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PATHWAYS TO (ACADEMIC) ENTREPRENEURSHIP: ON THE ROLES OF PERSONALITY, EARLY ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCE IN ADOLESCENCE, AND ACTION-CONTROL BELIEFS IN THE PREDICTION OF ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS AMONG SCIENTISTS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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INTERACTIVE PAPER

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Principal Topic
Promoting entrepreneurship may be vital for the success of today’s societies, which face enormous economic and social challenges (Audretsch, 2007). Referring to this, both researchers in the field of social sciences (i.e., Schmitt-Rodermund & Vondracek, 2002) and politicians (i.e., European Commission, 2006) have suggested to consider early entrepreneurial competencies in childhood and adolescence. Indeed, according to a life-span perspective of human development in general (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006) and of vocational development (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986), an entrepreneurial career might be understood as a developmental outcome. However, such a life-span perspective has been broadly neglected in empirical entrepreneurship research. Furthermore, although the role of personality is a traditional topic in entrepreneurship research, there is a research need regarding possible mediators between the personality-entrepreneurship-relation (Rauch & Frese, 2007). The objective of the present study was, therefore, to investigate the relation between early entrepreneurial competence in adolescence and personality, and entrepreneurial outcomes in adulthood (entrepreneurial intentions, Krueger & Carsrud, 1993). We focussed on academic entrepreneurship (Shane, 2004), i.e., the commercialization of new research knowledge through a firm founding.

Method
The method chosen was an online survey with one measurement occasion to collect current and retrospective data. Measurements were developed according to established research. Data was collected from a random sample consisting of N = 496 scientists from research institutions in Germany. Reliability analyses revealed satisfactory internal consistencies of the measurements. Results derived from structural equation modeling.

Results and Implications
As expected, early entrepreneurial competence in adolescence (inventions, leadership, and selling behavior) predicted scientists’ intention to found a firm. Moreover, scientists’ entrepreneurial control beliefs (agent-means and agent-ends beliefs) mediated this relationship. Personality (Big Five profile) was also associated with entrepreneurial intentions. The data suggests that such broad traits might, to some extent, affect entrepreneurial outcomes in adulthood via early precursors and control beliefs. The findings contribute to our knowledge about entrepreneurial development over the life-span as well as to our understanding of starting points for the promotion of (academic) entrepreneurship.

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