

The Scientometrics of Social Entrepreneurship and Its Establishment as an Academic Field*

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This paper provides an overview of the state of art of research on social entrepreneurship and the establishment of this topic in the academic world. It uses scientometric methods in measuring the maturity of social entrepreneurship research. The empirical part reveals the exponentially growing number of papers, the institutionalization of social entrepreneurship in seven dimensions, the emergence of thematic clusters, and methodological issues. The paper makes concrete suggestions on how to overcome methodological challenges. Furthermore, we provide a ranking of the 22 most cited academic contributions in social entrepreneurship. Surprisingly, almost half of the most cited papers have not been published in journals but in books, raising doubts about the current (over-)rating of journal publications.

Introduction

“As a body of literature develops, it is useful to stop occasionally, take inventory for the work that has been done, and identify new directions and challenges for the future” (Low and MacMillan 1988, p. 139). This famous quote expresses the motivation behind our contribution. Social Entrepreneurship has become a highly relevant topic in entrepreneurship research in recent years. In a world that faces many social challenges and with governments that are often unable to provide solutions, motivated social entrepreneurs are often key to improving socially challenging situations. Furthermore, in many cases, it appears that social entrepreneurs provide innovative social solutions more sustainable and effective

than government invention would have been [see Kickul and Lyons (2012); Volkmann, Tokarski, and Ernst (2012b), for a contemporary overview of social entrepreneurship]. Recognizing the importance of social entrepreneurship, a wide body of research literature and academic activities has developed, and considerable academic progress in the understanding of social entrepreneurship has been made in recent years.

However, some authors have argued that this subsequent field of entrepreneurship research apparently remains in its infant or nascent state (for instance, Martin and Osberg 2007; Nicholls 2010; Roberts and Woods 2005). Our goal is to use scientometric measures to evaluate whether this assessment remains justified, to draw

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conclusions on the advances and the sustainable nature of the field and to develop expectations for future research. Building on existing work and our analyses, we will provide concrete recommendations for methodological progress that would finally allow for more empirical measurement in social entrepreneurship research, a so far underdeveloped area as we will show in a later section.

Common reviews often are particularly influenced by authors' perceptions and preferences. Using scientometric examinations of the body of literature can reduce such liabilities and can lead toward more systematic approaches on reviewing (see Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart 2003). The method in scientometric studies used to generate metrics of academic literature is accordingly called "bibliometrics" (Ball and Tunger 2005; Garfield 1973, 1998; Harsanyi 1993; Lotka 1926; Pritchard 1969; Rauter 2006; Solla Price 1963, 1976, 1981; White and McCain 1989).

Van Leeuwen (2004, p. 374) defines bibliometrics as "the field of science that deals with the development and application of quantitative measures and indicators for science and technology based on bibliographic information." Although the advantages of bibliometric-based reviews are quite clear, bibliometrics have only rarely been used in the field of entrepreneurship (e.g., Grégoire, Meyer, and De Castro 2002; Ratnatunga and Romano 1997; Romano and Ratnatunga 1996; Sassmannshausen 2009, 2010, 2012a, 2012b). Moreover, the majority of the rather few publications using bibliometrics on entrepreneurship literature have been encouraged by a special issue on the bibliometrics of entrepreneurship published by *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice* in 2006 (Cornelius, Landström, and Persson 2006; Grégoire et al. 2006; Reader and Watkins 2006; Schildt, Zahra and Silanpää 2006), edited by three leading scholars (Gartner, Davidsson, and Zahra 2006).

A large number of reviews on social entrepreneurship have previously been published (e.g., Chell, Nicolopoulou and Karatas-Özkan 2010; Certo and Miller 2008; Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010; Danko and Brunner 2010; Desa 2007; Douglas 2008; Galera and Borzaga 2009; Granados et al. 2011; Haugh 2005; Johnson 2000; Lehner and Kanikas 2013; Lyon and Sepulveda 2009; Neck, Brush, and Allen 2009; Nicholls 2010; Nicholls and Cho 2006; Peredo and MacLean 2006; Pierre, von Friedrichs, and Wincent 2014; Roberts and Woods 2005; Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009; Thompson 2008; Weerawardena and Mort 2006). However, only three reviews have been based on bibliomet-

rics, and these studies used rather small data sets (Desa 2007; Granados et al. 2011; Kraus et al. 2014). Using a large-scale data set for a bibliometric study, this paper is closing a research gap and thereby generating "economies of overview" on social entrepreneurship as a scholarly field of interest. In the following section, we will provide a brief introduction to bibliometric methods and to sampling issues related to the search for publications on social entrepreneurship. Additionally, the article will use scientometric methods beyond pure bibliometrics, assessing the academic establishment of social entrepreneurship.

Method

Scientometrics is the science of measuring and analyzing science. For instance, the resources dedicated to one field can be measured quantitatively by counting tenured chairs, professorships, academic centers, and so on or by calculating the accumulated amount of financial resources.

Bibliometrics is a method within the scientometrics approach. Using bibliometrics, for instance, the quantitative development of the body of relevant literature can be assessed and the most frequently cited publications can be identified. It seems plausible to assume that authors cite articles and journals they find useful (Romano and Ratnatunga 1996, p. 8; see Nisonger 1994). Therefore, a bibliometric-based review will focus on the most cited papers, not only on those papers that meet its authors' preferences. The review will thus help to identify the most influential scientists and journals by empirical measures. Cluster and/or content analyses based on articles' content and citations can identify "hot spots" and "blind spots" in research. However, a full-scale cocitation analysis exceeds the scope of this paper and is left for future research.

The development of the body of literature is examined by the use of online databases including EBSCO Host's "Business Source Premier," "Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts," "Philosopher' Index," "Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection," "PsycINFO," "Emerald," "ProQuest," "ScienceDirect," "Springer Link," "Wiley," and "Google Scholar." Search at EBSCO Host, Emerald, ScienceDirect, Springer Link, and Wiley was limited to peer reviewed and scholarly journal articles, whereas search via Google Scholar and ProQuest includes books, book chapters, trade magazines, and the so-called "gray literature" (i.e., working papers, conference proceedings, white papers, research reports,

academic theses, and similar). This approach allows distinguishing the quantitative development of the body of *scholarly* contributions from the quantitative development of the academic literature on social entrepreneurship *in general*.

