



AUTHOR(S):

TITLE:

YEAR:

Publisher citation:

OpenAIR citation:

Publisher copyright statement:

This is the _____ version of an article originally published by _____
in _____
(ISSN _____; eISSN _____).

OpenAIR takedown statement:

Section 6 of the "Repository policy for OpenAIR @ RGU" (available from <http://www.rgu.ac.uk/staff-and-current-students/library/library-policies/repository-policies>) provides guidance on the criteria under which RGU will consider withdrawing material from OpenAIR. If you believe that this item is subject to any of these criteria, or for any other reason should not be held on OpenAIR, then please contact openair-help@rgu.ac.uk with the details of the item and the nature of your complaint.

This publication is distributed under a CC _____ license.

Karatas - Ozkan, M., Anderson, A.R., Fayolle, A., Howells, J. and Condor, R., 2014. Understanding entrepreneurship: Challenging dominant perspectives and theorizing entrepreneurship through new postpositivist epistemologies. Journal of Small Business Management, 52(4), pp.589-593.

**Understanding entrepreneurship: challenging dominant perspectives and theorising entrepreneurship through new post-positivist epistemologies:
Introduction to the special issue**

The aim and scope of the special issue

Over the past decade scholarship in entrepreneurship has generated a large body of research reflecting an important and dynamic subject domain (Wiklund, Davidsson, Audretsch and Karlsson, 2011; Rauch, van Doorn and Hulsink, 2014). Entrepreneurship has become an increasingly popular field of study with a growing community of scholars from a wide spectrum of disciplines and methodological perspectives (Acs and Audretsch, 2003; McDonald et al, 2014; Zahra, 2007). In essence, the field of entrepreneurship research is multi-paradigmatic conveying different perspectives on what entrepreneurship is (Burg and Romme, 2014); how entrepreneurial process can be explained and how different forms of entrepreneurship can be understood. Despite the growing attention to, and richness in, methodological approaches, entrepreneurship still lacks methodological diversity (Neergard and Ulhoi, 2007; Wiklund et al, 2011). Positivist approaches and associated quantitative studies have dominated the field until early 2000s (Ucbasaran, Westhead and Wright, 2001; Gartner and Birley, 2002). Consequently post-positivist approaches and associated qualitative research designs are 'demonstrably underrepresented in entrepreneurship research' (Hindle, 2004, p. 577). This is in spite of the ability of non-positivistic approaches to address interesting, even fundamental entrepreneurship questions.

Entrepreneurship is characterised by complex, dynamic and emergent processes and the interplay between actors, processes and contexts. Post-positivistic approaches offer the opportunity to examine subtleties of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship by placing emphasis on a range of its dimensions and the interplays between dimensions (Anderson, Dodd and Jack, (2012). Such post-positivistic research aims to develop concepts and theory which enhance our grasp of social phenomena in natural settings, with due emphasis on the experiences, views and understandings of all participants (Patton, 2002), and hence significantly contribute to the advancement of scholarly activity in the field of entrepreneurship. Different epistemologies widen the options for entrepreneurship researchers, allowing them to accommodate greater complexity in their research findings and to reflect upon the

lived experiences of entrepreneurs (Neergard and Ulhøi, 2007). As noted by Alvarez and Barney (2013), for entrepreneurship to stand and develop further as a subject domain, scholars need to engage in research that delineate things in other disciplines in ways that scholars in those disciplines have not done previously.

Entrepreneurship is broad and multi-faceted so much so that we, entrepreneurship scholars, can each only claim expert knowledge in a narrow segment (Chell and Karatas-Ozkan, 2014). Paradigm choices and hence methodological orientations are fundamentally important in capturing the complexities of the entrepreneurial process, contexts and actors through robust research. Nonetheless, there is a growing recognition that certain research questions can only be addressed by qualitative work rooted in post-positivist research paradigms. Approaching entrepreneurship as a complex social phenomenon in a particular spatial and temporal context entails a move away from the predominant assumption that entrepreneurship research will benefit from one overarching theory, concept or methodology (Welter, 2011). More recently, there is a call for the field of entrepreneurship to develop integrated theoretical frameworks by developing robust research evidence across methods and different forms of data (Rauch et al., 2014). We suggest that a deeper engagement with the philosophical and theoretical foundations of entrepreneurship research is fundamentally important in generating such robust scientific evidence that can offer new insights and ways of theorising in the field. Furthermore, we argue that despite a growing body of post-positivistic research in response to such calls, the ‘legitimacy’ of these approaches is still subject to debate on the grounds of rigour and relevance. The aim of this special issue is to challenge these prevailing but oft-hidden assumptions governing the conduct and publication of scholarly enquiry in the field of entrepreneurship and offer alternative perspectives for future research and illustrate some applications.

