# A Review of Social Entrepreneurship Research

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**Abstract**

To enhance the understanding of social entrepreneurship, researchers have to reach a consensus on the construct of definitions and, in doing so, acknowledge the diversity of research interests involved in the study of social entrepreneurship. The purpose of the chapter is to present a state-of-the-art review and a bibliographical analysis of the field of social entrepreneurship. We highlight and analyse the extent to which research has devoted significant attention to social entrepreneurship, what individual researchers have published about social entrepreneurship topics, and how they have engaged in areas of discussion and made contributions. In a response to the lack of published research and incremental knowledge-building, the chapter further maps the prominent issues discussed in the social entrepreneurship literature and outlines some possible emergent research dialogues. One presumption in our study is that the discussions in the most cited articles have had a major impact on the direction of the contemporary social entrepreneurship discourse. In this vein, the study highlights key contributors and contributions to the multidisciplinary

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field of social entrepreneurship, and the relationships between individual contributions and the broader discussion in the literature.

## 3.1  Introduction

Social entrepreneurship can broadly be viewed as a process of creating value by combining resources in new ways that are intended primarily to explore and exploit opportunities for creating social value by stimulating social change or meeting social needs (Mair and Martí 2006). The use of entrepreneurship for social purposes rather than for profit, or how entrepreneurial profits can be used for social purposes, has been of great interest for practice and policy for quite some time (Fowler 2000; Harding 2004). The new global scenario, where marketization has gained power, has challenged the way common social functions are organized and financed. All over the world, researchers now report that innovative individuals are solving social needs that are unaddressed by private business, government, and other institutions. Practice reveals that these entrepreneurs have been able to fight social problems such as inequality and poverty using solutions that traditional entrepreneurship has failed to address. Inspired by the fact that social entrepreneurs can be highly potent social transformers by dint of adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private or economic value), as well as the pursuit of new opportunities to serve that mission (Dees 1998), research has now started to devote significant attention to social entrepreneurship issues and how social entrepreneurs can revise existing solutions to be financially, organizationally, socially and environmentally sustainable.

Despite this increasing interest, the scholarly study of social entrepreneurship could be considered an area that is underexplored and is at an early stage of development. Although there has been significant recent attention, this research has been plagued by the absence of an accepted view about what it is and how it can be defined (Mair and Martí 2006). Its theoretical underpinnings have not been adequately explored, and the need for contributions to theory and practice are pressing (Austin et al. 2006). Although focusing upon other issues, previous research has often concluded that there is a need for further academic inquiry. Despite the work that has been done, scholars often complain about contributing to a highly diverse and disparate field of research, not to mention the difficulties of incremental knowledge-building through joint research dialogues and debates. Therefore, it is necessary to pinpoint the core of social entrepreneurship in order to stimulate and guide future research (Mair and Martí 2006). Until recently there have been some scattered attempts to contribute to a better understanding of the direction of the social entrepreneurship discourse. To enhance the understanding of social entrepreneurship, researchers have to reach a consensus on the construction of definitions and, in doing so, acknowledge the diversity of research interests involved in the study of social entrepreneurship (Short et al. 2009).

In response, the purpose of this chapter is to present a state-of-the-art review and a bibliographical analysis of the social entrepreneurship field. We aim to highlight and analyse the extent to which research has devoted significant attention to social entrepreneurship, what individual researchers have published about social entrepreneurship topics, and how they have engaged in areas of discussion and made contributions. In a response to the lack of published research and incremental knowledge-building, the chapter further maps the prominent issues discussed in the social entrepreneurship literature and outlines some possible emergent research dialogues. We note that the field is multidisciplinary in its nature, which is something that researchers should be aware of and acknowledge. One presumption in our study is that the discussions in the most cited articles have had a major impact on the direction of contemporary social entrepreneurship discourse. In this vein, the study highlights key contributors and contributions to the multidisciplinary field of social entrepreneurship, and the relationships between individual contributions and the broader discussion in the literature.

## 3.2    Research Approach

We conducted a bibliographical analysis in order to obtain insights into the research about social entrepreneurship. The literature search was a complete review of everything published on social entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurs in recognized academic periodicals. A SciVerse Scopus database search was used for this literature review. Scopus is considered to be the largest abstract and citation database of research literature and quality web sources, covering nearly 18,000 titles from more than 5,000 publishers, with 41 million records, from indices to acknowledged niche journals (Scopus 2013). As such, the database includes published articles from the ISI database, ABI/Inform database EBSCO, and other similar databases. The advantage of SCOPUS is that it offers comprehensive and systematic tools for tracking and analysing previous research articles. The key words used for the analysis were social entrepreneurship; social enterprise(s); and social entrepreneur(s). The manuscripts were selected via their abstracts. We categorized and analysed the years when the articles were published, the scope of the papers (qualitative, quantitative, or conceptual), the academic journals that published on social entrepreneurship, citations, and years of citations, *h*-indices of the field, top ten contributions in terms of citations and their impact on the field, the extent to which different disciplines have been engaged in publishing about social entrepreneurship, prominent themes or discussions in the literature, the productivity of those scholars publishing on social entrepreneurship, core universities involved in developing the field, the popularity of the most prominent themes of research, and emerging issues in the field of social entrepreneurship research.

The method for performing an analysis of social entrepreneurship with this approach has some limitations; in focusing on academic journals and recognized journal publications, we did not include books or book chapters in our analysis, as

**Fig. 3.1** Publications about
social entrepreneurship
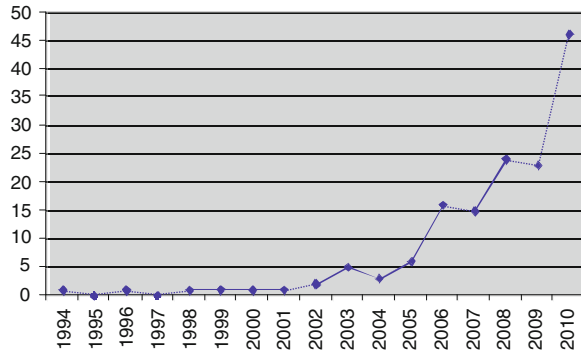


has been in Chap. 1. We have also omitted conference papers and new outlets that
are not yet acknowledged in Scopus. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the
principal research dialogues would be based upon published academic articles in
what could be considered to be quality publications, and that our review would
thus capture single contributions in the field of social entrepreneurship.

