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Who is more likely to walk the talk? The symbolic management of entrepreneurial intentions by gender and work status

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ABSTRACT

Loose coupling as an antecedent to symbolic management is rarely if ever studied at the individual level of analysis. Yet, individuals are central agents in starting and developing new businesses. Inspired by cultural and institutional theory, this study examines the cognitive coupling and symbolic management of entrepreneurial intentions of individuals as a consequence of the cultural legitimacy of entrepreneurship in society. The research design first replicates the well-established positive relationship between high self-efficacy and high entrepreneurial intentions in a heterogenous sample and then demonstrates the interaction effects with cultural legitimacy and domain independent sub-groups, gender and work status. Using random sample survey data from 68 countries findings show that men and the employed are more likely to loosely couple and symbolically manage entrepreneurial intentions to found a new business than women and the unemployed. Women and the unemployed are more likely to walk the talk. This study contributes to the micro-foundations of cultural entrepreneurship and the 'hypocrisy story' in neo-institutional and world society theory with implications for entrepreneurship policy on gender and work status.

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Introduction

Cultural entrepreneurship is gaining currency in explaining how entrepreneurs evangelise support for their ideas and intentions. Entrepreneurs have been studied as 'skilled cultural operators' who are effective storytellers of their personal capabilities and visionary ideas (Gehman & Soublière, 2017; Rao, 1994; Soublière & Lockwood, 2018). Storytelling works by entrepreneurs articulating a narrative for an entrepreneurial opportunity and associating that narrative with a legitimating cultural referent that has resonance to a set of investors, customers and competitors (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001, *in press*). Large sample research substantiates that those entrepreneurs likely to obtain resources are the ones effective at telling a story with narrative fidelity to the

larger institutional environment (Martens, Jennings, & Jennings, 2007). Effective storytelling requires a set of skills anchored in a strong sense of self-efficacy that is the belief in one's capabilities. Yet, research on cultural entrepreneurship does not consider how individual differences among entrepreneurs and their institutional environments affect assessment of their personal capabilities and hence narration of entrepreneurial intentions.

This concern is not trivial because institutions shape the perception of entrepreneurial opportunities through their impact on individuals (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012, chapter 5). Moreover, the extent to which entrepreneurs believe in their own capabilities consistently shows a positive association between high self-efficacy and high entrepreneurial intentions to start a new business (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000). Self-efficacy refers to individuals' subjective understanding of his or her own capabilities to accomplish a certain task (Bandura, 1977).

A problem with entrepreneurial self-efficacy research is it has been carried out in relatively homogeneous contexts (e.g., Townsend, Busenitz, & Arthurs, 2010; Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005) and it does not consider the effects of the larger institutional environment (Mauer, Neergaard, & Linstad, 2009). This oversight is important for two reasons, first because entrepreneurship represents independent domains that do not necessarily share homologous relations (DiMaggio, 1997), for example showing variance by gender (Jennings & Brush, 2013), country (Global Entrepreneurship Research Association, 2017) and institutional environment (Baumol, 1996). That is, information and cognitive schema shaping entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours may be organised quite distinctly at work than at home, with little correspondence between the two (DiMaggio, 2002, p. 276).

Second, entrepreneurship as a career choice is in some contexts a stereotype, a cult and valorised identity surrounded by mythical and symbolic value (Brandl & Bullinger, 2012). Institutionalised myths and symbols are widely shared cultural ideals that individuals and organisations draw upon to support their personal narratives. Symbols are the words, gestures, pictures and objects that confer the meaning and legitimacy of that narrative (Morgan, Frost, & Pondy, 1983). And, an integral part of storytelling in the context of cultural entrepreneurship is how entrepreneurs manage cultural symbols and personal impressions in which they draw other peoples' attention to the meaning of an object or action that goes beyond the object's or action's intrinsic content or functional use (Zott & Huy, 2007, p. 70).

The high symbolic value of entrepreneurship as a career choice suggests it may be vulnerable to symbolic management by some individuals, but not others; symbolic management in the sense that stated intentions to be an entrepreneur may be loosely coupled from actual behaviour to start a business (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Start-up artists for example may be good at beauty pageant contestants and as a result travel the business plan circuit, but never really start the company. In essence, these individuals may symbolically bask in the identity of an entrepreneur and the role legitimacy it confers, but not engage in the hard work of founding a new venture.

The study of symbolic management of institutionalised myths is well-established in organisation theory research as those actors who adopt practices to gain legitimacy (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983) and loosely couple stated intentions from actual behaviour (Schofer & Hironaka, 2005; Westphal & Zajac, 2001; Zajac & Westphal, 1994, 2004). The corpus of literature on symbolic management, colloquially referred to as 'face-

work', 'window dressing', 'cheap talk', and 'smoke and mirrors', has consistently shown, absent surveillance, that perceptions, intentions or actions are weakly related to each other (see Bromley & Powell, 2012 for a review). This view of loose coupling and symbolic management has been examined at the organisational and world society levels, but not at the individual level, yet human intentionality is a critical property of organisational emergence (Katz & Gartner, 1988).

Examining loose coupling as an antecedent of symbolic management at the individual level requires understanding how external forces in the institutional environment are linked to individual identities and capacities (Binder, 2007). It raises the question, when the cultural legitimacy of career attributes become highly institutionalised in society, are all classes of individuals likely to follow in lock-step, as predicted by neo-institutional inspired research? Cognitive and social psychological theory suggests otherwise, that if individuals' intentions are motivated only by external forces, people would behave implausibly like 'weather vanes', shifting directions to whatever legitimacy imperative was currently situational (Bandura, 2001, p. 7). Our findings suggest a reconciliation between these two views that cleaves along differences in subgroup domain (DiMaggio, 2002).

To examine the potential for cognitive loose coupling and symbolic management our research design first replicates a well-established finding that one's perception of skill and experience (self-efficacy) is positively associated with one's intentions to start a business (entrepreneurial intention) (Mauer et al., 2009). Institutional and cultural theory suggests this relationship to be contingent not only on the level of cultural legitimacy of entrepreneurship in society, but also differences in domain independent subgroups. Findings reveal the association between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions is weaker in cultural environments where entrepreneurship is more legitimate, suggesting an opportunity structure where individuals can more easily engage in strategies to cognitively loosely couple and symbolically managing entrepreneurial intentions. We show cognitive loose coupling of self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions varies by level of institutionalisation of cultural legitimacy, and also by gender and work status; suggesting that women and the unemployed are more likely to walk the talk than men and the employed.

This study extends the scope conditions of research on cultural entrepreneurship and institutional analysis to the micro-behaviour of entrepreneurs. The hypotheses are examined using random sample survey data on individuals in 68 countries over seven years. Hierarchical generalised linear models are employed to estimate three different equations representing three levels of analysis, one for individual variation, one for within country variation and one for across country variation. This tri-level research design allows us to observe that the legitimacy imperative cannot be applied uniformly to entrepreneurship across levels of analysis, providing evidence that neo-institutional and world society theory do not predict the same results for individuals as has been demonstrated for the organisations and world systems levels.

