

Social Entrepreneurship: A Content Analysis

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Competing definitions and limited empirical research are impediments to the emerging field of social entrepreneurship. Our study provides a systematic review of the literature and empirical materials used. A standardized search of academic databases and citation analyses revealed trends in the literature. Content analysis was applied to a total of 567 unique articles from 1987 to 2008 revealing patterns in the research. A total of 274 unique case studies or examples were cited in 123 articles, and we analysed their characteristics. Generally, we found very little empirical data on the topic, confirming the need for more rigorous empirical research.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper provides a content analysis of the literature on social entrepreneurship, with particular emphasis on case studies. Using standardized search terms in several bibliographic databases (EBSCO, ProQuest, and Google Scholar), we trace the trends in the literatures on: “entrepreneur” OR “entrepreneurship”; “social entrepreneur” OR “social entrepreneurship”; “social movement”; and “social marketing.” We plotted the results by year for the period from 1987 to 2007. Our citation analysis demonstrates that despite growth in the literature on “social entrepreneurship” in recent years, it remains dwarfed by the research on “entrepreneurship” and “entrepreneurs,” as well as on “social movements”.

Our content analysis of 567 unique articles concerning “social entrepreneur” OR “social entrepreneurship” revealed interesting patterns. It confirmed that there are no consistency in definitions and objects of focus and that there is little rigorous comparative analysis. Some research encompasses social innovation and advocacy efforts. Other articles use a more narrow definition insisting on inclusion of income generation goals. We also found different levels of analysis, including studies of individuals (micro), studies of organizations and processes (meso), and broader studies of the economic, political and societal context (macro). Finally, the majority of the journal articles did not conduct empirical research and instead simply focused on theory. A mere 22% (123) made reference to specific examples of social

entrepreneurship, primarily drawing on secondary accounts to illustrate arguments. While 274 unique case studies were cited in 123 articles, most appear only once and often with limited detail.

We suggest that strengthening the precision of definitions, exploring measures of success, increasing the rigor of empirical research, and drawing on related disciplines would strengthen the field of social entrepreneurship overall. Further work should focus on clarifying definitions and boundaries in order to clearly explain why only some are identified as examples of successful social entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. As well, improving the rigor of analysis and empirical data on impacts and on processes would strengthen assertions concerning “best practices.”

INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship is a new, emerging field challenged by competing definitions and conceptual frameworks, gaps in the research literature, and limited empirical data (Mair & Marti, 2006; Nicholls, 2006). A number of scholars argue that entrepreneurship is a process that can be applied to the creation of economic or social ends. For example, Drucker (1985) suggested that “the entrepreneur always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity” (p. 42) regardless of whether that opportunity is commercial or social in nature. Often, however, the focus in “entrepreneurship” studies is on only “for-profit” activities while the term “social entrepreneurship” has focused primarily on activities with social purposes. In recent years, the term “social entrepreneurship” has emerged to describe the application of entrepreneurial activities with an embedded social purpose. For our purposes, business entrepreneurship focuses on wealth creation and is of interest because of its potential to fuel economic development whereas social entrepreneurship focuses on ‘making the world a better place’ and creating social capital.

Recently, the discourse on social entrepreneurship has been fuelled by a number of high profile business entrepreneurs who have turned their attention to social causes. In 2006, Bill Drayton, founder of Ashoka (a non-profit organization dedicated to finding and supporting social entrepreneurs worldwide), said: “social entrepreneurship is helping to bring about a productivity miracle in [...] the ‘citizen half of the world’ (education, welfare and so on)” (“Survey: The rise of”, 2006). Drayton’s concept has attracted some wealthy and influential proponents including billionaire Jeff Skoll (founder of eBay), who created the Skoll Foundation, an organization devoted to promoting social entrepreneurship. Skoll describes social entrepreneurs as individuals “motivated by altruism and a profound desire to promote the growth of equitable civil societies [who] pioneer innovative, effective, sustainable approaches to meet the needs of the marginalized, the disadvantaged and the disenfranchised. Social entrepreneurs are the wellspring of a better future” (Skoll Foundation, n.d.). This concept of social entrepreneurship has also been popularized by books, including David Bornstein’s (2004) *How to change the world: Social entrepreneurs and the power of new ideas*. It has also been popularized by the business press; for example, *The Economist* (“Survey: The rise of”, 2006) has heralded the “rise of the social entrepreneur.”

While the popular press has waxed enthusiastically about this “new” phenomenon, researchers have attempted to examine, conceptualize and categorize entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. Despite the excitement, Dees and Anderson (2006) observe that as an academic field, social entrepreneurship is still immature, and lacks the deep, rich, explanatory or prescriptive theories expected in a more mature academic field. Perhaps more importantly, Nicholls (2006) observes that innovative social ventures cannot achieve their full potential until there is a more comprehensive understanding of how they are driven and what assumptions motivate them.

