**Inequalities in Entrepreneurship Opportunities: the intersectionality of contexts, situatedness, positionalities and identities.**

The aim of this special issue is to reopen the debate on inequalities in entrepreneurship opportunities by providing a space for a dialogue between established intersectionality theories and the emerging relevant approaches of contextualized or situated positionality-based entrepreneurship. Our focus was to develop a series of manuscripts that examine entrepreneurship by looking at multiplied or amplified inequalities which can be explained, through the concept of intersectionality among others. Capturing discrete combinations of multiple sources of disadvantage that individuals experience, intersectionality, originated from the work of Crenshaw (1991), and has been utilised in the field of entrepreneurship, by Abbas et al. (2019), Dy et al. (2016) Barrett and Vershinina (2017) and Lassalle and Shaw (2021). Yet this special issue was a call to develop and broaden it further in entrepreneurship research.

In fact, we were seeking novel theoretical perspectives on intersectionality as a theory and a method in entrepreneurship research, as well as contributions that use contexts, situatedness or positionalities to analyse the inequalities in entrepreneurship opportunities. Perspectives on inequalities of entrepreneurship opportunities are situated in the poststructural frame (Ahl, 2006; Bruni et al., 2004; Ogbor, 2000) that understands the individual experiences and their subjectivity to be continuously shaped and dynamically constituted through engagement with cultural discourses and learning to occur at the intersections of negotiating positionality and identity amidst contradictory discourses (Fenwick, 2002). Extant studies in entrepreneurship negate the role of positionality in shaping entrepreneurial experiences of individuals, and their access to opportunities, and individual’s ability to respond to these emerging opportunities apart from a few notable studies (Villares-Varela and Essers, 2019; Dy, 2020).

The feminist intersectional approach (Carbado et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1989;  Collins, 1990; Forson, 2013; Hancock, 2007; Hooks, 1981) seeks to understand the connections between the multiple axes of oppression and exclusion and reveals that these markers of identity are not simply additive. They actually constitute a distinct marginalised experience and a set of multiple overlapping subjectivities. Recognizing the situatedness of individuals in a specific context can help develop useful explanations of their marginalised experiences. The stories through which specific identities emerge for a particular individual, do not occur in a vacuum, rather they are situated in the context and as such identities are highly contingent on situated accomplishments. Further, it is important to examine the appropriateness of intersectionality theory in different and diverse contexts.

Entrepreneurship occurs in various spatial dynamics and urban, cosmopolitan and rural contexts that are associated with physical locations in different places and spaces, including migration flows (Barrett and Vershinina, 2019; Vershinina et al., 2019; Yamamura and Lassalle, 2019). By exploring accounts of intersectional experiences, articles in this special issue amplify the silenced voices from around the world. Indeed, we know little about the stratification of societies in non-western geographies. Therefore, it is important to develop intersectionality in entrepreneurship, focusing on empirical, methodological and theoretical developments (Essers et al., 2010; Lassalle and Shaw, 2021), towards, among others, a more translocational positionality based approach (Anthias, 2008; 2013) to exploring inequalities in entrepreneurship opportunities (see also Villares-Varela et al., 2018).

Within entrepreneurship research, situational analyses as well as context and its dimensions (Fenwick, 2002; Villares-Varela and Essers, 2019; Welter and Baker, 2020) have been largely examined in stable, mainstream economies rather than precarious or volatile ones. Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, the world’s economies have been abruptly thrust into unexpected adversity and unpredictability. This has renewed the need for understanding context beyond merely environment (Johns, 2018), and for considering how entrepreneurs ‘do’ context (Welter and Baker, 2020), and how such ‘doing’ - entrepreneurs’ agency - is affected by the entrepreneurs’ individual markers of identity (Dy et al., 2014). There is a call to study how situational analysis is contextualised and its implications are affected by new and ever-changing contexts in entrepreneurship research and theorization.

