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# Classics in Entrepreneurship Research: Enduring Insights, Future Promises

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**A**cademic inquiry into entrepreneurial phenomena has had a rich history over several decades and continues to evolve. This editorial draws attention to the classics: seminal articles that make profound contributions to the development of an academic field in entrepreneurship studies. We focus on the formative years of entrepreneurship research, specifically the 1970s and 1980s, to identify classics using a key informant approach that surveys members of the journal editorial board. Each nominated classic is introduced and discussed by an editorial board member, with particular focus on research opportunities that may be pursued going forward. Analyzing classics allows for the recognition of substantive advances in entrepreneurship research and provides an opportunity to delve into the academic progress achieved in understanding entrepreneurial phenomena.

**Keywords:** classics; foundation; entrepreneurship; historical perspective

Entrepreneurship is a young academic field (Low, 2001; Chiles, Bluedorn, & Gupta, 2007), with the first academic book on entrepreneurship appearing in the 1930s and the first academic presentation in the 1950s (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Starting from humble beginnings, entrepreneurship research gradually gained momentum as the field increasingly acquired more legitimacy. Prominent business schools, including Harvard and Wharton, commenced entrepreneurship courses, endowed chairs in entrepreneurship got funded, conferences and journals dedicated to entrepreneurship came into operation and rapidly acquired traction, and the Academy of Management transitioned entrepreneurship from a special interest group to division status (Bygrave, 2007). As a result of these developments, entrepreneurship became a popular field of serious academic inquiry, with a growing community of researchers across a broad spectrum of scholarly disciplines.

Given the increasing popularity of the academic field of entrepreneurship, the editors of *New England Journal of Entrepreneurship* thought it was time to identify articles that may be considered classics within the discipline. We defined a classic as a foundational article that was first published before 1980, addressed ideas that are still relevant to the field, and subsequently spawned follow-up research that still resonates in the field. The editors were motivated in part by Bygrave's (2007: 23) admonition to the field to look back at the articles published in the early days for the "profound" effect they had on subsequent research on entrepreneurial phenomena. Another motivation stemmed from the realization that other social science fields, including disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and economics, readily recognize and appreciate original classics, which have played a critical role in advancement of the respective fields. Entrepreneurship researchers, however, have not yet identified the classics in the field, an issue that the editors at this journal sought to redress.

There are many ways to identify classics in a field of research. We decided to adopt a simple, yet elegant procedure to come up with a list of articles that may be considered classics in entrepreneurship research. More specifically, we asked each member of the journal's editorial team to nominate a research article they believed made a foundational contribution to entrepreneurship research within their field of expertise. In other words, we tasked the editorial team with the identification of classic articles in entrepreneurship studies based on their knowledge of the field and the advice of their close colleagues and collaborators. We required that the nominated articles be from the 1970s or 1980s. There were three major reasons for focusing on this particular time period. First, the 1970s and 1980s was a time when early works on entrepreneurship appeared, so that by the 1990s

entrepreneurship had gained considerable legitimacy within the academy (Landström, 2015). The prestigious Babson Entrepreneurship Research Conference began during this period, and the *Journal of Business Venturing* and *Small Business Economics* were also founded in this time (Bygrave, 2007). Second, focusing on this time period eliminated the chance that editors may nominate their own work as classic. Finally, the distance in time allowed us to test the relevance of these works based on the endurance of their ideas over time. Despite some initial concerns about the constraints imposed by this time period, it was well embraced by the editorial team. The selection of the studies and the criteria by which they were considered to be classics were entirely at the discretion of each of the editors, and the expertise within their network of collaborators.

There are seven individuals associated with the journal in an editorial capacity, so we had a total of seven articles nominated as classics. The nominations proved to be interesting and revealing. Not one editor could claim to have had previously read all the seven nominated articles, reflecting the diversity of research interests in the journal editorial team, and the need for a work of this nature to exist as a point of reference for future scholarship within the field of entrepreneurship. Table 1 presents a list of the nominated articles along with the number of citations it has received on Google Scholar as well as Web of Science. Google Scholar reflects the popular and global impact of each work; Web of Science reflects a more purist understanding of scholarship work, framed by Western privilege that comes from the necessary munificence of institutional resources required to maintain this access.

