

**Is International Entrepreneurship research a viable spin-off from its parent disciplines?**

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**Forthcoming in:**

*Institutionalization of Entrepreneurship: Hopes and Pitfalls for Entrepreneurship Research*, Alain Fayolle and Philippe Riot (eds.), Routledge (in press).

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## **Is International Entrepreneurship research a viable spin-off from its parent disciplines?**

### **1. Introduction**

Hambrick and Chen (2008) argue that new academic fields are advanced through the process of differentiation, mobilization and legitimacy building. They suggest that some of the signals used to establish a field will include the adoption of a 'name' for the field, members refer to it as such, and efforts are made to develop community structures. As observed by Coviello, McDougall and Oviatt (2011), research in International Entrepreneurship (IE) seems to have followed such a pattern, beginning with early efforts to position itself at the interface of entrepreneurship and international business. Our objectives with this chapter are to: 1) extend aspects of Coviello et al. (2011) and the ontological review of IE by Jones, Coviello and Tang (2011), and then 2) use this information to assess if IE research is a viable spin-off of its parent disciplines. That is: is it a field? To facilitate this, we assess IE relative to the criteria proposed by Hambrick and Chen (2008: 32) in the model they develop to explain the rise of new academic fields as part of an "admittance-seeking social movement." We begin by discussing the origins and evolution of IE.

### **2. The Origins of IE Research**

In the late 1980's, the global economy was experiencing "momentous" change in world political and economic systems, rapid technological development and "dramatic" advances in IT and organizational methods (Dunning and Lundan, 2008: 739). During that period, researchers around the world began to take notice of small and young firms that were successfully competing globally; competing in ways that were previously unaddressed or inadequately explained by theory in either International Business or Entrepreneurship.

To the best of our knowledge, the first mention of the phrase 'International Entrepreneurship' is found in a Harvard Business School dissertation by Kohn (1988): *International Entrepreneurship – Foreign Direct Investment by Small US Based Manufacturing Firms*. Also in 1988, Morrow referred to 'the age of the entrepreneur' in discussing the role of technology in dismantling international barriers. The genesis of IE as a potential field however, was marked with McDougall's (1989: 387) empirical comparison of domestic and international new ventures. She defined the latter (INVs) as "...new ventures or start-ups that, from inception, engage in international business, thus viewing their operating domain as international from the initial stages of the firm's operation." This early work was closely followed by scholars writing about new timing and patterns of international expansion seen in young firms (e.g. Jolly, Alahunta and Jeannet, 1992; Litvak, 1990; Rennie, 1993). Also appearing in the early 1990's were studies stimulated in part by a growing awareness of the diversity in entrepreneurial activity across countries. For example, Choy (1990) discussed different entrepreneurial financing practices at a nation-level. Others focused on differences relating to culture such as studies of the cultural influences on the entrepreneur's perceptions and values (e.g. McGrath, MacMillan and Scheinberg, 1992; McGrath, MacMillan, Yang and Tsai, 1992).

By the early 1990's, research had emerged on two topics of interest that would later form clear streams of IE research. As identified by Jones et al. (2011), these were: Type A: Entrepreneurial Internationalization, and Type B: International Comparisons of Entrepreneurship. Much later (2001) saw the emergence of studies comparing entrepreneurial internationalization across countries or cultures. These combined the perspectives of the first two streams and are labeled Type C (Jones et al., 2011).

### 3. The Evolution of IE Research

After McDougall's (1989) study, she, together with Ben Oviatt, sought out other scholars studying INVs, and found evidence from around the world of this new phenomenon. In 1994, they published two catalytic articles that provoked examination of, and challenges to, extant theory. One article (McDougall, Shane and Oviatt, 1994) was published in entrepreneurship's premiere journal: Journal of Business Venturing. It used theoretical sampling to assess 24 INV case studies—12 cases compiled by the authors and 12 cases that they had identified from academic journals and meetings—relative to various aspects of IB theory. In parallel, Oviatt and McDougall (1994) appeared in the pinnacle journal of the other parent discipline of IE: Journal of International Business Studies. That paper developed a four-part typology of INVs, an organizational form generally defined as "...a business organization that, from inception, seeks to derive significant competitive advantage from the use of resources and sale of outputs in multiple countries" (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994: 49). As defined by them, these included global start-ups, geographically-focused start-ups, export/import start-ups and multinational traders.

Also in this time frame, Zahra (1993) offered a definition of IE that extended beyond the study of INVs (as per McDougall 1989) to include corporate entrepreneurship. He also conceptualized a process of IE. In addition, Giamartino, McDougall and Bird (1993) provided the first assessment of IE, from the perspective of academic researchers, while Wright and Ricks' (1994) Delphi study for the Journal of International Business Studies led them to argue that IE should be an important area for research in international business. Also, Knight and Cavusgil (1996) published their arguments about the 'born global.'<sup>1</sup>

As explained by Kuhn (1996), such scholarly discourse signals a new line of inquiry and these developments helped research in IE quickly gain momentum. The 1993 Babson Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research Conference offered a track devoted to 'Global Entrepreneurs and International Entrepreneurship', one that was differentiated from the cross-cultural entrepreneurship stream that began in 1989.<sup>2</sup> In 1996, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice published a special issue on IE and the McGill International Entrepreneurship Conference Series was launched by Richard Wright, Hamid Etemad and Peter Johnson in 1998. The first of these conferences led to two special issues in the Journal of International Marketing (1999).

