

Effects of Comfort Zone on Entrepreneurship Potential, Innovation Culture, & Career Satisfaction

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Acknowledgement to students: Giovanni Barbieri, Sara Sara Karabashlieva, Rishabh Holani

Outline

- Simple Question: Are Entrepreneurs born or can these seminal skills be learned?
- Our work supports the idea that these skills (mindset) can be learned
- Presentation Logic:
- Mindset Background (Carol Dweck)
 - – “people only learn when they can step outside their comfort zone”
 - Mindset plays a role
 - People can be taught to change mindset
- Our study shows that a Comfort Zone Scale (CZone) is correlated with being an entrepreneur and/or innovator
- Because mindset can be changed,
 - a person can be taught to increase their Comfort Zone
 - This reinforces the concept that seminal entrepreneurship and innovation skills can be learned

Background by Carol Dweck

Growth vs Fixed Mindset Findings

- Fixed: Don't lose the "label".
- Growth: Comfortable that you don't know, but can learn.
- Results: K-12
- Reinforcement Matters



Reference: Carol Dweck

<http://www.voicelifted.com>

Comfort Zone Scale

Personal



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- P1-4: Comfort with deciding but not knowing the result of personal decision.
- W1-4: Comfort with deciding but not knowing the result of professional decision
- Global data with Engineers, Business Managers, and Innovators/Entrepreneurs

1) Comfort with Personal Ambiguity

How much certainty do you need before making a significant choice in your personal life? P1: A very high degree of certainty (close to 100%)

P2: A significant level of certainty (50% or greater)

P3: More intuitive (less than 50%)

P4: Very little certainty, mostly instinctive (could be less than 10%)

2) Comfort with Professional Ambiguity

How much certainty do you need before making a significant choice in your professional life?

W1: A very high degree of certainty (close to 100%)

W2: A significant level of certainty (50% or greater)

W3: More intuitive (less than 50%)

W4: Very little certainty, mostly instinctive (could be less than 10%)

3) What were your Comfort Levels with Ambiguity in high school? (Personal) P1: A very high degree of certainty (close to 100%)

4) What were your Comfort Levels with Ambiguity in high school? (Professional) W1: A very high degree of certainty (close to 100%)

5) What factors most significantly influenced your ambiguity comfort levels before entering college?

6) Do you associate an increase in ambiguity comfort levels with a decrease in certainty in your personal life?

a. Yes b. No

7) Do you associate an increase in ambiguity comfort levels with a decrease in certainty in your professional life?

a. Yes b. No

8) What would you like your Ambiguity Comfort Level to be in the future? (Personal) Personal Scale Certainty Requirement

9) What would you like your Ambiguity Comfort Level to be in the future? (Professional) Personal Scale Certainty Requirement

10) Did you feel that your personal and professional comfort levels were coupled? E.g. if coupled: a P2 is generally also a W2, and a P4 would generally be a W4

a. Yes, b. No, c. Not sure

11) What is your educational background?

a. Engineering, science, or other technical area b. Liberal arts, Business, or other

12) What is your gender? a. Male b. Female

13) What is your age? a. Under 29 , b. 30-39 c. 40 or older

14) Where do you currently work? a. USA b. Latin America c. Europe, d. Middle East e. Asia, f. Australia g. Other

15) How would you mostly consider yourself? a. Entrepreneur or innovator , b. Management, operations, or business c. Engineering or technical d. Administrative or other

Measurement Instrument

1) Comfort with Personal Ambiguity

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4) What were your Comfort Levels with Ambiguity in high school? (Professional) W1: A very high degree of certainty (close to 100%)

5) What factors most significantly caused the change in your personal and professional ambiguity comfort levels between high school and now?

6) Do you associate an increase in "Comfort with Ambiguity" with [greater overall satisfaction](#) in your personal life?

a. Yes b. No

7) Do you associate an increase in "Comfort with Ambiguity" with [greater overall satisfaction](#) in your professional life?

a. Yes b. No

8) What would you like your [Ambiguity Comfort Level to be in the future](#)? (Personal) Personal Scale Certainty Requirement

9) What would you like your [Ambiguity Comfort Level to be in the future](#)? (Professional) Personal Scale Certainty Requirement

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Population of over 1000 Data points
Range of Professions
Range of Educational Backgrounds
Global and Demographic Information

certainty (close to 100%)

of certainty (close to 100%)

onal life?