## 3.3 Historical Background of Social Entrepreneurship

### 3.3.1 Social Entrepreneurship as a Legitimate Area of Research

One aim of the literature review was to analyse whether the publications would
have reached such a magnitude that social entrepreneurship could be considered its
own field of research. Figure 3.1 shows the published academic papers about
social entrepreneurship. We have identified approximately 146 articles that deal
with either social entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurs (please see reference list
and additional references). The early studies largely focus on core issues for
understanding the nature of a new but growing phenomenon in practice. In the
beginning of the development of this field of research, authors such as Prochaska
(1994) wrote about how non-profit organizations could profit from an entrepre-
neurial mindset, and how to deal with the challenges that arise when traditional
altruistic values in non-profit organizations (NPOs) meet business values in a
rapidly changing environment. In the same spirit, Sundar (1996) highlighted the
function of social entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurship as agents of change
and outlined examples for how innovation-driven voluntary-based organizations in
fact create alternative power structures in a changing society. Furthermore, De
Leeuw (1999) argued that such entrepreneurship-driven change processes gain
force by incremental community institutionalization, and Fowler (2000) proble-
matized the ideas of social entrepreneurship and civic innovation in non-govern-
mental development organizations (NGDOs) in the light of commercial
entrepreneurship and public welfare. Those early contributions to the field were
most often case-studies from different contexts, but they were eventually followed

by an attempt to develop new frameworks for the phenomenon of social entre-
preneurship. After slow development in the field during the Nineties, the concept
started to appear more frequently in 2004, since when publications have gradually
been increasing; indeed, since 2007 the field has exploded, with a steep increase in
publications to 46 articles in 2010. The articles are found to be attracting more and
more attention in problematizing the concept as an academic field of study, but
also attempting to find frameworks and typologies for the concept (for example,
Hamby et al. 2010; Neck et al. 2009; Trivedi 2010; Zahra et al. 2009). Against this
background, we believe that social entrepreneurship is an area of academic inquiry
that is currently something that attracts growing attention from a significant
number of researchers, and the body of knowledge created thus far might well
form the basis for a separate field of academic research that could be expected to
receive significant attention in future.

Overall, most of the studies are empirical and are built on interviews; there are
only a few statistical ones to be found. The studies analysed here generally focus
on a descriptive method and on individuals who stand out as social entrepreneurs.
However, some recent advances indicate that it can be useful for future research to
approach social entrepreneurship studies with the collective in mind, focusing on
the group instead of just the individual, and meeting the need for more explanatory
approaches (Novkovic 2008).

Table 3.1 presents the main academic publications that have covered social
entrepreneurship. In an analysis of journals that publish on this topic, it is obvious
that the publications in the field of social entrepreneurship have entered prominent
scientific journals. Where analysing journals in which the topic is published, it is
also worth mentioning that several well-established academic journals have started
to publish frequently on social entrepreneurship. For example, special issues and
frequent contributions have been found in *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*,
the *Journal of Business Ethics*, and the *Journal of World Business*. This is all
evidence of a field that is establishing itself (Kuhn 1970).

As a response to this increased interest, it should be noted that social entre-
preneurship now has its own academic periodical. This new scientific journal,
which was founded in 2010, is the *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*. Although it
is not currently qualified for Scopus or ranked search indices such as ISI, this new
journal may potentially add to incremental knowledge-building.

### 3.3.2   The Impact of Diverse Interests and Limited Dialogues

As is evident in Fig. 3.2, citations from published articles have gradually increased
over recent years. Before 2004, the general impact of the published articles was
very limited. However, in recent years, the impact of the publications has been
rather significant. Although there is a large amount of citations, there is a clear bias
towards some classical pieces, such as Eikenberry and Kluver (2004), Mair and
Martí (2006), and Austin et al. (2006). The many citations are generally picked up

**Table 3.1** Periodicals that frequently publish on social entrepreneurship (with the number of published articles in parentheses)

| |
| --- |
| Entrepreneurship theory and practice (8) |
| Journal of Business Ethics (8) |
| Journal of World Business (7) |
| Journal of Entrepreneurship (6) |
| Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing (4) |
| Voluntas (4) |
| International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research (3) |
| International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business (3) |
| Journal of Enterprising Communities (3) |
| Journal of Asia Pacific Business (3) |
| Journal of Business Venturing (3) |
| Business Horizons (3) |
| Public Administration Review (2) |
| Entrepreneurship and Regional Development (2) |
| Corporate Governance (2) |
| Accounting Organizations and Society (2) |
| Administration in Social Work (2) |
| Academy of Management Perspectives (2) |
| Journal of Management Development (2) |
| Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship (2) |
| Asian Pacific Journal of Social Work (2) |

and worked with from researchers 'inside the field' (in other words, the general impact of the articles published on social entrepreneurship is felt within this field). The field has an *h*-index of 13, which indicates that the ideas in a limited number of articles seem to drive the impact of this research field. This high impact is rather impressive, considering the limited time that social entrepreneurship research has been pursued. The citations are increasing exponentially, and during 2012 there were almost 300 cross-references in social entrepreneurship.

Regarding cross-citations, our analysis indicates that the ten most cited articles have a significant impact within the dialogues pursued in the field of social entrepreneurship, as defined by our literature review. In fact, as presented in Fig. 3.3, we note that these ten articles have at least some connection to the most prominent research dialogues that we have identified in the social entrepreneurship literature. We will come back to these dialogues, but overall this indicates that they have been used for incremental knowledge-building in social entrepreneurship research. The most prominent areas these article dialogues cover are areas such as
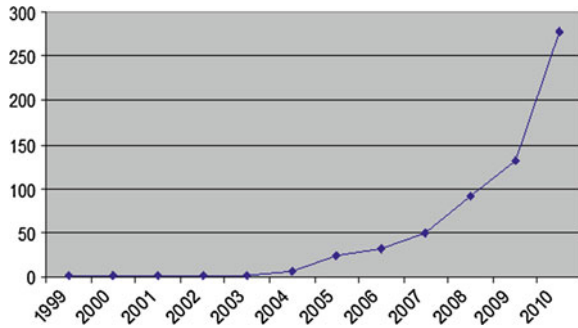
social entrepreneurship's transformative impact (for example, Eikenberry and
Kluver 2004; Fowler 2000), social innovation frameworks (Austin et al. 2006),
clarification of the definition and boundaries of social entrepreneurship and/or the
social entrepreneur (for example, Mair and Martí 2006; Peredo and McLean 2006;
Thompson 2002; Weerawardena and Mort 2006), social entrepreneurship and
poverty alleviation (for example, Fowler 2000; Seelos and Mair 2005), drivers and
values for social entrepreneurs (for example, Hemingway and Maclagan 2004),
and types of start-up processes present in social entrepreneurship organizations
(for example, De Leeuw 1999).