In 2000, the Academy of Management Journal published a special IE Research Forum. As an indication of the interest in IE, the AMJ special issue generated 34 submissions from 81 authors in 21 different countries. It also provided three specific catalysts important to researchers in IE. First, because AMJ is the premiere journal in management research, its recognition of IE signaled legitimacy to other areas. Second, Zahra, Ireland and Hitt's (2000) paper on new venture internationalization, learning and performance received the AMJ Annual Best Paper Award. Third, McDougall and Oviatt's (2000) introduction to the special issue formally positioned IE at the intersection of research in international business and entrepreneurship. IE was defined as: "...a combination of innovative, proactive and risk-seeking behaviour that crosses national borders and is intended to create value in organizations" and it included "...research on such behaviour and research comparing domestic entrepreneurial behaviour in many countries" (McDougall and Oviatt, 2000: 903). This definition is generally considered to be the formal 'naming' of the emerging field. Also relevant is that it established the parameters for research in IE.

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<sup>1</sup> See Coviello, McDougall and Oviatt (2011) for a discussion of the terminology in IE research.

<sup>2</sup> The BCERC Index (to 2011) shows that IE research has appeared in various tracks (e.g. Global, 1994; Geographic Expansion, 1996). There was a specified 'International Entrepreneurship Track' from 2005-2009 while in other years 2001-2004 and 2010-2011, it has been labeled 'International'.

As understanding of IE continued to surface, Zahra and George (2002: 262) offered another definition of IE, considering it to be "...the process of creatively discovering and exploiting opportunities that lie outside a firm's domestic markets in the pursuit of competitive advantage." Notable with this definition is that it excludes international comparisons of entrepreneurial behaviour which was included by McDougall and Oviatt (2000).

In 2003, the Journal of International Entrepreneurship was launched to provide a forum for research specific to IE (rather than being an 'international journal' of entrepreneurship). In addition, special issues on IE continued to appear. Examples include: Journal of International Management (2001), Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice (2002), Small Business Economics (2003, 2005, 2008), Journal of International Business Studies (2005), Management International Review (2005) and International Business Review (2005). During this period, the Academy of International Business Annual Meetings held tracks for IE research, including a special panel session at the 2005 meeting in Quebec City.

In 2005, the Journal of International Business Studies awarded Oviatt and McDougall the JIBS Decade Award for their 1994 contribution, simultaneously publishing commentaries on IE by Autio (2005) and Zahra (2005). This signaled further recognition for IE among IB scholars. Similar acknowledgement came from other fields in that the Journal of International Marketing's Hans B Thorelli Award (for the most significant and long-term contribution to international marketing theory or practice) was awarded three times to IE studies: Jones (1999), Knight (2000), and Burgel and Murray (2000). Since then, the terms of the prize have changed and two more IE studies have recently received the Thorelli Award: Moen and Servais (2002), and Chetty and Campbell Hunt (2004).

Also in 2005, Oviatt and McDougall (2005: 540) offered a refined definition of IE in Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice. Like Zahra and George (2002), they incorporated the concept of opportunity: "International entrepreneurship is the discovery, enactment, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities – across national borders – to create future goods and services." Notably, this definition permits – but does not require – the formation of new organizations, and allows for corporate entrepreneurship. By removing reference to the original three components of an entrepreneurial orientation (from Covin and Slevin 1990), it opens debate on how many, or which, dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation to include. It also allows for multiple levels of research, potentially incorporating the individual entrepreneur, team, firm and/or external actors and influences. Also important is that again, Oviatt and McDougall (2005) explain how IE research includes studies of: 1) entrepreneurship *crossing* borders, i.e. entrepreneurial internationalization, and 2) comparative studies of entrepreneurial behavior *across* borders (i.e. in different countries and/or cultures).

From 2006–2009, yet more special issues on IE appeared: International Marketing Review (2006), Journal of World Business (2007) and Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal (2009). Notable across these and the earlier special issues is that the list includes the leading journals in Management, Entrepreneurship, International Business, International Marketing and Small Business. IE research has also been published in numerous books.

Also in 2009, was the launch of *ie-scholars.net*, a virtual community built to support IE research globally.<sup>3</sup> This initiative was supported by a grant from Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. *ie-scholars.net* has nearly 300 research members and partner institutions in seven countries. It provides support for the annual McGill International Entrepreneurship Conference and Doctoral Colloquium (rotating through Canada and other countries), and the Journal of International Entrepreneurship. More tangible outcomes include the five volume SAGE book series of IE research edited by McNaughton and Bell (2009) and a six-book series edited by Etemad (published by Elgar).

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<sup>3</sup> <http://ie-scholars.net>

#### **4. Challenges to IE**

By 2009, IE appeared to hold an identifiable position at the interface of international business and entrepreneurship research. A number of reviews of IE had also been published (see Coviello et al., 2011 for a summary); reviews that helped signal the potential of research in the area. Some reviews assessed specific areas of interest while others considered IE from a particular disciplinary perspective or theoretical lens. However, Zahra, Korri and Yu (2005) suggested that IE research was mechanical, with some of it atheoretical. Then, two reviews outlined grave concerns for IE research. Keupp and Gassman (2009) conducted a review to identify the gaps, deficiencies and inadequacies of IE. They criticized its phenomenological basis, imbalance in the theoretical integration of international business and entrepreneurship, and lack of coherence. Similar concerns were expressed by Coombs, Sadrieh and Annavarjula (2009: 31) and they conclude that "...a theoretical paucity summarizes the present state of research [in IE]."

