Entrepreneurship is a relatively young field; arguably, it is progressing through adolescence, struggling with issues of its identity, with how it is perceived and valued. This may be a contentious statement, but relative to other social sciences, for example, economics, entrepreneurship is perhaps ill-defined and still developing its theoretical base which has yet to be stoutly tested through sound empirical research. The Academy of Management views entrepreneurship as a division not a discipline and likewise the British Academy of Management categorises it as an area of special interest; this despite the scope of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship has only two four-star-rated journals in which scholars may publish their work; the alternative is to publish in lower-rated journals in the field or in journals from the mainstream disciplines. Hence, this series of handbooks published by Edward Elgar is potentially a significant milestone; a marker which may help scholars reflect on how far the subject has come, and where further inter-disciplinary research may be usefully carried out to help solidify the knowledge base that is entrepreneurship.

Scholarship in entrepreneurship has grown significantly since the mid-1990s. Over the years we have witnessed disputed territory of how it is defined, its disciplinary bases, the language in which it is couched, the unit of analysis upon which researchers should focus their attention, and a tussle over paradigmatic approaches. Despite interesting and original contributions from across the globe, the field of entrepreneurship has been dominated by Anglo-American perspectives and hence academic production in associated journals. This volume deliberately highlights all these issues on which we as researchers may reflect and learn, and advance the field by questioning prevailing, indeed dominant, assumptions, historically internalised research practices and perspectives with a focus on inclusivity and rigour in scientific endeavour, and its impact on society and economy. Although there is considerable new work produced and published in the area, we should never forget that as scholars we aim to stand on the shoulders of other great thinkers so that we can see further. As Alvarez and Barney (2013) have pointed out in a recent paper, for entrepreneurship to stand as a unique subject domain, it needs to generate theories that delineate things in other disciplines in ways that scholars in those disciplines have not done previously. This entails a more reflexive approach and theorising from an empirical evidence base.

This series of *Handbooks in Entrepreneurship* produced by Edward Elgar facilitates an important task in scholarship, that of reviewing, reflecting upon and presenting the state of the art of our subject. Entrepreneurship is potentially vast, multi-faceted and complex, so much so that we can each only claim expert knowledge in a narrow segment. However, we do need to be able to see the bigger picture and in doing so the possible connections between the various parts that help draw them together into a coherent whole. To this end, this *Handbook* commences with two thought-provoking chapters, raises issues of theoretical framing, moves on to highlight the importance of
paradigm choice, methodology and method, considers different disciplinary approaches to entrepreneurship and small business, and raises different questions about entrepreneurship education and learning before moving on to consider the application of entrepreneurship research in different sectors.

We think of the entrepreneurship scholar as being multi-skilled, having not only the breadth of knowledge of the discipline, but the research tools to delve deeper into its subject matter, ask the relevant questions and design research that is methodologically sound in respect of the chosen lines of enquiry. Many of our chapters raise issues that are pursued in greater depth by other authors in this volume; we have therefore made considerable effort to cross-reference chapters to enable you the reader to work your way through not only your specialism but additional chapters that should broaden your purview and deepen your understanding of the subject.

In this slightly lengthier introduction than might be expected we want to highlight some of the key issues raised by authors so that you may use this introduction as more than a roadmap, but a guide and a taster to the discoveries that you will make. In this regard we have attempted a logical sequencing of the chapters but, as is the case with any handbook, the reader may dip into any of the chapters that intrigue you, or will inform your on-going research, in whatever order suits you. We commence with theoretical framing, but especially those tantalising chapters that should get you thinking from whatever direction you approach the discipline! Building on the theoretical framing section, we continue with presenting the chapters on methodologies, paradigms and methods. We then present a range of disciplinary approaches to entrepreneurship including behavioural, sociological and psychological approaches. We have chosen to present two chapters on entrepreneurship education and learning, which exemplifies the intersectionality of behavioural and sociological approaches as a sub-domain of entrepreneurship. Our final section puts forward five chapters that demonstrate applications of entrepreneurship research with a view to moving the field forward.

PART I THEORETICAL FRAMING

Chapter 2, William B. Gartner: Notes Towards a Theory of Entrepreneurial Possibility

Entrepreneurs operate in a future that is uncertain, where judgements are needed and decisions difficult to make on the back of information that may not be readily available, expensive to collect or at best incomplete. In such a context entrepreneurs should not have fixed ideas, rather they should arguably be flexible in their quest to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities. But here is the problem which Gartner highlights and explores: much of decision theory and entrepreneurial decision-making is based on probability theory. However, in situations where changes and future outcomes are unknown a probability distribution cannot be attached to outcomes (Knight, 1921). This surely takes one into the realm of possibility and as some have argued it is in the realm of the possible with which entrepreneurs deal (e.g. Shackle, 1972; 1979). In his chapter, Gartner plays with the concepts of the probable and the possible and gives us a different sense of what the thought processes and mind of an entrepreneur might be like. But Gartner does more than that, he attacks the deterministic positivistic approaches of the statistician for whom
probability holds the key to prediction of likely events. Statisticians focus our minds on particularities such as the higher probability that entrepreneurs are, for example, male, of a certain age range and ethnicity. However, as Gartner points out there are plenty of counterexamples—outliers—of the statistical profiles of entrepreneurs. Statistical profiles tell us what is; not what might be or what might become. This type of thinking opens up our minds to practical and policy issues of how one might increase entrepreneurial activity amongst groups of individuals for whom rates of entrepreneurship have been historically low. Gartner concludes by acknowledging that he is still developing his ideas on the possible and calls for more research in this fascinating area, using stories which act as models for the possible.

Chapter 3, Mark Casson and Marina Della Giusta: Buzzwords in Business and Management Studies

There are times in the development of a discipline when it is appropriate to ask deeper questions about the shape, state and trends that demarcate its direction and evolution. As Casson and Della Giusta note there are some trends that are unhelpful; one such is ‘conceptual redundancy’. Conceptual redundancy or the excessive use of ‘buzzwords’ can only work if certain conditions hold, the authors argue. These are that academics who innovate by developing new concepts will only do so if there are incentives to drive the process. The incentive is the enhancement of their reputation. This is accompanied by a weak elite that do not profess to understand their discipline and allow this tendency to flourish. Peers who either like to innovate or to imitate disseminate the buzzwords and a wealth of new terms is created that are essentially vacuous; vacuous because they are either ill-defined or not defined at all.