**Table 1. Classic Entrepreneurship Papers** (published during 1970s and 80s)

S. No.	Nominating Editor	Author and Year	Journal	Article Title	GS Citation	WoS Citation 2016
1	Guo	Ket De Vries, 1977	JMS	The entrepreneurial personality: A person at the crossroads	748	N/A
2	Osorio	Pennings, 1982	AMJ	The urban quality of life and entrepreneurship	99	25
3	Jiang	Miller, 1983	MS	The correlates for entrepreneurship in three types of firms	3511	N/A
4	Dutta	Gartner, 1985	AMR	A conceptual framework for describing the phenomenon of new venture creation	2744	521
5	Ozkazanc-Pan	Bowen & Hisrich, 1986	AMR	The female entrepreneur: A career development perspective	442	104
6	Javadian	Bird, 1988	AMR	Implementing entrepreneurial ideas: The case of intentions	1756	308
7	Gupta	Covin & Slevin, 1989	SMJ	Strategic Management of small firms in hostile and benign environments	3732	884

GS Citation: Google Citation; WoS Citation 2016: Web of Science total citations by April 2016

We also asked each editorial member to provide a brief write-up of a scholarly reflection about the article they nominated. Our guideline asked each editor to include in their respective summary, the reasons why they considered their particular article a classic, as well as what could be considered the future research expectations emanating from, and informed by their nominated article. We also agreed, collectively, to keep our individual write-ups short, yet with enough details for help other scholars to become acquainted with the relevance of the article. In addition, we agreed to discuss new ideas on what kind of novel research can sprout from the selected classics. The write-up about each classic article constitutes the remainder of this article. We discuss below the classics in a chronological order. It is worth reiterating that each article was selected because it was considered foundational on its own merits in a distinct area of entrepreneurship. We conclude with a discussion of the limitations and implications of our efforts to identify classics in entrepreneurship research.

### **A Brief Journey into the Nominated Classics**

#### ***Ket De Vries (1977), *Entrepreneur as a Person at the Crossroads****

The role of individuals in the entrepreneurship process as well as the impact of the budding business venture and environment on entrepreneurial activities have been extensively studied in the field of entrepreneurship. Early entrepreneurship studies focused on developing a psychological profile of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurs were perceived to be significantly different from nonentrepreneurs in terms of their backgrounds and personality traits (Gartner, 1985). Later studies, acknowledging the importance of the context in which entrepreneurial activities occur, focused on how entrepreneurs respond to their environments.

Researchers (e.g., Low & MacMillan, 1988) argue that entrepreneurship is a multifaceted phenomenon and hence a synthesized view should be adopted. For example, Gartner (1985) provided an integrated framework for describing new venture creation that included entrepreneurial individuals, process, environment, and organization. Shane and Venkataraman (2000) in their theorization of opportunity-based entrepreneurship defined the study of entrepreneurship as the scholarly examination of how, by whom, and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated, and exploited" (p. 218). Such definition and theorization focus on how

entrepreneurial individuals interact with their environments on various entrepreneurial activities as they create new business ventures.

Indeed, a synthesized view was presented in Ket De Vries's (1977) article, with the entrepreneur being described as a person at the crossroads. In this article, the author examined social, economic, and psychodynamic forces that can influence entrepreneurship. At the individual level, Ket De Vries (1977) proposed three functions an entrepreneur fulfills: innovation, management–coordinating, and risk-taking. He also discussed personality traits common among entrepreneurs including the desire to take personal responsibility for decisions, preference for moderate degree of risk, and a high need for achievement. In addition, Ket De Vries (1977) pointed out that entrepreneurs are not a homogenous group and therefore different types of entrepreneurs—such as craftsman entrepreneurs and opportunistic entrepreneurs—exist. This article was a forerunner in that it discussed the emergence of a new type of entrepreneurs—internal entrepreneurs and the existence of “internal entrepreneurship” in large bureaucratic organizations that involves creation of new product ventures and new technology divisions in existing companies (p. 43). The author identified social and economic factors that can give rise to entrepreneurship: ones' social status (e.g., ethnic minority or immigrants), family background (e.g., having a father who is self-employed), and change in institutional patterns and environment (e.g., industry) turbulence. Moreover, Ket De Vries (1977) emphasized family dynamics and one's childhood and upbringing in his theoretical analysis. Lastly, he highlighted the importance of entrepreneurial organization not only as a tangible reality of personal success but also a business entity that is of emotional significance to entrepreneurs.

