Future Research Topics in Social Entrepreneurship:

A Content-Analytic Approach

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ABSTRACT

To identify what scholars consider to be important and interesting for future research in social entrepreneurship, this paper analyzed 248 social entrepreneurship papers and generated 327 topics for future research. From these 327 topics, a modified Delphi process generated twenty seven underlying themes. Subject matter experts were surveyed as to how interesting each research topic is, and the extent to which the topics lend themselves to theoretical or empirical development - from which we also calculated aggregate scores for each theme. In this paper, we present all research topics that scored at or above 2.5 on a 5-point scale for both questions. We discuss the implications of both the method and the results of the study.

Keywords: Social Entrepreneurship, Social Enterprise, Future Research
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Scholars naturally reflect on important next steps in the collective research agenda. This is particularly salient and important in emerging research areas, striving to have greater impact on academicians and practitioners. With great potential for such impact, the field of social entrepreneurship could benefit from a roadmap of critical but unresolved questions. Scholars have examined the work to-date to take stock of previous research on social entrepreneurship (e.g. Short, Moss, & Lumpkin, 2009; Moss, Lumpkin, & Short, in press). Yet little attention has been paid toward a comprehensive examination of future directions. Instead, scholars new to the topic of social entrepreneurship have only the individual opinions of authors working in this domain to help guide their future research.

This paper adopts a novel approach to identifying future research directions to generate an aggregate picture of research topics in social entrepreneurship. This approach harnesses the issue-identifying capacities of all authors who have published in the field of social entrepreneurship. We analyze the text of published social entrepreneurship research papers about what the authors consider to be important future directions. Specifically, we conduct a content analysis of all articles published on social entrepreneurship to present, summarize, and analyze future research possibilities from this comprehensive body of published research.

This approach to collecting and categorizing scholars’ opinions about future research questions in social entrepreneurship comes at a timely point in the evolution of this field. Social entrepreneurship research has been characterized as lacking unity with disagreements on the domain, boundaries, forms, and meanings of the term and field (Dacin, Dacin & Matear, 2010;
The identification, explication, and organization of future research directions may facilitate progress towards field-wide communication and coagulation.

This paper proceeds as follows. We begin with a literature review of extant in-depth papers on future research in social entrepreneurship. We then detail the methods utilized in this study; with particular attention to the novel aspects of the methods. The results of the methods section are the focus of this study and provide readers with a list of future research opportunities, the dominant themes among these opportunities, and indicators of the quality of both the individual opportunities and the themes. We conclude the paper with a discussion of the findings and the implications of the method and the results.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

While many published research papers discuss future social entrepreneurship research (e.g. Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010; Harris, Sapienza & Bowie, 2009; Mair & Martí, 2006), three papers are notable for the depth of this discussion and the scope of their topics. We briefly discuss these three papers here – Haugh (2006), Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern (2006), and Short, Moss & Lumpkin (2009) – and the research themes identified in each of these papers are summarized in Table 1.

Haugh’s (2005) paper focuses wholly on the future research agenda in social entrepreneurship. Building on both social enterprise and nonprofit research, this paper begins by identifying eight themes that she believed would strengthen and deepen our collective knowledge of social entrepreneurship. These themes are: defining the scope of social entrepreneurship, the
environmental context, opportunity recognition and innovation, modes of organization, resource acquisition, opportunity exploitation, performance measurement, and training education and learning about social entrepreneurship. From this foundation, Haugh derives several individual research topics that merit study within each theme. Haugh’s attention centers on themes and topics that would contribute most to practice, not academic research.

Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern (2006) begin by comparing and contrasting commercial versus social entrepreneurship. This paper identifies similarities between the two, along with distinctions that will influence future research. The authors create a new framework to help scholars approach social entrepreneurship research more systematically, and they propose six areas for future social entrepreneurship research: markets, mission, capital, people, performance, and context. Within these areas, the authors suggested 28 ideas for future research.

Short, Moss and Lumpkin (2009) conduct what is arguably the most comprehensive literature review on social entrepreneurship to date. They aimed to summarize and analyze the extant body of published social entrepreneurship work and deduce future research opportunities from this analysis. As a result, the authors offer social entrepreneurship variants on the ten key themes in strategic entrepreneurship identified by Schendel and Hitt (2007). The themes put forth by Short, Moss and Lumpkin consist of: social value creation, opportunity creation and discovery, risk taking in social ventures, innovation management in social ventures, effects of change processes on social ventures, role of technology in creating social value, diffusion of social innovations, processes underlying social venture formation, relationship between institutions and social entrepreneurship, and simultaneous production of social and economic value. The authors also identify several disciplines and theories that may influence future research.
While several commonalities appear across these three papers, their predictions or suggestions for future research also differ. As to commonalities, the impact of external influences on social entrepreneurship is mentioned in all three papers in some form (i.e., the environment, context, or relationships between institutions and social entrepreneurship). At least two of the papers mention social venture performance, the identification and exploitation of social opportunities, and the organization of social ventures. Beyond this, relatively inconsistent guidance is offered as to the most important or needed social entrepreneurship research topics. In part this derives from different experiences, expectations, and interests of the authors. To move toward greater convergence in scholars’ future interests, our paper attempts to provide a field-wide, comprehensive collection and analysis of the publicly expressed research topics across extant social entrepreneurship papers. We identify several new themes within social entrepreneurship research not identified in prior review papers, conduct supplemental analyses of these themes by leading experts in the field, and provide a break-down of component research topics within each theme.

