

Investigating the Entrepreneurial Attitudes of African Americans: A Study of Young Adults

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Executive Summary

An examination of the entrepreneurial attitudes of African American business students from multiple U.S. universities was conducted using the Entrepreneurial Attitudes Orientation (EAO) scale. Results of the analysis indicate that African American students have very high entrepreneurial attitudes compared with the original validation sample of the EAO, and these attitudes are even higher among those with prior entrepreneurial exposure via a family-owned or self-owned business. These findings are consistent with current rates of minority-started businesses and known intergenerational linkages in business ownership. Discussion of these findings and future research are also addressed.

Introduction

As noted in multiple reports from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), entrepreneurs often pursue business ownership based on either opportunity recognition or financial necessity due to the lack of economic alternatives. Consistent with this finding, research indicates that minorities are seeking out more entrepreneurial opportunities as a way to overcome the frustration and discontent associated with the lack of advancement opportunities in their current organizations (Heilman & Chen, 2003; Weiler & Bernasek, 2001). While these numbers indicate that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well, research indicates that many individuals have high levels of entrepreneurial potential that is never acted upon (Kent, 1990). In fact, the Kaufman Foundation indicates that minority entrepreneurs are a largely untapped resource in the economy of the United States. Of special concern is the degree to which African Americans may experience barriers that limit their potential in the entrepreneurial sector.

Before addressing potential obstacles historically faced by African Americans in regards to business ownership, it is first important to understand the significance of entrepreneurship for minority groups. As suggested by Acs, Tarpley and Phillips (1998), a primary contribution of entrepreneurship for minorities is the opportunity it creates to enter the economic and social mainstream of American society. Similarly, past research has argued that the health and growth of African American-owned small businesses often serves as a strong barometer for the overall progress made by minorities in the U.S. (Feldman, Koberg & Dean, 1991; Thompson, 1999).

The passage of the Small Business Act has positively impacted the number of minorities who have considered entrepreneurship as a viable career choice. The Act enhances the use of entrepreneurial training to grow the capacity and skills of potential small business owners (Martin, Wech, Sandefur & Pan, 2006). As a result of the governmental and educational initiatives, the number of opportunities for minorities to receive training and education for small business development has substantially increased over the past few decades.

Between 1997 and 2002, minority-owned companies increased in number, annual gross receipts, and paid employees at a rate faster than non-minority firms. According to a report from the Minority Business Development Agency (2006), these businesses represented almost 18% of classifiable firms, employed 9% of all paid employees, and grossed 8% of all annual gross receipts (\$668 billion) in 2002. More recent research indicates that there are approximately one million African American owned businesses in the U.S., accounting for over \$100 billion in annual sales (African American Entrepreneurs, 2009). Additional evidence also indicates that minority entrepreneurship has steadily increased during the past decade, with estimations that currently 30% of small businesses in the U.S. are owned by women or minorities (Bergman, 2006).

Little research has empirically examined the entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions of African Americans, particularly young adults. In fact, despite their increased involvement in business ownership, research indicates that minorities in general tend to be less optimistic overall in their expectations of business success (Carter, 2000) and are more likely to fail when starting a new venture (Boden & Nucci, 2000; Carter, Williams & Reynolds, 1997; Robb, 2002). Thompson (2004) points out that successful entrepreneurship requires a combination of temperament, talent and technique. It can be argued that temperament is first needed in order to convince African Americans of their potential in the entrepreneurial arena, and to encourage them to view business ownership as a viable career option.

The purpose of this study is to examine the entrepreneurial attitudes of African American students. Specifically, this analysis compares the entrepreneurial attitudes of this group of minorities against the original validation sample of the Entrepreneurial Attitudes Orientation scale. A stronger understanding of the entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions of young adults in the African American population can offer insight into their interest in business ownership as a viable career choice, and make an important contribution to the entrepreneurship research body. Additionally, a better understanding of the entrepreneurial mindset of African Americans is important in determining their interest in entrepreneurship education programs.

Literature Review

The study of entrepreneurship may include consideration of numerous contextual factors, including environmental and individual characteristics. Past areas of focus for entrepreneurial research have included geographical location, regional policies, access to resources and support

programs, family history, educational levels, personality traits, attitudes, ethnicity, and gender. The current study considers two of these individual factors, specifically attitudes and ethnicity.

