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Critical research and entrepreneurship

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published in

International Journal of Management Reviews
2023

DOI (link to publisher)

[10.1111/ijmr.12298](https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12298)

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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citation for published version (APA)

Dey, P., Fletcher, D., & Verduijn, K. (2023). Critical research and entrepreneurship: A cross-disciplinary conceptual typology. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 25(1), 24-51.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12298>

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Critical research and entrepreneurship: A cross-disciplinary conceptual typology

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Abstract

Critical perspectives of entrepreneurship have gained increasing traction over the last two decades. The transformative potential of critical research resides in challenging some of entrepreneurship research's epistemological, ontological and theoretical assumptions, with a view to offering a range of alternatives. Critical research in entrepreneurship has remained fragmented, however, due to its heterogeneous theoretical lineages and compartmentalized and niche interests. Addressing this situation, our objective is to intensify the space of critique in entrepreneurship research by offering a theoretically informed typology that delineates different manifestations of 'criticalness'. Our overarching contribution is to advance a typology distinguishing four ideal types of critical entrepreneurship research based on evaluative emphases (referred to as 'valence') and the meta-theoretical assumptions informing its critical operation (called 'paradigmatic orientation'). By demonstrating the variegated political, ethical and ideological interests and preoccupations that critical studies serve within different management sub-disciplines, the typology provides a conceptual vocabulary for making sense of and synthesizing critical perspectives across scholarly boundaries. Also, it helps to reposition understandings of critique as gestures of negativity by stimulating a greater appreciation of the generative potential of critique and the theoretical and philosophical possibilities that this can bring to our scholarly community.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, a steady flow of critical studies has evolved in business and management research with the intent of challenging assumptions about entrepreneurship's role in society, the economy, theory and research. Commentaries by Armstrong (2001), Nodoushani and Nodoushani (1999) and Ogbor (2000) provided early groundwork for a critical questioning of the dominant conceptions and variegated myths upon which entrepreneurship is based. One of these conceptions is the privileging of entrepreneurship as 'opportunistic wealth creation' or

'profit making' (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) and associated assumptions concerning the entrepreneur as the primary driver of opportunistic behaviour (Hanlon, 2014). Another is the pervasiveness of functionalist, economic and managerial approaches (Hjorth, 2013a; Hjorth & Holt, 2016; Steyaert & Katz, 2004) which prioritize certain forms of knowledge and theorizing entrepreneurship at the expense of other possibilities (Grant & Perren, 2002). A further conception is the portrayal of entrepreneurship in unambiguously positive terms (Weiskopf & Steyaert, 2009; Wiklund et al., 2019), whether as a 'positive economic activity' (Calás et al., 2009, p. 552) or the 'engine

that moves and sustains capitalism' (Zahra & Wright, 2016, p. 610) by facilitating wealth creation (Rindova et al., 2009).

Spurred by the conviction that entrepreneurship research needed to become more reflexive about its processes of knowledge production, various calls encouraged entrepreneurship research to account for its ideological biases and blind spots, its value-neutral stance (Ogbor, 2000) and preferencing of functionalist paradigmatic assumptions (Perren & Jennings, 2005). Along those lines, critical commentators also called for a (re)interrogation of the dominance of the neo-classical enterprise discourse (Armstrong, 2005; Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007; du Gay, 2004; Jones & Spicer, 2005) and its associated 'heroization' of the enterprising self (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2008; Fenwick, 2002; McCabe, 2008). Critical perspectives also sought to expose the 'dark side' of entrepreneurship by highlighting its limits, failures and misfires (Shepherd, 2019; Wiklund et al., 2019) on the one hand, and its radical possibilities (Perren & Jennings, 2005; Wright & Zahra, 2011) on the other.

Despite the recent flurry of critical activity (Lundmark et al., 2022), we argue that almost 20 years after Perren and Jennings' (2005) observation about the dearth of critical activity in entrepreneurship research, a comprehensive understanding of critical research on entrepreneurship is still absent. This is surprising considering how critical traditions and perspectives have taken a central role in many management sub-disciplines (e.g. accounting, organization studies and critical management studies). In these domains, critical interests have grown into vibrant sub-fields of research with their own research communities, research chairs, specialized conferences and journal outlets. In entrepreneurship research, there is a growing body of critical contributions on entrepreneurship, but most of them, with few exceptions, are published outside of top-tier management journals (Dey & Mason, 2018). Given that critical research in entrepreneurship tends to be fragmented across different sub-disciplines of business and management, we miss the opportunity to reflect upon, in an integrative manner, the theoretical, philosophical and practical possibilities that this emerging multi-disciplinary stream of literature can bring to mainstream entrepreneurship scholarship (Ireland & Webb, 2007).

Our objective in this paper is to transcend the scholarly silos in which critical research is published to create space for reflection about the current state of critical research on entrepreneurship. Aspiring to foreground the diversity inherent in critical research and to provide an integrative synthesis of its various nuances and emphases, as well as its theoretical interests and paradigmatic implications, we provide a conceptual typology distinguishing four ideal types of critical research based on their evaluative

emphases (sceptical vs. affirmative) and meta-theoretical assumptions informing critical operation (foundational vs. post-foundational). This theory-driven typology, which allows us to identify points of intersection within the stock of critical research on entrepreneurship, is distinctive from other paradigm frameworks (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Chua, 1986) which tend to treat critical research as merely one perspective amongst others. In contrast, we present a theoretically informed and multi-paradigmatic typology that is designed specifically for critical research. Our aim is to broaden understanding of critical research and to demonstrate that, rather than representing a set of niche and peripheral interests (Jones & Murtola, 2012a), it merits attention in its own right.

Our review contributes to entrepreneurship scholarship on four levels. First, we demonstrate how critique is generative for revealing problem areas and blind spots of mainstream entrepreneurship research. For example, critical approaches are opposed to managerial and functionalist entrepreneurship research that merely calls for 'ever better', more efficient and effective ways of 'doing' entrepreneurship. In emphasizing instrumental considerations over substantive values, functionalist research tends to downplay and overshadow the political contradictions and ethical predicaments that underlie entrepreneurship (Cheung & Yeo-chi King, 2004; Fisscher et al., 2005). Our conceptual typology addresses entrepreneurship research's exclusionary tendency by acknowledging that 'to pick only the shiny and charming is to seduce oneself' (Jones & Murtola, 2012a, p. 133), whilst overlooking how entrepreneurship is a political project (Armstrong, 2005; Jones & Murtola, 2012b) with distinct ethical implications (Anderson & Smith, 2007; Buchholz & Rosenthal, 2005; Clarke & Holt, 2010).

Second, by offering a theoretically informed typology to make sense of and classify the heterogeneous and fragmented stock of critical research, we take up Shepherd's (2015) call to 'step out of the niches' of entrepreneurship research and 'embrace multiple perspectives [...] from multiple paradigms' (p. 503). Creating order out of what has, until now, been a highly diverse body of literature (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2021), dispersed across disciplinary boundaries (Rawhouser et al., 2017), helps to increase the granularity of our understanding of critical research by enabling a 'deeper dive' into the underlying issues and interests that preoccupy critical approaches. This allows us to include and take sides with the interests, issues and actors who are typically under-represented in mainstream entrepreneurship research and who are often exploited or disenfranchised (Warren, 2005). It also allows us to pinpoint different (and changing) intellectual traditions and assumptions that have advanced the critical trajectory of entrepreneurship research over time.

Third, we bring to the fore the double-edged nature of critical research, dealing on the one hand with the ‘negatives of entrepreneurship’ (Shepherd, 2015, p. 217) (referred to as scepticism) and on the other hand with entrepreneurship’s transformative and emancipatory potential and possibilities (referred to as affirmation). Whilst the ‘two-edged’ nature of critical research has been recognized in other fields (Singer, 2006), it has not been fully appreciated in the entrepreneurship field (Dey, 2000). In our review, therefore, we shed light on how these two evaluative stances have been used in the existing literature, elaborating their explanatory or theoretical potential, pinpointing issues that deserve further critical scrutiny (Ireland & Webb, 2007) and discussing how the two perspectives can be productively combined in future research.

Fourth, by disclosing the range of critical perspectives in entrepreneurship research we make explicit the politics of knowledge creation (Delbridge & Fiss, 2013). Specifically, given that critical research has been less visible in top-tier entrepreneurship journals, and reflecting on what kind of critical research is published in entrepreneurship outlets as well as related management sub-disciplines (critical management studies, general management, economics, business ethics), helps to make visible the publication norms and prohibitions characterizing our epistemic communities (Breslin & Gatrell, 2020). Bringing to centre stage the politics of knowledge creation is important for the advancement of entrepreneurship scholarship, not only because it offers evidence of a reflexive field of research that remains open to pluralism (Calás et al., 2009), but also because it puts entrepreneurship ‘to the test’ and to public examination (Jones & Murtola, 2012a).

In what follows, we first elaborate on what critical research is (and is not) and why it matters for entrepreneurship research. We then theorize the two dimensions underpinning our typology and introduce the four ideal types of critical research that emanate from it. This is followed by a detailed illustration of the ideal types through representative articles. In the final sections, we further develop and qualify the main insights of the review and conclude with suggestions for future research.

Critical research: What it is (and is not) and why this matters for entrepreneurship research

Critical research on entrepreneurship consists of a small, but rapidly growing, scholarly community operating across different disciplines, theoretical positions and paradigms. Critical studies are characterized by interests as wide-ranging as ‘unmasking the entrepreneur’ (Jones & Spicer, 2005), denaturalizing the fundamental knowledge

claims of canonical entrepreneurial texts and discourses (Essers et al., 2017; Greckhamer, 2010; Mishra & Bathini, 2019; Ogbor, 2000; Rao, 2018) or exposing the dark side of entrepreneurship, including negative deviance, fraud or misbehaviour (Armstrong, 2005; Kets de Vries, 1985; Lundmark & Westelius, 2012; Olaison & Sørensen, 2014; Tomczyk & Ross, 2011), that is usually hidden from view (Ashman et al., 2018; Rehn & Talas, 2004; Wright & Zahra, 2011).

Other critical studies have highlighted under-represented entrepreneurial voices or social groups that are denied access to entrepreneurial opportunities (Imas et al., 2012; Lockwood et al., 2001; Osbourne, 1991). Here, research efforts draw attention to ‘who and what are left out of dominant theoretical approaches and research frameworks’ (Calás et al., 2009, p. 553), in order to spotlight unequal and asymmetrical relations of power related to gender, women, ethnicity or disability (Ahl, 2004; Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010; Essers & Benschop, 2007, 2009; Knight, 2006; Marlow, 2014; Williams & Patterson, 2019).