Some sampling issues occur when conducting bibliometric research based on Google Scholar. The results from Google Scholar are not always reliable. A search for the term “social entrepreneurship,” for instance, indicated a nonexistent article supposedly written by Bronfenbrenner and allegedly published in 1955 in *The Journal of Economic History*. A working paper on social entrepreneurship authored by Baron published in 2005 is mistakenly mentioned to originate in 1916. The mistake most likely occurred because the publication has the Number 1916 within the series of the *Stanford GBS Research Papers* (Baron 2005). An article from Brazil from 2008 is mistakenly listed in 1981 (Furtado, Júnior, and Hrdlicka 2008). A work by Bain from 1978 on vocational training (Bain introduced form sheets to assess students’ learning progress) can hardly be called a scholarly work and certainly has nothing in common with social entrepreneurship. However, for reasons unknown, Google Scholar listed Bain’s form sheets among publications on social entrepreneurship (Bain 1978). Precisely, the same issue can be reported for six papers published in 1977 and for many more publications provided by the Education Resources Information Center database, none of which touch upon social entrepreneurship. Many more examples could be added. Therefore, it was necessary to thoroughly double check the list of publications provided by a search using Google Scholar. Accordingly, to avoid sampling errors, this article is based on manually corrected lists.

The total number of publications indicated by Google Scholar can vary over time. Google Scholar is a dynamic database that detects articles that are cited more often than those articles that remain uncited. Hence, the number of articles on social entrepreneurship published in 2011 is likely to differ depending on whether the number is researched in early 2012 or late 2013. Such differences can be huge and, therefore, create a challenge to sampling that must be addressed. (In our case, the difference exceeded 500 publications per year; specifically, the number of publications containing the exact phrase “social entrepreneurship” published in 2011 was given by Google Scholar as 2,370 in early 2012 but in late 2013 was given as 2,960.) When used for scientific publications—as in this paper—Google Scholar there-

fore has the disadvantage that the data, particularly exact numbers of publications, are hardly reproducible. The current algorithm of Google Scholar (as of December 2013) is further contaminated by internal links made on the webpage of “The Academy of Management Executive”; for technical reasons unknown, Google Scholar for some volumes currently related all articles and other content published by this particular journal to the subject area of “social entrepreneurship” while we were preparing this article. This again required manual correction, demonstrating once more that Google Scholar can only be used with great caution.

The number of citations (that an article has received) is taken from Google Scholar and from EBSCO Host. EBSCO Host will only provide numbers of citations from peer work, whereas Google Scholar will refer to all references, including those that originate from gray literature and some bachelor or master theses (but only as long as those publications are known to Google Scholar, so there is some continuing randomness in the database). Microsoft Excel 2010 was used to create a unifying database and running descriptive analyses. The creation of a unifying database is necessary because some of the databases mentioned above are meta-databases. Therefore, a single publication is likely to be included in two or more databases, for example, in EBSCO, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. Hence, only summing up the total numbers of publications taken from each database is not a reliable measurement instrument to capture the body of literature because this approach would lead to massive statistical over-coverage by counting the same papers many times over.

Results

In this section, we present our results from scientometric research, structured into five key areas of academic and scientific advancements:

- (1) expansion of the body of literature,
- (2) progress in institutionalization in the academic world,
- (3) emergence of thematic clusters,
- (4) advances in research methods, and
- (5) impact of literature measured by citations.

Measuring the Body of Literature on Social Entrepreneurship

It is not exactly known when the term “social entrepreneurship” was used first, but it was likely

in an academic publication by William N. Parker in 1954. He reported in an article published by *The Journal of Economic History* about a distinct form of entrepreneurship in Germany:

To the individual German in the mining industry, all three types of activity appeared as outlets for enterprise and ambition. The first is most obviously "economic entrepreneurship" on a job, and contributed clearly to the functioning of the economy and, under other favourable conditions, to its growth. The individual's interest in the second (which may be called "social entrepreneurship") depended on the fluidity of the German social structure, the standards for advancement, and the individual's own restlessness. (Parker 1954, p. 400)

To Parker, social entrepreneurship contributed to an increased social mobility that allowed members of the working class to achieve relatively well-paid, intrapreneurial leadership positions by demonstrating entrepreneurial behavior. Although the definition of social entrepreneurship has changed throughout the past decades, contributing to social mobility remains a core objective for many social entrepreneurs. Therefore, Parker's article could be considered a starting point in research on social entrepreneurship.

However, almost no one touched this subject for exactly three decades, except for one isolated publication ("isolated" in terms of bibliometry means that this paper was never cited). Then, in 1982, the research topic was picked up by five publications, including one on Norwegian female entrepreneurs (Larson 1982). However, these five early publications treat social entrepreneurship as a side issue or only mention social entrepreneurship somewhere in the article. Only in 1984 did an article for the first time place social entrepreneurship in the center of its empirical focus, presenting two cases in social entrepreneurship, again related to female entrepreneurs in Nordic countries (Frankel 1984). A Dutch Ph.D. thesis from 1986 seems to be the first publication to place the phrase "social entrepreneurship" in its title (Kleij and van Marken 1986). The first professionally published book that contains "social entrepreneurship" in its title appeared in 1987 (Theobald 1987). This publication seems to be the first one to receive increased academic interest as indicated by 53 citations, according to Google Scholar (data from December 2013), whereas the previously mentioned Ph.D. thesis went completely unnoticed. The articles by Larson (1982)

and Frankel (1984) earned only 11 and 5 citations, respectively, but not from publications on social entrepreneurship. However, Theobald's book provides an outlook on the future, forecasting that the future will bring increased complexity, diversity, and uncertainty. As Theobald predicted in 1987, Dik and Deshler (1988) forecasted in 1988 "[b]y the year 2010, the world will be wired more tightly. Fiber optic networks will abound, satellite transmission will be old hat, and we'll have moved to smaller, more independent/dependent communities existing within a shrinking, global community environment. Most homes in North America will be equipped with televisions, optical disks, videorecorders, computers, and a countless number of new, powerful, inexpensive, usable electronic products. Video phones and cellular phones will abound and the fifth generation of computers will be remarkable. The advent of miniaturization will allow everyone to carry a smart card for communications, computing, financial transactions, shopping, record keeping, and accessing information databases." Although this forecast turned out to be remarkable accurate, the understanding of social entrepreneurship differs from our reading of that notion today.

Additionally, the Babson Conference in 1987, considered by many to be the premier entrepreneurship research conference in the world, for the first time accepted a paper on social entrepreneurship (Quesada and Mello 1987), followed by a second paper only in 1990 (Ciastrkowski and Bailey 1990).

Today's dominant definition of social entrepreneurship seems to have emerged in 1990. It is an oddity of the multidisciplinary nature of entrepreneurship research that the "Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine" was among the first journals to spell out that definition when Duhl (1990, pp. 555–556) differentiated the social entrepreneur from other entrepreneurs. He noted, "Unlike the entrepreneur whose prime interest is profit and economic gain, the social entrepreneur has all the same skills with different values. He has the ability to pull together programs, projects, and enterprises where the end product is the social good. This does not mean an absence of economic gain. It means a balanced concern for all needs that people have." Duhl then elaborates on the contribution of social entrepreneurs to health and well-being in a city such as New York. Not surprisingly (given the disciplinary area of this medical publication), Duhl's definition of and appreciation for social

entrepreneurship went unnoticed by social entrepreneurship researchers and is cited for the first time by this article in the context of social entrepreneurship research.