We consider the above reviews as healthy for debate, and note they highlight certain important points (e.g. the need for multi-level research). However, although we believe that theoretical convergence is an important process in the development of a field, we follow Johnson and Duberly (2000) in arguing that a fixation on the development of theoretical models, and unity in methodological approaches, constructs and measures, may result in a set of relatively inflexible 'game rules' being applied to IE (Jones et al., 2011). That is, although such milestones are important, focusing solely on them might blind researchers to a richer understanding of IE phenomena. Applying Kuhn (1996), it could also lead to IE scholars taking the phenomena and paradigmatic views that launched research in the area, for granted. In addition – as noted by Jones et al. (2011) - there were a number of limitations in the parameters and search procedures of the reviews. For example, Keupp and Gassmann (2009) restricted their review to a pre-determined set of 16 journals, and included teaching cases and traditional SME export studies. In addition, it is not clear whether Keupp and Gassmann's (2009) search extended to and included cross-country and cross-cultural studies.

This led Jones et al. (2011) to conduct an extensive review of the literature, focusing on the phenomena and related issues that had been studied in IE, over its full history. They reviewed the domain in a manner consistent with its defined parameters, arguing that in IE, this must include research explicitly positioned at the interface of international business and entrepreneurship. That is, integrating theory and arguments from both fields. Rather than applying a particular theoretical lens to analyze aspects of IE or using pre-determined attributes to define their analysis, they used inductive thematic analysis and interpretation to identify patterns of inquiry from 1989-2009. This drew on procedures from the medical sciences and evidence-based management research, and facilitated a process of systematic review that was as comprehensive and inclusive as possible. The outcome was a review that, to the extent possible, covered all available IE articles published in English language journals, with selection guided by a detailed protocol for article inclusion/exclusion and assessment (see Appendices A and B in Jones et al., 2011). The result was an ontological map of IE research for the period 1989-2009. This was published in a special forum dedicated to reviews of IE, in the Journal of Business Venturing.

#### **5. IE Research: 2010-2012**

To this point, we have summarized the evolution of IE research from 1989 to 2009. Now, in 2013, we ask: has IE in fact, emerged as a field? To help answer this question, we took three steps. First, we applied the Jones et al. (2011) protocol to extend the literature review and identify IE research published in 2010-2012. Second, we analyzed the full set of articles for evolutionary patterns. Third, we combined this information with that from sections 2-3 in this chapter to help assess IE relative to Hambrick and

Chen (2008). Here, we report the results of our preliminary analysis, focusing on how primary themes have emerged, the nature of empirical studies, and the relative influence of the parent disciplines on IE, over time. To identify recent IE research, we relied on the parameters used by Jones et al. (2011) to identify what is IE research and what is not (see Table 1). We found 213 empirical papers, 17 conceptual papers, 11 reviews, 5 papers focus on methodological, education or theory-building issues and 4 editorials with detailed commentaries. This totals 250 IE papers published between 2010 and 2012.

Table 1 about here

### 5.1. Patterns Relating to Primary Themes

To begin, we provide an overview of how IE research has developed, Figure 1 presents the primary IE research themes in order of their emergence into the literature. The pattern begins with McDougall's (1989) study that differentiated the international and domestic new venture.

Figure 1 about here

Between 1989 and 1993, the earliest themes were concerned with: 1) the type of venture, and 2) internationalization. Other themes to emerge in the first five year period are comparative studies of entrepreneurship focusing on: 3) cross-national and 4) cross-cultural differences. By 1993, it appeared that IE had promise as a field of study and the first evaluation of it was published. The period 1994-99 saw the introduction of three new themes: 1) networks, 2) influences on performance, and 3) the entrepreneur/ship focus in IE. The following five years (2000-2004) saw acceleration in published output and a further three themes: 1) orientation and strategy, 2) international comparisons of entrepreneurial internationalization, and 3) a category we refer to as 'other' but note as dominated by educational issues for IE. Two more themes emerged in 2005-2006: 1) resources and capabilities, and 2) research methods in IE.<sup>4</sup> In 2010, the most recent theme appeared, focused on IE research in emerging and transitional economies. In addition, there is a marked increased in Type C studies (international comparisons of entrepreneurial internationalization) in the most recent time period (2010-2012), and the Resources and Capabilities theme was dominated by research on learning and knowledge. We also note what appear to be emerging themes related to: 1) the role of the internet in IE and 2) studies of IE embedded in the context of venture capital firms and family businesses. Finally, we note with interest, three papers that depart from the traditional focus on the firm or entrepreneur as unit of analysis for IE. Chandra and Coviello (2010) develop arguments regarding the 'consumer-as-international-entrepreneur' while Nasra and Dacin (2010) explore the nation-state as an international entrepreneur. In addition, Chelekis and Mudambi (2010) study how MNCs internationalizing into emerging (and rural) economies support micro-entrepreneurship

As of the end of 2012, we identify 551 IE articles for analysis. As per Jones et al. (2011), this excludes editorials. Of the 551 we analyze, 459 are empirical and 57 are conceptual. Those remaining include reviews of IE, or papers focused on issues pertaining to methodology, education or how to develop theory. Although the empirical research is dominated by Type A studies (entrepreneurial internationalization;  $n = 307$  or 67%), international comparisons of entrepreneurial behavior are clearly evident. By 2012, these Type B studies include 49 that emphasize cross-cultural analysis and a further 75 that assess entrepreneurship across countries. Type C research is much smaller ( $n = 28$ ) but has begun to emerge more recently. In the same way that Type C research is now appearing and Type A research has shown increased interest in learning and knowledge as it pertains to IE, Type B research has been

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<sup>4</sup> See Jones et al. (2011) for a comprehensive breakdown of the primary themes of IE from 1989-2009 inclusive.

dominated in recent years by country-comparisons that typically, rely on secondary datasets. Examples include Stephan and Uhlaner (2010) or De Clercq, Meuleman and Wright (2012).