   The most influential article was written by Eikenberry and Kluver (2004) and
has been cited 62 times. In an analysis of what in this article has been cited by
other researchers, we notice that it has had a significant effect on the discussion of
ongoing societal transformation processes and the impact of marketization on
democratic processes and civil society. Among the citations that have an increased
impact across the years, it is interesting to notice that the influence of Austin et al.
(2006), for example, is high. In an analysis of the cross-citations, it seems to be
that this article has been cited because it provides a comparative view of com-
mercial entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, and thus reaches out to
researchers interested in working on a comprehensive and solid ground regarding
the definition and nature of social entrepreneurship. Another article with great
impact on the direction of the concept of social entrepreneurship is the one written
by Peredo and McLean (2006), which has been cited because the authors under-
score that while an individual can stand for social entrepreneurship, such processes
more often involve collective and cooperative efforts. Moreover, the article by
Mair and Martí (2006) has been cited because of their suggestion of a broad
definition of social entrepreneurship and the inclusion of the interaction between
the actor and the context in the view of social enterprise, as well as for the way
these researchers call for theoretical development in the field and how they suggest
reconstructing existing theories as a means of reaching a better understanding of
social entrepreneurship.

   Although one may think that social entrepreneurship research is mostly influ-
enced by entrepreneurship researchers in business, management and accounting,
this field of academic inquiry is based upon a multitude of researchers from
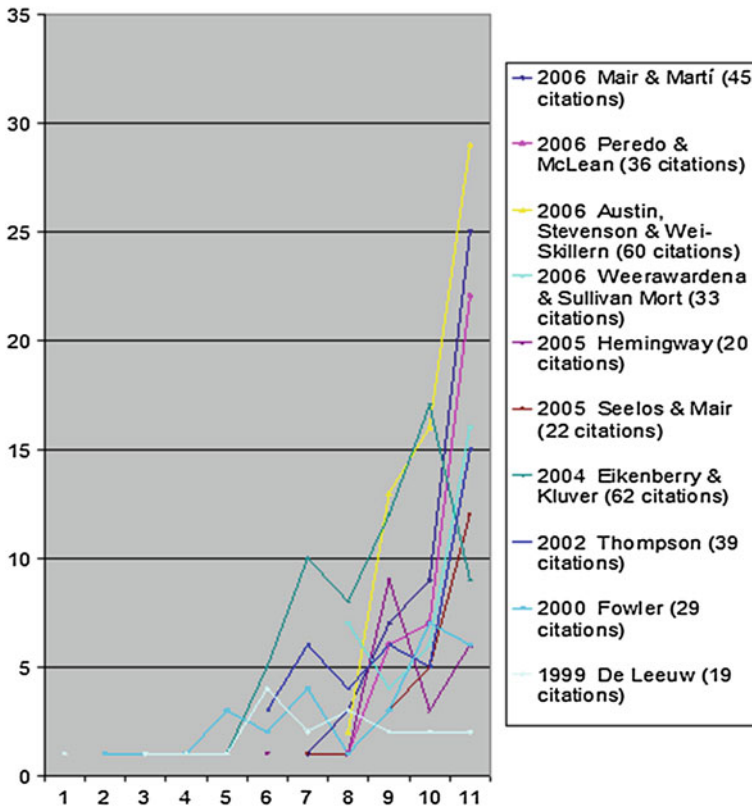
**Fig. 3.3** Cited articles about social entrepreneurship (from 1999 to 2010)

various disciplines. As reported in Table 3.2, in addition to business, management and accounting, this research has also been published in sociology, social science, psychology, as well as in economics and finance, environmental science, health and engineering. Table 3.3 lists the most active contributors in social entrepreneurship.

Table 3.4 presents our review of research environments active in the field of social entrepreneurship. In an analysis of these academic institutions, there are evidently some universities that publish more on social entrepreneurship. In the lead is the University of Oxford, followed by Duke University and George Mason University: these three have three or more publications in the area. Other well-known universities that are to some extent active in social entrepreneurship research are Florida International University, Université Simon Fraser, and Babson College. However, there is no clear body of knowledge at any one university. Given that only a limited number of researchers actively make frequent contri-butions, and that no clear body of university knowledge has yet developed, there does not seem good reason to consider social entrepreneurship a separate field of

**Table 3.2** Publication frequency of social entrepreneurship by field or discipline (with the number of published articles in parentheses)

| |
|---|
| Business, management, and accounting (97) |
| Social sciences (64) |
| Economics, econometrics, and finance (55) |
| Engineering (17) |
| Computer science (11) |
| Medicine (11) |
| Decision sciences (6) |
| Environmental science (6) |
| Psychology (6) |
| Health professions (3) |
| Nursing (3) |
| Arts and humanities (2) |
| Earth and planetary sciences (2) |
| Physics and astronomy (2) |
| Immunology and microbiology (1) |

research. According to Kuhn (1970), it would be difficult to create syntheses that align potential contributing scholars without clear, frequent, and dominating carriers of knowledge; this too suggests that social entrepreneurship is as yet in the early stages of developing into a separate field of research.

## 3.4    Areas of Discussion in Social Entrepreneurship Research

While observing that there is not much developed institutional knowledge thus far, and the number of authors contributing to this field is relatively small, we reviewed the published articles to identify the areas of discussion, and thus the threads of academic dialogues among researchers in the field of social entrepreneurship. To that end, we analysed and counted topics and cross-citations in order to identify emerging discussions and themes in the literature, which enabled us to identify common areas of discussion, covering different problems and approaches to social entrepreneurship from different angles. Table 3.5 presents the thirteen areas of discussion so identified, the common discussions the various authors pursue, and some examples of studies that have played a part in each dialogue. The table also highlights the disciplines that thus far have made active contributions to each specific dialogue. Below, we elaborate on each area and the core discussions related to each theme.