Two different things are going on here, which it is important to recognise for research purposes. First is the unnecessary proliferation (essentially of synonyms) of redundant terminology, which the authors refer to as ‘duplication’ and second, the refinement of conceptual terms through detailed, often qualitative, research. The former has the feel of the ‘Emperor’s new clothes’; a ‘band wagon’ on which academicians enthusiastically leap, thus exacerbating the problem. For some research purposes, especially where quantitative research or economic analysis is concerned, a clear, simple definition is a prerequisite to analysis (see also Minniti and Lévesque, Chapter 9 in this volume). For other purposes, that is, building theory and gaining a nuanced understanding of context and behaviour, qualitative research methods are appropriate (see especially Chell, Chapter 7 in this volume). However the latter method should also build on prior work; position new knowledge relative to extant knowledge; and refrain from proliferating redundant terms.

Casson and Della Giusta illustrate this with reference to the (over)use of the term ‘strategy’. They argue, somewhat controversially, that ‘strategy has succeeded purely because it is a buzzword not an important conceptual innovation’. A key point that they make is that strategy research has tended to focus on successful firms that have survived rather than firms that have failed and become extinct thus potentially biasing views of strategic issues of the business as a whole. The authors go on to critique Porter’s work on strategy, in particular as presenting the monopolist as being a competitive force for good. The term ‘strategy’ may be used if it is given a carefully defined meaning rather
than the loose usage that it has fallen into. The definition may be generic or specific; the former, the choice amongst alternative courses of action, the latter, a strategic decision that commits resources for a future course of action that usually involves sunk costs and is in that sense irreversible. Given clear and tight definitions rigorous analysis can proceed and for quantitative research purposes based on formal models.

The terms ‘entrepreneur’ and ‘entrepreneurship’ could be considered to be buzzwords. In the UK, 1971, in a ‘Committee of Enquiry on Small Firms’ was set up under the chairmanship of John Bolton. No University business schools included ‘Entrepreneurship’ as one of their offerings; now most do. There is a small rump of scholars who see ‘small businesses’ as an interesting area of study and a ‘laboratory’ for understanding theory, practice and policy of small business behaviour. Now anyone who sets up a business, be it a small shop on the High Street, a social enterprise or a nursery is designated an entrepreneur. Once we talked about the ‘petite bourgeoisie’, ‘small business owner-managers’, ‘the self-employed’, ‘caretakers’ and ‘professional managers’ of enterprises; we differentiated and looked at the context and the motivations of founders, successors to, or people who bought into or inherited an enterprise (c.f. Chell et al., 1991 for further references). Howorth et al. (Chapter 18 in this volume) offer a typology of family business (owners). Arguably it is only by retaining this rich nuanced contextual data that we can build meaningful theory about the foundations, entrepreneurial processes, outcomes and so forth that we wish to understand. The important point however is that where for example, entrepreneurship is being used in different senses as a function (innovation), role (e.g. owner-manager), personality (e.g. imaginative) or behaviour (e.g. proactive) then adopting different definitions or no definition at all adds to the confusion (Casson, 2010; Casson & Della Guista in this volume). If we are to build the discipline then we should not use the richness of the English language and its proliferation of synonyms (with slight nuances of different meaning) as a means of enhancing our reputation or giving a positive ‘spin’ to the discipline, rather we should take definitions of terms as our starting point. Where we are genuinely exploring new territory using qualitative methods, there is no reason not to define terms. While we may have built a new conceptual framework; we should reflect and make explicit what those concepts mean, how we are defining them, and what theoretical import they hold.

Chapter 4, Cynthia Forson, Mustafa Özbilgin, Mustafa Bilgehan Ozturk and Ahu Tatli: Multi-level Approaches to Entrepreneurship and Small Business Research – Transcending Dichotomies with Bourdieu

Forson et al. argue that the field of entrepreneurship and small business is complex, interdisciplinary and would be best served by multi-level investigations that transcend separate framing levels and dichotomies. Indeed, small business owner-managers, entrepreneurs, their businesses, their behaviours and the various outcomes of their activities are heterogeneous and can be said to operate at different social levels: individual (micro), firm (meso) and societal, institutional (macro) (Karataş-Özkan and Chell, 2010). The implicit question they answer is what conceptual framework is available to deal with the multiple forces of structure and agency in entrepreneurship and small business. They suggest Bourdieu’s sociological framework that captures the field (both
wider and narrower context), *habitus* (strategies, practices and dispositions of agency) and capitals (the resources, including where appropriate the intellectual capital, cognitive maps and frameworks, experience and profile of the agents themselves). This they term an integrative framework which crosses the artificial boundaries created by research silos (quantitative versus qualitative methods and methodologies, disciplines and preferred methods). Bourdieu’s framing reminds us that entrepreneurship and small business is couched in social, political and economic relationships that exert multiple influences on the behaviours of individuals, firms and industries and the wider socio-political economy. Such framing gives a common language to facilitate understanding entrepreneurial and small business phenomena which transcends cultural and national boundaries aiding the growth and development of entrepreneurship and small business as a field; and contributing both to the further development of grounded policy and practice.

**Chapter 5, Mine Karataş-Özkan, Cagla Yavuz and Jeremy Howells: Theorising Entrepreneurship: An Institutional Theory Perspective**

Karataş-Özkan and her colleagues succinctly review the literature on institutional theory from social, political and economic perspectives. They explain how this works as a process through regulative, cognitive and normative forces. By taking an institutional perspective they emphasise the multiple levels and complexity of institutional environments in which enterprises operate within transitional economies, where gender and ethnicity are salient issues, and where emerging markets provide institutional voids for the recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities. They highlight the importance of the term ‘institutional entrepreneur’ to challenge the concept of ‘opportunistic entrepreneur’ and give weight to the agency of entrepreneurs in shifting institutions, and fields that change socially and politically institutionalised practices.

Furthermore they highlight the importance of the different strategies employed by entrepreneurs locally and nationally. This is particularly evident in social enterprises and here they forge a link with de Bruin et al.’s chapter in this *Handbook*. The discussion of ‘entrepreneurial strategies’ makes an interesting counterpoint with Casson and Della Guista’s chapter. From a methodological viewpoint Karataş-Özkan et al.’s chapter raises implicitly the unit of analysis that researchers should consider when planning their work. They argue that through institutional theory the unit of analysis may be the organisation, a group within or an individual agent. Furthermore in referencing Bourdieu’s work, they suggest the importance of an institution’s capital in its exercise of power. It is this power and domination of the institutional environment that influences the actions and entrepreneurial processes of enterprises. Again there is a connection made on this occasion to Forson et al.’s chapter which explicates Bourdieu’s framework further. As these authors conclude, there is more work to be done that aims to explain entrepreneurship from within the multi-layered complexity of the field or context in which entrepreneurs seek to make their livelihood. Understanding how this works at an individual country-level and then launching further comparative, cross-country studies would be informative to the discipline as a whole.
PART II METHODOLOGIES, PARADIGMS AND METHODS