Ket De Vries's (1977) review was a pioneer at a time when research on entrepreneurship was in its infancy. His integrated view of entrepreneurship with attention to the individual, organization, and environment was further extended in later studies such as Gartner (1985) and Shane and Venkataraman (2000). Ket De Vries (1977) was among the first to direct the attention to internal entrepreneurship, an important research topic in later studies called corporate entrepreneurship (e.g., Sharma and Chrisman, 1999). He also proposed a novel analysis of the role of

family dynamics and one's childhood experience in the emergence of entrepreneurship and demonstrated the entrepreneur's family of origin (Dyer & Handler, 1994).

As we continue to explore the myths and the phenomena of entrepreneurship, it would be wise for us to bear in mind this classic writing and theorization by Ket De Vries (1977). The interest in studying the interactions among individual, family, organization, and environment is evident in more recent research on, for example, the role of human capital in technological entrepreneurship (e.g., Wright, Hmieleski, Siegel, & Ensley, 2007), the research on venture creation and entrepreneurial intent (e.g., Shook, Priem, & McGee, 2003), and the research on work-conflict and psychological well-being of entrepreneurs (e.g., Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001). From this perspective, future research should carry Ket De Vries's (1977) insights forward in explicating the nexus of these important components of entrepreneurship.

### **Pennings (1982), The Urban Quality of Life and Entrepreneurship**

According to a report from the World Health Organization, as of 2010 already more than half of the global population live in urban areas understood as geographical spaces of higher population density and vast human features in comparison with the surrounding areas (Global Health Observatory, 2010). The same report suggests that this percentage will surpass 70 percent by 2050 as the process of urbanization builds. This estimate presents urban spaces as locations with above average contiguous concentrations of human populations often with access to basic services. Yet this understanding of urban does not speak of the quality of life in that space. Pennings (1982) can be considered as the first scholar to make the link between entrepreneurial outcomes and the different types of urban environments, thus recognizing that not all urban spaces have the same allure for entrepreneurship. In doing so, he opened the conversation to later works such as Porter's (1995) work on the competitive advantage of the inner city, Markusen's (1996; 2005) ideas of urban development and businesses, and on the arguments of the creative class by Richard Florida (2002).

Penning's work has served, directly or indirectly, to frame ideas such as the integration and collaboration of business and communities (Birla, 2006; Blowfield, 2007; Dearlove, 2002; Ellis, 2001; Karnani, 2008), cities as the organizational extension of business (e.g., Forman &

Goldfarb, 2008; Hillman & Keim, 2001), urban places as an organizationally manageable space (e.g., Buschmann & Coletta, 2009), and the organization of the community as a single economic unit to achieve socioeconomic sustainability (e.g., Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). This work on urban entrepreneurship also set precedents on methodology that identify different types of local munificence as sources of local entrepreneurship (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994; Specht, 1993). Linking munificence and entrepreneurship, Penning opens a conversation on principles of venture creation (e.g., Amezcua, Grimes, Bradley, & Wiklund, 2013; Gartner, 1985) as well as entrepreneurial ecosystems (e.g., Aldrich, 1990; Marin-Aguilar & Vila-López, 2014).