Theoretical background

This section reviews background theory to motivate our interdisciplinary and multi-level approach. Neo-institutional theory explains how institutions influence organisations through network relations in organisational fields, focusing on three mechanisms

of isomorphism – normative, coercive and mimetic (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). According to this view, organisational decision making is shaped by actors attending to legitimacy imperatives in the external institutional environment. This external focus can easily lead to conflict with functional activities internal to the organisation. This conflict is managed symbolically and structurally by loose coupling (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), for example strategically saying one thing and doing another and structurally separate core functions of the organisation from those at the periphery.

The concepts of loose coupling and symbolic management have been examined extensively in a variety of studies as pressures to conform to legitimacy imperatives (Zuckerman, 1999), coercive sanctions (Weber, Davis, & Lounsbury, 2009), powerful leaders (Fiss & Zajac, 2004; Tilcsik, 2010) and regulatory sanctions (Short & Toffel, 2010). Many studies support the ‘hypocrisy story’ of publicly announcing one thing and doing another at the organisational and world systems levels (e.g., Schofer & Hironaka, 2005; Westphal & Zajac, 1994; Zajac & Westphal, 2004).

Loose coupling and symbolic management have proven useful concepts in two variants of institutional theory, neo-institutional (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) and institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012). A key distinction between these two variants is the logics research shifted the focus of inquiry beyond an organisational field to include a greater variety of theoretical mechanisms and levels of analysis, including individuals and societies (Friedland & Alford, 1991). This pivot segues drawing on cognitive and social psychology and linking it to institutional and culture sociology (DiMaggio, 1997, 2002).

DiMaggio (2002), for example in explaining why cultural sociology and cognitive psychology benefit from integration, developed a set of arguments on how social institutions organise cognitive processes. He examined empirical studies in social and cognitive psychology to find support for the qualitatively developed tool kit theory in cultural sociology, that is cultural as tools as distinct from the traditional view of culture as values (Swidler, 1986). Several arguments from his cross disciplinary meta-analysis are relevant guides. First, the pressure for consistency in thought and action is more social, than intrapsychic. Second, people have varying degrees of access to cognitive schema based on centrality to self-image, emotional weight, salience, and frequency and recency with which the environment has activated the schema. Third, cognitive schema is organised into relatively independent domains. Fourth, there are different types of cognition, ‘cold’ which is deliberate and thoughtful versus ‘hot’ which is impulsive and stereotypical.

We draw in particular on DiMaggio’s (2002) argument on the principle of domain independence in how knowledge and dispositions of individuals pertain to different categories of life situations, for example family and work. Paraphrasing from DiMaggio’s (2002) arguments, often researchers assume that general values are accurate predictors, but this approach leads to looking for cultural effects at the wrong level of analysis. Instead, subgroup domains are more accurate in reflecting the predilections to think and act in certain ways in certain situations. Therefore, to not define how subgroup domain independence operates risks ‘conflation of situation-specific dispositions with global characteristics of cultural traits that obscure the independence of action domains’ (DiMaggio, 2002, p. 279). Thus, an accurate assessment of the cultural legitimacy of entrepreneurship and its effects on individual self-efficacy and intentions

lies not in the central tendencies but in the interactions of disposition and subgroup domain. Subsequent sections identify the subgroup domains of interest to examine our research question.

Hypothesis development

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's subjective understanding of his or her own capabilities to perform a certain task and can be referred to as self-assessed skills (Correll, 2001, 2004; Thébaud, 2010), ability expectations (Townsend et al., 2010), efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1977) and confidence in one's own skills (Arenius & Minniti, 2005; Koellinger, Minniti, & Schade, 2007). The career literature claims that individuals' self-efficacy of certain career relevant tasks impacts their likelihood of engaging in certain career paths. Self-efficacy shapes the foundation of human action in the sense that unless individuals believe in their own capabilities to successfully produce the intended outcome, they have no incentive to try or persist in the face of obstacles (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Townsend et al., 2010), a critical necessity for entrepreneurs. Thus, individuals are likely to avoid challenging tasks and situations exceeding their perceived level of skills and take up challenges where they are comfortable with their own skills and capabilities.

As previously noted, prior tests of the relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions have been performed on relatively homogenous samples. Moreover, given our arguments on the value of focusing on the interaction effects we set up a baseline test. Thus, to elaborate the scope of prior research we examine whether the relationships between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions holds for a country diverse sample.

Hypothesis 1: *Individuals who assess themselves as having entrepreneurial skills (self-efficacy) are more likely to possess entrepreneurial intentions.*

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy and cultural legitimacy

Individuals with low self-efficacy are easily convinced of the futility of effort when confronted with institutional impediments whereas individuals with high self-efficacy engineer a way around those institutional impediments (Bandura, 2012, p. 14). In other words, some individuals more than others rely less on external institutions for motivation or approval of their behaviour and more on their own intrinsic attributes. However, Bandura's argument that individuals are proactive, self-reflecting, and regulating in their ability to evaluate the social system's response to efficacious behaviour poses the question of how to measure the social system's response. This is a question of how symbolic and material representations of cultural legitimacy in the institutional environment interact with individuals' mental structure to shape their intentions.

Cultural legitimacy involves taken-for-granted assumptions that perceptions and actions of individuals and organisations are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values and motives (Deepphouse & Suchman, 2008; Suchman, 1995, p. 574; see Deepphouse, Bundy, Tost, & Suchman, 2017; for the most recent review). The quest to meet legitimacy imperatives stemming from the larger institutional environment has led organisational actors to engage in different strategies of action such as loose coupling and symbolic management. Fundamental assumptions underlie the research findings on loose coupling and symbolic management. First, intentions and actions are motivated by an external source (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Second, engaging symbolic referents to institutionalised myths must have the appearance of actually working to be effective in conferring legitimacy (Hallet, 2010). Third, organisational studies examine loose coupling effects in two stages over time. It distinguishes between behaviours motivated by functional necessity, often occurring earlier in the observation period, and the loose coupling and symbolic management of mimicry behaviour typically, occurring later as the institutional environment becomes increasingly institutionalised (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). Note, later research has challenged the universality of two stage models of institutionalisation (Lounsbury, 2007; Shipilov, Greve, & Rowley, 2010).