The work of Robinson, Stimpson, Huefner, and Hunt (1991) was one of the first to incorporate an attitude scale to predict entrepreneurial activity. An advantage of using an attitudinal approach is that it can be more domain-specific, which increases the correlation with actual behavior and reduces unexplained variability. Attitudes tend to change across time and situations through an interactive process with the environment. Once a person's attitude has been measured, a prediction can be made about the person's future actions (Carlson, 1985). Robinson et. al. (1991) developed the Entrepreneurial Attitude Orientation (EAO) model based on the four constructs of achievement, innovation, personal control, and self-esteem in business.

The theory of planned behavior developed by Ajzen (1991) also provides an important background when examining entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions. Ajzen (1991) suggests that attitudes are influenced by beliefs and probable outcomes associated with behaviors. Past research has used the theory of planned behavior to examine entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions, and how they can impact entrepreneurial behaviors (Fayolle & Gailly, 2013; Krueger & Carsrud, 1993; Tkachev & Kolvereid, 1999). Based on the theory of planned behavior, entrepreneurial intentions are the cognitive representation of an entrepreneur's willingness to adopt a specific behavior, and an antecedent to entrepreneurial behavior (Ajzen, 1991). A more favorable attitude toward entrepreneurship will increase a person's intention to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Multiple studies have used the theory of planned behavior to examine the entrepreneurial intentions of students (Audet, 2004; Boissin & Emin 2006; Harris, Gibson & Taylor, 2007/2008; Fayolle & Gailly, 2013).

Scholarly research on the entrepreneurial experiences of African Americans today is limited, and is not fully understood within the context of social science literature. While few would question the idea that African Americans, like other entrepreneurial actors, have difficulty creating and managing successful firms, the suggestion that they are not successful has received much attention in scholarly and popular outlets (Foley, 1966; Frazier, 1957; Glazer & Moynihan, 1963; Light, 1972; Sowell, 1978). However, research on African American experiences often does not convey the complex, textured difficulties they encounter when considering business ownership (Young, 2007). Instead, more recent research echoes the old, but still relevant themes, of inadequate capitalization and discrimination that have survived with remarkably little alteration since at least the 1970s (Young, 2007).

Past research suggests that both females (Carter, 2000; Hisrich & Brush, 1987; Thomas, 2001) and minorities (Heilman & Chen, 2003; Kourilsky & Esfandiari, 1997) face serious obstacles in the entrepreneurial process, including less education and business experience, limited resources, and fewer mentors and advisors. In addition, they have greater difficulty obtaining financing (Coleman, 2002; Verheul & Thurik, 2001) and have a more limited credit history (Shaw, Carter & Brierton, 2001). Research also indicates that minorities are less interested in starting a business (Matthews & Moser, 1995; Kourilsky & Walstad, 1997) and when they do it tends to be smaller and more likely to be in the retail or service sectors (Perry,

2002) where failure rates are much higher than other business sectors (Brush & Chaganti, 1999). African Americans can become too reliant on micro businesses due to their inability to penetrate a more traditional customer base (Sriram, Mersha & Herron, 2007). Robb (2002) and Marlow and Patton (2005) suggest that this occupational segregation may result from the capital restraints faced by many minority entrepreneurs.

In addition to resource constraints, two critical challenges, which may be somewhat linked together, are the skill deficiencies of minority groups in regards to entrepreneurship and the dearth of role models and mentors available within local communities. Over a decade ago, Kourilsky and Esfandiari (1997) noted that although African American youth reported they would like to explore the opportunity of starting their own business, they lacked a strong foundation of basic entrepreneurial knowledge. The good news is that entrepreneurial attitudes and skills can be developed through entrepreneurship education programs (Mitra & Matlay, 2004; Robinson et al., 1991). Research shows that education and skill differentials help explain why certain people engage in entrepreneurial activities and are more successful than others (Carter, Gartner, Shaver & Gatewood, 2003; Farmer, 1997; Gatewood, Shaver, Powers & Gartner, 2002). Various streams of literature also relate the effects of entrepreneurship education and venture creation on the development of youth (Rasheed, & Rasheed, 2004).

