

[ICSB 2010 Competitive Paper Submission Example¹](#)

Crossing the Great Sample Divide: Comparing Perceptions of Environmental Uncertainty among Entrepreneurship Students and Nascent Entrepreneurs

Principal Topic & Research Question(s)

Entrepreneurship involves seeking to exploit profitable opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) by taking judgmental decisions about the coordination of scarce resources in the creation and growth of new products, services and ventures (Casson, 2003). Prior research has considered the efficacy of entrepreneurship education, particularly as growth in entrepreneurship programs continues and students increasingly enter college with active ventures. The collective evidence to date suggests that despite entrepreneurship students differing from their “real world” counterparts in some meaningful ways (e.g., Robinson, Huefner, & Hunt, 1991), an important issue for future research revolves around *how* to improve the content and delivery of entrepreneurship to meet student needs as they seek to develop their venturing goals (Gendron & Greene, 2004).

This study seeks to extend prior research by exploring perceptions of environmental uncertainty among student entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs within the larger population. Specifically, extant theory and empirical evidence from the entrepreneurship and social-psychological literatures are employed in order

¹ Note: Maximum abstract length is 900 words (excluding title)

to investigate three primary research questions. First, what type and to what degree do student entrepreneurs perceive environmental uncertainty? Second, is the degree and dimensionality of uncertainty perceived by student entrepreneurs consistent with the degree perceived by the broader entrepreneurial population? If so, does the comparative consistency in degree and/or dimensionality of perceived environmental uncertainty with the broader entrepreneurial population vary with additional academic training for students? Exploring these questions will provide a clearer understanding of the social-cognitive and psycho-cognitive elements entrepreneurs employ as they acquire additional entrepreneurial training and strategize for venture development.

Methodology/Key Proposition

This study draws on lay epistemic theory of social cognition and prior empirical entrepreneurship research as it examines the dimensionality of student perceived environmental uncertainty and compares these perceptions to the broader entrepreneurial population. Our basic proposition is that entrepreneurs early in their formal academic training will perceive a greater degree of environmental uncertainty, both generally and across various dimensions proposed in previous research (e.g., Milliken, 1987), but that the difference will diminish with greater academic training.

Student data for this project are generated via a Web-based survey of U.S. students at varying levels of academic training in entrepreneurship. Archival data from the Panel Study of Entrepreneurial Dynamics

are used for comparative purposes to the broader entrepreneurial population. Descriptive, comparative, and multivariate data analysis techniques appropriate for examining the central research questions are employed.

Contributions

This research makes three specific contributions to emerging research focusing on effective entrepreneurship education delivery. First, it sheds light on how student entrepreneurs perceive the significance uncertainty associated with various dimensions of their respective environments. Second, provides a rare comparison between the perceptions of this increasingly significant entrepreneurial population and the broader entrepreneurial population upon which much of our current understanding of new venture creation is based. Third, it provides insights into how and the extent to which academic study in entrepreneurship contributes to the evolution of environmental uncertainty perceptions. In doing so, it offers insights to entrepreneurship educators and policy makers alike as to how they can meaningfully support economic development.