However, even in the “social entrepreneurship” literature, debates over definition persist. For example, Brock, Steinder and Kim (2008) conducted a review revealing more than a dozen different definitions for “social entrepreneurs” and “social entrepreneurship” (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
SELECTED DEFINITIONS OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR AND SOCIAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Author(s) & Year	Definition of Social Entrepreneur
Ashoka	Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social problems. They are ambitious and persistent, tackling major social issues and offering new ideas for wide-scale change.
Bornstein, D., 2004	A path breaker with a powerful new idea, who combines visionary and real-world problem solving creativity, who has a strong ethical fibre, and who is ‘totally possessed’ by his or her vision for change.
Dees, J. G., 2001	Social entrepreneurs play the role of change agents in the social sector, by: Adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value); Recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission; Engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning Acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand; Exhibiting heightened accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created.
Light, 2006	A social entrepreneur is an individual, group, network, organization, or alliance of organizations that seeks sustainable, large-scale change through pattern-breaking ideas in what or how governments, non-profits, and businesses do to address significant social problems.
Martin, R. L. & Osberg, S., 2007	The social entrepreneur should be understood as someone who targets an unfortunate but stable equilibrium that causes the neglect, marginalization, or suffering of a segment of humanity; who brings to bear on this situation his or her inspiration, direct action, creativity, courage, and fortitude; and who aims for and ultimately affects the establishment of a new stable equilibrium that secures permanent benefit for the targeted group and society at large.
PBS’ “The New Heroes”	A social entrepreneur identifies and solves social problems on a large scale. Just as business entrepreneurs create and transform whole industries, social entrepreneurs act as the change agents for society, seizing opportunities others miss in order to improve systems, invent and disseminate new approaches and advance sustainable solutions that create social value.
Schwab Foundation	What is a Social Entrepreneur? A pragmatic visionary who achieves large scale, systemic and sustainable social change through a new invention, a different approach, a more rigorous application of known technologies or strategies, or a combination of these.
Skoll Foundation	The social entrepreneur as society’s change agent: a pioneer of innovation that benefits humanity. Social entrepreneurs are ambitious, mission driven, strategic, resourceful, and results oriented.
Thompson, 2002	People with the qualities and behaviours we associate with the business entrepreneur but who operate in the community and are more concerned with caring and helping than “making money’.”

Author(s) & Year	Definition of Social Entrepreneurship
Austin, J., Stephenson, H., & Wei-Skillern, J., 2006	Social entrepreneurship is an innovative, social value-creating activity that can occur within or across the non-profit, businesses or government sectors.
Johnson, 2000	Social entrepreneurship is emerging as an innovative approach for dealing with complex social needs. With its emphasis on problem solving and social innovation, socially entrepreneurial activities blur the traditional boundaries between the public, private and non-profit sector and emphasize hybrid model of for-profit and non-profit activities.
Nichols, A., 2007	Social entrepreneurship entails innovations designed to explicitly improve societal well being, housed within entrepreneurial organizations which initiate, guide or contribute to change in society.
Mair, J. & Marti, I., 2006	Social entrepreneurship: Innovative models of providing products and services that cater to basic needs (rights) that remain unsatisfied by political or economic institutions.

Reinforcing the need for a more constrained definition, a recent study by the Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship (CASE) (2008) suggested the need to clarify definitions currently fragmenting the academic community and to find terminology that can be used to distinguish more easily between different forms of socially entrepreneurial behaviour.

In addition to definitional issues, the area of social entrepreneurship is currently disadvantaged by the limited empirical evidence available. As CASE (2008) acknowledges:

current success stories, while powerful and moving, lack hard data or proven measures of success, scalability, and sustainability. Otherwise, this could look like a field with lots of little ventures that are admirable but almost never come close to the espoused goal of widespread, lasting impact, and that never match up to the problems they are designed to solve. (p. 8)

Specifically, there is a lack of robust data directly linking social entrepreneurship with social improvements. Indeed, some authors have even suggested that the proliferation of new organizations may actually create competition and inefficiency within an already highly fragmented social sector. Finally, in addition to documenting “success,” it has been noted that there is also a need to understand failures (Dees & Anderson, 2006; Nicholls, 2006; CASE, 2008).

Our paper is structured as follows. First, we discuss aspects of the literature that we deem relevant to issues related to definition as well as levels of analysis. Next, we discuss our research questions and methods for citation and content analysis, including the selection of texts, categories of analysis and our coding approach. We then present our findings in terms of overall patterns in the literature. Finally, we close with a discussion of our conclusions and the possible implications to both research and practice.

CATEGORIZATIONS OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social Innovation versus Social Enterprise

In recent years, a considerable amount of research has focused on debating what is included or excluded in the definition of social entrepreneurship. Overall, although the definitions may vary, there is general consensus that there should be two parts to the definition of social entrepreneurship. First, social entrepreneurship involves creating something new, characterized by innovation rather than simply the replication of existing enterprises or practices (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006). This ‘newness’ may take the form of a new approach or new process. Second, at least some of the objectives of the undertaking need to be related to creating social value, sometimes referred to as “social good” rather than

simply creating personal and shareholder wealth (e.g., Zadek & Thake, 1997). Both parts of the definition represent challenges. First, delimiting the nature and extent of the innovation is somewhat problematic and highly subjective; second, the definition of “social value” can be contested. Our research shows that there is little consistency in the analyses that lead to categorizing some individuals and organizations as social entrepreneurs and others as philanthropists, non-profits, NGOs, or activists.