The next section presents the research methodology we used to achieve these ends.

**METHODS**

Our methodology included five steps, which were 1) collecting research papers, 2) collecting proposed future research topics, 3) applying exclusion criteria, 4) cleaning the data, and 5) analyzing the data.

*Collecting Papers*
Our first step focused on collecting a comprehensive set of social entrepreneurship research papers. Following a precedent set by Short and colleagues (Short et al., 2009), we searched four databases using four key phrases for peer-reviewed scholarly articles without restrictions on publication dates. The databases were EBSCO, Web of Knowledge, ABI/INFORM, and Science Direct. The search phrases were: “social entrepreneurship”, “social entrepreneur”, “social venture”, and “social enterprise.” Our search yielded 248 papers between 1991 and 2010 from a variety of disciplines, including entrepreneurship, management, marketing economics, education, finance, law, political science, sociology, and others.

Collecting Proposed Future Research Topics

Once the papers were gathered, the next step involved applying content analysis to identify what the authors’ proposed as future research topics. To accomplish this, we focused the content analysis on the final sections of papers. We identified a few exceptions in which future research topics were not restricted to the final sections of papers. These were either review papers that take stock of a field (e.g. Certo & Miller, 2008), papers that specifically focus on a future research agenda (e.g. Haugh, 2005), or some combination of the two (e.g. Short, Moss & Lumpkin, 2009). Allowing for such exceptions, we conducted a focused analysis in the following way. First, we read the title and abstract of each paper to determine if the paper fell into the exception category (i.e. future research topics were proposed throughout the paper). If a paper was one of the three exceptions identified above, we performed the content analysis on the text of the entire paper. If it was not, we performed the content analysis on the final sections of the paper. Sections with the following headings (and their variations) were of particular priority: “Discussion”, “Conclusion”, “Limitations”, “Implications”, and “Future Research.”
From these final sections, we entered the text of every instance in which the author(s) provided a topic for future research into our database. While these statements tended to include terms like “future research”, “further inquiry”, etc., they came in many forms. Nevertheless, they were easily identifiable, and we turned our attention to organizing the research topics that this step produced.

**Exclusion Criteria**

The need for exclusion criteria can perhaps best be presented using an analogy from meta-analysis. Quantitative meta-analytic studies employ a variety of criteria to ensure only appropriate secondary data are used in the analyses (Cooper, 1998). For example, meta-analysis studies exclude theoretical papers and often employ quality standards such as excluding papers that fail to use control groups. These exclusion criteria aim to filter out useless or less valid data. In a similar vein, we created and applied four exclusion criteria to the research topics we encountered. The exclusion criteria we employed are as follows.

The first criterion excluded topics that, although they are drawn from a social entrepreneurship paper, they advocate for research in a broader or different field. For example, in a paper investigating leadership vision in nonprofits (Ruvio, Rosenblatt & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2010), the authors state that “additional research is needed to identify the relationships between various facets of vision and different types of ventures or/and leaders” (p.155). While this is arguably a good topic for future research, it does not pertain specifically to social entrepreneurship. All similar instances of research topics not focused on social entrepreneurship were eliminated.
The second criterion excluded research topics that simply proposed replication of the paper’s framework, model, propositions, hypotheses, or theory, or proposed testing them in a slightly different way. Authors of empirical studies often mention methodological improvements for future scholars to pursue, including collecting a larger or more diverse sample or employing different types of data collection techniques (such as data from multiple sources or longitudinal data). For example, Luke and Verreynne (2006) note, “This study has briefly examined only one government organization in limited depth. Further analysis of similar organizations in greater detail is necessary…” (p.442). While such topics certainly represent research opportunities, they do not point future scholars to new research topics. Thus, such statements were culled from our database.

Our third criterion excluded research ideas that were broad to the point of offering little guidance to scholars. For example, Zahra and colleagues (2009) comment, “The antecedents of social entrepreneurship also require careful analysis which might include societal, organizational and individual variables” (p.530). Notably, the authors go on to identify more specific research topics, yet the above-quoted topic is too broad-brush to offer a specific topic for study.

Lastly, we excluded research topics that could not be parsimoniously stated within a sentence or two. Most proposed future research topics were understandable without elaboration or explanation. Some topics, however, required considerable background information, such as a working knowledge of the paper’s model or specialized concepts and theories. For example, Jones, Latham and Betta (2008) state: “Further research is required to analyze how the divisioning dynamics unfold for social entrepreneurs who, unlike Pat, are more prepared to openly embrace a managerialist discourse. How can the processes involved in these divisionings be further theorized?” (p.343). There are at least two issues with this statement. First, one must
understand what Pat represents in the paper’s case study to reflect the authors’ suggestion accurately. Second, terms like “divisioning dynamics” are not commonplace and would require explanation for most scholars working in the social entrepreneurship field. Therefore, while this statement may point to a promising research topic, it and other like statements were excluded from the database because of our focus on the parsimony necessary to analyze a large number of research topics in one paper.