### 5.2. General Methodological Patterns

Turning to the methodological patterns in IE, Table 2 summarizes the approaches used in the empirical studies we identified. Survey research dominates IE (47%) although qualitative (28%) and mixed method techniques (9%) are also evident. This prevalence of qualitative and mixed method approaches is particularly so for Type A (entrepreneurial internationalization) studies, and likely a result of arguments that a new field requires exploratory work. These methods provide depth and context to the understanding of IE phenomena. Table 2 also indicates that Type B studies make more use of secondary datasets, notably Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) data. Other datasets are however, also in use, either on their own or as a complement to GEM. Examples include data from the World Bank, OECD, WHO and the IMF.

Table 2 about here

### 5.3. Patterns Related to the Parent Disciplines

Although a full theoretical review is beyond the scope of this research, Table 3 provides a comparison of how IE research has been positioned relative to its parent disciplines since 1989. Given our search parameters, both international business and entrepreneurship theory/concepts are evident in all 551 papers.

Table 3 about here

McDougall (1989) established the positioning of IE relative to IB by comparing entrepreneurship in an international vs. domestic context. In the following four years, papers included both IB and entrepreneurship concepts but were clearly informed by a dominant or 'lead' discipline – these are indicated in the first two columns of Table 3. This has continued but column 3 shows a steadily increasing number of entrepreneurship studies with a strong international influence. Most importantly, papers that balance IB and entrepreneurship elements started to emerge in 1993 and have clearly grown in number (see column 4). In 2000, a clear shift in the literature appears with 8 of 18 studies integrating both international business and entrepreneurship theory. Then, using a yearly average from 2001-2012, approximately two-thirds of the papers are considered to be clearly 'international + entrepreneurship' in terms of how they integrate the literature and develop their arguments. Over all years, this totals 320 articles (58%) positioned at the interface of international business and entrepreneurship. This signals a clear trend in the development of IE as a field of study.

## **6. Is IE Now a Field?**

Returning to Hambrick and Chen (2008), the evidence presented thus far suggests that IE has managed to differentiate itself, mobilize, and gain some legitimacy. However, has it? In Table 4, we summarize our assessment of IE relative to the criteria used by Hambrick and Chen (2008) in their discussion of new academic fields as admittance-seeking social movements.

Table 4 about here

*Differentiation.* In terms of differentiation, Oviatt and McDougall (1994) and McDougall et al. (1994), clearly and strongly made the claim that some important phenomena fell outside the scope of existing disciplines. These and other arguments also recognized that unprecedented change in (e.g.) world markets and technologies were influencing actual firm behavior. This suggests that one of the reasons IE research was initially well-received and then later, won various awards, publication opportunities in special issues and government grants to assist its development, was that IE was positioned as having a mission that was socially (as well as economically and intellectually) relevant. Early scholars also seem to have been careful to avoid positioning IE as a “threat or intellectual affront to established fields that were in a position to block its advance” (using the language of Hambrick and Chen, 2008: 36). Explicit calls and efforts were made to integrate extant theory in definitions, constructs, and research designs (e.g. McDougall and Oviatt, 2000; Oviatt and McDougall, 2005; Coviello and Jones, 2004; Jones and Coviello, 2005). Thus, because IE sits (by definition) at the intersection of existing fields, it allows for complementary rather than competing research.

*Mobilization.* Beneficial to IE mobilization is that its emergence is predicated on supportive environmental conditions. Initially, these included developments in the technology sector, where multitudes of start-up firms found that to compete and survive they needed to reach international markets. Thus, there was at least the appearance of external relevance, if not actual evidence of external demand for IE research. More recently, we note that in Europe, national governments are increasingly supportive of entrepreneurship education relative to global markets (e.g. Finland, the UK), and this bodes well for IE.

The situation for internal (student) demand is, however, less evident. Most universities guided by AACSB or other accreditation requirements rarely see a strong need for IE courses at the undergraduate or MBA level, and the number of universities offering courses in IE remains limited. Although there have been some exceptions (e.g. the desire of a donor), the most typical situation is that a faculty member with a strong interest in IE successfully lobbies to offer the course. There is some evidence that the faculty-driven internal demand for IE courses is growing in recent years. Beginning in 2007, the University of Colorado Denver began offering an IE workshop targeted to faculty who wish to research IE or who plan to teach an IE course. The workshop has been offered at two U.S. locations, South Korea and Istanbul. Over 150 faculty members from 40 universities in 23 countries have attended. According to the workshop’s Director, Manuel Serapio, about 30 percent of the attendees indicate in their registration materials that their reason for attending is to enable themselves to teach a course in IE that their university plans to offer.

Returning to Hambrick and Chen’s (2008) other criteria, do IE scholars have a bounded set of shared interests? This is to some, unclear, because of the diverse themes within the domain of IE and the range of methods and theories followed in pursuit of evidence. Furthermore, it is apparent from recent reviews that some view IE differently than we (the current authors) do. However, IE does have a relatively clear definition that has evolved from a narrow focus on international new ventures to one that is more inclusive of different organizational forms, the conceptualization of opportunity and entrepreneurship, and the need to understand behavior in the process of crossing borders as well as in different national and cultural contexts (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005). Also, although IE research themes may be large in number, they are now more clearly articulated (see Jones et al., 2011).

Another factor important to mobilization is that early discourse was facilitated by a number of social infrastructures. Notably, the Annual McGill Conference (begun in 1998) has been a consistent forum and by rotating that conference in and out of Canada (to Finland, Singapore, Italy etc.), the international interest in IE research has grown. In recent years, the McGill Conference has also hosted a

Doctoral Colloquium, indicating the presence of new scholars in IE. We note too that although IE lacks visibility in the Academy of Management, both the Academy of International Business and Babson Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research Conferences have consistently included IE research, with IE researchers often attending both. This suggests the existence of a political opportunity structure, i.e. a generally non-hostile or benign attitude toward IE on the part of established organizations. Furthermore, forums for IE such as the McGill Conference or *ie-scholars.net*, provide oblique rather than direct competition.

