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The (mixed) motivations of those engaged in enterprise and experiencing poverty

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Introduction

This chapter concerns motivations that inform engagement in enterprise creation and operation by individuals who are experiencing poverty. We present an in-depth, empirical qualitative exploration of motives for enterprise amongst a sample of 42 people in the UK who are experiencing poverty conditions. There are several contributions to knowledge from this research. First, we demonstrate that traditional push-pull thinking about enterprise motivations lacks nuance; notably, that despite the logic of supposing a financial motive would be prioritised in a sample characterised by resource deficit, in fact it was not. Second, we map push-pull motivations and their intersection with intrinsic-extrinsic motivations; to our knowledge, this is the first attempt to create and develop such a refined understanding of enterprise motivations. Third, we find that context and circumstances are recurrent factors that reflexively inform the motivations of those who experience poverty and engage in enterprise creation and operation.

According to data published in 2020, the number of new businesses established in the UK over the last two decades has increased by around 70 percent during that time (BEIS, 2020) and post-Covid, the pace of increase is expected to accelerate as employment is lost in the inevitable recession. In fact, even before Covid the new business rates were mostly attributable to increases in the numbers of the very smallest of enterprises, the self-employed or sole trading firms (House of Commons Library, 2019). The stimulus for some of this micro venturing is the perception that self-employment and new business creation are good routes out of poverty, especially for some marginalized groups (Sutter *et al.*, 2019). This rhetoric is common in developed nations, especially amongst governments and supranational organisations (e.g.

European Commission, 2013; UK Government, 2018) since it carries with it the potential for reduction of unemployment rates. However, while it is true that new businesses employ the founder and sometimes others (Audretsch and Thurik, 2001), business is not an economic panacea. It has become associated with economic value-adding because of the conflation of two quite distinct types of business activity. First are the growth-oriented start-ups with the potential to contribute employment and financial value, referred to specifically as ‘entrepreneurial’ firms (Baumol, 1990; Audretsch, 2006; Bögenhold, 2019). Thereafter, all other businesses, including self-employment, are pulled together with these to arrive at a conceptual and statistical ‘entrepreneurship’ rate (e.g. Bosma and Kelley, 2019). In this chapter we use the term ‘enterprise’ to refer to holistic business venturing activity, thereby reserving the term ‘entrepreneurship’ for a specific growth-oriented business type.

Despite the conflation of the range of business, there is an ongoing narrative throughout the literature that, ~~by value adding,~~ (all) enterprise generates wealth and is therefore a solution to poverty (see for example Rindova *et al.*, 2009; Bruton *et al.*, 2013). Supporting this assertion is evidence of high levels of intentions to start up or become self-employed amongst the Western poor (unhelpfully referred to in some papers as ‘entrepreneurial intentions’) (Hart *et al.*, 2018). This chapter explores if a context of poverty itself is a contributing motivator for pursuing enterprise and how it might inform and shape ensuing enterprise experiences.

According to a UN report, a fifth of the UK population live in poverty (where poverty is defined as family income below a government-defined threshold) (Alston, 2018). This poverty intersects with enterprise, and rates of poverty for the self-employed are the highest for any ‘employed’ group (Galloway *et al.*, 2016; Scottish Government, 2016, respectively). Further, the extent of the poverty is worsening, with greater reduction in income levels amongst self-employed people in the lowest income centile than other groups (Belfield *et al.*, 2015). Assuming poverty is not a satisfactory state for individuals, a question central in this chapter is: *What were the original motivations of those engaged in enterprise, and now living in poverty, for this mode of work?*

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, we review the literature on enterprise motivations. Thereafter we set out the methodology used to collect and analyse the data presented. We discuss our findings and present conclusions with considerations given

to our contribution to theory and the value of these for policy and practitioners operating in the business development and support fields.

Enterprise motivations

With reference to Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964), the expected outcomes of an action have been shown to influence attitudes and behaviours taken towards achieving the target action. In the business studies field, considerable research has explored the relationship between motivations, business creation actions, and outcomes (Krueger and Carsrud, 1993; Manolova *et al.*, 2012; Kautonen *et al.*, 2015) This research has tended to explore the relationship between motivations and financial outcomes almost exclusively though, and so has concluded that the key motivation – indeed, the expectation – of business is improved financial circumstances, an extrinsic and economic driver. Thereafter, variation in ambitions and skills commensurate with this expectation is argued to lead to variation in outcomes; essentially the type of motivation exhibited prior to business creation has an (causal) impact on the financial outcomes achieved Lepeley (2019).

Referring similarly to the key extrinsic driver of income ambitions, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) refers to the broad ‘entrepreneurship’ types of *opportunity* and *necessity* (Bosma and Kelley, 2019). These are consistent with, and often linked to, the conceptualisations of pull and push motivations for starting a firm (Amit *et al.*, 1995). The logic is that push motivations are responses to limited alternative options for work and are thus associated with necessity entrepreneurship (enterprise in the absence of reasonable alternatives). Conversely, pull motivations involve attraction to an opportunity to be in business and therefore resonate with GEM’s opportunity entrepreneurship. Thereafter there is the linking of outcomes with these types of motivations, with growth firms most often associated with opportunity and pull (Delmar and Wiklund, 2008), and low-value enterprise associated with necessity and push (Block and Wagner, 2009). Pull/push, opportunity/necessity motivations and their impact on outcomes have become key underpinning rationales that have been used to inform policy and interventions aimed at enabling and supporting business (van der Zwan *et al.*, 2016). We summarize the theoretical (and frequently empirically supported) link between business creation motivations and outcomes in Figure 1.