Findings in this article can become pivotal for future research in entrepreneurship as the number of urban dwellers increases and environmental issues take the forefront in communities. Original findings suggest a negative relationship between entrepreneurship and environmental issues where pristine environments may deter entrepreneurship under certain conditions. Likewise findings at the industry level hint at the need for further research on the impact of zoning, lobbying, and advocacy at the industry level. Furthermore, the original analysis on urban spaces looks at ventures as externalities to their environment thus environmental factors are only considered as resources to the venture rather than elements encouraging the actions of the entrepreneur. Complementing this resource-based perspective, new research may consider resources and ventures not as externalities to the venture but as part of the venture itself or a network (Osorio, Ozkazanc-Pan, & Donnelly, 2015). Likewise, future work can consider that environmental elements are also part and parcel of the venture itself (Calás, Smircich, & Bourne, 2009). Finally, using this work and its original findings, new venues of research can be developed to explore how societal trends impact entrepreneurial spaces as we move into a society where pristine environments are now the ideal space for lifestyle entrepreneurs and technology entrepreneurship may focus on preserving these spaces rather than avoiding them, as originally done.

## Miller (1983), The Correlates for Entrepreneurship in Three Types of Firms

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) has been an interesting topic for entrepreneurship scholars in past decades because under the rubric of corporate entrepreneurship, EO explores origination and implementation of firm strategic behavior. EO literature has been explored over the past three decades and the conversation of EO now exceeds the broader topic of corporate entrepreneurship.

Most scholars agree that three foundational and pioneering works on EO are Mintzberg (1973), Khandwalla (1977) and Miller (1983) (see Basso, Fayolle, & Bouchard, 2009 for a review). Mintzberg (1973) first proposed 'entrepreneurial mode' of firms' strategic decision-making and discussed how top managers commit organizations to 'bold courses of action'. Later, Khandwalla (1977) reinforced the importance of the top managers in pursuing and constructing strategic decisions.

Miller (1983) is a critical piece in the history of entrepreneurship because it introduced the conceptualization of entrepreneurial firms, encompassing three EO dimensions—innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness—which allow researchers to measure the degree of entrepreneurial behavior and examine the EO–performance relationship. The concept of EO advanced the field in understanding what it means, in a practical or behavioral sense, for a firm to be entrepreneurial (Miller, 2011). A behavioral model of entrepreneurship promotes discussion on how behaviors rather than attributes constitute the entrepreneurial process (Covin & Slevin, 1991). Miller (1983) suggested that firm-level entrepreneurship should exhibit all three behaviors with some degree of simultaneity (Anderson & Covin, 2014). Since then, a significant number of researchers have used this construct to measure the EO–performance relationship.

Miller (1983) also acknowledged a different approach in understanding what makes a firm entrepreneurial. Specifically, he examined how senior managers' decision-making may influence firm strategy and such an influence could be contingent upon the nature of the organization and its environment. In particular, Miller emphasized that "what is most important is not who is the critical actor, but the *process* of entrepreneurship itself and the organizational factors which foster or impede it" (Miller, 1983: 770; emphasis in original). Miller's approach linked

senior manager's predisposition toward entrepreneurial decision-making with firm strategy and the dynamic environment.

Later on, Covin and Slevin (1989) and Lumpkin and Dess (1996) advanced our understanding of EO; in particular, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) proposed multidimensional views of EO with autonomy and competitive aggressiveness recognized as additional important dimensions of the construct, therefore shedding more light on the original Miller (1983) work of unidimensional or composite construct.

Miller's (1983) work therefore advances the field with the notion that firms can "be entrepreneurial" because they engage in innovative, proactive, and risk-taking strategic behaviors. The unique linkage of individual characteristics (senior managers), firm strategy and performance, and environmental dynamism makes Miller (1983) a ground-breaking piece.

## Gartner (1985), A Conceptual Framework for Describing New Venture Creation

In 1985, Bill Gartner published a paper in the *Academy of Management Review* that attempted to offer a holistic framework for examining the new venture. In subsequent years, this paper has helped progress research and understanding of entrepreneurship as a distinct domain of inquiry.

