TOWARDS A GEOGRAPHY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL PERSONALITY (SUMMARY)

Martin Obschonka  
Friedrich Schiller University Jena, martin.obschonka@uni-jena.de

Eva Schmitt-Rodermund  
Friedrich Schiller University Jena

Rainer K. Silbereisen  
Friedrich Schiller University Jena

Samuel D. Gosling  
University of Texas at Austin

Jeff Potter  
Atof Inc.

Recommended Citation  
Available at: http://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol32/iss5/19
SUMMARY

TOWARDS A GEOGRAPHY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL PERSONALITY

Martin Obschonka, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany
Eva Schmitt-Rodermund, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany
Rainer K. Silbereisen, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany
Samuel D. Gosling, University of Texas at Austin, USA
Jeff Potter, Atof Inc., Cambridge, USA

Principal Topic

There is convincing evidence that a specific constellation of Big Five personality traits within the person relates to entrepreneurship. In this study, we explore regional differences in an entrepreneurial Big Five constellation. Applying a multidisciplinary perspective, we draw from (1) individual-level research on the entrepreneurial Big Five profile, (2) regional entrepreneurship research, and (3) psychological research on geographical variation of personality.

Method

We analyzed two large-scale data sets: American personality data collected via an online questionnaire (N = 619,397) (Rentfrow et al., 2008) and the German Socio-Economic Panel (N = 19,842). Moreover, we utilized public archival data on state-level entrepreneurial activity (e.g., business creation and self-employment rate). We mapped entrepreneurial personality (index measure) across the 50 U.S. states (and Washington, DC) as well as across 14 federal states of Germany and then investigated state-level correlations between entrepreneurial personality and indicators of entrepreneurial activities. We finally checked for the robustness of these correlations by controlling for regional economic prosperity.

Results and Implications

The American results revealed a clear regional distribution pattern of entrepreneurial personality, with high values in the West and in large parts of the South. Entrepreneurial personality appeared to be particularly low in the Rust Belt area. The regional variation of entrepreneurial personality corresponds to the pattern that can be usually observed when mapping entrepreneurial activity across the United States. We indeed found the state-level correlations between entrepreneurial personality and activity to be positive in direction, substantial in magnitude (e.g., r = .53), and robust when controlling for regional economic prosperity. These promising results were supported by the German data. The results contribute to a deeper understanding of regional differences in personality—a field that is receiving growing attention in the social sciences (Rentfrow et al., 2008; Florida, 2008). Furthermore, our findings have implications for regional entrepreneurship research that aims at finding explanations for the documented regional differences in entrepreneurial activity.

CONTACT: Martin Obschonka; martin.obschonka@uni-jena.de; (T): +49 (0)3641 9 45-205; (F): +49 (0)3641 945202; Department of Developmental Psychology and Center for Applied Developmental Science, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Am Steiger 3/1, D-07743 Jena, Germany.