We also see what Hambrick and Chen (2008: 45) refer to as a “socially interconnected core and complementary variety of scholars.” For example, researchers with clear ties to IE sit on numerous review boards. Our count shows that the Journal of Business Venturing has sixteen such board members and in 2009, was the first to appoint an editor specific to IE (Nicole Coviello). Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice appears to have eighteen IE board members, while Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal has seven (with Mike Wright as Editor-Elect). This signals a high level of understanding of IE in the top entrepreneurship journals. Across the various international business and international marketing journals, there is an average of five IE board members per journal, and there are six at the Academy of Management Journal (with Gerry George included as Editor).

Finally, IE has benefitted from the early commitment and drive of many (now senior) scholars, as well as the many younger scholars who are devoting much of their time to IE research. At the same time, it is important to recognize that to the best of our knowledge, no IE scholars are housed in distinct IE Departments (and we are unaware of any such departments). Rather, IE scholars have homes in other departments. As such, they are under pressure to publish their best work in the top journals in their ‘home’ discipline. On this issue, one criterion discussed by Hambrick and Chen (2008: 34) is whether or not a “substantial number of major universities designate positions for its members, grant tenure to its members, seek peer tenure evaluations from its members and allow its members to supervise graduate students”. An indirect way of assessing this is to consider professorial titles. In the context of IE, Chairs in International Entrepreneurship are extremely rare. To the best of our knowledge, the earliest were held by Nicole Coviello (University of Auckland) and David Crick (de Montfort University, Birmingham City University). However, these positions were in ‘Marketing and International Entrepreneurship’. At time of writing, the only titles specific to IE that we are able to identify are at York University (Moren Levesque), Technische Universität München (Hana Milanov) and Victoria University of Wellington (David Crick). Marian Jones is Professor of International Business and Entrepreneurship at Glasgow while Robert Hisrich is a named Professor of Global Entrepreneurship at Thunderbird. Notably, although Shaker Zahra held the 3U Professorship of IE at Twente, his title at his home institution is Professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategy. Thus, residing across disciplinary areas is most common and many senior IE scholars have such an appointment (e.g. Patricia McDougall-Covin is a named Professor of Entrepreneurship and also a Professor of Strategy. ). In contrast, many of our colleagues reside in a specific discipline. Examples include Marketing (Tage Koed Madsen), Management (Dirk de Clercq) or International Business (Niina Nummela).

Is this problematic? To some extent yes, since as researchers working in (at least) two areas of study, we need to publish in both and this can dilute the time and effort one devotes to IE. It also means that our training and interests are very diverse. On the other hand, by working across fields, we are informed by (and inform) other types of research and research questions. In our favour is the emerging realization in some universities that economic, social and technical problems in today’s world are complex and require multi-disciplinary knowledge and teams to address them. Potentially, the capabilities and knowledge developed through the process of straddling at least two core disciplines may open opportunities for IE scholars.

*Legitimatization.* Hambrick and Chen (2008) note that legitimacy involves both intellectual persuasion (through arguments and evidence of unique contributions) and emulation of norms in the parent or adjacent fields. Regarding persuasion, we have already noted the various awards for IE research, and Table 5 summarizes the journals where IE research is found in the ‘top fifteen’ list of articles, based on citations. Notably, this list includes the top journals in both IB and entrepreneurship, as well as others. In certain journals, IE research is ranked particularly well.

Table 5 about here

This is not to say that IE lacks critics in its parent disciplines. For example, a recent review of fifty years of IB theory (Rugman, Verbeke and Nguyen, 2011) argues there is (little or) no robust empirical evidence of ‘born-global’ firms. A full rebuttal is beyond the scope of this chapter so we note simply that although national registers and databases may not capture the nature or scope of international new ventures, the IE literature includes comparative evidence from survey and case research regarding various organizational forms. These include not only born globals, but also the born regional firms noted by Rugman et al. (2011) (aka the geographic start-up from Oviatt and McDougall 1994), as well as born-again globals and various other forms of international new venture.

In terms of emulation, which refers to the methodological or paradigmatic conventions of well-established fields, our review suggests that some inroads have been made here (as evidenced by publications in either the top IB or entrepreneurship journals, or outside the parent disciplines). However, much work is yet to be done since most IE research is not, in fact, published in strong journals. For example, only 38% of IE articles published from 2010-2012 are in journals such as the Journal of Business Venturing, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, or Journal of International Business Studies.<sup>5</sup> Even IE’s own journal (Journal of International Entrepreneurship) has, after a promising start, struggled to maintain its status. It may be that more work needs to be done to respond to Zahra, Korri and Yu’s (2005) call for less mechanical research. Does this mean that IE research must move to a more fully positivistic paradigm? We suggest not, noting that even Hambrick and Chen (2008: 51) criticize the strategic management literature for having moved away from its “interest in deeply textured understanding of strategic decision processes.”

## 7. Discussion

Based on the previous sections, it appears that although IE has made progress as an emerging field, there is still room to improve. Before discussing the implications of this, we reflect on a number of more philosophical issues. First, we realize that for survival, some expect a new field to “demonstrate its distinctiveness and assert its worthiness” (Hambrick and Chen, 2008: 36) such that it will not be subsumed over time by one of its antecedent disciplines or claimed by new entrants from other fields. At an operational level, Tranfield, Denyer and Smart (2003) suggest that a field must develop context-sensitive research and a reliable stock of knowledge to enhance evidence-informed [management] practice and policy. Grégoire, Noël, Déry and Bécharde (2006: 335) go further to argue that a new field must also establish “a widely shared ‘paradigm,’ i.e., a set of assumptions about a field’s object of study,

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<sup>5</sup> Journals considered ‘strong(er)’ for the purposes of this analysis (and where IE articles are found) include *Academy of Management Journal*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Journal of World Business*, *Management International Review*, *International Business Review*, *Journal of International Marketing*, *Small Business Economics*, *International Marketing Review*, *Journal of Small Business Management*.

method of investigation, explanatory model, and overall interpretation scheme". We ask: is this sensible or even appropriate for IE?

