

THE MOTIVATIONAL READINESS MODEL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

Although research has identified different reasons underlying the start of a new venture (e.g., push vs. pull entrepreneurship; Amit & Muller, 1995; Haynie & Shepherd, 2011; Shapero & Sokol, 1982), they have been rarely linked to different entrepreneurial actions. A more common view is that entrepreneurial behavior is driven by the general intention to start a business, which itself is influenced by the desirability and feasibility of entrepreneurship (Bird, 1988; Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000). Importantly, these models do not consider the different reasons as potentially affecting the entrepreneurial process. Moreover, the focal concept in these models is the intention to formally set up a new business (Bird, 1988; Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000; Thompson, 2009). Entrepreneurial intent's focus on the act of venture creation proves problematic as entrepreneurship is not completed by the creation of a new (innovative) business. Research analyzing the behavior of successful entrepreneurs highlights the iterative character of entrepreneurial decision making that requires ongoing entrepreneurial motivation even after the point of formal venture creation (Dew et al., 2009; Rasmussen, Mosey, & Wright, 2011; Sarasvathy, 2001). As intentions may fall short of capturing the dynamic aspects of the motivational process underlying entrepreneurial action, a different approach seems warranted.

The goal of this paper is to address both shortcomings of existing research by offering the Motivational Readiness Model of Entrepreneurship (MRME). This model replaces intentions by the concept of *motivational readiness*—a psychological experience of the willingness to gratify a desired outcome (Kruglanski et al., 2014)—as the centerpiece in a theory of the entrepreneurial process. We propose that motivational readiness is a concept that allows linking the requirements of successful entrepreneurial action with characteristics and abilities of the entrepreneur. Since the desired outcome can be temporally more distant than the act of venture creation, motivational readiness transcends single acts of behavior. As such, we develop a mid-range theory of the entrepreneurial process that allows both static and dynamic aspects to be incorporated and therefore contributes to a more encompassing view. As a further contribution, we consider different mechanisms depending on the motivational basis of an entrepreneurial activity. Specifically, we outline distinct dynamic processes for push versus pull entrepreneurship (Haynie & Shepherd, 2011).

TOWARD A MOTIVATIONAL READINESS MODEL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A Theory of Motivational Readiness: Basic Concepts

Motivational Readiness (MR). Motivational readiness has been defined as the “inclination or tendency, whether or not ultimately consummated, to gratify some Want, whether implicit or explicit” (Kruglanski et al., 2014: 367). In the present context, we refer to motivational readiness as the degree to which a person seeks to gratify entrepreneurial Wants. Importantly, high levels of motivational readiness are characterized by goal commitment and translate into goal magnitude (Kruglanski et al., 2014). As such, motivational readiness encompasses notions of *behavioral intentions* (Ajzen, 1991), *propensity to act* (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996), *implementation intentions* (Gollwitzer, 1999), and *commitment* (Locke, Latham, & Erez, 1988; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003). We therefore consider it a concept capable of unifying motivations that initiate entrepreneurship and those which reinforce entrepreneurial action (see Courneya, 1995).

Entrepreneurial Want. A Want is an outcome that a person desires at a given moment (Kruglanski et al., 2014). Entrepreneurship literature has discussed Wants as *desirability* (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000; McMullen & Shepherd, 2006; Shapero & Sokol, 1982), *entrepreneurial aspirations* (Hessels, van Gelderen, & Thurik, 2008; Garud & Giuliani, 2013), and *attitude* (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994). An entrepreneurial Want synthesizes concepts like motive, need, wish, drive, and desire and therefore is important for the formation of entrepreneurial action. An important element of Wants is their strength, meaning that motivation will be higher when a Want is high in magnitude (Kruglanski et al., 2014).

In addition to their magnitude, entrepreneurial Wants differ in their content. Research on career reasons and motives for entrepreneurship unveil some of these differences in the content of the entrepreneurial Wants. Birley and Westhead (1994) show that owner-managers of independent businesses create their business to fulfill a specific psychological need (e.g., for approval, independence or personal development), to follow a role model, to increase the welfare and security of their family (e.g., owners of family businesses) or to increase welfare among their community (e.g., social entrepreneurs). Furthermore, for some individuals venture creation is a mean to receive certain indirect benefits such as tax reduction (Birley & Westhead, 1994). Furthermore, Carter et al. (2001) find six main categories of career reasons for nascent entrepreneurs: self-realization, financial success, roles, innovation, recognition and independence. As these examples show, entrepreneurial Wants are rarely targeted at the act of creating a new business, but rather on the (desired) outcomes adjunct to such creations.