Some, including Dees and Anderson (2006), the Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship (2008), and Neck, Bush and Allen (2009) argue for a “big tent” approach to social entrepreneurship that embraces a wide range of activities and organizations. Some scholars even portray social entrepreneurship as an innovative, social, value-creating activity that can occur within or across the non-profit, business, and public sectors (Austin et al., 2006).

However, other authors insist on a narrower definition for social entrepreneurship. For example, Yujico (2008) suggests that established institutions such as government agencies, aid agencies, charities, foundations and non-government organizations should not be included as social enterprises because they “straddle the divide between for-profit and non-profit institutions in terms of goals and means” and because “their goals of enhancing social well-being are similar to those of non-profit institutions, but these enterprises are not primarily funded by revenues from tax collection or charitable aid and are thus less insulated from market dynamics” (p. 495).

Boschee & McClurg (2003), for example, maintain that “unless a non-profit organization is generating *earned* revenue from its activities, it is *not* acting in an entrepreneurial manner” (p. 1). Such approaches tend to have a pro-business bias, using business as a leverage to improve social conditions (Mair & Marti, 2006). Martin & Osberg (2007) insist that the field must be restricted to exclude social service provisions or social activism in order to gain respect among “serious thinkers.” They tend to focus on a narrower notion of social enterprise, in which profit is earned to advance social objectives, whether by for-profit, non-profit or public/private partnership.

Dees & Anderson (2006) suggest that these two competing conceptions represent two schools of thought which they term the “social innovation school” and “the social enterprise school.” The authors suggest that cross-fertilization, rather than competition, between these perspectives, will enrich the overall field of social entrepreneurship.

Forms of Organization

The first question for our content analysis relates to the question of the scope and the focus of the activity as described on a continuum from purely income generating to purely social goals. Another dimension of the categorization of social entrepreneurship concerns organizational forms which seem to operate along a continuum, including: 1) Businesses or business people engaging in social goals; 2) cross-sectoral partnerships including for-profit and non-profit organizations (Sagawa & Segal, 2000); 3) shifts by non-profits to new sources of funding (Austin et al., 2006); or, 4) new processes to alleviate social problems and catalyse social transformation (Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2004). Thus, we also focused our analysis on three organizational forms—private sector firms engaged in achieving social goals, private/public partnerships, or organizations whose main focus is purely social goals.

Levels of Analysis

To further complicate definitional matters, social entrepreneurship research can be categorized by the level of analysis. Writing about entrepreneurship (more broadly defined), Jennings (1994) distinguishes between research focused on the individual characteristics of entrepreneurs, organizational/corporate entrepreneurship processes, and a third approach grounded in broad macro economic theory. These levels of analysis may be differentiated as micro (focusing on the individual), meso (focusing on the processes or the organization), and macro (focusing on the broader social/economic/political context).

Micro Level

Research at the micro level currently dominates the larger field of entrepreneurship research (Davidson, 2001). Research in this stream mostly focuses on the entrepreneur, examining entrepreneur-

ship from a psychological and sociological perspective (McClelland, 1961; Collins & Moore, 1964; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Arenius & Minitti, 2005). Studies tend to focus on the characteristics of individual entrepreneurs—the “great man theory” of innovation—and use a variety of techniques to assess demographic and psychographic factors, as well as other characteristics. This approach has been adapted in studies on “social entrepreneurs,” focusing on their individual traits and leadership (Thompson, Alvy, & Lees, 2000; Drayton, 2002). For example, the personal nature of leadership in socially entrepreneurial ventures “may be more than beneficial; it may be necessary” (Roper & Cheney, 2005, p.101). Mumford (2002) notes that “social innovation involves certain cognitive operations and expertise not always seen in other forms of creative thought. Leaders must, for example, identify social restrictions on potential solutions and analyse the downstream consequences of social implementation as they generate, revise and develop new ideas” (p. 242). The characteristics attributed or discussed in relation to social entrepreneurs, including public sector entrepreneurs, parallel those associated with business entrepreneurs, including leadership and charisma, risk perception/tolerance, motivation, personal attributes, family issues and marginalization (Lewis, 1980; Dees, 1998). Some research focuses on the motivation of the individual social entrepreneurs. For example, Anderson (1998) and Yujuico (2008) both suggest that social entrepreneurs are not only motivated by altruism but also outrage and resentment at injustice. This focus on “the new heroes” celebrated by Ashoka is grounded in theories which ascribe significant agency to individuals in effecting change. Most of the definitions, provided by Brock et al. (2008) for example, focus on the character of the individual social entrepreneur. It must be noted, however, that some authors find the focus on the individual to be elitist (CASE, 2008).