Second, in positioning IE at the interface of international business and entrepreneurship, McDougall and Oviatt (2000) note that both antecedent disciplines are becoming less distinct as fields of study (see also Hambrick and Chen's 2008 observations regarding IB). Thus, another question worth considering is: How might a new field sitting at the intersection of two already hybrid and evolving fields claim to be distinctive? If integration is considered to be the new field's distinctiveness, our review shows that IE is not only retaining but increasing in this regard. Another trend we see is integration of IE with theories and perspectives from other domains such as strategic management, institutional theory and cognitive psychology (see Jones et al., 2011). A third question might be: Does this dilute or strengthen IE?

In considering these questions, we return to the phenomena widely attributed as stimulating the emergence of IE. These relate to the early and rapid internationalization of new and small ventures in response to factors such as economic integration, advances in technology and knowledge intensive industries, deregulation and changes in industry and market structure. Individuals and firms responding to these changes in innovative, proactive and risk-seeking ways were seen as being entrepreneurial with regard to venturing in a globalizing and increasingly complex world. To us, this complexity suggests a need for multi-theoretical approaches to understand the antecedents, influencing factors and outcomes of IE (see also Wright and Ricks, 1994). Areas of study like IE that sit at the intersection of parent disciplines reside there because the phenomena under study defy explanation by either one alone. Those working in such an area or space develop means to compare and contrast competing explanations and look for areas of agreement or convergence.<sup>6</sup> They also learn the language, orientation and structures of each discipline and learn to converse in the language of either. Opportunities for insight and the development of new approaches emerge from researchers' experiential knowledge when coupled with different or new lenses from other fields. Thus while some call for unifying frameworks and methodological directions in a new field (e.g. Grégoire et al., 2006), as do some of our own early arguments (McDougall and Oviatt, 2000; Coviello and Jones, 2004), a competing but also compatible argument is to call for new insights and new entrants to IE from other disciplines to enrich our understanding of the complex phenomena encompassed by IE.

This line of thought views diversity as important. It also provides a counter-argument to those such as Hambrick and Chen (2008) who suggest a new field of study requires 'distinctiveness.' Following Schumpeterian reasoning, diversity fuels innovation, opportunity and sustainable development and is as important in securing IE's survival and position as a field as is the rigorous development of its theories and methods.

## **8. Implications for IE**

Following from the above, we believe diversity strengthens a research field and should be encouraged. At the same time, we also believe that diversity can fit within definitional parameters such as those provided by Oviatt and McDougall (2005). Thus, our first observation is that scholars must take care to understand what IE research is and what it is not. As noted previously (see Table 1), a number of topics are outside of IE because they have their own home (e.g. immigrant entrepreneurship or innovation management) or simply because they provide an organizational context (e.g. SMEs). Second, we recommend careful consideration of first, what aspects of IE phenomena a theory might help explain and, second, how such theories might be usefully integrated to arrive at more comprehensive

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<sup>6</sup> While a discussion of theory borrowing is beyond the scope of this chapter, we recommend that IE scholars read both Whetten, Felin and King (2009) and Okhuysen and Bonardi (2011) – the latter being comments from two AMR Editors.

explanations or provide new insights. As identified by Jones et al. (2011), we believe there is clear evidence of increasing sophistication of theoretical integration in IE. We also believe that there will be a stronger interdependence between entrepreneurship and international business because the former explains the behavior and cognitions of the firm and entrepreneur while the latter explains the context and mechanisms influenced by or influencing that behavior or cognitions.

Regarding the arguments of Hambrick and Chen (2008), certain issues need to be addressed. Although the IE seems to have differentiated itself, ongoing and improved social *mobilization* is a priority. According to McAdam (1982), emergent collectives will advance to the extent that they are effectively organized and able to secure resources. At this time, although IE has an informal network of colleagues and editorial board members, and a virtual community through *ie-scholars.net*, there is no formal membership structure (and no fees) that signify and legitimize “belonging” in comparison to (e.g.) the Strategic Management Society or Academy of International Business. This might lead to IE surviving in a marginal state with limited resources, limited membership, and limited acceptance by the broader academic establishment. In addition, the lack of formal membership may hamper further development of the *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, either in terms of financial support or providing a clear ‘publication home’ for IE researchers. The lack of formal structure might also mean that IE researchers will look to established formal organizations (such as AIB) to direct their work and thus, IE could be reabsorbed by one of its parent disciplines.

The decision on a formal membership organization for IE is not for us to make. However, we refer to Hambrick and Chen’s (2008: 37) observation that a network is critical for “providing cohesion and enhancing the carefully controlled dissemination of the incipient field’s purpose, philosophy and agenda.” One available mechanism is *ie-scholars.net* exists given it has the scope to disseminate both research and teaching materials. On the issue of education, we note with interest that Strategic Management emerged through the classroom; in contrast, IE did not. This needs to be addressed in order to drive internal demand and to this end, efforts are underway to compile IE education curricula and practices to share through *ie-scholars.net*. Ideally, changes to the *ie-scholars* website could position it as the primary resource for sharing IE research and education, and this might be a sufficient ‘home’ for IE. A second point is that although there are over 500 IE journal articles and nearly 300 members in *ie-scholars.net*, much of the core network involved with editorial boards, conference leadership etc. is the same (small) group of researchers. This network needs to be widened.