Combining insights from self-efficacy and neo-institutional theories and applying them to our dependent variable of entrepreneurial intentions, we argue if entrepreneurship is increasingly institutionalised as legitimate in society, this may trigger an explanatory mechanism different from the expectations put forward by Bandura (1977, 1986). For example, when entrepreneurship as a career choice has high legitimacy, status and respect in society, the psychological effects of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intentions will be moderated by the extrinsic institutional pressures to symbolically express socially acceptable intentions. However, if the career choice to become an entrepreneur has lower legitimacy, status and respect, individuals are more likely to be motivated intrinsically and rely on their personal self-efficacy to express entrepreneurial intentions to start a new venture. Thus, Bandura's (1977) theory is conditional, non-intuitively we expect self-efficacy to have a stronger effect in explaining entrepreneurial intentions in societies where entrepreneurship is less culturally legitimate. By extension, this expectation also suggests that individuals are less likely to symbolically manage their entrepreneurial intentions as the occupational legitimacy of entrepreneurship decreases.

Hypothesis 2: *The positive association between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions decreases (loose coupling) as cultural legitimacy increases in society.*

Variation in symbolic management by subgroup domains

Bandura (2012, p. 17) argues that performance of self-efficacy needs to be evaluated relative to subgroup domains because peoples' beliefs in their capabilities vary across activity domains, situational conditions and societal subsystems (Bandura, 2001, p. 1). General performance measures of self-efficacy lose their predictive power when the influence of domain-linked efficacy beliefs is not taken into account. But, Bandura

(2001, p. 5) admittedly recognised that the mechanisms linking such socio-structural factors to intentions and actions are largely left unexplained.

There are two approaches to understanding differences in socio-structural factors that link to different expectations for loose coupling and symbolic management of entrepreneurial intentions. Cultural sociologists argue from two prototypical perspectives. Culture is a repository of values that motivate individuals' intentions and these values are transmitted to individuals via socialisation from institutions such as family and religion (Parsons, 1964). Alternatively, culture is a loosely coupled repertoire of rhetorical tools that individuals use to rationalise, justify and make sense of their life situations and choices (Swidler, 1986). Related research shows that rhetorical tools are employed by institutional entrepreneurs (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) to introduce new organisational forms and institutional change as well as by individuals in the symbolic management of professional negotiations related to professional work (McPherson & Sauder, 2013).

Understanding the conditions in which actors are likely to select one intentional orientation from another depends on the domain independence of subgroups in society (DiMaggio, 2002, pp. 278–279). As noted, domain independence cleaves along different classes of life situations, for example work and family, and these domain distinctions refer to independently organised schema, knowledge and personal dispositions (DiMaggio, 2002). Similarly, Bandura (2012, p. 14) argued that self-efficacy is not a generalised trait, but people differ in their assessment across different activity domains. Following this line of reasoning we partition the sample by domain experience. We argue that the effects of cultural legitimacy as a moderating variable on the association between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions will vary by individuals' gender and work status. Moreover, we expect the cognitive loose coupling of self-efficacy and expressed entrepreneurial intentions to vary given differences in functional necessities and value orientations associated with difference in these subgroup domains. To flesh-out these arguments we explored the domain specific research on inequality and occupational identity to inform how coupling effects might partition by gender and work status.

Subgroup domain: gender

Several characteristics of gender are related to support from the institutional environment, functional need and family-work integration. Wilson, Kickul, and Marlingo (2007) found women face various forms of discrimination (Ahl, 2006; Greer & Greene, 2003) for example in the form of discouraging environments (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007) and more limited access to resources (Becker-Blease & Sohl, 2007; Fay & Williams, 1993), therefore suggesting that women have stronger functional needs for self-efficacy to overcome these barriers. Further, Verheul, Uhlaner, and Thurik (2005) showed that women's self-perception of their identity as an entrepreneur is not well supported by the institutional environment, compared to men. Klyver, Nielsen, and Evald (2013) found that gender equality on the institutional level paradoxically reduced women's likelihood to engage in self-employment in developed countries. Jennings and Brush (2013, p. 679) in their extensive review of the literature found societies' acceptance of entrepreneurship is "a gendered phenomenon." For males, being an entrepreneur is a well-established role identity in society, but this is not commensurately so for females.

Combined with the various forms of discrimination faced by women who may select entrepreneurship as a vocational choice, in all likelihood requires women to possess a stronger perception of self-efficacy to push back on society's lack of pulling them naturally into an institutionalised role structure.

While historically women's employment has increased, females world-wide remain less likely to be employed than males (England, 2010), particularly women in entrepreneurial ventures (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Moreover, in more traditional societies, different norms exist for desirable and appropriate career paths for women as distinct from men (Baughn, Chua, & Neupert, 2006; de Bruin, Brush, & Welter, 2007). Women's roles are to a greater degree associated with family values and household responsibilities (Cheraghi, Jensen, & Klyver, 2018); if women do pursue entrepreneurship they often simultaneously fulfil plural roles, having to balance the role of entrepreneur with roles associated with domestic responsibilities. Brush (1992) recognised that female entrepreneurs tend to not view their ventures as autonomous economic entities, but rather as entwined with their familial relationships and responsibilities. Women are more likely to engage entrepreneurship as an occupational choice for functional necessity in hopes of better balancing and integrating work and family life (Cromie & Hayes, 1988; Jennings & Brush, 2013). This tighter coupling of work and family suggests a lower likelihood for loose coupling and symbolic management of entrepreneurial intentions, than men who are more likely to compartmentalise the two subdomains. Based on this research the effects of self-efficacy for women should be more grounded in both internalised values and functional necessity rather than in symbolic identification with the role of an entrepreneur. Therefore, an increase in the cultural legitimacy of entrepreneurship is less likely to moderate the effects of self-efficacy for women than for men. That is, men are more likely to symbolically manage their intentions as a consequence of increased cultural legitimacy of entrepreneurship.

Hypothesis 3: *The negative moderation of cultural legitimacy on the association between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions (loose coupling) is weaker for women compared to men.*

Subgroup domain: work status

We also expect the loose coupling of self-efficacy from entrepreneurial intentions to be moderated by work status and to be more prevalent among the employed compared to the unemployed. Scholars in economics (Korpi, 1997), psychology (Cohn, 1978) and sociology (Block & Koellinger, 2009) have shown that unemployment is associated with lower psychological well-being and lower income. In these respects unemployment can act as a push factor for self-employment making unemployed individuals more likely to enter entrepreneurship as an occupational choice compared to the employed (Gilad & Levine, 1986; Wennekers, Van Wennekers, Thurik, & Reynolds, 2005). Evans and Leighton (1990) for example found that unemployed individuals are twice as likely to start a business compared to employed individuals and that the likelihood of self-employment increases with the duration of unemployment. Accordingly, the unemployed intent on entering self-employment are likely pushed into entrepreneurship by functional necessity rather than symbolic identification with the culturally legitimate

role of an entrepreneur. Therefore an increase in the cultural legitimacy of entrepreneurship is less likely to moderate the effects of self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions for the unemployed.

Hypothesis 4: *The negative moderation of cultural legitimacy on the association between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions (loose coupling) is weaker for unemployed individuals compared to employed individuals.*

Methodology

Data, sampling method and research design

The data are a part of the larger Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) international research project. The project has generated extensive databases on a wide range of issues and factors germane to entrepreneurship worldwide. We use the National Population Survey containing detailed individual-level data on entrepreneurship.