An established body of research has investigated the personality characteristics and traits associated with entrepreneurship (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994; Brockhaus, 1980; Krueger & Brazeal, 1994; Montago, Kuratko & Scarella, 1986). Collins, Hanges & Locke (2004) suggest that need for achievement is an entrepreneurial trait, while other research has shown that entrepreneurs have a high level of self efficacy and esteem (Erickson, 2002; Krueger & Brazeal, 1994). Additional research indicates that entrepreneurs have a greater internal locus of control (Hansemark, 2003) and possess a more positive attitude toward risk (Douglas & Shepherd, 2002; McMullen & Shepherd, 2006), creativity (Feldman & Bolino, 2000), and innovation (Rauch & Frese, 2007).

Researchers have also explored the learning theory associated with program content and the pedagogy of entrepreneurial development programs (Leitch & Harrison, 1999). Empirical evidence supports entrepreneurial education as an intervention tool that impacts adult attitudes toward entrepreneurship (Ede, Panigrahi & Calcich, 1998; Hansemark, 2003; Hatten & Ruhland, 1995). Youth awareness and attitudes related to the social and economic desirability of entrepreneurship as a career option has been the subject of other studies (Kourilsky & Walstad, 1998; Walstad & Kourilsky, 1998). A recent study by Fayolle and Gailly (2013) showed that the impact of entrepreneurial training programs on entrepreneurial intentions is strongly impacted by the students' initial level of intention and prior exposure to entrepreneurship.

If Kourilsky and Walstad (1998) are correct that skill deficiencies stop minorities from considering business ownership, then the resulting effect can be a limited supply of positive role models for young adults. In fact, research by Heilman and Chen (2003) found a general lack of mentors and mentoring opportunities for potential minority entrepreneurs. Research indicates that a strong support network and a positive relationship with a mentor can help prospective

business owners learn the skills needed to operate and manage a small business successfully. Minorities may have fewer opportunities to engage in professional relationships with mentors because of cross cultural differences or the unwillingness of other minority leaders to participate in mentoring relationships (Heilman & Chen, 2003).

The entrepreneurial sector is an important source of future opportunity for minority groups; however, prior research indicates that minorities need more skill and technique development in order to achieve greater levels of success. While a pressing problem, it is equally important to gain a better understanding of the attitudes of young African American adults toward entrepreneurship in order to determine their future entrepreneurial intentions.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Students enrolled in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) served as a target area for collecting data for this study. HBCUs have played a crucial role in the rise of black entrepreneurship. These institutions have been “seats of black progress” because of their supportive campus environment and open opportunity structures (Bennett & Xie, 2003). Research on the graduates supported by the United Negro College Fund report high levels of satisfaction with HBCUs and frequently stated that they have prepared “them well for participation in society” (Butler, 1991). In addition the fund observed that upward economic and social mobility of HBCU graduates are, in many respects, reminiscent of the experiences of immigrant ethnic groups that pursued the American Dream through higher education and entrepreneurship (Butler, 1991).

Evaluating the relationship between attendance at HBCUs and those African Americans who have become successful entrepreneurs reveals two opposing viewpoints. From one perspective, many believe that native-born African Americans have failed to develop a tradition of entrepreneurship most notably because they lack opportunities to gain experience in “buying and selling” (Frazier, 1949), the dearth of business “success symbols” (Foley, 1966), and the absence of a cultural heritage (Light, 1972). Thus, this viewpoint embraces the idea that successful African American businesses result from a tradition of successful individuals, rather than one based upon a collective experience (Light, 1972).

Another perspective examining the relationship between attendance at HBCUs and entrepreneurship attitudes embraces the view that a small class of mostly Southern blacks has followed a tradition of self-help and entrepreneurship. Inspired by the idea espoused by Booker T. Washington, they could “take advantage of the disadvantages” of racial oppression (Butler, 1991). This counterargument holds that active participation in the educational, religious, and fraternal organizations of the segregated black communities of the South is a hallmark of this select group of black entrepreneurs and that attendance at HBCUs is central to this heritage (Butler, 1991). It suggests that the formation and continued existence of this class, particularly in the South, where blacks faced their greatest disadvantages – has been tied closely to

involvement in the institutions that its members have collectively supported, most notably HBCUs (Boyd, 2007).