**Table 3.3** Authors that frequently (>2) publish on social entrepreneurship (with the number of published articles in parentheses)

| |
|---|
| Nicholls, A. (3) |
| Wang, H. (3) |
| Trivedi, C. (2) |
| Mort, G. S. (2) |
| Peredo, A. M. (2) |
| Meyskens, M. (2) |
| Gray, M. (2) |
| Mulloth, B. (2) |
| Haugh, H. (2) |
| Carsrud, A. L. (2) |
| Weerawardena, J. (2) |
| Toepler, S. (2) |
| Crofts, P. (2) |
| Martí, I. (2) |
| Horwitch, M. (2) |
| Chand, V. S. (2) |
| Rosengard, J.K. (2) |
| Li, J. (2) |
| Fawcett, B. (2) |
| Sud, M. (2) |

### 3.4.1   A Need for Sustainable Organizations

The background to this dialogue is that due to an increasingly competitive environment within NPOs as well as traditional organizations, a need has emerged to create sustainable organizations. This is seen both on strategic and operational levels (Weerawardena et al. 2010). Thus a discussion has begun that addresses the rise in opportunities for new models of business, where NPOs and for-profit organizations are active in the same domain, and even share the same structure, or parts of it. The trigger for the dialogue is an increasingly competitive market, where organizations need to focus on aspects other than financial profit in order to 'stay in the game', and how such factors as being socially and environmentally attuned can be important for success in this new environment.

Examples of authors who have studied this area are Weerawardena et al. (2010), who have conducted an extensive literature review and used multiple, qualitative case-studies in order to examine how the need to build a sustainable organization has impacted on the strategy focus of NPOs. The study makes a

**Table 3.4** Universities that publish frequently on social entrepreneurship (with the number of published articles in parentheses)

| University of Oxford (5) |
| --- |
| Duke University (4) |
| George Mason University (4) |
| University of Newcastle, Australia (3) |
| IESE Business School (3) |
| Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (3) |
| Pennsylvania State University (2) |
| University of Calgary (2) |
| University of Victoria (2) |
| Zhejiang University (2) |
| John F. Kennedy School of Government (2) |
| La Trobe University (2) |
| University of Detroit Mercy (2) |
| University of California, Irvine (2) |
| The Open University (2) |
| Florida International University (2) |
| Université Simon Fraser (2) |
| New York University (2) |
| Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2) |
| University of California, Berkeley (2) |
| Babson College (2) |
| University of Sydney (2) |
| University of Illinois at Chicago (2) |
| University of St. Gallen (2) |
| Swinburne University of Technology (2) |
| Ryerson University (2) |
| University of Queensland (2) |
| Griffith University (2) |

strong contribution to current debate in social entrepreneurship and to a broader agenda concerned with developing sustainable organizations. Meyskens et al. (2010), meanwhile, have studied the symbiosis of entities in the social engagement network and the role of social ventures. The overall conclusion of this dialogue is that the frameworks that are introduced provide a means of better understanding the context in which relevant social engagement players in a network exist, and the

**Table 3.5** Areas of discussion in social entrepreneurship

| Areas of discussion | Business, management, accounting | Social sciences | Economics, econometrics, finance | Health professions | Engineering | Environmental science | Psychology | Example study |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Need to build sustainable organizations | X | | | | | X | | De Leeuw (1999) <br> Weerawardena et al. (2010) |
| Local social enterprising | X | X | | | | | X | Fowler (2000) <br> Martin and Novicevic (2010) |
| Poverty alleviation through microfinancing | | | X | X | | | X | Seelos and Mair (2005) <br> Mohan and Potnis (2010) |
| Social innovation frameworks | | X | | | | | | Austin et al. (2006) <br> Dawson and Daniel (2010) |
| Start-up processes in social entrepreneurship | X | | | | | | | Maase and Bossink (2010) |
| Clarification of social entrepreneurship | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | Mair and Martí (2006) <br> Peredo and McLean (2006) <br> Clamp and Alhamis (2010) |
| Social value creation and commercialization | X | X | X | | | | | Di Domenico et al. (2010) |

(continued)

**Table 3.5** (continued)

| Areas of discussion | Business, management, accounting | Social sciences | Economics, econometrics, finance | Health professions | Engineering | Environmental science | Psychology | Example study |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community development | | X | X | | X | | | Irani and Elliman (2008) |
| Social capital mobilization | | X | | | | | | Thompson (2002) |
| | | | | | | | | Onyx and Leonard (2010) |
| Marketization of NPOs | X | | | | | | | Eikenberry and Kluver (2004) |
| | | | | | | | | Dempsey and Sanders (2010) |
| Characteristics of social entrepreneurs | | X | | | | | X | Weerawardena and Mort (2006) |
| | | | | | | | | Hemingway (2005) |
| | | | | | | | | London (2010) |
| Organizations of social enterprises | X | | | | X | | | Smith et al. (2010) |
| How to solve social challenges | X | X | X | X | X | | X | Tremblay et al. (2010) |

synergies that they can develop. Furthermore, the dialogue points to how incremental social entrepreneurship could build strategy-focused organizations in order to create sustainability in parallel to traditional solutions.

### 3.4.2 Local Social Enterprise and Clashes in Communities

This dialogue focuses on increasing the standard of living and alleviating poverty in deprived parts of the world through the establishment of local social enterprises with a bottom-up strategy, meaning that the local enterprise is grounded in the community, instead of in state or regional entities. The gist of the dialogue, however, is that this can cause cultural clashes in the communities concerned, since traditions, culture, and values differ between the locals and those entering the community intent on establishing a local enterprise. The ideas of engagement in social entrepreneurship come from a global increase in poverty levels, giving rise to a need to create sustainable farming communities. This is often undertaken by local entrepreneurs who are passionate about changing a situation, and step in as a social entrepreneur with new innovative models to solve an existing problem. By studying the community where the enterprise is to be established, talking to locals, say, or visiting the local church, such cultural clashes can be avoided.

Example studies include Martin and Novicevic (2010), who have written an article discussing social entrepreneurship among Kenyan farmers in which they give an example of acculturation challenges and programme successes. They discuss issues such as the role of social entrepreneurship, servant leadership, and acculturation in reducing the problems of poverty in Kenya. In this research it can be seen that one person can make a difference by using the right methods, being passionate about making a difference, and by integrating with the local community. Another study is that of Rashid (2010), who debates the topic of development through social entrepreneurship with a focus on certain perspectives and evidence from Bangladesh. His conclusion is that, due to factors such as the need for sustainability, a number of NGOs have increasingly engaged in commercial enterprises, leading to potential trade-offs between organizational growth and a pro-poor orientation that may jeopardize the NGOs' social objectives. The general consensus in this dialogue is very supportive of approaches that include the local population and use a bottom-up strategy when establishing social enterprises at a community level, in order to avoid clashes and to achieve overall success.