In their effort to make sense of the different levels of exclusion they experience, discriminated individuals may certainly feel even more excluded than those aligned with normative patterns. However, it is interesting to observe how they manage to reinterpret these differences through entrepreneurial initiatives. For instance, Stead (2017) explores how women entrepreneurs are able to mobilize more resources and influence by deploying tactics of belonging in which they either erase their differences or accentuate them depending on the networks or markets they target. In this context, an examination into how marginalized entrepreneurs make attempts to interpret and/or reinterpret their differences may help observe how these individuals narrate the different levels of discrimination that may characterize them. Another example concerns sexual and ethnic minorities, as Ghabrial (2017) highlights the difficulties for the individuals concerned to identify with a normative group but also successes in creating socially and economically active micro-communities. Ghabrial (2017) goes further to discuss how these individuals develop pride in their multi-differences and may present them as a privilege. To better support populations challenged by their differences, it would be useful to explore in what contexts they can reverse their perception of marginalization to enact agency in their formal or informal endeavors.

Beyond the call for applying intersectionality theory on a wider diversity of situated contexts, we saw a need to better frame intersectionality theory, developed by Crenshaw (1991), McCall (2005) or Cho et al. (2011), in entrepreneurship research. Martinez Dy et al. (2014) recall the complexity of the “intersectional” and suggest that current approaches remain underdeveloped or do not sufficiently reflect reality, especially the privileged situations of some persons on others. Most of the identified current limits of intersectionality support the call for situating the experiences of individuals (Tholen, 2015; Magrelli et al., 2020). Moreover, a better integration of both agency and structure is required to reflect the real situation of persons facing specific issues while engaging in entrepreneuring (Beckert, 1999 ; Lassalle and Shaw, 2021). Intersectional theory indeed needs to account for the evolving context of individual agents, as entrepreneurs, operating under constraining structures (Lassalle and Shaw, 2021). So far, intersectional research has often struggled to consider individual trajectories of entrepreneurs and their relation to entrepreneurial opportunity, placing deprived entrepreneurs in a stigmatized category.

To further integrate the notion of power as the relational and pivotal force in explaining the social positions individuals hold, Anthias’ positionality approach incorporates a dynamic perspective of difference by taking into account social positions as both processes and outcomes (Anthias 2002, 2006, 2008, 2013). Complementing (and partly departing from intersectionality), positionality helps to grasp the multiplicity of social positions that entrepreneurs have. Anthias (2002) further incorporates time and space into this crucial theoretical impasse through translocational positionality which “is one structured by the interplay of different locations relating to gender, ethnicity, race and class (among others), and their at times contradictory effects” (Anthias 2002: 275). In entrepreneurship studies, translocational positionality (Villares-Varela and Essers 2019) can help us to understand the multiple social positions embodied by entrepreneurs in organisations, at home and, in multiple geographical locations (for example, for migrant and/or transnational entrepreneurs). By focusing on diverse groups of people that may have vastly different entrepreneurial experiences based on their positionality across various axes of difference and the range of other intersecting realities, the researchers may uncover how individuals perceive the entrepreneurial opportunities and which intersections can make them marginalised and oppressed. The motivations for engaging in entrepreneurship may be aligned to the way in which they perceive opportunities for freedom and flexibility but also a choice of sectors, new forms of flexible work, new ways of aesthetic entrepreneurship, which are performed and shaped within and by virtual spaces such as social media.

Surely, methodologically it may be difficult to articulate an intersectional approach and a contextualised approach. Indeed, referring to Welter (2019), the study of context raises the question of its impact on an individual's identity. Yet, some insights are provided in different studies using translocational positionality (Villares-Varela and Essers 2019), or by deploying structuration theory as the ontology for intersectional research in entrepreneurship (Lassalle and Shaw, 2021). These studies enable a finer capture of the specific situations experienced by - among others - female migrant entrepreneurs but could be applied to a wider diversity of entrepreneurs. Such situated intersectional approaches to entrepreneurship enhance our understanding of the intersectional nature of entrepreneurial experiences, not only through categories such as class, gender, or race, but also shed light on the dynamic nature of how these markers of identity situate and are situated in a specific context and under specific structures, where the individual is engaging in entrepreneurial activity.

