From the Margins to the Mainstream: The Development of Research on Small Business and Entrepreneurship in the UK

Robert A Blackburn and David Smallbone

Small Business Research Centre
Kingston University
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT2 7LB
United Kingdom

Tel: 00 44 (0)20 8547 7247
Fax: 00 44 (0)20 8547 7140
r.blackburn@kingston.ac.uk
d.smallbone@kingston.ac.uk
http://business.kingston.ac.uk/sbrc

October 2007

ISBN 978-1-902425-06-1

Introduction

The contemporary landscape of UK entrepreneurship and small business research is very different today from that over 30 years ago. From what could be described as an underdeveloped knowledge base, with contributions from a small number of often isolated researchers, it is argued that the field has now become mainstream academic activity. Since the 1970s, we have witnessed the establishment of a number of key intellectual, personnel and institutional pillars upon which the knowledge base has developed. Moreover, the investigation of small firms and entrepreneurship is now recognised as a legitimate area for academic pursuit by research peers, with a respectable body of knowledge and theory. The institutional framework, together with the body of researchers generating this knowledge is now extensive, robust and significant. The process of achieving this status has been aided by an increasingly supportive ideological climate, which has been reflected in growing interest from public policy makers at European, national and local levels, as well as from practitioners involved in working with small firms and entrepreneurs, such as business support agencies, banks and accountants. The extent of this development may be illustrated with a number of selected metrics of activity. For example, the number of delegates attending the first UK research conference dedicated to small firms, in 1978, was less than 40[1], but by 2007 this had risen to over 600. Estimates of the number of UK based professors in the field have risen from 158 in 2003 to 271 in 2007 (of which we estimate 144 are active members of the Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship – ISBE).[2] There has also been a steady establishment in the number of peer-reviewed outlets for publication. The Higher Education Funding Council of England's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has appointed a dedicated specialist

on the assessment panel to cover small firms and entrepreneurship in 1996, 2001 and 2007. At the same time, the path has been a challenging one and much remains to be done to establish the place of the study of small firms and entrepreneurship on a par with other management areas, such as business strategy and marketing. At the same time, the field is now well beyond its emergent phase and is on par with many other fields of study in business and management that are in their youth.

How has this field of investigation achieved this growth in prominence in a period of 30 years? The answer to the question lies in the motivations to investigate small firms and entrepreneurship, which in the UK appear to have three, inter-related, roots:

(i) interest in academic knowledge building and theorising,
(ii) interest in policy development and evaluation,
(iii) and interest in enterprise education for teaching, spreading practise and promoting entrepreneurship.

These factors need to be set in the context of changes that have occurred in the UK economy, in recent decades, which has seen an increasing role for small firms and new businesses since the mid-1970s. In order to understand the current state of the knowledge base, the methodological traditions and contribution of UK entrepreneurship and small business research, it is important to understand its antecedents. In this Monograph, we place an emphasis on the historical dimension of the development of the field for it is this, we argue, that has shaped subsequent developments and we should not lose sight of what has already been undertaken in the process of knowledge accumulation.

Aims and Objectives of the Monograph

This Monograph aims to map the development of the research base on small firms and entrepreneurship in the UK and assess its distinctiveness, in the wider international context. First, the paper *identifies the origins and key milestones* in the development of the field, seeking to explain the particular reasons for the style, agendas and outcomes of research undertaken in the UK. To what extent has the volume and quality of research on small business and entrepreneurship in the UK helped to secure the legitimacy of the field? For the purposes of the paper we define 'legitimacy' in terms of achieving recognition as a sound area for study by academics and their peers and other external stakeholders. How institutionalised has small business and entrepreneurship research become, in the sense of becoming embedded in the curricula of universities, activities of government departments and other stakeholder bodies? Our analysis begins with an examination of the early period of development which, we argue, has been influential in subsequent phases of research, its agendas and methodologies.

Second, the paper seeks to discuss the *distinctiveness* of UK small business research. This involves an investigation of the topics and agendas, methodological and theoretical developments and the body of knowledge generated. It includes questions, such as what are the subject boundaries of research and entrepreneurship in the UK? What have been the motivations of those involved in the development of the research field? What are the epistemological, methodological and empirical foundations of research on small firms and entrepreneurship in the UK? To what extent has the field in the UK developed in terms of a coherent empirical and theoretical base? What is

the paradigmatic path of development of small business research in the UK? Is it following a path of developing a distinctive coherent paradigm or is it one of multidisciplinary knowledge accumulation? How is the research tradition in the UK different from elsewhere?

In undertaking the above, we recognise that it is not straightforward and, since our analysis involves academic judgement, it is inevitably influenced by our own background and experience. As a result, we regard this paper as one which contributes to the growing body of reflective material on the field. Indeed, it benefits from previous reflective pieces on the UK field (e.g. Stanworth et al., 1982; Stanworth and Curran, 1984; Curran, 1986, 1989; Stanworth et al., 1991; Watkins, 1994, 1995;; Rosa, 1997; Landström, 2005; Gibb, 2000a) as well as edited compilations of publications over the period (e.g. Atkin et al, 1993; Westhead and Wright, 2000). The paper has also benefited from feedback on earlier versions of the paper from researchers who both contributed and witnessed the development of the field since the 1970s.

The 1970s and 1980s: From Margins to Emergence

Chronologically, the genesis of the current UK knowledge base on small firms and entrepreneurship started in the 1970s. Up to the early 1970s there had been a number of significant, if somewhat isolated, UK studies which could be broadly conceived as 'research on small firms'. However, at this time, the language of 'entrepreneurship' had still to penetrate the radar of most UK researchers. These studies were often within specific disciplinary boundaries with very little cross-over or synergy with

other studies on small firms. They included studies of the sociology of employment relations e.g. Batstone, 1969; Goldthorpe et al., 1968; Ingham, 1969), analyses of social class (e.g. Goldthorpe et al., 1968); economics (e.g. Marshall, 1919), finance (Singh and Whittington, 1968) and analyses of the concentration or size distribution of firms by economists (Hart and Prais, 1956). Such 'classics' have been referred to by successive waves of researchers and indeed some of the named authors were to continue to publish well into the 1980s. The UK research base on small firms or entrepreneurs in this period was, however, much less in abundance than in the USA. The latter already had policy (e.g. Mayer and Golstein, 1961) and academic research interests, spanning economics, psychology and sociology (e.g. Schumpeter, 1942; McClelland, 1961; Smith, 1967; Collins et al., 1964). The US Small Business Administration (SBA) was undoubtedly an important stimulant to the growth of research in the USA and the particular nature of this research. The fact that this was created in 1953 'as an independent agency of the federal government to aid, counsel, assist and protect the interests of small business concerns, to preserve free competitive enterprise and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of our nation' gave small firms prominence from a relatively early start. This contrasted with developments in the UK.

The later start in interest in the UK compared with the US is most probably linked to broader socio-economic-political environmental conditions, pertaining at the time. In the 1970s, the UK had one of the lowest rates of new firm formation and lowest levels of small business ownership in the western world (Bolton Report, 1971). In addition, small firms were not perceived at the time as targets for government policy. As one of our informants put it: 'there had been little or no political appetite to take up the cause

of ‘entrepreneurial gun slingers’ who were often central to US liberal economic business culture’. Nor was there a demand for knowledge on entrepreneurship and small business in universities and polytechnics; something which would continue amongst the Russell Group universities for some time. In contrast, entrepreneurship was present in US business schools, which were well established by the 1970s.

In higher education, UK Business Schools were not yet established as a force in universities or polytechnics. Moreover, in most of those that did exist, entrepreneurship and/or small business management was typically absent. Whilst generating material for teaching may not be the prime factor influencing the demand for research, the general absence of entrepreneurship and small business studies from the curriculum is indicative of the status and interest in the topic in higher education institutions at the time. In other words, collectively there was little call or drive for a body of knowledge and theory related to small businesses or entrepreneurship. Instead, there was disparate interest from scholars, as discussed earlier, but these interests were yet to coalesce with any force.

Ideologically, in the UK, in the 1950s and 1960s, small firms were considered an anachronism by governments and largely ignored by mainstream academics. Small firms did not feature in the 1964 Labour Government’s white heat of the technological revolution and the dominant tripartite model of managing the economy between trades unions, employers and government through NEDC sector committees provided little opportunity for small firm engagement. Indeed, the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation established by the Labour Government in 1964 was charged with the mission of encouraging mergers and acquisitions in order to create

larger firms to facilitate the development of the internal economies of scale that were viewed at the time as essential if the UK economy and its businesses were to compete in global markets. The UK was not alone in this regard, at the time, reflected in the industrial policies of the French government , which had introduced a series of 'Etatist' plans since World War II (see Shonfield, 1965: Part 2; and the writings of authors such as Servan Schreiber). Small businesses were often overlooked in these plans and there were indications that the average size of units needed to be enlarged on the grounds of efficiency (Shonfield, 1965: 137-139).

However, this predominantly negative ideological and academic climate was soon to change. A general consensus amongst commentators and our interviewees is that the field in the UK was 'born' in the early 1970s, with major contributions from government and academics. However, take off, in the sense of attracting a substantial body of researchers, occurred more than a decade later. The objectives of these early contributions varied: some were policy driven responses to economic concerns, whilst others involved individuals making serious attempts at theorising and developing a knowledge base. The reasons for this seemingly *volte face* in interest in the early 1970s may be debated, but Curran's analysis goes a long way to explaining the trend. In the 1950s and 1960s….:

> …big was beautiful and any economy with a large small enterprise sector was clearly a backward economy. Small enterprises were remnants of earlier stages of development of sectors of the economy which had not developed sufficiently to harvest the economies of scale or geared themselves to meet competition from other industrial societies whose predatory multinationals would eventually pick off inefficiently organised local markets if they failed to modernise. 'Modernise' in this context usually meant reorganisation into large-scale units and the 1964-1970 Labour government, for example, made encouraging such modernisation a major policy. Curran (1986:40)

However, observations of competitor nations, such as Germany and Japan for example, revealed the strength of the small firms and a questioning of the big is beautiful mantra. The nascent and disparate academic interest that existed on small firms in the UK was given an enormous fillip with a Committee of Inquiry on Small Firms (the so-called Bolton Report, 1971), commissioned by the Labour Government in 1969 and delivered under a Conservative administration in 1971. This proved to be a main foundation stone, if not the keystone, of small business research in the UK. As well as playing a significant role in showing cross-political party and Government interest in small firms, it also provided a wealth of original and secondary data on the small firm and a platform for future academic research. The Committee had a Research Director and produced 18 research reports on specific areas related to small firms, such as finance, small retailers and distributive trades.

The importance of the Report should not be under estimated in terms of its affect on helping stimulate academic interest in the field, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, writing in 1981 in an introduction to one of the many books in the field the authors pointed out: 'It is hard to over-estimate its influence. Indeed, it is doubtful whether the wide and intense interest in small business would exist without the stimulus provided by the Bolton Report' (Gorb et al., 1981: 3). This view was repeated time and time again. For example, Curran and Stanworth were even stronger in their assessment:

> 'The influence of the Report over the last decade would be difficult to overstate. It aroused interest among politicians, academics and the media and its findings and recommendations have formed the bedrock of virtually all research, analysis and policy making since.' (Curran and Stanworth, 1982a: 3 in Stanworth et al., 1982).