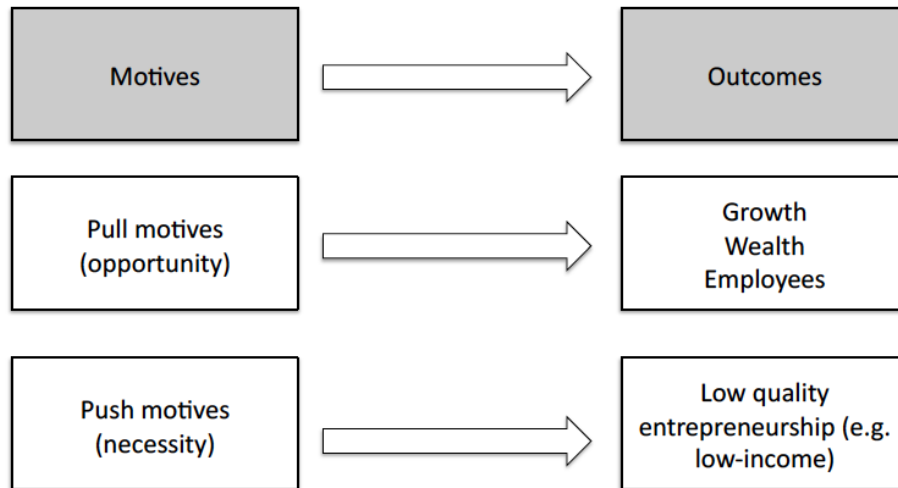


Figure 1. Previously theorised relationship between motives and outcomes

Despite the clear logic of these relationships there is plenty of evidence that motivations for, and experiences of, enterprise creation and operation are more complex. Mochrie *et al.* (2006) for example, found in a sample of rural firm owners that while they most often reported opportunity motivations, they also had no growth ambitions. Similarly, Jones *et al.* (2012) found avoidance of growth as a deliberate strategy, regardless of the antecedents to the micro-firms in their sample. Consistent with this, where Amit *et al.* (1995) compared income levels between those reporting push and pull motives, statistical significance was limited to only the 93 percent level.

There are also studies that contend that push-pull are not discrete categories (Gilad and Levine, 1986; Dawson and Henley, 2012) and question the push/pull, either/or dichotomy (e.g. Hughes, 2003; Williams, 2008). For example, Dawson and Henley’s (2012) study of motivations using Labour Force Survey data, found that in a large UK sample (~11,000), a significant proportion reported conflicting motivations, i.e. push *and* pull. Emerging recently are studies that explore alternative drivers, with a key focus on the importance of intrinsic motivations for pursuing enterprise work. Among these, esteem, wellbeing, flexibility and control have been found to be drivers of enterprise activity (Morris *et al.*, 2006; Hessels *et al.*, 2008; Stirzaker *et al.*, 2019), and in some cases, particularly pertinent for specific groups (e.g. Morris *et al.*, 2006, and; Lepeley, 2019, on women, and; Stirzaker *et al.*, 2019, on older venturers).

Beyond agential influences, context and circumstances are also critical antecedents to enterprise. As long as 25 years ago, Amit *et al.* (1995) acknowledged the need to “look

beyond personal attributes in attempting to explain entrepreneurial performance” (p.74) since business is always conducted by humans in contexts (also Zahra *et al.*, 2014). Since then, much has been written about the influence of context on enterprise motivations (Williams, 2009; Welter, 2011; Anderson, 2015). Jones *et al.* (2012), for example, explore specific contextual factors that contribute to the ‘push’ effects experienced by some people, such as changes to workplace requirements and employment norms in a sector. Elsewhere Jayawarna *et al.* (2014) explore the effects of personal circumstances over a life course as sources of privilege or disadvantage in the enterprise process. More recently, Galloway *et al.* (2019) eschew the either/or, agency versus context focus in many studies of motivations and instead draw on critical realism to propose that enterprise emerges as a consequence of a reflexive process whereby an individual’s behaviours and actions are inextricably bound to their context (and vice versa). Thus, enterprise emerges as idiosyncratic and reflexive, involving an agent in context. On motivations, they propose that individuals who engage in enterprise do so in an attempt to realise some reflexively perceived and personally meaningful value which may be extrinsic or intrinsic and not necessarily financial. Critically though, enterprise on the part of any individual is dialectical and bound to their particular circumstances in context. Pertinent to this research is the context of poverty as an influence on enterprise. The relationship between push-pull *and* intrinsic-extrinsic motivations and how these may intersect with poverty as an antecedent and as an outcome context of enterprise have not previously been explored, and therefore, it is to this that we now turn.