### 3.4.3 Poverty Alleviation Through Microfinancing

The point in this area is that microfinance offers a means of reaching poor people who are excluded from the formal financial sector, and that a fundamentally new method is needed to create a scalable and sustainable business model to meet this unmet need—a catalytic innovation (Mohan and Potnis 2010). One can see

microfinancing as a phenomenon mainly in developing countries, or in economies where rapid financial growth is taking place, such as India. The background to the interest in social entrepreneurship research in researching microfinance is the need that has arisen in recent years for equal financial opportunities so that even the very poorest can affect their own situation and escape the poverty trap. This produces growth in developing economies and lessens the gap between rich and poor. One example study is by Mohan and Potnis (2010) who have studied this area by looking at catalytic innovation in microfinance for inclusive growth. In their discussion they focus on five factors: customer focus on the poor and social entrepreneurship for the social mission; operational innovation; information technology; human capital management for scaling; and financial sustainability. Another example is Epstein and Yuthas (2010), who have also studied the phenomenon of microfinancing, in this case by investigating microfinance in cultures of non-repayment. They argue that by better understanding non-repayment cultures, and developing management strategies attuned to the unique attributes of these regions, the microfinance industry can effectively and profitably support these underserved entrepreneurs. The conclusion of the discussions related to this particular dialogue outlines how microfinancing can reach deeper in society to give opportunities to social entrepreneurs who do not otherwise have the financial means to succeed with their ideas. There are many people who have an inner wish to develop and create an innovative idea, but unfortunately do not have the economic stability to do so.

### 3.4.4   Social Innovation Frameworks

The interest in this particular area centres on the notion that social innovations are triggered by an interest in improving the well-being of people in society, and that social rather than economic concerns drive the development and application of new ideas for solving problems and improving social conditions (Dawson and Daniel 2010). In order to categorize and better understand the meaning of, and connections between, aspects of social, business, and technical innovation, frameworks are created—social innovation frameworks.

Here, researchers such as Dawson and Daniel (2010) debate understandings of social innovation. In their study, they discuss framework dimensions such as the translation of innovations in science and technology into commercial applications. Furthermore, they also address issues of sustainability, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and change. In expanding on the fact that social innovation frameworks can be shaped in different ways, Chand and Misra (2009) discuss this topic in an article about teachers as educational–social entrepreneurs and the innovation–social entrepreneurship spiral. In conclusion, it can be argued that an entrepreneurship focus in policy that encourages diffusion processes, different to those of the innovation generation, allows for the pooling and sharing of locally effective social entrepreneurship practices and contributes to wider social impact. Although

the studies and literature related to this particular theme support the need to acknowledge social innovation frameworks, research has not yet been able to formulate specific details about how these frameworks should be designed.

### 3.4.5 Types of Start-up Process in Social Entrepreneurship

The background to this dialogue is that collaboration across sectors can provide innovative solutions to social problems (Maase and Bossink 2010), and that this is an influential component in understanding how social enterprises differ from traditional start-ups. As such, an interesting area of study for the group of researchers interested in social entrepreneurship is the various start-up processes in social enterprises versus traditional enterprise start-ups. There may be a conflict in the initial interest, and also the view of how value is created can differ, while studying the unique conditions for social enterprises compared to traditional start-ups, thus inviting a discussion about the opportunity-seeking behaviour of the social entrepreneur and the risk-avoiding behaviour of the organization. It is interesting to note in this dialogue that relatively little is known about the factors that inhibit the partnerships between social enterprises and organizations in the business, public, government, and non-profit sectors (Maase and Bossink 2010), which is a shortcoming, because it is proposed that such partnerships determine the success rate for social entrepreneurship processes. The appearance and influence of such partnerships is thought to be different to that of traditional enterprises.

An example of a study in this mode is Maase and Bossink (2010), who discuss factors that inhibit partnering for social enterprise start-ups, where they outline inhibiting issues, including having different perspectives on the meaning of partnership, joint ventures, societal organization, and entrepreneurialism. They also highlight the difficulty of establishing a solid partnership due to different views of the end goal of the enterprise. While outside actors value monetary rewards, social entrepreneurs are more concerned with positive social change and more intrinsic factors. A slightly different angle is offered by Hwee Nga and Shamuganathan (2010), who focus on the influence of personality traits and demographic factors on social entrepreneurship start-up plans and social entrepreneurship start-up processes. Besides outlining the specifics of social entrepreneurs and how they shape the course of social entrepreneurship start-ups, this study points to a need for facilitating social entrepreneurship through education by nurturing sustainable development values in future business graduates. In looking at this particular area as a whole, it is clear that there are some emerging thoughts on how start-up processes differ between traditional and social business companies. Furthermore, the literature indicates several alternatives understandings of how social enterprises are developed, and in what manner these involve factors such as education and societal organization.

### 3.4.6   Clarification of Social Entrepreneurship

This discussion turns on the fact that social entrepreneurship is a relatively new concept, making it necessary to come up with a clear definition of what it is that makes it relevant to both researchers and practitioners. The literature on entrepreneurship typically identifies two types of entrepreneurship: traditional business entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship (Clamp and Alhamis 2010). Here, there are discussions about whether dimensions such as social, societal, and business entrepreneurship are in fact one and the same, or whether they differ, and, if so, how. In order to perform solid research with clear guidelines, authors suggest there is a need to arrive at a proper definition, thus avoiding a mix-up in terms and the creation of less legitimate research material.

Researchers such as Peredo and McLean (2006) state that social entrepreneurship is exercised where a person or persons clearly aim to create social value of some kind and pursue this by exploiting opportunities, employing innovation and tolerating risk. The likes of Fowler (2000) suggest that social entrepreneurship is the creation of sustainable socio-economic structures, relationships, institutions, organizations, and practices that yield and sustain social benefits, which are thus important components to consider in any definition of social entrepreneurship, a view supported by authors such as Swanson and Zhang (2010), who discuss the importance of innovation in solving social problems and accomplishing social outcomes. Swanson and Zhang (2010) go on to highlight the importance of acknowledging work towards achieving sustainability, and how for-profit organizations and NPOs differ in their business manners. Spear (2006) discusses social entrepreneurship using a slightly different model, for he includes ideological orientations by pointing out that the practising people are not of the 'heroic individualistic' type, but rather that joint efforts or a team-based character should be emphasized. In joining this particular dialogue, Clamp and Alhamis (2010) advocate the inclusion of contextual aspects in the definition (more specifically the ones that distinguish between cooperative and individual ventures) along with social business development. The central point in this area is that there is a general agreement that any definition of social entrepreneurship needs to acknowledge the meaning of work, ethics, and the role of business in society. It is a broad dialogue, but it seems that the field has found use for several suggested definitions.