Cleaning the Data

After completing the first three steps, we cleaned the data. Many of the research topics in the database did not make sense out of context, were sentence fragments, were not topics for study, or would benefit from rewording. For example, Mair and Marti (2006) argue: “Yet it is necessary to make major efforts in this direction and to develop useful and meaningful measures that capture the impact of social entrepreneurship and reflect the objectives pursued” (p.42). In aiming for parsimonious topics, this sentence was rewritten in the following way: “Develop useful and meaningful measures that capture the impact of social entrepreneurship and reflect the objectives pursued.” The importance of retaining the authors’ underlying ideas guided our editing.

While editing was done to make each research topic parsimonious, we note that, at this stage in the analysis, research topics were not combined or collapsed across papers. Efforts to collapse topics and eliminate redundancies will be described in the data analysis step.

After applying the four exclusion criteria and cleaning the data, only 59 papers provided at least one usable future research topic. From these 59 papers we collected 327 research topics.
Analyzing the Data

The output of the previous three steps was a parsimonious list of 327 future research topics proposed by researchers published in the social entrepreneurship arena. While this list itself has potential value, further analysis will generate a deeper look into underlying interest patterns among social entrepreneurship scholars. We conducted three types of analyses to uncover these patterns. These analyses focused on capturing the scholarly interest in each topic, capturing the developmental potential of each topic, clustering the topics by themes, and generating measures of the scholarly interest in each theme.

The first analysis sought to measure the quality of research topics by considering scholarly interest, and scholarly perceptions of their empirical or theoretical developmental potential. Towards this end, two surveys were created with each topic representing an item on the surveys. The sampling frame for these surveys was board members and participants (i.e. authors of a paper accepted paper) of the 7th Annual Satter Conference on Social Entrepreneurship held at New York University (NYU) in 2010. The Satter Conference is “a three-day conference dedicated to the ongoing development of theory and research on social entrepreneurship and its impact on global communities. The aim of the conference is to bring together scholars in social entrepreneurship to discuss emerging concepts and themes in social entrepreneurship research” (Kickul, 2010, p.1). As such, the participants and board members of the conference are scholars engaged in social entrepreneurship research, and arguably subject matter experts on this paper’s research topic. From this sampling frame, we formed a convenience sample of four board members and two participants at the conference.

Three of the respondents were asked the following question for each topic: “In your opinion, how interesting is the research [topic]?” The other three respondents were asked “In
your opinion, how well does the [topic] lend itself to theoretical development and/or empirical analysis?” These questions were chosen because of their broad and encompassing nature and because the interestingness and the theoretical/empirical contribution of a research question are frequently cited as salient criteria for publication (e.g. Colquitt & Ireland, 2009). However a significant limitation in these questions is that both interestingness and development potential are “in the eye of the beholder” and thus biased towards the respondent’s paradigm. Nevertheless, the responses may provide some rough and preliminary quality indicators to differentiate the 327 topics. The responses were averaged and are presented in Table 2. Due to space limitations, we present all research topics that scored at or above 2.5 on a 5-point scale for both questions. However the full list of 327 research topics is available at: ‘http://www.SocEntResearch.org’.

Our second analysis focused on discerning thematic clusters among the 327 items. In order to classify the topics into common categories, we employed a 3-stage modified Delphi procedure (Dalkey, 1969; Moss, Lumpkin & Short, 2010; Reger & Palmer, 1996). During the first stage, two of the authors independently read through all 327 topics and categorized each, based on the primary focus of the topic. The authors were allowed to assign no more than two categories to any given topic. The flexibility of allowing two classifications proved both useful and necessary as several topics represented a link between two common research themes. In the end, 149 of the 327 topics were counted as members of two categories.

During the second stage, the two raters went through every topic together, comparing their classifications. In this session, the authors divided the topics into two types: those in which
there was complete agreement between the authors as to the classifications, and those in which there was not complete agreement. Following this session, the two authors independently reviewed all of the topics upon which there was disagreement for a second time, determining whether their classifications should be modified.

During the third and final stage, the two authors jointly went through every topic that lacked classification agreement in the previous session. At this point, the authors discussed why they classified the topics as they did and engaged in discussions as to the most appropriate way to classify each topic. In some cases, this meant referring to the original paper. In others it meant combining, dividing or renaming the categories to better reflect underlying concepts. Otherwise, the authors came to conclusions based on logical arguments. There were no topics for which the authors did not reach a classification consensus.

This method yielded 27 categories which may be deemed as dominant future research topic themes. The names of these categories are as follows: Business Models & Organizational Forms, Innovations, Contexts - General, Social & Economic Impact, Opportunities, Collaborating, Missions & Goals, Financing/Funding, Individual Characteristics, Measurements & Definitions, Stakeholders, Strategies, Resources, Social Support & Networks, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) & Ethics, Institutions, Effectiveness/Performance, Conflict & Competing Goals, Policies & Practices, Motivation, Firm Characteristics, Change & Adaptation, Sustainability, Governance, Government & Public Policy, Local & National Communities, and Other. This Other category was composed of topics that did not logically fit into other themes, as well as themes that were composed of 5 or fewer topics – the latter being a necessity for a parsimonious presentation. Themes that were moved to the Other category included Leadership, Education, Growth, Marketing, Complexity, Identity, and Competition. A
brief description of each of the 27 themes, along with examples of member topics is presented in Figure 1.

Finally, we compiled some informative statistics on each theme, which included the number of topics in the theme, the average interesting score (AIS: averaged across both raters and all topics), the ranking of the AIS scores (1= highest score, 27=lowest score), the average development score (ADS: averaged across both raters and all topics), and the ranking of the ADS scores (1= highest score, 27=lowest score). Figure 1 presents these statistics.

