

Guest editorial: the early adolescence of entrepreneurship research

In what is arguably a seminal piece of scholarship Shane and Venkataraman (2000) posited entrepreneurship lacked a conceptual framework, thus limiting the breadth and depth of entrepreneurship research. Despite this limitation, they noted the real promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research. Since then, the number of scholars exploring entrepreneurship, from a diverse array of geographies (Kiggundu, 2002; Ogundana *et al.*, 2021; Gomes *et al.*, 2022; Pérez-Nordvedt and Fallatah, 2022), disciplines (Henry, 2021; Neumeier *et al.*, 2019a; Winkler *et al.*, 2021) and perspectives (Bandera *et al.*, 2021; Williamson *et al.*, 2022; Souakri *et al.*, 2022), has drastically risen. The net result is an explosion of entrepreneurship articles, journals and books on all matter of entrepreneurship, including topics on entrepreneurial intentions (Krueger *et al.*, 2000; Fayolle and Liñan, 2014; McLarty *et al.*, 2021), mindsets (Naumann, 2017; Lynch and Corbett, 2022; Pidduck *et al.*, 2022), education (Neck and Greene, 2011; Mahto *et al.*, 2018; Pittaway and Cope, 2007), ecosystems (Neumeier *et al.*, 2019a, 2019b; Fredin and Lidén, 2020) and various types of entrepreneurship including social and humane entrepreneurship (Certo and Miller, 2008; Kruse *et al.*, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2021; Santos *et al.*, 2021). The two most prestigious journals, the *Journal of Business Venturing* and *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, have very high impact factors. Although entrepreneurship still lacks an accepted paradigm (indeed it lacks definitional clarity), and we continue to struggle fully specifying what entrepreneurship education is and for what purpose (Liguori *et al.*, 2018), entrepreneurship has cemented its position as a legitimate domain for research and teaching.

Why was entrepreneurship as research field ignored for so long? We feel part of the explanation goes into the heart of business research. Normally, management, and other business faculty major motivation (indeed the fastest way for promotion) is to develop and test theories. As theories are based on some covering laws, they should hold for all-time. Accordingly, the test of business research is not in its practical application, but its ability to develop stable, theoretical frameworks. This was not always the case. Business theories such as Frederick Winslow Taylor and Elton Mayo addressed real, social problems. The transformation of the business school, which occurred after the Ford and Carnegie reports of the 1950s, placed an emphasis on the development of theory and the use of the scientific method. The net result of this change is that we have moved past the mundane to the theoretical.

Entrepreneurship research struggled as a result. The ideal place for entrepreneurship, given its financial implications, is the field of economics. However, neoclassical economics limits the role that the entrepreneur can play because of its assumptions of perfect information and equilibrium. Although there were mainstream economists such as William Baumol who attempted to develop theories of entrepreneurship within the neoclassical framework, these attempts were limited in their effectiveness. Heterodox economists, such as those of the Austrian school, did develop a framework for entrepreneurship given that their tradition (unlike neoclassical) does not assume perfect information, but rather ignorance and subjectivism. However, the Austrian economics school was not as well-regarded in the general economics profession. This lack of attention to Austrian economics created wrong assumptions. A common viewpoint, one held by the economist John Kenneth



Galbraith was that entrepreneurship was a 19th century phenomenon, whose time had passed. Instead, Galbraith assumed that large corporations had such much power that they could last forever.

However, Galbraith's opinions were proved to be completely incorrect. For instance, IBM was the largest computer company. Likewise, K-Mart was the largest retailer. The emergence of technology and innovation brought an end to this dominance, replacing these dominant corporations with newer, more agile companies. Some of the largest corporations at present, such as Amazon, Apple, Google and Microsoft, did not exist in the 1960s (or even the 1990s) and have emerged due to changes in technology and customer tastes. The tale of Blockbuster reflects this trend. Blockbuster was the dominant corporation in home video rentals. It was so common, that the white, blue and yellow Blockbuster boxes are pop-culture icon for people who came of age in the 1980s and 1990s. Blockbuster rented videotapes which came in large bulky boxes. However, emergence of the smaller, more compact DVD allowed for the advent of Netflix, who could easily mail out DVDs so that people could rent without going to a store. Then Netflix got into streaming. Both factors allowed for the emergence of a new way of watching movies, ending the dominance (and the survival) of Blockbuster.