As well as attracting interest from government, small business owners became a focus of attention for lobby groups (see May and McHugh, 2002), which helped to generate an ideological climate favourable for the study of small firms. The Bolton Committee had noted how small business owners were ineffective in relation to forming pressure groups and there was an absence of such groups presenting evidence to the Committee on behalf of small firms (Stanworth and Curran, 1984:136-137). However, the 1970s saw a change in this regard, as lobby groups interested in small firms began to emerge. In 1974 the National Federation of the Self-employed and Small Business was established which quickly had a membership base of 30,000 in the first six months. The Confederation of British Industries (CBI) also raised its interest in small firms and the Conservative Party, which since WW2 had tended to ignore the particular needs of small firms, resurrected interest, and setting up the Small Business Bureau in 1976. Other lobby groups were also formed in this period (see May and McHugh, 2002).

There was also a changing economic climate and a growing interest in small-scale activity more broadly. Schumacher's book (1973) with its 'small is beautiful' message raised interest in alternative ways of living and increased the attention paid to small firms.[3] As well as directly affecting UK energy policy and producing 'stagflation', the oil crisis of the early 1970s added force to the growing arguments for a serious reassessment of large scale activity. Collectively, these changes in socio-economic-political conditions and search for new ideas to change lifestyles helped to create an environment that encouraged academic analyses of the role of small firms in economy and society.

Contemporaneously, UK academics were becoming more interested in small firms. Early studies focused on specific issues, such as owner-managers motivations (Stanworth and Curran, 1973), the role of the petit bourgeoisie in society (Bechhoffer and Elliott (1976), employment relations (Curran and Stanworth, 1979a; 1979b; Ingham, 1969; 1970) and the economics of small firms (Boswell, 1973). Research in these early days was typically rooted in specific disciplines and the ontological and philosophical approaches were typically embedded within specific scientific areas, such as sociology and economics. This meant that there were few opportunities for exchange across disciplinary areas, or to the establishment of a 'small business research community'. However, one common point made by researchers in such early works was the paucity of knowledge, or even the myths that surrounded small firms and their owner managers. There was also evidence of knowledge accumulation and debate particularly in relation to employment relations and finance: areas that have continued to attract attention and where a great deal more is now known and theorising is relatively well developed.

In addition to a rise in academic curiosity and research, there was also a growing interest in educating advisers and students for small business. This included helping potential, and already active, small business owners, through the provision of courses and seminars run by practitioners and academics. Training providers included an array of professional bodies, quasi-government agencies such as enterprise agencies, Universities and Polytechnic bodies and the newly established Small Firms Service, which was one of the outcomes of the Bolton Committee's report. Although this took some time to develop across the whole UK University sector, there were pockets of activity in the 1970s. A key development, in this respect, was the role of some higher

education bodies in running start-up programmes and incorporating small business management into university curricula. For example, business start-up programmes were pioneered at the London Business School, the Polytechnic of Central London, Durham Business School and Manchester Business School. These courses provided oxygen to a nascent field of study, in the sense of requiring a pedagogic base and research on small firms as well as requiring and legitimising lecturers' and practitioners' efforts in the field.

A key milestone in helping the growing legitimisation of the field, as an academic area for study, came with the launch of an annual conference by the UK Small Business Management and Teaching Association (UKSBMTA) in 1978. This inaugural event, hosted by Durham University, was attended by around 30 people, some of whom continue to this day to undertake research on small firms. The second conference, held at Ashridge College entitled 'Small Firms Policy and the Role of Research', had 71 people on the list of participants plus 21 international practitioner guests.[4] In addition to academics, a look through the delegate lists shows attendance by prominent politicians, including the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (David Mitchell, MP), government departments (The Treasury); representatives of regional and local support agencies (e.g. CoSIRA; Greater London Council; London Enterprise Agencies, Highlands and Islands Development Board); and of the high street banks (Midland, National Westminster and Williams and Glyns). Small firms were seemingly attracting attention across the spectrum of academics, politicians and practitioners. The field was also now beginning to attract a variety of research sponsors. Government departments were continuing to fund their own research, for example in relation to employment relations (Clifton and Tatton-Brown, 1979), but

this was slowly changing as academic experts in small business were beginning to be recognised. Given the significance of financial issues as a topic of study, the high street banks were also showing interest, which was soon to be converted into the sponsorship of research and specific events. The National Westminster Bank, in particular, was active from the early days and was soon to be joined by others.[5]

As a result, by the end of the 1970s, the foundations of the field of UK small business and entrepreneurship had been established and were steadily being built upon. Government, in particular, had laid a keystone for the development of the field of study through the Bolton Report, boosting academic research, as well as stimulating activity amongst support agencies and finance institutions. Subsequently, the Wilson Committee (1979) examined finance for small firms, showing an on-going interest in the lot of small firms on the part of government. The broader ideological climate was also conducive for further research, as political and interest groups helped legitimise the relevance of the field of study. The commercial banks were becoming increasingly interested in the small business market and were beginning to develop specialist small business services. Researchers in universities and polytechnics were now making a number of significant contributions to the knowledge base, with dissemination facilitated by the recently established annual conference.

Given the gestation and birth conditions of small business research in the UK, it is perhaps not surprising that the link between public policy and small business research is one of the strongest features of the UK 'scene'. In one sense, this may be regarded as a symbiotic relationship: each feeding off the other. Early publications from the conferences held in the late 1970s showed this relationship. The edited books of

selected papers from the 1978 and 1979 conferences, for example, embraced both academic and policy themes and had contributions from both practitioners and academics. The first edited book based on the 1978 conference (Gibb and Lewis, 1980) was entitled 'Policy Issues in Small Business Research', epitomising this link. One of our interviewees also pointed out the desire of researchers at the time to encourage the development of a rigorous and relevant research base upon which sound policy formulation could be based. But in another sense, this relationship has not been without its tensions, possibly at the expense of a greater emphasis on theorisation, whilst other researchers have questioned a tendency for small business and entrepreneurship research to become overly focused on policy implications. Moreover, it has been suggested that the idea that researchers can influence policy may be considered naïve, underestimating how complex policy making is in contemporary democratic political systems (e.g. Dannreuther, 2007).

The 1970s and '80s saw the rise of a number of individuals who were influential in establishing the field of study. Graham Bannock was one of the key figures in this period having influence in both government and academic circles, in his role as Director of Research for the Committee of Inquiry on Small Firms and also as a consultant producing a number of influential books and academic articles (Bannock, 1976; 1981; 2005). A coterie of academics had also developed, with many individuals continuing in the field of study for more than two decades, including Birley, Chell, Curran, Gibb, Kirby, Scott, Stanworth and Watkins.[6] These academics exerted influence on the field of study through their pioneering research projects and publications. They were also important in helping to influence the emerging distinctiveness of UK research, including its multi-disciplinary base, methodological

diversity and richness and critical stance on studying the small firm and entrepreneurs. What might be characterised as a 'social science' perspective has continued to be a feature. It will be argued that it is one of the distinctive features of UK research base, together with a strong initial focus on the study of small firms rather than on entrepreneurship.

However, although the UK small business research base had developed in the 1970s, in some respects it was still in its infancy and still to achieve broad legitimacy amongst academic peers. The number of researchers and the volume of research output were growing but remained limited. A number of research institutes dedicated to studying and assisting small firms within universities and polytechnics had been established[7], which although significant, were still few and far between. Research on small firms was also struggling to gain respectability within universities and polytechnics. One of our interviewees, for example, pointed out that studying small firms was viewed with some surprise, if not disdain, by other academics who regarded it as 'peculiar' and 'at odds' with 'real' research (and indeed teaching). Mainstream management subjects, such as corporate strategy and marketing were typically taught in ways that failed to recognise the distinctive needs and behaviours of smaller businesses. At this time, it is fair to say that UK research on small firms and entrepreneurship was in the shadow of US research, again suggesting an immaturity. However, the continued poor economic performance of the UK underlined the need for strengthening the UK research base, particularly as larger firms appeared increasingly unable to generate sufficient jobs to prevent unemployment rates from rising.

The 1980s: Take-off and Growth in Volume of Research

If the 1970s saw the birth of small business research in the UK, the 1980s witnessed its 'take-off'. In this period, the volume and quality of research outputs increased and a critical mass of researchers was reached to ensure that small business and entrepreneurship research would not be a mere passing phase. Worldwide, the field was undergoing expansion and the vibrancy of the period in the UK is reflected in the London Business School's Small Business Bibliography, which had 2,592 entries in 1980, 4356 in 1983 and 13,500 in 1989 (cited in Curran and Blackburn, 2001: 4).

This growing base of activity in the late 1970s was to be further boosted by new research coming from the USA. The seminal publication by Birch (1979) on job generation in the US was especially important at a time when unemployment in the UK topped 3m in 1982, representing 12.5% of the working population.[8] Some have suggested that this is the single most influential piece of research on small firms to come out of the USA. Small business research now had an added impetus, namely investigating the contribution to job generation. This *'job generation'* theme attracted a new wave of researchers studying new firm formation, regional contributions and economic analyses of small business performance.

The number of institutions attracted to the growing field of small business research and education expanded in the 1980s, linked to universities and (the then) polytechnics. They included the Small Business Centre (Durham), the Scottish Enterprise Foundation, Small Business Units at Kingston Polytechnic; Polytechnic of Central London; London Business School; the New Enterprise Centre (Manchester

Business School), the Small Firms Unit (University of Nottingham) and the Small Shops Research Unit (University of Wales at Lampeter). The bulk of the researchers in the dedicated small business units were closely linked with the establishment of the UKSBMTA. There were also researchers in institutions and research units not explicitly having small firms in the title but who were also conducting significant work in the field. They included the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS) at the University of Newcastle.

Small business was also beginning to make in-roads into the curriculum, which helped to increase the need for a research base, as well as pioneering the field of UK entrepreneurship education. The London Business School had organised a Teachers Programme for educators and trainers in the small business field as far back as 1977. The Polytechnic of Central London (PCL) ran the London Enterprise Programme, in association with the London Enterprise Agency and the Greater London Council, catering for the training needs of both small business start-ups and also growth firms. PCL also ran 'Business Ideas', 'Business for Graduates' and 'Franchising' short-courses. The availability of materials for these programmes was considered sparse at the time. There was evidence of a North American influence in the research agendas and materials produced. For example, an edited book (Gorb et al., 1981) drew on contributions from the US, as well as the UK. This was partly a result of the linkage with 'classics' in the field, which were often from the USA, but it also reflected the relatively low level of research output in the UK compared with the USA. This is illustrated in the Foreword by John Bolton:

> 'The three editors of the book all work at the Institute of Small Business at the London Business School and participate in its various teaching programmes. They, in common with others, have always found it difficult to guide students towards

> appropriate background reading in small business' (Bolton in Gorb et al., 1981: i).

When UK authors were developing materials on small business education, this was often based on 'lessons learned' from experiences in the USA illustrating the relative infancy of the UK knowledge base (e.g. Gibb, 1982, Ch 2 in Webb et al. 1982) and it was not until well into the 1990s that substantial investment in the UK base took place.

In 1982, an edited book based on the proceedings from 1981 UKSBMTA Conference with a sub-title 'Bolton Ten Years On', depicted the exciting and pioneering state of small business research at the beginning of this launch period. Researchers were now writing about 'the small business field' as distinctive from other subject areas, thus creating an identity and seeking recognition from academic peers. At the same time, the boundaries of the field were still open and not sufficiently well defined.

