ASSESSING THE METHODOLOGICAL RIGOR OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH: THE STATE OF THE FIELD (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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INTERACTIVE PAPER

ASSESSING THE METHODOLOGICAL RIGOR OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH: THE STATE OF THE FIELD

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Principal Topic

The field of Entrepreneurship has experienced increased legitimacy and popularity over the last 25 years and the growth of the field over the last decade being has been exponential. The field’s evolution has benefitted from advances in both theory development and research methodology resulting in an increase in the number of entrepreneurship publications in both general management journals and entrepreneurship focused journals, the latter of which have grown in prestige. However, advances in theory development have outstripped those in research methodology (Dean, Shook & Payne, 2007).

A number of studies that systematically examined the methodologies employed in research throughout the field (e.g., Chandler & Lyon, 2001, Busenitz, et al., 2003, Crook, et al, 2010, Dean, et al. 2007) have noted that the rigor in the discipline has increased over time. In this study we build on previous research by expanding the journals included in our examination. We also empirically test the relationship between the level of rigor employed and the level of importance placed on publication in specific journals by management departments. This enables us to offer a set of recommendations that helps improve the general state of methodological rigor of entrepreneurship research and that benefits scholars as they approach empirical tests in the field.

Method

We perform a content analysis of entrepreneurship-related articles from the general management journals and entrepreneurship specific journals during the period of 2007-2009. The journals were selected based upon their acceptability as a target for empirical entrepreneurship articles. We also analyze journal lists provided by management departments to create a set of journal categories based upon the import placed upon publication in each of these journals. Through this content analysis and subsequent hypotheses testing we examine the relationship between publication in a set of journals and the inclusion of various methodologies.

Results and Implications

Our results provide an accurate view of the methodological rigor employed in different categories of journals across the field of entrepreneurship so that scholars may be cognizant of what level of rigor is necessary when designing entrepreneurship research for publication in specific journals. High quality scholarship should be the goal of every entrepreneurship researcher to provide the greatest understanding of the phenomenon that we choose to study. Empirical results demonstrating the importance that reviewers and editors place on methodological rigor will be more persuasive and have greater impact on research design decisions than simply discussing this topic.

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