Chapter 6, Luke Pittaway, Robin Holt and Jean Broad: Synthesising Knowledge in Entrepreneurship Research – The Role of Systematic Literature Reviews

Carrying out research in any discipline in a way that builds and enables the development of theory requires a depth of knowledge and understanding of the state of the art of the subject; to know what is currently known, what we do not yet know and more specifically what the right questions we should be addressing are. Pittaway et al.’s chapter on the use of ‘systematic literature reviews’ (SLRs) addresses this crucial issue. The chapter opens with a brief discussion of the nature of enquiry pointing to two aspects of reflection on the development of any discipline: (a) philosophical reflections; and (b) the development of research methodologies that encourage systematic reflection on empirical evidence, synthesising research findings and making sense of them holistically, that is, across the discipline. The authors then make a case for the adoption of the systematic literature review to facilitate the development of evidence-based policy and practice as well as theoretical foundations of the discipline. They compare the use of meta-analysis suggesting that the latter technique is less relevant in management research. This provides an interesting point of comparison with Rauch’s chapter in which he adopts the latter technique to reveal the strengths of research on the entrepreneurial personality (see below).

Having made a case for the adoption of SLRs the authors usefully go on to explain lucidly how the research team may go about conducting such a review. This emphasises the reflective nature of the process commencing as it does with ‘identifying the need for the review’. It essentially includes framing the research question, developing a protocol and applying relevance assessment criteria. Carrying out the citation and literature search is likely to throw up a very large number of citations which need to be screened and whittled down to a manageable number. The smaller number of citations is then appraised using content analysis and thematic coding. The identification of themes is particularly useful where a team of researchers is carrying out the work. Finally the results are synthesised and reported.

Researchers have long argued about the fragmentation of the discipline of entrepreneurship; that it is interdisciplinary but researchers sit principally in their own ‘silo’ (compare Forson et al., Chapter 4 in this volume). One important advantage of the SLR is that it draws findings from across disciplinary boundaries and aids building an evidence base. Other advantages are that it is a transparent procedure and structure which is reported explicitly. While these are important advantages the method also has some disadvantages which the authors recount. Of these, the fact that it is a ‘scientific method’ and sits within the positivist paradigm would not be lost on many qualitative researchers. A discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of positivism and anti-positivism can be found in the ensuing chapter where I introduce the two approaches to using the critical incident technique.
Chapter 7, Elizabeth Chell: The Critical Incident Technique: Philosophical Underpinnings, Method and Application to a Case of Small Business Failure

Several of the chapters in this *Handbook* indicate the importance of a qualitative methods approach to exploring further the conceptual framework the authors concerned are expounding. This may be in part due to the need to develop theory, but also authors have pointed to the complexity of entrepreneurial activity, processes and outcomes and the need to capture such detail through thick descriptions and analytic methods. Qualitative methods are difficult to execute well and their philosophical underpinnings vary. Chell’s chapter on the critical incident technique traces the history and development of this particular qualitative method, namely the critical incident technique (CIT) interview, the philosophical assumptions of functionalism that were made by its originator Flanagan (1954) and those of an interpretivist perspective developed by Chell in her earlier work (Chell, 1998; 2004; Chell and Baines, 1998; 2000). Chell examines critical reviews of the method, taking points of contrast and exposing any weaknesses and how they have been dealt with. Researchers have expressed concern about the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative methods in general and attempts have been made to address this issue (see Seale, 1999; Patton, 2002; Hammersley, 2007). Chell discusses these issues and provides a way through, touching on philosophical issues such as the nature of truth, the form of life that is entrepreneurship and its social connectedness and the nature of insight and generalisation. In alignment with many other chapters in this *Handbook*, Chell stresses the use of CIT in exploring entrepreneurial issues within context as it allows for understanding the perspectives, frames of reference, experiences of participants (entrepreneurs or small business owner-managers) and views on matters of critical importance to them.

Chell then moves on to the practical application of CIT particularly within an interpretivist framework and illustrates using a case study of a failed small business. She argues as have others of the need for more research on business failure. Importantly Chell discusses the case study technique and the practical aspects of performing a CIT interview. She raises the importance of reflexivity, the use of language during the interview and afterwards when coding and analysing transcripts. One example of the significance of the choice of language in asking questions around critical incidents was provided by Karataş-Özkan and Chell (2010) in their study on nascent entrepreneurship and learning whereby they demonstrate, for example, the importance of aligning with the language of the participants and making the inquiry accessible to them by using terminology such as ‘significant occurrences’ rather than critical incidents, which may have connotations for the interviewees. A further important aspect is gaining access to significant others as well as any documentary evidence. This is a particular challenge for the researcher but will ensure that what happened, when, and the significant part that events and other players exercised on outcomes is well understood.

Chapter 8, Sylvia Gherardi and Manuela Perrotta: Gender, Ethnicity and Social Entrepreneurship: Qualitative Approaches to the Study of Entrepreneuring

Gherardi and Perrotta demonstrate what the original contributions of qualitative research grounded in non-positivist research paradigms are, echoing with the recent broader debate in the field of entrepreneurship (see Anderson et al., 2014). They initially
address the problem for qualitative research methodologies in gaining acceptance and legitimacy in a research world where positivist approaches based on the scientific method are still favoured. Reflecting on Calás et al (2009), Gherardi and Perrotta remind readers of the importance of questioning the biases and limitations of dominant research by revealing the value of marginal practices to the broader research community. The authors skilfully review the issues as a prelude to considering how gender and ethnicity issues in entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship might be addressed through rigorously conducted qualitative research. A crucial matter is that traditional approaches tend to reproduce the normative model of functionalism and market capitalism and pay scant attention to processual and contextual dynamics. This is a theme that is echoed in other chapters (e.g. Chell; Forson et al.; Karataş-Özkan et al.; and McKeever et al.) where the importance of understanding context is underscored.

Gherardi and Perrotta argue for the importance of critical reflection to create space for qualitative, non-positivist research methods that enable analysis from a feminist empiricist perspective. In this regard the authors provide an incisive overview of qualitative methods; the importance of understanding narrative, different perspectives on the stories told, and the symbolic framing and cultural meaning of stories that entrepreneurs use to legitimate their new ventures to others. Legitimacy building becomes a key theme and has echoes of Bourdieu’s conceptual framework outlined in Forson et al. in this volume (see also Karataş-Özkan and Chell, 2013). Turning to gender and entrepreneurship, Gherardi and Perrotta point to the emancipatory assumptions that feminist theory brings which is apposite in a field emphasising social (and economic) change and power relations. The authors review some very interesting studies that show how gender and entrepreneurship are culturally produced and reproduced in situated social practices. In this regard they draw out the preponderant influence of masculinity in public situations and market activities and how this delimits female entrepreneurs’ discourse and behaviour. They go further to delineate how hegemonic entrepreneurial practices are not only interconnected with gender, but also ethnicity, religion and geographic context. These unarguably are complex issues which require the depth of analysis, the richness of data, and the critical interpretation of multiple layers of discourse and perspectives which robust qualitative approaches can furnish. While some work has been undertaken to address such an agenda, carefully reviewed by the authors, many challenges remain, not least of which are the methodological considerations of ‘doing such research’: through reflexivity understanding the flexibility of human interactions, the ambiguity of interpretations and the ability to generate new knowledge that aids theory development and further research on entrepreneurship.