These illustrative examples show how the attribute ‘critical’ is often not mentioned directly but enacted through a range of specific concepts such as culture, gender, history, inequalities, poverty, ethnicity, power and emancipation—concepts which are often used to be critical ‘in’, ‘of’ and ‘about’ entrepreneurship (Hlady-Rispal & Servantie, 2016; Olaisen & Sørensen, 2014; Rindova et al., 2009; Weiskopf & Steyaert, 2009). This suggests that not only is a single definition ineffective for capturing the richness and specificities of the different trajectories and interests that critical research engages with, but that what is critical is a matter of ongoing discussion (Fournier & Grey, 2000; Parker & Parker, 2017; Parker & Thomas, 2011; Spicer et al., 2009). Additionally, whilst a substantial part of critical research on entrepreneurship does not even use the attribute ‘critical’, others in turn used the prefix ‘critical’ in a way that is in stark contrast to our intentions.

For example, in a simple first-stage Scopus search (March 2020) which we undertook to clarify the conceptual parameters of our review, we found 151 articles¹ that used the terms ‘entrepreneurship’ AND ‘critical’ in either abstract, title or keywords. Of these, 83 were classified as critical in their identification of ‘success factors’, ‘critical threshold points’ or ‘critical junctures’ that were perceived as pivotal for successful entrepreneurship. In addition to this, we noted that the prefix ‘critical’ is often used in line with the expectations of normal science and associated notions of systematic, rigorous and disciplined scientific research.² Here, the practice of being critical of existing approaches is seen as generative for advancing the scientific discipline by either challenging theories and assumptions that are false or by re-examining dominant

beliefs or accepted forms of knowledge that underpin existing literature (Glaser, 1941). For example, many authors defined their studies as ‘critical’ in the sense of drawing attention to, or calling for more, ‘critical awareness’ of some unaddressed research gap or theoretical problem within entrepreneurship research (such as gender or western entrepreneurship).

What became clear from the first filtering of critical articles related to entrepreneurship is that defining what is critical depends on (at least) three issues. First, the meaning of ‘critical’ is a relational matter since what is understood as critical always ‘depends on what counts as dominant’ (Parker & Thomas, 2011, p. 422). Second, since dominant or ‘mainstream’ perspectives constantly change, critique also changes (or is supposed to change) accordingly (Dey, 2020). Third, defining what is critical requires the setting of some parameters for what is not critical. With these issues in mind, we now turn to the task of clarifying ‘what is not critical’ so as to draw some conceptual boundaries for developing our conceptual typology.

Criteria for deciding ‘what is not critical’

Referring to the articles in the Scopus search, closer analysis revealed that articles focusing on ‘critical factors’ were primarily motivated by the intention to uncover the factors that explain variance in entrepreneurial performance. We maintain that this type of research is predicated on a functionalist paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) which assumes an objectivist stance for identifying how entrepreneurship precipitates specific outcomes and effects, such as economic growth. As we noted earlier, a functionalist paradigm has been well established in mainstream entrepreneurship research (Grant & Perren, 2002; Jennings et al., 2005). Its philosophical assumptions and worldview construe entrepreneurship as constituted of stable entities or properties, which can be studied in a universally valid and value-neutral manner (Jennings et al., 2005) with the aim of making these entities ‘amenable to instrumental control and manipulation’ (Chia, 1995, 2008, p. 162). This rationalist and objectivist logic tends to overlook everything that is not directly linked to entrepreneurial success and its constitutive elements (Hjorth, 2013a). For this reason, research using the attribute ‘critical’ whilst grounded in a functionalist paradigm is excluded from our analysis.

A similar evaluation can be made about entrepreneurship studies that self-identify as critical because they are challenging established norms, interests and concerns of entrepreneurship scholars but which eventually advance well-rehearsed arguments pertaining to, for example, market-based, wealth-creating or job-stimulating out-

comes of entrepreneurship (Armstrong, 2005; Calás et al., 2009; Rindova et al., 2009; Weiskopf & Steyaert, 2009). An illustration of this tendency can be found in the (now) large volume of studies that emphasize social entrepreneurship as a means for creating value for those less fortunate (Saebi et al., 2019). Although acknowledging that the ‘social turn’ in entrepreneurship research is important, we note that instead of transcending notions of entrepreneurship as primarily an economic activity, research in this stream often perpetuates traditional managerial and neo-liberal assumptions (Hjorth, 2013a; North et al., 2020) by emphasizing the productive ideal of entrepreneurship as a medium for building a better world (Chandra, 2017; Sutter et al., 2019). Research that emphasizes these ideals and aspirations but glosses over the intricate socio-economic and politico-ethical challenges and constraints that accompany and perpetuate grand challenges (Karatas-Ozkan et al., 2014; Packard, 2017) are not considered as relevant for our review.

In the preceding discussion, we have clarified that studies employing the label ‘critical’ but which do not, in their outcomes, bring into sharper relief entrepreneurship’s systemic entanglement with issues such as unequal relations of power and associated processes of oppression, domination, exploitation and subjectification (Calás et al., 2009; Jennings et al., 2005), are not considered to be examples of critical entrepreneurship research. Following this clarification, we are now able to make precise the conceptual boundaries that are central for distinguishing what is critical research.

Critical research is characterized by assumptions, perspectives and approaches that embody or progress at least one of the following: (i) challenging entrepreneurship ‘as we know it’ in mainstream approaches (Hjorth & Holt, 2016), particularly functionalist premises and assumptions; (ii) rejecting the heroic and eulogizing ‘hegemony of the positive’ (Essers, 2009; Johnsen & Sørensen, 2017; Sørensen, 2008), which renders invisible the ‘dark sides’ of entrepreneurship and its negative consequences; (iii) recognizing entrepreneurship’s co-implication with concrete realities of suffering and with the production of advantages and disadvantages, opportunities and constraints (Jones & Murtola, 2012a); (iv) ‘taking sides’ with those on the receiving end of exploitation, oppression and subjectification. In sum, critical research is that which reflects a certain ‘consistency of disruptive intent’ (Bureau & Zander, 2014) and which takes account not just of entrepreneurship’s systematic dysfunctionalities, political ramifications and ethical predicaments, but also its emancipatory potential or possibilities for productive subversion and resistance.

We turn now to elaborating the strategy upon which our conceptual typology was developed. Our choice has been to include only journal articles in the dataset because our

main interest is to consider the extent of critical research in published and ranked journals. We do acknowledge, however, relevant books and book chapters in the main text.

Sampling and analytical process

The selection of the final set of articles involved four broad steps. First, as alluded to above, the review process was initiated by a search process aimed at identifying the founding pieces that ‘kick-started’ critical entrepreneurship research. We used seven articles that had an early, formative influence on the general understanding of what critical entrepreneurship research is, and is capable of achieving: Armstrong (2001), Calás et al. (2009), Jones and Spicer (2005), Nodoushani and Nodoushani (1999), Ogbor (2000), Rindova et al. (2009), and Steyaert and Katz (2004).

In the second step, we identified 151 articles from the first-stage Scopus search processes. The sample was subjected to a full-text examination which identified 30 articles as relevant for our review. As explained above, relevance was determined based on our inclusion criteria and the critical epistemological positioning of the studies (Calás et al., 2009). We then combined the 30 articles with the seven founding articles and applied a ‘snowballing’ approach (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) to the bibliographies and Google citations of these articles. Our aim was to identify a set of critical articles that fitted the criteria mentioned above and to capture articles that were published within the broader field and sub-disciplines of business and management.

The snowballing approach enabled us to enrich the dataset with articles that might not make explicit use of the attribute ‘critical’. This led to a refined sample reflective of the broad universe of potentially relevant articles, whilst also breaking ‘down interdisciplinary silos’ to ‘offer alternative outlooks’ (Jones & Gatrell, 2014, p. 4). This snowballing process gave us another 60 articles and a total dataset of 97 articles to work with. These are listed chronologically in Table 1.

In the third step, the team members engaged in iteratively mapping, appraising and evaluating all articles from the sample (Greenhalgh et al., 2005; Hopkinson & Blois, 2014). This process allowed the authors to gain ‘a cumulative understanding’ of the available literature (Taylor & Spicer, 2007, p. 326) and to make preliminary classifications in terms of their critical orientation and underlying philosophical and paradigmatic perspective (Green et al., 2006). This analytic step enabled a tentative understanding of the distinguishing dimensions based on which the literature could be sorted (Doty & Glick, 1994).

In the fourth step, we opted for a *cross-disciplinary conceptual typology* (Rawhouser et al., 2017). Typologies are

classification schemes that ‘conceptually derive interrelated sets of ideal types’ (Doty & Glick, 1994, p. 232). Cross-disciplinary research has the distinct advantage of creating a useful bridge for scholars from different disciplinary homes that might share common interests but might not usually interact (Ireland & Webb, 2007). Three points are important to note here. First, typologies have formed an integral part of management research (e.g. Adler, 1983; Laws & Prideaux, 2006; van Grinsven et al., 2016) and entrepreneurship (e.g. Cohen et al., 2008; Jones-Evans, 1995; Pirnay et al., 2003; Wortman, 1987). They are often used, however, to merely summarize the extant literature without adding anything to the existing stock of knowledge (Cornelissen, 2017). A conceptually derived typology is distinctive, therefore, because it offers ‘important and original ideas’ (Kilduff, 2006, p. 252) by ordering the literature on the basis of conceptual distinctions (Doty & Glick, 1994) that is not self-evident from the individual research articles. Inspired by ‘a logic of discovery rather than [...] a logic of validation’ (Van Maanen et al., 2007, p. 1146), our typological theorizing (Sandberg & Alvenson, 2021) emerged iteratively from an ongoing ‘back and forth’ between the existing body of critical entrepreneurship research and the broader social science literature which we used to develop the typology.

The second reason for developing a multi-dimensional conceptual typology was to facilitate the categorization of different types of critical research. This meant that we could ensure that critical research was the sole ‘centre of gravity’ within the typology, rather than ‘one perspective among others’, as tends to be the case in existing paradigmatic frameworks (such as Chua, 1986 who distinguishes positivist, interpretive and critical research; Burrell and Morgan, 1979 who include the critical dimension in their ‘radical structuralist’ paradigm; or Alvesson and Deetz, 2000 who sketch critical research as one of four prototypical research directions—normative, interpretive and dialogic). Devising a pluralistic framework centred on only critical research was essential for accommodating the historically and socially diverse range of critical perspectives, its sometimes ‘double-edged’ nature (Singer, 2006) and the binary paradigmatic assumptions we observed in the review articles.