The national territory, its memory and its political practices determine the understanding of the categories of intersectionality. But, the calculation of the poverty line is not the same in Europe, Asia, Middle East or the Americas for example. From there, national politics also have an impact on the interaction between the categories of intersectionality. Perhaps one could consider to showcase their work that clarifies what we mean by ‘inequalities in entrepreneurial opportunities’ -- inequality of resources (post-materialist feminism), legitimacy or lack thereof, self-efficacy or self-confidence, and general difficulty in aligning entrepreneurial motivations and resources with existing Western normative models.

Therefore this special issue opens a critical debate and offer a provocative space to discuss inequalities in entrepreneurship beyond original ideas of intersectionality, by bringing translocational positionality and situated context in defining new intersectional perspectives that can explain the marginalised experiences of contemporary groups of entrepreneurs. In bringing the current research on contemporary entrepreneurship which happens in urban, rural, cosmopolitan settings, in emerging industries, and new geographical locations of the Global South by old and new groups of entrepreneurs, whose identities are shaped by gendered norms, and gendered structures, sectoral experiences and new technologies and social media, this special issue has the potential to challenge the existing conceptualisations of the heroic masculine icon and their high growth venturing and unearth the heterogeneity of who is the contemporary entrepreneur, and how their experiences in entrepreneurship can be marginalised and shaped by dynamic intersecting contexts.

**Summaries of articles includes in the special issue.**

Eleven papers form the corpus of this special issue, each focussing on varying dimensions of inequality pertaining to entrepreneurial action. In the first paper of this special issue, entitled “[*Subsistence entrepreneurship and intersectional inequalities: a case study of women from Pakistani urban-poor districts*](https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJEBR-12-2022-1094/full/html)”, the authors, [**Uzair Shah**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Uzair%20Shah)**,**[**Niall Hayes**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Niall%20Hayes) **and** [**Asfia Obaid**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Asfia%20Obaid), apply an intersectional approach on the specific context of women in deprived cities in the Global South, trying to explain why these women, while entrepreneuring, reproduce poverty. The analysis of 44 semi-structured interviews and focus groups that refers to the experience of women entrepreneurs from deprived district of cities in Pakistan, they reveal that interacting social inequalities, patriarchal norms, especially the norms of honour and veil, perpetuate the disadvantages poor women face while selling and producing their goods and services.

In the second paper entitled “*Really being yourself”? Racial minority entrepreneurs navigating othering and authenticity through identity work”* the authors, [**Maud van Merriënboer**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Maud%20van%20Merri%C3%ABnboer)**,**[**Michiel Verver**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Michiel%20Verver) **and  [Miruna Radu-Lefebvre](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Miruna%20Radu-Lefebvre" \o "Miruna Radu-Lefebvre.)**, apply an intersectional based approach to the topic of identity. Based on the analysis of 24 semi-structured interviews of migrant persons who develop their venture in the Dutch technology sector, they seek to describe the “navigate” experiences of othering whilst maintaining a sense of existential authenticity. They reveal that members of the majority group in society threaten the authenticity of minority entrepreneurs. These last ones are keeping their legitimacy by strategically enacting their identity, while seeking to preserve their sense of existential authenticity. In that respect, their use of the intersectional theory challenges mainstream theories on entrepreneurial identity work but also extends the literature on authenticity in the field of entrepreneurship.