In following years, the number of publications that at least mentioned social entrepreneurship increased very slowly and unsteadily; it took six years or more for the next three major impulses in social entrepreneurship research to emerge:

- First, an edited book, *New Social Entrepreneurs: The Success, Challenge and Lessons of Nonprofit Enterprise Creation*, was published by Emerson and Twerksy in 1996 and well received, as indicated by more than 200 citations.
- Second, in 1997 Leadbeater's book, *The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur*, followed, now cited more than 600 times.
- Third, in 1998, Gregory Dees¹ published his ground-breaking work, "The Meaning of Social Entrepreneurship" (Dees 1998), a "gray" publication (working paper) cited more than a thousand times.

Beginning in 1998, the number of publications continuously increased, more than doubling from 1999 to 2000. The number continued to grow constantly at more-modest rates until it again almost doubled from 2005 to 2006. That is, when social entrepreneurship became a mega-trend in entrepreneurship research. In 2007, the number of new publications that included the exact search phrase "social entrepreneurship" according to Google Scholar reached more than 1,000. For 2012, Google Scholar indicated 3,390 new publications that include the exact search phrase, whereas for 2013, a year barely fully covered by Google Scholar at the time we executed our research (December 2013), the number of new publications reached 3,870. Figure 1 displays the development, showing the dramatic increase of papers that contain the phrase "social entrepreneurship."

In 2013, the cumulative number of publications containing the exact search phrase "social entrepreneurship" for the first time exceeded 20,000 publications. Scholars in the field of entrepreneurship display a sense of irony by wondering whether the number of papers on social entrepreneurship is already exceeding the num-

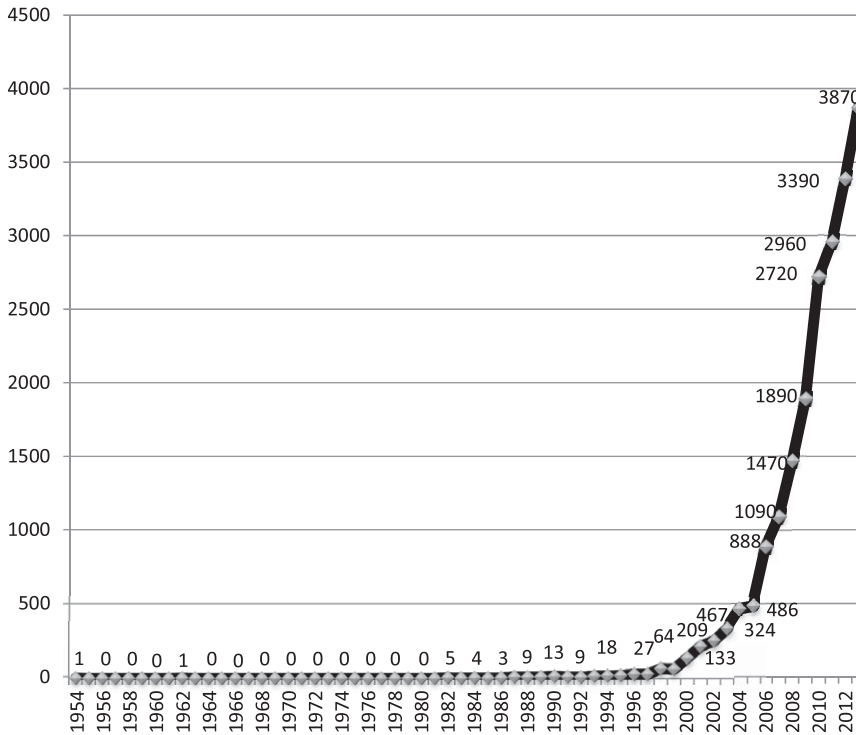
ber of social entrepreneurs in the field, a "rare breed" (Dees 1998, p. 6) (and with our paper we have added another point to the case).

However, publications identified by Google Scholar contain the exact search phrase "social entrepreneurship" somewhere in the article, perhaps in the heading, the abstract, the keywords, or many times throughout the main text. However, it might also be the case that "social entrepreneurship" is mentioned only once in a single footnote or within the list of references. Hence, it is not always clear whether such papers identified by Google Scholar really address social entrepreneurship, or whether "social entrepreneurship" is only mentioned for marginal reasons. Thus, Google Scholar only provides an illustrative proxy for documenting the growth of the field.

Other databases (such as EBSCO) allow limiting the search to the title, abstract, keywords, and subject terms, thereby making it possible to reduce results to those peer-reviewed journal articles that address social entrepreneurship at their very core. Using the search phrase "social entrepreneur*," the results (which will include, e.g., social entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial activities) again show a steep increase beginning in the year 2000, as shown in Figure 2. However, as expected by the data selection method, the number of relevant articles identified by EBSCO Host is much smaller than the equivalent numbers provided by Google Scholar. EBSCO creates a statistical under-coverage because many academic entrepreneurship publications, particularly journals on social entrepreneurship, are not covered by EBSCO (see Sassmannshausen 2012b, for a list of 99 entrepreneurship journals). For instance, the decline in publications after 2005 and after 2010 may be due to the then new *Social Enterprise Journal* (founded 2005, not covered by EBSCO) and the *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship* (founded 2009, not covered by EBSCO), which may have attracted many submissions that went unnoticed by EBSCO (again, see Figure 2). Furthermore, some articles may use different wording, for example, social innovation, social venturing, and social enterprise. Finally yet importantly, expressions in other languages, such as the German "soziales Unternehmertum," are also not covered by the search algorithm. This limitation

¹Greg Dees, the great pioneer of social entrepreneurship in practice and academia, passed away Friday, December 20, 2013, at age 63 while we were in final preparation of the submission of this article. His contribution to social entrepreneurship will live on. Our feelings are with his family.

Figure 1
Number of Publications Per Year (1954–2013) Containing the Exact Search Phrase “Social Entrepreneurship” According to Google Scholar in December 2013 (Manually Corrected for Statistical Over-Coverage)



particularly affects the results provided by EBSCO because the search was limited to titles, abstracts, keywords, and subject terms. Because scholarly publications on social entrepreneurship in languages other than English are likely to refer to some English literature (and thereby are likely to include the term social entrepreneurship at least somewhere throughout the list of references), the effect is much weaker on results from Google Scholar. Therefore, any search result provided by EBSCO does not indicate the total number of relevant publications. Google Scholar provides statistical over-coverage, but EBSCO results in statistical under-coverage. Nevertheless, EBSCO indicates 461 articles published through 2012. This number by far exceeds the number of papers reported by previous bibliometric studies on social entrepreneurship (Desa 2007: 70 papers; Granados et al. 2011: 286 papers), and the difference is not only due to the additional

time span of our research because we also identified a greater number of reviewed scholarly journal papers for each year than previous studies did. For instance, for 2010, our findings exceed the number of papers reported by Kraus et al. (2014, p. 2) by more than a factor of 3.