The National Population Survey is a representative sample of adults 18 years and older in different countries. Every calendar year, each participating nation completes a National Population Survey embracing a minimum of 2,000 randomly selected respondents who are asked a variety of questions regarding their engagement and attitude towards entrepreneurship. See Reynolds et al. (2005) for a detailed description of the sampling procedures.

The data for 68 GEM countries are pooled across seven survey years from 2003 to 2009, which combined resulted in 622,102 useable individual respondents. Thus, our data are hierarchical with three levels: 622,102 individuals nested in 262 country/year combinations nested in 68 countries. See Table 1 for an overview of the number of individual respondents and the number of years across country.

The data set is more geographically and culturally heterogeneous than previous studies on culture and cognitive characteristic in general (e.g., Mitchell, Smith, Seawright, & Morse, 2000) and self-efficacy specifically (e.g., Arenius & Minniti, 2005; Koellinger et al., 2007; Townsend et al., 2010). In 2003, the countries involved accounted for 90% of the world's GDP and covered 60% of the world's population (Klyver, 2008). Variations in macro-economic conditions potentially affect the cultural legitimacy of entrepreneurship (Lounsbury & Hirsch, 2012; Paulson & Townsend, 2004). To increase the reliability of estimates of the relationship between cultural legitimacy and intention to start a business, the cultural heterogeneity of the data set was increased by pooling data across the years from 2003 to 2009 to represent periods of economic boom and setback, including the economic crisis in 2008 (Kotz, 2009).

Of the 622,102 respondents, 17% expect to start a business within the next three years. With our comparative cross-national research design, the selection of the dependent variable – the intention to start a business – minimises the risk of causality problems. We argue that tracing individuals further back in the entrepreneurial process reduces the likelihood that they assess they have entrepreneurial skills due to their entrepreneurial intentions and increases the likelihood that they possess having entrepreneurial intentions because of their self-efficacy.

Table 1. Countries reporting in the survey sample.

Country	Years	N	Country	Years	N
Argentina	6	6,608	Kazakhstan	1	1,277
Australia	4	5,721	Korea	2	1,888
Austria	2	2,218	Latvia	5	6,690
Belgium	7	10,239	Macedonia	1	1,192
Bolivia	1	765	Malaysia	2	2,186
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2	2,041	Mexico	3	5,388
Brazil	7	12,002	Netherlands	7	12,942
Canada	2	1,748	New Zealand	3	2,857
Chile	6	12,213	Norway	5	6,072
China	5	8,546	Panama	1	1,184
Colombia	4	6,107	Peru	5	7,151
Croatia	7	7,622	Philippines	1	1,716
Czech Republic	1	1,849	Poland	1	1,198
Denmark	7	16,294	Portugal	2	1,652
Dominican Republic	3	4,318	Romania	3	4,584
Ecuador	2	2,766	Russia	2	1,522
Egypt	1	1,617	Saudi Arabia	1	1,326
Finland	7	7,479	Serbia	3	4,263
France	7	9,686	Singapore	4	7,196
Germany	6	19,170	Slovenia	7	10,723
Greece	7	8,333	South Africa	5	8,970
Guatemala	1	1,558	Spain	7	136,020
Hong Kong	4	3,843	Sweden	5	33,223
Hungary	6	8,732	Switzerland	4	7,369
Iceland	7	8,392	Syria	1	1,404
India	3	3,248	Thailand	3	5,248
Indonesia	1	1,294	Tonga	1	1,080
Iran	2	4,285	Turkey	3	4,496
Ireland	6	6,901	Uganda	3	4,472
Israel	4	4,624	United Arab Emirates	3	4,321
Italy	7	8,327	United Kingdom	7	93,788
Jamaica	4	7,522	United States	7	16,773
Japan	7	6,947	Uruguay	4	4,508
Jordan	2	2,837	Venezuela	2	1,571

Measurement

Dependent variable

The dependent variable is ‘Entrepreneurial Intention’, a binary variable coded 0 for No and 1 for Yes to the following question (e.g., Tsai, Chang, & Peng, 2016): ‘Are you, alone or with others, expecting to start a new business, including any type of self-employment, within the next three years?’

We acknowledge the limitations of a single item dichotomous measure. However, for our specific purpose there are three main reasons to apply such a measurement strategy. First, entrepreneurial intentions have been measured in many different ways (e.g., Kolvereid & Isaksen, 2006; Krueger, 1993; Liñán & Chen, 2009), including single-item (e.g., Krueger et al., 2000) and multi-item (e.g., Zhao et al., 2005) approaches. The single-item measure we have selected is widespread in recent studies, especially in larger national population surveys such as the GEM in which single-item measures are not rare (e.g., Kwon & Arenius, 2010; Kwong, Thompson, Jones-Evans, & Brooksbank, 2009; Thébaud, 2010).

Second, reviews on the use of single- and multiple-item approaches suggest that single-item measures can be used, if the item reflects a homogeneous construct as indicated by an alpha above 0.85 (Loo, 2002). A good example is the study of

entrepreneurial intentions by Zhao et al. (2005) reporting an alpha value of 0.88. Bergkvist and Rossiter (2007, p. 183) argued that ‘... theoretical tests and empirical findings would be unchanged if good single-item measures were substituted ... in place of commonly used multi-item measures’.

Third, research specific to cultural studies indicates that limited variability is a preferable bias compared to the bias caused by cultural variation in the interpretations of scales (Hult et al., 2008; Runyan, Ge, Dong, & Swinney, 2012).

Independent variables

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is measured dichotomously, creating the variable Self-efficacy, a binary variable coded 0 for No and 1 for Yes to the following question (e.g., Kwon & Arenius, 2010; Thébaud, 2010): ‘Do you have the knowledge, skill and experience required to start a new business?’

Again, we acknowledge the potential limitations of a single item dichotomous measure. But for similar reason as for entrepreneurial intention, we argue such a measurement strategy is appropriate. Self-efficacy has also been measured in various ways depending on the research purpose. It has been measured in experiments (Correll, 2004) and in surveys and it has been measured as a construct based on both multi- (Townsend et al., 2010) and single-items (Arenius & Minniti, 2005; Koellinger et al., 2007; Thébaud, 2010). The single-item has been used in situations where data-collections have taken place across nations.

Gender. The variable Gender was coded 0 for male and 1 for female in response to a self-report survey questionnaire item.

Work status. Respondents’ work status was used to compute the categorical variable ‘Work Status’, using two indicator variables, one for the work status ‘Unemployed’ and another for the work status ‘Other’ capturing students, the retired, among others, with the reference group category of work status ‘employed’ capturing those employed full time or part time.