The 1980s produced a wealth of UK based research and approaches, covering definitional issues (Curran, 1986; Ganguly and Bannock, 1985); research on owner-managers (Scase and Goffee, 1980), including gender (Watkins and Watkins, 1984) and ethnicity (Ward and Reeves, 1980; Ward and Jenkins, 1984; Wilson, 1984; Ward, 1986; Jones and McEvoy, 1986) finance (Hutchinson and Ray, 1986); class analyses (Bechhofer and Elliott, 1981; Scase and Goffee, 1982); economic analyses (Binks and Coyne, 1983; Binks and Jennings, 1986); psychological approaches (Chell, 1985); geographical and regional perspectives[9] (Cross, 1981; Fothergill and Gudgin, 1982; Keeble and Wever, 1986; Lloyd and Mason, 1984; Smallbone et al., 1992; Westhead, 1989); new firm formation (Storey, 1981; 1982); employment relations (Rainnie and

Scott, 1986; Rainnie, 1989); sector based analyses, particularly the retail (Kirby, 1986); and innovation (Oakey, 1981; 1984; Rothwell and Zegveld, 1982; Rothwell, 1984). Newer areas of interest also included studies of worker co-operatives (Cornforth, 1983; Hughes, 1984), management buy-outs (Wright and Coyne, 1985) and franchising (Stanworth, 1984; Stanworth et al., 1984). The two volume work 'The Survival of the Small Firm' (Curran et al., eds. 1986a and 1986b) demonstrates the breadth of research, methodological eclecticism of the field and the high quality of research produced.

Another central pillar in the development of small business research in the UK was the establishment of a peer reviewed publication outlet. In 1982, the *European Small Business Journal* was launched published by Clive Woodcock, a leading journalist for *The Guardian* newspaper, who frequently used output from academic researchers in his small firms' page, which for over a decade appeared every Tuesday. The launch of the Journal was a major achievement, providing a refereed academic outlet for research findings and adding further to the field's infrastructure. Only two other small business journals existed at the time – the US based *Journal of Small Business Management* and *the American Small Business Journal (now Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice)*. The inaugural volume of the *European Small Business Journal* included contributions from key individuals and an editorial board that included other leading European researchers of the time. The five papers in the launch edition spanned the process of starting a business, job satisfaction, government policy and policy issues in relation to innovation. The Journal also had an abstracts and reviews section, which invited shorter contributions that were designed to help keep researchers abreast of important developments. The abstracts in the Journal were in

four languages and it was evident that the founders were not confined to merely publishing UK based work. Indeed, the title European was replaced by the time the second issue was produced and the publication was re-named the *International Small Business Journal*.[10] Nevertheless, the lead paper by Curran and Stanworth sought to review the development of the field since Bolton, emphasising both the enormous influence of the Bolton Report as well as massive increasing in interest by researchers that had occurred since:

> Since then [Bolton] a rapidly expanding body of research, multidisciplinary in approach, has built upon the Committee's work to produce one of the most remarkable examples of sustained academic exploitation of any area of business activity yet seen in Britain. It is from this research base that we launch our attempt to describe developments since 1971 and make projections through the next decade (Curran and Stanworth, 1982b: 16).

The paper argued that the Bolton Report tended to be over-pessimistic in assessing the condition and future of small firms in Britain and that there were counter-trends at work. Without being rashly over-optimistic, the authors suggested that small firms would continue to maintain their position in the economy and with the newer forms of business organisation and technological developments there may be opportunities for expansion.

In the 1980s, the institutional framework and infrastructure within which researchers were operating was also significantly augmented. The continued growth in interest in small firms by researchers and educators supported an annual conference, normally hosted by a University under the auspices of UKSBMTA and then the UK Enterprise Management and Research Association (UKEMRA), which thrived as the amount of research expanded and an increasing numbers of delegates were attracted to the field.

A recurring theme in the development of the field is a regular 'stock-take' of the knowledge base. In 1986 the Small Business Research Trust (SBRT) commissioned James Curran, a leading and influential researcher, to write *Bolton 15 Years On*. The task was not easy:

> Has the expansion of small business research continued to produce genuine advances in our understanding, have the levels of theorising and quality of the research developed further, what new areas have opened up and what gaps remain to be filled? Curran (1986: 4)

The Report examined over 200 references, presented around four themes: data sources; the owner-manager and the role of the owner-manager in small firms; employment and employment relations; and small enterprise and their environments, including for example, their role in the economy, innovation and state policies. Overall, the assessment was upbeat in relation to both the breadth of topics covered, and the depth, in terms of the theoretical sophistication and methodological strategies used. Research in Britain, it was argued, was such that it '…is now superior in range and quality of relation to that of any being generated elsewhere anywhere in the English speaking world, including the United States' (Curran, 1986: 49). Much of the US literature was criticised for being overly descriptive and the adoption of an 'over-evangelical stance'. A central argument made by Curran was the need to establish respectability amongst academic peers, which would help to secure funding from the prestigious Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). This underlined the need for researchers to avoid evangelism and adopt a more critical stance.

At the same time, it was suggested that the research base needed to be better recognised by government and research councils. Despite the on-going relationship

with policy, Curran argued that policy-makers and those in government need to ensure that they raise their awareness of small business issues if policy is to be more effective and reach the businesses and owner-managers that it is supposed to be targeted at. Methodologically, Curran emphasised the need for researchers 'to get much closer to the actual workings of the small business' (Curran, 1986: 51), which would require the use of qualitative techniques to cover owner-managers, employees, spouses and their financial advisers. The area also continued to suffer from data inadequacies and a case was made for a national sample survey of small firms.

This analysis was further developed in subsequent publications (Curran, 1989; Carter et al., 1989). Despite the proliferation in research activity in the 1980s, attention was drawn to the *quality* of what was being produced. A good deal of this research was regarded as empirical and 'atheoretical', which is perhaps not altogether surprising, given the pioneering nature of the field and the absence of readily available datasets. Small business and entrepreneurship research in the UK was also regarded as being poorly funded, having too few formally trained academic researchers, lacking academic 'weight' or recognition in universities, being too uncritical of orthodox thinking and having only limited influences on policy (Curran, 1989; Carter et al., 1989).

In short, by the end of the 1980s, small business research had advanced considerably in terms of its subject boundaries and the volume of research undertaken. There was a strong research community, a nascent institutional structure, a well developed conference programme and emerging linkages with stakeholders that included government and the banks. In time it became clear that the subject matter for

research on small firms and entrepreneurship would span the range of business studies using a variety of paradigmatic positions and draw upon mainstream disciplines rather than create a new over-arching position. However, the academic legitimacy of the field had not yet been fully secured. Our own observations of conference proceedings and edited books deriving from these suggest that the 1980s was mainly a period of empirical rather than theoretical development. Despite the high level of stakeholder interest and the exchange of research results with government agencies, for example, through the annual conference and contract research work, the status of the field within the corridors academia remained low. A combination of its newness, the low academic barriers to entry and drive for empirical evidence meant that the period was mainly one of increasing research quantity, without major theoretical advancement.

The 1990s and Beyond: Into the Mainstream?

Whilst the 1980s were characterised by a take-off and growth of small business and entrepreneurship research in the UK, the period since the early 1990s has seen a consolidation, institutionalisation and legitimisation of the field. It is argued that, in this period, the field has certainly reached adolescence and is becoming increasingly recognised alongside other *applied fields* in business studies, such as human resource management, strategic management, marketing and operations management. A number of key events occurred in this period alongside the steady accumulation of data and knowledge necessary for increased legitimacy.

The end of the 1980s and early 1990s saw the ESRC Small Business Initiative (1989-1994), which represented another key pillar in the development of the field in the UK.

Storey outlines the background rationale of the Initiative as a need to raise the quality of the small firms' research base:

> 'A tricky decision therefore faced the Economic and Social Research Council. Should it fund research in an area which, whilst of major political importance, appeared at that time to have a reputation of lacking 'intellectual equipment? In the event, the ESRC did decide to finance a programme of research.' (Storey, 1994: xiii).

The Initiative was co-ordinated by David Storey, who had already established a strong reputation in the field, particularly through his work on job generation and public policy (e.g. Storey and Johnson, 1987). The Initiative had a number of distinctive features. First, its funding base was one of the largest amounts awarded by the ESRC with a budget of £1.4 million. The Initiative included co-sponsors, of which £400,000 was contributed by Barclays Bank, DTI, the Rural Development Commission and the European Commission (DG 23). The scale of the resources allocated meant that agendas could be investigated in depth and over a longer period of time. The Initiative also attracted researchers, who previously had received relatively little funding from public sector research bodies.

Second, the Initiative was multidisciplinary in approach, whilst aiming to target resources. In practice, this involved funding three Centres of Excellence (Brighton, Cambridge and Kingston), together with 13 smaller individual projects. Behind this approach was the view that small business research had hitherto suffered from "the lack of theoretical underpinning for much of the existing research" (ESRC, 1988:2). The ESRC Initiative engaged over 50 researchers directly from a range of academic disciplines. Since many of these researchers had not previously specialised in the small business field, the Initiative contributed to developing the small business

research community in the UK and this has shown to have long-term impact. Two of the three Centres initially funded by the Initiative at Cambridge and Kingston have continued to develop and contribute to the institutionalisation of the small business and entrepreneurship field by their continued attention to it. Cambridge University's Centre for Business Research has produced a longitudinal series of publications as well as a panel survey which originated from the ESRC Initiative and is based around the theme of British enterprise (e.g. Cosh and Hughes, 2007). The third Centre, based at Sussex University, continues with its focus on employment studies. Individual researchers involved in the Initiative have also taken forward the small business and entrepreneurship research agenda, which in some cases has involved considerable career progression. Together these points suggest that the initiative has been significant in helping legitimise the field amongst academic peers and helping institutionalise the field.

Third, the Initiative had a strong dissemination strategy both in terms of academic and practitioner outcomes. During the funding period, 11 workshops were held at Warwick University, where researchers presented ongoing findings to a discussant and other researchers on the programme. This process was important not only in terms of information dissemination but also helping generate an 'esprit de corps' amongst participants and contributed to the development of new contacts and increased networking between researchers involved. The results of the research were also presented to specialist audiences, including the sponsors, as well as to external academic audiences, such as at the Institute for Small Business Affairs (ISBA) annual conference. Although there has been no assessment of the number of outputs from the Initiative, a consensus is that they run into the hundreds (see Dannreuther, 2006). In

addition to the overview book by Storey (1994), three edited volumes were published by Routledge covering different aspects of the firm including employment (Atkinson and Storey, 1993); urban and rural perspectives (Curran and Storey, 1993); and finance (Hughes and Storey, 1994).

The impact of these outputs on raising the academic legitimacy of the field is unquestionable and the impact of the Initiative on the user community has also proved to be long-term. There have been three official evaluations of the Initiative although it is suggested that there is a problem of attribution in such analyses (see Dannreuther, 2006). However, the impact of some of the publications from the Initiative have been substantial in terms of citations and market reach. An analysis of Storey (1994) shows that it has been cited 1187 times in Google Scholar by January 2007 and 358 times in the ISI citation index by September 2006.[11] The book has global sales of 11600, is now in its eighth edition and has been translated into Japanese. As a result of the Initiative, academics continued to work closely with the banks (including the Bank of England) and government departments (including the BERR, DEFRA) and internationally with the European Commission and the OECD).

Fourth, the Initiative generated a variety of methodological, knowledge and theoretical breakthroughs. The variety of projects and technical expertise of the researchers involved led to an impact that was both broad and deep. Topics included the economics and finance of small firms, spatial perspectives, sectoral differences, performance issues, sub-contracting, employment, ethnic minorities, management strategies, adjustment processes, legal form and taxation, history and relations with the state and representative groups (see Storey, 1994: xvii-xviii). Entrepreneurship

related topics were also supported, including new business formation (e.g. Townroe and Mallalieu, 1993), venture capital (Mason and Harrison, 1994) and patterns of growth and performance (Smallbone et al., 1995). Methodologically, the Initiative displayed a variety of quantitative and qualitative approaches and the use of both primary and secondary data analysis. Whilst some of the topics had been covered in earlier studies, the Initiative provided much needed investment, attracting expertise to undertake research of enhanced rigour and high profile.