Third, a usual precondition of typology-based theorizing (Cornelissen, 2017) is that the types are comprehensive and mutually exclusive (Snow & Ketchen, 2014, p. 231). Our typologizing approach adapts these two assumptions, however, by taking account of how the ‘action of putting things, which are not identical, into a group or class [...] depends on recognizing a set of things to be alike when they are not identical’ (Bronowski, 1951, p. 21). Expanding this logic, the distinguishing feature of our conceptual typology is that it tries to identify ‘ideal types’ (Doty & Glick, 1994; Weber,

TABLE 1 Overview of articles comprising the dataset in chronological order (N = 97)

No.	Author name(s) and year of publication	Journal	Quadrant/bubble no. ^b
1	Kets de Vries (1985)	<i>Harvard Business Review</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: low/F: low)/B1
2	Fournier (1998)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B8
3	Nodoushani and Nodoushani (1999)	<i>American Business Review</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: low)/B3
4	Baines and Wheelock (2000)	<i>Gender, Work & Organization</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: low/F: low)/B1
5	Cohen and Musson (2000)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: low/P: high)/B6
6	Ogbor (2000)	<i>Journal of Management Studies</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
7	Armstrong (2001)	<i>Economy & Society</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
8	Doolin (2002)	<i>Organization Studies</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: low/P: high)/B14
9	Fenwick (2002)	<i>Work, Employment and Society</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
10	Carr (2003)	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: low/P: low)/B13
11	Hannafey (2003)	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: low/F: high)/B2
<i>Double entry</i> ^a	<i>Double entry</i>		Affirmative-foundational (A: low/F: high)/B10
12	Bruni et al. (2004)	<i>Gender, Work & Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
<i>Double entry</i> ^a	<i>Double entry</i>		Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
13	Bruni et al. (2004)	<i>Journal of Organizational Change Management</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
14	Cheung and Yeo-chi King (2004)	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Affirmative-foundational (A: high/F: high)/B12
15	du Gay (2004)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
16	Rehn and Taalas (2004)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
17	Steyaert and Katz (2004)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: low)/B3
<i>Double entry</i> ^a	<i>Double entry</i>		Affirmative-foundational (A: high/F: low)/B11
18	Buchholz and Rosenthal (2005)	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
19	Jennings et al. (2005)	<i>Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
<i>Double entry</i> ^a	<i>Double entry</i>		Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
20	Jones and Spicer (2005)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
21	Marlow and Patton (2005)	<i>Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
22	Perren and Jennings (2005)	<i>Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
23	Storey et al. (2005)	<i>Human Relations</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: low/P: high)/B14
24	Styhre (2005)	<i>International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
25	Ahl (2006)	<i>Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
26	Blackburn and Ram (2006)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: low/F: high)/B2
27	Hartman et al. (2006)	<i>Zeitschrift für Wirtschafts- und Unternehmensethik</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

No.	Author name(s) and year of publication	Journal	Quadrant/bubble no. ^b
28	Hamilton (2006)	<i>International Small Business Journal</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
29	Lewis (2006)	<i>Gender, Work & Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
30	Ahl (2007)	<i>Journal of Business Venturing</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
31	Anderson and Smith (2007)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: low/P: low)/B13
32	Berglund and Johansson (2007a)	<i>Journal of Enterprising Communities</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: low/P: low)/B13
<i>Double entry</i> ^a	<i>Double entry</i>		Sceptical-post-foundational (S: low/P: low)/B5
33	Berglund and Johansson (2007b)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
<i>Double entry</i> ^a	<i>Double entry</i>		Affirmative-foundational (A: high/F: high)/B12
34	Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson (2007)	<i>International Small Business Journal</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: low)/B3
<i>Double entry</i> ^a	<i>Double entry</i>		Affirmative-foundational (A: high/F: low)/B11
35	Essers and Benschop (2007)	<i>Organization Studies</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
36	Levy and Scully (2007)	<i>Organization Studies</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
37	Ainsworth and Hardy (2008)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
38	McCabe (2008)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
39	Harmeling et al. (2009)	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: low/P: low)/B13
40	Sørensen (2008)	<i>Scandinavian Journal of Management</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
41	Brenkert (2009)	<i>Journal of Business Venturing</i>	Affirmative-foundational (A: high/F: high)/B12
42	McCabe (2008)	<i>Human Relations</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
43	Calás et al. (2009)	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
44	Essers and Benschop (2009)	<i>Human Relations</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
45	Rindova et al. (2009)	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	Affirmative-foundational (A: high/F: high)/B12
46	Banerjee and Tedmanson (2010)	<i>Management Learning</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
47	Clarke and Holt (2010)	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
48	Essers et al. (2010)	<i>Gender, Work & Organization</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: low/P: high)/B14
49	Goss et al. (2011)	<i>Organization Studies</i>	Affirmative-foundational (A: high/F: high)/B12
50	Wright and Zahra (2011)	<i>Entrepreneurship Research Journal</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: low/F: low)/B1
51	Ahl and Marlow (2012)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
52	da Costa and Saraiva (2012)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: low)/B3
53	Gamage and Wickramasinghe (2012)	<i>International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: low/F: high)/B2
54	Imas et al. (2012)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
55	Jones and Murtola (2012a)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
56	Kenny and Scriver (2012)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

No.	Author name(s) and year of publication	Journal	Quadrant/bubble no. ^b
57	Marlow and McAdam (2012)	<i>Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
58	Tedmanson et al. (2012)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
<i>Double entry^a</i>			
59	Fuller (2013)	<i>Business Ethics: A European Review</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: low/P: low)/B5
60	Hamilton (2013)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: low)/B7
61	Hjorth (2013b)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
<i>Double entry^a</i>			
62	Hjorth (2013a)	<i>Society & Business Review</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
63	Lewis (2013)	<i>Gender, Work & Organization</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B14
64	Loacker (2013)	<i>Culture & Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
65	Marlow and McAdam (2012)	<i>International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
66	McAdam and Marlow (2013)	<i>The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
67	Peredo et al. (2017)	<i>Journal of Business Venturing</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: low)/B7
68	Perren and Dannreuther (2012)	<i>International Small Business Journal</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: low/P: low)/B5
69	Rehn et al. (2013)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
70	Verduijn and Essers (2013)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
71	Bureau and Zander (2014)	<i>Scandinavian Journal of Management</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: low/P: low)/B5
<i>Double entry^a</i>			
72	Drakopoulou Dodd (2014)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: low)/B15
<i>Double entry^a</i>			
73	Essers and Tedmanson (2014)	<i>Gender, Work & Organization</i>	Sceptical-foundational (A: high/F: low)/B11
74	Hanlon (2014)	<i>Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
75	Marlow (2014)	<i>International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
76	Miller (2014)	<i>Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
77	Olaison and Sorensen (2014)	<i>International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
<i>Double entry^a</i>			
78	Verduijn et al. (2014)	<i>International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16 Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

No.	Author name(s) and year of publication	Journal	Quadrant/bubble no. ^b
<i>Double entry</i> ^a	<i>Double entry</i>		Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
<i>Double entry</i> ^a	<i>Double entry</i>		Affirmative-foundational (A: high/F: high)/B12
<i>Double entry</i> ^a	<i>Double entry</i>		Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
79	Al-Dajani et al. (2015)	<i>British Journal of Management</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: high)/B4
80	Vallas and Cummins (2015)	<i>Organization Studies</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
81	Courpasson et al. (2016)	<i>Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
82	Dey (2016)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
83	Hjorth and Holt (2016)	<i>Journal of Business Venturing Insights</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
84	Driver (2017)	<i>Human Relations</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
85	Berglund et al. (2017)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
86	Johnsen and Sørensen (2017)	<i>International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
87	Alkhaled and Berglund (2018)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: low/P: low)/B5
88	Ashman et al. (2018)	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
89	Berglund et al. (2018)	<i>Gender, Work & Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
90	Dashipour and Rumens (2018)	<i>Organization</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
91	Dey & Mason, 2018	<i>Journal of Business Venturing</i>	Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
92	Dy et al. (2018)	<i>Organization</i>	Sceptical-foundational (S: high/F: low)/B3
93	Jones and Clifton (2018)	<i>Gender, Work & Organization</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
94	Farias et al. (2019)	<i>Entrepreneurship & Regional Development</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
<i>Double entry</i> ^a	<i>Double entry</i>		Affirmative-post-foundational (A: high/P: high)/B16
95	Wheadon and Duval-Couetil (2017)	<i>International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: low/P: low)/B5
96	Williams and Patterson (2019)	<i>International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8
97	Whiting and Pritchard (2020)	<i>Journal of Management Inquiry</i>	Sceptical-post-foundational (S: high/P: high)/B8

^aDouble entries denote articles that simultaneously represent the sceptical and affirmative valence pole. One article (providing a conceptual overview of different perspectives of critical entrepreneurship research) thereby also represented the two paradigmatic positions (foundational and post-foundational).

^bThe bubble numbers refer to Figure 3, which depicts the distribution of articles across and within the four types of critical research.

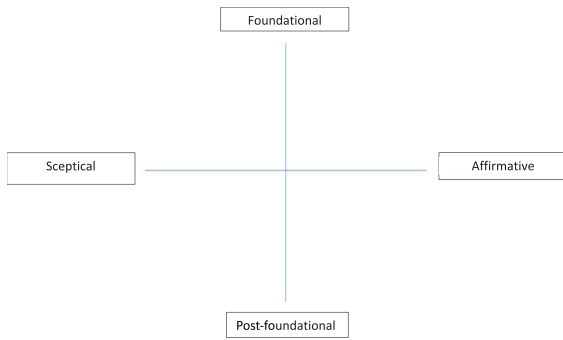


FIGURE 1 Four dimensions of critical research in entrepreneurship [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

1968) that capture resemblances and differences that exist within the literature. A focus on ideal types, consisting of a ‘hard core’ and a ‘softer periphery’ (Lakatos, 1968), enables us to elucidate a particular type of critical research in a universal form, whilst creating a sensitivity for the internal variability of each type and the level of alignment of specific contributions with the ideal. Also, acknowledging the ‘soft periphery’ of each ideal type allows us to show that rather than being mutually exclusive (Collier et al., 2012), some articles have interests that might overlap with another type. We return to this point in the discussion.