Poverty and enterprise

With expectations that enterprise will be financially rewarding, it seems reasonable to anticipate that people who are experiencing poverty may well exhibit motivations that align with achieving such an outcome (e.g. Chivers, 2017; Lenton, 2017). The oft-theorised potential for enterprise to alleviate poverty depends on this rationale and enterprise is thus presented as a ‘cure’ for resource deficit (Bruton *et al.*, 2013; Sutter *et al.*, 2019). The evidence does not support this though. First, the implied primacy of agency as the catalyst for enterprise activity is conceptually precarious. In fact, where the employment market is weak or failing there may be few alternative work options beyond enterprise work (Williams and Horodnic, 2015), so as Kautonen *et al.* (2010)

notes, in many cases enterprise is, in effect, involuntary. Evidence on rates of enterprise supports this – a high ‘entrepreneurship rate’ (signalling more accurately a high rate of self-employment) is a key indicator of poor economic conditions whereby people look to self-employment in the absence of employment market opportunities for work (Bögenhold and Staber, 1991). Indeed, this is never so pertinent as in recession (Bögenhold, 2019), and post-Covid is a daunting prospect (ONS, 2020).

Thus, the small enterprises that tend to be created in adverse economic circumstances may not be the solution to poverty that people may anticipate, and in fact, the simple logic of enterprising one’s way out of poverty is disingenuous. Poverty has been found to be a community experience that can inform one’s identity in that context (Slade Shantz *et al.*, 2018). The context of poverty itself has potential implications when pursuing enterprise, therefore. Poverty is closely linked with social exclusion, which refers to the compounding effects of resource deficit as it causes marginalization from established structures such as education and work, in turn, leading to further and ongoing resource deficit. Again, this is a reflexive process as an agent responds (often by lack of engagement and participation) in the structures that are ostensibly tasked with disseminating resources to support social and economic life (Gordon, 2006; De Holan and Fernandez, 2017). Essentially, poverty is defined as financial capital deficit, but is associated also with deficits in human and social capitals such as skills and experience (DeTienne, 2010), and in turn, these deficits decrease the availability of employment and quality of income from work (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997). Played out in an enterprise context, since responsibilities for wages and in-work experiences are conferred on the individual, poor quality outcomes such as incomes below minimum wage, lack of employment rights, can and do ensue in many cases (Chivers, 2017; Dvoutely *et al.*, 2018). Adding further to the complexity are the inconsistent experiences throughout broader social categories such as gender, culture or family background, all of which have been found empirically to influence an individual’s ability to transcend poverty (Jayawarna *et al.*, 2014; De Holan and Fernandez, 2017; Sarkar *et al.*, 2018). As such, rather than solving it, enterprise can actually have the opposite effect, and indeed from an income point of view, Lofstrom (2013) and Murphy (2015) find that pay amongst some self-employed people is substantially less than for those in employment; D’Arcy and Gardiner (2014) estimate 40 per cent less.

Therefore, while we know poverty and enterprise intersect, we have little data on what has motivated those involved. Do they feel pushed by circumstances or pulled by the promise of the rhetoric that presents enterprise as an opportunity to realise value (however this is defined)? This research seeks to contribute some evidence to this via two broad research questions:

RQ1. What motives for enterprise do venturers in poverty express?

RQ2. What, if any, factors intersect with agential motives for enterprise in the context of poverty circumstances?

Methodology

This research sought to explore the motivations of those engaging in enterprise and experiencing poverty. According to Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2005), qualitative research enables the meaning that humans attribute to their experiences to be explored, thus informing rich descriptions of phenomena and revealing ‘gaps’ in existing research. Given the limited inspection of motivations for enterprise for those experiencing poverty, qualitative data collection is an especially appropriate approach, therefore. Furthermore, as per recommendations of Hindle (2004), when seeking to understand motivations, gaining access to the perceptions and reflections of individuals is necessary, and again, qualitative research provides a means to achieve this since large scale quantitative-orientated studies such as GEM cannot (Gartner and Birley, 2002; Neergaard and Ulhoi, 2007). Thus, to investigate any potential causal processes and perceptions of motivations (Vroom, 1964), the empirical work reported here is based on a qualitative methodology. In particular, testimony and opinion of those who are engaging in enterprise and experiencing poverty was sought and so a methodology to elicit narratives direct from those being studied was applied (Bryman, 2001; Duff and Bell, 2002). Specifically, 42 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted that encouraged conversation and extended narrative testimony. As per Stake (1995), the rationale for this was to allow for rich exploration of themes identified in the literature, and to enable and prompt issues not previously identified to emerge.

The 42 self-employed participants were all identified as experiencing poverty as per the classification set out by UK Government (2020) that underpins entitlement to the state benefit known as Working Tax Credit (WTC) (recently replaced by the broader

provision of Universal Credit). WTC is a top-up payment for those whose income from work falls below that considered sufficient to support a household (this varies depending on circumstances; for example, at time of publication, it is currently £13,100 for a single person household and £18,000 per annum for a couple without children). To qualify for WTC in the UK, an individual must work at least 30 hours per week (16 if disabled or a single parent). For those who are self-employed or in business, information such as hours worked, and income must be reported monthly and the top-up payments are made in arrears. While using a government-defined income top-up mechanism as an indicator of income poverty is not beyond contention, criteria such as this have been applied in other similar studies (Broughton and Richards, 2016) and thus allows this study to be comparable to other work on low incomes. Further, claiming benefits in the UK is a stigmatised action (Baumberg, 2016) subject to extremely rigorous conditions (Wright and Patrick, 2019); therefore, we can reasonably conclude that individuals would not undertake claiming benefits unless it was necessary to their income requirements.

Participants were recruited to the study via online advertising of the research through social media, targeted print advertising, and local radio advertising. Recruitment was on a voluntary basis and respondents were assured confidentiality and anonymity. Interviews lasted at least one hour, and all were recorded and transcribed verbatim, resulting in 1025 pages of testimony. The sample is presented in Table 1.