In the study entitled “[*Intersectionality of place and race: entrepreneurial performance of Arab citizens of Israel*](https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJEBR-07-2022-0615/full/html)”, the authors, [**Inas Saleh Said**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Inas%20Saleh%20Said) **and** [**Vijay Vyas**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Vijay%20Vyas), find that better-off, educated, and non-conformist Arab-Israeli men who engage in opportunity entrepreneurship in Israel, and operate in broader markets can effectively overcome intersectional disadvantages. Education emerges as a crucial factor for entrepreneurial success and socio-economic improvement, promoting gender equality and reducing marginalization. Israeli policymakers should enhance access to higher education for the Arab Israeli citizens, and Arab Israeli entrepreneurs will benefit from utilizing the Israeli entrepreneurship advisory services. The study highlights the importance of stimulation and universalism values and recommends that Arab Israeli community leaders encourage participation in national and international markets to diminish ethnic enclave dependency. These findings have broader implications for marginalized communities globally, suggesting that education and entrepreneurship can alleviate intersectional disadvantages and foster development. Future research should explore alternative theories, the performance of predictors in different contexts, and comparative analyses of marginalized entrepreneurs across various regions.

The paper by **Iuliana Chitac** entitled “*Identity is a matter of place: intersectional identities of Romanian women migrant entrepreneurs on the Eastern-Western European route*”, explores how women migrant entrepreneurs create, negotiate and enact their identities in the different contexts in which they are embedded. The paper reveals the complexity of intersectional identities in the transnational context of in-betweenness between the country of origin and the host country. Using an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA), the article presents the narratives of nine Romanian women entrepreneurs who have been entrepreneurs in both Romania and the UK. By looking at the participants’ experiences of belonging in both socio-cultural contexts, the article provides novel insights on how women migrant entrepreneurs enact, live, or leave, their intersectional identities to achieve transnational belonging. Whilst they feel empowered as women entrepreneurs in the UK, their entrepreneurial identity faces resistance from the cultural patriarchal and masculine hegemonies in Romania. The article thus advances understanding of intersectional identities from a transnational perspective of contextual embeddedness and therefore contributes to academic and policy debates on women migrant entrepreneurship.

The article entitled "*Barriers to Entrepreneurship: an Intersectional Analysis of an Early-Stage Refugee Entrepreneurship Programme in the United Kingdom*" **by Salmon Udeni and Ann Singleton**, contributes to ongoing research on the use of translocational positionality in entrepreneurship studies (Anthias, 2008). The study focuses on refugee entrepreneurs and the barriers they face, drawing on qualitative interviews with both entrepreneurs and business support agents. It highlights how organizational, representational, intersubjective, and experiential barriers create practical and psychological deterrents to refugee entrepreneurship. The article also demonstrates the framework's utility in capturing overlapping barriers to entrepreneurial opportunity, adding complexity to studies on resource mobilization and capital formation within business and management studies. These challenges are particularly visible among refugee communities in hostile environments.

The article by **Heatherjean MacNeil and Angela Dy** entitled “*Doing Inequality, Doing Intersectionality’: Intersectionality As Threshold Concept For Studying Inequalities In Entrepreneurial Activity*” proposes a novel reframing of intersectionality as a threshold concept in entrepreneurship research, to deepen our understanding of inequalities in entrepreneurship. The study utilized a conceptual approach, drawing from education studies to explore intersectionality through its transformative, irreversible, integrative, bounded, and troublesome features, which are fundamental to threshold concepts. MacNeil and Dy challenge the conventional use of intersectionality in entrepreneurship research and argue for a paradigm shift that positions intersectionality as the starting point rather than end point for inquiry, fostering a deeper analysis of the nuanced ways in which historical and emergent social hierarchies and power systems influence entrepreneurial activities. Such reframing encourages us to reconsider and deepen our approach to studying entrepreneurship through an intersectional lens, potentially leading to richer, more comprehensive understandings of inequality in this field. They conclude that intersectionality is not simply an analytical tool but a critical threshold concept that can lead to transformative insights into structural inequalities within entrepreneurship.