The process of typologizing drew from different social science literatures and involved frequent re-inspections in case of disagreement between the authors (Kimjeon & Davidsson, 2021). After several iterations, a stabilized typology emerged that grouped together existing research (Bailey, 1994) based on two dimensions: (i) *valence* and (ii) *paradigmatic orientation*. The two poles of the valence dimension (sceptical vs. affirmative) capture the tendency within entrepreneurship to emphasize its negative or positive possibilities (Perren & Jennings, 2005; Wright & Zahra, 2011). The two poles of the paradigmatic dimension (foundational and post-foundational), which we owe to Marchart (2007), help us categorize critical entrepreneurship research according to its underlying assumptions, grounds or ‘foundations’. These dimensions, which are combined into a conceptual grid in Figure 1, are now elaborated.

INTRODUCING THE DIMENSIONS INFORMING THE TYPOLOGY

The valence dimension: Sceptical research

The term ‘valence’ alludes to the evaluative quality of an appraisal. Forming one of the ‘most important concepts at the heart of emotion experience’ (Charland, 2005,

p. 83), valences comprise a basic affective quality by distinguishing phenomena according to binary criteria such as positive–negative or desirable–undesirable (Solomon & Stone, 2002). The first pole of our valence dimension is referred to as *sceptical* and takes its cues from the etymology of *kritikos* as a practice of objecting, challenging or ‘taking issue with’. Reminiscent of what is also referred to as ‘negative critique’ or simply ‘negativity’ (Massumi, 2010; Noys, 2012), the key operation of sceptical research is to disturb established knowledge and practices by revealing negative consequences, ideological operations or moral faultiness. Sceptical research is *antagonistically* related to (or simply opposed to) its object of critique (Parker & Parker, 2017), thereby aspiring to problematize and ‘undo’ the supposed naturalness of dominant conceptions (Farias et al., 2019). The sceptical orientation is informed by a myriad of theoretical perspectives which are united within an explicitly antagonistic prospect (Örtenblad, 2020). This may involve, for instance, post-Marxism (Zizek, Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe), Frankfurt School Critical Theory (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Habermas), post-structuralism (Foucault, Lacan and Derrida), standpoint theories (feminism, post-colonialism) and critical realism (Bhaskar, Callinicos and Jessop).³

The valence dimension: Affirmative research

In line with recent calls for a kind of critique that emphasizes progressive—that is, fairer, more caring, empowering and transformative—forms of management (Fournier & Grey, 2000; Spicer et al., 2009), we term the second pole of the valence dimension *affirmative*. The guiding idea of affirmation (Andersen, 2017; Braidotti, 2011, 2013; MacLure, 2015; Raffnsøe, 2016) is that critique should actively intervene in and transform reality by helping people identify and realize available (political and ethical) *potentialities* (e.g. opportunities for productive resistance and micro-emancipation) (Mouffe, 2013; Truman et al., 2000). Affirmative critique goes beyond merely problematizing entrepreneurship and instead occupies a ‘space between being “for” and being “against”’ (Parker & Parker, 2017) the subject matter. For example, an affirmative critique of ‘social entrepreneurship’ would suggest that the concept, in its general understanding, is ‘inadequate but necessary’. It is inadequate in the sense that common conceptions remain overly wedded to issues pertaining to heroism, the non-political, the post-ideological and the ‘objective’. On the other hand, social entrepreneurship remains ‘necessary’ since it contains the seeds of becoming the harbinger of a paradigm of radical becoming (Calás et al., 2018), emancipation (Rindova et al., 2009) and social

creativity (Weiskopf & Steyaert, 2009). Affirmative critique implies working ‘creatively in and from (and hence not against) the structured field of (for example) social entrepreneurship studies’ (Steyaert & Dey, 2010, p. 235), using critique as a means for unleashing the potentiality of the concept contained and ‘silenced’ by ‘mainstream’ approaches (Dey & Steyaert, 2010).

To summarize, the two poles of the valence dimension—sceptical and affirmative—can be likened to the tradition of discerning ‘negative’ criticism (*against* the common stock of knowledge) and ‘positive’ critique or ‘critical creativity’ (Fenwick, 2016).

The paradigmatic dimension: Foundational research

According to Marchart (2007), foundational thinking is based on such ‘metaphysical figures’ as ‘totality, universality, essence, and ground’ (p. 2), a seeking for a ‘solid anchorage’ (p. 4) on which to found critique. The paradigmatic basis of foundational critique in its normative manifestation can be found in certain ethical approaches such as deontological or virtue ethics, but is perhaps best known through the Frankfurt School Critical Theory Horkheimer and Adorno (1947), which conceives of individuals as able to master their own destinies through the use of reason and collaboration with peers (Habermas, 1993). The overarching objective of foundational critical research consists of qualifying and justifying social reality based on higher, universal principles and norms related to, for instance, human rights, equality or solidarity. Operating on the plane of reason, foundational critique takes issue with, for instance, instrumental reason (such as profit maximization), ideology, myth, mass consumerism and distorted communication. Moreover, it is through recourse to such transcendental and stable foundations that critique passes judgement on questions such as ‘what is good for us?’ and ‘who benefits?’

While these examples point towards a type of foundational critique which assumes that reality ‘as we know it’ is always shaped and distorted through dominant discourses and technologies of power, there is also a second type of foundationalism. This second type grounds critique upon empirical facticity by probing interrogation of the factual content and reasonableness of prevailing assumptions and beliefs. The critical operation here relies on the sovereignty of robust empirical facts which are used to oppose prejudice, stereotypes, unreason and factual errors in order to endorse the truth (Gasché, 2007). In both manifestations, therefore, foundational critique starts from a stable *ground*, either with the aim of denaturalizing the ground upon which the status quo is based or

by establishing a ground which possesses highly desirable qualities.

The paradigmatic dimension: Post-foundational research

Post-foundational critique rejects the idea of universal truth and associated principles and values stable and unchanging phenomena. It further reminds us that it is not always clear in a given situation which foundation to use to pass an evaluative judgement, since different foundations might lead to conflicting assessments of the same social reality (Gold, 2010). Taking issue with reproaches of elitism and self-contradiction that have frequently been held against foundational forms of critique (Sonderegger, 2008), post-foundationalism marks a response to this concern. Following Marchart (2007, p. 2), a *post-foundational* approach ‘does not attempt to erase completely such figures of the ground’, but to weaken their ontological stability and immutability. This weakening of the *ground* does not lead, however, to the assumption of the total absence of *all* grounds (which Marchart coins ‘anti-foundationalism’), but rather to the assumption of the impossibility of a *final* ground from which understanding and critical judgement can be derived). Post-foundationalism posits that ‘foundations’ are fundamentally contingent (i.e. man-made, context-dependent and subject to constant change), which implies that the ability to pass judgement and determine a virtuous path presupposes weighing the possibilities given in each situation (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014).

Post-foundational critique, therefore, tries to identify ‘softer foundations’ that are committed to open-ended and context-sensitive principles (Lather, 1993), such as difference, dissensus, multiplication or plurification. Thus, rather than emphasizing an ‘anything goes’, where individual expression is all that matters, post-foundationalists would insist that critique must judge and assess in a more immanent, contextual and embedded manner while accepting the need to ‘think beyond a world in which the “to come” of the future is “regulated in advance” by normative and juridical prescriptions’ (Popke, 2003, p. 312). In this way, post-foundationalism suggests replacing conclusive assessment based on a priori principles with experimentation, consensus with dissensus and using research as a vehicle for practising resistance through confrontation and creation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994).

To summarize, the two poles of the paradigmatic orientations differ in their underlying premises; foundational critical research assumes that critique should adhere to and achieve higher principles and ideals, whilst post-foundational critique (through experimentation) allows

for multiplicity and *movement*. We now combine the two dimensions to sketch four ideal types of critical research on entrepreneurship.

Four ideal types of critical entrepreneurship research

In this section, we differentiate four ideal types of critical entrepreneurship research and elaborate their distinctive features and guiding concepts. These are outlined in Table 2. We also refer to exemplary studies from our sample (see Table 1) to add explanatory detail and depth to our conceptual explanations.

Type 1: Sceptical-foundational: Challenging entrepreneurship based on higher universal norms and principles

Sceptical research with a foundational orientation assumes that since entrepreneurship exists in different shapes and forms, there is always the possibility that it is done in ways that are incommensurate with the advancement of the common good (Baumol, 1990; Harris et al., 2009; Horkheimer, 1972). This type of research summons higher principles and norms to challenge topics pertaining to unbridled positivity and heroism, the non-political, the post-ideological, the 'objective' and 'value-free'. Contributions of this type are 'foundational' in that they assume some kind of 'final ground' (such as a world characterized by a higher degree of solidarity and equality) from which critique can be offered and from where knowing actors can (rationally) create their own social realities.

A further train of sceptical-foundational research points at the role of entrepreneurship research in the ideological support of capital accumulation (Hanlon, 2014) or its tendency to appropriate the value being created by other actors (Jones & Murtola, 2012b). An ideological focus allows for deeper insights about how entrepreneurship scholarship has developed a partial understanding of its focal phenomenon, ignoring and 'editing out' elements of entrepreneurship which are widespread, but largely ignored, such as entrepreneurial excess, irrationality or ethical breaches (Jones & Spicer, 2009). The main point of critique here is that mainstream approaches tend to overstate the productive value of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, while also preserving (wittingly or otherwise) the social order, including negative instances such as oppression, exclusion and inequality.

Ideological critiques often exhibit a natural connection with contributions dealing with the 'dark side' of entrepreneurship (Kets de Vries, 1985; Wright & Zahra,

2011). Broadly speaking, 'dark side' research aspires to challenge the self-evidences surrounding entrepreneurship research through a confrontation with empirical facts and 'myth busting'. The focus of this body of literature is on the widespread, but broadly overlooked, negative behaviours, practices, effects and outcomes of entrepreneurial endeavours (Shepherd, 2019). Prior research in this tradition has focused on entrepreneurial failure, and fraud, or on the negative personality traits entrepreneurs often possess, such as overconfidence, narcissism, aggressiveness, greed, hubris, deviance or obsesiveness (Haynes et al., 2015; Miller, 2014).

A different line of inquiry has also used empirical evidence to show how the emancipatory potential of entrepreneurship is often overstated (Al-Dajani et al., 2015; Blackburn & Ram, 2006; Jennings et al., 2016). What is reflected in these insights is that research on the 'dark side' has taken it upon itself to understand if, and when, entrepreneurship creates dysfunctions in individuals, families, communities and society (McMullen & Warnick, 2016). Examples of this type include contributions that expose entrepreneurship as an oppressive force (Jones & Murtola, 2012b), which is used to conceal and justify dominant relations of power (da Costa & Saraiva, 2012) or power asymmetries (Fournier, 1998) related, for instance, to gender or ethnicity (Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010; Bruni et al., 2004; Essers & Benschop, 2007, 2009; Marlow & McAdam, 2012).