The Initiative facilitated a number of innovations in the sense of applying social science methods to the field, including the use of critical incident techniques to unpack owner-manager networking behaviour, the engagement of entrepreneurs and financiers in business angel research, the use of quantitative methods in law and the foundation of a much needed longitudinal study of small firms. The direct and indirect links established with the user community further strengthened the legitimacy of the field. Academics were increasingly regarded as the source of technical expertise in the field by both their peers and the user community. In short, the ESRC Small Business Initiative has been significant in terms of the expansion of the knowledge base, the promotion and attraction of researchers into the field, its positive institutionalisation effects and raising the reputation of the field amongst academic and user communities.

The period has also seen developments in the opportunities for dissemination. In 1991 UKSBMTA changed it name to the UK Enterprise Management and Research Association (UKEMRA), which emphasised the *research* as well as management driven element. Further name changes came in 1994 to the Institute for Small

Business Affairs (ISBA) and in 2004 to the Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE). Attendance at the Conference has continued to expand: the numbers have risen from 203 in 1996 to over 600 in 2007, which is about the same size of the UK's British Association of Management (BAM) conference.[12]

Alongside the annual ISBE conferences, additional opportunities for dissemination opened up during this period, including the small business and enterprise development conference; the annual ethnic minority conference, which has now passed its 10th year; an annual new technology based firms' conference; and a conference on rural enterprise. Both the ethnic minority and rural events have a strong policy orientation, including contributions from practitioners as well as academic researchers. Internationally, a number of European conferences have attracted a significant input from UK researchers throughout the period, including the biennial Recontres de St Gallen, Switzerland (since 1948); the European Small Business Seminar (now called the Annual Conference of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Network, under the auspices of the European Foundation for Management Development), which is now in its 37th year; and the Research in Entrepreneurship and Small Business conference (RENT), which celebrated its 20th anniversary in Brussels in 2006.

This was also a period in which a number of new UK-based journals were launched. The *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* (established in 1994), with close ties initially to an annual conference, the *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research* JSBED (established in 1995) and *Venture Capital* (established in 1999). More recently, niche papers focusing on public policy issues relating to SMEs have been published in *Environment and Planning C:*

Government and Policy, which has included a number of special issues containing papers from the annual ISBE conference. Apart from close ties with UK based journals that have ISI recognition (*ISBJ and Environment and Planning C*), other journals in which UK small business and entrepreneurship publish regularly include *Regional Studies, Work Employment and Society, Urban Studies* and a number of employment relations journals including *Employee Relations* and *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. Non-UK based journals have also been important vehicles for the development of the research field, with UK authors now penetrating academia in the USA, through publication in the *Journal of Business Venturing* (JBV) and *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* (ET&P), as well as the European based *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*. UK academics have led on special editions in US and European based journals, illustrating their growing international engagement and esteem (e.g. Jennings et al., 2005). There have also been a number of conceptual papers in such journals seeking to develop an understanding of small business management across national boundaries (e.g. Torrès and Julien, 2005; Curran, 2006). Major publishers have also been engaged in commissioning book series on small business and entrepreneurship (e.g. Routledge), as well as handbooks edited by internationally reputable, UK based researchers (Westhead and Wright, 2000).

Watkins' (1994 and 1995) analyses of developments in the nature of production and outputs in the field produced interesting results, contributing to our assessment of growth of the research field. Investigation of six books comprising 73 papers produced from the annual ISBA/ISBE conferences led the authors to suggest that team-working was an emerging distinctive characteristic of the field during this

period, since the mean number of co-authored papers increased from a mean of 1.63 in 1980-82 to 2.16 by 1990-92 (Watkins,1994: 29). Further analysis showed that this rise in team working was across, as well as within, institutions, including the engagement of staff from funding bodies. However, the analysis also showed that there was an absence of continuity of authorship between the 1980s and 1990s, reflecting a tendency for some researchers to move in and out of the field. This gave some cause for concern by the Watkins: 'The danger is that lack of prior knowledge of what has and has not been researched will lead to studies being inadvertently replicated, and resources thereby squandered' (Watkins, 1994: 30). Whether or not this is a fair interpretation of the situation is open to debate given that newcomers to the field were bringing a vibrancy and new analytical perspectives. However, the fact that there was a growth in multiple authorship may be viewed as a positive sign in that the field was much less likely to be drawing on a narrow range of authors or body of knowledge.

In a subsequent paper (Watkins, 1995), 60 papers published in five books from the 1980-82 and 1990-92 ISBE conference proceedings were analysed. In this case, Watkins finds evidence that may be interpreted as an increasing maturity and legitimisation of the field. First, he reports an increase in the average number of citations of other works per output from 18.6 to 28.5. Second, he finds that the average age (median) of outputs cited increased from 2.7 years to 4.3 years. Third, he finds a growth in the number of citations to refereed journal papers to increase from 15 per cent to 25 per cent. Again interpretations of such findings may vary and much of the increase in citations and their age may be attributed to the simple fact that with time there is a greater quantity of work available for citation. Similarly, the growth

in the number of journal citations does not necessarily mean that there was a growing core literature. Subsequent investigation by Watkins found that of these journal citations only one per cent was of articles in small business journals in 1980-82 and three per cent in 1990-92.[13] In some respects, these findings are not surprising given the broad social science base of the UK small business and entrepreneurship literature. Although Watkins concluded, with regret, the limited ability of the field to develop a cumulative body of knowledge with journals, on the other hand the results did suggest that there had been some increase in the quality of outputs, no matter how disparate.

In view of the evidence presented above, it is fair to say that the UK small business and entrepreneurship knowledge base has undergone diversification rather than a narrowing of its boundaries. Some have described this as a 'fragmentation' of the field (Landström, 2005), whilst others regard this diversity as symptomatic of vibrancy as the field takes on characteristics of a 'border zone' (Steyaert, 2005). Certainly, the UK research agenda has not ossified since the pioneering days of the 1970s, with a number of new themes emerging through the 1990s and 2000s.

Analysis undertaken by the authors of the topics covered in papers presented at the annual ISBE conference in 1996 and 2006 shows some change over time in attention paid to particular topics. In this regard, female entrepreneurship and enterprise education appear to have the experienced the highest increase in attention over this period. In the case of female entrepreneurship, there were no papers presented on this topic in 1996, although in 2006, they comprised 10 per cent. In the case of enterprise education, the proportion had grown from two per cent of the 69 papers presented at

the 1996 conference to 20 per cent of the 200 presented in 2006. This was followed by finance (from two per cent to 11 per cent); economic development (from three per cent to 12 per cent); new venture creation (from two per cent to nine per cent); and technology (from seven per cent to 14 per cent). Topics that had declined in terms of relative attention included papers focused on the characteristics of owners/managers and entrepreneurs (from 22 per cent to 13 per cent); and HRM (from 12 per cent to six per cent). Topics such as public policy and survival and growth issues remained fairly constant in their relative importance, at around 15-20 per cent of the total number of papers each. Whilst care should be taken not to over-interpret these data, they do reveal some change in the focus of attention of UK researchers over the period, which to some extent reflects international trends. In addition, the ISBE conference has increasingly attracted more international delegates over the years, which has also influenced the topic profile of papers presented.

Additional emerging topics studied by UK researchers include studies of business exits and habitual entrepreneurs (e.g. Ucbasaran et al., 2006); understanding the effects of regulation (e.g. Hart and Blackburn, 2005); business performance (Barkham et al., 1996; public policy evaluations (e.g. Hart et al., 2007; Storey, 2002); intellectual property management (Blackburn, 2003); learning (Pittaway and Rose, 2003); social capital (Cope et al., 2007) and transition economies. (e.g. Smallbone and Welter, 2001). Others have sought to provide more intensive conceptual pieces, focusing on the role of the owner-manager for example, such as Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson (2007).

Although initially firmly rooted in small business research, the most recent period has seen UK researchers showing increasing interest in entrepreneurship, which again reflects increasing international influences. Whilst for some, this simply reflected a change in the *nomenclature* used, as entrepreneurship was simply used to characterise small business ownership, for others it undoubtedly reflects a change in focus towards new venture creation and growth, rather than an interest in a wider range of small business characteristics and behaviour. Acceptance of the nomenclature is partly a result of increasing international influences, although it may also reflect a demise in the antipathy towards the term, which was for some time associated with Thatcherite policies of the 1980s.[14] Whilst some researchers retain the traditional UK focus on small firms, there is a growing number who are following the growing international emphasis on 'entrepreneurship', in focusing on the processes of venture creation, opportunity recognition and exploitation. For example, analysis of papers presented at the 1996 and 2006 ISBE conferences shows that the proportion using the language of entrepreneurship increased from 22 per cent to 64 per cent over this period. Focusing on those that defined entrepreneurship specifically in terms of the creation of new ventures, the proportion increased from six per cent to 19 per cent. Although the UK small business field has always been relatively open to international influences (e.g. Wright management buy-outs; Mason venture capital), it is becomingly increasingly so. UK researchers were also now becoming more internationalised and engaging with colleagues in other European countries and the USA through collaborative projects, publications, exchange of staff and joint-presentations.

As mentioned previously, the policy orientation of much of the research on small firms and entrepreneurship in the UK dates back to the time of the Bolton Report.

However, since the early1990s, there has been a rise in interest in small businesses by UK government departments and an accompanying plethora of initiatives seeking to promote small businesses. In almost 20 years the field has witnessed the launch of the Training and Enterprise Councils in 1991 (subsequently replaced by Local Learning and Skills Councils), Business Links in 1993, and the Small Business Service in 2000, which was renamed the Enterprise Directorate of the recently established Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform in 2007.

Other government departments and agencies have commissioned research on a variety of small firm topics, including the Department for Education and Science, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, the Treasury, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Health and Safety Executive and the Countryside Agency. Membership of the European Union has created some new opportunities for UK researchers, through participation in pan-European projects, as well as raising issues for the research agenda in the UK as a result of policy documents, such as the recent Entrepreneurship Green Paper, the White Paper and Lisbon Agenda.

One of the best manifestations of the link between policy and research is the annual ISBE Conference, referred to above, which in recent years has been one of the best attended conferences in the field globally. The conference reflects the activities of ISBE as an organisation, whose current mission is 'to advance research, education and policy in small business and entrepreneurship (www.isbe.org.uk), with policy makers, practitioners, educators, as well as researchers comprising its membership. Analysis of papers presented at the 2006 ISBE Conference show that 57 per cent include policy implications; 69 per cent claim implications for practitioners (i.e. business support

professionals and consultants) and entrepreneurs; compared with 34 per cent claiming a contribution to theory (based on the authors assessment). Moreover, the policy and practitioner orientation appears to have remained consistent over time, since similar analysis of papers presented at the 1996 ISBE Conference reveals 61 per cent to include policy implications and 62 per cent implications for practitioners and entrepreneurs. Significantly, the proportion of papers with claimed theoretical implications has grown over time: from 20 per cent in 1996 to 34 per cent in 2006. Closer analysis of those ISBE Conference papers in which authors identify policy implications shows some to be based on research commissioned by government departments or policy agencies, which by definition is policy oriented in conception, whilst others are based on independent research, such as that undertaken for a PhD, or a grant-funded project, rather than for a consultancy contract.