Taken together and despite all limitations, both databases provide a good indication of whether a field is growing, stagnant, or fading away. Both diagrams (Figure 1 and 2) display an *exponential increase* in literature. In bibliometric science, this is considered a sign for the establishment of either a distinct field of research or a “hot topic” within an existing discipline. The latter would mean that “social entrepreneurship” is only a trend, and the high numbers of publications will fade away sooner or later (negative growth rates in numbers of new publications, finally forming a parabola-like curve in the graphical description of

number of publications per year). The former would be indicated by finally decreasing but still positive growth rates, finally forming an s-shaped curve with a number of new publications per year on a stable but rather high level. If academic engagement with social entrepreneurship is institutionalized by the establishment of research centers, professorships, doctoral programs, scholarships, and so on, then it can be expected that—due to the durable dedication of academic resources—social entrepreneurship is a topic that will not fade away. Rather, it will persist, with the number of publications finally shaping an s-curve, not a parabola. We will, therefore, examine the institutionalization of research on social entrepreneurship in the next section.

Institutionalization of Social Entrepreneurship in Academia

The durable establishment of themes in scientific research can be detected by seven scientometric indicators for institutionalization. The first six of the seven indicators can be tested using scientometric and, in particular, bibliometric methods. The seven indicators reflect the following:

- (1) emergence of specific journals,
- (2) acceptance of research articles addressing social entrepreneurship by leading journals that are not particularly dedicated to the field under examination,
- (3) emergence of edited volumes and monographic books,
- (4) new annual conferences and dedicated workshops within existing conferences, and accordant contributions in conference proceedings,
- (5) development of teaching materials such as textbooks and teaching cases,
- (6) dedicated tenured professorships, chairs, and academic centers or research institutes (for instance, as indicated by authors' affiliations mentioned in research articles), and
- (7) integration of the topic in accredited curricula and in extracurricular teaching activities, and the emergence of student initiatives promoting social entrepreneurship.

(1) *Emergence of specific social entrepreneurship journals*: Recent years have seen the launch of devoted academic periodicals (beyond those publications that address the nonprofit sector in general). Examples include the *Stan-*

ford Social Innovation Review (2003), *Social Enterprise Journal* (2004/5), *Social Responsibility Journal* (2005), *Journal of Enterprising Communities* (2007), *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship* (2010), and—last but not least important—the *International Journal of Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation* (2011). The *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship* (1995) has always displayed a strong focus on social entrepreneurship, even before this term became well known, but does also address commercial entrepreneurship, particularly in the context of developmental challenges. Similarly, some journals have developed a focus on social entrepreneurship, for example, the *Journal of World Business* and the *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*.

The number of academic journals is joined by new trade magazines that address social entrepreneurship practitioners' needs for information, inspiration, and communication, for instance the Australian *Third Sector Magazine*, the British *Alliance Magazine*, the Canadian *SEE Change Magazine*, the German *enorm: Wirtschaft und Mensch* and the Indian *Beyond Profit*. This exemplary selection also demonstrates that the emergence of popular magazines dedicated to social entrepreneurship has become a global phenomenon.

(2) *Acceptance by leading journals*: If leading journals (those that have no special dedication toward social entrepreneurship) accept articles on a certain research topic, this topic consequently gains both reputation and exposure. Like new businesses, new research topics face liabilities of newness and smallness. New research topics always face the risk of not receiving sufficient attention or reputation; they may stay in a small niche. A positive attitude displayed by leading editorial boards can encourage scientists to join those first movers who already do research in a young area of interest.

If a young field of research is structured as a subdivision of an established field (in the case of social entrepreneurship as a subsequent field to entrepreneurship in general), there are two groups of leading journals: journals that lead within the superordinate field and journals that lead within the wider scientific community around that

superordinate field. Two leading entrepreneurship research journals have picked up social entrepreneurship only recently; *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice* published its first article on social entrepreneurship in 2006 (Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern 2006), and the *Journal of Business Venturing* only followed in late 2009 (Mair and Martí 2009; Zahra et al. 2009).

Leading journals in general (such as *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Management Science*, *Organization Science*, *RAND*, *Research Policy*, or *Strategic Management Journal*) have not yet (as of December 2013) published reviewed articles on social entrepreneurship. However, *Academy of Management Journal* has at least accepted presentations and workshops on social entrepreneurship at its annual meeting and papers have been published in *Academy of Management Learning & Education* and *Academy of Management Perspectives*. Furthermore, *Administrative Science Quarterly* has featured a two-page book review on social entrepreneurship, thereby at least acknowledging the existence of this research topic. If research on social entrepreneurship is to sustain its current academic hype, it is urgent that it is published in leading journals. To this end, the character of articles (currently largely phenomenological and theoretical reflections, definitions, conceptualizations, and good practice reports) and methods (primarily single case based or grounded on single narratives) certainly needs improvement. This issue will be addressed more deeply in our conclusion.

- (3) *Emergence of monographic books and edited volumes*: An increasing number of edited volumes and monographic books have been published on social entrepreneurship. This movement started in the 1990s and has become most visible since 2004 (e.g., Bornstein 2004; Fayolle and Matlay 2010; Leadbeater 1997; Lundström et al. 2014; Mair, Robinson and Hockerts 2006; Nicholls 2006; Perrini 2006; Seymour 2011; Shockley, Frank, and Stough 2008; Volkmann, Tokarski, and Ernst 2012b; Ziegler 2009). Furthermore, publications on closely related topics have been widely published and circulated, including titles such as *Microfinance:*

Emerging Trends and Challenges (Sundaresan 2008) or the *Handbook of Microcredit in Europe* (Carboni et al. 2010).

- (4) *Conferences*: Social entrepreneurship has long been included in leading entrepreneurship conferences such as Babson's *BECER*, Australia's *AGSE ERE* (now *ACERE*), *ICSB WorldConference*, European's *RENT*, or German-speaking countries' *G-Forum*. The Entrepreneurship Division has accepted papers for presentation at the *Academy of Management Annual Meeting* and a "Personal Development Workshop" focusing on social entrepreneurship has been included in the meeting's program (2010). The *Satter Conference on Social Entrepreneurship* was launched in 2004 and is likely the first annual academic conference on social entrepreneurship. It currently is known as the annual *NYU-Stern Conference on Social Entrepreneurship*, hosted by Jill Kickul.
- (5) *Development of teaching materials such as text books and teaching cases*: Leading business schools around the globe (including Harvard Business School, IESE, Kellogg School of Management, Richard Ivey School of Business, Stanford Graduate School of Business, and University of Hong Kong) have published *social entrepreneurship case studies and other teaching materials*. The first dedicated *textbooks* have been published recently, for instance, *Understanding Social Entrepreneurship*, authored by Kickul and Lyons (Routledge, 2012) and *Social Entrepreneurship and Social Business*, edited by Volkmann, Tokarski, and Ernst (Springer Gabler, 2012b).
- (6) *Academic institutionalization by dedicated centers and tenured or fully endowed professorships or chairs*: Centers for social entrepreneurship spread out across many continents and include, for instance (in alphabetical order)