Against this backdrop, we now elaborate on two exemplary articles to increase the granularity and descriptive detail of the sceptical-foundational type of critical research. The first is by Jones and Murtola (2012b), who offer a political-economy framework to discuss how entrepreneurship participates in the systematic 'expropriation of the common'. Noting that entrepreneurial value creation is becoming increasingly 'socialized' and collaborative as it relies on skills, resources and forms of life residing outside of the enterprise, the authors identify a 'negative moment' in how the collectively created and commons-based values are captured or 'expropriated' by the entrepreneur. The authors provide an exposition of a problematic dynamic to be found at the core of entrepreneurship, which creates the basis for the continuous accumulation of capital. In this way, Jones and Murtola (2012b) perform a moral assessment of entrepreneurship, particularly pertaining to its predatory role in society, which challenges renditions of entrepreneurship as an univocally positive thing (Wiklund et al., 2019).

We also see Perren and Jennings (2005) as exemplifying the sceptical-foundational type. Acknowledging that entrepreneurship has become an integral part of political discourse in many countries, this article argues that entrepreneurship policies are often based on a problematic

TABLE 2 Distinctive features and guiding concepts of four ideal types of critical entrepreneurship research illustrated with exemplary contributions

Sceptical	
Quadrant 1: Sceptical-foundational	Quadrant 2: Sceptical-post-foundational
Features/characteristics	Features/characteristics
Challenging the idea that entrepreneurial traits or capacities are possessions of individuals.	Problematising traditional assumptions that entrepreneurship is wholesome, good and emancipatory, for the benefit of society/economy.
Bringing to the fore new contexts, voices and empirical sites that have been unexplored.	Bringing to the fore new contexts and empirical sites that have been unexplored.
Challenging how entrepreneurship is being brought to the fore to perpetuate (neoliberal) idea(s).	Addressing how entrepreneurship is too unquestioningly being brought to the fore to perpetuate (neoliberal) idea(s).
Where entrepreneurship is seen as a means of managerializing or economizing the social.	Challenging the managerialization/economization of the social).
Problematising traditional assumptions that entrepreneurship is wholesome, good and emancipatory, for the benefit of society/economy.	Addresses the dark sides of entrepreneurship, as well as entrepreneurship as oppressive 'force'.
Seeing entrepreneurship as an oppressive 'force' or emphasizing the dark sides.	Challenging possessive individualism.
Showing how entrepreneurship produces inequality or oppression and so on, and in describing/revealing it, assuming that we have done something to overcome/reduce it (critique predicated on universal principles).	Arguing for more plurality/diversity in perspectives being adopted (cf. the social, feminist or minority perspective).
Arguing for more plurality/diversity in perspectives being adopted (cf. the social, feminist or minority perspective).	Questioning images and representations that lead to a one-sided, reductionist understanding of entrepreneurship.
Starting from the assumption that scholars are in a position of <i>critical authority</i> such that we are able to recognize new contexts where entrepreneurship is at play.	Addressing the 'radical', disruptive energy of/in entrepreneurship (e.g. contributions attending to processes of entrepreneurial becoming).
Guiding concepts: negative consequences, 'undoing', exploitation, consensus, essences, entities, normativity, universality, ideology, exposure, revelation, anchoring, grounding.	Guiding concepts: difference, dissensus, otherness, ambivalence, aporia, multiplication, energy, 'undoing', empowering, transformation, becoming, process.
Exemplary contributions: Jones and Murtola (2012b); Perren and Jennings (2005).	Exemplary contributions: Loacker (2013); Ogbor (2000).

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Affirmative <i>Quadrant 3: Affirmative-foundational</i> Features/characteristics	<i>Quadrant 4: Affirmative-post-foundational</i> Features/characteristics
Offering views of how entrepreneurial initiatives lead to societal change and can be (re)aligned to (matters of) the common good (as a way out of neoliberalist capitalist economic systems).	Offering views of how all entrepreneurial initiatives may lead to societal change and be (re)aligned to (matters of) the common good (as a way out of neoliberalist capitalist economic systems).
Presenting views of how this productive potential results in social realities that are less distorted by oppressive, asymmetrical relations of power.	Offering views of how the productive potential results in social realities that are less distorted by oppressive, asymmetrical relations of power.
Investigating/discussing alternative 'forms' of entrepreneurship, highlighting new contexts and empirical sites that have been unexplored.	Investigating other/alternative 'forms' of entrepreneurship.
Arguing for the need for more dialogue, more exposure, more sociality and humaneness.	Highlighting new contexts and empirical sites that have been unexplored.
Showing how enterprises/entrepreneurship may form a vehicle for realizing higher normative ideals.	Arguing for the need for more dialogue, more exposure, more sociality and humaneness.
Assuming that entrepreneurship and its universal values offer emancipatory, liberating possibilities as a result of which we can judge how well different forms of entrepreneurship reduce inequality/human suffering.	Challenging the notion of essences and entities as ways of grounding, vehicles for change.
Guiding concepts: essences, entities, unity, consensus, normativity, universality, ideology, productive potential, empowering, opposition, intervention, fixing, anchoring, grounding.	Emphasizing the 'undoing' of foundations, accepting things in flux, in flow, becoming, non-fixing, processual and so on. No fixed end point as things unfold.
Exemplary contributions: Bureau and Zander (2014); Goss et al. (2011).	Guiding concepts: creating sociality, community building, disruptive, subversive energy, aporia, multiplication, the moment; undoing, unfixing, becoming. Exemplary contributions: Buchholz and Rosenthal (2005); Dashtipour and Rumens (2018).

'foundation' insofar as they foreground the importance of macroeconomic growth and profitability, while suggesting that the value of actual entrepreneurs and small business owners is defined solely through their contribution to national economic prosperity. With its focus on problematizing prevailing assumptions about entrepreneurship held by government agencies, the authors 'expose' the power dynamics of entrepreneurship policies by attending to how they curtail entrepreneurial agency. The article is part of the sceptical-foundational quadrant as it points towards an inconvenient truth about entrepreneurship policies, and thus argues for the need to uncover and 'denaturalize' it through further empirical research.

Type 2: Sceptical-post-foundational: Challenging entrepreneurship based on contingent norms and multiplicity

Sceptical critical research with a post-foundational orientation is chiefly interested in understanding how entrepreneurship actualizes (or not) alternative states of affairs in relation to an emergent status quo. The focus here, unlike sceptical-foundational research, is not to use higher principles and norms to evaluate or judge entrepreneurship. To illustrate this, it is instructive to quote Foucault's (1983) seminal description of his critical project: 'My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad' (p. 231). Foucault's statement connotes a sense of how sceptical research with a post-foundational orientation aims to determine the, at times, subtle dangers entrepreneurship might be related to, and particularly what ethico-political choices and predicaments lie at their core. It aims, therefore, to problematize entrepreneurship by attending to how it creates or contributes to conditions that restrict, curtail and coerce multiplicity, plurality and possibilities of action (Calás et al., 2009).

As with its foundational counterpart, sceptical-post-foundational contributions challenge established ways of knowing, but they deviate from the former by not assuming the possibility of a final and self-contained foundation; rather, they rely on a weakened understanding of 'ground' by emphasizing notions of entrepreneurship as a process of ongoing 'becoming', which is contingent, subject to change, and not reaching some final 'destination' or end state (Calás et al., 2018). For example, Ogbor's (2000) deconstruction of the dominant ideas about the entrepreneurship phenomenon is markedly sceptical in orientation. It also appears, at first glance, to be 'foundational' not just because of its affinities with Critical Theory (as described above), but because it sets out to unveil how entrepreneurship works ideologically to serve

'as a tapestry for un-examined and contradictory assumptions and knowledge about the reality of entrepreneurs' (p. 605). Given Ogbor's (2000) aim, however, of 'undoing' the essentialist fallacy of entrepreneurship research by denaturalizing the notion that entrepreneurship consists of some essential elements, this contribution can be more accurately described as post-foundational. The task of sceptical-post-foundational critique, then, is to inquire about how processes of signification produce commonsensical assumptions of entrepreneurship, including which issues and elements those canonical meanings entail, or render elusive.

Consider, as a second illustrative example, the article by Loacker (2013) which addresses how artists are discursively redefined as economic actors in the context of neoliberal capitalism. Specifically, the article discloses how artists' identities were discursively reframed as 'entrepreneurial creatives' or 'culturpreneurs'. While the government-induced 'culturpreneurial shift' from the arts to the 'creative industries' presents artists with several ambivalences regarding their self-image, Loacker illustrates how artists, while trying to reject being turned into subjects of competition and marketization, eventually cannot escape from it. The article is thus sceptical in how it uncovers how artists unintentionally participate in their own 'entrepreneurialization' and post-foundational in how it engages in the problematization of the discursive subordination of artistic values to neoliberal ideals without, however, performing value judgements (good/bad or right/wrong) based on pre-ordained higher moral principles.

Type 3: Affirmative-foundational: Unleashing the emancipatory potential from a critical stance

Unlike its sceptical counterpart, affirmatively critical entrepreneurship research includes attempts to realign entrepreneurship with the common good (defined through universal standards, such as solidarity or inclusion). In so doing, it signifies the subject matter as a vehicle of emancipation (Rindova et al., 2009), creative world-making (Montessori, 2016) or reflective judgement, which leads to a reassessment of what is desirable (Clarke & Holt, 2010). In this way, affirmative critique, rather than trying to disqualify entrepreneurship based on its apparent moral myopia and tendency to disregard higher principles and values (Hartman et al., 2006), seeks to transcend ongoing debates in entrepreneurship research predicated on the logic of economic rationality (Calás et al., 2009). It does this by offering a different understanding of how entrepreneurship can become a critical force of societal production

capable of removing constraints within the economic, social, technological cultural and/or institutional environments to establish new structures more conducive to wellbeing (Rindova et al., 2009).