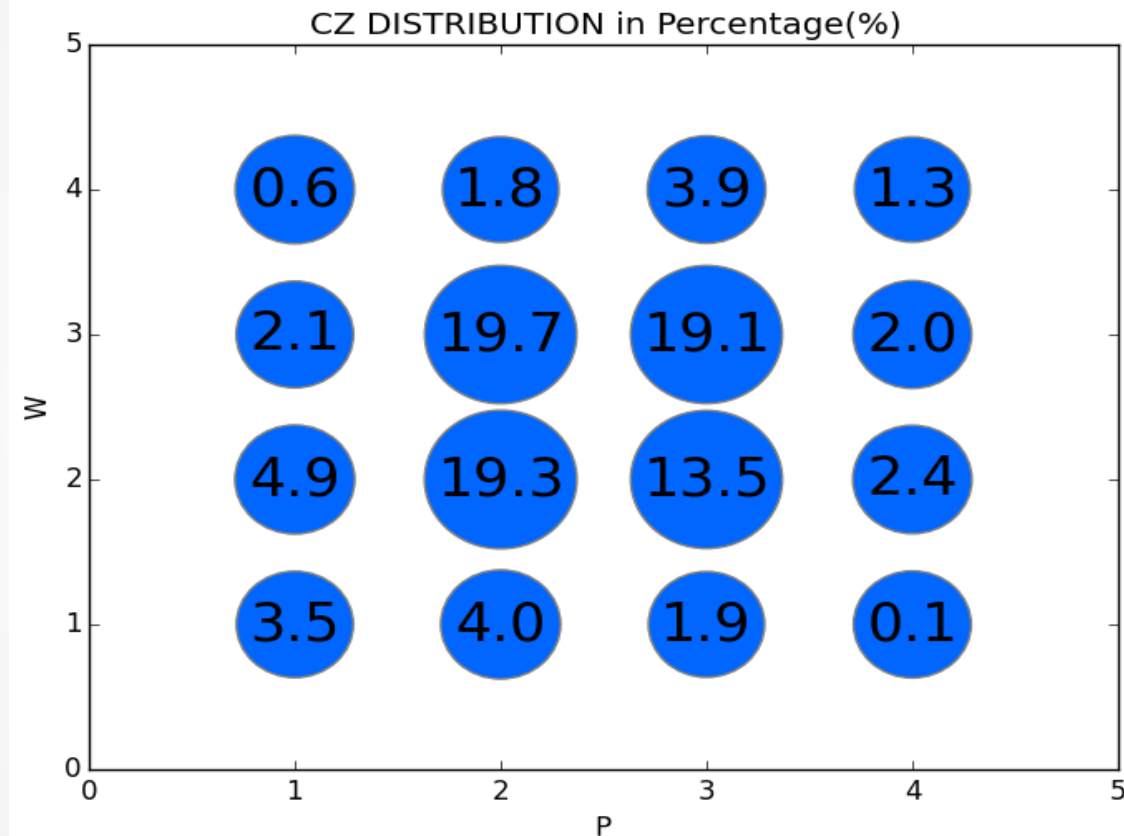
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nty Requirement

