

Call for Papers for a Special Issue – Academy of Management Perspectives (AMP)

EXCEPTIONALISM AND OUTLIERS: ADVANCING MANAGEMENT THEORY AND
PUBLIC POLICY FROM POWER LAW DISTRIBUTIONS IN GROWTH-DRIVEN
PHENOMENA

Submission deadline: August 1, 2023

BACKGROUND

There is a rarified class of so-called “exceptional” or “star” or “outlier” performer firms whose names are synonymous with growth and success. These firms—along with the individuals within them—have a resonating impact on future entrepreneurs long after these entities are no longer considered “entrepreneurial.” Firms like this inspire and educate the rising generations. As such, their philosophies and actions are the “canary in the coalmine” for future strategies and management principles implemented in growth-oriented firms around the world, including: social enterprises, public sector organizations, NGOs, governments, charities, and even religious organizations.

Exceptional firms have relatively large data footprints (through media, public appearances, and the reporting requirements that come with larger firms), allowing researchers to take a data-driven approach to developing new theory, consolidating and extending existing theory. Further, where the myth of the “lone hero” entrepreneur has long been debunked as a misleading exaggeration of the typical development of successful ventures (McMullen, 2017); there remains the opportunity to learn from both entrepreneurial leadership and employment practices horizontally across outlier firms.

Star performing firms and individuals (specifically entrepreneurs and senior managers), likely have unique behaviors, processes, practices, and even individual-level cognitions that can inform theory and policy. The seeds of creative destruction often arise in a few exceptional initiatives and subsequently inform the landscape defining best practice for other aspiring ventures. Rather than writing off outliers as aberrations to our theorizing, this call seeks to draw attention to how we can advance greater understanding of success from the exceptional and highly influential few. Outliers oftentimes start as everyday ventures, but with exceptional outcomes, they continue to serve as inspiration and models for legions of potential entrepreneurs (Peter & Pierk, 2021). They exist in all industries, all nations, and all types of venturing. They are a statistical phenomenon, the people in the tail of the distribution, but it is their highly desirable place in the curve that makes them interesting. This is the focus of this special issue: *examining exceptional high-growth firms, for the purposes of better understanding outliers as a*

Editorial Team

- Gideon D. Markman, Editor-in-Chief
- Geoffrey T. Wood, Editor-in-Chief
- Véronique Ambrosini, Associate Editor
- David Collings, Associate Editor
- Peter T. Gianiodis, Associate Editor
- William S. Schulze, Associate Editor
- Roy R. Suddaby, Associate Editor
- Siri Ann Terjesen, Associate Editor
- Libby Weber, Associate Editor

A Premier Journal for Theory, Policy & Impact

- AMP publishes rigorous and impactful conceptual papers that are salient to policy
 - **Policy:** Actionable principles that guide the behavior or governance of organizations, groups, or individuals
 - **Conceptual work:** An original theoretical contribution that consolidates and/or extends scholarly debates
- Impact factor: 7.846 (5-Year: 9.642)
- #27 /226 of Business & Management journals, chartered ABS 4 ranking, ABDC A ranking

context, exploring the boundary conditions of existing theory, and developing new theory and policy towards future exceptional firms.

So, how do we know an exceptional outlier? The star performer literature suggests that means and standard deviations are meaningless, and that star performers are found in a power law distribution (Sornette, 2006; Taleb, 2020). This is also true for nascent, young, and high-growth firms (Crawford, Aguinis, Lichtenstein, Davidsson & McKelvey, 2015). Outliers are identified as those observations in the tail of the power law distribution (Crawford et al., 2015); as such, depending on the relative exceptionalism: outliers can account for anywhere between .1%-18% of the total observations in the distribution, explaining an overwhelming disproportion of results. Thus, papers in this special issue may classify an outlier according to the shape of the particular distribution under study. Further, we can study the phenomenon as it occurs, because exceptional outliers will far exceed the distribution curve long before their ultimate outcome. As such, it is incumbent upon researchers to keep these two considerations in mind as they design their research and identify potential outliers: a focus on outcomes, and extreme outperformance relative to peers.

AIMS and SCOPE of the SPECIAL ISSUE

The study of growth star performers can occur at multiple levels (Beamish & Hasse, 2022): the ecosystem, the firm, and even the unique contribution of key individuals—any that might influence exceptional outcomes. Outliers are the culmination of factors: innovations, personality, philosophies, a unique management style, strategies, resource management, (at least sometimes) impression management tactics, and more; but how *each of these* explains, expands, redefines, and contradicts prevailing theories is the undiscovered country of this research tract. This special issue will address the call from Crawford et al.'s (2015) findings of ubiquitous power law distributions in the inputs and outcomes of new venture emergence and growth: “Our results call for the development of new theory to explain and predict the mechanisms that generate these distributions and the outliers therein (p. 696).”

We encourage research exploring a wide range of assumptions and research questions: some example research questions are listed below. With a focus on growth, entrepreneurship research is expected and welcomed, but so is research from any management domain.