Despite its 'positive' prospect, affirmative critique does not paint the kind of rose-tinted, optimistic interpretation of entrepreneurship as produced in media reports or celebratory research articles. Instead, affirmation requires a critical interrogation of its premises and guiding assumptions. The affirmative 'turn' differs from the sceptical one, in seeking alternative ways of approaching what is found to be problematic. It also differs from the broader and more popularized notion of purpose-driven social entrepreneurship or cognates which, for many, epitomizes the 'affirmative' potential of entrepreneurship (McMullen & Warnick, 2016). As has been pointed out by Calás et al. (2009) and Hjorth (2013a), the dominant discourse of social entrepreneurship is biased towards mainstream management theory and economic thinking, with a positivist paradigmatic orientation, and tends to treat the social as a by-product of, or (merely) a profitable opportunity for, entrepreneurial activity (Driver, 2017). It is only after these deeply entrenched premises about entrepreneurship have been dissolved that we can reconstruct what Dey and Steyaert (2018, p. 2) refer to as the 'productive sense' of affirmative critique.

Contributions of this type are foundational in that they seek to identify essences or entities that can be 'fixed' or grounded to entrepreneurship. They either provide philosophical reasons, norms and principles or robust empirical findings to judge or evaluate different forms of entrepreneurship according to how well they work to reduce human suffering or inequality, with the assumption that entrepreneurship (and its universal principles) brings about emancipatory or liberating possibilities (Fleischmann, 2006; Santos, 2013).

To illustrate these issues, we draw attention to two exemplary articles. First, Bureau and Zander (2014) offer thoughts on how entrepreneurs, as well as artists, face the necessity to transgress and alter existing 'operating rules' of a particular field, adding a 'subversive' dimension to their endeavour. Explaining subversion as an act of 'overthrowing' existing rules, they elaborate on the subversive potential of art if, and when, (three) conditions are being met, namely: (1) it should be connected (to society); (2) it should produce new (emotional) perceptions and representations; and (3) it should have a (behavioural) impact beyond, in the case of entrepreneurship, the world of business. Entrepreneurs, they argue, can be seen as agents of social change who resist opposing forces. This contribution is, thereby, classified as affirmative. And, with its attempt at pinpointing the 'nature' or essence of subver-

sive entrepreneurship (i.e. what it 'is'), we further deem it to be on the foundational pole.

Second, Goss et al. (2011) present an understanding of emancipatory entrepreneurship that sees micro-processes of power and related moments of resistance as critical to the ways in which entrepreneurs bring about positive social change. In contrast to approaches that view social change simply as a beneficial outcome of economic activity (Calás et al., 2009), Goss and colleagues contend that social change always involves redefining barriers erected and maintained by power relations. The article is affirmative in recognizing that entrepreneurial ventures can act as vehicles for positive change by altering prevailing power relations. We place it on the foundational side of our framework because it assumes that people are masters of their own destiny and can use their human capacities to create social orders that are conducive to human flourishing.

Type 4: Affirmative-post-foundational: The undoing of foundations in the name of difference and multiplicity

Like the previous section, contributions of this type are affirmative in being 'for entrepreneurship' and 'saying yes' to its potentiality as a society-creating force (Weiskopf & Steyaert, 2009). It also encourages scholars to practically intervene in social reality rather than merely studying (and critiquing) their object of inquiry (Spicer et al., 2009). Attending to processes of entrepreneurial *becoming*, affirmative-post-foundational critical approaches create important insights as to the radical, disruptive and subversive energy at the heart of entrepreneurship. However, rather than employing generalizable principles or a common ground upon which to judge the appropriateness or effectiveness of entrepreneurship's ability to 'enhance people's possibilities for living' (Hjorth & Holt, 2016, p. 53), in its post-foundational orientation affirmative critique sees foundations as contingent, in flux, subject to change and often not fully realized or actualized into some *final* ground. The focus of affirmative-post-foundational research is thus placed firmly upon how entrepreneurial endeavours creatively punctuate, breach and reassemble prevailing relations of force, considering social change not as the realization of some predefined normative ideal (e.g. the good society) but as a continuously unfolding, contested and dynamic process (Dey & Mason, 2018).

An exemplary contribution is that by Buchholz and Rosenthal (2005), who offer an account of entrepreneurial morality based on creativity, experimentation and sensitivity. Resolutely opposed to the (foundational) idea that people are essentially rational beings who use reason to align themselves with universally acceptable moral standards,

the authors maintain that the ethics of entrepreneurship cannot be reduced to the level of pre-ordained commitments (read fixed codes or principles of good conduct). Thus, in contrast to foundational approaches which relate 'moral entrepreneurial conduct' to higher universal principles, Buchholz and Rosenthal's article is post-foundational in conceiving of entrepreneurial morality as an ongoing creative and experimental process that is guided by and responsive to the unique situations that entrepreneurs face. Offering an alternative to those who see ethics and entrepreneurship as a contradiction in terms (Carr, 2003), the article is affirmative in that it treats moral deliberation as an act of weighing the options available in each situation and knowing how to balance available norms with other considerations to achieve a good outcome.

A second exemplary contribution, by Dashtipour and Rumens (2018), deepens the conceptualization of entrepreneurship as social change by illustrating how entrepreneurial processes disrupt and disturb the social order, thus creating affect in the form of anxiety. Entrepreneurship, according to these authors, discloses and uproots 'established norms, familiarity, and coherence' (p. 224), thereby creating 'heterotopia' (spaces of difference), which highlights 'how entrepreneurship establishes a disturbing incongruence' (p. 235). The authors argue, furthermore, that such disturbance and anxiety may be what is needed to engender the kind of provocation that brings about (social) transformation. The article is affirmative in how it reconceptualizes entrepreneurship as a disruptive social change activity. The contribution is post-foundational in how it argues that entrepreneurship is characterized by a constant urge to move beyond the limits of the given, thereby loosening the prevailing 'ground', not to replace it with a better one, but to expand the possibilities for multiplication and continuous movement.

DISCUSSION

Sparked by the observation that there is an absence of systematic reflection on the state of critical research on entrepreneurship, our objective in this paper has been to intensify the space of critique in entrepreneurship scholarship. Rather than ordering available research according to commonly used and predetermined paths for critical research, such as Frankfurt-style Critical Theory, post-structuralism, labour process theory, Marxism and so on, we have established our own conceptual ordering system to heed two key characteristics which we believe are crucial for classifying critical research: the evaluative stance (valence) and the paradigmatic orientation. Combining the two dimensions from a synthesis of diverse social sci-

ence literatures has allowed us to distinguish four generic types of critical research. This is noteworthy in that many paradigm frameworks (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Chua, 1986) position critical research as just one category of research—a positioning which downplays the distinct interests, assumptions and preoccupations typifying different strands of critical research. In advancing this theoretically informed typology, three key insights and contributions can be nuanced from our findings.

First, having taken up Shepherd's (2015, p. 503) call to 'step out of the niches' by grouping together formerly dispersed research, we have identified four quadrants of critical research, each of which offers a granular vocabulary or internally coherent 'grammar' (Jones & Gatrell, 2014) on the subtleties and nuances of critical entrepreneurship research. Second, in devising these quadrants, we have been able to accommodate the diversity inherent in the recent surge of critical entrepreneurship research and to create a contact zone between disciplinary traditions of management research that do not usually communicate. Third, our conceptual typology has enabled us to highlight and discuss the politics of scholarly knowledge creation underpinning the available stock of critical research,⁴ particularly in relation to the range of journals involved and the types of critical articles being published. These contributions are discussed in more detail below but to preface this, we begin with a summary of the key insights from each quadrant—insights which also highlight productive areas for future research.

The first quadrant is 'sceptical research with a foundational orientation', whose main contribution to entrepreneurship research lies in how it enables deeper insights into the aspects of entrepreneurship that are often concealed, marginalized, edited out or excluded by dominant conceptions. Sceptical-foundational research has been instrumental in denaturalizing overly one-sided renditions which tend to mythicize and romanticize the positive side of entrepreneurship while downplaying or neglecting more critical issues, such as the dark side, downside and destructive side of entrepreneurship (Shepherd, 2019). This research bears significance for the advancement of entrepreneurship research by addressing whether what we know about entrepreneurship is actually true, or merely a myth or ideological smokescreen hiding the true state of reality. Perhaps the greatest merit of sceptical-foundational research resides in how it uses robust empirical findings and/or universal higher principles (e.g. equality, solidarity or inclusivity) to create the ground to expose false premises, stereotypes and mechanisms of privilege and power.

Whereas sceptical-foundational research aims to 'myth-bust', expose and denaturalize dominant conceptions of entrepreneurship, and pass judgement on those aspects

of entrepreneurship that are out of line with the common good, our second quadrant ‘affirmative-foundational’ reflects the extent to which entrepreneurship can bring about desirable outcomes, thus creating greater alignment between entrepreneurship and the advancement of the common good. Affirmative-foundational research advances entrepreneurship research, therefore emphasizing the liberating and emancipatory potential of entrepreneurship. Making the case that entrepreneurship cannot be reduced to a monetary discourse of wealth creation, profit and economic growth (Lundmark et al., 2022), affirmative-foundational research either draws on well-founded standards of the common good and the ‘good life’ or uses robust empirical findings to establish how, and under what circumstances, entrepreneurship helps to reduce inequalities, exclusion or oppression. Arguably the greatest potential of this form of critique is to provide a sense of direction about what entrepreneurship ‘ought to be’, normatively speaking, while offering guidance on how entrepreneurship needs to be developed to meet higher standards of the common good.

Third, research in the ‘sceptical-post-foundational’ quadrant shares with sceptical-foundational research an interest in challenging seemingly unshakable truths about entrepreneurship. However, the two differ in the way they make critical judgements: while the former examines representations of entrepreneurship for their blind spots and (usually covert) power effects in order to raise awareness of the true state of reality hidden behind myths and ideologies, the latter denies the existence of a universal truth. It focuses instead on how material, historical, economic and discursive structures and practices condition our knowledge of entrepreneurship and make individuals (and entire societies and economies) amenable to political forms of control. Entrepreneurial endeavours are thus evaluated not according to predetermined criteria of ‘right or wrong’, but in terms of the kind of political reality they come to prioritize, including the sort of ethical consequences which derive from this normalization. Sceptical-post-foundational research contributes to the advancement of entrepreneurship research by reminding us that continued reflection and deconstruction of our conventions of knowledge production and knowing is essential to undoing premature closure of our understanding of entrepreneurship.