Gartner's paper began with the observation that most of the then prevailing research on entrepreneurship was premised on two broad assumptions: (1) that entrepreneurs are different from nonentrepreneurs and (2) that entrepreneurial firms are different from nonentrepreneurial firms. Such a classification, he reasoned, is simplistic: in practice, the difference among entrepreneurial firms tends to be far greater than either differences between entrepreneurs and nonentrepreneurs or entrepreneurial versus nonentrepreneurial firms. As such, Gartner proposed that it would be valuable to recognize the diversity among entrepreneurs and their ventures by examining a wider set of parameters and then classifying entrepreneurial ventures into groups or clusters based on these parameters. Adopting Miller's (1981) idea of the new venture as a gestalt, Gartner (1985) proposed a novel framework that would distinguish new ventures along four dimensions: individual(s), process,

environment, and organization. Additionally, based on findings of previous research, he identified within each dimension a series of specific characteristics that could be utilized to differentiate among clusters of new ventures. He suggested that such an approach would allow new ventures to be viewed as “a kaleidoscope... [enabling researchers] to identify specific variables that describe how each new venture was created, in order that meaningful contrasts and comparisons among new ventures can be made” (p. 701). In turn, he opined such an approach would help arrive at a more informed understanding of underlying factors that explicate the diversity among entrepreneurial firms, explain conflicting empirical results, as well as lead to development and adoption of robust methodologies to conduct research in this arena and report study findings.

Insights laid out in Gartner (1985) turned out to be immensely valuable in providing a roadmap for follow-up entrepreneurship research, thus helping the field emerge from the shadows of sister disciplines such as management and strategy. Subsequent researchers took up all four dimensions identified by Gartner (1985) and examined them to lay a strong foundation for the field. For example, in their paper defining the promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research, Shane and Venkataraman (2000) highlighted the importance of Gartner’s (1985) work, especially the processual aspects that serve as important elements to distinguish among entrepreneurial firms. Bruyat and Julien (2001) took the insight from Gartner’s (1985) framework specifically to suggest the interaction between an enterprising individual (or the entrepreneur) and the environment as a process that evolves and helps build what the authors classified as “new value creation,” and with the individual and the new object being created acting as dialogic elements of such a process. Similarly, Bhave (1994) utilized thoughts from Gartner (1985) to focus on the entrepreneurial process *per se*. In his work, he developed a comprehensive model of how such a process evolves over the nascent stages of the new venture, going from opportunity identification through technology setup and organization creation to market exchange and customer interaction.

With regard to the individual dimension of Gartner’s (1985) framework, follow-up research has branched off into several streams, of which at least two are most significant: psychological aspects of entrepreneurship (e.g., Hisrich, Langan-Fox & Grant, 2007; Rauch & Frese,

2000; Shaver & Scott, 1991) and entrepreneurial intention and cognition (Bird, 1988; Gregoire, Corbett & McMullen, 2010). Similarly, on the organizational dimension, an expanding stream of research has emerged with regard to identification of firm-level characteristics that distinguish between entrepreneurial and nonentrepreneurial firms and among entrepreneurial firms themselves. A large part of the research elaborating the impact of Gartner’s (1985) organizational dimension has been classified under the burgeoning research on entrepreneurial orientation as a construct of significance, which examines the impact of firm-level behavioral characteristics such as risk-taking, proactiveness, innovativeness, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness on firm performance, survival, and growth (Covin & Slevin, 1989; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin & Frese, 2009). Lastly, some research emerging has begun to consider the fourth dimension of Gartner’s (1985) framework: the role and impact of the environment on entrepreneurship (Edelman & Yli-Renko, 2010; Zahra & Covin, 1995; Zahra & Garvis, 2000).