### 3.4.7   Definition of Social Value Creation and Commercialization

This particular dialogue, which is present in a few studies, involves the concept of social value creation and the commercialization of social enterprise. Social value creation here is the process involved in entrepreneurial action, where the value is created and remains present in the social outcome or change that occurs, instead of in monetary profit. This discussion stems from the fact that the field of entrepreneurship has evolved, and as it matures it has benefited from the injection of ideas

derived from a broad array of theoretical traditions and methodologies (Di Domenico et al. 2010), as well as from the actual practitioners who look beyond making money to making a difference in society, thus the creation of value in their actions. Hence Di Domenico et al. (2010) have performed an analysis of social bricolage, theorizing the social value creation in social enterprises, and looking at how current theorizations of bricolage in entrepreneurship studies require refinement and development in order to be used as a theoretical framework for social entrepreneurship. Munshi (2010) writes about similar issues in an article on value creation, social innovation, and entrepreneurship in global economies. Overall, this dialogue offers an overview of the current research and the definition of social entrepreneurship in order to highlight how social innovation and new social value creation underpin social entrepreneurship.

### 3.4.8 Community Development

This dialogue about community development addresses changes in local communities on the social and economic level, and the resulting implications for community development. When dealing with social entrepreneurship and community development, the focus is on the underlying factors the drive it, such as alleviation of poverty, increased standards of living, and the mobilization of social capital. 'Community development' is a broad term applied to the practices and academic disciplines of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens, and professionals in improving various aspects of local community life. Many communities have seen a decline in welfare, especially in developing countries, but also in industrialized countries. Here, authors dwell on social entrepreneurs who see an opportunity to make a difference by improving schools, working conditions, childcare and eldercare, water supplies, agricultural, and the like.

Thus Irani and Elliman (2008) discuss how the public sector is often considered synonymous with inefficiency and a lack of motivation to be innovative. The way in which community development and change can take place on site thanks to passionate individuals and entrepreneurs is one area that is discussed in their research. They also outline a model to be used as a facilitator in the conservative and risk-averse culture that bedevils the public sector. Evidently, community development can be studied in many ways. One example is Fawcett and Hanlon (2009), who look at the 'return to community' and challenges to human service professionals, and argue that a form of spatial analysis and social entrepreneurship can be used to facilitate meaningful participation in decision-making processes in a variety of communities, and to reforge social connections at a range of levels. In essence, this dialogue points to the importance of observing and being active at the community level in order to generate positive change through social enterprise.

### 3.4.9  Social Capital Mobilization

This theme focuses upon the mobilization, or proper utilization of, a community-wide vision, and the ability to bring together the diverse groups within a community in order to facilitate development in (rural) communities experiencing decline. The extent to which communities can command their diverse social, professional, and information networks to draw upon external expertise, ideas, and resources is a crucial feature of generative capacity (Onyx and Leonard 2010). In other words, communities need to develop and create growth in order not to 'die out', and that is best achieved by coming together in networking groups and governmental support groups, creating trust, and sharing their knowledge within the community at large in order to coordinate actions.

An example of such a study is Birch and Whittam (2008), who address the third sector and the regional development of social capital, looking at how social capital can develop through third-sector involvement. They conclude that a key aspect of the third sector is its role in regional development through the promotion of social capital (Birch and Whittam 2008). Further studies outline how the coordination of social mobilization is especially important in achieving change and improvements (Meyskens et al. 2010). Such research often highlights the importance of networking in areas that are experiencing a decline, most often rural areas, in order to coordinate actions that will eventually lead to a positive development.

### 3.4.10  The Marketization of NPOs

The core of this theme is that social entrepreneurship has not only emerged as a broad set of practices and discourses centred on the pursuit of meaningful work, but also involves the application of the tenets of capitalist entrepreneurship to NPOs, with the goal of creating meaningful alternatives to traditional corporate career paths (Dempsey and Sanders 2010). The background to the issue of the marketization of NPOs has to do with NPOs moving towards a more traditional organization while retaining their initial mission, and thus creating other variations of employment, which for many can be more meaningful. As such, NPOs are now starting to be seen in a different light due to changes in their organization.

By looking at non-profit marketization and work–life imbalances in popular autobiographies, Dempsey and Sanders (2010) discuss the issues of the marketization of NPOs and its practices and effects, including how it relates to current concerns about meaningful work. The point of their argument is that although popular portrayals of social entrepreneurship offer a compelling vision of meaningful work centred on solving pressing social problems, they also celebrate a troubling account of a work–life balance centred on self-sacrifice, underpaid or unpaid labour, and the privileging of organizational commitment at the expense of health, family, and other aspects of social reproduction. Another example of a study that discusses this is Eikenberry and Kluver (2004), who were among the

first to take a direct look at the marketization of the non-profit sector, while at the same time asking whether civil society is at risk as a result. In the literature, it is thus possible to observe a significant interest in the marketization of the non-profit sector on the part of public administration scholars and public managers in order for such organizations to flourish, reach out, and create new and innovative opportunities.

### 3.4.11 Characteristics of Social Entrepreneurs

The background interest of this theme is an emphasis that the character of social entrepreneurs is an inner drive to produce change in society and communities. Monetary profit is not necessarily the ultimate goal; instead it is the creation of social value and causing improvements for a community or individuals. The core question to ask here is: what motivates and drives social entrepreneurs and in what aspects do they in fact differ from traditional entrepreneurs? In order to be able to execute legitimate research in this area, researchers search for a clear definition and understanding of the motivation and character of social entrepreneurs.