Discussion

The current paper has analyzed published research papers in social entrepreneurship to develop a 30,000-foot view of the field and, in particular, of future research directions. In conducting this research, this study has generated three outputs: the raw data of future topics proposed in published research papers, the underlying themes that underscore this list of topics, and descriptive statistics on these themes. Let us discuss the relevance of each of these outputs.

The raw data that we generated for this study may be quite useful to future social entrepreneurship researchers. Young scholars or scholars new to this topic might use it as a springboard for jumping into this research stream. Outside scholars can examine these questions from the perspective in which they are rooted to find topics to which they can contribute. This long list of largely unexplored topics can perhaps serve to excite researchers from related but more mature, well-studied fields about the possibilities of contributing to a nascent field.
One notable finding from the data is that many social entrepreneurship papers pointed to no future research topics for study. While this is not necessarily unique to social entrepreneurship scholarship, this is arguably surprising given how young the field is and how many research questions remain unanswered. Perhaps because of the field’s youth, many social entrepreneurship scholars may have not yet developed their own unique roadmap of fundamental or burning questions that warrant study. With so many possible directions and so little agreement as to which are most promising, social entrepreneurship researchers may be hesitant to speculate about the future. In addition, many social entrepreneurship scholars begin working in this arena after establishing themselves in outside fields, and this is compounded by no or only limited availability of publications, conferences, grants, and doctoral programs specific to social entrepreneurship. With their attention split among several research foci, such academic boundary spanners may help import innovative theoretical and methodological perspectives, at the cost of being less engaged with the advancement of the collective social entrepreneurship research agenda.

In addition to the raw data, this research yielded several findings from the data analysis that are worthy of discussion. One involves the themes that emerged in the data, which can be examined with an eye to whether one finds surprising any of the themes that do appear and any themes that do not appear. First, consider the themes that do appear in our data and that might not be expected. One theme that emerges is corporate social responsibility and ethics within social enterprise firms. While corporate social responsibility and ethics are popular topics in the larger management literature, these issues do not disappear but seem to retain their relevance within firms with clear social missions. Second, the theme of social and economic impact is also noteworthy. Traditional entrepreneurship and strategic management research focuses more on
how the environment - e.g. society or the larger economic context- influences the firm. Within social entrepreneurship research, however, scholars appear to be emphasizing the greater impact that social entrepreneurs have on their social and economic environments.

One theme that did not emerge in our data is the global side of social entrepreneurship. Global, international, and cross-cultural topics were raised in individual papers, but there was not sufficient attention to these issues that, using our methodology, we could argue that such a theme emerged. It appears that most researchers focus attention on within culture or within country social entrepreneurship, although possibilities for insights derived from comparative and/or global work obviously exist. Compared to commercial entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship may be more culture-specific, socially-embedded, and community-tied. While this may increase the challenges facing social entrepreneurship scholars, a global research perspective can serve to expand our academic understanding of the interface of societal, cultural, and economic relations, as well as expand the toolbox of social business models that work in practice.

While the statistics calculated on the data may be only rough indicators, we suggest the following interpretations. The number of topic mentions per theme, which generally reflects how many times a theme was touched upon in the literature, may indicate the overall importance of a given theme. The number of papers that raised each theme may reflect the scope of the issues or the level of agreement as to a theme’s importance. The Average-Interest-Scores and corresponding rankings provide scholars with a way to compare academic interest in different themes. The Average-Development-Scores may provide a way to gauge the current maturity of a particular topic or the potential for scholars to contribute to the advancement of the topic.

The most mentioned theme (39 mentions) by a sizeable margin involves
effectiveness/performance. In this respect, the extant social entrepreneurship literature aligns with commercial entrepreneurship and strategy literatures such that scholars aim to increase understanding of why some firms perform better than others. The theme rated as the most interesting by the survey respondents, concerns the general contexts surrounding social entrepreneurs. Dimensions within the general context include cultures, market forces, other organizations, economies, and more. Scholars appear to be highly interested in understanding the interrelationships between such factors and social entrepreneurs. The theme rated as the least interesting, however, concentrates on motivation. This is arguably surprising given the unique challenges inherent in motivating and rewarding employees within social ventures. The theme rated as having the most potential for theoretical or empirical development was financing/funding. This theme may thus embody low-hanging fruit for scholars wishing to make a contribution to extant theoretical or empirical frameworks. Conversely, the theme rated last in developmental potential concerns corporate social responsibility and ethics. This may highlight an area of study in which providing theoretical or empirical contributions could prove particularly challenging.

These are just a few of the findings that the authors deemed most striking. We invite readers to explore the results in greater depth; particularly those that are related to their own interests. The next section presents a broader discussion of the interpretation and implications of this research.

**Conclusion**

The current paper analyzed 248 social entrepreneurship research papers published between 1991 and 2010 with an eye to authors’ discussion of future topics worth exploring in
This analysis generated 327 topics for future research, which were organized across twenty seven underlying themes. These themes were: Organizational Forms, Innovations, Contexts, Effects on Environment, Opportunities, Competing and Collaborating, Missions, Capital, Social Entrepreneur Individuals, Measurements and Definitions, Stakeholders, Strategies, Resources, Social Networks, Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethics, Institutions, Performance, Competing Goals, Leadership, and Other. The themes with the highest combined ratings (combining interesting and developmental potential), as ranked by our subject matter experts, concerned financing/funding, innovations, and general contexts.