To summarize, it can be said that Gartner’s (1985) seminal paper on the one hand served to identify the relative weaknesses of prior approaches to examining new venture research and on the other hand helped lay out a robust framework to facilitate research on entrepreneurial firms along four critical dimensions to explain variation and diversity among them. In subsequent years, the framework was enthusiastically embraced by entrepreneurship scholars to guide their own research, though with varying degrees of adoption. Considering research that followed publication of Gartner’s (1985) paper, it may be said that the framework had the most significant influence on subsequent research with regard to insights relating to the individual and organizational dimensions. In comparison, the impact of insights offered through the process and environment dimensions have been relatively less spectacular. In conclusion, therefore, it may be said that the process and environment dimensions are areas of the Gartner framework that hold the highest potential for further exploration through incorporation into a range of research questions, designs, and methodologies in the future.



## **Bowen and Hisrich (1986), The Female Entrepreneur: A Career Development Perspective**

At the time of its publication three decades ago, Bowen and Hisrich's (1986) article was one of the first to address and examine the notion of women's entrepreneurship and focus attention exclusively on female entrepreneurs. Their work was seminal for bringing together, through a career development perspective, what had previously been disjunctive studies and approaches to the study of women entrepreneurs. Their work offered a comprehensive framework for understanding the entrepreneurial behavior of women through a careful outline of impacts and influences on women's ability and choices in pursuing entrepreneurship. In doing so, they offered the entrepreneurship field a first glance at why and how women become engaged in entrepreneurship.

In more recent times, the focus on women's entrepreneurship has blossomed but compared to the majority of entrepreneurship work this still represents a small fraction of the field. To this end, a number of influential studies have emerged in recent decades including those focusing on specific challenges women face in entrepreneurship ranging from psychological barriers such as gender stereotypes to structural barriers such as access to capital (De Bruin et al., 2007; Brush & Edelman, 2000; Carter et al., 2003; Gupta et al., 2008; Sullivan & Meek, 2012; Sweida & Reichard, 2013; Thebaud, 2010). In addition to these approaches, some work has adopted a critical perspective to highlight and question gendered assumptions guiding entrepreneurship research (Ahl, 2004, 2006; Ahl & Marlow, 2012; Bird & Brush, 2002; Bourne, 2010; Brush, de Bruin, & Welter 2009; Calás et al., 2009; Muntean & Ozkazanc-Pan, 2015; Mirchandani, 1999; Robb & Watson, 2012). Thus, the field of women's entrepreneurship is becoming richer through the various different perspectives adopted by scholars ranging from micro-level psychological dimensions, to meso-level organizational issues, and macro-level structural and societal elements.

Future research in this area can extend these lines of inquiry. However, rather than doing so in a piecemeal fashion, the emphasis should be on understanding the interdependencies across these levels and how they might create challenges unique for women entrepreneurs across differences of race, ethnicity, education, and so forth. Furthermore, future work can also examine how

different ecosystems foster women's entrepreneurship through multilevel analyses of all stakeholders including entrepreneurs, support organizations, and policy makers (see Watkins et al., 2015). Doing so will allow for a deeper understanding of entrepreneurship and allow for actionable policies to redress inequities facing women engaged in business.

## **Bird (1988), Implementing Entrepreneurial Ideas: The Case for Intentions**

Since the 1980s, the subject of entrepreneurial intentions has been among the most researched topics in the field of entrepreneurship, and has provided scholars with a powerful theoretical framework (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015). Shapero and Sokol (1982) and Shapero (1984) initiated the discussion of entrepreneurial intentions by highlighting the influence of social, political, and economic variables on entrepreneurial intentions. Subsequently, Katz and Gartner (1988) investigated the role of the entrepreneur's intentions (as well as other stakeholders' intentions) on new and existing ventures. However, Bird's (1988) seminal publication was the first to examine the topic of entrepreneurial intentions through cognitive perspectives, and offered a psychological model to explain how entrepreneurial intentions are formed. Bird's work is considered a classic for several reasons. For one, it is the first study on entrepreneurial intentions that attempts to go beyond descriptive studies to offer a systematic approach to differentiate entrepreneurship from strategic management (Bird, 1988). Second, it is among the earliest studies to bring cognitive perspectives into the analysis of entrepreneurship. Cognitive research is specifically important to entrepreneurship because it provides crucial insights into key aspects of the entrepreneurial process (Baron, 2004). Finally, Bird makes a clear distinction between entrepreneurial intentions and similar concepts, such as goal setting and the manager's intentions in established firms. By means of these distinctions, she helped establish entrepreneurial intention as a separate field of research with its own theoretical framework.