One of the potential major consumers of the knowledge base on small firms and entrepreneurship is enterprise education, which includes lecturers in Business Schools, as well as practitioners and advisory bodies. Earlier analyses suggested an absence of suitable learning materials for entrepreneurship education, as well as some difficulties of transferring research into teaching (e.g. Carter et al., 1989). In the past decade this has expanded through a combination of increased recognition of the field but also because of a series of national initiatives providing funding for the expansion of higher education into this area. These include the Science Enterprise Challenge Fund (of £25m), which led to the establishment of eight Institutes of Entrepreneurship in universities to deliver entrepreneurship programmes, alongside the goal of enhancing the exploitation of science-based intellectual property. Centres of Excellence for Teaching and Learning in Entrepreneurship have more recently been

established in the Universities of Nottingham, Leeds Metropolitan and the White Rose Consortium of Leeds, Sheffield and York. Whilst not mainly established to promote research, these initiatives, amongst others, have contributed to increasing the number of academic positions in the field of entrepreneurship, as well as to the demand for applied research.

Our analysis shows that the number of degree courses provided in UK Universities with 'entrepreneurship' in the title is currently 244 spread across 30 institutions, with 'enterprise' referred to in the titles of 190 courses in 42 institutions (UCAS website search January 2007). However, research shows that few graduates start businesses once their studies are complete. For example, only 2.3 per cent of graduates who left higher education in 2003 (and whose destinations were known), were self employed six months after graduation (NCGE, 2006). The same report concluded that the level of graduate entrepreneurship in the UK appears comparatively low in relation to that in the US, for example. This should not be a surprise. An earlier analysis by Rosa (2003) confirmed the finding that shifting the number of graduate entrepreneurs in the UK is not easy despite efforts by government agencies to do so.

A good indicator of the take-off of the field in the UK is the number of doctorate completions, which has grown significantly since the 1970s. An analysis of the UK database of doctorate theses shows that between 1970 and 2005 [15]:

87 PhDs were completed with the words small business in the title
652 PhDs were completed with the words small business in the abstract
66 PhDs were completed with the word entrepreneurship in the title
149 PhDs were completed with the word entrepreneurship in the abstract

The data shows a rise in the number of doctorates completed with 'small business' included in the abstract in the 1990s (258) compared with 129 in the 1980s and 36 in the 1970s. This growth looks likely to continue, since between 2000 and 2005, this figure was already 229 completions (Jan 2007). The growth in 'entrepreneurship' doctorates also shows a similar upward progression, although on a smaller scale: from seven having the word 'entrepreneurship' in the abstract in the 1970s, to 38 in the 1980s, 56 in the 1990s and 48 between 2000-2005.

Another indicator of the growing institutionalisation of the field is the establishment of networks for doctoral students. UK students now have access to a number of doctorate workshops and networks focused specifically on entrepreneurship and small firms. These including the ISBE doctoral day at the annual conference and regular workshops; the doctoral workshop held at the annual RENT conference; as well as workshops at other international conferences, including Babson. Clearly, the growth in student completions and supply of specialised training programmes is a further indication of the growing legitimacy of the field. It is also important in providing a potential source of trained researchers to further raise the quality of research and sustain growth in the future.

Some Distinctive Characteristics of UK Small Business and Entrepreneurship

A review of the growing emergence and institutionalisation of the field over the last 30 years or so, inevitably raises the question of its distinctive characteristics and shaping influences. As a consequence, this final section of the paper identifies a number of distinctive features, which include its policy orientation, empirical tradition

and associated methodological diversity, an emphasis on a critical social science perspective, an emphasis (until recently) on small business rather than entrepreneurship *per se*, and an orientation towards middle level theory development.

Policy orientation and relevance

Without doubt, one of the key themes in UK small business and entrepreneurship research is the link with the public policy agenda. Whether this is a strength *or* weakness is open to debate. On the one hand, engagement by researchers with a policy agenda has helped to demonstrate an applied relevance of research, as well as adding to its funding opportunities. For example, the links between researchers, the DTI and particularly the SBS from 2000 have provided useful co-operation between the research community and government departments, leading to a number of high profile research outputs. Certainly, interest in small firms by the state has influenced the research base and the activities of academic researchers. Without this interest, it may be argued that the field would not be as well developed and the body of researchers able to contribute to the field would be diminished.

Although policy orientation is a longstanding characteristic of research in the field of small business and entrepreneurship in the UK, the extent to which research has actually influenced policy in practice is difficult to assess. Apart from the quality of the research itself, other factors which affect its influence on policy is the extent that policy-makers are really committed to evidence based policy and indeed the process of policy-making itself; the context in which the research is commissioned; and the relationship between those commissioning the research within a policy agency or government department and the end users i.e. those responsible for actually

developing and/or implementing policy. The relationship between the academic research base and public policy is strong but this does not mean that theory has necessarily been led by policy or vice versa. Gibb (2000b), Storey (2002), Curran (2000a) and Curran and Storey (2001) in their assessments of the development of UK policy have been very critical of the inability of public policy to make the necessary shift, or develop the appropriate institutions and initiatives to satisfy the needs of both small firms and government policy objectives. For example, one recurring theme in public policy has been an emphasis on 'small business growth' whilst researchers have repeatedly shown that the bulk of small business owners do not want to expand their firm.

One question that arises is the role of academic research in relation to policy. In this regard, one key potential role is to contribute to an evidence base for effective policy making and implementation (e.g. Smallbone et al, 2007), although this raises questions about what constitutes acceptable 'evidence'. Another potential role is with respect to monitoring and evaluation, which is a common context for research commissioned by government bodies (e.g. Hart and Lenihan, 2006) and also feasibility studies, although these are more commonly undertaken by professional consultants than by academic researchers. Clearly, researchers also have an important role in providing critical perspectives on aspects of public policy, both in concept and in the way that policy is delivered. In the latter case, it can be argued that research has made a contribution by providing empirical evidence and informed insight which challenges assumptions that policy-makers sometimes make about what small firms need and/or how they behave.

From a scientific point of view, an emphasis on policy-related research has both advantages and potential disadvantages. On the one hand, it offers an opportunity to develop applied knowledge; to potentially influence public policy; and more fundamentally perhaps to demonstrate the contribution of academia to addressing societal issues. There are also practical benefits in terms of an additional source of income for applied research, in circumstances where alternative sources of funding may be limited, particularly where large scale and relatively expensive empirical work is involved. At the same time, there are also potential disadvantages, which include the opportunity cost in terms of time for more fundamental research; contribution to theory development; possible restrictions on the ability to publish results; and the possibility that engagement in such work may discourage more fundamental policy critiques. However, it is the responsibility of researchers to maintain academic integrity in their endeavours and this includes being critical of public policy agendas. Certainly, the tradition of being prepared to be critical has helped counter the potential sanitising effect of public policy driven research and there is evidence that some researchers are prepared to criticise policies and institutions.

Whilst it is important for academic researchers to maintain a balanced portfolio of work, restrictions on the publication of research results has not been a major issue in the UK, based on the authors' experience, over the last 20 years. Our conclusion is that the policy orientation of UK research on small business and entrepreneurship has had a positive influence on the development of the field in the UK, contributing to the size and diversity of the research community.

Strong empirical tradition with methodological diversity

Another emerging feature of UK research on small business and entrepreneurship is its empirical orientation, involving considerable methodological diversity. In order to understand this, it is necessary to consider the economic, political and social context within which the growing research interest was spawned. In the 1970s, the UK economy was in crisis, particularly in terms of inflation and unemployment, and small firms were looked to as one of the solutions to help combat employment problems. However, at the time, there was a recognised absence of reliable data and official sources available for secondary analysis were often found wanting. As a consequence, the empirical tradition is partly a result of the call to arms to researchers for 'evidence'. The UK research base started in the 1970s with a period of empirical endeavour in which researchers sought to capture various data concerning small firm characteristics and behaviour. This call for evidence did not stop in the 1970s, as new issues and topics emerged, requiring new data and analyses.

Associated with this empirical tradition is methodological diversity, which includes an emphasis on the use of qualitative and interpretivist methodologies over time, which is reflected in analyses of papers presented at the ISBE national conferences. For example, the authors own analysis showed 55 per cent of the 200 papers presented at the 2006 conference to be based on qualitative approaches; 26 per cent quantitative and 18 per cent used a combination of the two. This compared with 1996 when the equivalent figures 51 per cent; 33 per cent and 16 per cent respectively (n=69). Clearly, the use of more process-oriented qualitative and interpretivist approaches has become more common over time. Similar analysis undertaken by others for the 2005 conference classified 34 per cent as using a qualitative approach;

12 per cent using a quantitative approach; and 24 per cent using mixed methods (Ritchie and Lam, 2006). The rest were either literature reviews, theoretical papers or practitioner papers. Methodological diversity is associated with multi-disciplinarity, as economists, sociologists, psychologists, geographers and ethnographers, amongst others, populated the field. This assessment suggests that the UK field has been more prepared to embrace qualitative approaches more than in the USA, which has emphasised the dominance of quantitative approaches (Aldrich and Baker, 2000). A recent issue of *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, illustrated this position, with UK researchers taking the lead in a major US entrepreneurship journal (Jennings, et al., 2005).

A critical social science perspective

UK research in the field of small firms and entrepreneurship is based on a strong tradition of viewing small businesses as an object of study rather than a phenomenon to be promoted. This reflects the strong 'social science' traditions of research in the field, emphasising a reporting and critical analysis of 'what is', rather than 'what ought to be'. One result may be a greater distance between research and teaching than exists in the US, for example, where contributing to the development of entrepreneurship in society appears a more common research objective than it does in the UK, viewed as one of the measures of legitimacy in the US (Low, 2001). Again this distinctiveness may be traced from the origins of the field of study. Small business research began in the UK when Business Schools were in their infancy and hence the demand for knowledge for the promotion of enterprise (teaching) was a contributory rather than main factor in knowledge production. Early UK small business researchers emerged from social science disciplines rather than business

school backgrounds. There was also a consciousness amongst some researchers to avoid replication of what was seen as US style research and develop a UK-oriented knowledge base. As one of our interviewees suggested, there was a tendency to deliberately try to avoid a 'north American hegemony' of the field. In the 1980s, Curran had warned against academic research drifting into becoming the voice of advocacy, focusing instead on analysing the real world of the small business owner. Small business researchers have not shied away from being critical of the object, illustrated by Rainnie's (1989) work on employment relations, MacDonald and Coffield (1991) on youth enterprise and, more recently, Blackburn and Ram (2006) in relation to entrepreneurship and social inclusion. This is crucial if research is to avoid the criticism of accepting a positive ideological stance or reifying entrepreneurship (Ogbor, 2000), either through ignorance or conscious promotion.

Boundaries and language of small business and entrepreneurship research

As demonstrated above, the foundations of UK small business and entrepreneurship research have disparate roots, which span the social sciences. One of the outcomes of methodological pluralism is a rich variety of paradigmatic lenses on the phenomena called small business and entrepreneurship. Whilst this can lead to problems of communication between researchers from disciplines with different traditions and conceptual bases, overall it contributes to a richness associated with a variety of perspectives and methods. Thus, the wide knowledge base in the UK is a reflection of a cornucopia of different ontological and epistemological assumptions and methodological and analytical approaches. For example, the focus on the owner-manager has attracted psychological analyses of their characteristics (Chell, 1999), sociological analyses of the 'petite bourgeoisie' (Bechhoffer and Elliott, 1976) as well

as owner-manager motivations (Stanworth and Curran, 1973) and human capital approaches (e.g. Taylor, 2005). The multi-disciplinarity that is a characteristic of UK research in the field is associated with a heterogeneity of research questions, generated from different disciplinary perspectives. As a result, theorisation takes place at different levels of analysis and for a variety of purposes. This, combined with the complexity of the phenomena under investigation has contributed to limited progress being achieved in developing an integrated, theoretical approach, which has been judged by some authors to be unachievable (Gibb and Davies, 1990). As well as using a variety of methods, researchers have also focused on different units of analysis: the individual, the firm, the industry and the economy and society. As a result, it is perhaps not surprising that there are few, if any, meta or unifying theories within the field of study.