Hypotheses

Despite the discrepancies highlighted in previous literature, the attraction of entrepreneurship continues to be positive among college-age African Americans. Various GEM reports suggest that ethnic entrepreneurship is on the rise in many regions of the world, and extol the importance of involving minorities in the entrepreneurial process in order to accelerate the overall pace of entrepreneurial activity within the economy (Reynolds, Camp, Bygrave, Autio, & Hay, 2001). While African Americans are still somewhat underrepresented as small business owners in the U.S., the growth rate of African American-owned small businesses is quite high (Martin, Wech, Sandefur & Pan, 2006). Sriram, Mersha and Herron (2007) suggest that entrepreneurial opportunities are critically important within the African America community as a means of overcoming the stagnation in our national economy, particularly in urban areas. In addition, a recent study from Junior Achievement found that 86% of African American teens expressed interest in starting a business (African American Entrepreneurs, 2009). This finding leads one to believe that many African American students view entrepreneurship as a legitimate career opportunity. As such, the following hypothesis is offered:

H1: African American students will possess significantly stronger entrepreneurial attitudes than the Entrepreneurial Attitudes Orientation (EAO) scale's validation group.

Research has established a link between entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions and past business experience and exposure. This link may include direct work experience or indirect experience through a family business. Studies show that both work experience with a small business (Peterman & Kennedy, 2003) and a family business (Reitan, 1997) has a positive impact on perceptions of new venture feasibility and desirability. In addition, Gatewood and Shaver (1991) found that self-confidence and motivation can be affected by experience and past business results.

Research has also addressed the identification of specific skills necessary for business development. Baum and Locke (2004) argue that skills related to resource attainment are needed to start and grow a new business venture. Organizational skills that are often learned in formal education settings are then needed to manage older, more developed organizations. Those who come from an entrepreneurial background are more likely to have been exposed to the resource allocation skills referred to by Baum and Locke (2004). They may have more confidence in their ability to start a business and be successful in a business venture. Since research has shown that entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions can change (Robinson et al., 1991), prior personal experience is likely to play a role in shaping these attitudes. Fayolle and Gailly (2013) found that prior entrepreneurial exposure and experience can directly impact entrepreneurial intentions, and



that formal entrepreneurship training programs often have a greater attitudinal impact on those with limited experiences. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H2: Past entrepreneurial experiences with entrepreneurial activities will result in stronger entrepreneurial attitudes for African American students.

Methodology

Participants

Participants in the study included 93 students enrolled in business courses at multiple HBCUs. The schools surveyed were located in the southeast U.S., with the common denominator being an existing course curriculum related to entrepreneurship. At participating schools faculty members were asked to request that their students complete an anonymous online survey. Survey completion was entirely voluntary and no identifying information was recorded.

Students within the sample were 54% female with an average age of 25. The participants came from all class levels, with the largest percentage classified as seniors (45%), followed by graduate students (29%), juniors (18%), sophomores (4%) and freshman (4%). In addition, consistent with previous research comparing unique sample group EAO scores (Gibson, Harris, & Sadighian, 2011; Harris, Gibson & Taylor, 2007/2008), the EAO validation sample (Robinson et al., 1991) was used as the baseline comparison group for this study.

Measures

We measured entrepreneurial attitudes with the EAO survey instrument (Robinson et al., 1991). The EAO is theoretically well grounded and provides a composite score based on four attitude subscales: 1) Achievement in business refers to concrete results associated with the start-up of a business (Cronbach's alpha = .84), 2) Perceived personal control of business outcomes concerns one's perception of control or influence over his or her business (Cronbach's alpha = .70), 3) Innovation in business relates to acting on business activities in novel ways (Cronbach's alpha = .90), and 4) Perceived self-esteem in business which relates to self-confidence with regard to one's business affairs (Cronbach's alpha = .73). The four subscales have been shown to produce 77% accuracy in predicting entrepreneurship (Robinson et al., 1991).