Chapter 9, Maria Minniti and Moren Lévesque: Mathematics and Entrepreneurship Research

Mathematics has a founding place in the history of thought over the millennia and so it is, Minniti and Lévesque argue, fundamental to the scientific enquiry into the nature of entrepreneurship, small business behaviour and outcomes. Since the Enlightenment and the birth of modern thought of David Hume and philosophers such as Rousseau, alluded to by the authors, and the development of mathematical reasoning in economics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; mathematics has provided the basis for
logical thought, parsimony of argument and model development in the social sciences. It is with this backcloth that the authors make a case for the continued and extensive use of mathematics in research in this field. The case is well made, in a way that is accessible to non-mathematicians and entrepreneurship researchers who have not embraced quantitative approaches to researching their subject. The authors explain the various advantages of adopting mathematics including the systematic rules that assure consistency; the ability to generalise from the findings; the simplicity of mathematical models that allow the researcher to identify the relationships between input variables and outcomes; the efficiency with which hypotheses may be tested and verified; and the robustness of the model, including objectivity, validity and independence of the variables. Here it is worth noting some comparisons with the chapters of Casson and Della Giusta and Rauch. Having established what the properties of mathematical models are the authors then show their application to entrepreneurship theory. They round off the chapter by identifying some exemplary areas of mathematics for elucidation in respect of their application to entrepreneurship research problems. In this endeavour the authors give the reader a greater appreciation of the use of mathematical models in entrepreneurship research. They give us an insight into the way of thinking and the mathematically based approach. Of course that is not to say that all research problems can be reduced to mathematical forms of enquiry; all research depends on what questions are being asked and what is the best way for the researcher to answer the particular question and solve the research problematic. In this regard Andreas Rauch, in the next chapter, asks an age-old question of ‘who is an entrepreneur’ and how might such a question be best answered.

Chapter 10, Andreas Rauch: Predictions of Entrepreneurial Behavior: A Personality Approach

The idea of an ‘entrepreneurial personality’ and the ability of traits to predict entrepreneurial behaviour has been an area fraught with criticism and a scepticism bordering on disbelief for many decades (e.g. Gartner, 1988; Chell et al, 1991; Chell, 2008). Indeed I think it would be true to say that most sociologically-oriented academics have dismissed the idea that personality traits may play any part in explaining entrepreneurial behaviour and outcomes such as business success, founding or other measures of entrepreneurial performance. Rauch’s review of the state of the art, however, suggests that we should not be too hasty. He demonstrates that advances in personality theory and relatively new tools, in particular meta-analysis, are able to show modest effects of trait on behavioural and performance outcomes. Important, he argues, is the identification of specific traits that may be related theoretically to tasks and outcomes. Also traits should be considered as part of a model that includes mediating (e.g. goals and plans mediate the effects of achievement motivation) and moderating variables that demonstrate the contingent nature of traits (Chell, 1985). Developing such models is still in its infancy and shows there is a considerable amount of work to be carried out. Careful consideration of Rauch’s step-by-step explanation should be a prerequisite for that further work in this area. This chapter is one of three key chapters that specifically examine aspects of psychology and entrepreneurship. Readers who have enjoyed Rauch’s chapter will also be interested in that of Fiona Patterson and Máire Kerrin (Chapter 11) and Barbara Bird and her colleagues (Chapter 12), both of which apply our understanding of psychological...
principles in the context of entrepreneurial behaviour and outcomes. Other chapters which cross-cut some of Rauch’s themes are Pittaway et al. (Chapter 6) which alludes to the role of meta-analysis in systematic reviews and Minniti and Lévesque (Chapter 9) who highlight the role of mathematics in research.

PART III DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Chapter 11, Fiona Patterson and Máire Kerrin: Characteristics and Behaviours Associated with Innovative People in Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises

Patterson and Kerrin argue that understanding the innovative characteristics of their employees will aid the SME to be more competitive. A crucial problem is how this might be delivered when there is so little agreement about what innovation is; when innovative work is influenced at individual, group and organisational levels; and how it relates to entrepreneurship and small business behaviour. They put forward a detailed and relatively comprehensive model of the organisational resources that are believed to impact innovation, focusing particularly on employee behaviour and leadership performance. This provides a refreshing examination of innovation within SMEs that highlights the considerable scope for further research which views the owner-manager as a leader who has the task of marshalling resources with a view to delivering creative and innovative outcomes of the enterprise. Underlying this is the understanding that there are multiple factors at different levels operating on the working environment of the firm; that a thorough understanding of leadership role, style and behaviour is a prerequisite of effective innovative practice; and that management should align their HR interventions, selection and retention of employees, working environment and skills training development to develop increased innovation outcomes. This chapter should excite the interest of readers of Mayson and Barrett (Chapter 14) who focus on the organisational aspects of human resources and also that of Andreas Rauch (Chapter 10) which approaches the problem of entrepreneurial behaviour from a psychologist’s perspective and emphasises the need for model building. Casson and Della Giusta (Chapter 3) and Minniti and Lévesque (Chapter 9) also highlight the need for model building where a quantitative approach is being proposed.

Chapter 12, Barbara Bird, Leon Schjoedt and Ralph Hanke: Behavior of Entrepreneurs – Existing Research and Future Directions

Barbara Bird’s work is in a lengthy tradition seeking to understand what it is that entrepreneurs do that distinguishes them from others, including managers and leaders. In this chapter she and her colleagues review the state-of-the-art literature on entrepreneurs’ behaviour and relate the work to current constructs, such as cognition, motivation and decision-making. The purpose for both practical and research purposes is to be able to understand, predict and control behaviour of entrepreneurs, as individuals as well as in groups or teams. This is especially important in research design; distinguishing terms such as behaviour (input), performance (an outcome), ability, skills and competences,
which are also inputs but differentiated from behaviours, and processes, such as planning. As in the case of Rauch’s chapter, Bird et al. emphasise the need to build a model, and in particular, to develop good measures of identified behaviours and other variables. In reviewing the literature on model building, they identify a number of key issues that future research should address, including measurement issues, such as construct validity, the lack of longitudinal research designs, the use of self-report and the threat to validity, the lack of consistency in conceptualisation and measurement leading to low levels of reliability and validity. Readers should also find reading Casson and Della Giusta (Chapter 3) and Minniti and Lévesque (Chapter 9) to be of interest. Importantly the authors here point out that research should be designed to facilitate outcome predictions otherwise what is the point? Finally Bird and colleagues identify selling behaviour as a much neglected aspect of entrepreneurs’ behaviour and rightly urge further empirical work not only on the behaviour of entrepreneurs but also, and specifically, their selling behaviour which they correctly emphasise has been a much under-researched topic despite its centrality to what an entrepreneur does.