In her model, Bird explains how entrepreneurial intentions are formed based on certain factors, including the entrepreneurs' needs, values, wants, habits, and beliefs. These factors result in the entrepreneur creating and maintaining a temporal tension, sustaining strategic focus, and developing a strategic posture. Bird also explains how intentionality is a result of both rational

and intuitive thinking, which are influenced by contextual and personal factors. Since Bird's publication, an increasing number of studies have been published based on her model of entrepreneurial intention. Some of these studies focus on improving Bird's model by adding other cognitive components and perspectives into the model (e.g. Boyd & Vozikis, 1994; Krueger, 2007, 2009). Other research has been focused on the factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions. Improvisation (Hmieleski & Corbett, 2006), entrepreneurial education (Souitaris, Zerbinati, & Al-Laham, 2007; Pittaway & Cope, 2007; Wilson, Kickul, & Marlino, 2007), risk perception (Segal, Borgia, & Schoenfeld 2005), prior family exposure to entrepreneurship (Carr & Sequeira, 2007), and gender stereotypes (Gupta et al., 2008) are all among the identified factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions.

Although the subject of entrepreneurial intentions has grown rapidly as a field of study, there is still room for additional research. A very important component of Bird's argument is the impact of intentionality on entrepreneurial action in terms of both venture creation and venture growth. Although several studies (e.g., Kolvereid & Isaken, 2006; Kautonen, Van Gelderen, & Tornikoski 2013) have examined the relationship between venture creation intention and the actual creation of venture, very few studies (with the exception of Kolvereid & Bullvag, 1996) have examined the process through which an entrepreneur's growth intentions influence the growth of the venture. In addition, with the rise of social entrepreneurship research, scholars may benefit from Bird's model to gain a better understanding of both social entrepreneurship intentions and sustainable entrepreneurship intentions, two areas that have yet to be researched in greater depth (Liñán & Fayoll, 2015).

### **Covin and Slevin (1989), Strategic Management of Small Firms in Hostile and Benign Environment**

A quick glance through the entrepreneurship articles published in top-tier peer-reviewed journals reveals a lively discussion developing around the topic of entrepreneurial orientation, generally referred to as EO. Common definitions of EO conceive it as a firm-level construct capturing the managerial tendencies and decision-making philosophies that are entrepreneurial in nature (Covin & Lumpkin, 2011). Basso, Fayolle, and Bouchard (2009: 313) observe that EO "seems to be one of the few examples of stabilized concepts in management science." While the origins of EO scholarship can be rightly traced back

to the works of Khandwalla (1976) and Miller (1983), it is not commonly realized that research in this area truly began in earnest with the publication of Covin and Slevin (1989). Given the proliferation of EO-related research in entrepreneurship, management, and other disciplines such as marketing and tourism studies (Gupta & Gupta, 2015), it seems justified to nominate Covin and Slevin (1989) as an original classic in entrepreneurship studies. To give credit where it is due, our nomination follows Wales, Gupta, and Mousa (2013) who used SSCI citations as a basis for considering Covin and Slevin (1989) an entrepreneurship classic.

Several excellent reviews of EO scholarship have been published in recent years (Gupta & Gupta, 2015; Wales, Gupta, & Mousa, 2013; Wales, 2016). A common theme across these reviews, and others (e.g., George, 2011; Lumpkin & Dess, 2005) is that EO remains a fertile topic of inquiry. The popular appeal of EO seems to stem from its ability to speak to one of the most critical managerial questions: Why do some firms perform better than others? EO purports to explain superior firm performance as stemming from a firm's decision-making policies, managerial practices, and behavioral activities that are entrepreneurial in nature. To capture EO, Covin and Slevin (1989) emphasized the three dimensions of risk-taking, proactiveness, and innovativeness, developing a nine-item scale to assess a firm's strategic commitment to entrepreneurship. Since then, the EO-performance link has emerged as the most studied relationship in the EO literature (Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin, & Frese, 2009), with new contributions continuing to illuminate the performance consequences of EO from novel perspectives. In addition to the main effect of EO on firm performance, scores of studies have examined internal and external contingencies that may impinge on this relationship. Notably, support for predictions about EO effects has been found outside the United States as well, with Sweden and China among prominent examples of countries where EO research has been done. So prolific has been the research on EO over the years that the number of manuscripts now published on the topic of EO exceed that of articles examining the broader topic of corporate entrepreneurship (Wales, 2016).