--Insert Table 1 here--

As per the recommendations of Miles *et al.* (2014), data collection and analysis were concurrent, thus after each interview memos were made and tentative codes and themes noted. After 20 interviews, data collection was paused to allow for a first review of all data collected thus far. Consequently, when data collection resumed, exploration of new or previously understood relationships between codes and themes using “if-then” relationships, which may indicate causality as per Miles *et al.* (2014, p. 89), was the focus. This included for example, *if* human capital is arts-based, *then* self-employment is perceived as the ‘logical’ means of paid work. Upon data collection completion, analysis was conducted as per the stratified process described in Miles *et al.* (2014) of *data reduction, data presentation* and *explanation*. *Data reduction* involved several rounds of coding to distil patterns and inform categories, themes and constructs. For

data presentation, data were condensed, and matrix and networks display formats were applied and by ‘ordering’ the data, the research team were enabled to explore and search for ‘how’ factors. Finally, in line with the critical realist position of the research, the focus of the *data explanation* phase was seeking ‘why’ factors, such as influence and affect, that, through data presentation, would reveal potential interrelationships between individual and their context and circumstances. In total, five researchers followed the Miles *et al.* (2014) process individually. Thereafter, consensus on results was achieved through collaboration, consultation and the process of retrodution to mitigate individual interpretation bias (Danermark *et al.*, 2002). Ensuing themes and example evidence are presented in Appendix 1.

Findings

The first pertinent finding to report is participants consistently expressed both push *and* pull motivations. Additionally, we find repeated reference to both intrinsic *and* extrinsic motivations in individual responses and across the sample. Contrary to previous research that has often positioned poor quality financial outcomes in opposition to opportunity motivations, we found evidence of respondents expressing pull motivations and positive attitudes towards creating and engaging in these business activities that were not financially lucrative (e.g. “*my dream come true*”, R3). Occasionally these opportunistic desires to pursue business creation dated back quite some time, such as was the case for R5:

“When I finished with the ambulance service and was trying to find something to do, I was thinking of doing something on my own anyway; so, it had been in my head.” R5

When asked about their motivations for engaging in enterprise, respondents gave complex responses which often implicated circumstances and context as important conditions too. In the following sections we set out the findings that explore these in greater depth.

The intersection of values, conditions, and context in poverty enterprise

First, Table 2 maps, in matrix form, the motives themes expressed in this sample, revealing the relationships between codes and themes. The motives expressed are clustered according to their alignment with either push or pull motivation

characteristics *and* their intersection with intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics. This is an original representation of how these differing motivation characteristics may intersect and illustrates that intrinsic/extrinsic and push/pull motivations interact and are permeable. It is worth noting that within each quadrant the factors listed could be an ambition or an attribute, further demonstrating the complexity of the motivations expressed.

	Pull Conditions	Push Conditions
Intrinsic Value Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Freedom & flexibility ● Autonomy ● Personal development/passion (pursuit of creativity/hobby) ● Self-esteem ● Human capital/work experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Desire/need for work/life flexibility not met while in employment
Extrinsic Value Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Income (earned/benefits) ● Opportunity ● Capital available – personal/government ● Social networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Status - Stigma of unemployment ● Lack of other work options ● Encouragement from others ● Income necessity (security) ● Industry norms of sectors

Table 2. Push/Pull – Intrinsic/Extrinsic matrix

As per Table 2, the respondents in this study expressed a multitude of overlapping motivations for engaging in enterprise; this is indicative of the complexity of motivations and immediately identifies that a narrow and dichotomous interpretation of enterprise motivations is limited. Moreover, respondents did not discuss motivations in isolation. Instead they were contingent on the context or circumstances the individual found themselves in. Consequently, reference to context and circumstance is interwoven within the responses presented. Furthermore, the respondents in this study reported motivations that are frequently reported by pull motivations-oriented research. This might suggest that there are some motivations for enterprise, for example the desire for autonomy and flexibility, that are virtually universal. Other perceived influences were more idiosyncratic and varied. Hereafter, the narrative that follows explains where pull/push overlap and intersect with intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of enterprise as voiced by the participants in this study. We report these findings in depth as they are new data from an under researched population. Furthermore, these findings

provide additional, and important, nuance to our understanding of motivations and their function in the pursuit of enterprise creation and operation.

Intrinsic motivations

Intrinsic motivations, with regards to enterprise creation, refer to factors such as the potential for personal development, wellbeing or the feeling of having autonomy and control within the work environment. In this study, intrinsic motivations were expressed repeatedly, and based on analysis, can be aligned with pull and push conditions (refer to Table 2). In the case of intrinsic-pull for instance, recurrent reference was made to the impact of enterprise on identity as a professional worker. These tended to be nuanced and person-specific of course, for example, R6 discussed how continuing to work in the aftermath of a serious health diagnosis allowed her to retain esteem and confidence:

“It showed me that I was still a valued person and, I mean, I still get periods where my confidence takes a knock, but I always bounce back and think, yeah, I can do this.” R6

This example illustrates that enterprise creation served as a means to achieve a non-financial value and is inextricably linked to the personal circumstances of R6; had she not experienced this significant life change (diagnosed with serious health condition), she may not have selected enterprise as an (income) option.