To improve *legitimacy*, it appears that the issue of emulation (from Hambrick and Chen 2008), warrants particular attention. This implies a need for a more rigorous approach to IE methods. As a start, a review of methodological fit would be appropriate (as per Edmondson and McManus, 2007). This would help identify where IE and/or specific IE themes fit in the categorization of nascent, intermediate or mature research. Also, an updated review of methodological patterns (extending Coviello and Jones, 2004) would be welcome as would in-depth reviews on specific methodological issues.

Given the prevalence of survey data in IE research, scholars must be aware that most leading journals now demand recognition of the potential for common method variance. Thus, if single-informants (e.g. lead entrepreneurs) are studied, additional analysis is likely required to mitigate reviewer concerns regarding bias. IE could also benefit from a compilation of multi-item measures suitable for different types of IE research; measures that can be assessed for cross-national and cultural validity in order to satisfy leading journals. Importantly, IE research has a strong qualitative component and this leads us to make two points. First, because qualitative studies are unable to be assessed with classic meta-analysis, we refer to Walsh and Downe (2005) for guidance on how to conduct a meta-summary of qualitative findings. This could complement the more traditional efforts at meta-analysis that are beginning to emerge. Second, there is much room for improvement in the nature of qualitative

design, implementation and reporting. We encourage IE scholars to learn from those publishing qualitative studies in journals such as *Academy of Management Journal*.

Finally, we note the increased use of secondary databases. In part, this may reflect the lack of quality survey data available (or the difficulty in obtaining it). We also suspect that the increased pressure to publish for tenure-track faculty leads them to use data that is readily available. However, secondary data can be problematic in that firm age is often inaccurate, international dependent variables are often absent, it is difficult to compare databases from different countries and, more often than not, proxy variables have to be used for most measures. Thus, we are somewhat cautious about the use of secondary databases, especially for the study of entrepreneurial internationalization behavior (Type A and Type C research).

## **9. Conclusions**

Is IE a field? Our assessment of IE relative to the criteria established by Hambrick and Chen (2008) suggests that much progress has been made to establish IE as a credible and identifiable field of research. At the same time, we see that additional efforts are required to strengthen the mobilization and legitimization of IE. We also expect that if interest in entrepreneurship and international business education grow (as we believe they will), there will be a need to ensure that IE is clearly and consistently differentiated from its parent disciplines. IE is unique because of its 'interface' position; one that allows for multi-theoretical and multi-level insights.

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**Table 1:**  
**The Parameters of International Entrepreneurship Research**

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*A. Inclusion Criteria*

1. Research that directly and explicitly integrates theory and concepts from both IB and E in one of three categories (based on the definition of IE from McDougall and Oviatt (2000) and the ontological review of Jones, Coviello and Tang (2011)):
    - a. Entrepreneurial behavior across borders (entrepreneurial internationalization);
    - b. International comparisons of entrepreneurial behavior;
    - c. Comparative studies of entrepreneurial internationalization.
- 

*B. Exclusion Criteria by Theoretical Relevance*

1. Studies focused on SMEs rather than IE per se, i.e. where entrepreneurship issues and theories are not integrated or addressed in the study;
  2. Studies in which the primary focus is not international entrepreneurship. E.g. studies of biotech firms in global industries or in which the focus is on technological innovation rather than business or entrepreneurial processes;
  3. Studies focused on domestic entrepreneurship in one country;
  4. Cross-cultural assessments of (e.g.) EO measures that focus on scale and measure development or validation;
  5. Studies on transnational and/or immigrant entrepreneurship.
-

**Table 2:**  
**Nature of Empirical Studies in IE Research (1989-2012)**

	<b>Empirical Method</b>						<b>Total</b>
	<i>Qualitative</i>	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Mixed Method</i>	<i>GEM</i>	<i>Other database(s)</i>	<i>Other</i>	
<b>Type A</b> – Entrepreneurial Internationalization	114	144	29	1	12	7	307 (67%)
<b>Type B</b> – International Comparisons of Entrepreneurship	7	65	6	28	11	7 *	124 (27%)
<b>Type C</b> – Comparative Entrepreneurial Internationalization	8	8	6	2	4	0	28 (6%)
<b>Total</b>	129 (28%)	217 (47%)	41 (9%)	31 (7%)	27 (6%)	14 (3%)	<b>459</b>

\* GEM combined with other databases

**Table 3:  
Patterns of Home/Informing Disciplines 1989-2012 (n = 551)**

<i>Year</i>	<i>International Business</i>	<i>Entrepreneurship</i>	<i>Entrepreneurship in an International Context</i>	<i>International Entrepreneurship</i>
1989			1	
1990	1	1		
1991		4		
1992	1	3		
1993		1		2
1994	1	2	1	2
1995	2			2
1996	2	2	1	3
1997	2	2	3	5
1998	3	2		
1999	4	3		2
2000	4	1	5	8
2001	4	1	4	7
2002	1	2	2	8
2003	2	2	2	15
2004	6	1	5	17
2005	1	8		22
2006	6	3	1	22
2007	3	1	3	33
2008		11	6	33
2009	2	3	8	27
2010	8	2	12	27
2011	9	13	18	41
2012	6	11	12	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>68 (12%)</b>	<b>79 (14%)</b>	<b>84 (15%)</b>	<b>320 (58%)</b>