Cultural legitimacy. Deephouse and Suchman (2008, p. 60) in their literature review of the concept of legitimacy find three terms – legitimacy, status and respect – have essentially the same empirical referents. We operationalise the concept of cultural legitimacy by measuring status and respect for successful entrepreneurship in each country. The variable ‘Cultural Legitimacy’ (associated with entrepreneurship) is the percentage of the adult population in a country responding Yes on the following questionnaire item: ‘In your country, do those successful at starting a new business have a high level of status and respect?’

Cultural legitimacy at the societal level is measured as the aggregation of individuals’ response to the question regarding the cultural legitimacy of the vocational status of entrepreneurship in the country. It varies both ‘across years within countries’ which were estimated on the country/year level (level 2 – within country variation) as the deviation from the mean, and it varies across countries estimated on the country level (level 3 – across country variation) as the mean. We have 262 observations on the country/year level representing 68 countries on the country level. Since several

countries only have one or few country/year observations, we base our hypothesis tests on cultural legitimacy across countries, thus on the country level.

Control variables

The human-capital variables, age and education, are controlled because self-efficacy is a perceptual rather than a human-capital variable. Respondent's age was used to compute the categorical variable 'Age' – the age group younger than 30 years old was coded 1, the age group between 30 and 49 years old was coded 2, and the age group above 50 years old was coded 3. We computed the variable 'Education', 0 for no education, 1 for some secondary education, 2 for secondary degree, 3 for post-secondary degree, and 4 for graduate experience.

Entrepreneurial intentions are also driven by the opportunity structures in the context of where individuals live (Stinchcombe, 1965). Prior research, and specifically prior GEM research, recognises a relationship between the proportion of adults engaged in entrepreneurship and the level of economic development (Wennekers et al., 2005). Schwad (2010) defines a country 'Economic Development Stage' as its access to and use of primary resources in order to gain global competitiveness. To control for economic development stage, we coded Schwad's (2010) five stages: 1 for factor-driven economies, 2 for factor-driven economies in transition, 3 for efficiency driven economies, 4 for efficiency driven economies in transition, and 5 for innovation driven economies.

In addition to controlling for the general economic development stage in a country, we also controlled for specific economic activity with regard to entrepreneurship – the 'National Start-up Rate'. The national start-up rate is the proportion of the adult population in a certain year actively engaged in starting their own business, alone or together with others in which the respondent is at least part owner. Together this enables us to make conclusions regarding the combined effect of self-efficacy and cultural legitimacy regardless of the opportunity structure and the economic activity in a country.

Measurement issues

To validate that the measure of Entrepreneurial Intention and the measure of Self-efficacy are not measures of the same phenomenon we computed a cross-tabulation of Entrepreneurial Intention by Self-efficacy. It reveals the two measures are distinctively different, showing that of those individuals with intentions to start a business within the next three years, 78% also assess they have entrepreneurial abilities, while of those who assess they have entrepreneurial abilities, 26% also have entrepreneurial intentions. This clarifies that the two measures are distinctively different.

Although, our measure of cultural legitimacy is extracted from the same source, it is an aggregation of individual-level responses from large country samples and therefore unlikely subject to the influence of common method bias (Lai, Li, & Leung, 2013). All together our diagnostic analysis suggests common method bias, in which a single factor can account for all the variance in the data, is not a serious threat to our results (Lai et al., 2013; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

Analytical strategy

The cross-level estimation methods are inspired by the approaches of Thébaud (2015) and Autio, Pathak, and Wennberg (2013) to similar types of GEM data. First, we computed 68 separate logistic regression models, one for each country with pooled data over survey years, testing for a positive association between Self-efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intention after controlling for Gender, Age, Education and Work Status. This approach was used to test Hypothesis 1.

The data represent different levels of analysis (individual level, country/year level and country level). To use a standard logistic regression model would force the country measures (Cultural Legitimacy) to be modelled in the same way as individual-level predictors, which is not appropriate because we expect individual-level predictors to vary across cultural legitimacy (Hox, 1995). Thus, using a standardised logistic regression approach violates the assumption of independence between observations. A more appropriate modelling technique is a three-level hierarchical generalised linear model (HGLM) with a Bernoulli distribution because our dependent variable is dichotomous (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). The HGLM approach uses three different equations, one for the individual level, one for the country/year level and one for the country level, which allows for estimates with respect to all levels. Thus, individuals are nested within country-years and country-years are nested within countries (Thébaud, 2015). This technique allows us to assume that the association between Self-efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intentions varies with Cultural Legitimacy both across years within countries (country/year level) and across countries (country level).

Our dichotomous dependent variable suggests a non-linear approach following McCullagh and Nelder's (1989) generalised linear model. Our HGLM is similar to hierarchical linear models on level 2 and level 3 but differs on level 1, which uses a binomial sampling model and logit link model as further described in Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, Congdon, and du Toit (2004, p. 96). Heuristically, this approach computes a linearised dependent variable using full penalised quasi-likelihood (PQL) (Raudenbush et al., 2004, p. 103).

The HGLM models should be interpreted as standardised coefficients. First the main effects of Self-efficacy on Entrepreneurial Intention were estimated in Model 1 in Table 5. Two-way interactions were then added for Self-efficacy and Cultural Legitimacy for both the country/year level and the country level to test Hypothesis 2. Finally, the three-way interactions of Self-efficacy, Cultural Legitimacy, and Gender and Work Status were estimated, respectively, for both the country/year level and the country level to test Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4.

Empirical results

Tables 2 and 3 show the descriptive statistics respectively for the individual- and country-levels. On the individual level, the dependent variable Entrepreneurial Intention is positively correlated with Self-efficacy, Work status unemployment and Education are negatively correlated with Gender, Age, and Work status other. The highest correlation ($r = 0.253$) is between Entrepreneurial Intentions and Self-efficacy indicating there is no multicollinearity (Knoke, Bohrnstedt, & Mee, 2002). On the

Table 2. ^aMeans, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations for covariates of entrepreneurial intentions to start a business (Level 1).

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Entrepreneurial Intention	.17	.37	1						
2. Self-efficacy of Abilities	.50	.50	.253**	1					
3. Gender	1.52	.50	-.088**	-.159**	1				
4. Work Status – unemployed	.18	.38	.005**	-.086**	.225**	1			
5. Work Status – other	.17	.38	-.047**	-.130**	-.005**	-.210**	1		
6. Age	2.11	.74	-.190**	-.026**	.028**	.074**	.020**	1	
7. Education	2.18	1.11	.030**	.102**	-.022**	-.174**	-.063**	-.074**	1

** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test)

^aDue to the use of ordinal variables it is more correct to report Spearman correlations, however we report Pearson correlations because the pooled sample is too large to calculate Spearman correlations.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and Spearman correlations for covariates of entrepreneurial intentions to start a business (Level 3).