The fourth and last quadrant includes research with an ‘affirmative-post-foundational’ orientation. It assumes that there is no universal answer to the question of what makes entrepreneurship worthwhile and ‘good’ (which is the goal of affirmative-foundational research). The primary contribution of affirmative-post-foundational research is to highlight more clearly the transformative and emancipatory potential of entrepreneurial endeav-

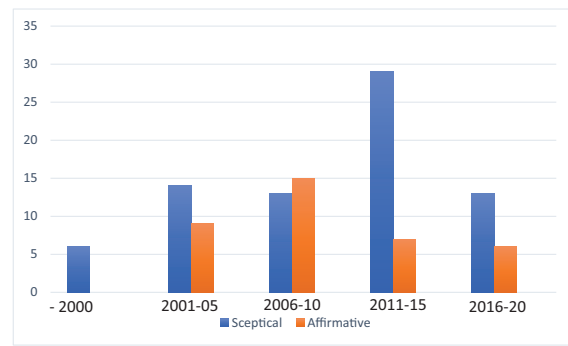


FIGURE 2 Histogram of publication frequency [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

ours by illuminating how they creatively disrupt, break through and recompose prevailing structures and power relations to increase possibilities for human flourishing. Rather than viewing emancipation as a pristine space of absolute autonomy and freedom, research in this quadrant takes a somewhat more modest approach by assuming that the transformative and emancipatory potential of entrepreneurship is necessarily ephemeral and partial, as well as fundamentally ambivalent and contested. Affirmative-post-foundational research is interested in how entrepreneurship can be used to create conditions that facilitate plurality, ‘otherness’ and multiplicity (Calás et al., 2009), and takes a privileged standpoint to create greater awareness that entrepreneurship is always more diverse and multifaceted than is commonly assumed. Its contribution to entrepreneurship research, therefore, includes a call to go beyond the boundaries of prevailing knowledge to unleash the ever-present possibility of reinvention of our existing understandings.

Turning next to the issue of the politics of scholarly knowledge creation, we now provide a reflection on the evolution, distribution and types of critical articles being published pertaining to entrepreneurship. Prior to 2000, for example, and as demonstrated in Figure 2, only six of the articles from our sample were published. This is surprising, given that Kets de Vries’s (1985) article on the dark side of entrepreneurship was already published in the mid-1980s. After 2000, however, critical articles began to make their way into journal outlets, with each 5-year block showing a steady distribution (and slight increase) of the sample of articles over time (i.e. 23 in 2001–2005; 28 in 2006–2010; 36 in 2011–2015; 18 in 2016–2020).

This evolution can be explained by the publication of Ogbor’s (2000) seminal article which, with over 1000 Google citations, was a catalyst for further critical re-evaluations of the ideological biases and blind spots of entrepreneurship research. The sceptical orientation of this article could also be indicative of why, with the

exception of the 2006–2010 period which denotes a stronger presence of affirmative articles, the majority of published articles from our sample (i.e. 67% vs. 33% affirmative articles) adopt an exclusively sceptical orientation (with topics related to under-represented voices, the dark side, deconstructions of dominant notions and perspectives—see Table 1, fourth column for more detail on the themes).

It is also interesting to note from Figure 1 the emergence of affirmative research, which began to appear in the 2001–2005 period (with nine articles). Affirmative research, with its interest in contexts, reconstructions and concepts central to the productive aspects of entrepreneurship and how they result in more sociality, emancipation, exposure, moral imagination, reflective judgement, humanness and social/societal realities that are less distorted by oppressive structures, slightly exceeded sceptical articles in the 2006–2010 time period (15 affirmative vs. 13 sceptical). Despite this flurry of affirmative articles, however, sceptical critical research has retained a stronger presence in entrepreneurship research, possibly in view of entrepreneurship scholarship's early preoccupation with economic theories (Hjorth, 2013a) and continuing assumptions that take for granted its positive, opportunistic and wealth-creating effects (Calás et al., 2009; Wiklund et al., 2019).

Another point to emphasize is that even if there is no linear or exponential growth pattern in the affirmative or sceptical articles that we reviewed, there has been a drop in critical entrepreneurship research over the last 5 years (a total of 18 articles, 12 sceptical and six affirmative). One possible reason that critical research has lost some of its momentum, as noted by Spicer et al. (2016), is that critical research has been increasingly accused of primarily challenging (rather than improving) entrepreneurship in terms of both theory and practice. As explained earlier, however, emphasizing a view of critique as a gesture of pure negation (Örtenblad, 2020) is misleading, because affirmative research advances a form of critical engagement that permits us to unleash the radical possibilities at the heart of entrepreneurship, whilst also making practical contributions to its field of inquiry (Alvesson, 2020; Spicer et al., 2016).

Noting the 'tailing off' of critical publications, therefore, we would like to signal the potential of affirmative critical research for future entrepreneurship scholarship. The shift to affirmative critique has the potential to foster a more generative and productive view of critique which is less focused on oppositional engagement with mainstream research (Lundmark et al., 2022) but rather aims, as Dey (2020) argues, to meet and advance the mainstream on its own terms. Future critical research on entrepreneurship could build on current debates in

critical management studies (Spicer et al., 2009) about how research can balance critique and practice by actively intervening in and proactively changing entrepreneurship discourse and practice. There is scope, therefore, to emphasize that critical research is transformative, practically engaged and value-driven (Jones & Murtola, 2012a) and to build progressive dialogues with non-critical scholars in order to advance the creative, inventive, interventionist and oppositional (theoretical, methodological and empirical) possibilities of entrepreneurship research.

Reflecting further on the nuance and significance of the two dimensions of our typology, we are also able to elaborate on how the analysed articles are distributed across and within the four types of critical research (see Figure 3). Each article of our sample was classified regarding the extent to which it fulfilled the criteria of the two dimensions. We employed a discrete approach assessing each article in terms of their scores ('low' = 1 and 'high' = 2) on the relevant poles of the two dimensions. Research articles belonging, for example, to the sceptical-foundational type of critical research are rated as respectively 'low' and 'high' on the two dimensions 'foundational' and 'sceptical' (more information on the assessment process can be found in Appendix A). This classification approach results in the four types of critical research each having four distinct manifestations, leading to a total of 16 which are grouped into bubbles in Figure 3. The criteria listed in Table 2 were used to classify the entire sample of articles, the authors checking and discussing the classifications until consensus was reached. Table 1 (shown earlier) also gives details of which articles are represented by the individual bubbles.

Figure 3 shows that the larger bubbles are located on the outer end of the plot, which gives a strong signal that the articles are explicit about their critical focus and their paradigmatic foundation. This is a positive sign in that the majority of the articles analysed do not suffer from making paradigmatic choices that are not sufficiently elaborated and from adopting a critical stance that is not explicitly reflected. A central concern, therefore, for future critical research should be to continue to make explicit the grounds upon which account(s) of the foundational and post-foundational types of research are based and in what ways those grounds seek to challenge, change and transgress their object of confrontation.

Apart from confirming that sceptical research outnumbers its affirmative counterpart, the analysis revealed that 11 articles from our sample simultaneously embody aspects of both the affirmative and sceptical types (see Table 1 for detail on articles combining both perspectives). This 'double-edged' nature of critical research materialized in research efforts that focused on balancing the creative and antagonistic potential of critique by pinpointing existing problems of entrepreneurship whilst also

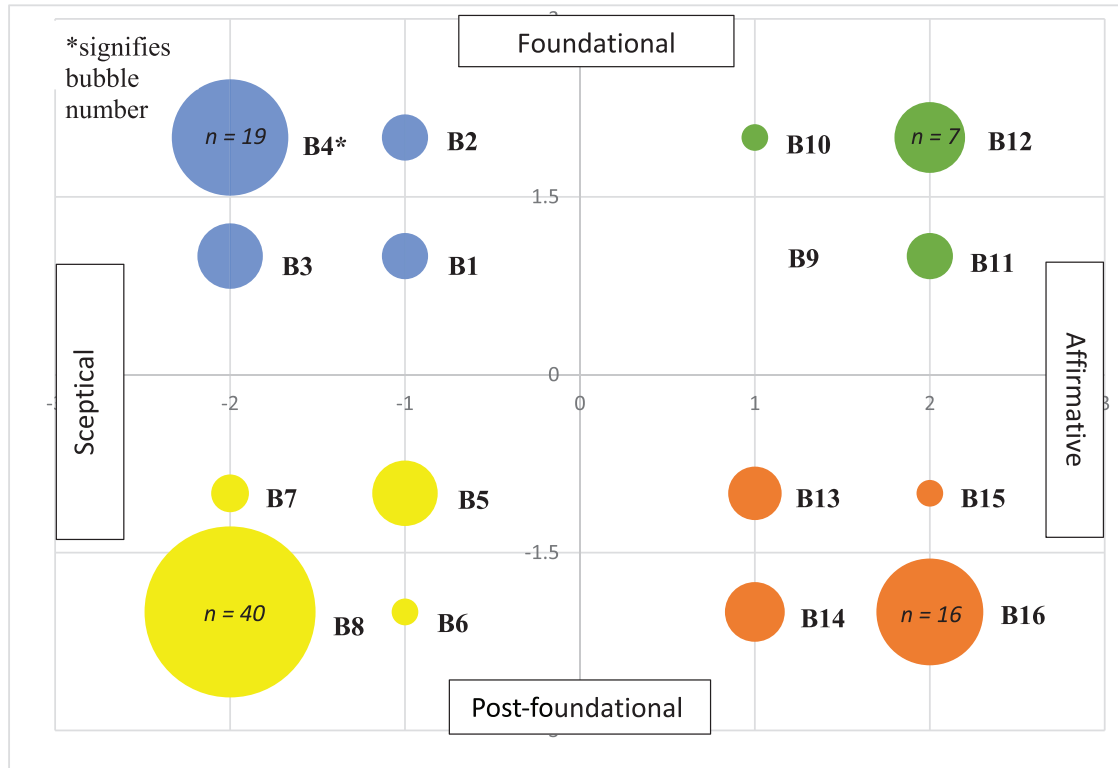


FIGURE 3 Frequency distribution of articles across and within the four types of critical research [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

offering thoughts on how alternatives can be created. A paradigmatic example was provided by Olaison and Sørensen (2014) who offer an exposition of the one-sided way failure is dealt with in entrepreneurship research. The article is sceptical of how certain ‘sanitized’ accounts of entrepreneurial failure are more readily recognized than those which lack any positive opportunities and redemptive qualities, thereby excluding any sense of the political and ethical urgencies associated with failure. The authors also make an affirmative offering by raising sympathy amongst mainstream scholars for an extended view of failure which acknowledges that the two types of failure are inextricably related. This study serves as an exemplar for how affirmative and sceptical valences can be present within a single article. Future research could extend Olaison and Sørensen’s example by using the valence dimension like a Möbius strip, combining the sceptical and affirmative tendencies on a single surface.