The intrinsic motivations of flexibility and freedom in the type, time, and location of work that enterprise was perceived to enable was also evident. For example, R1 expresses this relationship between flexibility and a personal desire to engage in enterprise:

“I think working freelance is something that once you sort of develop a certain level of experience, it’s very flexible and always really interesting and exciting. I like those elements of it. It’s something I wanted to do for myself” R1

Again, that R1’s testimony reflects her as an individual and her circumstances; whilst benefiting from high human capital attainment, R1’s skillset and experience is within an industry that is largely based on freelance labour – an external circumstance which makes it hard for some to generate consistent income. Thus, whilst R1 expresses flexibility as a pull motivation, the structural norms of the industry she is in create a certain expectation around working conditions. Consequently, the flexibility anticipated as arising from engaging in enterprise intersects with specific personal

circumstances, including physical ability and other circumstances which are beyond the control of the individual.

In contrast, respondents discussed employment-based work which did not meet their flexibility needs – they were *pushed* into enterprise as a consequence of a lack of flexibility in employed work. Thus, flexibility is simultaneously operating as both a pull and a push factor, at least to some degree. This was especially the case for individuals where there were other life factors that would hamper their ability to work within organisational structures. This could include when the individual had caring responsibilities or a health-related issue that was challenging to integrate with employment-based work activity, such as was the case for R12 and R29:

“It’s been very difficult. It didn’t seem like there were other options really because I am terrified of going back to work, particularly with an illness that’s so unpredictable” R12

“I wouldn’t want to commit to saying I could do a job Monday to Friday each day because I don’t know how I’m going to be each day health-wise” R29.

In this study, enterprise was reported as a means by which to combine work and life. This was described as aligning with intrinsic motives such as flexibility, sense of personal development and identity; outcomes which were perceived to be possible to achieve concurrent with the generation of some income.

Extrinsic motivations

The extrinsic motivations expressed by participants included the extrinsic-pull of financial considerations – both in terms of income generation and the financial capital that was available in order to engage in business. Sometimes straightforward opportunity identification was a factor, with the inference that financial returns would ensue as a consequence, as expressed by R17:

I wanted to do it myself. I just felt that the same equipment I could get for filmmaking would be the same equipment I could use for 360 film making. And because it’s new, then no-one was really doing it.” R17

Income expectations from engaging in enterprise were also explicitly described; this could include an improvement in their finances, as per this example from R1:

“That was my plan, to work smarter not harder. The rate of pay is very good for consultancy” R1

In other cases, the income anticipated was to augment financial sustainability as exemplified by R10’s testimony:

“I have to because I don’t have enough income [from] my pension” R10

While financial considerations were clearly important for all in some capacity, there was, however, recurrent testimony that making money from business activity was not considered the main priority. Instead quality of life and pursuing personal interest were balanced against the requirements of enterprise activity, as R3’s testimony exemplifies:

~~*“I’d much rather go on a training course or read a book than go fighting for work” R3*~~

I’m incredibly frugal. So, clothes are still charity shop. The other thing that I’ve done for years is go to the shops at 9 o’clock and I look at what food’s still in good shape and I buy the reduced priced food, you know, so for years I’ve done that. It’s like, I’d much rather go on a training course or read a book than go fighting for work, you know, so I do live really frugally.[...] So, I suppose I’ve had the space to duck and dive, and do what I want (R9)

These findings indicate that enterprise is perceived as a means to realise many outcomes, some of which may compete with each other; indeed, as these examples illustrate, the default expectation of financial return is highly nuanced, even within a sample that could be implicitly expected to ‘prioritise’ such an outcome. This further indicates that the intentions and subsequent actions that inform enterprise creation and operation are not predicated on a ‘universal’ platform, certainly from the perspectives of these individuals and their agency.

The extrinsic motivators expressed in this study, which included the extrinsic-push of environmental conditions over which individuals had little control, further supports the idiosyncratic experience of motivations for enterprise. As was the case for R1 discussed above, the operating norms of many of the industries in which participants in the study were engaged was often a key driver of enterprise work: ten respondents were in the arts sector, seven were in transportation-related activities, and there were several in construction, therapy or other service roles that are commonly described as ‘freelance’. The norms of enterprise activity within these industries provide additional context in which respondents in this study may have formed motivations, for example, R41 says:

“Almost all the upholsterers you meet these days are men over 50 and they’ve come up through a certain system where you used to go and start as an apprentice when you’re 16 and you’d be taught all the skills while being paid. And then you would kind of have everything you would need to go off on your own at some point in the future.”

Respondents also referred to other contextual influences on their enterprise activities. These were highly person-specific and in this sample included pregnancy, relocation, and health, amongst others, again with an impact of industry context. R10’s testimony exemplifies:

“I started having problems with my knees, my ankles, my wrists, my hands. I went to the doctor and he said, what do you do for a living? I said, I work as a landscape contractor. He said, you need to find a different job.” R10

Findings indicate that for each respondent, context influenced both the decision to engage in enterprise and the ensuing enterprise experience. In most cases, these personal circumstances were the stimulus as they sought resolution to some personal need and conflated this with intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of enterprise.