Accordingly, this radical transformation of commerce has encouraged the development of entrepreneurship as a field of research. This topic is an important one for the *Journal of Management History*. Indeed, we have seen a plethora of articles on entrepreneurship in the journal, including examples of entrepreneurship and a discussion of the definition of entrepreneurship (Honig and Black, 2007; Prieto and Phipps, 2014; Laudone *et al.*, 2015; Sapir, 2019). It should not be inferred, like Galbraith did, that entrepreneurship is not an important part of the economic action. Indeed, as the articles included in this issue illustrate, entrepreneurship is common historical solution in various and diverse political, social and institutional settings. We must keep this in mind as we slowly recover from COVID-19 the importance of entrepreneurship as we attempt to recover from the economic slowdown (Smith *et al.*, 2022; Bacq and Lumpkin, 2020; Maritz *et al.*, 2020).

As is the standard case in this journal, we provide a brief synopsis of the articles. We commence with Derek Lidlow's (2022) article on "The Prehistoric" entrepreneur, a definition. The entrepreneurship field has struggled with the definition of entrepreneurship. Based on the findings of anthropology and archaeology, Lidlow find that entrepreneurship has been a common occurrence since before the dawn of civilization. The findings of this article:

[...] produced a unique time and place independent definition of entrepreneur that enables the identification of pre-historic entrepreneurial activity and heretofore unrealized structure of entrepreneurial activity. Specifically, entrepreneurship as defined herein pre-dates social hierarchy, political economy, markets, and pricing mechanisms. Modern definitions often inconsistently limit the scope of entrepreneurial behavior.

The benefit of this article is that it encourages us to reconsider the dominant market logic of entrepreneurship. Instead, we should focus on the embeddedness of entrepreneurship to help understand its context.

Schachter's (2022) insightful article on race, class, gender and social entrepreneurship: extending the positionality of icons is another remarkable contribution. This article considers the biographies of Rose Schneiderman and Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, two Progressive Era pioneers who formed new organizations to address marginalized populations. Included in Dr Schachter's discussion is an overview of various strategies used by Schneiderman and St. Pierre Ruffin to overcome the various obstacles that they needed to overcome. Another notable outcome of this work is that it extends: "Prieto and Phipps' (2014) exploration of how three Progressive era women contributed to the social entrepreneurship field using a diversity perspective that emphasizes intersectionality and positionality." Schachter forwards this

contribution by adding the narratives of “a white working class woman and a financially secure Black woman both active in the Progressive era.”

In a very similar vein, [Zincir \(2022\)](#) provides an interesting and thoughtful take on Georg Mayer, who was a Jewish entrepreneur living in Turkey before 1945 and was active for over 40 years. Zincir uses reflexive agency to explore various primary source documents on Mayer, including his own writings. It is important to note that Turkey had undergone a massive transformation due to the outcome of the First World War, which meant the end of the Ottoman Empire and the malaise associated. Important findings of this article is the use of social network for reflexive agency; the use of established community is a necessity for during a period of structural change. In addition, “a strong stimulus such as a life threat can be a force majeure and trigger for individuals to take risks, affecting their abilities of reflexivity.”

[Kirby et al. \(2022\)](#) provide a thought-provoking take on sustainability and entrepreneurship, one that is at variance with some of the triumphal narratives that abound the literature. This paper takes direct aim at traditional approaches of entrepreneurship that has focused on, what has been called, “The Friedman Doctrine,” which is “to make as much money as possible.” Rather than being a fad, “sustainability dates back to the 19th century” with the example of Saltaire. This tale begins when Sir Titus Salt developed a village, Bradford, which became highly profitable, but one that soon became highly polluted. Salt wanted to use Rodda Smoke Burner, which produced very little pollution. However, Salt was refused and so he left the village, starting Saltaire, based on the principles of sustainability. A takeaway from this article is that rather than being separate sustainability and entrepreneurship should be wedded together.

Irina Nikolskaja Roddvik, Birgit Leick and Viktor [Roddvik \(2022\)](#) considers the development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Arctic led by Norwegians in Russia. The ecosystem literature is a relatively new construct within the entrepreneurship literature. As such, scholars have debated about the concept and what leads to the development of an ecosystem. One of the findings of the literature is that favorable geography is an important consideration to an ecosystem. However, Arkhangelsk is hardly an ideal location, near the Arctic, with difficult climates and in a country with, to put it mildly, a flawed political system (the Tsarist system). However, the Norwegians were able to create an economic community that existed until the Stalin era, only ending in 1930s. This is a very interesting and well-developed paper about how an ecosystem comes into being despite geography and institutional deficiencies.

The net result of these articles is to illustrate the importance of entrepreneurship in a series of different conditions. What is interesting is that we have been debating and using entrepreneurship to solve societal problems since before the dawn of history. Accordingly, these articles (and other historical articles) may provide us greater insight into entrepreneurship which will enable scholars to develop better theories, measures and conceptions. Entrepreneurship, as these articles indicate, has a glorious past, and, probably, an even brighter future.

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Further reading

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