Despite years of research, the EO literature continues to generate excitement about several promising research questions worthy of future research. We mention three research endeavors here that we believe engender

directly from Covin and Slevin (1989). One crucial area within EO research that has received little attention so far is the mechanisms through which EO translates into firm performance—in other words, mediators linking EO with firm performance. Another critical issue in the EO literature pertains to elaborating the theoretical foundations for the EO-performance relation. Currently, the positive EO-performance relation is accepted either on faith or on the basis of empirical evidence, but little conceptual rationale is offered to justify it. Finally, there is an emerging debate within the literature as to whether the dimensions of EO are additive in nature as has generally been assumed (Kuratko, 2007) or may actually be multiplicative (Slevin & Terjesen, 2011) or even geometric (Gupta, 2015). These are all exciting questions that scholars need to grapple with going forward, but they are only the proverbial tip of the iceberg as the EO literature is replete with new and engaging possibilities for further research (e.g., Wiklund & Shepherd, 2011).

## Discussion

Entrepreneurship is a vibrant academic field with a rich history. With the goal of recognizing some of the key articles that advanced research in the early years of inquiry on entrepreneurial phenomena, we set out to identify and discuss classics that helped lay the foundation for future scholarship in the field. Classics are considered the “gold bullion of science” (Smith, 2007) and they help provide a historical perspective on the scientific advancements in a field. Using a focused key informant approach, we identified seven classics in entrepreneurship research, published over the two decades of the 1970s and 1980s. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first systematic effort to reveal the classical articles in entrepreneurship research and their impact on subsequent scholarship.

Our approach to the identification of classics is substantially influenced by two decisions we made: (1) time period of 1970s and 1980s, and (2) asking journal editors for nomination. The imposition of these two conditions substantially influenced our identification of classic articles. For example, publications from this period represent the moment in time when we started to reflect on our current views on entrepreneurship as the 1970s and 1980s were cultural and societal tipping points. Thus extending the time period under investigation to include the 1990s and 2000s, for example, may have introduced other articles to our list, but publications during this

period can hardly be considered classics as they may still be too young to assess their true impact in the field, thus not addressed in the scope of this review. Likewise, moving beyond the subjective opinions of key informants like journal editors to more objective indicators (such as citations) or tapping into the “wisdom of the crowds” by polling members of the entrepreneurship division may also have introduced other articles to our list. Future investigations may benefit from pursuing alternative paths not taken in the study reported here.

The classics nominated here may be influenced by the academic training and affiliations of the editors at North American doctoral programs. It is possible that scholars from other parts of the world may have selected different articles as classics in entrepreneurship research. Our concerns about ethnocentrism in the nominating process are somewhat alleviated by the realization that entrepreneurship research has been, and continues to be, dominated by North American scholarship. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to probe the views held by researchers from different parts of the world with regard to the classic articles in entrepreneurship studies.

We hope this pioneering effort to identify classics in entrepreneurship research, as well as the recent publication of other articles with similar historical flavor (Carlsson et al., 2013; Landström, Harichi, & Astrom, 2012), will spur discussions about the formative years of the field of entrepreneurship studies and its future. As entrepreneurship research becomes broader and more fragmented, we believe it is worthwhile to pause and reflect on the enduring value of key articles that opened new vistas for entrepreneurship scholars to explore. Perusal of original articles from the early days of entrepreneurship research educate and inspire further research from established incumbents as well as new entrants to the field.

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