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3
1. Cultural Legitimacy	69.85	10.28	1		
2. National Start-up rate	5.91	4.00	.199	1	
3. GDP per capita	3.69	1.31	-.298*	-.495**	1

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test)

country level, correlations are stronger although there remain no indications of risk of multicollinearity. The highest correlation ($r = -0.495$) is between Economic Development Stage and National Start-up Rate.

Table 4 reports the results supporting Hypothesis 1 in which 68 logistic regressions are computed.

We found a significant positive association in all 68 countries. The log odds range from 0.50 in Malaysia to 2.76 in Japan. For example, individuals in Malaysia who assess they have entrepreneurial abilities are a bit more than one and half times as likely ($e^{0.50}$) to possess entrepreneurial intentions compared to individuals who assess they do not have entrepreneurial abilities, while individuals in Japan who assess they have entrepreneurial abilities are almost 16 ($e^{2.76}$) times more likely to have entrepreneurial intentions compared to individuals who assess they do not have such abilities.

Table 5 reports the results for Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3. The table reports first the country level estimates, second the country-year level estimate, third the individual level estimate and finally various cross-level interaction effects separated into two- and three-way interaction effects. Model 1 shows the results for the control variables indicating that females compared to men and younger individuals are less likely to possess Entrepreneurial Intentions at a p value < 0.001 . Individuals with higher Education are more likely to possess Entrepreneurial Intentions at a p value < 0.001 . Unemployed individuals are more likely to possess Entrepreneurial Intentions compared to employed individuals whereas individuals in the Work Status category ‘other’ are less likely to possess Entrepreneurial Intentions compared to employed individuals – both at a p value < 0.001 . In addition, the level-3 country variable, National Start-up Rate, has significantly positive associations with Entrepreneurial Intentions, while the

Table 4. Log odds of logistic regression models of Self-efficacy of Abilities (SAA) on Entrepreneurial Intentions (EI) and cultural legitimacy in countries.

Country	Association between		Country	Association between	
	SAA and EI (Log odds)	Cultural legitimacy		SAA and EI (Log odds)	Cultural legitimacy
Japan	2.76	50	Dominican Republic	1.41	88
Russia	2.62	64	Venezuela	1.39	73
Romania	2.44	66	Iceland	1.37	70
Croatia	2.03	52	Sweden	1.37	62
Thailand	1.97	79	Egypt	1.36	84
Czech Republic	1.96	47	Finland	1.35	87
France	1.96	65	Poland	1.33	58
Germany	1.89	75	Argentina	1.28	72
Switzerland	1.86	74	Greece	1.26	70
Netherlands	1.81	67	Jordan	1.25	85
Hungary	1.78	60	Indonesia	1.24	54
United States	1.75	62	Turkey	1.24	83
Norway	1.71	68	Serbia	1.19	60
Spain	1.71	56	Korea	1.16	67
Portugal	1.71	64	Chile	1.14	68
Panama	1.67	67	Colombia	1.13	74
Denmark	1.64	75	Uruguay	1.06	74
Macedonia	1.63	72	Jamaica	1.06	80
Austria	1.63	71	Guatemala	1.02	67
Belgium	1.60	56	Bolivia	.99	55
Kazakhstan	1.60	85	China	.95	70
Singapore	1.59	56	Australia	.94	69
Italy	1.56	65	Brazil	.92	76
Latvia	1.56	73	Iran	.88	80
Ireland	1.54	81	Peru	.88	74
Slovenia	1.53	72	Ecuador	.86	72
Hong Kong	1.51	65	New Zealand	.84	70
Israel	1.51	69	Philippines	.82	84
United Arab Emirates	1.50	81	Uganda	.77	86
Mexico	1.48	57	Syria	.76	89
South Africa	1.48	60	Saudi Arabia	.63	89
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1.46	62	Tonga	.61	52
United Kingdom	1.46	73	India	.56	80
Canada	1.43	66	Malaysia	.50	74

level-3 country variable, Economic Development Stage, has a significant negative association with Entrepreneurial Intention.

Consistent with Table 4, Model 1 in Table 5 shows a significantly positive association between Self-efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intentions at a p value < 0.001 . Individuals who assess they have entrepreneurial abilities are more likely to possess entrepreneurial intentions than individuals who assess they have not such abilities. In support of Hypothesis 2, Model 2 shows that the impact of Self-efficacy on Entrepreneurial Intentions is significantly dependent on the Cultural Legitimacy of entrepreneurship in a given country, and that the association is stronger in countries where entrepreneurship receives less Cultural Legitimacy compared to countries where entrepreneurship receives more Cultural Legitimacy, at a p value < 0.001 .

In order to test Hypothesis 3 arguing that the loose coupling between Self-efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intentions is weaker for women than for men, we introduced

Table 5. Estimates of hierarchical generalised linear models of entrepreneurial intentions: gender interaction (Standard deviation in parentheses).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Country level				
Intercept	-1.50*** (.12)	-1.51*** (.10)	-1.51*** (.12)	-1.51*** (.11)
Economic Development	-.26** (.08)	-.27** (.08)	-.27** (.08)	-.27** (.08)
National Start-up activity	.20* (.08)	.19* (.09)	.20* (.08)	.19* (.08)
Cultural Legitimacy (Across country variation)	.11 (.09)	.19** (.07)	.23** (.10)	.21** (.08)
Country/year level				
Cultural Legitimacy (Within country variation)	-.08* (.03)	-.06 (.03)	-.06 (.04)	-.06 (.04)
Individual level				
Age	-.47*** (.02)	-.47*** (.02)	-.47*** (.02)	-.47*** (.02)
Education	.11*** (.02)	.11*** (.02)	.11*** (.02)	.11*** (.02)
Gender (male is referent)	-.18*** (.01)	-.18*** (.01)	-.23*** (.02)	-.23*** (.01)
Work Status (employed is referent)				
Other	-.07*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)
Unemployed	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)
Self-efficacy of Abilities (H1)	.70*** (.03)	.70*** (.02)	.61*** (.03)	.61*** (.03)
2 Way Cross-Level Interaction effects				
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Cultural Legitimacy (Within country variation)		-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.02 (.02)
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Cultural legitimacy (Across country variation) (H2)		-.09*** (.03)	-.10*** (.03)	-.13*** (.03)
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Gender			.10*** (.02)	.10*** (.02)
Gender*Cultural Legitimacy (Within country variation)			.00 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Gender*Cultural Legitimacy (Across country variation)			.00 (.01)	-.02 (.02)
3 Way Cross-Level Interaction effects				
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Gender* Cultural Legitimacy (Within country variation)				.02 (.02)
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Gender* Cultural Legitimacy (Across country variation) (H3)				.04* (.02)

¹ $p < 0.10$ * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

The significance levels are reported as two-tailed tests for control variables and as one-tailed tests for independent variables. Dummy variables for year of survey are not reported. All independent and moderator variables are modelled with random standard errors.