Meso Level

At this level, the research focus is on entrepreneurial organizational processes as ways to foster innovation (Cooper & Bruno, 1975; Burgelman, 1983; Quinn & Cameron, 1983; Burgelman, 1984; Dollinger, 1984; Timmons & Bygrave, 1986; Zahra, 1993; Jack & Anderson, 2002). Focusing on the process of entrepreneurship, a number of researchers (Stevenson, 1983; Sahlman, 1988; Wheelwright & Clark, 1992) identify factors common among entrepreneurial enterprises such as focussing on opportunities, not resources (Dees, 1998; Guclu, Dees, & Anderson, 2002). This research tends to focus on the processes for achieving social goals (Covin & Slevin, 1986), including analyses of organizational forms, goals and structure (Curtis & Zurcher, 1974), governance and management issues (Gonzalez & Healey, 2005), stages in the social entrepreneurship process (Thompson, Alvy & Lees, 2002), and new approaches to public sector management (Leadbeater, 1997). Further, the process of social entrepreneurship has been described in a way that parallels discussion of entrepreneurship processes, namely:

- Identify a gap and related opportunity;
- Inject imagination and vision into the solution;
- Recruit and motivate others to the cause and build essential networks;
- Secure the resources needed; and
- Introduce proper systems for controlling the venture (Leadbeater, 1997; Dees, 1998; Thompson et al., 2002).

Macro Level

Research at this level focuses on entrepreneurship as part of economic and social development (Schumpeter, 1934; Baumol, 1993; Minitti, Arenius & Langowitz, 2005; Coyne & Boetke, 2006). At the macro level, there are studies that attempt to understand the broad structural, cultural and economic forces which shape entrepreneurship, such as neo-liberalism. Some of these forces have the objective of driving government policies, such as tax policies, regulatory frameworks, and education that in turn drive or promote entrepreneurship. Leading work which focuses on the macro level includes:

- The Global Entrepreneurship Model, which considers the economic context and complementary activity among different groups (Minitti et al., 2005);
- Studies looking at the complex relationship among entrepreneurship, large firms and macro-economic activity, including the notion of embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985);

Analyses of government policies and access to financing (Darwall & Roberts, 1998; Prasad & Linde, 1999); and

The impact of catalyst enterprises on the economy (Davidson & Wiklund, 2001).

More recently, we see similar macro efforts to conceptualize social entrepreneurship within the broader environment. For example, Weerawardena & Sullivan-Mort (2006) consider its iterative relationship with social development, including peace and human rights. They discuss the stages of development of a “civil society” as well as interactions among movements and groups, while considering other contextual factors such as politics, communications and social infrastructures. Finally, there are also studies which consider the interaction among these levels. For example, Mair & Marti (2006) suggest that social entrepreneurship needs to be understood as a process resulting from “the continuous interaction between social entrepreneurs and the context within which they and their activities are embedded,” (p. 40) in turn linking the individual, the process, and the context.

OUR STUDY

In a modest effort to contribute to the social entrepreneurship landscape, we address the following specific research questions:

What are the patterns in the academic literature on entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, social movements and social marketing?

How can literature on social entrepreneurship be categorized in terms of objectives, research methods and levels of focus?

What empirical evidence and specifically, case studies, have been examined under the umbrella of “social entrepreneurship”?

How do these cases fit with the categories of social entrepreneurship, including dimensions such as goals, sectors, organizational forms and levels of analysis?

How have these cases been framed by other disciplines?

METHODOLOGY

Our paper used a combination of textual analysis techniques to: examine overall patterns in the discourse on entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, identify empirical studies, and explore the discourse in further detail.

The first stage in the analysis involved using standardized search terms to identify and collect empirical articles on the topic of social entrepreneurship. Standardized searches were conducted in all of the databases within ProQuest and EBSCOhost, respectively, as well as Google Scholar. The searches were not restricted by date, but were limited to their occurrence in the citation and abstract of scholarly journals in the ProQuest databases, and in the title of the article for EBSCOhost databases and Google Scholar, in which it was not possible to restrict to the abstract. The search term “social entrepreneur” OR “social entrepreneurship” was entered into the database to identify all articles containing these terms. We then analysed the patterns of these over time and contrasted them with identical searches on the terms “entrepreneur OR entrepreneurship,” “social movement,” and “social marketing.” It should be noted that combining searches from multiple databases presents significant problems as there are duplicates and Google Scholar searches include citations as well as complete articles. Notwithstanding, as the patterns in the searches of individual databases were similar, we believe the results are a reasonable indication of trends and comparisons among subjects but not of total scholarly production in journals.

The number of citations per year were recorded from the beginning to the end of the years in which they began to emerge (10 or more citations). We then tallied the numbers across the three search engines and graphed the pattern of citations that emerged. For the search “social entrepreneur” OR “social entrepreneurship,” which we planned to code, results were exported into a bibliographic management program, RefWorks, which allowed us to view and subsequently eliminate: all duplicates (within and across databases), all results not in English, and all results that were not scholarly journals but not filtered

by the respective databases. After these items were removed, we were left with a final master list of 567 unique articles citing “social entrepreneur” OR “social entrepreneurship.” These 567 articles were collected and downloaded; however, a small percentage (n=44) of these articles were not available via our university’s journal subscription service and thus were not accessible for review. The remaining 523 articles were then ascribed a code, and hand sorted by four independent coders for occurrences of references to specific cases of social entrepreneurship. Upon closer examination, approximately three-quarters of the articles (n=400) were either not relevant to the topic of social entrepreneurship and/or did not make reference to specific cases of social entrepreneurship. At the conclusion of the aforementioned process, a final total of 123 articles were selected for coding and detailed analysis. Each individual coder was provided with a standardized coding sheet to record information on each article and each case study, respectively. The coding sheet consisted of the following items: (1) the individual entrepreneur named; (2) gender(s) of the individual(s) studied; 3) location(s) of the case studied; (4) organization name; (5) sector(s) of the organization, including health, economic development, education, equality seeking, violence prevention, service provision and ‘other’; 6) the objective of the organization, namely, income generating for social goals, purely social goals, or a combination of income generating and social goals. All cases were coded twice and the results were tabulated and analysed to ensure internal consistency. An overall total of 366 mentions of 274 unique cases were identified.