Chapter 13, Edward McKeever, Alastair Anderson and Sarah Jack: Social Embeddedness in Entrepreneurship Research: The Importance of Context and Community

McKeever, Anderson and Jack provide an informative state-of-the-art review of the historical underpinnings and current developments in the concept of social embedding in entrepreneurship. The roots of the social embeddedness concept can be traced back to sociologists such as Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, Max Weber, Ferdinand Tönnies, and Emile Durkheim, who all contributed to illuminating the importance of structures in sociology. Marx offered the earliest and the most comprehensive account of social structure, by relating political, cultural, and religious life to the mode of production (an underlying economic structure). Initially the concept of social embeddedness lacked theoretical rigour but the seeds of the idea of the influence of social structure on the functioning of exchange relationships took hold, not only from the input of sociologists but also from social psychologists and anthropologists. Names like Weber, Simmel, Polanyi, Lewin, Festinger, Levi-Strauss, Giddens and Granovetter were just some of the giants of the various disciplines upon whose shoulders later theorists stood.

From a research perspective, criticisms of the construct are important to identify. For example, Uzzi (1997) identified the problem of attempting to combine specific economic propositions with broad statements about how social ties influence entrepreneurial actions. This led to the emergence of key research themes: structural contexts, processes and performance implications. It should be noted also that this work, at the turn of the twenty-first century, drew upon contemporary philosophical debates about the nature of structure and the ontological status of entrepreneurial processes of opportunity-seeking or discovery depending upon which side of the debate one seated oneself (outlined in Chell, 2008). These debates were further enriched by a consideration of multi-level theorising in entrepreneurship (see Karataş-Özkan and Chell, 2010; Karataş-Özkan, 2011) and the writings of theorists such as Bourdieu who maintained a practical import to their work (Özbilgin and Tatli, 2005). In this regard reading Forson et al. (Chapter 4) is to be recommended.

Research stimulated by Jack and Anderson (2002) suggested that embedding is a
bilateral process whereby mutuality, credibility, knowledge and experience are accumulated in a specific social space. This development in thinking highlights the relational dynamics but not the impetus that energises action. Here we believe further theoretical and empirical work that draws on Bourdieu’s framework including his notion of power would make an interesting and unique contribution. However, McKeever et al. suggest that informal social contexts provide a ‘moral framework which largely determines what types of behaviours are socially appropriate’—a strand of further research that readers might consider in relation to Spence (Chapter 20).

McKeever and his colleagues also point out the importance of unpacking the notion of social embeddedness within different types of structures, such as family, ethnicity, social class and gender, all of which have both facilitating and constraining aspects. A further area ripe for research which McKeever and his colleagues identify is that of the constraining influences of embeddedness. We sometimes paint too shiny a gloss on our constructs emphasising the positive aspects and overlooking the negative. This deficiency we should urgently address. It may not go as far as sampling cases of enterprise failure (see Chell, Chapter 7) but as the authors suggest, research that examines the unforeseen exit of a crucial member of staff, institutional forces that affect the market(s) in which the enterprise is embedded, ‘over embeddedness’ that may stifle economic action and result in sub-optimal performances should be encouraged.

The stage of our understanding of embeddedness and the amount of further research that should be done to enrich and deepen our knowledge of the phenomenon suggest the need for qualitative, theory-building research that may include multi-level perspectives. One such level might be the family and in this regard the work of Howorth and her colleagues (see Chapter 18) offers interesting detailed perspectives. In this way it will be possible to go beyond describing what is the case and ask the all-important why and how?

Chapter 14, Susan Mayson and Rowena Barrett: Human Resource Management and Entrepreneurship: Building Theory at the Intersection

Mayson and Barrett’s chapter addresses a timely research problem, which is to demonstrate the intersectionality between fields of HRM and entrepreneurship. In responding to the call for putting the HRM in the picture for small, growing and entrepreneurial firms, the authors highlight the importance of entrepreneurial context along the dimension of how HRM contributes to organisational performance (readers might like to compare Patterson and Kerrin’s approach, see Chapter 11 in this volume). They illustrate the application of a range of theoretical lenses in exploring the HRM in entrepreneurial contexts, such as resource-based view, social exchange theory and institutional theory.

The authors have worked tirelessly to encourage the development of research at the interface between entrepreneurship and HRM, but claim that the majority of the contribution comes from ‘one side of the ledger’, that of HRM, and that entrepreneurship scholars appear to be rather uninterested in exploring this interface. Nonetheless they have uncovered a sufficiency of papers covering specific aspects of this interface, viz: the performance link between HRM, firm performance and entrepreneurial processes; the development of Human Capital (HC) with a view to understanding better the influence of entrepreneurial behaviour within SMEs; the impact of formality and
Introduction

informality in SMEs and entrepreneurial firms and the effects of structure or lack of structure on growth, productivity and performance; the impact of single HRM practices such as training and skills development on small firm performance. Such an agenda should excite entrepreneurship scholars especially as there are many lacunae for further research. Interestingly Mayson and Barrett separate out research which has focused on the employers from that which has focused on the employees’ perspective. More multiple perspectives research in entrepreneurship should be encouraged in this post-modern age as it helps gives richness and depth to the data. In the current climate, however, developing a model of context, actions and outcomes—where context may include HRM systems (or lack of them), actions include strategic and tactical decisions, including HRM practices such as recruitment and training, and outcomes, such as productivity, growth, profitability—is what is needed to advance research in this area. Of course other methods may be adopted such as detailed case studies especially where depth of understanding and theory-building is needed.

Mayson and Barrett have thus pointed up a rich seam of potential for a considerable amount of further work which should be both fascinating and worthwhile. In this regard, they argue for moving beyond the level of theorising whereby there is an acknowledgement that small and entrepreneurial firms present a unique context for managing human resources. Due to overemphasis by entrepreneurship scholars on the opportunity creation process, an important part of the equation, which is garnering human resources, is often neglected, particularly in the context of sustainability and growth of an entrepreneurial venture. Echoing with this recognition, Mayson and Barrett remind us of the significance of HRM to explore entrepreneurial dynamism.