The article by **Thomas Cooney, Etain Kidney and Maura McAdam** entitled “*Everyday Prejudices: An Intersectional Exploration of the Experiences by Lesbian and Gay Entrepreneurs”* explores how homophobia and heterosexism are experienced by lesbian and gay entrepreneurs in the pursuit of their entrepreneurial endeavours. Based on fourteen in-depth interviews, the article reveals the embedded nature of both violent and subtle discriminations in the everydayness of the participants’ entrepreneurial activities. There is a shared understanding among participants of the pervasive context of heterosexist discriminations and minority stress and the influences it has on their lives. As the article further discusses, non-conformity with masculinity or femininity often triggers homophobia. Lesbian and gay entrepreneurs make different attempts to minimise the negative impact of gender presentations. By taking an intersectional perspective the article shows how the different axes of identity influences gender identity performance and therefore provides a novel understanding of the impact of heterosexism on LGBT+ entrepreneurial activities.

The article by **Sibel Ozasir Kasar** entitled “*Religiosity and Entrepreneurship: Women Entrepreneurs in Türkiye”* explores how women's entrepreneurial opportunities in Türkiye are influenced by their religiosity within the context of the nation's socio-political and gender dynamics. By adopting a qualitative research approach and individual in-depth interviews, the study analyzes the life stories of ten Turkish women entrepreneurs. The key findings reveal a nuanced and complex relationship between religiosity and entrepreneurship, highlighting the extent to which religiosity can enable and/or constrain entrepreneurial opportunities, depending on the entrepreneur’s positioning within religious networks, their societal roles, and the wider socio-political landscape. Although more entrepreneurship research is emerging from Islamic contexts, Türkiye has historically navigated a complex relationship between secularism and Islam, and the novelty of this research lies in its focus on the multiple dimensions of religiosity ranging from visible markers like attire to more implicit elements like business ethics. As such, the contributions of this research focus upon the interplay of religion, gender, and politics in shaping women’s entrepreneurial opportunities.

The article entitled “*Intersectional entrepreneurship : The burden of contextual embeddedness beyond the business*”, the authors [**Sakura Yamamura**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Sakura%20Yamamura) **and**[**Paul Lassalle**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Paul%20Lassalle)explore LGBT entrepreneurship in an original way, analyzing the issues at stake based on the experiences of micro-aggressions that make up the daily lives of LGBT+ intersectional entrepreneurs. Most studies evoke the fears and anxieties of LGBT+ entrepreneurs by situating them solely in relation to economic or socio-economic issues. This study underlines how the universe of fears of people discriminated against in more than one way constitutes a space-time in its own right that needs to be examined in its own right, and not systematically subordinated to questions of entrepreneurial performance, if we are to understand its complexity. This is an important moment for entrepreneurial literature to deliberately free itself from its economic-centric approach, which prevents us from addressing the multiplicity of tensions experienced by intersectional entrepreneurs!

The article "*Defying the Odds? Multiple Disadvantage as a Source of Entrepreneurial Action*" the authors, **Sundas Hussain, Charlotte Carey, and Natalia Vershinina** use the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to show that women's entrepreneurial intentions are influenced by their experiences of multiple layers of disadvantage, the resources they have access to, and their positionality. This study adds to the ongoing discussions about the challenges faced by vulnerable groups, with particular attention here to unemployed women in social housing who want to start their own businesses. By emphasizing the importance of understanding the specific context of entrepreneurship experiences (Welter 2011), the article also introduces an innovative theoretical framework in this field.

The article entitled “Entrepreneurship under patriarchy: The intersecting forces characterising everyday life for Nigeria’s women entrepreneurs “, the authors, [**Chioma Onoshakpor**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Chioma%20Onoshakpor)**,**[**James Cunningham**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=James%20Cunningham) **and**[**Elizabeth Gammie**](https://www.emerald.com/insight/search?q=Elizabeth%20Gammie), explore women's entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Although the proportion of women entrepreneurs is substantial, patriarchal culture tends to limit their ambitions, very often restricting their activity to the informal economy. Intersectional theory captures the three faces of the weight that patriarchal culture thus places on activities crucial to the country, namely gender roles, class and religion. Entrepreneurship is thus valued for men, who appear as protectors of the family and kin, while women entrepreneurs often feel that they are stealing part of their time and care from the family. This has an impact on the motivations and ambitions of Nigerian women. Class membership creates asymmetries in terms of access to financial support. Women of influence can count on female solidarity, while their male counterparts attract banks and investors. The religious context is also a source of support for the Nigerian entrepreneurial population as a whole. However, patriarchal religious messages encourage its members to doubt the validity of women's ambitions to grow their own businesses, even when they excel at it. In this way, we can see how three clusters of prejudices hamper the entrepreneurship of women, who often find themselves in relatively illegitimate as business women in the eyes of others.