FINDINGS

Citation Analysis

We found the first citation of social entrepreneurship in 1984. For the period 1986-2007, our search in all ProQuest databases produced 162 articles and our search in all EBSCO host databases produced a total of 60 articles. The search in Google Scholar produced 2186¹ results for a total of 2728 citations over 21 years on social entrepreneurship, peaking with 433 citations in 2006. (See Graph 1).

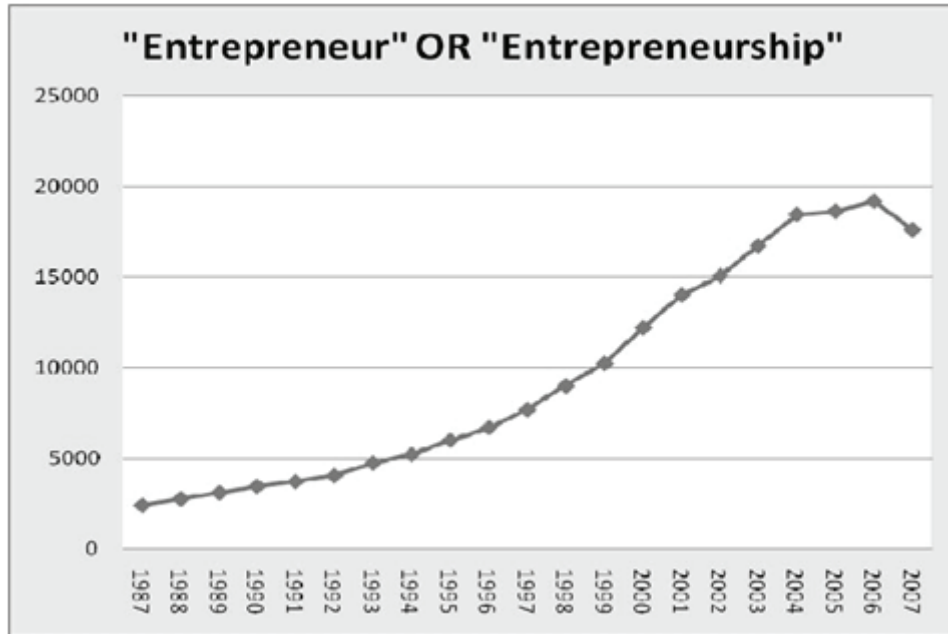
GRAPH 1
CITATION ANALYSIS: “SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR” OR “SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP”



In contrast, the terms “entrepreneur” and “entrepreneurship” produced citations back to the 1970s with a total of 201,005 citations over 21 years peaking with 19,171 citations in 2006 (see Graph 2). This

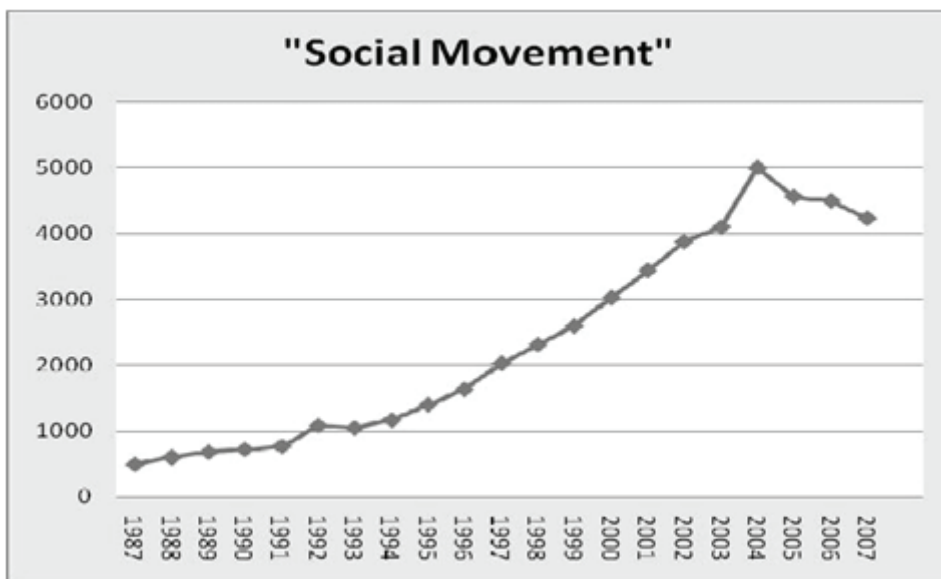
indicates that “social entrepreneurship” is a tiny fraction of the overall body of literature on entrepreneurship.

GRAPH 2
CITATION ANALYSIS: “ENTREPRENEUR” OR “ENTREPRENEURSHIP”



With 56,540 citations over 21 years, the “social movement” citations peak in 2004 with 2996 citations (See Graph 3). This represents more than 20 times the citations we found for “social entrepreneurship” OR “social entrepreneur.”