At the same time, the language of UK small business and entrepreneurship has changed over time. The roots of the field in small business studies has been associated with a hesitancy, and even reluctance, on the part of many UK researchers to use the language of entrepreneurship, rather than that of small business owners and managers, or indeed, to narrowly focus on the exceptional (i.e. growth orientated entrepreneurs) rather than the typical. In the 1970s and 1980s this was dominated by the terms ‘small business’ and ‘owner-manager’. Partly as a result of growing interest by government at different levels (but particularly the European Union), the term SME became increasingly used in the 1990s, particularly in relation to statistical and macro studies, based on secondary databases. More recently, the term ‘entrepreneurship’ has gained currency, partly for reasons already discussed, although the term ‘entrepreneur’ is still often used interchangeably with ‘owner-manager’,

rather than being confined to risk takers, or the creators of new ventures. The growing acceptance of the term has been boosted by the growth in entrepreneurship education across UK Universities which is using the term and language of entrepreneurship rather than the research tradition of small business.

Pre-paradigmatic and middle range theory development

One recurring criticism of UK small business research is a lack of theoretical development, which in some respects is a surprising criticism, given that the field is now over 30 years old, has been the subject of substantial investment and has attracted a range of talented researchers from a variety of disciplines (Gibb, 2000b; 2002; Curran, 2000b; Ucbasaran et al., 2001). However, whilst the above has shown a massive shift in the knowledge base, the limited theorisation in UK small business and entrepreneurship research does require unpacking. First of all, this criticism is not confined to the UK research base. Certainly, commentary on the field in the USA on entrepreneurship has, for example, led to similar points concerning the limited progress towards disciplinary status (Aldrich and Baker, 1997; Busenitz et al., 2003), or that it is still in a theory building stage. Elsewhere Landström has identified the struggles in the field between disciplinary research (i.e. as in sociological, economics and psychological approaches) and distinctive domain research (Landström, 2005: 82-85). UK small business research has developed by the application of specific disciplinary approaches to an applied field in what may be termed 'middle range' theories. As Bryman and Bell point out: 'In other words, they fall somewhere between grand theories and empirical findings. They represent attempts to understand and explain a limited aspect of social life' (Bryman and Bell, 2003: 8). Hence, it is erroneous to say there the field has not generated new theories.

A strong example includes contributions to theories of employment relations and the debates surrounding the employment relationship in small firms (Ram and Edwards, 2003). Indeed, the UK research base on small business and entrepreneurship has a long history of research on employment and employment relations in small firms (e.g. Ingham, 1970; Clifton and Tatton-Brown, 1979; Curran and Stanworth, 1979; 1981; Rainnie, 1989; Marlow et al., 2005). More recently, mainstream employment relations researchers have engaged with small firms, for example through the inclusion of small workplaces (5-9 employees) in the Workplace Employment Relations Surveys of employees and employers and appointment of a 'small establishments' workplace' research team (See Forth et al., 2006; Storey et al., forthcoming). A further example relates to the economics of small firms which continues to attract attention and development drawing upon mainstream theoretical bases. These approaches display a high level of conceptual and technical sophistication and span the very early analyses of Marshall, to those in the 1970s to 1990s (Boswell, 1973; Bannock, 1981; Reid, 1993) and more recent analyses (Parker, 2004).

Whether or not this pre-paradigmatic state means that small business and entrepreneurship research is *less* developed than other business and management fields, or elsewhere, is open to debate. Certainly, this is not unusual in business and management research, which typically attracts a variety of paradigmatic positions: The small business area could perhaps be described in Biglan's terms as 'soft' and pre-paradigmatic '…that is the area lacks a body of theory that is subscribed to by all members of the field…. Biglan's studies, found that areas like the humanities,

education and management did not share a unitary paradigm' (Perren et al., 2001: 86).

This pre-paradigmatic position may not be regarded as a weakness. UK research in the field has come close to understanding the world of business owners through a variety of methodological approaches, including ethnography (e.g. Holliday, 1995), case studies (Perren and Ram, 2004), survey methods, including both longitudinal and cross sectional analyses, and primary and secondary data analysis (e.g. Cosh and Hughes, 2007). However, whether or not it has displayed a broad enough ontological and epistemological stance is open to debate. Grant and Perren (2002) for example, analysed the underlying meta-theoretical approaches in 36 papers in leading journals worldwide and found these to be overwhelmingly 'functionalist'.[16] At the same time, the three papers that were classified as 'interpretivist' all derived from UK based researchers, suggesting that whilst the criticism of meta-theoretical hegemony may apply across the field, this may be less so in the UK than worldwide. Indeed, there has been a recent debate in the UK management literature more broadly regarding the 'conservatism' of positivist methodologies and an encouragement to utilise qualitative approaches more extensively (Bell, 2006).

A long established national conference attracting policy makers and practitioners, as well as academics

The UK research community is extensive. For example, the ISBE membership base exceeds 500 members and has an estimated 144 UK-based Professors. This is probably a realistic estimate of the number of *active professors* currently in the UK although the total number of professors in the field in 2007 is reported to be 271 (ISBE, 2007; Perlex, 2007). A key and lasting focus for the UK research community has been the annual ISBE conference, which has grown to more than 600 delegates in

2007 and is currently the largest European conference on small firms and entrepreneurship. The significance of the conference is in its role in helping to legitimise UK small business research as a serious area of study. The effects have been threefold. First, its longevity and expansion has helped put small business research on the radar of academic and policy agendas. This acts as a strong counter to the isolated activity taking place previously. Second, the conference provides an opportunity for researchers to disseminate and discuss research results. The outputs from the conference have been published as books and proceedings as well as in special editions of reputable journals. Third, the conference provides opportunities for new and younger researchers to meet and has thus helped cultivate a body of new researchers and instil an element of self-development in the field. Although there is a core of small business researchers the conference also benefits from 'migrants' who often bring to event fresh thinking, methodological approaches, theories and ideas to add to the vibrancy of the field (e.g. Holliday, 1995).

Conclusions

This monograph has sought to analyse the development of UK small business and entrepreneurship research, identifying some of its distinctive characteristics. It has drawn on published works plus interviews with academics. The UK field has shown dynamism over the past 30 years, arguably unlike any other field in business and management. From its origins involving a number of isolated individuals in the 1970s, to Cinderella activity in the 1980s and growth in the 1990s, it is argued that this can now be considered mainstream business and management activity. This growth and distinctiveness is based on a number of pillars, including: institutional

developments, a large community of scholars, a strong knowledge base, and engagement with various user and stakeholder groups. The UK now has a strong institutional base, particularly in universities where both producers and consumers of research are well established. It also has a vibrant community of scholars focused on investigating small business and entrepreneurship and the growing demand for entrepreneurship education amongst undergraduate and postgraduate courses means that research and teaching have had to come closer. The period has seen a steady accumulation of knowledge on the field and the foundation and establishment of a number of internationally recognised dissemination outlets for research outputs, through refereed conferences and ISI recognised journals. However, some questions remain on the quality and scope of this knowledge base.[17] Collectively, the amount of expenditure on research in the UK is difficult to evaluate, although it has clearly run into the millions during the past decade. The field has also been the subject of a major injection of funding from research councils, including a single grant of £1.4m in the late 1980s- early 1990s. This suggests that it has shifted in terms of scale but also in recognition by peers.

These activities and developments have contributed to the small business and entrepreneurship field in the UK achieving legitimacy. However, our assessment is that the field is considered to be pre-paradigmatic at the meta-level. In other words, the UK knowledge base does not have its own distinctive meta-theories, but instead displays a range of paradigmatic positions, with theories best characterised as 'middle range'. This is perhaps similar to debates surrounding the development of 'entrepreneurship' as a field in the USA and chimes with the perspective that

'…entrepreneurship research espouses a diverse range of theories applied to various kinds of phenomena' (Gartner, 2001: 34).

The distinctiveness of the UK research base lies in both its intellectual eclecticism and connections with policy agendas. The antecedents of the UK small business research are diverse and this richness of studying the phenomena from a different disciplinary lens has continued throughout its 30 years of progress. Small business research in the UK includes a range of agendas which has included what is small business research for? In other words, researchers have been prepared to question the rationale of small business research. Despite its long-standing connections with a policy agenda researchers have been prepared to question the relevance of small business and entrepreneurship as vehicles to overcome, for example poverty alleviation, unemployment and deprivation. Linked to this is the continued embeddedness of studies within academic disciplines rather than the generation of a new all-embracing small business or entrepreneurship paradigm. This, we would argue, is a strength rather than weakness as this permeation from a variety of disciplines ensures a continued vibrancy. In making this position, we are not alone (see Steyaert, 2005). Hence, research in the UK is not distinguished by the generation of its own theory, or indeed by consensus in ontological, epistemological or methodological approach. Instead, the UK research community has a number of distinctive clusters ranging from those with normative objectives, focusing on increasing the contribution of entrepreneurship to society, through to those who focus on analysis of 'what is' rather than 'what ought to be'.

Acknowledgements

This Monograph has benefited from discussions with James Curran, Allan Gibb and John Stanworth who gave up their valuable time to be interviewed in December 2006 – January 2007 and from correspondence with David Storey, Peter Rosa, Sara Carter, Elizabeth Chell and David Watkins. Any errors or omissions in the work, however, remain the responsibility of the authors.

Endnotes

[1] Evidence drawn from counts of lists of delegates and information provided by Perlex Ltd to the authors, the conference organisers of the ISBE conferences since 2003.
[2] Data provided by Perlex Ltd.
[3] In popular culture also, the small is beautiful theme became more topical and was reflected so in the television series 'The Good Life'. We are grateful to Sara Carter for this point.
[4] Our documentary evidence shows that 21 guests attended via Cranfield School of Management and came from the Caribbean, Nigeria, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Bangladesh and Pakistan, Malaysia, Korea, the Soloman Islands and Fiji. This is most probably a reflection of the involvement of Professor Malcolm Harper who was to establish the Journal Small Business Development in 1990.
[5] NatWest have been very active supporters of the field, with financial sponsorship of research projects, a quarterly survey and books. The Bank funded the publication by Stanworth and Gray (1991) one of the key publications of its time. Lloyds Bank, now Lloyds TSB has also continued to fund a quarterly survey which is produced under the auspices of SERT. HSBC have since 1987, sponsored a Professorial position at Kingston University and now sponsors the SBRT quarterly survey.
[6] This list is not meant to be exhaustive but includes authors who have published in four decades beginning in the 1970s.
[7] For example, the Small Business Unit, Polytechnic of Central London; New Enterprise Centre, Manchester Business School; Small Business Unit, London Business School.
[8] See: (http://www.politics.co.uk/issuebrief/economy/employment/unemployment/unemployment-$366619.htm).
[9] Regional Studies produced a Theme Issue on Small Firms in Regional Economic Development (see Storey, 1984).
[10] Woodcock died in 2001. It was suggested by one of our interviewees that the reason for the change in name after only one volume was to appeal to a wider audience beyond Europe. This was also reflected in the Editorial Board which included North Americans and Australians as well as Europeans.
[11] Google scholar search January 2007; other data cited in Dannreuther (2006).
[12] Evidence provided by Perlex Ltd.
[13] Watkins includes in the category SME journals: International Small Business Journal, Small Business Economics, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice; Journal of Small Business Management.
[14] We are grateful to Sara Carter for this point.
[15] Analysis undertaken of database of UK PhD and MPhil theses by authors [http://www.theses.com].
[16] Journals included E&RD, ET&P, ISBJ, JBV, JSBM, SBE.
[17] Feedback from the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise, for example, criticised the UK research base as having no premier international journals, few members the boards of international journals and a shortage of qualified teachers with doctorates. ISBE provided a response to this assessment arguing that it some of the assertions were factually incorrect (see ISBE.org.uk). Nevertheless, the view provided was part of a wider research assessment exercise of UK research and was not, therefore, un-influential.