Before digging deeper into the conclusions that one can draw from this study, we must caution the reader as to its limitations. Several limitations arise from the subjectivity of our methods. Aspects of the exclusion criteria used to reduce the number of topics – in particular, criteria three (excluding topics that are too broad) and four (excluding topics that are not parsimonious) – required the author to apply these criteria based on his judgment as to breadth and parsimony. The techniques used to measure academic interest, to measure the developmental potential of topics, and to combine topics into themes may be influenced by the idiosyncratic interests and paradigmatic perspectives of the individuals completing these tasks. Given research constraints, we chose individuals for these tasks based on availability and expertise instead of representativeness of the field. Finally, we required more than five topical mentions to justify the creation of a theme, whereas a different number might have resulted in more or fewer themes.

These limitations notwithstanding, however, we believe that this study provides guidance for scholars seeking to contribute to social entrepreneurship research. Scholarly interest in social entrepreneurship is growing. We hope that the current study has made a contribution by
presenting a parsimonious look at future research directions that will in some small way encourage others to study social entrepreneurs and social ventures. In addition, we hope that by highlighting the commonality across future research topics, the current paper will reduce the tendency of scholars to “talk past each other.” This criticism has already been leveled at social entrepreneurship researchers (e.g. Dacin, Dacin & Matear, 2010; Short et al., 2009). Given the diverse backgrounds of current (and most likely future) social entrepreneurship scholars, this field can benefit greatly from balancing novel thinking and meaningful conversation.

Since the basis for this paper derives from scholars’ assessments of future research directions, it seems mandatory that we comment on our own beliefs about how the current paper can lead into new research topics in social entrepreneurship. Our singular focus on academic research begs the question of what a parallel analysis of practical or popular publications on social entrepreneurship would yield. Do the interests of practicing social entrepreneurs, stakeholders who support them, and the general public converge with the topics and themes identified by researchers? Do their interests differ from those of researchers? Future research could examine the evolution of thinking between the academy and practice by expanding our analysis of published social entrepreneurship work to include a broader set of publications. In addition, the current analysis is ripe for a study of trends, as one indicator of how thinking in the field changes over time. Finally, the type of analysis reported in this paper can shed insight into how social entrepreneurship research and associated institutions are growing and changing. A comparison of our results to similar analyses of social entrepreneurship topics and themes regularly published in journals, presented at conferences, and taught in doctoral seminars will shed light on the forces driving the legitimacy of the social entrepreneurship field.
References