There was also evidence in the sample of ‘gig working’: having several self-employed jobs at the same time. Participants reported that gig work enabled the ability to dip in and out of work/enterprise opportunities to mitigate the precarious nature of supply of them. R9 explains:

“I do some babysitting, you know, ducking and diving, a bit of everything. And I supplement it with working homelessness, and I do hostel shifts. Until recently I was still doing HIV in schools, we were called the Sexual Health Team. But [City] Council just, without notice, chopped that work.” R9

The most prevalent extrinsic-push driver was a lack of alternatives to generate income specifically through employment opportunities, with several noting they had tried and failed to find work in the employment sector, as per R18’s testimony:

“I was applying for jobs like basically for years and I was doing voluntary work, and everything, and I wasn’t really getting anywhere.” R18

The lack of employment opportunities in fact was described as a failure of employment contexts to meet their life or work needs – where individuals had prioritised other life

requirements which held higher value or were more pressing. It was also evident that extrinsic-push factors could intersect and influence the individual to report a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic pull factors. This excerpt from R30 provides an illustration:

“I got made redundant, [...] and my friend, he had a taxi company and so a started driving private hire for him and then a sat my brief to drive his taxi, so I started driving taxis. [...] Well, it was just to be my own boss [and] it’s kind of flexible, with having kids you know, that you can take time off when you need it so you can go to sports days and things like that” R30

Elsewhere, access to benefits payments was reported as a background contextual condition. For example, while R12’s main drivers were intrinsically motivated in relation to the desire to continue work on her own terms, her personal context of ill-health and the availability of the non-means tested Personal Independence Payment (PIP) state benefit, to which she was consequently entitled, consolidated this choice. These extrinsic drivers were embedded in her personal circumstances:

“The crucial thing ...that’s meant to be there to support you whether you’re working or not, regardless. So, I knew that I was going to be able to... [become self-employed], if someone could help me go through that transition and I could keep that [PIP]” R12

In summary, extrinsic motivations are complex and myriad; critically, no one in the sample cited drivers independent of their personal circumstances, suggesting that circumstance and context are the source of push drivers, which may be an especially important consideration for those who are beginning from a position of poverty or for those who subsequently find themselves having such an experience.

The role of capitals (and capitals deficits)

Respondents referred to multiple factors that shaped their enterprise activities. While these respondents perceived enterprise as feasible, this feasibility, and the subsequent outcomes, were modified by self-efficacy and the resources available (i.e. financial, human and social capital), as well as person specific contextual factors.

First, regarding financial capital, all participants in this study engaged in enterprise with no (or very low) initial financial capital. As Table 1 illustrates, the low-value venturing represented in this sample all require little or no capitalisation; most were operated at or from a participant's home, and sales were of services and intended to be incremental.

Human capital includes the skills and experiences of the individual that may be sector-specific, or it may relate to general business skills. The enterprises in this study tended to have low barriers to entry, especially in terms of low human capital requirements; a factor identified by the participants as a particularly enticing aspect of the enterprise they created and operated. Additionally, individuals made reference to their limited business-specific skills and experiences. When seeking to enhance their knowledge and skills from available resources such as business support agencies, for example, respondents tended to report that the support available was not appropriate for their enterprise as per R10's example testimony:

"I went in there [Enterprise support agency]. They were useless. If I'd been employing 10 people, they could probably have helped me." R10

There was also evidence, however, that human capital specific skills or knowledge prompted opportunity perceptions, as per R4:

"I was looking for Christmas presents for [Name] and I came across them [business product] on eBay. I saw how much they were going for, and I've always been arty, and I thought, I can do that." R4

Nevertheless, the human capital of the sample was often aligned with low-income industries (e.g. caring, the arts) or was of limited direct relevance to the enterprise created. Instead, low human capital barriers to entry were evident in the types of enterprise created, much like the low financial barriers which informed enterprise feasibility.

Social capital can be an influential factor in enterprise creation and development. In this sample, participants reported that they sought new work-related opportunities through people they knew. For example, R5 describes how a friend alerted him to a 'job', which turned out to operate on a self-employed basis, at his local church:

"One of our friends was an elder in this church and he said there was a job available, maybe you should try it. So, that was what led to that. I didn't look for it. It was suggested to me and she put me forward and that was it." R5

However, it was also the case that social capital applied mostly within or between people who were operating within the same industry and thus there were limited opportunities to interact with other social capital contacts, who may have provided further, more diverse enterprise opportunities.

Discussion

This research sought specifically to answer the two key research questions:

RQ1. What motives for enterprise do venturers in poverty express?

RQ2. What, if any, factors intersect with agential motives for enterprise in the context of poverty circumstances?

Motivations amongst those who are experiencing poverty in enterprise emerge as complex and dialectic, whereby external circumstances affect an individual and, circumstantial and personal/individual factors related to resources and individual contexts intersect with the agential motives reported. On validity of the proposed push-pull causal relationship with business income outcomes, our study supports the idea that push-pull motivations are not dichotomous (Dawson and Henley, 2012), instead they are complex, blurry and overlapping. The respondents in this study expressed a variety of motivations for enterprise creation. For example, some owners discussed financial returns and (continued) social status linked to income-generating activity. However, in contrast to the financial rewards often cited for engaging in enterprise (e.g. European Commission, 2013), becoming self-employed for these respondents was not always or often driven by desire for wealth. Interestingly, this is contrary to what would be expected given the challenging personal (and financial) circumstances of the respondents; counterintuitively, enterprise action was not often viewed as a means to relieve that situation directly. Instead, in line with Galloway et al (2019) on the importance of non-financial value, there were consistent references to intrinsic attractions such as the opportunity to pursue personal development or achieve freedom and flexibility. These were discussed as essential for several respondents as they sought to work in a way that will meet competing needs; for example, childcare requirements or health concerns. In fact, intrinsic pull motivations were the core focus for

respondents in this study, suggesting their importance in prompting entrepreneurial action. However, as motivators they tended to refer to *expectations* of enterprise rather than actual outcomes. For example, being self-employed or running a business frequently did not meet the desired expectations of/for freedom and autonomy, and in many cases individuals were in fact *less* autonomous due to the requirements to meet the needs of their business customers (e.g. as adhoc providers for trade industry). Thus, the outcomes achieved were disappointing, and potentially a significant pitfall of committing to entrepreneurial action, in comparison to initial aspirations.