GRAPH 3
CITATION ANALYSIS: “SOCIAL MOVEMENT”



The term social marketing produced 1,384 citations over 21 years, peaking in 2007 with 1,785 citations (See Graph 4). The term first appears in the literature in the 1960s.

GRAPH 4
CITATION ANALYSIS: "SOCIAL MARKETING"



Content Analysis

We reviewed 567 unique articles and identified 123 articles which made reference to case studies. We analysed the 123 articles in more detail and found a total of 366 cases studies cited within. The way in which they were cited varied from a passing mention, for example Vega and Kidwell's (2007) classification of 80 cases of entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship, to detailed assessments such as Alvord, Brown and Letts' (2004) comprehensive study of cases of social entrepreneurship. Further analysis of these showed that only 35 of the 366 cases were cited in more than one article (see Table 2 for the most frequently cited examples). The rest were mentioned only once in one article. The 10 cases most often cited were: Grameen Bank (14 mentions); Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (6); Ashoka (6); Ben and Jerry's (6); Partnership for a Drug-Free America (4); Delancey Street Foundation (4); and Pioneer Human Services (4).

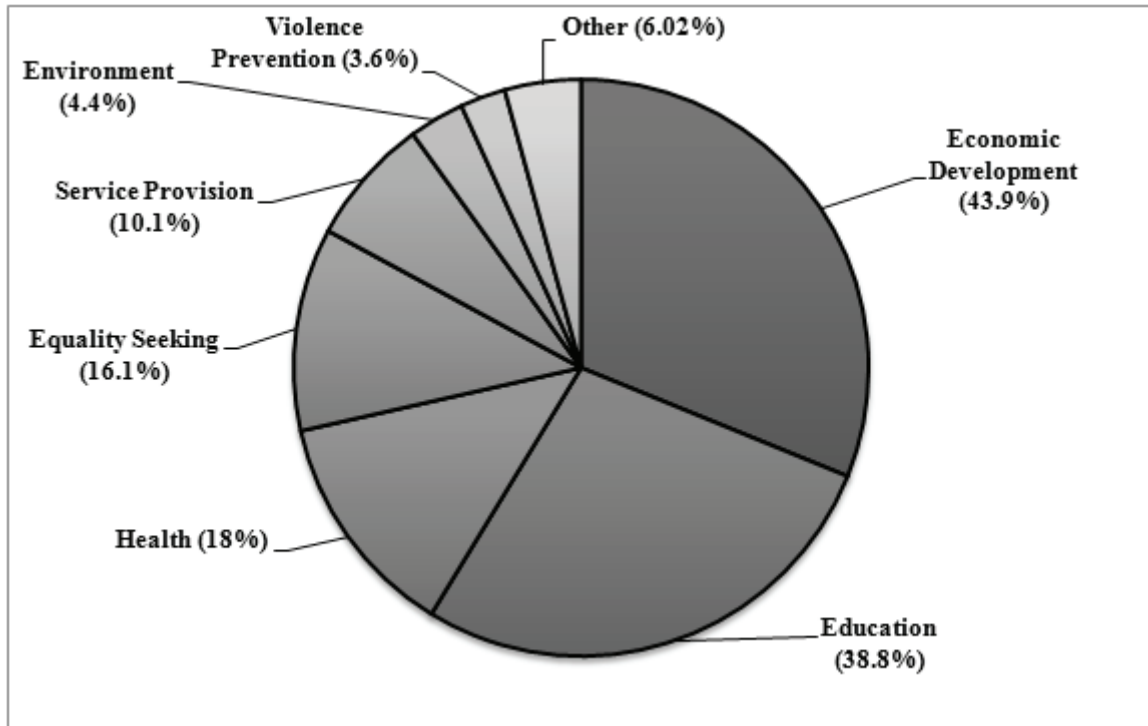
In about 52% percent of the total cases, specific individuals (n=191) were identified as social entrepreneurs. The majority, 60% (n=122), of them were men. In addition, three articles named both a male a female.

Of the organizations cited as examples of those engaged in social entrepreneurship, more than one third (35%) of them (n=130) are located in the United States. An additional 27.7% (n=102) are located in other industrialized countries while 27.6% (n=101) are from developing countries. Among the organizations referred to in the total number of cases, 43.9% (n=161) had economic development as their principal focus, compared to 38.8% (n=142) in education, 18% (n=66) in health. Approximately, 16.1% (n=59) were concerned with equality seeking for women, people with disabilities, or the gay and lesbian community, 10.1% (n=37) with service provision (housing, career counselling, etc.), 4.37% (n=16) with the environment, 3.6% (n=13) with violence prevention, and 6.01% (n=22) were in the "other" category. These findings are shown in Figure 5 below.

