

Foreword

Norris Krueger

It might be hard to imagine today but circa 1990, the field of entrepreneurship was mired in a research tradition that essentially chose to believe entrepreneurs were born, not made. No matter what the broader fields of psychology and economics might say, we tended to believe (or wanted to believe) that entrepreneurs were this magical creature. As one wag put it, not only did entrepreneurship embrace the dying subfield of personality psychology, we made up for it for executing poorly.

But in the early 1990s, we began to see a shift – a tectonic shift we did not immediately see but nonetheless revolutionary. Suddenly we saw tools and theories from social psychology started appearing (and getting past reviewers). Instead of focusing of person variables (P) and situation variables (S) we could embrace **P×S** variables. For example, in grad school I became enamoured with self-efficacy.

One such tool was behavioural intentions – whether Al Shapero’s model of the entrepreneurial event or Ajzen-Fishbein’s models, we suddenly had a very useful tool. As we know now, intentions to be entrepreneurial are much trickier than intentions to buy breakfast cereal but it was a start.

Consider the number of citations for “entrepreneurial intentions” versus citations of “entrepreneurship” in Google Scholar.

	<u>Before 1993</u>	<u>After 1993</u>	<u>Growth</u>
Entrepreneurial intentions	112	~17,000	150×

At the same time, entrepreneurship research overall only grew 10×. That is, intentions research has grown more than FIFTEEN times as fast as entrepreneurship research in general. Google Scholar reports over 8200 intentions publications in 2018 alone. That success at least coincided with a rise in other tools from social psychology and cognitive psychology. We also see a 9× increase in entrepreneurial cognition research relative to entrepreneurship in general and it accelerated considerably after 1993, suggesting emotional

intelligence research was at least a leading indicator of research there (Kaffka & Krueger, 2018).

BUT WHY SO SUCCESSFUL?

Certainly intentions models yielded large, shiny R-squareds (if the R-squared is high, it must be right, eh?) and certainly face validity. We had compelling arguments like Shaver and Scott (1991) that the so-called “entrepreneurial personality” was a wee bit more complicated. Still, it does not take a neuroscientist to understand that the rise of the intentions model now opened the door to deeper inquiry into “what lies beneath” intent (Krueger, 2007). We soon had great contributions from Robert Baron (1998) and Ron Mitchell (Mitchell, Smith, Seawright, & Morse, 2000) to pry the door even farther to great theory and methods from cognitive psychology.

A HIDDEN LEVER?

I got into intentions because my dissertation supervisor was in marketing and intentions were widespread there, even boring. But I was not the only person to take advantage of this experience base and, more important, the broader tool kit from social psychology.¹ If you are going to talk about perceived feasibility and perceived desirability, maybe it will help us to understand... perceptions? While Evan Douglas had done some clever and impactful work already (Douglas & Shepherd, 2002a) he had begun a delightful deep dive into the various perceptual lenses that entrepreneurs might deploy. (Remember that Busenitz and Barney had forced us to engage with Kahneman and Tversky’s marvellous findings.)

Evan’s Babson paper on entrepreneurial perceptions is pretty much my favourite Babson presentation. It showed that entrepreneurship was firmly on a course to using the best concepts and tools from mainstream psychology. An early piece I did with Alan Carsrud on using social psychology tools in entrepreneurship didn’t get many citations until papers like Evan’s started appearing and now people read it on Researchgate and message me “how passé”. A humorous sign that we have moved far?

¹ And there were other good scholars doing good work. Lars Kolvereid was another early adopter of the theory of planned behaviour and contributed a long stream of solid, useful work. Jill Kickul made contributions that tested the limits of the intentions model and Malin Brännback brought new tools like Vallerand’s passion scales and Rick Bagozzi’s theory of trying. Francisco Liñán is another intentions scholar whose work I highly recommend. And Evan’s early co-author, Dean Shepherd, has been one of *the* rock stars of our field.

For the Carsrud–Brännback book, *The Entrepreneurial Mind* (2017), I asked “is the field of entrepreneurship growing... or just growing bigger?” Evan’s new book is terrific evidence that, yes, we are growing!

Entrepreneurially yours,
Norris Krueger, June 2019, Boise, Idaho