While some authors were concerned with identifying the varying reasons for entrepreneurship, others highlight communalities in entrepreneurial Want content. For example, Dunkelberg et al. (2013) distinguish two broad sets of reasons for venture creation: monetary and nonmonetary reasons. Interestingly, the authors show that entrepreneurs behave differently according to their respective reason for entrepreneurship. In line with this distinction and according to further entrepreneurship research we distinguish two general categories of entrepreneurial Want content that may lead to venture creation, namely push and pull Wants (e.g., Cooper & Dunkelberg, 1987; Amit & Muller, 1995; Haynie & Shepherd, 2011). Amit and Muller (1995) describe “push entrepreneurs” as dissatisfied with their current situation, implying that dissatisfaction is the driver that brings these individuals to self-employment. By contrast, “pull entrepreneurs” are attracted by the business opportunity and its implications for the individual (Amit & Muller, 1995, p. 65). The distinction is similar to that between opportunity and necessity entrepreneurship (Acs, 2006). Necessity entrepreneurship is typically described by avoiding desires and a lack of possibilities (Hindle & Klyver, 2006; Singer, Amorós, & Arreola, 2015) while the so-called opportunity entrepreneurship is characterized by approaching Wants (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Singer, Amorós, & Arreola, 2015). Referring to the theory of

regulatory focus (Higgins, 1997), promotion goals characterize opportunity entrepreneurship, while prevention goals are more present in the case of necessity entrepreneurship. Following these typologies we argue that push entrepreneurs are motivated by career reasons like security or approval, while pull entrepreneurs are lured mainly by the potential for self-realization or challenge.

Gratification Expectancy. The third basic concept of the theory of motivational readiness is expectancy, the “subjective probability an individual assigns (consciously or unconsciously) to gratification of the Want” (Kruglanski et al., 2014: 369). Similar to the Want state, gratification expectancy has a long tradition in entrepreneurship literature. Using different terms like *perceived feasibility* (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000; McMullen & Shepherd, 2006), *self-efficacy* (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994; Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2007) or *perceived behavioral control* (on the basis of Ajzen, 1991; Krueger & Carsrud, 1993), gratification expectancy has been identified as an important driver of entrepreneurial intentions. For the most part, the entrepreneurship literature dealt with aspects of feasibility that were mastery-related. This means that feasibility is often linked to the individual’s abilities and knowledge (see, e.g., Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000; McMullen & Shepherd, 2006).

How Want and Expectancy Interact in the Formation of Motivational Readiness

Most models of entrepreneurial motivation assume (and find) independent main effects of desirability and feasibility on intentions (e.g., Boyd & Vozikis, 1994; Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000) or actions (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). A recent meta-analysis provides further support of this view (Schlaegel & Koenig, 2014). Existing studies differ, however, in the magnitude either of the two concepts exerts. Moreover, there is evidence pointing to an interaction between desirability and feasibility (Fitzsimmons & Douglas, 2011). Taken together, cumulating evidence exists that point to more complex effects in the entrepreneurial process. The theory of motivational readiness enables us to delineate the relationship and provide an updated view on how entrepreneurial action may emerge.

Want Strength Mediates the Impact of Expectancies in Push Entrepreneurship. Push entrepreneurship is characterized by a situation in which previous environments felt constraining (e.g., constraining income, autonomy, or security). Alternatives such as being self-employed, however, have to be assessed whether the yet-to-become entrepreneur can gratify the respective goal (e.g., increasing autonomy or security). Accordingly, expectancy plays a critical role in push entrepreneurship (Freitas et al., 2000). In addition, expectancy makes Want satisfaction appear more realistic (Bandura, 2012; Kruglanski et al., 2014) which, in turn, may increase the desire for that outcome (Higgins et al., 2013). Even though the relationship can be reciprocal as in the case of ‘wishful thinking’ (Kruglanski et al., 2014), we argue that the former is more typical for entrepreneurial motivation. For example, there is evidence that career-decision-making self-efficacy predicts career-decision-making attitudes (Luzzo, 1993). In their meta-analysis, Schlaegel and Koenig (2014) also found support for an effect of perceived feasibility on perceived desirability. Accordingly, an entrepreneurial Want is seen to (partially) mediate the effect of gratification expectancy on motivational readiness in push entrepreneurship.