The Special Issue Contents

The papers in this special issue advance epistemological debates about entrepreneurship in many ways. The first paper authored by Hlady-Rispal and Jouison offer a comprehensive review of publication trends in entrepreneurship research by drawing on an analysis of 111 articles published between 2007 and 2012 in the leading entrepreneurship journals. The authors make important observations one of which includes lack of clarity or explicitness of the paradigm chosen and the link between paradigms and research designs in those qualitative papers. They suggest that scholars should be more mindful of such a need to explicate their paradigmatic standing and demonstrate the link to research design and associated methods of data collection and analysis.

The second paper authored by Tatli, Forson, Ozbilgin and Sulatskaya demonstrates importance of overcoming traditional dichotomies in entrepreneurship research (such as actor versus process; agency versus structure, qualitative versus quantitative) and offers a Bourdieusian relational perspective that allows for exploring entrepreneurship as interconnected sets of relationships. Departing from the key assumption of the relational perspective (Kyriakidou and Özbilgin 2006) that the agency–structure dualism could be overcome through an understanding of social reality as comprising varying and distinctive layers that are mutually interdependent and interlocking, the authors contribute to the field by offering an amplified framework of Bourdieusian relationality for entrepreneurship research. They view Bourdieusian concepts of field, *illusio*, symbolic violence, *habitus*, strategies and capitals as key constituents of a relational conceptual framework that allows for multi-level research in entrepreneurship. They also argue that through Bourdieu’s notions of participant objectivation and epistemological breaks placing emphasis on the relationality between the researcher and the research inquiry, we can deal with the second dichotomy in the academic study of entrepreneurship: the dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The third paper furthers the debate on the Bourdieusian perspective to entrepreneurship research through a Bourdieusian analysis of entrepreneurship scholarship by demonstrating how entrepreneurship scholars develop their own practice (*habitus*). Building on the notion of reflexivity, the authors, Drakopoulou-Dodd, McElwee, McDonald and Smith, examine key processes, structures and relationships within qualitative entrepreneurship authorship. They make practical contributions by offering guidance for good practices authoring in the field; insights into emotional aspects of authorship and raising awareness for potentially dysfunctional practices. These two papers on the Bourdieusian perspectives to entrepreneurship research complement each other by combining academic and practical contributions of such approach.

The fourth paper offers an empirical application of a qualitative investigation from a post-positivistic perspective in the specific domain of social entrepreneurship. Costanzo, Perrini and Vurro present a qualitative investigation of social firms by focusing on the inherent tensions between economic sustainability and social impact characterising social entrepreneurship. Their paper explores managerial approaches to dual-mission management I

UK-based social enterprises. The adoption of a post-positivistic approach allows for illuminating dynamics underlying managerial dispositions towards certain approaches to managing conflicts and tensions. The hybrid nature of social enterprises and multiplicity of stakeholder needs and expectations feed into all governance, structural, organisational and managerial dimensions of social entrepreneurship. This paper is a fine example of how such interconnected elements of a particular form of entrepreneurship can be understood and explained empirically.

In a theoretical paper, Nicolopoulou advances the debate on social entrepreneurship, which is characterised by ‘accumulated fragmentalism’ and ‘in a pre-paradigmatic state’ (Nicholls, 2010). Her paper addresses paradigmatic and theoretical issues of social entrepreneurship through an in-depth exploration of its interactions with the original ‘root’ field of entrepreneurship, as well as theoretical underpinnings of CSR and Sustainability in their currently evolving state. Utilising the Bourdieusian concept of capital and transformations between forms of capital, her paper presents an enriched framework by the inclusion of newer forms of capital that lie at the heart of social entrepreneurship. Through this framework, she argues that the field of social entrepreneurship appears to develop through cross-currents between the ‘tendency to structure’ and ‘the tendency to expand’. Therefore, paradigmatic structuring of the field of social entrepreneurship relies mostly on the transformation of the multiple capitals inherent in the field. Aligning with the previous paper, this paper exemplifies how social entrepreneurship can be understood from inter-disciplinary and post-positivistic angles.

