

Introduction

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Entrepreneurship is certainly one of the most important areas of research for several reasons. It is socially important because small-scale entrepreneurs contribute to new job growth to a much larger extent than big companies (Mulhern, 1995).

First, small and medium-sized enterprises are important for the economy because they are the major agents of economic growth and employment (about 99% of the European companies are small or medium sized and they provide 66% of the working places; ECSB, 1997). They add jobs faster than bigger companies in the developed and underdeveloped world (Birch, 1987; Bruederl, Preisendoerfer, & Ziegler, 1992; Mead & Liedholm, 1998). Small-scale firms are highly adaptable and able to act quickly and innovatively. Particularly for underdeveloped countries, they are important for sheer survival (Frese, 2000).

Second, in order to develop a good model of performance, it is useful to look at small-scale entrepreneurs because they have a complex set of tasks that is of high relevance for future jobs (Frese, 1997). Therefore, we need a job description, good theory, and empirical data on performance in entrepreneurial situations in work and organizational psychology. Third, entrepreneurship research is at the boundary of organizational and work psychology. Since the individual entrepreneur is important for the development of the organization, for leadership, for the long-term profitability of the organization, both individual aspects of the entrepreneur (work psychology) as well as organizational issues play an equally important role in its study. Moreover, the overlap of concepts in work and in organizational psychology and its possibility to influence each other is profitably studied in entrepreneurship research. Fourth, because of its multidimensionality, many important issues of psychology are involved when studying entrepreneurship; in addition, it is also an interdisciplinary area that overlaps with economics and business science. Reviews of the psychological

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issues have been provided by Chell, Haworth, and Brearley (1991), Cooper and Gimeno-Gascon (1992), Furnham (1992), and Rauch and Frese (2000).

Given this importance, it is surprising that work and organizational psychologists have not done more studies in the area of entrepreneurship. This is true both in the United States and in Europe. In particular, Europe seems to lag behind and we would like to encourage more research in this area. Therefore, this special issue is supposed to present the research situation in Europe at this moment with the full knowledge that many new research programmes have just recently started. We would be happy if this special issue would stimulate new research and possibly new controversies in this area.

Our special issue embraces a few very important contributions to the area. First, Stanley Cromie presents an overview of some of the research on personality variables that has been shown to be related to entrepreneurial inclinations. He argues that there is a set of personality variables that could be shown to be important for entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial success. In his view they can be grouped together in one specific instrument.

One specific new issue is in the forefront of the article by Allinson, Chell, and Hayes on intuition and entrepreneurial behaviour. Here the major issue is the difference between managers and entrepreneurs on the use of intuition.

Utsch and Rauch present in the third article a model that starts out with a personality variable often studied as a predictor of success in entrepreneurs and shows that behavioural strategies are effective mediators between achievement orientations and entrepreneur's success in a large cross-sectional study in Germany. This is shown with a sophisticated LISREL modelling approach.

Elizabeth Chell presents a social constructionist approach to understanding the nature of entrepreneurship. Her review highlights those aspects of the entrepreneurial process and context that the literature, logic, empirical research, and observation suggest are fundamental to the emergence of entrepreneurial outcomes. From this discussion Chell develops an agenda for further research and new theory.

We also have contributions that are of equal importance although they are much shorter. Marco van Gelderen goes one step beyond the usual questions in entrepreneurship research and looks at the quality of being enterprising in ordinary people. He shows clearly that it is easy to think of an enterprising quality as a general quality that goes beyond issues studied in entrepreneurship research.

Sigrun Göbel presents a case study on one particular entrepreneur and shows what makes him tick and successful. Since this was a case from the same study that Utsch and Rauch have drawn their results from, we also know the quantitative position of this particular entrepreneur presented in the case study. Since Göbel works as a practitioner with small-scale entrepreneurs, it also represents a practitioner's point of view.

Finally, we have asked Robert Hisrich to give us a point of view from outside Europe on European research in this area. Robert Hisrich has been one of the psychologists who made the first contribution to this area and his viewpoint from outside Europe is very important for us as well.

Next, Chapman evaluates the previous articles from a practitioner's perspective, identifying those "truths" that resonate from the trainer/management development specialist dealing with owner-managers and entrepreneurs on a day-by-day basis.

It is easy to see that the common theme of this special issue is to look at personality predictors of success and entrepreneurial behaviour. This is quite significant as the use of personality factors in entrepreneurship research has come under quite a lot of critique (e.g., Chell, 1985; Gartner, 1985). Earlier approaches to personality in entrepreneurship research probably invited critique for good reasons. However, all the articles in this special issue take as a starting point a much more sophisticated personality theory than traditional approaches have done (for example, much more specific person factors in Cromie, Allinson et al., and van Gelderen). A sophisticated mediation model is suggested by Utsch and Rauch and a theoretically much more sophisticated conceptualization of the entrepreneur is presented by Chell. The case study by Göbel also takes a more sophisticated approach than traditional personality concepts. Thus, it is also our hope that this new approach to personality will be seen as much more fruitful within entrepreneurship research than in the one used some time ago. In another article we have therefore talked about the necessity of reconsidering personality issues and have shown in a quantitative review how important personality factors actually can be (Rauch & Frese, 2000).

We have purposely had three editors of this volume, two from psychology but from different countries and one from economics who has contributed to the psychological literature in this area. We think this was a fruitful enterprise because it made it possible to have enough breadth and depth in the editorial process and at the same time to make practitioner's contributions possible because of the practitioner orientation of several of the editors. Finally, we want to thank the very able editorial assistant Heike Clasen whose help made it possible to edit this issue professionally and to finish it in time.

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