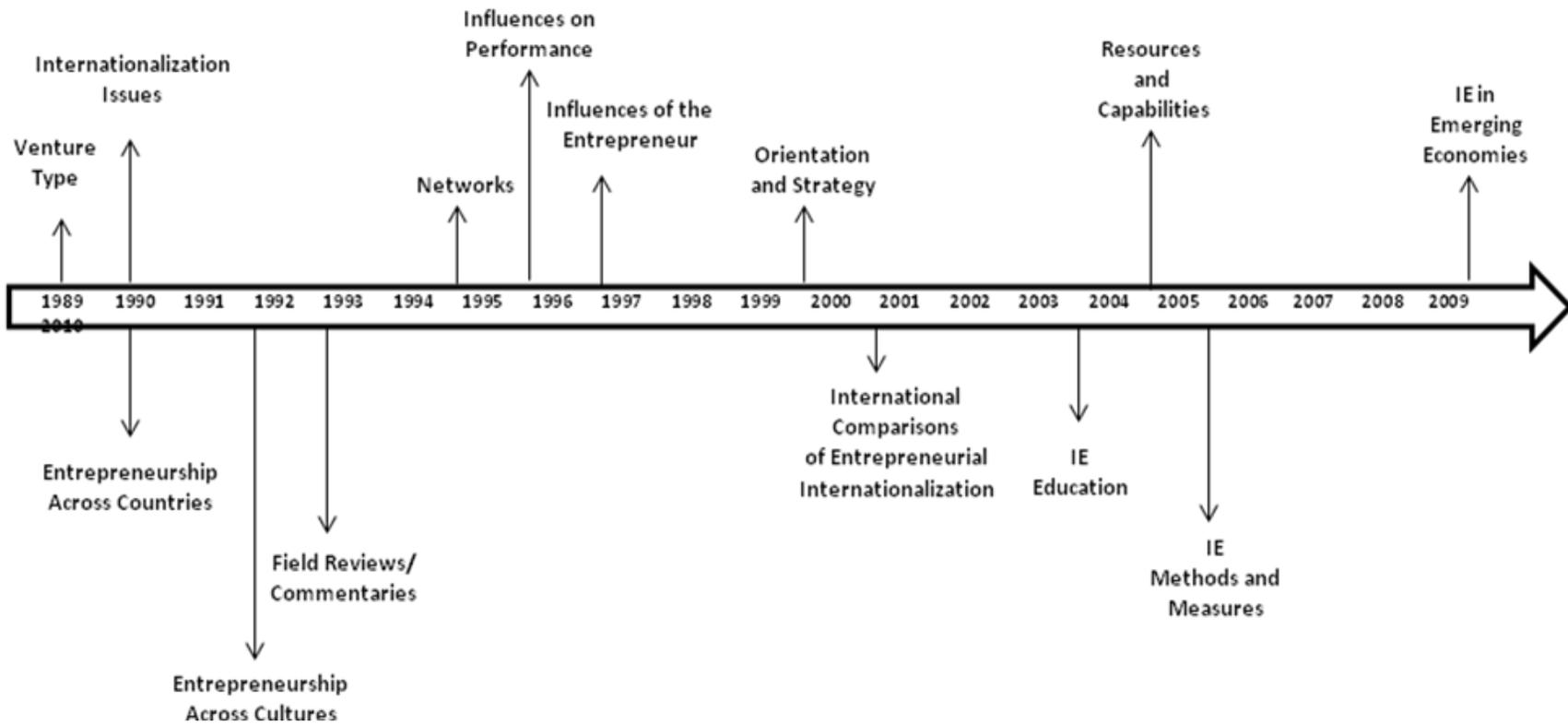
**Table 4:**  
**Assessing IE Relative to Hambrick and Chen's (2000) Proposed Elements of an**  
**Admittance-Seeking Social Movement**

<i>Elements</i>	<i>Criteria</i>	<i>IE</i>
Differentiation	Portrayal of a socially important mission	✓
	Affirmation of worthiness by outside influential parties	✓
	Portrayal of a mission that is complementary to adjacent fields	✓
Mobilization	External demand for community's body of knowledge	✓
	Internal demand (from students)	X
	Bounded set of shared interests	?
	Existence of multiple forums	✓
	Forums pose oblique competition to forums of the establishment	✓
	Socially interconnected core and complementary variety	?
Legitimacy Building	Intellectual persuasion	?
	Emulation of norms and styles of adjacent established fields	X

**Table 5:**  
**Journals with IE Research in ‘Top 15 List’ Based on Citations**  
**(Source: Publish or Perish, October 2013)**

<i>Journal</i>	<i>Citation Rank</i>	<i>Authors</i>	<i>Year</i>
Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice	7	Bloodgood, Sapienza and Almeida	1996
	12	Oviatt and McDougall	2005
International Business Review	1	Madsen and Servais	1997
	3	Coviello and Munro	1997
	5	Rialp, Rialp and Knight	2005
	9	Sharma and Blomstermo	2003
	11	Yli-Renko, Autio and Tontti	2002
Journal of Business Venturing	9	McDougall, Shane and Oviatt	1994
Journal of International Business Studies	4	Oviatt and McDougall	1994
Journal of International Marketing	1	Knight	2000
	2	Jones	1999
	3	Moen and Servais	2002
	4	Chetty and Campbell-Hunt	2004
	5	Burgel and Murray	2000
	6	Crick and Jones	2000
	12	McAuley	1999
Management International Review	1	Coviello and McAuley	1999
	2	Oviatt and McDougall	1997
Small Business Economics	3	Reynolds et al.	2005
	9	Van Stel, Carree and Thurik	2005

**Figure 1: Patterns of Primary Theme Emergence (1989-2012)** <sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Themes are not mutually exclusive and reflect only what was interpreted to be the primary theme/focus for a paper. Each paper has themes at secondary and tertiary levels.