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HELP ME ADAPT: MINORITY STATUS, ENTREPRENEURIAL HELP-SEEKING AND VENTURE FLEXIBILITY (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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≈ INTERACTIVE PAPER ≈

**HELP ME ADAPT: MINORITY STATUS, ENTREPRENEURIAL
HELP-SEEKING AND VENTURE FLEXIBILITY**

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Principal Topic

Minority entrepreneurs face unique challenges beginning and managing their ventures. The blocked mobility thesis proposes that the lack of minority success in the mainstream economy can be explained to a large degree by racial discrimination and socio-cultural barriers that they face in the mainstream society (Teixeira, 2001). For example, compared with non-minority entrepreneurs, minority entrepreneurs often operate in low-income business sectors due to prejudices imposed on them and their lack of sufficient human capital (Bates & Robb, 2014). As a consequence, minority-owned businesses are constrained in choosing where to locate, are smaller in size, less profitable and more likely to fail compared to those owned and run by non-minority entrepreneurs (Bates, 1989). While evidence suggests that minority ventures are less likely to succeed than non-minority ventures, little empirical research has examined venture-specific factors that differentiate minority and non-minority entrepreneurs.

We hypothesize that minority and non-minority entrepreneurs seek and gain help from different sources. We further hypothesize that the entrepreneur's ability to adapt to and remain flexible in the dynamic business environment is impacted by their access to needed resources when help-seeking. We also examine the differences between minority and non-minority entrepreneurs and their general behavior when seeking help.

Method

To test these questions, we are conducting a mixed-method investigation of minority and non-minority entrepreneurs. First, we collected multi-wave data of 228 entrepreneurs located in the United States, to understand how help-seeking and adaptation processes unfold across time. We also conducted a qualitative study to better understand how minority and non-minority entrepreneurs seek help and stay flexible, in addition to offering insights that will help explain our findings in the quantitative portion of our study.

Results and Implications

Preliminary quantitative results show significant differences between minority and non-minority entrepreneurs in help-seeking propensity rates, and a potential boundary condition between help-seeking and venture adaptation.

Early coding of the qualitative data reveal themes of emotional connection to the business and a desire to control venture outcomes which impacts help seeking decisions among the entrepreneurs interviewed in this study.

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