

Elizabeth Chell, 2008, *The Entrepreneurial Personality, A Social Construction*, 2nd Ed. Routledge: London. ISBN: 978-0-415-32809-8, pp. 320.

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Academic and policy interest in enterprise, and its handmaiden entrepreneurship, have burgeoned in recent times. Entrepreneurship literature, however, has yet to reach agreement on a number of core theoretical questions, including consensus over the nature of the entrepreneurial personality. In response, this second edition of an acclaimed book takes a synoptic, trans-disciplinary approach to craft an understanding of the entrepreneurial personality, which Chell argues comprises both socially-constructed phenomenon as well as consistency in behaviours, skills and competences. Further, in a field replete with a-theoretical 'how to' texts, this book also provides a much needed in-depth conceptual review and synthesis of entrepreneurship literature. Overall, the book's achievement is in perceptively reviewing and then synthesising various literature streams to provide an inter-disciplinary understanding of the entrepreneur and what makes them tick.

The book is organised in nine chapters, which all conclude with well argued summaries. Following a wide ranging introduction, chapters' two to seven consider different disciplinary perspectives on entrepreneurship. These chapters are comprehensive, current and coherently developed, and they function as excellent intermediate reviews to various academic views on entrepreneurial processes. For example, a reader interested in a review of the economic understanding of entrepreneurship would be well served to read chapter two, while a reader interested in interactionism and cognitive approaches to the entrepreneurial personality would find an excellent overview and references for further reading in chapter six. Therefore, the book offers discrete reviews of various literature streams and it is only in the final chapter that Chell draws together the preceding material to make her case for understanding the entrepreneurial personality within an interdisciplinary and multi-level optic. It could be argued, however, that the understanding offered by Chell in the final chapter, that integrates the previously reviewed literature streams within a 'big tent' synthesis is imprecise. However, the case for such a broad interpretation is well argued and convincing. Moreover, the book's big tent understanding of the entrepreneurial personality can be applauded for breaking down academic barriers and in consequence for potentially reframing and facilitating inter-disciplinary research.

This book will find a ready readership among academics who want an articulate intermediate overview of entrepreneurial literature streams, as well as a detailed set of references for further research. The book will also appeal to level three dissertation students conducting empirical research looking for a single source, well structured overview of entrepreneurial theory to underpin their data collection. Postgraduate enterprise and entrepreneurship scholars will also find the book an invaluable intermediate discussion to theoretical literature. The more reflective entrepreneur and

business advisor will further welcome this book for offering a thorough overview of the various, sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory, disciplinary perspectives on entrepreneurship.

There are, however, a number of limitations with this book. Minor quibbles include the frequent use of arcane expressions such as 'qua'. The two main weaknesses of the book, however, can be stated as follows. First, while it is reasonable to use case studies to illustrate and reflect on theoretical literature the book's examples are unconvincing. This is disappointing as reference to UK-based case material has the potential to offer an antidote to the bias in entrepreneurial literature towards US-based case studies. Further, Chell states that her approach to data is with 'profound curiosity and criticality' and she also comments on the difficulties associated with trusting autobiographical or biographical accounts of entrepreneurial behaviour. However, the case studies are flawed in that they can be characterised as exhibiting a tendency towards uncritical self-publicity; that is, of entrepreneurs presenting themselves as heroes in their own micro dramas. Moreover, there are a number of cases based on an 'analysis of secondary sources of data of high-profile entrepreneurs/innovators' and one can question whether the re-cycling of this previously published material adds anything of significance to the book's arguments. For illustration, 'A vision is something that you see and others don't: the case of Anita Roddick' is a hagiography and this highly partisan case account needs to be balanced with reference to more critical accounts of Roddick's role in founding and developing 'The Body Shop', which are numerous.

This leads on to the second main weakness of the book, in terms of what is omitted. To be sure the book offers a wide-ranging review of relevant literature streams, and it has to be acknowledged that the fast developing and emergent nature of entrepreneurship literature presents challenges. Nonetheless this book, and perhaps a future edition, would be improved with the inclusion of additional material, from two fast developing areas of research that have examined entrepreneurship processes in detail, namely from a business ethics and neo-capital perspective. For example, the entrepreneurial personality is also an ethical personality and understanding of the former could be strengthened with a more in-depth review of the literature examining the moral components of the entrepreneurial character and behaviours. Secondly neo-capital theory, which is considered in chapter five's review of 'new entrepreneurial traits' is under-examined, given the extent of recent research into the inter-section between 'capitalization' processes and entrepreneurship. For instance, the importance of human capital and intellectual capital for entrepreneurs in the high tech sectors is a rapidly developing research vista, and a review of this literature examining the challenges posed by technology and 'virtuality' would have given the book a more contemporary perspective on the reality of entrepreneurial challenges. Moreover, social capital, a theory that parallels the rise to prominence in academia and with policy makers of entrepreneurship, is also worthy of more discussion than it is afforded in this book. For example the third chapter focuses on a 'socio-economic' understanding of the entrepreneurial personality, and this review would have been strengthened with reference to social capital literature which examines entrepreneurial processes, as this theory also can be understood as offering a socio-economic embedded understanding of the economic activity. Finally, a closely related or perhaps sub-component of social capital is network theory and this important approach to entrepreneurship needs further elaboration. Thus, one approach to

understanding entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial personality which is under-discussed is within a social network analysis, which encompasses a considerable body of literature examining how entrepreneurial interactions can be viewed in relational, network terms.

However, regardless of these limitations the book offers a detailed, intermediate review of a broad, though not complete, range of the ever expanding and diverse entrepreneurial literature. In sum, the book is well written and offers extensive references to guide more in-depth investigations. The book's strength is too review and to synthesise an impressive range of literature streams from economics, sociology and psychology, to convincingly argue that the entrepreneurial personality can be elucidated within an interdisciplinary treatment, and as such the book contributes to strengthening the academic credibility of entrepreneurship studies. Scholars and entrepreneurs who are interested in developing a deeper theoretical understanding of the entrepreneurial personality will therefore find this book an invaluable addition to the field.