- the Ashoka McKinsey Center for Social Entrepreneurship (CSE),
- the Canadian Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at the University of Alberta,
- the Center for Social Entrepreneurship at Miami University, FL,
- the Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship (CASE) at Duke,

- the Competence Center for Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship at European Business School, Germany,
- the Genisis Institute for Social Business and Impact Strategies in Berlin, Germany,
- the Global Center for Social Entrepreneurship at the University of the Pacific, CA,
- the INSEAD Social Innovation Center in France,
- the U.S.-based National Center for Social Entrepreneurship,
- the New Zealand Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Research Centre, Massey University,
- the School for Social Entrepreneurs, University of Geneva, Switzerland,
- the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship in Geneva, Switzerland,
- the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford University, U.K.,
- the Social Enterprise Knowledge Network at Harvard University's Rockefeller Center,
- the Social Entrepreneurship Department at the Strascheg Center for Entrepreneurship in Munich, Germany, and
- the Wilson Center for Social Entrepreneurship at Pace University, New York.

In addition to these 15 globally prominent examples, the number of centers and endowments is rapidly increasing, furnishing proof of a globally successful institutionalization. One reason for this rapid development might be that the topic seems to be very appealing not only to students but also to many donors all over the world.

Chairs and professorships have been institutionalized in many countries; besides the aforementioned centers, further examples for chairs and professorships include universities around the globe. According to Volkmann, Tokarski, and Ernst (2012a, p. 11) professorships and chairs are located for instance in the following:

- Belgium: Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School,
- Canada: University of Calgary,
- Denmark: Copenhagen Business School,
- France: IESE Business School,
- Germany: the Leuphana University Lüneburg,
- India: Tata Institute of Social Sciences,
- Philippines: Asian Institute of Management,

- The Netherlands: Rotterdam School of Management,
- United Kingdom: University of Cambridge, University of Nottingham,
- United States of America: Portland State University, Babson College, Stanford Graduate School of Business, Duke University.

From the amount of resources dedicated to social entrepreneurship by centers, chairs, and professorships, it can be assumed that the topic will have a sustainable and productive future in academia.

(7) *Extracurricular and curricular teaching activities, student initiatives:* The *SIFE organization* (Students in Free Enterprises, now renamed *ENACTUS*) is one globally known example of extracurricular social entrepreneurship education and at the same time a student initiative for social entrepreneurship. Another example of a competition-based extracurricular activity is the *Annual Global Social Entrepreneurship Competition*, launched in 2005 by the Foster School of Business at the University of Washington, WA. Teams from all over the world compete for the best entrepreneurial social opportunity. In the *Sustainable Innovation Summit*, introduced by Robert Hisrich at *Thunderbird School of Global Management*, students crafted social innovations whereby the planned initiatives needed to be embedded in free market activities. *The Stewart Satter Program in Social Entrepreneurship* combines extracurricular and curricular efforts at NYU Stern School of Business. Curricular embeddedness of social entrepreneurship education indicates that the topic is not only a trend but will persist, particularly if the teaching activities are fully accredited. Progress remains needed in the area of fully accredited curricular programs on social entrepreneurship because the number of modules and programs remains limited, and most curricular teaching activities remain based on single courses.

Examining the seven areas of institutionalization in academia reveals that social entrepreneurship has left its infant state and is increasingly gaining maturity. The adolescence of a field is typically marked by a diversification

Table 1
Research Areas Addressed by Articles on Social Entrepreneurship
(in Percent)^a

#	Research Areas Addressed by Social Entrepreneurship Articles	Frequency (Percent)
1	Definitions, theoretical constructs or frameworks for social entrepreneurship, description or understanding of phenomena, typologies, taxonomies	59.5
2	Measuring social impact, social value creation, performance and other consequences of social enterprise or social entrepreneurship	29.1
3	Resources, supporting and financing social entrepreneurship, and decision making by social investors	26.6
4	Networks and communities in social entrepreneurship	20.3
5	Social enterprises from an organizational theory perspective	20.2
6	Processes in social entrepreneurship	17.7
7	Social entrepreneurs and their motives, methods, and psychology	17.3
8	Reviews on social entrepreneurship research	11.4
9	Reports and narratives or interviews on (single) projects in social entrepreneurship	10.1
10	Social opportunity recognition and development	8.9
11	Social entrepreneurship education	6.3
12	Social innovation	5.1
13	(Single) book reviews	2.5
14	Interviews, forum contributions, comments, and notes (no original scientific research, but expression of opinion, mind teasers, and so on)	1.3
15	Other	5.1

^aThe sum of the percentages exceeds 100 percent because some articles cover two or more areas.

of research topics and methods. The next paragraphs will, therefore, examine these criteria based on bibliometric analyses. Findings will be compared with previous research to identify dynamic developments.

Identifying Thematic Clusters

When analyzing titles, keywords, and abstracts of publications, it becomes obvious that the literature on social entrepreneurship focuses on a limited variety of topics. Based on a content analysis of 158 research articles, we suggest that most contributions can be classified by use of the 14 topic areas displayed by Table 1. The column on the right shows the frequency of according articles in our sample (in percent). Research into more-detailed aspects of social entrepreneurship seems to be underrepresented, compared with more general studies which try to describe or define the phenomenon, occasionally with rather conflicting results (for

instance, compare Santos 2009 with Schramm 2010; see Dacin, Dacin, and Matear 2010 for an overview and Huybrechts and Nicholls 2012 for an up-to-date reflection on social entrepreneurship definitions).

Previous bibliometric research on social entrepreneurship by Desa (2007) had identified only four major thematic streams, namely (1) definitional, (2) resource-constrained environments, (3) governance regulations, and (4) performance metrics, whereas Kraus et al. (2014) distinguished only five topic clusters, namely (1) definitions and conceptual approaches, (2) impetus, (3) personality, (4) impact and performance, and (5) future research agendas. Our research—by applying the method of thematic coding by five coders coding independently and then coming to agreement for each divergently coded article—has identified much more distinct clusters (Table 1) and offers, therefore, an extension of previous research. This extension

indicates that research on social entrepreneurship, on the one hand, has widely expanded its scope in the past six years, demonstrating the dynamic development of the field. On the other hand, it shows how limited databases and different methods can lead to much more narrow results (see Kraus et al. 2014). Due to the use of a different coding systematic, our findings did not reproduce thematic streams (2) and (3) as suggested by Desa (2007), although without doubt both topics had gained some attention from researchers. Articles on definitions, typologies, conceptualization, and on description of the phenomenon still form the dominant cluster. To develop the field of social entrepreneurship, less emphasis should be placed on such topics in the future. Instead, research should build on existing definitions, should develop empirical conceptualizations, and should place more weight on other themes, deepening our understanding of topics 2 to 14 in Table 1 and even adding new topics to the list by further diversifying social entrepreneurship research.