Expectancy Moderates the effect of Want Strength in Pull Entrepreneurship. In case of pull entrepreneurship it is useful to consider the *primacy of desire* (Kruglanski et al., 2014). While the expectancy of Want gratification is important for motivational readiness, the “Want (desire) seems crucial and indispensable” (Kruglanski et al., 2014: 369). This means that

formation of MR is best understood by a focus on (entrepreneurial) Wants. However, Kruglanski and colleagues (2014) argue that a combination of high desire and low expectancy is more motivating than that of low Want and high expectancy. This implies that Want and expectancy do not always simply sum up but additionally can multiply their effects on motivational readiness. Accordingly, the effect an entrepreneurial Want has on motivational readiness would depend on the gratification expectancy. Fitzsimmons and Douglas (2011) are among the first to consider an interaction effect between Wants and expectancy in entrepreneurship. Their study reveals that desirability is particularly important in forming entrepreneurial intentions when feasibility perceptions are low, rather than high. This means that expectancy can be seen as a moderator of the relationship between Want strength and motivational readiness.

From Motivational Readiness to Action

In line with Kruglanski et al. (2014: 371), we argue it is fundamental for entrepreneurial action that individuals achieve a certain magnitude of Want strength and expectancy gratification. For example, a medium Want strength (i.e., the Want content is somewhat attractive yet not extremely desirable) may not be enough to stimulate action. It is only when a certain MR threshold is reached that a commitment point is formed where the individual will undertake respective actions to fulfill the entrepreneurial Want. Thus, we can distinguish non-action and action areas, depending on MR magnitude.

Furthermore, there is evidence that push and pull Wants may represent different levels in a hierarchy of needs (e.g., Maslow, 1943; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). We know from motivation research that these levels of the hierarchy are related to different urgencies of need fulfillment. For example, Maslow (1943) describes that a basic need (e.g., safety) is more likely to be fulfilled compared to a higher-order need (e.g., self-actualization). In the context of entrepreneurial Wants, a push Want is associated with a lower and a pull Want with a higher hierarchical level. Consequently, we argue that the relationship between MR and entrepreneurial action is different for push and pull Wants. This argument will get support from research in regulatory focus if we take into account that a push Want is more likely associated with prevention goals (avoiding a certain situations) and a pull Want with promotion goals (achieving a certain situation). Respective literature shows that individuals in a prevention focus act sooner than individuals in a promotion focus (Freitas & Higgins, 2000). This leads to the existence of two different commitment points. For example, in case of equal MR individuals with a push Want are more likely to show entrepreneurial action compared to those with a pull Want.

Feedback Loops: The Dynamics between Actions and Motivational Readiness

Performing entrepreneurial activities results in short-term success or failure. The respective outcome will then feed back to expectancy, with success increasing and failure decreasing expectancy. In addition, entrepreneurs are expected to increase their Want strength, particularly those with pull Wants. Research has shown that engaging in entrepreneurial activities and showing entrepreneurial effort can lead to entrepreneurial passion (Gielnik et al., 2015), a highly intense and positive feeling (Cardon et al., 2009). However, there is evidence that this effect holds only for activities that are undertaken under a free choice (Gielnik et al., 2015). Accordingly, entrepreneurs with pull Wants are more likely to experience passion as an outcome of (successful) entrepreneurial activities. Different from success, a single failure is not expected

to decrease Want strength, regardless the entrepreneurial Want content. In contrast, a small failure might even increase Want strength among pull entrepreneurs (Förster et al., 2001).

According to the MRME, the increased (decreased) expectancy will boost (drop) motivational readiness. Because of the different readiness levels across Want types (with higher MR for pull entrepreneurs, relative to push entrepreneurs), the consequences are expected to differ as well. In the case of short-term success, entrepreneurs with a pull Want are thought to perform more activities, with a higher intensity. Entrepreneurs with push Wants will maintain their MR at a lower level, with no dramatic changes in entrepreneurial activities. If any, a possible consequence would be performing the successful activity with more effort. In the case of failure, pull entrepreneurs will try harder (Förster et al., 2001) or switch to other activities that promise more success. Push entrepreneurs, however, may become frustrated (Austin & Vancouver, 1996) and accordingly reduce their subsequent efforts. When the drop in MR reaches the threshold to non-action, they may even stop entrepreneurial activities and look for new ways to gratify their push Want. One reason why the abandonment of Wants is more likely among push entrepreneurs is that the respective Want types often are multifinal (Kruglanski et al., 2002), meaning that multiple means exist to satisfy the goal. For example, there are likely more means to generate income than there are for self-realization. Accordingly, there are more outside options available for push entrepreneurs in case of initial failure.