Figure 3 also alerts us to opportunities for further research on the affirmative-foundational perspective which is under-developed. This perspective can offer guidance on how entrepreneurship can become ethical by being aligned with (universal) higher principles of good moral behaviour and virtue (Lautermann & Tokarski, 2018). Since ethical theories are under-represented in affir-

mative critical research quite generally, we promote them in affirmative-post-foundational terms as well. Complementing normative or deontological ethical approaches (Diochon et al., 2018) which can delineate the contours of responsible entrepreneurship based on immutable, context-independent moral principles and rules, ethical approaches (such as Aristotle’s *phronesis* or practical wisdom) can offer fresh stimuli for thinking about how good entrepreneurial conduct can emerge outside stable foundations by weighing up possibilities and knowing how to align available principles and norms with other considerations so as to create some immanent good end (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014).

A final point relating to the distribution of articles across the quadrants concerns the journals in which the sample of critical research is published. This question relates to the politics of knowledge creation (Delbridge & Fiss, 2013) and the importance of recognizing that critical knowledge, like all forms of knowledge, is subject to norms and prohibitions. The percentage distribution of publications by management sub-disciplines is outlined in Figure 4.

Three key insights deserve particular mention. First, what can be gleaned from the figure is that three-quarters of the articles are published in different sub-disciplines of management covering ethics (10%), general

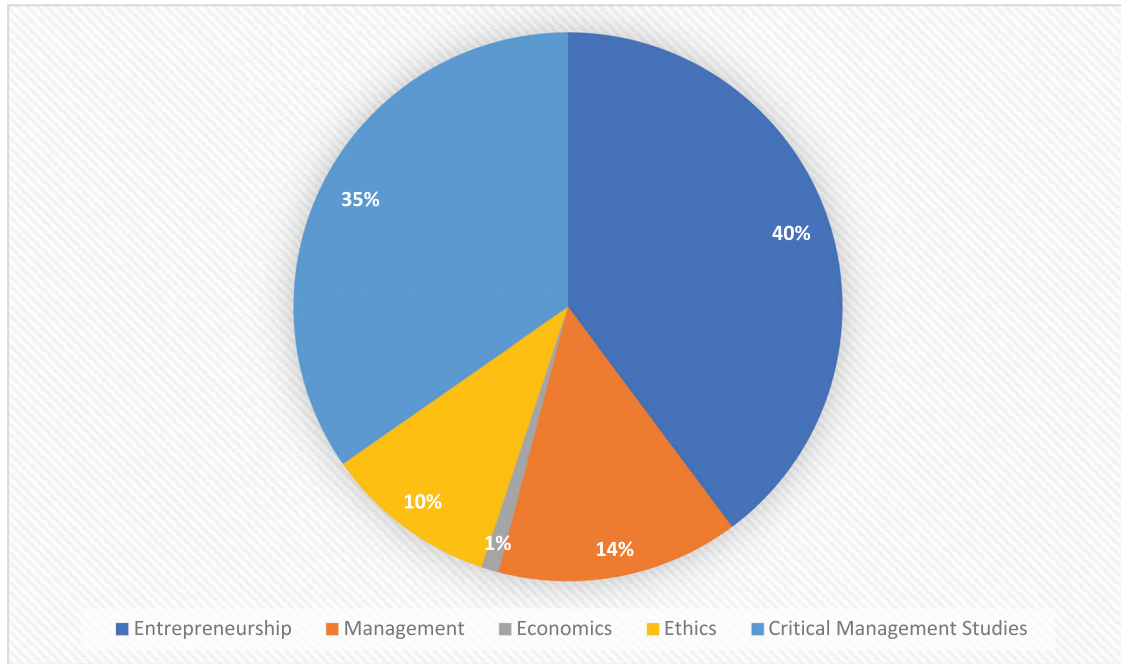


FIGURE 4 Percentage of publications by management sub-disciplines [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

management (14%), economics (1%), entrepreneurship (40%) and critical management studies (35%). This, to some extent, reflects our sample selection and decision to be inclusive of critical entrepreneurship articles across a range of management sub-disciplines. In addition to the finding that just over one-third of articles in our sample were published in entrepreneurship journals, what is also noteworthy about this distribution is the specific entrepreneurship journals that are present in the sample. The most prominent journals are: *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* (14 articles); *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* (6); *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research* (5); and *Journal of Business Venturing* and *International Small Business Journal* (3 each).

Second, we note that although both entrepreneurship and critical management studies journal outlets comprise a comparable distribution of affirmative and sceptical research (i.e. entrepreneurship journals: 30% affirmative and 70% sceptical articles; critical management studies journals: 25% affirmative and 75% sceptical articles), they differ in terms of the paradigmatic orientation of the published articles. For example, entrepreneurship journals are characterized by a larger proportion of foundational research (37%) compared to critical management studies journals (20%). This can be explained, in part, by the fact that entrepreneurship research is guided to a far greater extent by foundational assumptions (Lundmark

et al., 2022) than is the case in critical management studies (Hassard & Wolfram Cox, 2013).

Third, we also find a strong presence of post-foundational research in both entrepreneurship (63%) and critical management studies outlets (80%), which seems to reflect the popularity of post-structuralist and post-modern in management research since the early 2000s. These theoretical approaches have created sensitivity for the relationship between power, knowledge and identity, and have created novel insights into how entrepreneurial realities and the possibilities and predicaments they entail are mediated through language, discourse and power. Despite this, there is value in calling for increased plurality amongst post-foundational (as well as foundational) paradigmatic approaches informing critical research on entrepreneurship.

With the above as a backdrop, we see value in using future research to tap into new theories, such as new materialism which challenges post-structuralist accounts and their preoccupation with semiotic and discursive processes, and also anthropocentric accounts (based on their prioritization of human agency), to make the case that new ways of thinking are needed to accommodate the fact that entrepreneurs are not only immersed in a material world but are variously shaped and constrained by material objects and artifacts which constitute our social lives (Hoppe & Lemke, 2021). Although still largely absent, new materialist approaches are well placed to expand paradigmatic debates in critical entrepreneurship research in that

they introduce a new set of ethical and political questions pertaining to, for instance, what it means to act responsibly given that entrepreneurial agency is always and necessarily entangled with the 'agency of things' (Plate, 2021).

While the flurry of critical research on entrepreneurship is, overall, quite reassuring as it testifies to the vitality of a field under construction, we note that critical articles are still relatively difficult to publish (Dey & Mason, 2018). Indeed, closer inspection of the journal outlets (see Table 1) in our sample of articles shows that top-tier journals, such as the *Journal of Business Venturing* or *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* in the entrepreneurship domain, or *Administrative Science Quarterly* or *Academy of Management Journal*, are still less visible or completely absent as outlets for critical research on entrepreneurship. It is our hope that the present work will spark debate about the possibilities for publishing critical contributions in top-tier (entrepreneurship and management) journals. Rather than viewing critical research as merely another train of thought in an already multi-disciplinary and theoretically heterogeneous field of research, we suggest that critical research is and should remain a necessary 'auto-reflexive gesture' which continuously puts entrepreneurship 'to the test' (Jones & Murtola, 2012a, p. 117). Critical contributions can be challenging, but by questioning the status quo and self-evidences guiding our community, they can inspire mainstream research to be more reflective whilst also expanding entrepreneurship scholarship towards new empirical and theoretical opportunities for engaging with our subject matter.

CONCLUSION

Inspired and encouraged by the trajectory of critical entrepreneurship research, we feel that a further intensification of the 'critical turn' in entrepreneurship research is needed. Critical research, we argue, is essential for ensuring that entrepreneurship scholarship remains entrepreneurial and constantly self-renewing by questioning and disrupting norms and conventions of knowledge, with a view towards encouraging alternative, imaginative and evocative perspectives. Our conceptual typology has set itself the task of prefiguring an overview and critical agenda for entrepreneurship research that can stimulate further conversations and contributions on the theoretical and philosophical possibilities of critical research for entrepreneurship studies. We conclude by underscoring the wider relevance of critical entrepreneurship research for enabling critical engagement with the role of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in the world (Weiskopf & Steyaert, 2009). Herein, we claim, lies the promise and potential of a critical trajectory

for entrepreneurship research—a trajectory that we hope inspires others to both deepen and broaden the tentative agenda we have presented here.

NOTES

¹The search yielded a total of 223 articles which reduced to 137 when the filter 'business and management' (1992–2020) was selected, and then to 102 articles when the second and third filters were selected (namely 'article' and where the keyword 'critical' was nominated either by the author or the Scopus system). The same search was undertaken using the 'social science' filter and this yielded an additional 52 journals (which reduced to 49 when overlaps were taken into account). In total, this produced 151 articles that we used for clarifying the conceptual boundaries of our search.

²In broad strokes, normal science calls on researchers '(i) to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experience; (ii) the knowledge of the methods of logical enquiry and reasoning; and (iii) [the application of] skill in applying those methods' (Glaser, 1941, p. 5).

³It should be noted, however, that these theoretical orientations are not *exclusively* linked to the sceptical since they can also be used in (or moved towards) an affirmative sense (the second pole of the valence dimension).

⁴The basis for these additional insights was a careful reanalysis of the articles in our sample in terms of year of publication, their belonging to the four quadrants and the disciplinary background of the journals in which the papers were published.

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How to cite this article: Dey, P., Fletcher, D. & Verduijn, K. (2023) Critical research and entrepreneurship: A cross-disciplinary conceptual typology. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 25, 24–51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12298>

APPENDIX A

CRITERIA USED TO LOCATE THE INDIVIDUAL ARTICLES IN THE FOUR QUADRANTS (TYPES OF CRITICAL RESEARCH) VALENCE

- *High sceptical and high affirmative.* Self-identification as ‘critical’ and/or trying to make an explicit contribution to critical entrepreneurship research, explicit referencing of critical theories, clear evaluative stance (for or against ENT).
- *Low sceptical and low affirmative.* Critical orientation is implicit, few if any references of critical research, evaluative stance (for or against ENT) is implied rather than explicit.

PARADIGMATIC ORIENTATION

- *High foundational and high post-foundational.* Explicit reflection of paradigmatic orientation and assumptions pertaining to the article’s critical operation.
- *Low foundational and low post-foundational.* No explicit reflection of the article’s paradigmatic orientation; paradigmatic orientation can be inferred from the outcomes of the article (e.g. key findings and implications).