PART IV ENTREPRENEURSHIP, EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Chapter 15, Janice Byrne, Alain Fayolle and Olivier Toutain: Entrepreneurship Education: What We Know and What We Need to Know

Byrne and her colleagues offer a critical review of research and practice on entrepreneurship education (EE) in their chapter. They point out that entrepreneurship education as a subject domain suffers from a lack of clear theorising and organising taxonomies. They challenge ontological assumptions of entrepreneurship research by raising the questions of what, who, why and how to teach, as well as for which results? This scrutiny leads them to deal with definitional and conceptual debates surrounding entrepreneurship education, followed by context and audience. In addition to raising some uncomfortable questions about what entrepreneurship educators are doing, how they are doing it, and with what aims and objectives, this reflexive state-of-the-art chapter on entrepreneurship education offers a review of the literature clustered by five interrelated themes: state of play (the scope, evolution and institutionalisation of the field of entrepreneurship education); specific audiences and their needs; measurement and evaluation; entrepreneurial learning; and teaching methodology and mediums.

This chapter is very timely given the rapid expansion in EE during this century. Arguably entrepreneurship is not only a contact sport but rather in respect of education
it has characteristics of, say, learning to play the piano: (a) start with theory (the scales) and playing small pieces; (b) practise and gain experience; (c) test oneself; and (d) move on to more complex and challenging pieces. No one can be said to play the piano until they have mastered all such aspects. While one might think the same argument applies in EE, many educators apparently either teach from a theoretical perspective, or in practical skills (e.g. business planning) training. Indeed the authors suggest that there has in recent years been a move away from teaching about entrepreneurship (i.e. theory) to teaching for entrepreneurship (i.e. instilling personal and social skills, attributes and behaviours).

There are a number of reasons why it is still important to combine theory and practice. First, the educator should ask: Who is the intended audience? This means understanding socio-economic context especially for marginalised groups, the particular challenges that they face, and the implications for their relationality and skills set in order to meet those challenges. As many have argued in the past (Chell, 1985; Jack and Anderson, 2002) context and situation have implications for behaviour. This theme is taken up in several of the chapters in this *Handbook* from various disciplinary and topical perspectives.

The above suggests that entrepreneurship educators should reflect further on the content and design of their courses. A more comprehensive typology is required to capture the diversity of material that is the basis for entrepreneurship teaching. The dissemination of good practice is crucial to this but, the authors argue, is impeded by the fact that entrepreneurship educators are not publishing in mainstream entrepreneurship journals. The authors back up this contention by reviewing five leading entrepreneurship journals and two high-impact education reviews. They classify what they found according to the above-mentioned five themes. Many of the articles addressed more than one of these themes.

The authors identify a number of noteworthy issues for entrepreneurship educators: (a) the need for more complex taxonomies to account for the complexity of entrepreneurship educational offerings; (b) an imperative to integrate EE with concepts and models from the field of education; (c) a requirement to provide a clear and precise definition of entrepreneurship on which a non-ambiguous definition of EE may be based; and (d) an observation of a distinct absence of philosophical underpinnings to the teaching of entrepreneurship, surprising perhaps, given European philosophical traditions and, furthermore, a tendency to pursue functionalism, thus potentially linking what is known and may be taught to performance outcomes at individual and enterprise levels. Some outstanding questions include: how does the construction of entrepreneurial actions and behaviour and in particular the construction of opportunities affect EE? Should relational aspects of entrepreneurial learning be further developed and nurtured? How might EE courses be designed around how entrepreneurs think and act? How do entrepreneurship educators address the many issues of learning from failure and handling emotional aspects of entrepreneuring? These authors are not the only researchers to raise such issues (see in particular Chell, Chapter 7). However further research is urgently needed to evaluate the effectiveness of EE programmes and to assess the pedagogical transferability of experiential and relational entrepreneurial learning. Apart from an excellent review and state-of-the-art overview, Byrne and her co-authors suggest the need to create a virtuous circle aimed at sharing knowledge and including all stakeholders in EE to improve the design of courses, inform policy, support research and aid and develop educational good practice across the globe. The authors advocate a collaborative partner-
ship between these stakeholders, i.e. researchers, educators, mentors, policy-makers and learners themselves in order to render the research and practice of EE with legitimacy and effectiveness.

Chapter 16, Oswald Jones and Allan Macpherson: Research Perspectives on Learning in Small Firms

Through their state-of-the-art review of the literature of the past 30 years, Jones and Macpherson demonstrate the changes that have taken place in understanding how small firms develop by means of a process of collective, social learning and why this is so difficult to link causally to firm performance. However the authors maintain that there is convincing evidence of links between better performing firms and effective learning. This they argue is a consequence of the more sophisticated approach to training in leadership skills and business management. Furthermore they maintain that the integration of learning theory with small firm development initiatives has supported this progress. The authors offer a range of learning perspectives in their chapter and propose a framework that links individual (cognitive and behavioural) learning and social learning. This link is useful particularly in the context of the shift from a focus on individual know-how to owner-managers as part of a learning community.

Learning entrepreneurial competencies is wider than focusing on individual learning of owner-managers and this has implications for design and delivery of entrepreneurship education and training. There is no simple recipe for the management of the small firm; delivering on key management skills through training was not sufficient; it had to be more flexible and problem-oriented. Further development of the notion of entrepreneurial competencies showed that such competences enable owner-managers to develop organisational capabilities which are appropriate to the environment in which the firm is operating. But this did not resolve the problem of a purported learning-performance linkage; what it did was place emphasis on the need to encompass the firm’s environment in any theorising.

Such understanding of the complexities of small firm learning led to the development in research about ‘critical learning events’ based on the phenomenological approach to the critical incident technique (see Chell, Chapter 7). This experiential approach focused on how managers learn from day-to-day experience and includes their emotional responses to their individual learning encounter (Cope, 2003). It concerns learning by doing, lived experience and reflection on opportunities, hence problem-based action learning and critical reflection skills were thought to be crucial. This moved the research into current thinking about the social context of learning (Karataş-Özkan, 2011). The gap between individual and organisational learning needed to be addressed and this was done by introducing institutional theory. Neither individuals, nor groups nor firms learn in isolation from the institutional environment in which they are operating and embedded. Through such porosity small firm players negotiate and embed new practices within the firm.