In addition to the feedback loops associated with the success or failure of individual activities, long-term Want gratification (or its absence) can have unique effects. For example, sustained failure is expected to decrease Want strength even among pull entrepreneurs. Long-term effects also include satiation, meaning that the motivational readiness could decline over time, regardless of concrete success or failure. Want gratification can also affect motivation differently, depending on the Want's nature (e.g., consummatory or continuous; Austin & Vancouver, 1996). Again, research in regulatory focus can help us understand the different effects Want gratification may have for push and pull entrepreneurs. There is evidence that individuals in a prevention focus become more careful and try to avoid failure when reaching a state of goal attainment. By contrast, individuals in a promotion focus will become even more motivated if goal achievement is within sight (the goal 'loom larger' effect; Förster, Higgins, & Idson, 1998). Thus, we argue that in situations where Want gratification is within reach push entrepreneurs become more careful and focus on activities that help to avoid failure (e.g., diligent planning activities; Brockner, Higgins, & Low, 2004), while pull entrepreneurs become even more motivated and show more strategic activities (e.g., development of new ideas or new markets).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The goal of the present article was to introduce the concept of *motivational readiness* as the centerpiece in a new theory of the entrepreneurial process. In so doing, it was not the aim to discredit prior work (e.g., research on entrepreneurial intention). On the contrary, we aimed to provide a framework that incorporates the findings of prior research regarding the pre-founding process and restructure the way entrepreneurial desirability and feasibility are thought to determine entrepreneurial action. In addition, we intended to capture the dynamics of the entrepreneurial process and its iterative nature. This has important implications for research as well as for entrepreneurship practice.

Overall, the described framework employs a process perspective of entrepreneurship and thus echoes recent calls for more process in entrepreneurship research (e.g., McMullen & Dimov, 2013; Shepherd, 2015). Importantly, by highlighting the interplay between action and the entrepreneur's psychological characteristics via feedback loops that revive entrepreneurial motivation and upgrade cognition, the MRME captures the iterative character of entrepreneurship. It therefore helps to overcome the constraints of current intention models with their sole focus on the act of venture creation. At the same time, the MRME appears to be an evolutionary advancement, rather than embracing a radically new perspective of entrepreneurship. A strength of the proposed framework is its ability to integrate research findings that have not previously been linked to each other. For example, the process described here fits in seamlessly with the work of Haynie et al. (2010), and informs their view about the origin of the motivation necessary for metacognitive processing. Further, the MRME explicates the psychological foundation of approaches like Sarasvathy's (2001) effectuation model that pictures the entrepreneurial process as an iteration driven by a strong vision (i.e., a Want), self-knowledge (i.e., gratification expectancy) as well as support from a variety of potential stakeholders in the environment. Environmental input can include stimuli as diverse as role models, identification of market inefficiencies, entrepreneurial climate, technology transfer support, and education. All these stimuli have been shown to play a major role in initiating entrepreneurial behaviors (e.g., Alvarez, Barney, & Anderson, 2013; Geissler, Jahn, & Haefner, 2010; Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000; Shane, 2012), as they affect either entrepreneurial Wants or gratification expectancy.

In our model, we consider the non-linear effects of entrepreneurial Wants and gratification expectancy on the formation of motivational readiness. This moves beyond the dominant perspective of separate effects (see Fitzsimmons & Douglas, 2011, for an exception). Important modifications with respect to prior research, such as the primacy of desire in the formation of motivational readiness, inform research on the human capital-success relationship (e.g., Martin, McNally, & Kay, 2013; Unger et al., 2011): investments in skills or experience increase gratification expectancy, which only translates into motivational readiness in situations of strong Wants. This may explain why some empirical studies reveal conflicting results. For example, Gielnik et al. (2015) find a positive relationship between entrepreneurial training efforts and self-efficacy that does not translate into entrepreneurial action. Similarly, von Graevenitz, Harhoff, and Weber (2010) show that an increase in feasibility perceptions after entrepreneurship training does not necessarily increase entrepreneurial intention. In addition, they found a slightly significant negative effect of change in self-efficacy on changes in intention. Rather than assuming a general ineffectiveness of these training efforts, the reason for the lacking effect may have been a lack of match. Thus, shaping entrepreneurial Wants at the very beginning of a training program may increase the effectiveness of the measure.

Future research could more explicitly consider the role time plays in the entrepreneurship process. Although our framework is dynamic, we do not make concrete predictions of how temporal distance affects the relationship between Wants, expectancy, personality, and environment. Temporal motivational theory (Steel & Koenig, 2006) could provide valuable input, not least because it also considers Wants (named value) and expectancy. Steel and Koenig (2006) use their theory to explain procrastination, an interesting performance problem that is under-researched in entrepreneurship but likely to occur.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE FROM THE AUTHORS