to budowanie umożliwiają.

Budowanie kapitału społecznego było badane w dwóch grupach: przedsiębiorców społecznych i działaczy społecznych, przy użyciu kwestionariusza porównującego preferowane metody pracy z grupami. Wyodrębniono także siedem cech osobowości istotnych dla budowania kapitału społecznego i porównano ich występowanie u przedsiębiorców społecznych i działaczy społecznych, a także w reprezentacyjnej próbie społeczeństwa polskiego.

Wyniki pokazują, że przedsiębiorcy społeczni oraz działacze społeczni różnią się od polskiej przeciętnej pod względem badanych siedmiu cech osobowości w sposób istotny, a ponadto, że pod względem dwóch z tych cech przedsiębiorcy społeczni różnią się od działaczy społecznych. Zarówno przedsiębiorcy, jak i działacze społeczni używają metod budujących kapitał społeczny, jednakże przedsiębiorcy społeczni unikają stosowania metod, które nie prowadzą do budowania kapitału społecznego w odróżnieniu od działaczy społecznych, którzy takich metod swobodnie używają.

Słowa kluczowe: przedsiębiorczość społeczna, kapitał społeczny, zmiana społeczna, Ashoka, działacze społeczni