Jones and Macpherson illustrate the application of current learning theory through the LEAD programme offered to owner-managers in 2010 and 2011 provided by Liverpool and Lancaster Universities in the UK. A key part of the programme is the reflection and sharing of experiences by participants to promote genuine social
learning. Delegates are also encouraged to think about the context of their business and what they are trying to achieve. To complete the picture these authors link six key research findings to policy and practice. This forms the basis of collective learning and a plethora of aspects of social and institutionally-based learning opportunities evident in new practices integrated and sustained within the firm. This gives a sense of the need to constantly refresh and renew rather than a static picture of small firm learning. Only then presumably will the link between organisational learning and performance be evident.

PART V APPLIED ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

Chapter 17, Sarah Lubik and Elizabeth Garnsey: Entrepreneurial Innovation in Science-based Firms: The Need for an Ecosystem Perspective

How does any firm get started? Scholars of entrepreneurship and small business have been asking this question for decades, producing models, theoretical and practical ideas, and an evidence-based upon which policy makers can make their decisions. New technology small businesses, and in particular those emanating from the university sector as spin-outs are, the authors argue, a specific subset. An ecosystem’s perspective places the firm as the unit of analysis within its environment and seeks to explore the resource endowments available to it; viewing the internal resource environment against the business and policy environment in which the nascent firm may struggle to emerge and survive. The authors take a broader view of the environment to include policy development, market, partners and the national innovation system as key influences on the survival and success of such germinal science-based ventures. Lubik and Garnsey trace the recent history of the development of science-based policy for university spin-outs in the UK, which was particularly evident in the first decade of the twenty-first century. They examine the business models which link technology developments to the realisation of scientific value. In order to achieve their core objectives, science-based ventures need to gain access to considerable resources and this, the authors claim, is often a major stumbling block. Indeed more research is needed to examine under what circumstances novel business models are effective or ineffective. To achieve this they believe qualitative research on a case-by-case basis would provide the richness of data required to get a full grasp of the issues. Further research is also needed to examine the fledgling firm’s marketing strategy, which should be a narrow niche, allowing for the development of specific technologies for specific markets. These firms need to pursue a frugal design strategy and be wise to possible risks of partnerships and alliances. In particular there is surely further research that could be carried out here to examine partners who explore opportunities and those that exploit them. Indeed perhaps there is a case for investigating cases where there is a consortium of different types of partner where the nascent firm is embedded in a network of valuable relationships in comparison with those with a narrower, say, ‘fortress’ mentality? In essence Lubik and Garnsey make a case for science-based firms building a supportive ecosystem which is primarily focused on investment, where the resources invested are not only funds but management, business and strategic expertise.
They conclude with a useful policy perspective on the issue of how science-based innovation can become an important plank in the UK’s (but presumably any country’s) growth strategy. The authors also include an invaluable table listing areas for further research in theory, methodology, policy and practice.

Chapter 18, Carole Howorth, Jacqueline Jackson and Allan Discua Cruz: Entrepreneurship in Family Businesses

Howorth and her co-authors have provided a state-of-the-art review of research in family businesses in respect of entrepreneurship theory, practice and policy. Initially they search for a definition which has eluded many researchers given the heterogeneity of the family business and settle on one which might usefully be embraced by future scholars. They go on to highlight important debating points in this field and provide an insight into key theoretical, empirical and methodological issues, exploring some of the myths and invalid assumptions which they argue plague research on family businesses. Such themes are redolent of Casson and Della Giusta (Chapter 3) and of Gherardi and Perrotta (Chapter 8) in the sense of being rigorous in carrying out research.

Due to the preponderance of family businesses, it is much more difficult for researchers to make generalisations, to understand the various contexts in which they operate and the nature and influence of family dynamics. This is both a fascination and frustration of the subject matter! These authors show just how central entrepreneurship is to family businesses but also point to gaps in research such as the need for further work on entrepreneurial succession; the impact of family dynamics on the entrepreneurial process; and incorporation of family business into mainstream management fields. The authors also address various methodological issues for family business researchers and so reading this and the chapters in this Handbook that deal with both qualitative and quantitative methods would be appropriate. Research in this field also raises the issue of multiple levels which Forson and colleagues (Chapter 4) address from a Bourdieuan perspective. Certainly there are some outstanding issues such as culture that may be dealt with in this way; considering issues of power and domination in the management of the family firm as well as day-to-day family dynamics, leadership and the exercise of entrepreneurialism and innovation.

Howorth et al.’s chapter gives a solid research basis from which further work should emanate. For example, as Howorth and her co-authors argue, research should explore emerging areas and questions with reference to relevant conceptual platforms that draw upon complementary theories, rather than reliance on a single theoretical perspective. This supports the thread of the discussion in the theoretical framing section of the Handbook.

Chapter 19, Xin Gu: Developing Entrepreneur Networks in the Creative Industries – A Case Study of Independent Designer Fashion in Manchester

Xin Gu’s chapter picks up a number of themes that have interlaced themselves throughout this Handbook; notably, qualitative research methods; social networking; and the embeddedness of small firms, and also touches on the impact of local institutions on small firm behaviour (see Chell, Chapter 7, McKeever et al. Chapter 13 and Karataş-Özkan and her colleagues, Chapter 5). Gu is concerned to develop a depth of understanding of social networking in the creative industries and in particular fashion design,
based in Manchester, UK—a centre with deep historical roots in the textile and clothing industry. Her main focus is on the relationship aspects of social networks, how this enables the development of a culture and identity for fashion designers and their small enterprises and how culture tends to override business issues. The fragmentation of the industry in the Manchester region, where almost 70 per cent of fashion designers are self-employed, suggests two issues: a lack of power and influence by the many; and a question of what constitutes entrepreneurial behaviour in this sector. If it is creativity, what does this imply for definitions of entrepreneurs and the self-employed in other sectors?

Gu brings out the embedded nature of small firms in this socially networked sector, where friendship and community form the links in the network, blurring the edges between formal (business) and informal friendship relations. She shows how different ‘doing business’ is in the fashion design sector and from the outside looking in, how support and policy-making agencies viewed the industry as ‘flaky’ comprising by and large lifestyle cottage businesses. Gu argues that these creative entrepreneurs do not reject the idea of business success but want it on their own terms. What was aesthetically pleasing was fundamental to their brand-building strategy and overrode other considerations. High quality and craft skill was not only crucial to the product but also to the entrepreneur’s sense of identity. Further, it is that uncertainty that pervades all small business but in particular creative business that Gu argues is the main reason for relationship building through affective bonding. Not only does this present a network of like-minded people but it is also built on the principles of trust and reputation.

In line with several other authors in this Handbook, Gu demonstrates how context matters, showing for example from a policy perspective how the newly formed Manchester Fashion Network met the fashion designer’s need for a non-standard business network built on personal relationships, for facilitation rather than direction. Moreover the industrial context in which the fashion designers felt relatively powerless also suggests a crossover with Forson et al. (Chapter 4) and, in particular, the work of Bourdieu.