Methods in Research on Social Entrepreneurship and Future Directions

Our findings on methods employed in social entrepreneurship research largely replicate previous findings (e.g., Granados et al. 2011). This indicates that many articles (almost half of our sample!) lack an empirical part, whereas those that do present empirical findings are predominantly based on qualitative methods (see Table 3 later in this article). Cases and narratives are often simply used to *exemplify* theoretical concepts of social entrepreneurship but not for proper theory building (for instance, following a proper Grounded Theory approach). There is no doubt that narratives and other forms of qualitative research are important tools to enhance our understanding of the field (Gartner 2007; Gartner and Birley 2002; Hindle 2004; Neergard and Ullhøi 2007), *when applied properly*. A *methodologically advanced use*—particularly in terms of improved theoretical sampling—of narratives, interviews, case studies, and of anthropological studies would help to improve the field of social entrepreneurship because the field still lacks sufficient foundations for large-scale quantitative studies.

Our greatest concern with the current use of qualitative methods lies in the sampling practice of case samples and narratives. Sampling often seems to be opportunity driven (easy or convenient access to cases is the starting point, for

instance sampling via social networks of the researcher). Most qualitative studies use rather small samples. Single case studies and very few exemplary cases or single narratives and good practice reports are the most often used forms of empirical research. More comparative or contrastive case collections, theoretical sampling methods, and case collection steered by theoretical saturation is needed instead of the current dominant presentation of single cases or of random and very small numbers of cases. Thorough theory building from cases would then be possible (Eisenhardt 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007).

Thus, a theoretical approach to sampling should be observed. In theoretical sampling, data are gathered that are “driven by concepts derived from the evolving theory and based on the concept of “making comparisons,” whose purpose is to go to places, people, or events that will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 201). Collection of cases would continue until the point is reached at which no new insights emerge from additional interviews—what Strauss and Corbin (1998) referred to as *theoretical saturation* (Fauchart and Gruber 2011, p. 939). This approach—when applied to social entrepreneurship research more often—would increase the probability that research would collect different and varied data on identities and actions of social entrepreneurs and would better allow determining the range of variability (Glaser and Strauss, 2006; Miles and Huberman, 1994; see Fauchart and Gruber 2011, p. 939). However, no such studies were identified within our sample of articles, indicating that qualitative approaches in future social entrepreneurship research should improve theoretical quality and exploratory power by investing more effort in methodology than current approaches have done.

Quantitative research on social entrepreneurship is very limited in extent and primarily focusses on measuring social impact (see Mair and Sharma 2012, for an introduction) or assessing social venture financing (see Spiess-Knafl and Achleitner 2012 for a brief overview). Thus, developing quantitative measurement instruments in social entrepreneurship is one of the most current research challenges (Short, Moss, and Lumpkin 2009). Thus far, scales and scorecards have been developed to assess the *impact* or the *financing* of social ventures. It is time to develop a scale to test for social entrepreneurship *itself*.

Measuring something requires a definite understanding of the special characteristics and the boundaries of the phenomenon. The use of qualitative research is the common method in social science to achieve such an understanding. This might partly explain the dominance of qualitative methods in the beginning of social entrepreneurship research. Then, for quantitative research that goes beyond descriptive approaches, a clear theoretical construct is needed, based on items that can be object to objective empirical measurements on defined scales. Concerning the debate over definitions of social entrepreneurship and the limited exploratory power of small-scale qualitative studies (which often lack theoretical sampling and grounded theory approaches), it is understandable that such a scale has not been developed thus far. In the social entrepreneurship literature, it is suggested to use an approach based on a continuum to discriminate social and commercial entrepreneurship (for instance, Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern 2006; Dees and Elias 1998; Massetti 2008; Tan, Williams, and Tan 2005). It can be assumed that commercial entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship are not very dissimilar, but rather are activities within the same continuum of entrepreneurship. Thus, the approach could be based on distinguishing commercial and social entrepreneurship as the two ends of the continuum. The “ideal typical” extreme ends of the continuum would clearly distinguish solely commercial activities from solely social activities. However, commercial and social activities merge and intertwine in the “real typical” center of the continuum. (See Schramm 2010, who argues that that all entrepreneurship has a social function, a point of view already mentioned by Bygrave and Minniti 2000 and others; see Müller 2013 for an qualitative empirical study of the social and socioeconomical functions of rural entrepreneurship. Furthermore, see a widely overlooked article by Zafirovski (1999) for arguments that—when transferred to the debate on social entrepreneurship—can explain how our neoclassical economic preconceptions shape the distinction between social and commercial entrepreneurship in the first place.) Spear (2006) has suggested a different continuum approach, assessing social innovativeness to distinguish social entrepreneurship from other social business activities. This attempt most likely could be integrated by adding a dimension on social innovativeness to the former constructs.

In case such a continuum does exist, it should be possible to define dimensions of that continuum and to develop testable scales for each dimension that can be used to measure whether the nature of an entrepreneurial activity is more commercially or more socially related. Different dimensions of such a continuum could reflect different levels of analyses (see Davidsson and Wiklund 2001). Such measurement scales, for instance, would use Likert scales and factor analyses and would function similarly to those used in the context of entrepreneurial orientation (for instance, Covin and Slevin 1986) or entrepreneurial management (Brown, Davidsson and Wiklund 2001; Kuhn, Sassmannshausen, and Zollin 2010; Stevenson 1983; Stevenson and Gumpert 1985; Stevenson and Jarillo 1990). However, although the idea for such an empirical approach in social entrepreneurship based on a continuum now is more than 10 years old, to our knowledge, the application of the concept has yet to be successfully performed in empirical fieldwork. Neither has any measurement scale been derived from qualitative research and/or theory. We suggest that this should be a major focus of future research on social entrepreneurship. A breakthrough would then allow the incorporation of contextual variables or even the contextualization of empirical social entrepreneurship research in a second step. Context might play an important role, particularly in social entrepreneurship and the activities of social entrepreneurs, which often seem to be inspired by certain contexts (see Welter 2011 and Zahra and Wright 2011 on contextualization of entrepreneurship research in general).

