

The Thuringian Founders Study: Success and failure of innovative Entrepreneurs

“Independent Studies”: A Research-Oriented Program for Graduate Students
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This interdisciplinary project is part of the Jena Graduate School “Human Behaviour in Social and Economic Change” and focuses on the study of entrepreneurial activity over the life-span. As entrepreneurial activities have become an important adaptive behavior in a changing globalized economy, a research group comprising developmental psychologists and economists set up the Thuringian Founders Study. Combining both, economics and developmental psychology, one focus is on the antecedents of entrepreneurial success and failure of innovative business founders. From a psychological point of view, we investigate the early roots of entrepreneurial activities, such as special interests and competences in adolescence, parenting, personality, and the development of entrepreneurial motivations. In particular, we want to identify developmental pathways that predict entrepreneurial success as well as failure in the worklife, e.g. business profits, going bankrupt and job satisfaction.

The project also investigates the circumstances of company start-ups by scientists, particularly we want to understand the emergence of entrepreneurial intentions among academics, since this group plays an important role in the marketing of inventions. Indeed, academic entrepreneurship is a major topic in German economic policy nowadays. To this end, we will conduct an online survey with academics in Germany.

Starting points for a collaboration with students from Penn State could be the joint analysis of the collected data in well defined areas, e.g. factor analysis of entrepreneurial motivations or cluster analysis to identify types of developmental paths. We offer active participation in a multilayer research project with links to leading institutions such as CADS (Center for Applied Developmental Science Jena) and Max Planck Institute of Economics Jena. Not only do we offer to work together in empirical analysis, but we would like to direct this collaboration to tangible results, such as a congress poster or a scientific paper.

To sum up, we would love to welcome Penn State students to our project and enrich students’ scientific skills and experiences.

Literature:

Schröder, E. & Schmitt-Rodermund, E. (2007). Development of Entrepreneurial Interests, Attitudes and Behavior. In V. Skorikov & W. Patton (Eds.) Career development in childhood and adolescence (pp. 127-140). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

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