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generally also a W2, and a

P and W are equivalent less than 50%
of the time

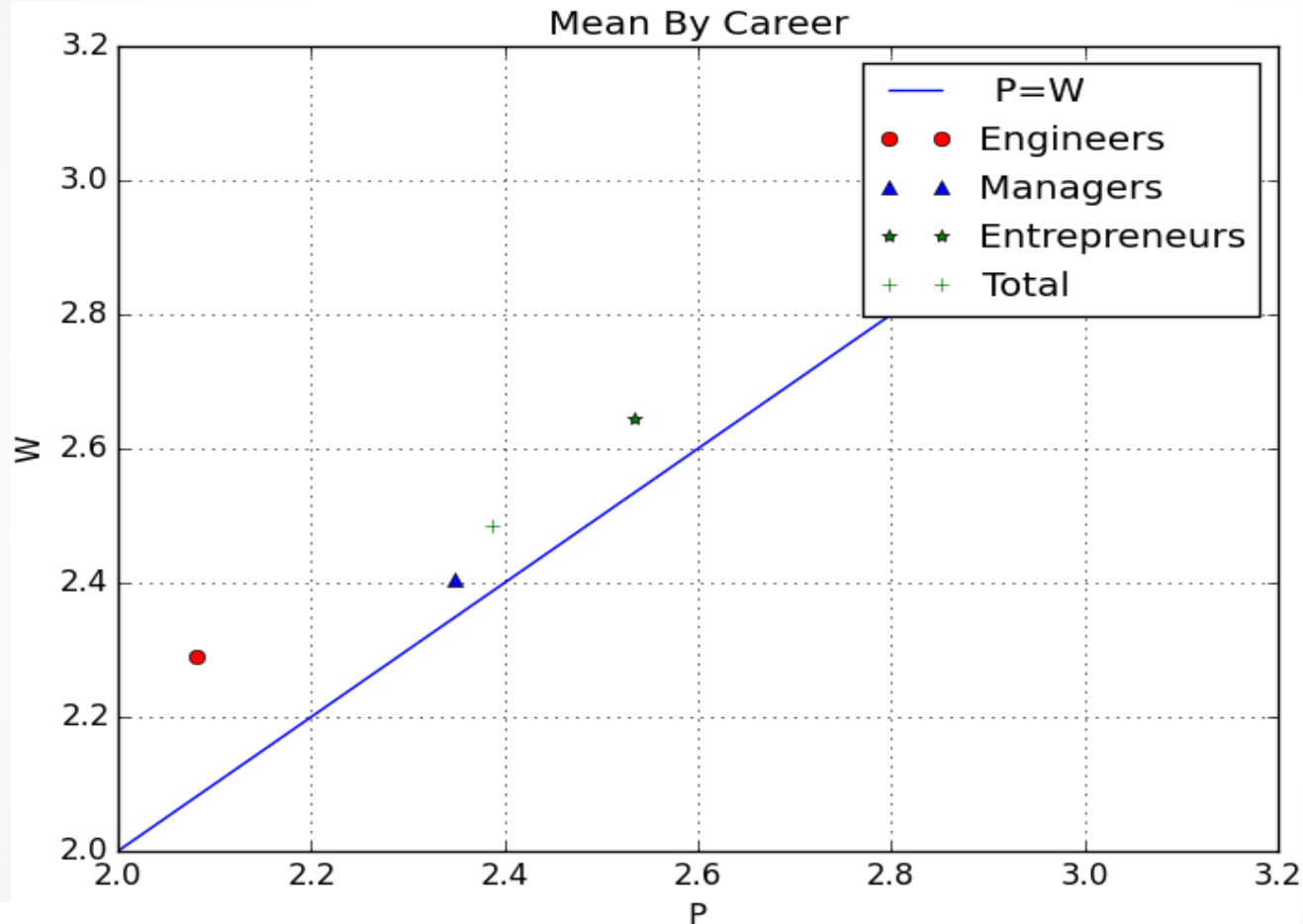


$P \neq W$: 56.8% of people

70% of respondents
positioned themselves
in level 2 or 3 , but half
favor one over the
other