The sixth and the final paper of the special issue turns our attention to gender and entrepreneurship. Hamilton presents a paper on entrepreneurial identity and gender from a post-structuralist feminist theory of gender and discourses. She offers a double epistemological shift in understanding gender dimension of entrepreneurial identity: First, a re-framing of the epistemological status of narrative supports philosophical and theoretical approaches to the constitution of narrative identity. Second, an epistemological shift to understand gender in entrepreneurship through the constitution of gendered identities in discourse is proposed. These shifts invoke the ontological dimension of narrative and contemporary theories of gender to understand entrepreneurial identity as co-constituted and located in repertoires of historically- and culturally-situated narrative.

Contributions and new directions

The papers in this special issue advance the scholarly debate on theorising entrepreneurship through new post-positivist epistemologies in several ways. First, they demonstrate the importance of clarifying, specifying and illuminating the link between the research problem and the paradigmatic approach with its associated epistemological underpinnings. Entrepreneurship scholars are encouraged to be more explicit about methodological and theoretical choices that they make, since these are integral to the research process. Second, this special issue reinforces the call for rigour with relevance in entrepreneurship research. Post-positivistic research should be undertaken with scientific rigour and quality criteria that apply to such research should be considered. Finally, the special issue offers operationalization of alternative perspectives to entrepreneurship research.

We thank all colleagues-authors, reviewers, and the editorial team at JSBM, involved in this collective endeavour. We hope that this special issue enriches the debates in this field and paves the way for further work.

References

Acs, Z. J. and Audretsch, D. B. (2003) *Handbook of Entrepreneurship Research*, Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Anderson, A.R., Dodd, S.D. and Jack, S. (2012) [Entrepreneurship as connecting: some implications for theorising and practice](#), *Management Decision*, 50, 5, 958-971

Alvarez, S. A. and Barney, J. B. (2013) Epistemology, opportunities and entrepreneurship: comments on Venkataraman et al. (2012) and Shane (2012), *Academy of Management Review*, 38, 1, 154-166.

Chell, E. and Karatas-Ozkan, M. (2014) Introduction to the handbook, *Handbook of Research on Small Business and Entrepreneurship*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham and Northampton, MA, 1-22.

Gartner, W. B. and Birley, S. (2002) 'Introduction to the special issue on qualitative methods in entrepreneurship research', *Journal of Business Venturing*, 12, 5, 387-396.

Hindle, K. (2004) 'Choosing qualitative methods for entrepreneurship cognition research: a canonical development approach', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 28, 6, 575-607.

McDonald, S., Gan B. C., Fraser, S., Oke, A. and Anderson, A.R. (2014) Towards a Multiple Perspective View of Entrepreneurship *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*,, forthcoming

Neergard, H. and Ulhoi, J. P. (2007) 'Introduction: methodological variety in entrepreneurship research', in H. Neergard and J. P. Ulhoi (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Entrepreneurship*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, 1-16.

Nicholls, A. (2010) The legitimacy of social entrepreneurship: reflexive isomorphism in a pre-paradigmatic field, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, July, 611-633.

Patton, M. Q. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Rauch, A., van Doorn, R. and Hulsink, W. (2014) A qualitative approach to-evidence based entrepreneurship: theoretical considerations and example involving business clusters, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 38, 2, 333–368.

Ucbasaran, D., Westhead, P. and Wright, M. (2001) 'The focus of entrepreneurial research: contextual and process issues', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 25, 4, 57-82.

Van Burg, E. and Romme, A. G. L. (2014) Creating the future together: toward a framework for research synthesis in entrepreneurship, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 38, 2, 369-397.

Welter, F. (2011) 'Contextualizing entrepreneurship: conceptual challenges and ways forward', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 35, 1, 165-184.

Wiklund, J., Davidsson, P., Audretsch, D.B., and Karlsson, C. (2011) 'The future of entrepreneurship research', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 35, 1, 1-9.

Zahra, S. (2007) 'Contextualizing theory building in entrepreneurship research', *Journal of Business Venturing*, 22, 3, 443–452.