Potential Research Questions

Exceptional Outlier Entrepreneurs or Firms vs. “Normal” Entrepreneurs or Firms

- What are the various ways we can conceptualize and operationalize outliers?
- What mechanisms drive the emergence of outliers?
- How do outliers amass and deploy human, social, and financial capital?
- How do outliers search for, recognize, assess, and pursue opportunities?
- How do outliers ideate, process, refine, resource, and launch potential ventures?
- Do outliers differ on cognitive and behavioral measures (e.g., passion, imaginativeness, self-efficacy, etc.)?

- How do outliers embody, discuss, reflect, or embrace social values within and outside their firms?
- How do outliers work in and lead their firms? Do they have any repeated personal habits?
- What are the cognitions, dispositions, beliefs of outliers?
- What are some goals, aspirations, motivations, and expectations for growth of outliers?

Exceptional Outlier Entrepreneurs or Firms (*within*)

- What are the domains of exceptional outliers e.g., profitability, growth, sales, resources acquired, etc.; do those domains matter?
- How do outliers manifest in non-commercial contexts? (i.e., social, institutional, cultural)?
- How do outliers interact with and exist within institutional alignments?
- How do outliers affect and inspire existing and future entrepreneurs?
- What are the political beliefs and involvement of outliers?
- What are some of the family alignments, involvement of family within business, and relationships of outliers?
- How do entrepreneurs create a reputation for being exceptional outliers and how do they use this reputation?

Exceptional Outlier Entrepreneurs or Firms (*across contexts*)

- Do the effects, manifestations, or implications of outliers differ across industries?
- Do the effects, manifestations, or implications of outliers differ across nations, regions, or cultures?
- Do the effects, manifestations, or implications of outliers differ between commercial and non-commercial contexts?
- How does the public reception/perception of outliers differ across contexts? When are “stars” celebrated or vilified?
- Does the recognition of outliers effect the firm, positively or negatively, and how?
- How could outliers reduce systemic wealth inequalities across different environments?

PAPER STYLE

1. Scholars are reminded that AMP seeks papers that advance theory and contribute to policy (broadly defined).
2. We welcome conceptual, quantitative, and qualitative (e.g., narratives, multiple cases, experiments) inductive papers, but note that AMP is neither a theory-tested nor a mathematical modeling journal.

SPECIAL ISSUE EVENT

To support authors considering submissions to this special issue we are planning three (possibly four) paper development workshops. Workshops prior to June 2023 will be open to anyone but will require submission and acceptance of an abstract of a proposed paper; the final workshop will be by invitation only. Further information will be made available 2-3 months prior to the PDW; details may change from what is listed below.

1. March/April 2023 – OPEN - In-person/Virtual at Ivey School of Business, London, Canada
2. May 2023 – OPEN - In-person/Virtual at LUISS Business School, Rome, Italy
3. November 2024 – BY INVITATION - Virtual for those who receive a revision request

SUBMISSION PROCESS

- **Submission deadline (full paper):** 1 August 2023. The **ScholarOne** submission portal will be open from July 17 to August 1, 2023 (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/amp>)
- **Authors should follow the AMP Manuscript Preparation Guidelines** (<https://aom.org/research/publishing-with-aom/author-resources/submitting-to-perspectives>)
- **Articles will be reviewed according to the AMP double-blind review process.**

We welcome informal enquiries relating to the Special Issue, proposed topics, and potential fit with the Special Issue objectives. Please direct any questions on the Special Issue to the Guest Editors:

- Daniel Clark, Ivey School of Business, Western University (*Canada*); dclark@ivey.ca
- Robert Pidduck, Strome Business School, Old Dominion University (*USA*); rpidduck@odu.edu
- G. Christopher Crawford, Sykes College of Business, University of Tampa (*USA*); gcrawford@ut.edu
- Per Davidsson, Jönköping International Business School (*Sweden*) & Queensland University of Technology (*Australia*); per.davidsson@qut.edu.au
- Nicola Breugst, TUM School of Management, Technical University of Munich (*Germany*); nicola.breugst@tum.de
- Christian Lechner, Luiss Business School, Luiss University (*Italy*); clechner@luiss.it
- AMP Co-Editor: Véronique Ambrosini, Monash University (*Australia*); v.ambrosini@monash.edu

REFERENCES

- Aguinis, H., & Bradley, K. J. (2015). The secret sauce for organizational success. *Organizational Dynamics*, 44(3), 161-168.
- Aguinis, H., Ji, Y. H., & Joo, H. (2018). Gender productivity gap among star performers in STEM and other scientific fields. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 103(12), 1283-1306.

Aguinis, H., & O'Boyle Jr, E. (2014). Star performers in twenty-first century organizations. *Personnel Psychology*, 67(2), 313-350.

Aldrich, H. E., & Ruef, M. (2018). Unicorns, gazelles, and other distractions on the way to understanding real entrepreneurship in the United States. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 32(4), 458-472.