### Table 1: Future Research Themes Identified in Extant Papers

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<tr>
<td>Defining the Scope of Social Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>Social Value Creation</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Environment</td>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Opportunity Creation &amp; Discovery</td>
</tr>
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<td>Opportunity Recognition &amp; Innovation</td>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>Risk Taking in Social Ventures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modes of Organization</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>Innovation Management in Social Ventures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource Acquisition</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Effects of Change Processes on Social Ventures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity Exploitation</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Role of Technology in Creating Social Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Measurement Training, Education, &amp; Learning About Social Entrepreneurship</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diffusion of Social Innovations Processes Underlying Social Venture Formation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship Between Institutions &amp; Social Entrepreneurship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Simultaneous Production of Social and Economic Value</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Research Topic</td>
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| Alvord, Brown & Letts    | 2004 | How do the attributes of social innovations shape outcomes and success in different contexts?  
Identify the various forms that social entrepreneurial ventures may take. | 2.67 | 4.33  |
|                           |      | What contextual patterns encourage or hinder the emergence of different kinds of innovations?                                                                                                                | 3.33 | 4.00  |
| Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern | 2006 | To what extent are earned-income strategies successful in social ventures?  
What have been the effects and effectiveness of applying the venture-capital approach to social entrepreneurship?  
Which contextual forces foster social innovation and entrepreneurship?  
What new financial instruments could be designed to overcome some of the current deficiencies in the philanthropic capital markets?  
To what extent do earned-income activities create tension with social mission or organizational values?  
What are the effects of market forces on the formation and behavior of social enterprises?  
In mixed markets where nonprofit and for-profit organizations are both operating, what are the relative competitive advantages, disadvantages, and interactive dynamics?  
What affects the extent and form of competition and collaboration among social enterprises?  
To what extent do social enterprises correct market failure?  
How does the social mission affect resource mobilization?  
How do country or community contextual differences change contextual forces?  
What determines the structure of philanthropic capital markets?  
How does a social entrepreneur determine the optimum mix of financing sources for the social enterprise?  
What are the key drivers of the philanthropic capital markets?  
What is the entrepreneurial process of identifying opportunities for social entrepreneurship?  
How does the social mission affect strategy?  
How do contextual forces shape opportunity creation for social entrepreneurship?  | 3.33 | 4.33  |
|                           |      | Develop rigorous, empirically grounded methods for evaluating structural risks to the nature of the services provided to clients - the population these organizations are built to serve. | 2.67 | 2.67  |
|                           |      | Develop a stronger understanding of social entrepreneurial failure; particularly with respect to costs, benefits, loss & grief.  
What is the appropriate measure or metric of social entrepreneurial success? | 3.00 | 4.33  |
| Cooney                    | 2006 | How are different types of organizational models set up to manage exposure of core social services to market and business "risk," taking into account different societal contexts?  
Develop rigorous, empirically grounded methods for evaluating structural risks to the nature of the services provided to clients - the population these organizations are built to serve. | 3.33 | 3.00  |
<p>| Dacin, Dacin &amp; Matear     | 2010 |  | 2.67 | 3.33  |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Ratings</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Understand the sources of failure when there are multiple missions or contradictory logics at play.</strong></td>
<td>3.67 3.00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Develop a stronger understanding of the process of social change based on progress made in the area of institutional change as well as the role of discourse and structuration in field-level change.</strong></td>
<td>2.67 3.00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent might social entrepreneurs subjugate their social mission to their profit mission in order to achieve sustainability?</strong></td>
<td>3.33 2.67</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Would social entrepreneurs compromise their objectives or social mission in order to suit the agendas and priorities of large funding organizations, governments, and foundations?</strong></td>
<td>2.67 2.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dann, Harris, Mort, Fry &amp; Binney 2007</td>
<td>Understand the effects of local legal and government contexts on social value creation in an allied manner to that undertaken in international business research.</td>
<td>2.67 4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understand the effects of cultural contexts on successes and failures in social entrepreneurship.</strong></td>
<td>3.00 4.00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dart 2004</td>
<td>Cross-sectional and cross-national studies focused on political ideology and social enterprise.</td>
<td>2.67 3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understand how social entrepreneurship reinforces problematic international development logics, such as by positioning local groups in developing countries as the objects of intervention.</strong></td>
<td>2.67 3.33</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dempsey &amp; Sanders 2010</td>
<td>Explore the extent to which narratives of social entrepreneurs reproduces and challenges extreme commitment, self-sacrifice and overwork.</td>
<td>2.67 2.67</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Identify the roles that benevolence and altruism play in resource acquisition.</strong></td>
<td>2.67 3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domenico, Haugh &amp; Tracey 2010</td>
<td>What are the implications of the choice of governance forms in social entrepreneurship ventures; particularly with respect to the organizations ability to remain loyal to its social goals?</td>
<td>3.00 3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorado 2006</td>
<td>Are social enterprises, some of which operate as for-profit ventures, more or less effective than traditional nonprofit social service programs?</td>
<td>2.67 3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germak &amp; Singh 2010</td>
<td>How are the various actors in the field of social entrepreneurship (e.g. donors, government, academics, etc.) making sense of the collective identity of social entrepreneurship?</td>
<td>3.00 3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent do differences in organizational identity result in differences in form and differences in efficacy in social ventures?</strong></td>
<td>2.67 3.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harris, Sapienza &amp; Bowie 2009</td>
<td>Are founders with past traditional entrepreneurship experience more likely to be successful in launching a new social venture?</td>
<td>3.33 4.33</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>How is success measured in hybrid organizations that value both social and economic aims?</strong></td>
<td>2.67 4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Under what conditions might such an explicit focus on 'purpose' provide advantage for traditional entrepreneurs, versus not?</strong></td>
<td>3.67 3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Understand the particular ethical issues endemic to social entrepreneurship.</strong></td>
<td>3.00 2.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haugh 2005</td>
<td>What could traditional entrepreneurs learn from the teleological, purpose-driven venturing of social entrepreneurs?</td>
<td>2.67 2.67</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What is the role of social networks in identifying opportunities, providing resources and business advice to social entrepreneurs?</strong></td>
<td>2.67 4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Investigate causes and consequences of social enterprise failure, and identify strategies to avoid failure.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Haugh 2007</td>
<td>Analyze the structure, role and contribution of social venture networks, and specifically, how business information and advice might be better delivered to nonprofit enterprises engaging in trading activity.</td>
<td>3.00 4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider how the culture of a nonprofit social venture is created, the values that are distinctive to nonprofit ventures, and how those values are influenced by strategies that are more frequently found in for-profit ventures.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Examine how the outcomes of social ventures are created and whether standardized techniques to evaluate and enumerate outputs and outcomes could be created.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore how the social enterprise structure is related to specific types of legitimacy (e.g. pragmatic, moral, cognitive)</td>
<td>Kistruck &amp; Beamish</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine the change in boards of directors as non-profits shift towards for-profit forms.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify the dominant governance models in social enterprises and investigate their effectiveness on a variety of criteria.</td>
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<tr>
<td>An examination of social enterprise boards of directors in terms of how they operate and who they elect.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the link between social entrepreneurship and sustainable development, and how can social entrepreneurship contribute to sustainable development?</td>
<td>Mair &amp; Marti</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What explains the emergence of geographic clusters of social entrepreneurial activity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can we observe geographical clusters with higher levels of social entrepreneurial activity, e.g. India and Bangladesh, or Brazil and Ecuador?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop useful and meaningful measures that capture the impact of social entrepreneurship and reflect the objectives pursued.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If context and embeddedness is so important, to what extent is it possible to transfer practices and scale out initiatives across geographic and community borders?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are some forms of organizing for social entrepreneurship better suited to address specific needs than others?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does social entrepreneurship differ in developed and developing countries?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examine the enabling and/or constraining effects of embeddedness with regard to social entrepreneurship.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What institutional factors explain the emergence of social entrepreneurship and what theoretical lenses may help us understand those factors?</td>
<td>Mason, Kirkbride &amp; Bryde</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variables influencing legitimacy in social enterprises offer an opportunity to study how governance systems facilitate an effective performance reporting process.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do particular governance arrangements have a significant impact upon performance (both of the organization and individuals)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The influence of constitutive rules in shaping the institutional environment, and understanding the relevance of routines and symbolic elements, would add depth to current understanding of social enterprise governance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does the organization adapt its social mission over time?</td>
<td>McDonald</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate the presence or absence of knowledge spillover in networks of social entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>Meyskens, Robb-Post, Stamp, Carsrud &amp; Reynolds</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can social entrepreneurs position themselves to absorb knowledge spillovers and transform them into competitive advantage in similar ways as posited for commercial entrepreneurs?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can partnerships and strategic alliances and other structures be used to make the social firm more competitive and thus more successful?</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.67  3.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the type of social venture formation (e.g., alliances vs. hierarchical governance) affect its ability to perform economically?</td>
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<td>3.00  2.67</td>
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<td>Miller &amp; Wesley II 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>Explore whether the increased accountability from social venture capitalist funding affects performance both in the short term (during funding) and long term (after funding).</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Explore the long-term performance and strategic implications of social venture capital funding.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Examine the structure and timing of social venture capital decisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Munoz &amp; Tinsley 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>Examine the degree to which social enterprises are emerging in response to public-sector demand and the implications this has for the autonomy of social enterprise as something separate from the state.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explore the evolution of the relationship between social enterprise and the public sector.</td>
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<td>Murphy &amp; Coombs 2009</td>
<td></td>
<td>Do social purposes change over time (either in direction or strength)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peredo &amp; Chrisman 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>May community-based enterprises be effectively introduced in communities (e.g., in refugee settings) that do not have a shared history of cooperative effort?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short, Moss &amp; Lumpkin 2009</td>
<td></td>
<td>Which dimensions of an entrepreneurial orientation are key to effective social venturing?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Can social entrepreneurs create disruptive innovations in the commercial sector?</td>
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<td>What strategic and managerial consequences flow from social entrepreneurs' urge to satisfy both economic and social objectives?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Is there a difference in the meaning and function of social entrepreneurship across cultural boundaries?</td>
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<td>Which entrepreneurial and strategic processes are most effective for creating social value across different social entrepreneurship activities?</td>
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<td>In what ways to social innovation processes change the ventures creating the innovations?</td>
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<td>Do social ventures hold more conservative stances toward risk than commercial ventures?</td>
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<td>In what ways do technologies provide competitive advantages in social ventures?</td>
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<td>How can social entrepreneurship activities be measured to enable economic analysis?</td>
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<td>Are the motivations/drivers of social venture creation the same as or different from those of traditional venture creation?</td>
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<td>What factors most impact social innovation diffusion?</td>
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<td>Does the unique experience of a social venture foster the creation of new opportunities?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do social entrepreneurs use opportunity discovery processes in the same ways as commercial entrepreneurs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young &amp; Tilley 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>Are best practices of sustainable entrepreneurship transferable between organizations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is sustainable entrepreneurship measurable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zahra, Rawhouser 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the personal or structural factors that contribute to social ventures' emergence, organizing behavior, and subsequent</td>
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</tbody>
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Bhawe,
Neubaum &
Hayton