the three-way interaction terms stepwise. Model 4 reveals a positive three-way interaction effect of Self-efficacy, Cultural Legitimacy and Gender on Entrepreneurial Intentions. Therefore, as hypothesised, we find the negative two-way interaction effect of Self-efficacy and Cultural Legitimacy is weaker for women than for men at a p value < 0.05 . Figure 1 illustrates the three-way interaction effect. It illustrates that Self-efficacy is positively associated with Entrepreneurial Intention regardless of Gender and Cultural Legitimacy (Hypothesis 1). It also shows that Cultural legitimacy has a positive impact on individuals' Entrepreneurial Intentions

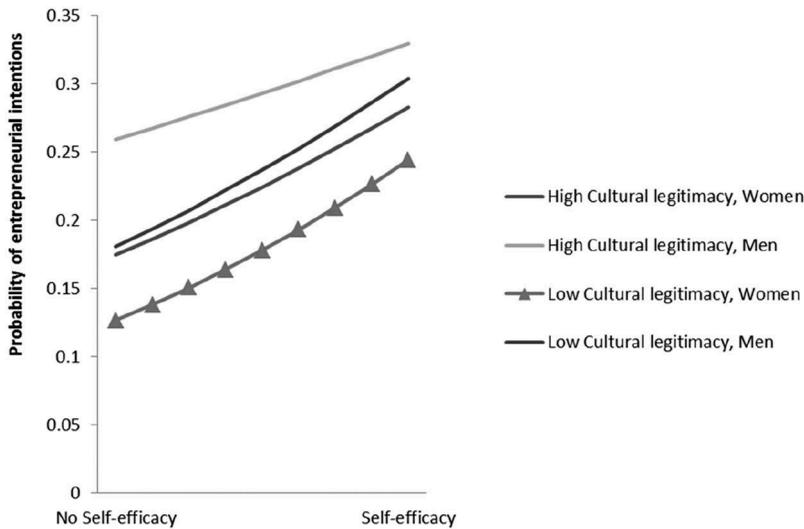


Figure 1. Three-way interaction plot: entrepreneurial intentions of individuals by their self-efficacy and gender and cultural legitimacy of their country.

(Hypothesis 2). Simultaneously it shows that the association between Self-efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intention for women is almost unaffected by Cultural Legitimacy in the country, illustrated by comparable slopes for women in countries with respectively low and high cultural legitimacy. For men the association between Self-efficacy and Entrepreneurial Intention increases with higher cultural legitimacy, illustrated with the steeper slope for men in countries with low Cultural legitimacy compared to men in countries with high Cultural Legitimacy. Thus, the loose coupling effect predicted by Hypothesis 2 is driven predominately by the male subsample. Men are more likely to associate Self-efficacy with Entrepreneurial Intention in countries with low Cultural Legitimacy compared to women, and more likely to express Entrepreneurial Intention without Self-efficacy in countries with high Cultural Legitimacy compared to women. Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Table 6 reports the results for Hypothesis 4, in which we argued that the loose coupling is weaker for unemployed individuals than for employed individuals.

Model 4 reveals a positive three-way interaction effect of Self-efficacy, Cultural Legitimacy and unemployed Work Status on Entrepreneurial Intentions. Supporting Hypothesis 4, the otherwise negative two-way interaction effect of Self-efficacy and Cultural Legitimacy is weaker for unemployed individuals compared to employed individuals at a p value < 0.05 . Figure 2 shows the three-way interaction effect illustrating that Self-efficacy is positively associated with Entrepreneurial Intention regardless of work status and cultural legitimacy. Simultaneously it shows that the association for unemployed is less affected by Cultural Legitimacy in the country compared to the association for employed that is more affected by cultural legitimacy. This is illustrated with the relatively steeper slope for employed in countries with low Cultural legitimacy versus employed in countries with high Cultural Legitimacy

Table 6. Estimates of hierarchical generalised linear models of entrepreneurial intentions. Work status interaction (Standard deviation in parentheses).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Control variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Way Cross-Level Interaction effects				
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Cultural legitimacy (Within country variation)		-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.02 (.01)
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Cultural legitimacy (Across country variation) (H2)		-.09*** (.03)	-.10*** (.03)	-.11*** (.02)
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Work Status_other			-.01 (.01)	-.02 (.01)
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Work Status_unemployed			.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)
Work Status_other*Cultural Legitimacy (Within country variation)			-.01 (.01)	-.02 (.02)
Work Status_other*Cultural Legitimacy (Across country variation)			.05** (.02)	.04 (.02)
Work Status_unemployed*Cultural Legitimacy (Within country variation)			.03* (.01)	.00 (.02)
Work Status_unemployed*Cultural Legitimacy (Across country variation)			.01 (.01)	-.01 (.02)
3 Way Cross-Level Interaction effects				
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Work Status_other *Cultural Legitimacy (Within country variation)				.01 (.01)
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Work Status_other *Cultural Legitimacy (Across country variation)				.01 (.01)
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Work Status_unemployed *Cultural Legitimacy (Within country variation)				.03* (.01)
Self-efficacy of Abilities*Work Status_unemployed *Cultural Legitimacy (Across country variation) (H4)				.02* (.01)

¹ $p < 0.10$ * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

The significance levels are reported as two-tailed tests for control variables and as one-tailed tests for independent variables. Dummy variables for year of survey are not reported. All independent and moderator variables are modelled with random standard errors.

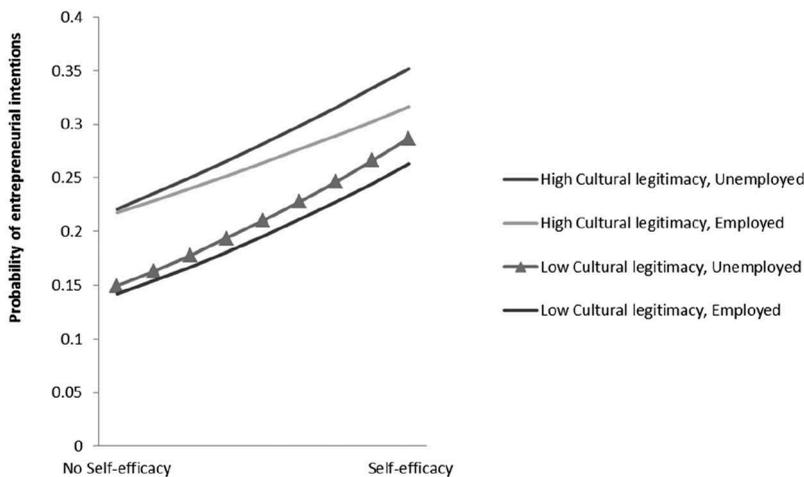


Figure 2. Three-way interaction plot: entrepreneurial intentions of individuals by their self-efficacy and work status and cultural legitimacy of their country.

compared with the slope for unemployed in countries with low Cultural legitimacy versus employed in countries with high Cultural Legitimacy.