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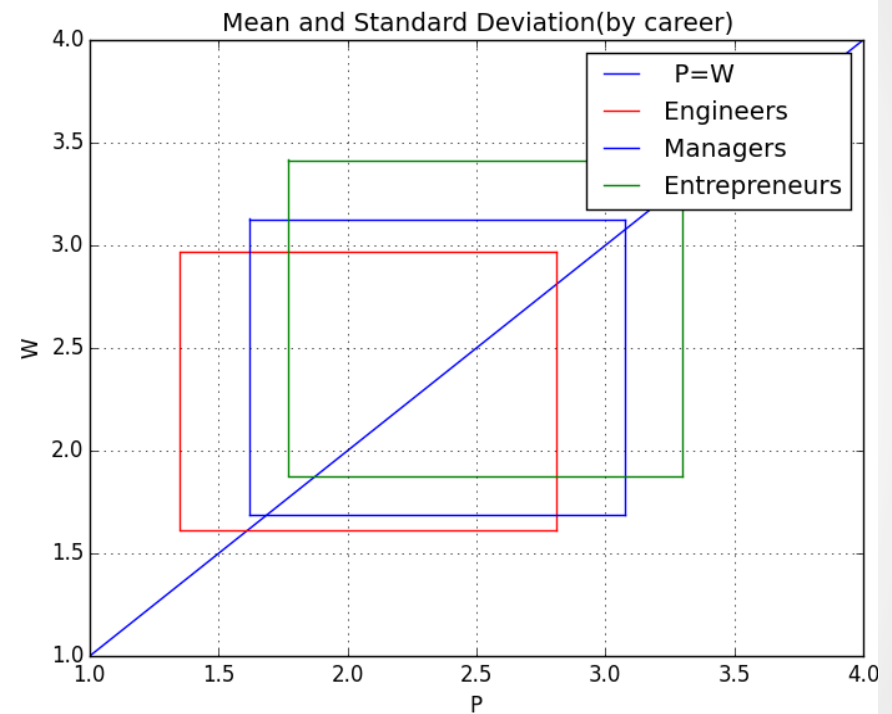
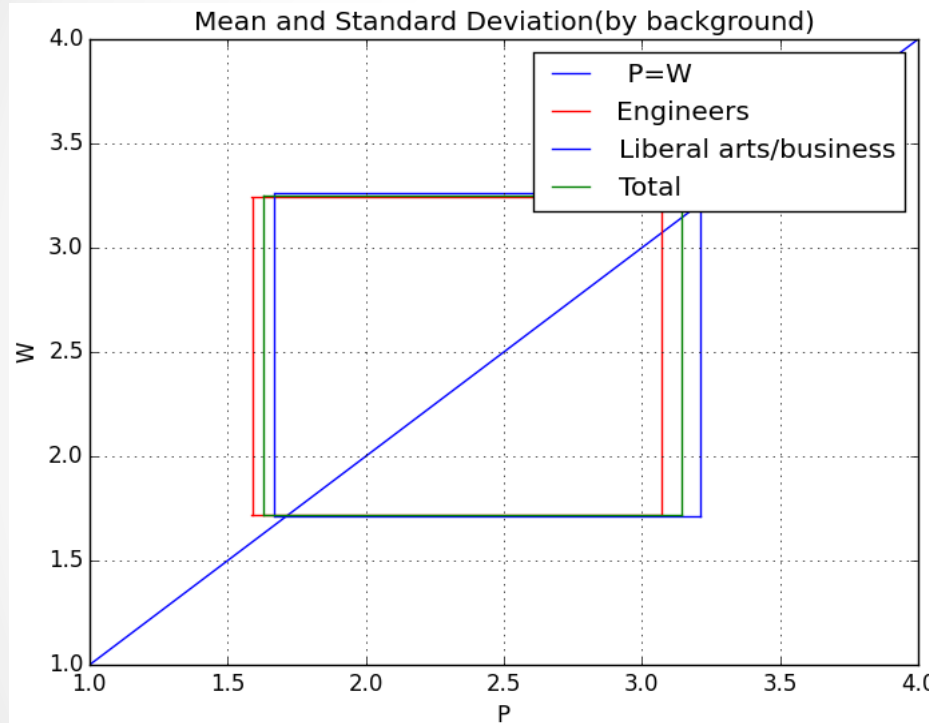
Entrepreneurs and Innovators have largest willingness to be outside comfort zones



95%
confidence
interval: plus
or minus
0.042;