References

Aldrich, H and Baker, T (1997). Blinded by the Cites? Has There Been Progress in Entrepreneurship Research?, in Sexton, D. and R. Smilor (eds.), *Entrepreneurship 2000*, Chicago, Ill: Upstart Publishing, pp. 377-400.

Atkin, R, Chell, E and Mason, C (1993) (eds) *New Directions in Small Business Research*, Aldershot: Avebury.

Atkinson, J and D.J.Storey (1993) (eds) *Employment the Small Firm And The Labour Market* Routledge: London

Bannock, G (1976) *The Smaller Business in Britain and Germany*, London: Wilton House.

Bannock, G (1981) *The Economics of Small Firms: Return from the Wilderness*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Bannock, G (2005) *The Economics and Management of Small Business: An international perspective*, London: Routledge.

Barkham, R, Gudgin, G, Hart, M and Hanvey, E. (1996) *The Determinants of Small Firm Growth: An Inter-Regional Study in the UK 1986-90*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London,

Batstone, E.V. (1969) 'Aspects of Stratification in a Community Context: A Study of Class Attitudes and the 'Size Effect'', PhD thesis, University of Wales.

Bechhofer, F and Elliott, B (1976) 'Persistence and Change: The Petite Bourgeoisie in Industrial Society', *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol XVII, No 2, 1976 and in an abbreviated form in Curran, J et al. (eds) Vol 1, 1986 *op cit*.

Bechhofer, F and Elliott, B (1981) (eds) *The Petite Bourgeoisie, Comparative Studies of the Uneasy Stratum*, London: Macmillan.

Bell, E. (2006) 'The Three Rs: Risk, Regulation and Responsibility in Management Research', *ESRC Seminar Series: Advancing Research in the Business and Management Field, The Dilemmas Facing Management Research in the UK, Manchester Business School,* Manchester University, December.

Binks, M and Coyne, J (1983) *The Birth of Enterprise*, Hobart Paper 98, London: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Binks, M and Jennings, A (1986) 'Small firms as a Source of Economic Rejuvenation' in Curran, J et al. (eds) Vol 1, *op cit*.

Birch, D (1979) *The Job Generation Process*, MIT Programme in Neighborhood and Regional Change, Cambridge: MIT.

Blackburn, R A (2003) (ed.) *Intellectual property and innovation management in small firms*, London and New York: Routledge.

Blackburn, R and Ram, M (2006) 'Fix or fixation? The contributions and limitations of entrepreneurship and small firms to combating social exclusion', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development,* 18**,** pp. 73-89.

Bolton, J E (1971) *Small Firms: Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Small Firms* Cmnd. 4811 London: HMSO.

Boswell, J (1973) *The Rise and Decline of Small Firms*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

Bryman, A and Bell, E (2003) *Business Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Busenitz, L W, West, G. P, Shepherd, D, Nelson, T, Chandler, G N and Zacharakis, A (2003) 'Entrepreneurship Research in Emergence: Past Trends and Future Directions', *Journal of Management*, 29, 3, pp. 285-308.

Carter, S, Faulkener, W, Nenadic, S and Cannon, T (1989) 'The nature, the role and the impact of small business research', in Rosa, P, Birley, S, Cannon, T and O'Neill, K (eds) *The Role and Contribution of Small Business Research*, pp37-55, Aldershot: Avebury.

Chell, E. (1985) 'The Entrepreneurial Personality: A few ghosts laid to rest', *International Journal of Small Business***,** 3, 3, pp. 43 -54.

Chell, E. (1999) 'The entrepreneurial personality – past, present and future', *The Occupational Psychologist,* 38**,** pp. 5-12.

Clifton, R and Tatton-Brown, C (1979) *Impact of Employment Legislation on Small Firms*, Research Paper No 6, London: Department of Employment.

Collins, O. F., Moore, D.G. and Unwala, D. B. (1964) The Enterprise Man. Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Graduate School of Business Administration Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI.

Cope, J., Jack, S. and Rose, M.B. (2007) 'Social Capital and Entrepreneurship: An Introduction', *International Small Business Journal*, 25, 3, June, pp. 213-219.

Cornforth, C (1983) 'Some Factors Affecting the Success and Failure of Worker Co-operatives: A Review of Empirical Research in the United Kingdom', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 4, 2, pp. 163-190.

Cosh, A. and Hughes, A. (2007) *British Enterprise: thriving or surviving?* Centre for Business Research, University of Cambridge.

Cross, M (1981) N*ew Firm Formation and Regional Development*, Aldershot: Gower.

Curran, J (1986) *Bolton Fifteen Years On: A Review and Analysis of Small Business Research in Britain*, London: Small Business Research Trust.

Curran, J (1989) 'The width and the depth small enterprise research in Britain 1971-1986', in Rosa, P. (ed.) *The Role and Contribution of Small Business Research,* Aldershot: Avebury, pp. 3-36.

Curran, J (2000a) 'What is Small Business Policy in the UK For? Evaluation and Assessing Small Business Policies', *International Small Business Journal*, 18, 3, pp. 36-50.

Curran, J (2000b) 'Small and medium enterprise development. Borrowing from Elsewhere? A research and development agenda – a comment on Allan Gibb's paper', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 7, 3, pp. 212-219.

Curran, J (2006) ''Specificity' and 'Denaturing' the Small Business', *International Small Business Journal*, 24, 2, pp. 205-210.

Curran, J and Blackburn, R (2001) *Researching the Smaller Enterprise*, London and New York: Sage.

Curran, J and Stanworth, J (1979a) 'Self Selection and the Small Firm Worker – A Critique and an Alternative View', *Sociology*, 13, ,: pp. 427-44.

Curran, J and Stanworth, J (1979b) 'Worker Involvement and Social Relations in the Small Firm', *Sociological Review*, 27, 2, pp. 317-342.

Curran, J. and J. Stanworth (1981) 'Size of Workplace and Attitudes to Industrial Relations in the Printing and Electronics Industries', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 19(1), pp. 14-25.

Curran, J and Stanworth, J (1982a) 'Bolton Ten Years On – A research Inventory and Critical Review', in Stanworth, J., Westrip, A. and Watkins, D. (eds), *Perspectives on a Decade of Small Business Research: Bolton Ten Years On*, Section One, pp. 3-28.

Curran, J and Stanworth, J (1982b) 'The Small Firm in Britain – Past, Present and Future', *European Small Business Journal*, 1, 1, September, pp. 16-25.

Curran, J. and Storey, D. J. (1993) (eds) *Small Firms in Urban and Rural Locations*, London: Routledge.

Curran, J. and Storey, D.J. (2002) 'Small Business Policy in the UK: The Inheritance of the New Small Business Service and Implications for its Future Effectiveness', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 20, 2, April, pp. 163-177.

Curran, J, Stanworth, J and Watkins, D (1986a) (eds) *The Survival of the Small Firms, Volume 1, The Economics of Survival and Entrepreneurship*, Aldershot: Gower.

Curran, J, Stanworth, J and Watkins, D (1986b) (eds) *The Survival of the Small Firms, Volume 2, Employment Growth and Politics*, Aldershot: Gower.

Dannreuther, C (2006) *The Impact of the ESRC's Small Business Initiative*, School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds.

Drakopoulou Dodd, S and Anderson, A (2007) 'Mumpsimus and the Mything of the Individualistic Entrepreneur', *International Small Business Journal*, 25, 4, pp. 341-360.

Forth, J., Bewley, H. and Bryson, A. R. (2006) *Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: findings from the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey*, London: Routledge.

Fothergill, S and Gudgin, G (1982) *Unequal Growth*, London: Heineman.

Ganguly, P and Bannock, G (1985) *UK Small Business Statistics and International Comparisons*, London: Harper & Row/Small Business Research Trust.

Gartner, W. B. (2001) 'Is There an Elephant in Entrepreneurship? Blind Assumptions in Theory Development', *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice*, Summer, pp. 27-39.

Gibb, A. A. (2000a) 'SME Policy, Academic Research and the Growth of Ignorance: Mythical Concepts, Myths, Assumptions, Rituals and Confusions*, International Small Business Journal*, 18, 3, pp. 13-35.

Gibb, A A (2000b) 'Small and medium enterprise development: borrowing from elsewhere? A research and development agenda', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 7, 3, pp. 199-211.

Gibb, A A (2002) 'In pursuit of a new 'enterprise' and 'entrepreneurship' paradigm for learning: creative destruction, new values, new ways of doing things and new combinations of knowledge', *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 4, 3, pp. 233-269.

Gibb, A and Davies, L (1990) 'In pursuit of frameworks for the development of growth models of the small business' *International Small Business Journal,* 9**,** pp. 15-31.

Gibb, A A and Lewis, J (1980) *Policy Issues in Small Business Research*, Aldershot: Gower.

Goldthorpe, J, Lockwood, D, Bechhofer, F and Platt, J (1968) *The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gorb, P, Dowell, P and Wilson, P (1981) (eds) *Small Business Perspectives*, London Business School: Armstrong Publishing.

Grant, P and Perren, L (2002) 'Small Business and Entrepreneurial Research: Meta-theories, Paradigms and Prejudices', *International Small Business Journal*, 20, 2, pp. 185-211.

Hart, M and Blackburn, RA (2005) 'Labour Regulation and SMEs: A Challenge to competitiveness and employability?', in Marlow, S., Patton, D. and Ram, M. (eds.) Chap. 7, *Managing Labour in Small Firms*, Routledge: London.

Hart, M, Driffield, N, Roper, S and Mole, K (2007) 'Evaluation of Regional Selective Assistance (RSA) and Selective Finance for Investment in England (SFIE), 2000-2004', *Report for the BERR*, July.

Hart, M and Lenihan, H (2006) 'Estimating additionality and leverage: The interplay between public and private sector equity finance in Ireland (2000-2002)', *Venture Capital: An International Journal of Entrepreneurial Finance,* 8**,** pp. 331-351.

Hart, PE and Prais, SJ (1956) 'The Analysis of Business Concentration: A statistical approach', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Series A, 119, 2, pp. 150-191.

Holliday, R (1995) *Investigating Small Firms, Nice Work?* London: Routledge.

Hughes, J (1984) 'Community co-operatives as small businesses', in Lewis, J et al. (eds) *Success and Failure in Small Business*, Ch 4, pp. 73-98, Aldershot: Gower.

Hughes, A and Storey, D (1994) (eds) *Finance and the Small Firm*, London and New York: Routledge.

Hutchinson, P and Ray, G (1986) 'Surviving the Financial Stress of Small Enterprise Growth', in Curran, J. Stanworth, J. and Watkins, D. (eds) *The Survival of the Small Firm, Volume 1*, *The Economics of Survival and Entrepreneurship*, Aldershot: Gower**,** pp. 53-71.

Ingham, G (1969) 'Plant Size, Political Attitudes and Behaviour', *Sociological Review*, 17, 3, 236-49.

Ingham, G (1970) *Size of Industrial Organisation and Worker Behaviour*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jennings, P, Perren, L and Carter, S (2005) 'Guest Editors' Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on Entrepreneurship Research', *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice*, pp. 145-152.