Of the specific research related to this theme, London (2008) discusses how social advocacy acts to drive individual social entrepreneurs, while Litzky et al (2010) discusses social entrepreneurs and argues that they are driven by a passion for implementing ideas, which sees them apply innovative, problem-solving approaches to solve social problems and prepared to go outside traditional ideologies—all of which pushes them to take clear risks that other entrepreneurs would not. Hwee and Shamuganathan ( 2010) note the traits that set social entrepreneurs apart from well-intentioned individuals and organizations. Acknowledging that traits are influenced by socialization and education, they suggest that social entrepreneurs weigh the importance of social vision, sustainability, social networking, innovativeness, and financial returns differently. Ruvio et al. (2010) have also identified certain factors that describe a social entrepreneur, in an article covering entrepreneurial leadership vision in NPOs versus for-profit organizations, while highlighting significant differences in the meaning of the vision articulated by social entrepreneurs, and further showing where they differ from entrepreneurs per se, who were also found to be important in transforming different visions into venture strategies and performance. The relevancy of this dialogue is its focus on what drives a social entrepreneur, and that the true engines of change are not just passionate about making big money, but instead set out to create change in a non-traditional business manner.

### 3.4.12 Organizational Realities

The background to this area is that NPOs that engage in social enterprises can have difficulty reconciling the social-service and business identities of their

organization. This tension can vary depending upon the timing of conception of the social enterprise (Smith et al. 2010). A dialogue relating to social organizations is evident this research, tracing the various structures and how they are shaped in contrast to traditional organizations, the argument being that when such an identification is clear, the field of social entrepreneurship can be further explored and legitimized.

An example study is Smith et al. (2010), who looked at the timing of the inception of social enterprises, concentrating on such issues as organizational identity, organizational impression management, and non-profit marketing, and whose findings suggest that identity tension varies according to the timing of conception of the social enterprise, and that non-profit leaders use different approaches for identity management and identity marketing for social enterprises. Another study is that of Lasprogata and Cotten (2003), who studied social enterprises by contemplating 'enterprise' and, at the same time, the business and legal challenges of social entrepreneurship. They highlighted difficulties such as how collectively NPOs have a tremendous influence on the quality of life in the US, through hospitals, churches, schools, and the like, which all have relevance for the understanding of the organization of social enterprises. The importance of this particular dialogue lies in the fact that social enterprises operate differently to traditional ones and, by doing so, push for positive change. However, it is important for social enterprises to be clear about their identity in order to be able to deliver high-quality services or products and successfully meet their goals.

### 3.4.13 How to Solve Social Challenges

This dialogue is rather broad and has been approached from many angles. Contemporary social challenges are legion: poverty alleviation, recycling, waste management, resource recovery, community development, local economic growth, and many more. The issue of solving social challenges has grown in recent years and is in many ways a 'hot topic'. The changes to the global climate, economic growth, and standards of living call for a fresh focus on the social, environmental, and economic realities, and thus new perspectives on public policy design that make a difference in the building of more sustainable communities.

A good example of analysing how to solve social challenges is offered by Tremblay et al. (2010), who discuss resource recovery, place, and social enterprise, along with recycling, social economy, poverty reduction, and social inclusion. The common thread in their approach is that informal resource recovery—the collection of recyclable materials from the waste stream and urban environment, known as binning—can contribute to poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability (Tremblay et al. 2010). Another example of how this issue can be researched comes from De Leeuw (1999), who discusses the topic of healthy cities and urban social entrepreneurship for health, showing that social entrepreneurship is the key to the success of health promotion and healthy city development, and,
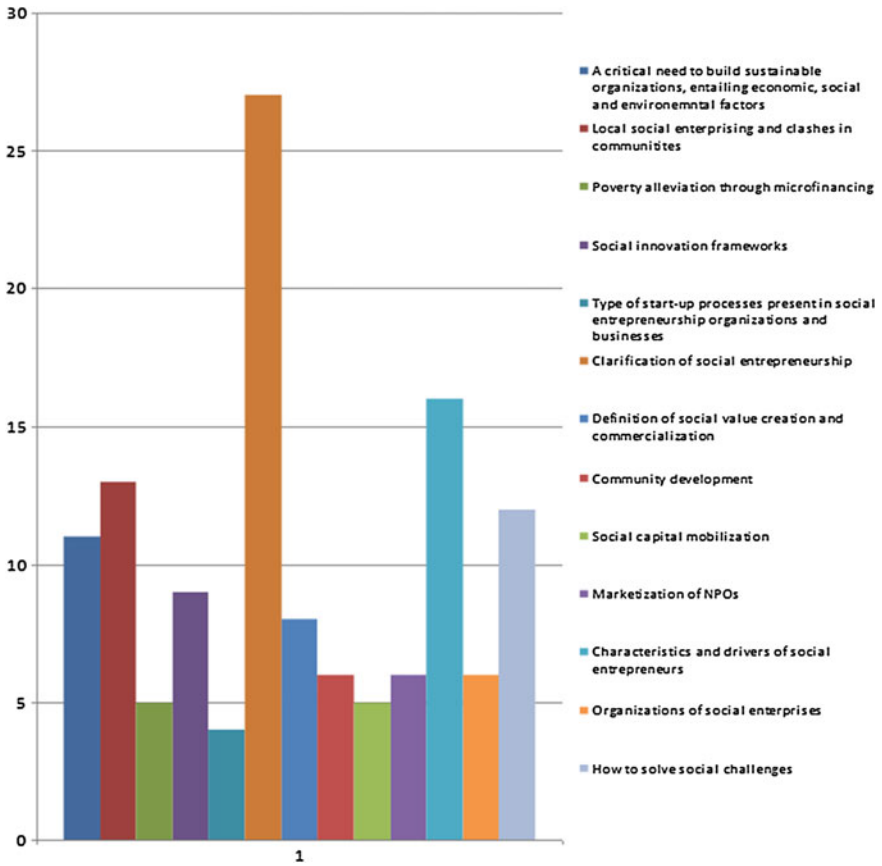
**Fig. 3.4** Contributions to research dialogues in social entrepreneurship

furthermore, that recognition of a policy-change model by the entrepreneur and subsequent strategic action did indeed influence urban policy agendas. In conclusion, we see that solving social challenges at the local, regional, national, and global levels can be a huge undertaking, but when focusing on resource recovery, social enterprise, poverty reduction, and so on, in combination with passionate social entrepreneurs, there are numerous examples to suggest that social challenges can be overcome.

