

Call for Papers

Journal of Small Business Management Special Issue on

Understanding entrepreneurship: challenging dominant perspectives and theorising entrepreneurship through new post-positivist epistemologies

Special Issue Guest Editors

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Submission deadline: June 1, 2012

Call for submissions

Over the past decade entrepreneurship scholarship has generated a large body of research reflecting an important and dynamic subject domain (Wiklund, Davidsson, Audretsch and Karlsson, 2011). 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, 2004; Zahra, 2007). 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 the 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 (Anderson and Starnawska, 2008).

Entrepreneurship is characterised by complex, dynamic and emergent processes and the interplay between actors, processes and contexts (Anderson et al, forthcoming). 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. Such post-positivistic research aims to develop constructs, 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 Ulhoi, 2007).

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). We suggest that a deeper engagement with the philosophical and theoretical foundations of entrepreneurship research is fundamentally important in generating new insights and offering new ways of theorising in the field. Furthermore, we argue that despite a growing body of post-positivistic research in response to such calls, ‘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 often-hidden assumptions.

We therefore invite papers that help to establish the relevance and utility of different post-positivist epistemologies; explaining their nature and how they are underpinned by a broad spectrum of research paradigms and traditions, such as interpretivism, social constructionism, critical realism and postmodernism. We seek papers that are reflexive in their nature and transparent in their application of such paradigmatic qualitative designs and theoretical underpinnings. In so doing, we aim to promote qualitative studies in entrepreneurship research that develop theory based on rich and credible qualitative data collected and analysed through rigorous research methods. However, we also welcome papers that develop particular methodological approaches, including the inter-play between quantitative and qualitative approaches, or demonstrate the contribution of qualitative research through real empirical examples.

Possible questions and areas to be addressed in papers include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Paradigmatic debates:

- What is the contribution of post-positivist paradigms and traditions to entrepreneurship research?
- Is the issue of paradigm commensurability resolved in entrepreneurship research?
- What are the philosophical foundations of different research traditions in entrepreneurship research and how do such philosophical underpinnings inform the formulation of research questions, the design of research and of course, the findings?
- What does critical realism offer to enhance our understanding of entrepreneurship, for example how does it differ from social constructionism and postmodernism?

2. Implications for research:

- What are the gaps and omissions in entrepreneurship research that are yet to be addressed, and how can they be better addressed by studies that take qualitative perspectives?
- What are the methodological challenges of designing and conducting post-positivist research in entrepreneurship?
- How can we evaluate and judge the 'quality' of post-positivist and qualitative research in entrepreneurship?
- Which levels of analysis are taken into consideration in such research taking post-positivistic approach? Which approaches are more tuned with layered ontology of entrepreneurship that focuses on multi-level analysis (i.e. individual, organisational and macro-environmental levels)?
- How well do such studies transcend the structure and agency dichotomy in entrepreneurship research?

3. Implications for theory:

- Which disciplinary debates prevail in entrepreneurship research? What is the value of inter-disciplinary work in post-positivist understandings of entrepreneurship?
- Does such entrepreneurship research generate insights that are applicable to other areas of management and organization studies?
- How well do those insights bridge the gap between entrepreneurship theory, practice and policy?

Review process and timetable

Submissions will be desk-reviewed by the Guest Editors. Manuscripts will be sent for full review if they make a sound and interesting contribution to the debates outlined. JSBM's high standards will be ensured by the guest editorial team and reviewers.

Paper submissions: June 1, 2012
Initial desk review: July 1, 2012
Round 1 review: November 1, 2012
Resubmissions: March 1, 2013
Round 2 review: June 1, 2013
Resubmissions: September 1, 2013
Final editorial: November 1, 2013
Publication date: October 2014

Early submissions are welcome and will be put into the review process straightaway. All submissions for the special issue should comply with the paper formatting guidelines for JSBM and must be submitted electronically at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jsbm> and clearly identified as for this Special Issue.

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