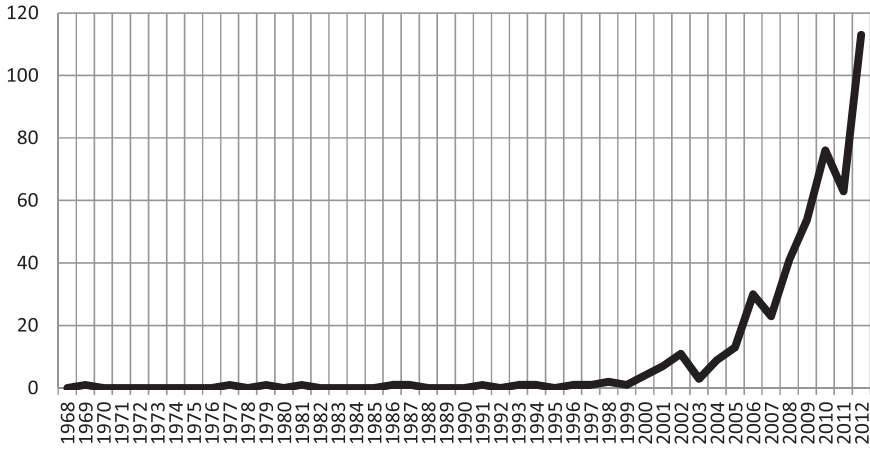
Impact of Social Entrepreneurship Research: Identifying the Most Influential Contributions

Assessing the impact of contributions, it can be assumed that citing a publication indicates that this publication has influenced the author in preparing his (or her) contribution. Although the author expresses disagreement with previous work, it has still caused him (or her) to reason about its content. Hence, it is argued that the “impact” of one author on other authors can be measured by the number of citations he or she receives for his or her work. Hence, the impact of a single publication can be measured by counting the number of citations that refer to it.

In doing so, many bibliometric articles have limited themselves to rather narrow

Figure 2

Number of Peer-Reviewed, Scholarly Journal Publications on Social Entrepreneurship Per Year According to EBSCO Host Database (EBSCO Database, for Instance, Excludes *Social Enterprise Journal*, *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, and *Social Innovation Review*)



databases, for instance, Thomson Reuter's ISI Web of Science. However, this excludes many leading publications (and of course creates a self-reinforcing circle around journals covered by the Social Citation Index), as, for example, the Thomson Reuter's Social Citation Index does not cover most of those journals that are published by Emerald, including *Social Enterprise Journal*, which has been central to the development of research in social entrepreneurship. The *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship* is also not included in this index. The ISI Web of Science covers only 15 out of 99 internationally relevant entrepreneurship journals (Sassmannshausen 2012b), implying that articles on social entrepreneurship published in general entrepreneurship journals might also have been neglected by this database. Similar criticism can be aimed at the use of "EBSCO Business Source Complete" and "Science Direct" because they too do not cover many entrepreneurship journals. Therefore, we use Google Scholar as a more complete database (see Figures 1 and 2 for a comparison of results when using different infometric data sources). Hence, our study goes far beyond the data used by Granados et al. (2011). Other, more general methodological reasons to

use Google Scholar in bibliometric studies on impact in science have been elaborated by Harzing (2011) and Harzing and van der Wal (2008a,b, 2009). We follow their argument when empirically identifying the most influential contributions and contributors using Google Scholar as our data source.

Accordingly, we use Harzing's (2007) "Publish or Perish" software (version 3.6 from 2012 and 4.4.8 from 2013) with the search term "social entrepreneurship" (exact phrase). The "Publish or Perish" software tracked more than 1,000 results for that particular search phrase and automatically limited its report to the 1,000 most cited articles. Nonetheless, because citation frequencies are not that high in entrepreneurship research in general (Sassmannshausen 2010, 2012) and in social entrepreneurship research in particular, limiting the data set to the "most cited" papers in the case of our research means that even one quote is sufficient to be included in the list of the 1,000 most cited papers. Thus, no influential paper was left out, at least when "influence" is operationalized by citations. After correcting the search results manually for statistical over-coverage (i.e., excluding articles that may include the term "social entrepreneurship" somewhere but do

not present research relevant in this area), 820 articles remain.

The most cited publication on social entrepreneurship, a working paper by Dees (1998), received 1,110 citations by December 2013. The average number of citations for those papers that were cited at least once is 47.96 by December 2013 (changed from 26.39 in December 2011), whereas the median number of citations for those papers is 12 (7 in December 2011). The huge difference between average and median reveals a heavily left-twisted distribution of citations, a common phenomenon in bibliometrics, explained by the so-called “Matthew effect” (Merton 1968). The fact that the distribution of citations follows common bibliometric laws (here: the Matthew effect) indicates that research on social entrepreneurship has entered a mature state. However, 19,454 papers remain uncited, indicating that the average number of citations referring to *all* social entrepreneurship publications is only 2.2 and both median and modus are zero (for a different sample of approximately 1,300 entrepreneurship papers already Sassmannshausen (2010, 2012) found the modus to be zero; despite the contemporary career relevance of academic papers it seems that most papers never get cited).

Table 2 also shows that 11 out of the 22 most cited papers are not published by peer-

reviewed journals but represent other types of publications, namely working papers, books, and book chapters in edited volumes. This seems unusual because journal articles are exclusively considered the most important, impactful, and career-relevant publications. However, Sassmannshausen (2010, 2012a) has already shown that the most cited paper on networks and entrepreneurship was not a journal article either, but a book publication. He furthermore empirically demonstrated that in that research area, there was no significant difference in the number of citations for journal papers compared with articles in edited books, as analyzed by the use of a cocitation matrix. Our findings on social entrepreneurship reproduce these findings. This raises the question of whether we overrate journal articles in their importance for “track records.”

The last bibliometric measure we examine is the H-Index for publications on social entrepreneurship. The H-Index by December 2013 is 110 (72 in December 2011) for papers on social entrepreneurship and that is fairly high. An H-Index of 110 indicates that 110 publications on social entrepreneurship have been cited at least 110 times. For comparison, the H-Index for entrepreneurship in general is 259, according to results from the “Publish or Perish” software, meaning that 259 papers on entrepreneurship have been cited at least 259 times (Box 1).

Box 1 The H-Index Explained

The *H-Index* was initially developed by *Jorge E. Hirsch* to assess the individual impact of scientists. Hirsch (2005) defines the H-Index as follows: “A scientist has index h if h of his/her N_p papers have at least h citations each, and the other $(N_p - h)$ papers have no more than h citations each.” For instance, a scientist with an H-Index of 14 has published 14 papers that have been cited at least 14 times each. Thus, the H-Index reflects both the number of publications and the number of citations per publication. The same scientist might have published 100 other papers that have never been cited. Those contributions do not improve the H-Index because of their relative irrelevance, but neither do they have a negative impact. Therefore, younger papers that have remained uncited due to their newness do not harm the H-Index but rather offer future opportunities for improvement.

One of the limitations of the H-Index is that it can only be used to compare scientists working in the very same field because citation conventions may differ between fields. Harzing and van der Wal (2008a,b; 2009) build on that limitation by suggesting the use of the H-Index to assess collectively the overall impact of journals dedicated to the same field. In this article, we suggest the use of the H-Index in assessing the development of a field, that is, social entrepreneurship.

Box 1 is adopted from Sassmannshausen (2012b).