In addition to completing the EAO, participants provided demographic information with respect to gender, age, class standing, previous exposure to entrepreneurial organizations, and information related to their future entrepreneurial intentions. In order to measure prior exposure to entrepreneurial initiatives, two questions were asked: (1) Has your family ever owned a small business? (2) Do you currently own a small business or have you ever owned a small business in the past?

Analyses

Since the primary interest of the study is to examine differences between the African American student population and the scores of entrepreneurs used in the original validation of the EAO, t-tests were used to compare the means of each group on each of the attitudes and intentions of interest.

Results

Hypothesis one was supported in all but one instance. African American students possessed significantly stronger entrepreneurial attitudes than did the EAO's overall validation group. In the one exception, entrepreneurial self-esteem, African American students were not significantly different, indicating they possessed comparable entrepreneurial orientation in this arena. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the four entrepreneurial attitudes used as the dependent variables for the current study. Table 1 also indicates the results of the t-test for differences between our sample and the validation sample used to create the EAO.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Entrepreneurial Attitudes

		Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Mean Diff.
Entrepreneurial Innovation *	African Americans	7.10	1.02	7.78	.82
	Validation Sample	6.2			
Entrepreneurial Achievement *	African Americans	8.18	1.25	11.40	1.48
	Validation Sample	6.7			
Entrepreneurial Personal Control *	African Americans	8.06	1.50	10.67	1.66
	Validation Sample	6.4			
Entrepreneurial Self-esteem	African Americans	6.62	1.68	-.45	-.08
	Validation Sample	6.7			

* $p < .05$.

Hypothesis two examined whether prior exposure to entrepreneurial activities was associated with stronger entrepreneurial attitudes within the current sample population. This supposition was supported for all entrepreneurial attitudes except entrepreneurial self-esteem. For self-esteem, having exposure via a family business or having one's own business was not associated with significantly stronger entrepreneurial attitudes. Table 2 provides both the descriptive statistics, as well as the results of the significance testing, for this hypothesis.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for Entrepreneurial Attitudes & Prior Exposure

	Has anyone in your immediate family ever owned a small business?	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Mean Diff.
Entrepreneurial Innovation *	Yes	44	7.26	.88	2.21	.45
	No	49	6.80	1.10		
Entrepreneurial Achievement *	Yes	44	8.50	1.21	2.41	.61
	No	49	7.89	1.23		
Entrepreneurial Personal Control *	Yes	44	8.43	1.32	2.40	.71
	No	49	7.73	1.59		
Entrepreneurial Self-esteem	Yes	44	6.95	1.68	1.84	.63
	No	49	6.32	1.63		

	Do you currently own a small business or have you ever owned a small business in the past?	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Mean Diff.
Entrepreneurial Innovation *	Yes	12	7.97	.71	4.69	1.09
	No	81	6.88	.98		
Entrepreneurial Achievement *	Yes	12	8.98	.88	3.18	.92
	No	81	8.06	1.26		
Entrepreneurial Personal Control *	Yes	12	9.08	.92	3.74	1.17
	No	81	7.91	1.51		
Entrepreneurial Self-esteem	Yes	12	7.15	1.66	1.18	.61
	No	81	6.54	1.67		

* $p < .05$.

Discussion

Given the realities of the current economy and the job market which college graduates are currently entering, it is of no surprise that interest in entrepreneurship is growing. A need exists for the continual encouragement of business ownership among African-Americans since less than 2% of all African Americans in the United States become business owners, compared to 5.6% for Caucasians (Ede, Panigrahi & Calcich, 1998). Comparisons of owner-age data indicate that owners between the ages of 25 and 34 represent only 17% of all African American business owners, the lowest percentage across all ethnic groups (Walstad & Kourilsky, 1998). This

finding suggests that a focus on introducing entrepreneurship at an earlier age may have a significant impact on reducing the disparity in business ownership by African-Americans.

In addition, some argue that limited opportunities for minority career advancement in the corporate world, particularly African Americans, makes entrepreneurship a more attractive and viable alternative (Basu & Altinay, 2002; Sriram, Mersha & Herron, 2007). While research has made significant strides in predicting what factors promote overall entrepreneurial success, less is known about why some individuals pursue entrepreneurial initiatives and some do not, and why some groups succeed at higher rates while others fail. According to Fairlie & Robb (2008), much still needs to be learned about why some racial groups are more successful in their entrepreneurial endeavors than others. This examination of the entrepreneurial attitudes of African American business students seeks to provide insight into this phenomenon.