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<tr>
<th>successes and failures?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given that behavioral theory argues that entrepreneurs satisfice when confronted with multiple constrains, does the increased complexity of multiple stakeholders influence the decisions of entrepreneurs?</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the globalization of social ventures' missions slow down entrepreneurs' decision-making process?</td>
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</table>

*The full list of 327 topics has been made available at: http://www.SocEntResearch.org
†AIS: “Average Interesting Score” is the average rating given by the subject matter experts when asked the following question: “In your opinion, how interesting is the [topic]?”
‡ADS: “Average Development Score” is the average rating given by the subject matter experts when asked the following question: “In your opinion, how well does the [topic] lend itself to theoretical development and/or empirical analysis?”
Figure 1: Future Research Themes

**Theme 1**

**Description:** Topics regarding the forms and structures of SE ventures  
**Example:** Does the type of social venture formation (e.g., alliances vs. hierarchical governance) affect its ability to perform economically?

**Theme 2**

**Description:** Topics regarding innovating within SE ventures  
**Example:** What factors most impact social innovation diffusion?

**Theme 3**

**Description:** Topics regarding contextual influences upon SE (excluding government & community)  
**Example:** Understand the effects of cultural contexts on successes and failures in social entrepreneurship.

**Theme 4**

**Description:** Topics regarding social value creation (including through economic means)  
**Example:** To what degree does the responsiveness of entrepreneurs to the community lead to general improvements in those communities, including measures of its general levels of health and welfare, crime, and consumer confidence?

**Theme 5**

**Description:** Topics regarding entrepreneurial opportunities in SE  
**Example:** What is the entrepreneurial process of identifying opportunities for social entrepreneurship?

**Theme 6**

**Description:** Topics regarding SE ventures’ collaborations with other firms  
**Example:** Identify the conditions under which an alliance with a social cause can improve attitudes and behaviors toward a corporate brand.

