

[Underdog Entrepreneurship: Causes, Mechanisms, Transitions and Impacts](#)

Announcement published by Zhiming Cheng on Wednesday, December 8, 2021

Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

October 1, 2022

Subject Fields:

Economic History / Studies, Immigration & Migration History / Studies, Labor History / Studies, Social Sciences, Business History / Studies

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September 2021

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ARTICLE TYPE: Underdog Entrepreneurship

SUBMISSION WINDOW: Jan 1, 2022 - Oct 1, 2022

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The *Journal of Business Research* will publish a special issue containing selected papers examining underdog entrepreneurship and its implications for academic research, business practices and policymaking.

While a large body of existing literature focuses on the positive personality and environmental qualities that stimulate entrepreneurship, an emerging body of literature argues the 'negative personal circumstances of an economic, sociocultural, cognitive, and physical/emotional nature may have an equally powerful role to play in getting people to become effective entrepreneurs' (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017, p. 7).

The theory of underdog entrepreneurship provides a valuable perspective to explain why adversity can breed business activities. For instance, studies find that those who experienced famine (Cheng et al., 2021a; Chu et al., 2016), war (Awaworyi Churchill et al., 2021), poverty (Cheng et al., 2021b), displacement (Shepherd et al., 2020), and mental and physical health issues (Lerner et al., 2019; Wiklund et al., 2018; Yu et al., 2021) are more likely to start their businesses. In addition, those in lower social class positions but with strong prospects of upward mobility are more likely to engage in entrepreneurship (Wang et al., 2021). Indeed, entrepreneurship has been advocated as a feasible solution to poverty (Bruton et al., 2013; Sutter et al., 2019). Underdog entrepreneurs are often unresourceful, and they employ 'workaround practices', such as bribes, to overcome the adversity they face, especially under informal institutions (Baron et al., 2018; Sydow et al., 2020). Underdog entrepreneurs also develop strong resilience and a preference for innovation and risk-taking, which are crucial for building a successful business (Morgan, 2020).

Yet, there is limited research on the causal relationships and the mechanisms through which unfavourable personal and environmental circumstances affect entrepreneurial choices and outcomes, resulting in insufficient evidence for economic and social policymaking. For instance, identifying causal relationships and the underlying mechanisms is critical because the efforts to address poverty have mainly focused on subsistence entrepreneurship rather than creating ventures that empower the poor to break out of poverty (Bruton et al., 2015). A few existing studies examine the impacts of adverse childhood experiences on entrepreneurship in adulthood (Awaworyi Churchill et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2021a; Drennan et al., 2005). Nonetheless, the literature only begins to investigate more broadly and deeply the roles of adversities in cultivating ‘disadvantage entrepreneurship’ (Maalaoui et al., 2020). A better understanding of underdog entrepreneurs is essential for making microfinance and other support programs more accessible and affordable for those in need (Sun & Liang, 2021). In addition, exploring what institutions and external enabling factors could shape and transfer this disadvantage entrepreneurship has relevant policy implications (Davidsson et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2020).

This special issue seeks submission to expand the understanding of the causes, mechanisms, dynamics, transitions and outcomes of underdog entrepreneurship. Interdisciplinary submissions which draw on theoretical, methodological and empirical insights from management, psychology, economics, political science, marketing, finance, strategy, organisational behaviour, international business and other disciplines are particularly welcome. We are interested in empirical papers that:

- Use lab, natural and field experimental methods, statistical/econometric approaches, or mixed methods to examine different aspects of underdog entrepreneurship.
- Examine the (causal) mechanisms/channels through which these relations take effect, the implications for the workforce/workplace and organisational or societal outcomes.
- Examine how businesses and society can utilise managerial talents and human and social capital stemmed from underdog experiences.
- Examine the roles of business organisations in the socioeconomic integration of marginalised groups with adverse childhood and adulthood experiences.
- Develop and test new theories to understand the relationship between adverse experiences and entrepreneurial outcomes in the actual business setting.
- Understand the unique mental process and activities of underdog entrepreneurs, their cognitive style, beliefs, start-up method, social network and tools for business growth.
- Understand the formal and informal institutions, external enablers which shape or transfer underdog entrepreneurship.
- Explore the impacts of underdog entrepreneurs on social innovation, poverty alleviation, and inclusive growth.
- Examine the economic, social and public policy relevance of underdog entrepreneurship.

However, submissions are by no means limited to these topics. The special issue is also open to submissions that provide negative, null or no results against their hypotheses or findings contradictory to the theory of underdog entrepreneurship.

Subject to approval, we plan to hold an online/hybrid paper development workshop for the special issue in 2022. Attendance at the workshop is neither a requirement for submitting to, nor a guarantee of acceptance into, the special issue. More information regarding the workshop will be

provided to prospective contributors in due course.

Guest Editorial Team

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Submission Information

- Submissions start date: **January 1, 2022**.
- Submission deadline: **October 1, 2022**.
- Papers for the special issue should be submitted through the *Journal of Business Research* submission system (www.editorialmanager.com/JOBR).
- In the submission system, please choose the article type '*Underdog Entrepreneurship*'.
- Guide for Authors can be found in www.elsevier.com/journals/journal-of-business-research/0148-2963/guide-for-authors
- The guest editors will first review papers submitted to the special issue. A paper may be rejected without being sent for review, should the guest editors view the paper as unsuitable for the journal in terms of quality or aims and scope of the *Journal of Business Research*.
- Selected full papers will be sent out for external peer review following the *Journal of Business Research*'s policy. They will receive comments from reviewers and guest editors. As needed, manuscripts will be returned to authors for revision along with the reviewers' comments. Revised manuscripts may be examined by the guest editors and external reviewers before a final decision being made by the Editor-in-Chief.
- Accepted papers will be published continuously in the journal and listed together under a virtual special issue.

Guest Editors

Zhiming Cheng is Associate Professor of Economics in the Department of Management of Macquarie Business School at Macquarie University and the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales (UNSW Sydney), Australia.

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Studies, Journal of Management Studies, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, Organization Science, and Academy of Management Perspectives (with a decade award). His four papers are listed in 'Highly Cited Papers' (top 1% in the fields of Economics & Business) by Thomson Reuters Essential Science Indicators. He received a Global Peer Review Award 2016, 2018, and 2019 for his place in the top 1% of global reviewers in Economics & Business by Publons. Dr Sun serves as the senior editor of *Management and Organization Review* and on the editorial boards of multiple journals, including *Journal of Management Studies, Journal of Product Innovation Management, and Quarterly Journal of Management*. He served as a guest editor for *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* and *Journal of Production Innovation Management*.

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Meena Chavan is Senior Lecturer in the Macquarie Business School at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Prior to academia, she worked as a Merger & Acquisition auditor with KPMG and Ernst & Young. She publishes in the areas of international entrepreneurship, international business/management/cross-cultural management and experiential learning and teaching, and on the emerging market of India and the impact of digital technology in the business world. Her research involves understanding the unique aspects of the institutional and cultural contexts of firm strategies. Her work focuses on the interplay of macro, micro and meso factors in entrepreneurship and international business. Her research has been published in top-tier journals such as *Journal of Small Business Management, International Journal of Manpower, Habitat International, International Journal of Intercultural Relations, Behaviour & Information Technology, Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research, and Australasian Journal of Information System*, among others. She is also an author of *Intercultural Management in Practice: Learning to Lead Diverse Global Organisations*, to be published by Emerald Publications. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (UK) and Fellow of the Intercultural Academy of Intercultural Research (USA).

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