The economy is highly dependent on small business and entrepreneurship, and this observation very much includes the enterprises of African Americans. As previously stated, approximately one million African American owned businesses exist in the U.S. accounting for \$100 billion in annual sales (African American Entrepreneurs, 2009). In addition, 86% of African American teens polled by Junior Achievement expressed interest in starting a business (African American Entrepreneurs, 2009). According to another sample of African American teenagers, their interest in entrepreneurship stems from a desire to be more autonomous and to help others (Wilson, Marlino & Kickul, 2004). These statistics are highly consistent with our findings. The emerging minority entrepreneurs included in the current study were found to have significantly stronger entrepreneurial attitudes than the student entrepreneurs who were originally used to validate the Entrepreneurial Attitudes Orientation scale.

The findings of this study with regard to the impact of prior exposure to entrepreneurial activities and its impact on attitudes are also consistent with what is known about real-life entrepreneurship. Other researchers indicate that intergenerational linkages in business ownership are quite strong. Some studies indicate that being self-employed is much more likely for the children of entrepreneurs (Fairlie & Robb, 2008). In fact, census data estimate that more than one half of all business owners had a self-employed family member (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

It is particularly good news to find that African American students in the sample scored high in achievement and innovation. Many studies (Collins, Hanges & Locke, 2004; McClelland, 1961; Rauch & Frese, 2007) found that the need for achievement is a strong entrepreneurial trait and is positively correlated with business success. In addition, achievement-oriented entrepreneurs often have the necessary blend of temperament and talent to identify business opportunities and arrange organizational resources to capitalize on these opportunities (Busenitz & Arthurs, 2007).

Early research by Schumpeter (1949) emphasized that innovation is a core concept for entrepreneurship. More recent research on innovation has shown that entrepreneurs are more innovative than the general population (Rauch & Frese, 2007). They are also critically important for their ability to innovate in the marketplace (Bosma & Harding, 2006). Unfortunately,

research also shows that minorities are often not involved in innovative businesses and tend to focus more on the service and retail sectors due to the low entry barriers (Marlow & Patton, 2005; Robb, 2002). However, these industries are also noted for higher failure rates. Perhaps the next generation of African American entrepreneurs will approach business creation from a more innovative viewpoint, regardless of the industry sector.

An additional concern is the fact that minority business entrepreneurs and business owners often fail to seek help and advice from mainstream institutions (Dyer & Ross, 2007), which can provide an important assistance in their entrepreneurial endeavors. It has been noted that they tend to avoid business support agencies such as chambers of commerce, commercial banks and government-sponsored institutions (Marlow, 1992). Other studies (Oc & Tiesdell, 1999; Ram, Sanghera, Abbas & Barlow, 2000; Young, 2002) also found that minority business owners are reluctant to utilize formal training programs. The lack of entry into innovative businesses and the reluctance to seek help from formalized support systems indicates a greater need for entrepreneurial education targeted towards minorities.

Although not a primary focus of our study, it is important to note the value that entrepreneurship education at various academic levels can play in helping prepare African American students for success in the entrepreneurial world. Research shows that many young adults, particularly those aged 25-34, are very much interested in new venture creation. Moreover, individuals with post-secondary academic experience are more likely to act in an entrepreneurial manner (Minniti, Bygrave & Autio, 2006). Fortunately, the number of academic courses on small business and entrepreneurship has grown dramatically over the past few decades (Solomon, Duffy & Tarabishy, 2002).