Chapter 20, Laura J. Spence: Business Ethics and Social Responsibility in Small Firms

Departing from the premise that business is a social and moral terrain (Jackall, 1988), Laura Spence provides a state-of-the-art review of ethical issues researched in respect of small business and entrepreneurship. She then usefully discusses current understanding of ethics and social responsibility in the small business. However there are many ethical theories which Spence then presents and usefully nominates just two ethics frameworks—moral proximity and social care—through which she explains their essence and application in small firms. This review has the advantages of being integrative—integrating large disparate bodies of literature—and focused on how particular ethics frameworks show particular relevance to known attributes of small firms, such as family business, relationship-orientation and social embeddedness (note potential research links with Howorth et al. (Chapter 18) and McKeever et al. (Chapter 13)). As Spence claims, it breaks down silos—an objective of several authors in this Handbook—and offers two theoretical avenues for future SME, ethics and social responsibility research thus facilitating the all-important accumulation of knowledge in this
developing field. Furthermore, Spence identifies an important research gap which is related to the theorisation process in this area. She calls for going beyond the empirical description of social and ethical issues in small firms and moving towards explaining the phenomena observed. She raises issues about the dominance of empirical research conducted in developed country contexts, mainly in Europe. She highlights the importance of informal economy and the implications for ethics research, challenging very fundamental assumptions about what is ethical. In presenting future research directions, she also cites the family firm as an interesting context and as an under-researched area from an ethics perspective. This is a fertile area to apply ethics of care and moral proximity lenses as she has discussed in her chapter. Her discussion implies not only these research directions but also policy and practice consequences. She argues that large firm decentralisation resulting in emulation of a small firm context has implications for ethics and creates challenges for business leaders and managers. In alignment with the corporate social responsibility paradigm and related trends, her chapter also highlights the importance of a nuanced and context-sensitive (large versus small firm context) approach to policy-making.

Chapter 21, Anne de Bruin, Eleanor Shaw and Dominic Chalmers: Social Entrepreneurship: Looking Back, Moving Ahead

De Bruin and colleagues offer an interesting read on social entrepreneurship (SE) by examining the phenomenon in the complex milieu of political and socio-economic developments across the globe. They argue that heterogeneous geo-political and socio-cultural contexts underpin the development of the SE phenomenon. This implies that the drivers for SE are highly context-dependent. SE has its origins in the politics of liberal conservatism away from state involvement in solving social problems. However, the seeds of social entrepreneurship were sown in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the philanthropy of wealthy industrialists. In this vein the authors trace the historical roots of SE, outlining the change in socio-economic conditions and the rejection of Keynesian economics which influenced successive governments into finding non-statist solutions to welfare and public service problems. The authors critique the ‘Big Society’ discourse created by the recent Coalition Government in the UK, by raising the issue of shrinking the state through drastic cuts in government budgets and social enterprise being ‘misused’ as a substitute for the provision of public and social services.

This political view was not confined to the UK but is apparent in both developed and emerging economies, notably China. The Global Economic Crisis of 2008 has merely acted to heighten the problem, revealing large swathes of world poverty and vast differences in lifestyle between the wealthy and the very poor. Whilst this scenario is well documented the question is can social entrepreneurship provide solutions? Is SE a sufficiently robust paradigm? Can it provide socially innovative solutions to the world’s most intractable social problems? De Bruin and her colleagues explore the literature on social entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurship in search of solutions. As ever in entrepreneurship, the lack of a unifying definition poses problems for those who want to move forward. The language of ‘opportunity’ that has typified research in entrepreneurship more broadly suggests an individualistic endeavour whereas for social entrepreneurs the driving force is the social need. This implies that SE involves
the innovative, socially-oriented development of opportunities for social value creation. How should researchers frame their work into social enterprise? De Bruin et al. suggest a resource-based perspective driven by social innovation, though acknowledging the contentious nature of the definition of ‘social innovation’. Perhaps we have to come to terms with the notion that all innovations and inventions can be used for good or ill? The research question, however, is: Is it possible to solve this dark side of social innovation, for example, where micro-finance initiatives can be implemented in an exploitative manner? The issue of ‘conflicts of interest’ perhaps should be just as much an integral part of theorising social entrepreneurship as of capitalism itself? Traditional approaches (viz. neo-liberal economic orthodoxy) have failed, leaving space for social innovators to devise creative solutions to market failure. The establishment of social innovation hubs and centres across the world suggests that social innovation is no longer a buzzword but an enduring term.

One important contribution of this chapter is that the authors present social innovation as an evolution of the concept of social entrepreneurship by highlighting the socio-political nature of these phenomena and they encourage interdisciplinary research to address an array of research problems in this sub-domain of entrepreneurship. De Bruin et al. conclude by outlining a rich and diverse research agenda which ties into specific chapters in this volume. For example, such a research agenda should comprise: analysing systems of institutional entrepreneurship and social innovation using an institutional theory approach (c.f. Karataş-Özkan et al., Chapter 5)); analysing social innovation using complexity and resilience theories; using embeddedness and agency theory (cf. McKeever et al. (Chapter 13)); adopt a cross-country comparative approach (cf. Chell et al., 2011) and include a comparative study of support environments; examine SE through a relational approach (Hjorth, 2010) in particular focusing on the role of stakeholders; carry out research on under-researched areas such as eco-entrepreneurship; and seek to improve our understanding of the workings of SE through more empirical evidence. Finally these authors suggest that SE researchers have a social responsibility to develop practical and meaningful implications of their work; there is no part in SE for dry theorising for its own sake.

FINAL WORD

Assembling this Handbook has been an adventure, and like all adventures it has had its ups and downs, its lows and highs. But having arrived at our destination we are thrilled by the journey and the themes that have emerged and provide links to what superficially appear to be different subject matters. These themes integrate the Handbook in a way that is satisfying and we believe will encourage researchers to move beyond the comfort zone of the confines of their particular research topic, and encourage further research that will cross the boundaries of conceptual silos derived from source disciplines.

Given the past decades’ explosion of scholarship in entrepreneurship, we are bound to raise the question, when will the Academy of Management and the British Academy of Management begin to recognise that entrepreneurship may be coming of age, and that perhaps it is timely to recognise it as a discipline and not simply an area or field of interest? We can only pose the question; it is for others to debate and take forward.
Finally we hope that all who delve into the pages of this Handbook will enjoy reading the chapters as much as we have done. We commend the work of our authors to you and look forward to further research emanating from the advice of our authors and the gaps in the literature that they so skilfully uncover.

REFERENCES