Baumol, W. J., Schilling, M. A., & Wolff, E. N. (2009). The superstar inventors and entrepreneurs: How were they educated? *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy*, 18(3), 711-728.

Beamish, P. & Hasse, V. (2022). The importance of rare events and other outliers in global strategy research. *Global Strategy Journal*, <https://doi.org/10.1002/gsj.1437>.

Bradley, K. J., & Aguinis, H. (2018). The Abundance of Star Teams: Antecedents of Heavy Tails in Team Productivity Distributions. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2018, No. 1, p. 11521). Briarcliff Manor, NY: Academy of Management.

Crawford, GC. (2021). 'Rock Star' Theory: How to Explain and Predict Entrepreneurial Success. *Research OUTREACH*, 121, 18-21. DOI: 10.32907/RO-121-1059397311.

Crawford, GC. (2018) Skewed Opportunities: How the Distribution of Entrepreneurial Inputs and Outcomes Reconceptualizes the Research Domain. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, Vol. 2018, No. 1, p. 18873.

Crawford, GC. (2015) The Emergence of Outliers in Entrepreneurship: A Self-Organized Criticality Framework. *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research* 35(16), Article 1.

Crawford, GC & Lichtenstein, B. (2013) Is there a Singular 'Law of Entrepreneurship'? Power Law Dynamics of Organizational Emergence and Growth. In Leslie A. Toombs (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventy-Third Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management*.

Crawford, GC. (2012) Emerging Scalability and Extreme Outcomes in New Ventures: Power Law Analyses of Three Studies. In Leslie A. Toombs (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventy-Second Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management*, ISSN 1543-8643.

Crawford, GC. (2012) Disobeying Power Laws: Perils for Theory and Method. *Journal of Organization Design*. 1(2): 75-81.

Crawford, G. C., Aguinis, H., Lichtenstein, B., Davidsson, P., & McKelvey, B. (2015). Power law distributions in entrepreneurship: Implications for theory and research. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 30(5), 696-713.

Crawford, GC, Linder C, Villani, E, & Lechner, C. (2017) Outlier Antecedents, Processes, and Consequences in the Emergence of New Ventures. *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*. 37 (3), Article 1.

Crawford, GC & McKelvey, B. (2018) Using Maximum-Likelihood Estimation Methods and Complexity Science Concepts to Research Power Law-Distributed Phenomena in *Edward Elgar Handbook of Research Methods in Complexity Science: Theory and Applications* 12: 227-251. E. Midelton-Kelly, A. Paraskevas, & C. Day (Eds.). Cheltenham, UK. ISBN:1785364413.

Crawford, GC & McKelvey, B. (2012) Strategic Implications of Power Law Distributions in the Creation and Emergence of New Ventures: Power Law Analyses in Three Panel Studies. *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*. (32) 12, Article 1.

Crawford, GC, McKelvey, B, & Lichtenstein, B. (2014) The Empirical Reality of Entrepreneurship: How Power Law Distributed Outcomes Call for New Theory and Method. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*. Volume 1, Issue 1-2, Article 1.

Kaehr Serra, C., & Thiel, J. (2019). Professionalizing entrepreneurial firms: Managing the challenges and outcomes of founder-CEO succession. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 13(3), 379-409.

Klein, P. G., Holmes Jr, R. M., Foss, N., Terjesen, S., & Pepe, J. (2022). Capitalism, cronyism, and management scholarship: A call for clarity. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 36(1), 6-29.

McMullen, J. S. 2017. Are we confounding heroism and individualism? Entrepreneurs may not be lonerangers, but they are heroic nonetheless. *Business Horizons*, 60: 257–259

Moulick, A. G., Pidduck, R. J., & Busenitz, L. W. (2019). Bloom where planted: Entrepreneurial catalyzers amidst weak institutions. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, 11, e00127.

Peter, C. D., & Pierk, J. (2021). Does Shark Tank Enhance Entrepreneurial Activities?. *Available at SSRN 3657391*.

Podobnik, B, Crawford, GC, Lichtenstein, BM, Wild, D, Zhang, X, Stanley, HE (2020) The New Wealth of Nations: How STEM Fields Generate the Prosperity and Inequality of Individuals, Companies, and Countries. *Chaos, Solitons, and Fractals: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Nonlinear Science, and Nonequilibrium and Complex Phenomena*. 141, 110323.

Sornette, D. (2006). *Critical phenomena in natural sciences: chaos, fractals, self-organization and disorder: concepts and tools*. Berlin: Springer Science & Business Media.

Taleb, N. N. (2020). Statistical consequences of fat tails: Real world preasymptotics, epistemology, and applications. STEM Academic Press.

Villamor, I., Aguinis, H., & Gabriel, K. (2021). Think Star Performer, Think Male? Existence and Nature of Implicit Star Performer Theories. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2021, No. 1, p. 11608). Briarcliff Manor, NY: Academy of Management.