Entrepreneurial education can prepare youth for new venture initiation by nurturing entrepreneurial motivation and helping them develop the knowledge and relevant skills that improve self-efficacy and effectiveness (Ede, Panigrahi, & Calcich, 1998; Fayolle & Gailly, 2013; Hatten & Ruhland, 1995). Kourilsky (1995) concluded that the supply of entrepreneurs could be increased if more people were to develop a positive perception about the feasibility and desirability of entrepreneurship through educational preparation at an early age. Similarly, Fayolle & Gailly (2013) suggest that training programs can help strengthen entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions, particularly for those lacking entrepreneurial experiences. Thus it is critical for colleges and universities to offer entrepreneurship programs for young adults interested in business ownership. These programs can help them to recognize that entrepreneurship is a viable career choice, and they can also equip them with a skill set for business development. Thompson (2004) suggests that talent and temperament are vital for entrepreneurs, and talent can be improved through participation in educational programs. If someone's temperament to be an entrepreneur can be assessed, then learning can be "relatively quick and easy" when appropriate training is provided (p. 246).

With the growth of African American participation in entrepreneurial activities, it is reasonable to assume an increase in their interest in entrepreneurship education (Martin et al., 2006). The large presence of African Americans at HBCUs can provide a significant opportunity

to influence a new generation of aspiring entrepreneurs. In order to better prepare students for business ownership, these institutions should consider offering formal mentorship programs to complement their educational offerings. Our results indicate African American students have an active entrepreneurial mindset. A more developed skill set and network can help these young adults overcome any real or perceived obstacles, and unleash their entrepreneurial passion to become more actively involved in new venture creation.

A model of urban entrepreneurship proposed by Sriram, Mersha, and Herron (2007) suggests that skills, motivation, and resources are all important factors for entrepreneurship to occur in the African American community. The model emphasizes that personal traits and values are impacted by culture and work together in determining an individual's level of motivation, which in turn impacts entrepreneurial behavior. Similarly, other studies (Lindsay, 2005; Morrison, 2000) argue that culture is important because it plays an integral role in determining entrepreneurial attitudes and whether entrepreneurial behaviors are desirable. Sriram, Mersha and Herron (2007) suggest that entrepreneurial achievement is driven by individual behavior and moderated by resource availability. They advise that close attention should be paid to the value of appropriate interventions in regards to promoting more entrepreneurial activities in the African American community. Educational programs can often be an effective intervention to encourage more minorities to consider business ownership as a viable alternative. However, as proposed by Dana (2001), in order for these programs to be successful they should be based on an understanding of cultural history, values, and way of thinking.

When compared with the work of Sriram, Mersha & Herron (2007), our findings are likely to be good omens. If one accepts the premise that attitudes are precursors to intentions, which then predict behaviors, the current generation of African American business students is well suited to pursue and succeed in the entrepreneurial realm. They have not only the motivation to pursue new business opportunities, but also have unprecedented access to the human capital that is gained through education and prior exposure to entrepreneurship that are necessary determinants of success in this field.

Limitations and Future Research

Promoting the success of small business enterprises plays an important role in our national economy. Minority firms hire more than 4.7 million employees, a disproportionate share of them minorities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), and many of these jobs are located in disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, increased entrepreneurial activities can result in a lower unemployment rate, increased establishment of new companies, and fewer failures of existing businesses (Hatten & Ruhland, 1995). Given the fact that minority-owned businesses do not have the same profitability outcomes of white-owned enterprise, all efforts to understand this discrepancy should be undertaken. Scholarly research on the entrepreneurial experiences of African Americans today is limited and is not fully understood within the context of social science literature.

While our study attempts to learn more about the entrepreneurial attitudes and experiences of young African American adults, it is not without its limitations. For one, a greater sample size is likely warranted to facilitate better generalizations about African American entrepreneurs. In addition, our sample was limited to students attending HBCUs. While these institutions serve as an important vehicle for African American students, these students may not be representative of the types of students found at other universities with a more varied population. Finally, our study did not attempt to categorize the types of previous entrepreneurial experiences among students; different types of experience may impact entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions in different ways.

Fortunately, our findings indicate that one area that should not be an impediment to the present generation of nascent entrepreneurs is their attitudes toward business ownership. We encourage more research that attempts to better understand the entrepreneurial skills, abilities, and attitudes among the African American population. With a better understanding of these factors, we can develop a more comprehensive policy and training programs to promote it. A greater supply of African American role models can serve as valuable mentors to young aspiring entrepreneurs who are interested in business ownership. As African Americans achieve greater entrepreneurial success, the economic standing of all Americans is improved and the small business sector's overall strength is solidified.

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