**Theme 7**

**Description:** Topics regarding the goals and purpose of SE ventures  
**Example:** What gives the social mission statement force?
**Theme 8**

**Description:** Topics regarding start-up capital used by SE ventures

**Example:** What are the key drivers of the philanthropic capital markets?

**Name of theme:** Financing/Funding

**Number of topics in theme:** 24

**Avg. Interesting Score:** 2.50

**Interesting Score Rank:** 5

**Avg. Theory/Empirical Development Score:** 3.44

**Theory/Empirical Development Rank:** 1

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**Theme 9**

**Description:** Topics regarding the individual characteristics SEs

**Example:** Are certain personality characteristics uniquely associated with social entrepreneurs?

**Name of theme:** Individual Characteristics

**Number of topics in theme:** 25

**Avg. Interesting Score:** 1.95

**Interesting Score Rank:** 26

**Avg. Theory/Empirical Development Score:** 2.97

**Theory/Empirical Development Rank:** 15

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**Theme 10**

**Definitions:** Topics regarding measurement & definition issues in SE research

**Example:** How can one measure social-value creation?

**Name of theme:** Measurements & Definitions

**Number of topics in theme:** 27

**Avg. Interesting Score:** 2.22

**Interesting Score Rank:** 21

**Avg. Theory/Empirical Development Score:** 2.93

**Theory/Empirical Development Rank:** 17

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**Theme 11**

**Description:** Topics regarding entities that have a stake in SE ventures

**Example:** How can entrepreneurs best communicate the social value proposition to different stakeholders?

**Name of theme:** Stakeholders

**Number of topics in theme:** 7

**Avg. Interesting Score:** 2.14

**Interesting Score Rank:** 23

**Avg. Theory/Empirical Development Score:** 2.62

**Theory/Empirical Development Rank:** 25

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**Theme 12**

**Description:** Topics regarding the strategic actions of SE ventures

**Example:** Why and when do nonprofits adopt a strategy of differentiation as opposed to other responses to competition?

**Name of theme:** Strategies

**Number of topics in theme:** 25

**Avg. Interesting Score:** 2.29

**Interesting Score Rank:** 13

**Avg. Theory/Empirical Development Score:** 3.32

**Theory/Empirical Development Rank:** 4

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**Theme 13**

**Description:** Topics regarding resources and their uses by SE ventures

**Example:** What are the ways in which social enterprises mobilize assets other models see as liabilities?

**Name of theme:** Resources

**Number of topics in theme:** 27

**Avg. Interesting Score:** 2.14

**Interesting Score Rank:** 24

**Avg. Theory/Empirical Development Score:** 3.06

**Theory/Empirical Development Rank:** 13

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**Theme 14**

**Description:** Topics regarding the social networks of SEs

**Example:** Investigate the presence or absence of knowledge spillover in networks of social entrepreneurs.

**Name of theme:** Social Support & Networks

**Number of topics in theme:** 13

**Avg. Interesting Score:** 2.28

**Interesting Score Rank:** 15

**Avg. Theory/Empirical Development Score:** 3.38

**Theory/Empirical Development Rank:** 2
**Theme 15**
**Description:** Topics regarding either corporate social responsibility or ethics within SE ventures
**Example:** Under what conditions are social entrepreneurs willing to cut ethical corners?

**Theme 16**
**Description:** Topics regarding institutional forces that influence SEs
**Example:** Explore the mimetic institutional forces in relation to structural outcomes in social enterprises.

**Theme 17**
**Description:** Topics regarding the performance or growth of SE ventures
**Example:** Are social enterprises, some of which operate as for-profit ventures, more or less effective than traditional nonprofit social service programs?

**Theme 18**
**Description:** Topics regarding how conflicting issues and goals influence SE ventures
**Example:** What strategic and managerial consequences flow from social entrepreneurs' urge to satisfy both economic and social objectives?

**Theme 19**
**Description:** Topics regarding the policies and practices within SE firms
**Example:** Are best practices of sustainable entrepreneurship transferable between organizations?

**Theme 20**
**Description:** Topics regarding motivations of SEs as well as others in the SE venture
**Example:** Does an organization's mission motivate benefactors to give to the institution; and if so, how?

**Theme 21**
**Description:** Topics regarding firm-level characteristics in social entrepreneurship
**Example:** Consider how the culture of a nonprofit social venture is created, the values that are distinctive to nonprofit ventures, and how those values are influenced by strategies that are more frequently found in for-profit ventures.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Theme 22</th>
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| **Description:** Topics regarding changes in and around SE ventures  
**Example:** Examine the change in boards of directors as non-profits shift towards for-profit forms. |

<table>
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<th>Theme 23</th>
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| **Description:** Topics regarding the sustainability of SE ventures  
**Example:** To what extent might social entrepreneurs subjugate their social mission to their profit mission in order to achieve sustainability? |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theme 24</th>
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</table>
| **Description:** Topics regarding the internal governance of SE ventures  
**Example:** Examine the governance and control issues used to deal with simultaneous management of conflicting ideologies and practices. |

<table>
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<th>Theme 25</th>
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| **Description:** Topics regarding how governments impact SEs  
**Example:** Which practices enable social entrepreneurship to be robust in the face of political corruption? |

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<th>Theme 26</th>
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| **Description:** Topics regarding how communities impact SEs  
**Example:** How does social entrepreneurship differ in developed and developing countries? |

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<tr>
<th>Theme 27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Description:** Topics that did not logically fit into other themes, or have enough (6) to form a new theme.  
**Example:** No representative examples |