## 3.5    Prevalence of the Identified Areas of Discussion

Figure 3.4 presents a summary of the popularity of the these thirteen areas of discussion. We can thus see that the clarification of social entrepreneurship is by far the most discussed area (27 contributions), followed by discussions of the

characteristics of the social entrepreneur (16 contributions), and local social enterprise and clashes in communities (13 contributions). Although limited, an interesting fact is that areas not connected to actual definitions, such as analysis of how to solve social challenges (12 contributions) and the need to build sustainable organizations reflecting economic, social and environmental factors (11 contributions) are increasingly mentioned over time. It is clear that research is no longer content merely to define social entrepreneurship, and is moving towards a focus on more specific areas. Hence the growing interest in social innovation frameworks (9 contributions) and the definition of social value creation and commercialization (8 contributions). However, we can see that there are several areas of discussion that have been paid little attention in research, such as the organization of social enterprises (6 contributions), marketization of NPOs and community development (6 contributions), social capital mobilization (5 contributions), and poverty alleviation through microfinancing (5 contributions). Another important area generally ignored in the research is the type of start-up processes evident in social entrepreneurship (4 contributions). Once more attention is paid to such areas, researchers may be able to identify both how businesses develop from being an idea to a functioning social enterprise, and how this enterprise then impacts local, regional, national, and possibly also global economic development.

## 3.6    Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter presents a literature review of social entrepreneurship. It highlights how the volume of research in this area has been increasing, and that the areas of discussion and impacts thereof have grown substantially in recent years. The study has analysed previous articles published about social entrepreneurship and found that a set of certain articles seem to have greatly influenced the research in this area, that only a few authors have published multiple studies, and that this is a truly multidisciplinary area of scientific inquiry which has a limited number of areas of discussion. The concept is defined in the literature in diverse ways, and a great deal of effort has gone into understanding the nature of social entrepreneurship, the social entrepreneur, and the boundaries of the social entrepreneurship concept, while trying to distinguish it from traditional, commercial entrepreneurship. Many empirical studies have been carried out, but the majority of them have been oriented towards summarizing experiences and opinions related to this area or addressing conceptual issues in order to establish the types of core ideas needed in this particular field of academic research. It is clear that more solid, qualitative empirical work is needed.

The study shows that there are certain common threads found in the subject of social entrepreneurship. By identifying and analysing thirteen areas of discussion, our study opens up for further incremental research on social entrepreneurship. We expect that future explorations of the subject will expand upon these areas, and that they could be helpful in knowledge-building and the recognition of key

contributions. Although we identified thirteen current areas of discussion, it is important to note that certain areas, such as the understanding how to organize social enterprises and the different types of start-up processes involved in social enterprise, have started to attract more attention, but are still relatively unexplored. We have mapped several issues beyond those two that show significant potential for further research. Obviously, our categorization into research dialogues should not be understood as the final say on the outline of the field—of course, there are alternative ways of understanding the literature, and dialogues will change and transform over time—and as such, we believe this effort should be looked on as something intended to help researchers interested in joining this particular field of research, and as a basis for reflection on how to go forward.

We hope our contribution will assist further research into social entrepreneurship in several ways. First, the literature review presented here should lead to a greater awareness of the status of the research field. We can see that it is a fairly new field, so it is essential to highlight major contributions and high-impact research. Second, we have been able to pinpoint certain areas of discussion that can be found in all the literature on social entrepreneurship, and we have commented upon the timing and popularity of those areas, which will enable more thorough research in future. Third, we have specifically noted and discussed the impact of the areas concerning the definition and nature of social entrepreneurship. The literature has elaborated on the differences between social entrepreneurship and traditional definitions of entrepreneurship, and we believe the field is ready to move beyond this to alternative issues not yet associated with this popular topic. Moreover, given the trends we have observed in particular areas of discussion, we believe that one contribution of this chapter is that it can assist and inspire researchers to specify the scope of social entrepreneurship and to detail how the concept can be associated with other closely related areas such as societal entrepreneurship, a topic closely linked to the concept of social entrepreneurship. Fourth, we believe that our bibliographical analysis will help academics and researchers to understand social entrepreneurship from a wider perspective, and appreciate its interest to a variety of disciplines. Our classifications and the areas of discussion we identify can assist researchers in developing multidisciplinary models and a broader frame of reference in working towards a better understanding of social entrepreneurship. Although it is likely that narrow areas of discussion targeted by one discipline will be drive the field forward in the short run, it is also likely that multidisciplinary efforts will be valuable for the future development of the field. They can integrate best practice and conceptualize the way in which effective social entrepreneurship can come about from a broad perspective. Thus, we encourage research that acknowledges contributions from across the full range of academic disciplines.

In conclusion, we have evaluated the status of this emerging field of academic research and believe there are strong indications that it could be considered a separate field of significant activity. Most certainly, the fact that publication productivity and citations are now significant indicates that this research may be considered a distinct field. A very much updated Scopus analysis from 2012

supports this, and further suggests that an extended list of knowledge bodies and researchers are contributing to social entrepreneurship research. For example, the Open University, the University of Birmingham, the University of Cambridge, Université catholique de Louvain, and Delft University of Technology among others are now to be found on the list of most productive institutions. In 2012, we can also see new authors entering the field, such as Nyssens, Tracey, Ferguson, Defourny, Mair, Smith, Spear, Trivedi, Westley, and Cooney. Although research activity is still restricted as regards the number of frequently published authors, the set of areas we identify here is starting to engage researchers, and has led to the founding of a specialized periodical. Although most scholars would agree that research must to be resolved into guiding principles that communicate potential questions and guidance for how data should be interpreted (Edmondson and McManus 2007), our review suggests that although that stage has not yet been reached, there are many factors to indicate that this field of research clearly deserves separate attention. In fact, we believe that there are also some underlying questions to be tackled. However, while there is potential for more openly pursuing interesting debates and research questions, the fact that this topic engages a wide variety of questions across the traditional disciplines can also restrict the development of mature paradigms. The current organization of academic contributions may restrict the development of a limited set of guiding principles, the publication of articles by relevant scholars, and the justification of key concepts (Kuhn 1970)—something that could be a potential challenge for this field. Thus we believe that our review may be helpful in aligning some areas of discussion and facilitating cross-disciplinary discussions among researchers who are interested in social entrepreneurship. Although the research discourses presented here rest on a historical review of existing work, we would contend that the areas highlighted are still valid. In an updated screening in 2012, we see significant research productivity, but in the same domains. In 2011, 120 articles had written; by March 2012, 30 articles had been produced, all in areas analysed in this chapter. The leading social entrepreneurship topic in 2012 was business, management and accounting, which we believe was only to be expected. We interpret this interest as largely reflecting global changes in finance, the environment, business, and community development. A shift towards a collective, sustainable development that looks to the future seems to attract research in social entrepreneurship. Against this background, we look forward to the future development of this field.

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