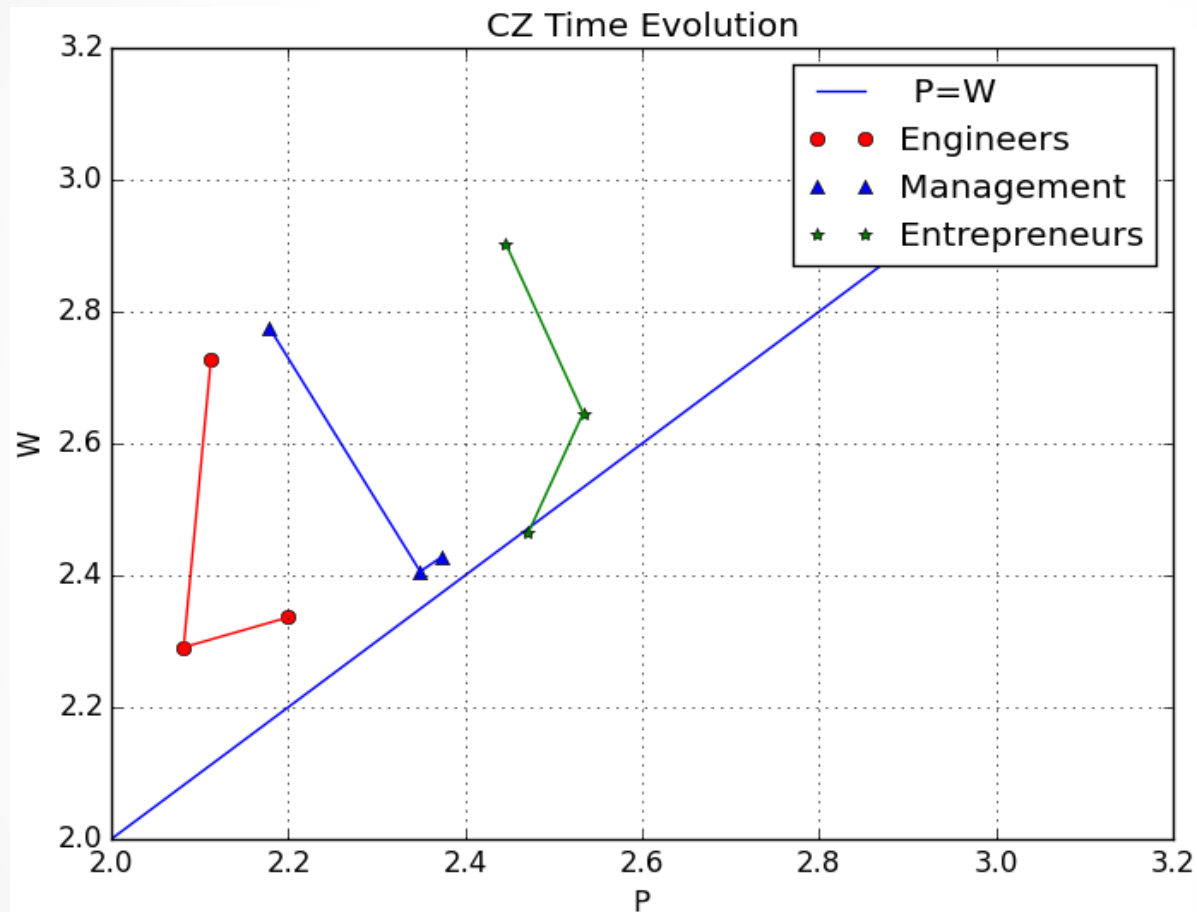
therefore the
differences
illustrated
(e.g. 0.1 to 0.5
for changes
on W and P)
are
statistically
significant.

Innovators are not from the same background



Mean and Standard Deviation by Background (4) and by Career (5) *Deletraz, Sidhu*

Evolution Over Time

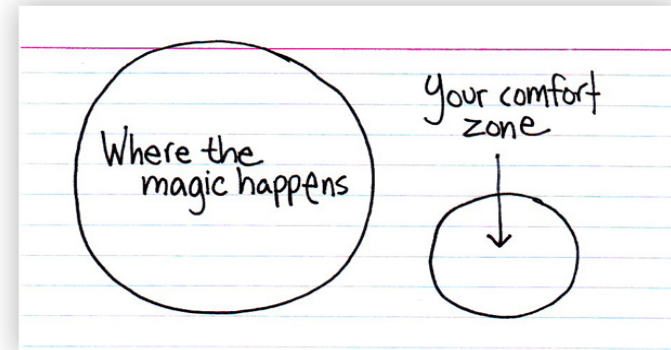


Notably, entrepreneurs increase their comfort with uncertainty over their careers, which is not the case for non-engineers and managers .

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Summary: Line of Thought

- People can **learn** new things only when they are outside of their **comfort zone**.
- **Innovators and entrepreneurs** are the comfortable with uncertainty & ambiguity. (and in fact even increasingly so over time)
- Implications on Organizations:
 - Innovative Organizations & Cultures
 - Must **Learn** faster
 - Must be **comfortable** with **new and ambiguous situations**
 - Mindset and psychology are at the root of innovation culture



Good News:

Comfort with growth, ambiguity, and resilience can be taught.

How: Reinforcement, Mental Training, and Berkeley Method Games

End of Section

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