TABLE 2
MOST FREQUENTLY CITED CASES IN CONTENT ANALYSIS

Individual Entrepreneur Named	Gender (M/F)	Location	Organization Name
Bill Drayton	M	United States	Ashoka
Fazle Abed	M	Bangladesh	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
Jerry Greenfield & Ben Cohen	M	United States	Ben and Jerry's
Max Clarkson	M	United States	Clarkson Center for Human Services
Mimi Silbert	F	United States	Delancey Street Foundation
		United States	Edison Schools
Melissa Bradley	F	United States	Entrepreneurial Development Institute
Muhammad Yunus	M	Bangladesh	Grameen Bank
Ken Kragen	M	United States	Hands Across America
Liz Pattison & Ian Matthews	F	Australia	Headquarters Youth Centre
	M		
Myles Horton	M	United States	Highlander Research and Education Center
Fabio Rosa	M	Brazil	Institute For Development Natural Energy & Sustainability
		United States	Institute for Social and Economic Development
Bill Strickland	M	United Kingdom	Manchester Craftsmen's Guild
		Spain	Mondragon Cooperative Cooperation
Victoria Hale	F	United States	OneWorld Health
		United States	OUT Fund for Lesbian and Gay Liberation
Phillip Joanous	M	United States	Partnership for a Drug-Free America
		United States	Pioneer Human Services
Group of Agricultural Researchers		Mexico	Plan Puebla
David Green	M	India	Project Impact
		United States	Rubicon Landscape Services
Bernard Ledea Ouedraogo & Bernard Lecomte	M	West African	Se Servir de la Seche en Savane et au Sahel
Ibrahim Abouleish	M	Egypt	Sekem
Ela Bhatt	F	India	Self-Employed Women's Association
D. K. Karve	M	India	Women's University
		United Kingdom	World Health Organisation

FIGURE 1
PRIMARY OBJECTIVES IN CITED CASES OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Of the organizations discussed, their objectives were split relatively evenly across the three categories we identified. Those identified as having income generation for social goals as the primary objective accounted for 29.2% (n=107). Those identified as having primarily social goals accounted for 22.4% (n=82) while those with a combination of income generation and social goals accounted for 20.2% (n=74).

In terms of the “impact” of social entrepreneurship examples, we found only 28 articles (23% of those referencing case studies) which provided detail on specific outcomes. However, very few of these included what would normally be considered to be empirical analysis of the results. Almost none defined criteria for success and systematically applied them. Most had very limited measures of performance.

DISCUSSION: AN EMERGING FIELD

Definitions

Our analysis of case studies reflected many different definitions of social entrepreneurship. Some examined: businesses or business people engaged in cross-sectoral partnerships with social objectives (Sagawa & Segal, 2000); efforts by non-profits to secure new sources of funding (Dees 1998; Austin et al., 2006); or projects with objectives related to social services, education, health, environment and social justice/equality seeking (Hibbert, Hogg & Quinn, 2002). However, there were fewer cases which illustrated the development of a process to alleviate social problems and catalyse social transformation that did not have a commercial aspect (Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2004).

Our study raises some interesting questions about how and why individuals and organizations are classified as social entrepreneurs and more importantly, why others in the same sector are not. For example, the Sierra Club is referred to as an example of social entrepreneurship but Greenpeace is not. Robert Redford is cited as an example of a social entrepreneur for his work on the Sundance Film Festival but other film-makers promoting social change are not. In some cases, the social entrepreneur is simply a

successful businessperson who has shifted his/her focus. The ways in which boundaries are drawn is often contestable and there is little evidence of systematic analysis. More empirical and comparative work is needed, perhaps within specific sectors, to demonstrate the nature and extent of the innovation.

The absence of an agreed upon, overarching conceptual framework for defining social entrepreneurship, combined with the lack of empirical research, makes it difficult to define success, undertake comparisons, evaluate outcomes, and suggest best practices. This discrepancy also reinforces questions that have previously been raised about the challenges of evaluating outcomes and defining success (Emerson, 2003; Snibbe 2006). For example, most of the papers published to date have been theoretical and have advanced claims and assertions about social entrepreneurship based on selected anecdotal examples. Generally, researchers present selected case studies to illustrate preferred theories rather than developing theories from these case studies. Very few provide any primary research.

Social Entrepreneurship versus Social Movements

There is also evidence to suggest that “social entrepreneurship,” particularly the stream focused on social innovation, is simply a reframing of a phenomenon previously labelled in other ways. Many of the cases cited in our research as examples of social entrepreneurship, such as the Sierra Club, are defined elsewhere as social movements (Brulle, 1996). The social movement literature, which is extensive, is full of examples of innovations which could also arguably be examined through the lens of social entrepreneurship. Yet this literature is seldom cited in studies of social entrepreneurship. The social movement process, described by McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald (1996) parallels other innovation processes and includes the following steps:

- Define policy goals;
- Frame the issue;
- Recognize and exploit (political) opportunity; and
- Mobilize resources.

In Table 3, we identify a few of the cases we found which are framed as examples of social entrepreneurship but are also discussed in the social movement literature with no cross-referencing. This would be a fertile area for further exploration.