Linked to expectations and in line with classic pull orientation, several respondents described their enterprise as based on opportunity (Amit *et al.*, 1995). Given that all of these respondents were in circumstances of poverty when interviewed, contrary to research that has drawn a connection between motivations and outcomes (Naffziger *et al.*, 1994; Wiklund *et al.*, 2003), the suggestion is that not all pull motivations are associated with either expectations or experiences of promising financial results. We find that rather than the motivations-outcomes trajectory presented in previous research, an alternative such as that presented in Figure 2 is more realistic, at least with reference to the participants in this sample.

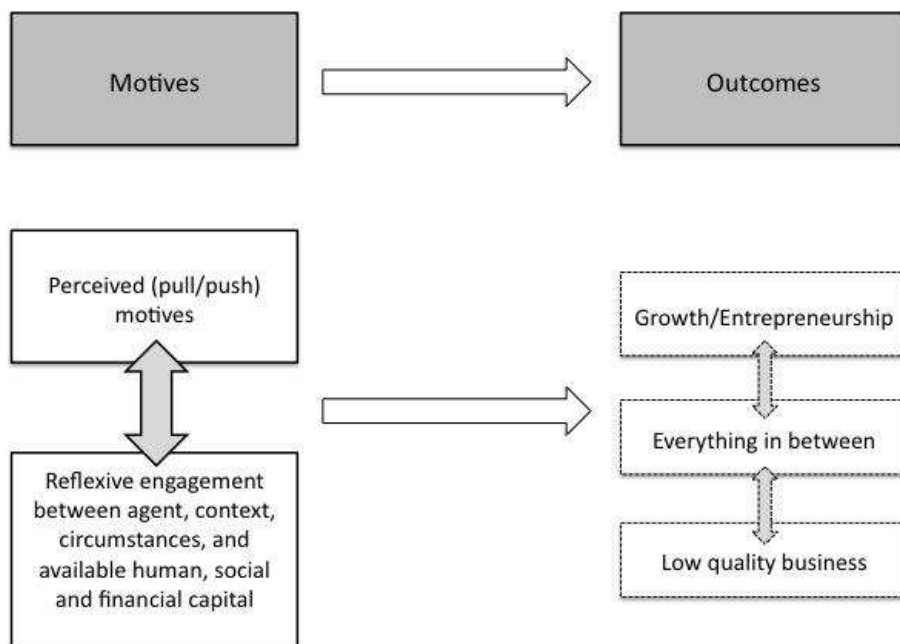


Figure 2: Refined theorised relationship between motives and outcomes

In this study, we find that context and circumstance are critical. For the participants in this research who had pursued enterprise in a context of poverty, circumstances and individual-specific contextual factors had a central role in informing business creation motivation and assessments of credibility. The findings of this study suggest that the context and circumstances in which individuals find themselves, such as realising that employed work would not accommodate attending hospital appointments, informed agential reflexive processing of their circumstances and income options, subsequently resulting in enterprise activity as a perceived means of managing personal circumstances. ~~reflexively processed and enterprise prompted by its perceived fit with these circumstances.~~ Engaging in enterprise in response to these contexts and circumstances, therefore, appears to align with perceived multiple forms of expected outcomes, or value, for most of our participants, further resonating with theory in Galloway *et al.* (2019). In this study, pregnancy, poor health, industry norms, underemployment and many other contextual and idiosyncratic circumstances were the backdrop to the agential response to engage in enterprise.

In sum, our findings suggest that while enterprise was *expected* to address some intrinsic and/or extrinsic motivation, in fact these were not in and of themselves associated with enterprise. Instead enterprise appears to have been perceived as the vehicle by which they could address intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to solve some personal and complex context-specific circumstances, with the expectation that improvement would ensue. The process therefore does not seem to involve pull/push drivers to enterprise, but rather pull/push drivers to a better intrinsic and/or extrinsic personal outcome(s). In the cases of our participants, by virtue of the fact they were experiencing enterprise as a context of poverty, any poverty alleviation expectation had not been met. In several cases, this was not the central ambition anyway though. For some, while there was expectation of income, there was no expectation that poverty would be alleviated. Instead, the expectation was that enterprise would be a context of poverty, but be a better option, or better fit, with personal circumstances than employed work or unemployment.

Consequently, we are critical of the previously reported causal link between motivations and the quality of business outcomes achieved. Our research finds that low-

income business outcomes are not clearly explained by push (or pull) motivations in a clear or consistent way. Indeed, the venturing process is more nuanced in reality than a dichotomous list of motivations. Further, and most crucially, the perceptions and experiences expressed by the respondents in this study appear to indicate support for an alternative to the frequently used agency-informed models of intentions. Our research indicates that context and circumstance may occur at different stages in the business creation motivations journey. Further, there are multiple contextual conditions influencing the potential work-related options available to an individual depending on their particular circumstances at a particular point in time.