Jones, T and McEvoy, D (1986) 'Ethnic Enterprise: the popular image', in Curran, J., Stanworth, J. and Watkins, D. (eds.) *The Survival of the Small Firm*, *Volume 1, The Economics of Survival and Entrepreneurship*, Ch. 11, pp 197-219 Aldershot: Gower.

Keeble, D and Wever, E (1986) *New Firms and Regional Development in Europe*, London: Croom Helm.

Kirby, D A (1986) 'The Small Retailer', in Curran, J., Stanworth, J. and Watkins, D. (1986a) (eds) *The Survival of the Small Firms, Volume 1, The Economics of Survival and Entrepreneurship*, Ch 9, Aldershot: Gower, pp. 162-179.

Landström, H (2005) *Pioneers in Entrepreneurship and Small Business Research*, New York: Springer.

Landström, H, Frank, H and Veciana, J M (1997) (eds) *Entrepreneurship and Small Business Research in Europe, An ECSB Survey*, Aldershot: Avebury.

Levicki, C (1984) (ed) *Small Business Theory and Policy*, The Acton Society Trust, London: Croom Helm.

Lewis, J, Stanworth, J and Gibb A A (1984) (eds) *Success and Failure in Small Business*, Aldershot: Gower.

Lloyd, P. E. and Mason, C. M. (1984) 'Spatial variations in new firm formation in the United Kingdom: Comparative evidence from Merseyside, Greater Manchester and South Hampshire', *Regional Studies,* 18**,** pp. 207-220.

Low, M. B. (2001) 'The Adolescence of Entrepreneurship Research: Specification of Purpose', *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice,* 25**,** pp. 17-26.

McClelland, D. C. (1961) *The Achieving Society,* Princeton, NJ., D. Van Nostrand Co.

Macdonald, R. and Coffield, F. (1991) *Risky Business?: Youth and the Enterprise Culture*, London: Falmer.

Marlow, S., Patton, D. and Ram, M. (2005) (eds.) *Managing Labour in Small Firms*, London: Routledge.

Marshall, A. (1919) *Industry and Trade: A Study of Industrial Technique and Business Organization*, London: Macmillan.

Mason, C. and Harrison, R. (1994) 'Informal venture capital in the UK' in Hughes, A. and Storey, D. '*Finance and the Small Firm'*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 64-111.

May, T and McHugh, J (2002) 'Small Business Policy: A Political Consensus?', *The Political Quarterly*, 73, 1, pp. 76-85.

Mayer, K B and Goldstein, S (1961) *The First Two Years: Problems of Small Firm Growth and Survival*, Small Business Administration.

Oakey, R P (1984) *High Technology Small Firms*, London: Francis Pinter.

Oakey, R P (1981) *High Technology Industry and Industrial Location*, Aldershot: Gower.

Ogbor, J O (2000) 'Mythicizing and Reification in Entrepreneurial Discourse: Ideaology – Critique of Entrepreneurial Studies', *Journal of Management Studies*, July, pp. 605-635.

Parker, S (2004) *The Economics of Self-employment and Entrepreneurship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Perlex (2007) Data provided by Perlex Ltd, Harrogate.

Perren, L and Ram, M (2004) 'Case-Study Method in Small Business and Entrepreneurial Research Mapping Boundaries and Perspectives', *International Small Business Journal*, 22, 1, pp. 83-101.

Perren, L, Berry, A and Blackburn, R (2001) 'The UK small business research community and its publications channels: Perceptions and ratings', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Spring, 8, 1, pp. 76-90.

Pittaway, L and Rose, M (2006) 'Learning and Relationships in Small Firms: Introduction to the Special Issue', *International Small Business Journal*, 6, 24, pp. 227 - 231.

Rainnie, A (1989) *Industrial Relations in Small Firms: Small Isn't Beautiful*, London and New York: Routledge.

Rainnie, A and Scott, M (1986) 'Industrial Relations in the Small Firm', in Curran, J, Stanworth, J and Watkins, D (eds) (1986) *The Survival of the Small Firms, Volume 2, Employment Growth and Politics*, Chapter 3, Aldershot: Gower.

Ram, M and Edwards, P (2003) 'Praising Caesar not burying him: what we know about employment relations in small firms', *Work Employment and Society*, 17, 4, pp. 719-730.

Ritchie, B and Lam, W (2006) 'Taking stock of small business and entrepreneurship research', *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research,* 12**,** pp. 312-327.

Reid, G (1993) *Small Business Enterprise: an economic analysis*, London: Routledge.

Rosa, P (1997) 'Entrepreneurship and small business research in the 1990s – a UK perspective', in Landström, H et al. (eds), Chapter 17.

Rosa, P (2003) 'Hardly Likely to Make the Japanese Tremble', The Businesses of Recently Graduated University and College 'Entrepreneurs', *International Small Business Journal, 11*, vol. 21: pp. 435 - 459.

Rothwell, R (1984) 'The Role of Small Firms in the Emergence of New Technologies', *Omega*, 12, 1.

Rothwell, R and Zegweld, W (1982) *Innovations and the Small and Medium Sized Firm*, London: Frances Pinter.

Scase, R and Goffee, R (1980) *The Real World of the Small Business Owner*, London: Croom Helm.

Scase, R and Goffee, R (1982) *The Entrepreneurial Middle Class*, London: Croom Helm.

Schumacher, E E (1973) *Small is Beautiful A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, London: Abacus.

Schumpeter, J.A. (1942) *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, New York: Harper and Row.

Scott, M, Gibb, A A, Lewis, J and Faulkner, T (1986) (eds) *Small Firms Growth and Development*, Aldershot: Gower.

Shonfield, A (1965) *Modern Capitalism*, London: Oxford University Press.

Stanworth, J and Curran, J (1973) *Management Motivation and the Smaller Business*, Epping: Gower Press.

Schumacher, E E (1973) *Small is Beautiful A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, London: Abacus.

Schumpeter, JA (1942) *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, New York: Harper and Row.

Singh, A and Whittington, G (1968) *Growth, Profitability and Valuation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Smallbone, D Leigh, R and North, D (1992) 'Growth Characteristics of Mature Small and Medium Sized Manufacturing Enterprises' in Robertson M., Chell E. and Mason C. (eds) *Towards the 21st Century: the Challenge for Small Business*, Ch. 11, pp 209-234, Macclesfield: Nadamal Books.

Smallbone, D, Leigh, R and North, D (1995) 'The characteristics and strategies of high growth SMEs', *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research,* 1**,** pp. 44-62.

Smallbone, D and Welter, F (2001) 'The Distinctiveness of Entrepreneurship in Transition Economies', *Small Business Economics,* 16**,** pp. 249-262.

Smith, N. R. (1967) *The entrepreneur and his firm: the relationship between type of man and type of company*, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, Michigan State University.

Stanworth, J. (1984) 'A Study of Power Relationships.and their Consequences in Franchise Organisations', *Social Science Research Council*, London.

Stanworth, J and Curran, J (1973) *Management Motivation and the Smaller Business*, Epping: Gower Press.

Stanworth, J and Curran, J (1984) 'Small Business Research in Britain', in Levicki, C (1984).

Stanworth, J and Gray, C (1991) (eds) *Bolton 20 Years On: the Small Firms in the 1990s*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Stanworth, J, Curran, J and Hough, J (1984) 'The Franchised Small Enterprise: Formal and Operational Dimensions of Independence', in Lewis, J et al. (eds) *Success and Failure in Small Business*, Ch 7, pp. 157-178, Aldershot: Gower.

Stanworth, J, Westrip, A, Watkins, D and Lewis, J (1982) (eds) *Perspectives on a Decade of Small Business Research: Bolton Ten Years On*, Aldershot: Gower.

Steyaert, C. (2005) 'Entrepreneurship: in between what?: on the 'frontier' as a discourse of entrepreneurship research', *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 2-16.

Storey, D J (1981) 'New firm formation, employment change and the small firm; the case of Cleveland County', *Urban Studies*, 18, pp. 335-345.

Storey, D J (1984) 'Editorial', Theme Issue on Small Firms in Regional Economic Development, *Regional Studies*, 18, 3, pp. 187-188.

Storey, D J (1994) *Understanding the Small Business Sector*, London: Routledge.

Storey, D J (2002) 'Six Steps to Heaven: Evaluating the Impact of Public Policies to Support Small Businesses in Developed Economies', in Sexton, D L and Landström, H (eds) *The Blackwell Handbook of Entrepreneurship*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Storey, DJ and Johnson, S (1987) *Job Generation and Labour Market Change*, Basingstoke: MacMillan.

Storey, D, Saradakis, G, Sen Gupta, S, Edwards, P and Blackburn, RA (2006) **'**Burying bleak house: formality and job satisfaction in smaller workplaces and single enterprises', *paper presented at the 21st ERU Conference, Cardiff*, September.

Taylor, S (2005) 'The hunting of the snark: a critical analysis of human resource management discourses in relation to managing labour in small organisations', in Marlow, S, Patton, D and Ram, M (eds.) *Managing Labour in Small Firms*, Ch. 2., London: Routledge.

Torrès, O and Julien, P-A (2005) 'Specificity and Denaturing of Small Business', *International Small Business Journal*, 23, 4, pp. 355-377.

Townroe, P. and Mallalieu K. (1993) 'Founding a new business in the countryside', in Curran J. and Storey D. (eds) *Small Firms in Urban and Rural Locations*, London and New York: Routledge: pp. 17-53

Ucbasaran, D, Westhead, P and Wright, M (2001) 'The Focus of Entrepreneurial Research: Contextual and Process Issues', *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice*, pp. 57-80.

Ucbasaran, D, Westhead, P and Wright, M (2006) *Habitual Entrepreneurs*. CheltenhamUK, Northampton Mass USA: Edward Elgar.

UKEMRA (1991) *Research Register 1994-1991*, Second Edition, Small Business Centre, Durham University: United Kingdom Enterprise and Management Research Association.

Ward, R (1986) 'Ethnic Business and Economic Change: An Overview', *International Small Business Journal*, 4, 3, pp. 10-12.

Ward, R and Jenkins, R (1984) (eds) *Ethnic Communities in Business*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ward, R and Reeves, F (1980) 'West Indians in Britain', memorandum submitted to the *Home Affiars Committee Race Relations and Immigration Sub-Committee, Session 1980-1*, London, House of Commons, December.

Watkins, J M and Watkins, D (1984) 'The Female Entrepreneur: Her Background and Determinants of Business Choice', *International Small business Journal*, 2, 4, pp. 21-31.

Watkins, D (1994) 'Changes in the Nature of UK Small Business Research, 1980-1990, Part One: Changes in Producer Characteristics', *Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Winter, 1, 3, pp. 28-31.

Watkins, D (1995) 'Changes in the Nature of UK Small Business Research, 1980-1990, Part Two: Changes in the Nature of Output', *Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 2, 1, pp. 59-66.

Webb, T, Quince, T and Watkins, D (1982) (eds) *Small Business Research*, Aldershot: Gower.

Westhead, P (1989) 'A Spatial Analysis of New Manufacturing Firm Formation', *International Small Business Journal*, 7, 2, pp. 44-68.

Westhead, P and Wright, M (2000) (eds) Advances in Entrepreneurship Volumes I, II and III. Cheltenham, England and Northampton, Mass USA: Edward Elgar.

Wilson Committee (1979) *The Financing of Small Firms*, Interim Report of the Committee to review the functioning of the financial institutions. Cmnd 7503. London: HMSO.

Wilson, P (1984) 'Black businesses in Britain: a survey of Afro-Caribbean businesses in Brent', in Lewis, J et al. (eds) *Success and Failure in Small Business*, Ch 6, pp. 125-126, Aldershot: Gower.

Wright, M and Coyne, J (1985) *Management Buy-outs,* Beckenham: Croom-Helm.