Table 2
The 22 Most Cited Publications on Social Entrepreneurship^a

Cites	12/2013	12/2011	Trend	Authors	Title	Year	Journal
1110	644	↗	↗	Dees	The meaning of social entrepreneurship	1998	No
968	632	↗		Bornstein	How to change the world: Social entrepreneurs and the power of new ideas	2007	No
836	430	↑		Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern	Social and commercial entrepreneurship: Same, different, or both?	2006	Yes
793	446	↑		Mair and Marti	Social entrepreneurship research: A source of explanation, prediction, and delight	2006	Yes
714	486	↓		Borzaga and Defourny	The emergence of social enterprise	2004	No
699	345	↑		Yunus	Creating a world without poverty: Social business and the future of capitalism	2009	No
640	478	↓		Deakins and Freel	Entrepreneurship and small firms	1996	No
637	450	↓		Leadbeater	The rise of the social entrepreneur	1997	No
506	289	→		Peredo and McLean	Social entrepreneurship: A critical review of the concept	2006	No
442	250	↑		Alvord, Brown, and Lettis	Social entrepreneurship and societal transformation: An exploratory study	2004	Yes
442	238	↑		Martin and Osberg	Social entrepreneurship: The case for definition	2007	Yes
427	192	↑		Nicholls	Social entrepreneurship: New models of sustainable social change	2006	No
404	254	↓		Eikenberry and Kluver	The marketization of the nonprofit sector: Civil society at risk?	2004	Yes
383	242	↓		Dart	The legitimacy of social enterprise	2004	Yes
370	204	↑		Weerawardena and Mort	Investigating social entrepreneurship: A multidimensional model	2006	Yes
363	226	→		Mort and Weerawardena	Social entrepreneurship: Toward conceptualization	2003	Yes
352	214	→		Thompson	The world of the social entrepreneur	2002	Yes
340	251	↓		Dees, Emerson, and Economy	Enterprising nonprofits: A toolkit for social entrepreneurs	2001	No
337	n.l.	↑		Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, and Shulman	A typology of social entrepreneurs: Motives, search processes and ethical challenges	2009	Yes

Table 2
Continued

Cites	12/2013	12/2011	Trend	Authors	Title	Year	Journal
336	227	↓	Thompson, Alvy, and Lees	Social entrepreneurship—A new look at the people and the potential	2000	Yes	
292	n.l. ^b	↑	Westley, Patton, and Zimmerman	Getting to maybe: How the world is changed	2007	No	
289	199	↓	Defourmy	From third sector to social enterprise	2001	No	

^aTwenty-two most cited contributions on social entrepreneurship by December 2013 and by December 2011 (according to our research using data from Google Scholar and Harzing's "Publish or Perish" software).

^bn.l.: not listed among the Top 20 in December 2011 (new to the list in December 2013).

Table 3
Methods Used in Social Entrepreneurship Research (in Percent)^a

#	Methods Used in Social Entrepreneurship Research	Frequency (Percent)
1	No empirical part (purely theoretical and/or conceptual papers)	46.8
2	Best-Practice Reports	7.6
3	Qualitative Research (total)	34.2
	3.1 Single Case Studies	6.3
	3.2 Multiple Case Studies	17.7
	3.3 Narratives	2.5
	3.4 Interviews	6.3
	3.5 Anthropological Qualitative Methods	1.3
4	Descriptive Quantitative Statistics	5.1
5	Inferential and Applied Quantitative Statistics	5.1
6	Reviews	13.9
	6.1 Comparative or Integrative Reviews	11.4
	6.2 Single Reviews	2.5
7	Other forms	2.5

^aThe sum of the percentages exceeds 100 percent because some articles cover two or more areas. Percentages are rounded.

Conclusion

We have found a considerable amount of evidence for the establishment of “social entrepreneurship” as an important domain of entrepreneurship research. This is not only documented by the cumulated number of publications and the growth rate of publication frequency. The domain has made significant progress in the variety of its research topics (Table 1). The number of citations (see Table 2 for the top 22 most cited papers) and the substantial level of H-index for papers on social entrepreneurship have reached formidable heights. Comparing numbers of citations from December 2013 with numbers taken in December 2011 reveals a strong dynamic development in all bibliometric measures. Some publications (such as Dees 1998) almost doubled in impact within only two years. Special conferences and journals hosted by well-known institutes (such as Stanford) and publishers (such as Emerald) have emerged. Articles on social entrepreneurship have been accepted by all leading journals in the field. Scientometric evidence in seven dimensions indicates that social entrepreneurship has reached maturity.

The sustainable organizational and institutional establishment of the field was also examined. We found many fully endowed, tenured

professors, chairs, and research centers. This indicates that “social entrepreneurship” will be more than only a trend that soon would fade away, as these professors, centers, and chairs represent a strong and durable resource of scholarship for future development of the field. Demand for curricular and extracurricular teaching, embeddedness in accredited teaching programs, and Ph.D. students focusing on social entrepreneurship indicate students’ interest in social entrepreneurship and ensure a future supply of talented and dedicated researchers.

However, concerning research methods and content of research, future progress is needed. We elaborated this in the section labeled “Methods in Research on Social Entrepreneurship and Future Directions” (see Table 3), in which we highlighted some shortcomings of the current state of the art and have made suggestions on how qualitative, case-based explorative research designs could be improved, calling for theory building by theoretical sampling and Grounded Theory approaches. This could also finally allow developing empirical measurement scales. Such scales could be introduced by recombining theory of social entrepreneurship with measurement constructs and scales that are already well developed in general entrepreneurship research. Reliability tests and factor

analyses would then mark a next important step in the advancement of the field, moving the field toward more-quantitative studies, an underrepresented methodological area to date.

Our research has some limitations that we addressed throughout this article. One additional limitation is the fact that we did not balance the list of the most cited publications against the age of the publication. Older publications have had more time to be cited and thus have a competitive advantage over younger publications. An additional methodological approach—the so-called response analysis—would be needed to outweigh this effect. Due to limited space and to maintain the focus of our paper, we did not present such a weighted list here because the results of a response analysis would not add evidence germane to the question of how well social entrepreneurship is established. We feel obliged to mention this limitation in particular because rankings and ratings often lead to (emotional) arguments over the results.

The future of social entrepreneurship research is not predetermined. It is the task of researchers in the field to shape the future. With this article, we took stock of social entrepreneurship as an academic field, following the opening quote by Low and MacMillan (1988). This article does not intend to “predict the future, but to tell you what you need to know to take meaningful action in the present” (Saffo 2007, p. 122). Hence, we do hope that our scientometric-based review will inform future decisions on research topics, research designs, and methodological choices. Our last point, however, should be formulated in memory of Greg Dees because we can summarize our findings with a statement made by Dees in 1998: “The idea of “social entrepreneurship” has struck a responsive chord.” Our article has delivered empirical proof that Greg Dees’s vision has come true.

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