TABLE 3
SELECTED EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Individual	Organization	Framed as Social Entrepreneurship	Framed as Social Movement
Muhammad Yunus	Grameen Bank, Bangladesh	Mair & Marti (2006) Roper & Cheney (2008)	Kar, Pascual, & Chickering (1999)
John Muir	Sierra Club, USA	Glaeser & Shleifer (2001)	Brulle (1996)
Susan B. Anthony	Women's rights, USA	Yohn (2006)	Ryan (1992)
Margaret Sanger	Planned Parenthood Federation of America, USA	Barendsen (2004)	Zald (1979)
John Woolman	Led U.S. Quakers to emancipate slaves	Bornstein (2004)	D’Anjou & Van Male (1988)
Verghese Kurien	AMUL Dairy Project, India	Budinich (2005)	Anbumani (2007)

Research on social movements and social change tends to place more emphasis on large scale structural forces at the macro level (McAdam et al., 1996) with individuals acting as catalysts to more or less effectively apply organizational and advocacy processes. The social marketing/health promotion/communication and action research literatures focus on planned interventions and processes, many of which would also fall into the broad definition of social entrepreneurship. We found few articles in the

social entrepreneurship literature which made any reference at all to social movements (Lewis, 2004; Sarker, 2005). These scholars reference the larger context of government downloading (new public management) and shifts to corporatization in framing social entrepreneurship.

While using the lens of innovation processes and entrepreneurship is a relatively new approach in management disciplines, there is a long history in political science of studying advocacy groups and social movements. In a way, social entrepreneurship (particularly the stream examining social innovation) is simply a reframing of phenomena which have been the subject of research in other disciplines. Moreover, there is overlap with the literature on social marketing which has been used, for example, to examine the evolution of many innovations related to health promotion, from anti-smoking to injury prevention and AIDS awareness (Cushman, James & Waclawik, 1991; Christoffle & Scavo-Gallagher, 1999). More interdisciplinary work is warranted.

Gender

The fact that almost 40% of the social entrepreneurs identified were female has far reaching implications which need to be further explored. The gender imbalance in for-profit entrepreneurs has been widely discussed. As scholars have noted, among successful business owners, there are significant gender differences in the definition of success (Orser & Dyke, 2009), but not necessarily differences in entrepreneurial self efficacy (Mueller & Dato-On, 2008) or ability. Consequently, efforts to restrict the definition of social entrepreneurship to the narrower notion of social enterprise may have the unintended consequence of excluding women, as they are more prominent in cases related to social innovation. This should be examined further.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Social entrepreneurship, broadly defined, poses more challenges to definition and impact assessment than business entrepreneurship. For example, the definition of “success” for business entrepreneurs is less complex than the definition of “success” for social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurship literature is laden with questions about evaluating outcomes and defining success (Emerson, 2003; Snibbe 2006). While there are established definitions of corporate success (e.g. profit, wealth generation, growth), it is more difficult to define success in social entrepreneurship. Some define success as being the generation of “social goods.” However, this does not clarify the definition of social entrepreneurship success, since one person’s definition of a “social good” may be another’s definition of a social evil, for example birth control or gay rights. More work is also needed on the criteria to define the objectives of social entrepreneurs(hip) and the nature and magnitude of impact. While some (Martin & Osberg, 2007) suggest that a social entrepreneur must effect lasting structural change, this is a standard seldom applied to successful business entrepreneurs. At the same time, we need a clearer definition of “newness” and ways to demonstrate it.

Our study reinforces findings made in previous research about gaps in the social entrepreneurship literature, particularly concerning the significant need for more empirical research in the field. Our findings also suggest that, perhaps because of definitional debates, there is comparatively limited attention focused on innovations with purely social objectives even though we argue that these should fall into the definition of social entrepreneurship. In largely ignoring case studies from the social movement literature, the social entrepreneurship literature misses some opportunities to build theory and also to explore interesting models from other disciplines.

To address this, we favour the broader definition of social entrepreneurship, advanced by the “social innovation school” (Dees & Anderson, 2006; Light, 2006; CASE, 2008) but we also see value in not choosing one definitional school over another. We also maintain that there is still a need to define success in social entrepreneurship and in doing so to first define “social good.” While “social value” is not as clearly defined as “profit,” there is some global consensus on “the common good” as reflected in such agreements as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the United Nations Millennium Goals.

The absence of consistent frameworks and rigorous empirical research makes it difficult to promote critical perspectives and debates on the specific phenomena categorized as entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, social movement, or social enterprise. There continues to be opportunities to do more empirical research to evaluate successes and failures and ultimately to harness best practices.

Finally, there does not seem to be consensus on the criteria or its application regarding when and why some individuals and organizations are framed as examples of social entrepreneurship while others are not. For example, if Ducks Unlimited (a hunting and conservation organization) is classified as an example of social entrepreneurship (Austin et al., 2006) is the National Rifle Association? If Susan B. Anthony is a social entrepreneur (Yohn, 2006), are other leaders of the suffragette or women's movement? If Bill and Melinda Gates are social entrepreneurs, why is there no mention of George Soros? How do we explain who is 'in' and who is 'out'? What are the boundaries and criteria?

Our research reinforces some of the suggestions made in previous research about gaps in the social entrepreneurship literature, particularly concerning the significant need for more empirical research in the field and more rigor in the application of definitions. To move forward, it will be important to recognize the impact of ideological framing and bias (e.g., pro/anti capitalism) which may limit analysis.

ENDNOTES

¹ As of September 2008. Because Google Scholar's web crawler continually updates citations, the same search produces significantly more results when conducted in November 2008.

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