Implications for research

The findings of this study have several implications for research. First, our findings provide further support for the work of Dawson and Henley (2012) by challenging the discreteness of push and pull motivations. In addition, the findings indicate that although previous research has found a link between (growth) motivations and (growth) outcomes, poverty outcomes are not necessarily associated with ‘defective’ motivations. Indeed, the participants in this study exhibit a range of motivations consistent with those found in multiple studies of (pull/opportunity-orientated) intentions and motivations. Thus, future research on business motivations is required to undertake a more nuanced inspection of what informs it. Second, we draw attention to the significance of contextual conditions that influence enterprise. As per the theory in Galloway *et al.* (2019), this study provides evidence of enterprise being adopted as a work mode as a consequence of reflexively understood expectations that it will achieve some reflexively understood value, particular to personal circumstances.

Implications for policy

The findings of this study suggest that business creation occurs in response to a complex mix of agential and structural factors. Of particular significance for the participants experiencing poverty in this study are their personal circumstances prior to business creation. Given the large percentage of individuals in the UK who are operating a business and are experiencing poverty – a situation likely to increase in the wake of Covid 19 – the importance of access to financial, human, and social capital

development is implied. In particular, this study implies a role for support and policy to accommodate and manage appropriate support for business creation in the form of business skills and networks development. Further, we call on policy to critically engage with the mandate that business creation is a solution to poverty that will provide a sustainable livelihood for all individuals who engage. The results of this study do not support the universality of this assertion. In fact, this was not even a universal expectation amongst participants.

Conclusion

This study investigated the motivations for enterprise of those experiencing poverty. The research makes three principal contributions to knowledge. First, the theoretical proposition that motivations are linked to the quality of enterprise is criticised. Instead, we found that many of the respondents in this study expressed motivations consistent with opportunity-orientation. Second, the study develops a new, more nuanced description of business motivations and how they intersect across push-pull and intrinsic-extrinsic characteristics. Third, our research indicates that circumstance and context are central, and inform subsequent thinking regarding the desirability and feasibility of enterprise. Thus, the dichotomous relationship between pull motivations and growth/wealth outcomes and push motivations with lack of growth/wealth outcomes is challenged. Instead, we demonstrate through our examination of enterprise in contexts of low-value outcomes that the push/pull-outcomes relationship is simplistic (and unrealistic), suggesting that current conceptualisations of motivations do not reflect the fluidity or overlapping perceptions of push and pull motivations.

As with all empirical studies, this research has several limitations. First, it is a qualitative study with a relatively small sample and thus generalizability is limited. Second, as a cross-sectional study, future research would benefit from taking a longitudinal approach that could work with those in the pre-nascent/nascent stage and as their business develops in order to explore motivations beyond post-hoc recollections. Finally, this study was conducted in a Western economic context in which there are a variety of business and financial safeguard systems that may have an additional impact on how motivations are shaped. Thus, we recommend that research informed by consideration of structure and agency is tested in different economic contexts to explore the robustness of the relationships found in this study.

This is so much improved. Thank you for taking on all the editing suggestions.

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Appendix

Open codes	Focussed codes	Themes
<i>It's very flexible and always really interesting and exciting. R1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Freedom & flexibility ● Autonomy ● Personal development/passion (pursuit of creativity/hobby) ● Self-esteem ● Human capital/work experiences 	Intrinsic (Pull)
<i>It showed me that I was still a valued person. R6</i>		
<i>I was thinking of doing something on my own anyway; so, it had been in my head. R5</i>		
<i>I have to because I don't have enough income [from] my pension. R10</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Income (earned/benefits) ● Opportunity ● Capital available – personal/government ● Social networks 	Extrinsic (Pull)
<i>I didn't look for it. It was suggested to me and she put me forward and that was it. R5</i>		
<i>I am terrified of going back to work, particularly with an illness that's so unpredictable. R12</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Desire/need for work/life flexibility not met while in employment 	Intrinsic (Push)
<i>I started doing it there as a kind of hobby and then when I gave up work 2 years ago... I had to give it up because I couldn't keep up with [Name] hospital appointments. Last year she had 40 odd appointments. So, there's no job that will let you have that much time off. So, it was just getting too difficult. So, I gave up and started doing the dolls, 2 years ago in May. R1</i>		
<i>I do some babysitting, you know, ducking and diving, a bit of everything. R9</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Status - Stigma of unemployment ● Lack of other work options ● Encouragement from others ● Income necessity (security) ● Industry norms of sectors 	Extrinsic (Push)
<i>I have a degree in agricultural forest sciences, but that's not particularly relevant, although that got me into environmental consensus, and conflict resolution. [...] I didn't do forestry. Just because of the time I came into it and the attitudes towards women in forestry, at that point, made it really difficult. [...] Although it was post equal ops, but they still explicitly said, we need a man for the job. I was too green to say, oh, you can't say that, you know, and also, of course, increasingly, I didn't want to work with people who had that attitude. R10</i>		

<p><i>I felt quite conscious of being a bit sort of poor and needy, and being an artistic person, or creative person, it's status wise, it's like being unemployed. It has an immense knock on effect on your confidence and self-esteem. R14</i></p>		
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Appendix 1. Data reduction table – codes and themes