***In summary,*** the eleven articles in this special issue collectively examine how intersectionality influences entrepreneurship across various contexts. They highlight the challenges and strategies of minority, migrant, and refugee entrepreneurs in navigating societal barriers while maintaining authenticity and legitimacy. Key themes include the role of education in overcoming disadvantages, the impact of socio-cultural norms on identity and entrepreneurial activities, and the importance of addressing intersectional inequalities to foster inclusive entrepreneurial environments. The research underscores the need for supportive policies, access to education, and broader market engagement to mitigate the effects of intersecting social hierarchies and promote entrepreneurial success among marginalized groups.

**Future research agenda**

Based on the manuscript contributions to this special issue, several key new directions for research in entrepreneurship with an intersectional focus emerge. One significant area is further exploration of how minority entrepreneurs strategically enact their identities to maintain authenticity and legitimacy in varying socio-cultural contexts. Additionally, investigating the role of education in mitigating intersectional disadvantages and promoting entrepreneurial success, particularly within marginalized communities, presents a critical avenue for future studies.

The complexities of transnational identities among migrant entrepreneurs, especially how they navigate and negotiate their identities between their country of origin and host country, warrant deeper examination. Furthermore, the specific organizational, representational, intersubjective, and experiential barriers refugee entrepreneurs face require detailed investigation, as do the strategies they use to overcome these obstacles.

Patriarchal norms' impact on women entrepreneurs in diverse cultural contexts, particularly in deprived or patriarchal societies, should be analyzed to identify empowering strategies. A novel approach involves reframing intersectionality as a foundational concept in entrepreneurship research, aiming to deepen the understanding of inequalities and encourage a comprehensive analysis of historical and emergent social hierarchies. An invitation to decolonial approaches that can take intersectionality forward would enrich the study of entrepreneurship further, theoretically and empirically in transnational or migratory contexts, for example.

Research should also focus on the specific challenges faced by LGBT+ entrepreneurs, including micro-aggressions and discrimination, to develop strategies for creating a more inclusive entrepreneurial environment. Additionally, the nuanced relationship between religiosity and entrepreneurship, especially how religious networks and socio-political dynamics influence women’s entrepreneurial opportunities, merits further study.

Shifting the research focus from an economic-centric to an experience-centric approach in studying intersectional entrepreneurs can provide a better understanding of the multiplicity of tensions they face beyond mere economic performance. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) can be utilized to explore how multiple layers of disadvantage influence entrepreneurial intentions and actions, particularly among vulnerable groups such as unemployed women in social housing.

Comparative studies of marginalized entrepreneurs across different regions and contexts are limited, and there is no large comparative study that has systematically explored these differences. This would be essential to identify common patterns and unique challenges, thereby informing more tailored and effective interventions. Exploring alternative theoretical frameworks and predictors of entrepreneurial success and disadvantage broadens the scope of intersectional research in entrepreneurship. Here, class positions should re-emerge as a key variable to understand access to entrepreneurship and the strategies put in place by the entrepreneurs.

These research directions aim to enhance the understanding of the intersectional dimensions of entrepreneurship, the entrenched inequalities in entrepreneurship for different groups of actors within different contexts and belonging, thereby informing both academic debates and practical policy-making to foster inclusive and supportive entrepreneurial ecosystems.

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