Employed are more likely to associate Self-efficacy with Entrepreneurial Intention in countries with low Cultural Legitimacy compared to unemployed, and more likely to express Entrepreneurial Intention without Self-efficacy in countries with high Cultural Legitimacy compared to unemployed. Thus, the loose coupling effect predicted by Hypothesis 2 depends on work status.

Discussion and conclusion

This study examined the relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions as a consequence of cultural legitimacy. We demonstrate a positive association between an individual's self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions to start a business depends on the cultural legitimacy of entrepreneurship in society. However, as cultural legitimacy increases, the positive association decreases; there is a loose coupling effect associated with the increasing institutionalisation of entrepreneurship as a desirable career choice in society. Further analysis reveals this is not a general effect as the loose coupling of self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions varies by domain independent subgroups. Men and the employed are more likely to cognitively loosely couple and symbolically manage their entrepreneurial intentions than women and the unemployed.

When entrepreneurship as a career choice has high legitimacy, status and respect in society, the psychological effects of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intentions will be moderated by the extrinsic institutional pressures to symbolically express socially acceptable intentions. However, if the career choice to become an entrepreneur has lower legitimacy, status and respect, individuals are more likely to be motivated intrinsically and rely on their personal self-efficacy to express entrepreneurial intentions to start a new venture. Thus, Bandura's (1977) classic theory is conditional, self-efficacy has a stronger effect in explaining entrepreneurial intentions in societies where entrepreneurship is less culturally legitimate. Individuals are less likely to symbolically manage their entrepreneurial intentions when the occupational legitimacy of entrepreneurship is low. This analysis develops the micro-foundations of cultural entrepreneurship with implications for neo-institutional and world society theories of and research on gender and work status.

The theory and data suggest different subgroup domains have different propensities to render myths incompatible with functional necessities and value orientations of certain subgroup domains (DiMaggio, 2002; Hallett, 2010). Women's identity is arguably more likely than men's to be motivated by internalised values grounded in functional necessity than by being justified symbolically by the role of the entrepreneur. Not only do women face greater discrimination by encountering greater barriers to resources, the role of entrepreneur for women is less institutionalised than for men (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Moreover, women face greater cross role responsibilities with balancing life domains such as children and family, making them more likely to rely on and integrate (i.e., tightly couple) their self-efficacy with their vocational intentions than men. Therefore, an increase in the cultural legitimacy of entrepreneurship in society is less likely to moderate the effects of self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions for women than men. Similarly, the unemployed are less inclined to loosely couple their

self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions, because they are likely to gravitate into entrepreneurship by functional necessity rather than by symbolic identification with the culturally legitimate role of an entrepreneur.

Previous research on entrepreneurial self-efficacy has overlooked the contextual effects in which self-efficacy is expected to function (Mauer et al., 2009). Consistent with Bandura's (1977, 2012) argument our findings show that supportive environments make self-efficacy function as an antecedent of intentions. However, without eliminating the effect of self-efficacy, as the cultural legitimacy of entrepreneurship becomes increasingly rationalised in the institutional environment, it lessens the benefit to be gained from self-efficacy for certain subgroups. Thus, on the one hand the supportive environment creates the conditions for self-efficacy to function, but on the other hand it diminishes the effects of the same benefits as the environment becomes increasingly supportive.

Contributions

We contribute to the development of the concept of loose coupling by examining it at the individual level of analysis and measuring subgroup domain to show differences in the micro mechanisms of cultural-legitimacy and entrepreneurship. Those individuals more socialised to values tethered to functionally necessary aspects of work and family are less likely to seek legitimacy from myths in the institutional environment because these myths are in conflict with practical activity, which makes them less accessible for stagecraft (Goffman, 1967/2005). Because values, as distinct from symbols, have 'tangible flesh', myths are rendered incarnate (Hallett, 2010). The findings suggest two different mechanisms that invoke how institutional pressures affect self-efficacy and individuals' intentions – values and tools.

At a broader level our findings on how loose coupling and symbolic management operate at the individual level contrast with findings at the organizational level with respect to the role of the professions and the state and the use of surveillance to ensure follow-through, i.e., doing what you say you will do (Cole, 2012). Meyer and Rowan's (1977: 360) theory of symbolic management hinges on assumption of the confidence and good faith in the professions and the "avoidance of inspection" p. 360. However, professionals are more highly educated and powerful in framing what is culturally legitimate in society than is the case for many other occupational categories in which individuals participate. To our knowledge there is no evidence that research conducted in professionalised environments generalises to how individuals in other subgroup domains outside such specialised arenas construct their intentions and actions. Indeed, entrepreneurs by definition typically operate outside of professional domains as entrepreneurship is a competing vocational alternative often of necessity and in general entrepreneurs have less formal education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Thus, our findings demonstrate an elaboration to coupling theory that develops an understanding of tight coupling and the value orientations of main street individuals in societies.

Future research and implications

The topics of loose coupling and symbolic management have continued to be of interest to scholars and policy makers because actors engaging in symbolically managed decisions often do not follow through, which can have serious consequences for society. Because our findings show that women are more inclined to tightly couple self-efficacy and intentions we suggest future research needs to examine whether women are a better bet than men in terms of following through on their intentions to start new businesses. If so, this has important implications for economic welfare and entrepreneurship policy initiatives, particularly given that women represent over 70% of the world's poor (Daley-Harris, 2009). Moreover, women are marginalised in financial and labour markets in spite of evidence that they more reliably pay back micro finance loans than men. Scholars (Correll, 2004; Ridgeway, 2011) argue that such entrenched patterns of gender inequality create strong barriers to women's economic participation.

That women's participation in entrepreneurship could be a route out of poverty or essential for a nation to build its economy emphasises the relevance of our findings on the duality of cultural effects for gender and work status and rewarding those who are more likely to walk the talk. One may argue that some countries allocate their resources most effectively by increasing their populations' entrepreneurial self-efficacy of certain demographic subgroups; whereas other countries might benefit more from increasing the cultural legitimacy of entrepreneurship as a vocational choice. If a society has limited entrepreneurial institutions and/or subgroup domains are relatively independent, investing in self-efficacy training may be most prudent. Emerging international commercial programmes such as Google's campus for mom's are a case in point with their focus on building self-efficacy in light of the lack of well-institutionalised role structures for women (Barden, 2014). However, if entrepreneurship is highly institutionalised in society and those institutions span multiple domains and levels of analysis such investments may not be the best use of resources.

Cognitive loose coupling to identify with cultural myths in the institutional environment is contingent on whether individuals relate to culture as a repository of values or a repertoire of tools for justifications in a given situation. While we have examined this distinction by individuals' domain independence, we do not mean to reify an artificial dichotomy in how individuals express their intentions. A fruitful avenue for future research is to explore the conditions in which the symbolic management of intentions to start a new business is performed alongside the expression of internalised values, rather than instead of them (Zott & Huy, 2007).

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