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# Fostering Tourism And Entrepreneurship In Fringe Communities: Unpacking Stakeholder Perceptions Towards Entrepreneurial Climate

By: **Carol Kline**, Lauren Duffy, and Dana Clark

## Abstract

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# Fostering tourism and entrepreneurship in fringe communities: Unpacking stakeholder perceptions towards entrepreneurial climate

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## Abstract

The success of entrepreneurial ventures in tourism is tied to the community ecosystem that supports it. As such, communities are continuing to assess their entrepreneurial climate to identify areas where new programs might enhance entrepreneurial success. Based on previous measures of entrepreneurial climate, the current study furthers the entrepreneurial ecosystem literature within the context of fringe communities as it relates to tourism development. Fringe communities, which are found in the peri-urban outskirts of major cities, have increasingly grown as the urban-rural divide continues to blur. Amenity migrants flock to these communities with access to “best of both worlds” with regard to having access to the resources available in both areas. Given the complexity of community demographics emerging in these communities, this study explored whether stakeholder demographics and relationship with the community affects perception of the entrepreneurial climate. Specifically, this research examined residents’ perceptions in a location demonstrative of fringe communities: Moore County, North Carolina, US. The study found that the most differing views were held on *Basic Community Needs*, *Community spaces/green spaces*, *Innovative, supportive & celebratory environment*, and *Community spirit*.

## Keywords

Fringe community, counter-urbanization, entrepreneurial ecosystem, entrepreneurial climate

## Introduction

Recently, the notion of the entrepreneurial ecosystem has emerged as a framework to evaluate support for entrepreneurial activity with regard to environmental elements that facilitate or constrain entrepreneurship in a given area (Autio et al., 2014; Isenberg, 2011). Entrepreneurship is often considered a phenomenon of urban centers that innately have healthy competition, access to resources, and conducive population factors (Freire-Gibb and Nielsen, 2014), but given

the tourism industry’s unique ability to develop in rural communities where other traditional industries have declined, research on entrepreneurial conditions (i.e. entrepreneurial climate, e-climate) in rural areas

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is well-developed (Kline and Milburn, 2010; Kline et al., 2014b; Koh, 2002; Komppula, 2014; McGehee and Kline, 2008; Wilson et al., 2001). In spite of this, there has been little focus on entrepreneurial ecosystems in *fringe communities*. Also called *exurbia*, the *peri-urban*, the *rurban*, or the *urban-rural fringe*, fringe communities are characteristically and geographically situated between the dichotomy of places defined as either rural or urban. Related to counter-urbanization trends, urbanization (e.g. urban sprawl), and the complexities of shifting post-industrial landscapes (Frisvoll, 2012; Halfacree, 2012), the current study contributes to the paucity of tourism research conducted on fringe communities in the US.

Drawing on literature that has investigated socio-demographic and community relationship variables that influence perceptions of entrepreneurship (Benneworth, 2004; Bosworth and Farrell, 2011; Kline et al., 2012), as well as the limited work on perceptions of tourism in fringe communities (Weaver and Lawton, 2001, 2004, 2008; Zhang, 2008), this study sought to provide clarity to the complex relationships stakeholders have to the community and the diversity of the stakeholders themselves in connection to their perceptions of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Specifically, this research asks:

1. Does stakeholder affiliation or relationship with a fringe community (i.e. residential status, work status in the community, residential setting, and residential tenure) influence perceptions towards the entrepreneurial ecosystem?
2. Are there differences based on stakeholder socio-demographic variables including gender, race, employment sector, income, age/generation, and education, and their perceptions towards the entrepreneurial ecosystem?
3. Are there differences in perception towards entrepreneurial climate based on their self-rating of entrepreneurship?

The importance of this cannot be understated: fringe communities are varied in the socio-demographic composition of its people who also have varied and complex relationships with the community and understanding the relationship of individuals to the community is important to consider when examining perceptions towards the entrepreneurial ecosystem. In recognizing this, it is essential to understand who become the ‘change-agents’ (i.e. the entrepreneurs) and the context that influences the direction of future development in the community. Thus, this study investigates differences in stakeholder perceptions towards

the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the conditions that support entrepreneurial efforts.

### *Literature review*

*Fringe communities*. With continued trends of counter-urbanization and urbanization (Frisvoll, 2012; Halfacree, 2012), many have recognized the fallacy of the rural-urban divide construct, moving towards a continuum of peri-urbanization (Champion and Hugo, 2004). In this space between are communities –fringe communities – that are characterized by both a more diverse population of residents, as well as features of the urban built landscapes (e.g. buildings, architecture, entertainment value), and of the rural, natural landscapes (e.g. outdoor space, pastoral settings, lakes, mountains; Chase, 2015; Taylor, 2011).

Defining features of peri-urban fringe communities are their continuous rapid change, fragmentation, and growth (Chase, 2015; Koster et al., 2010; Walker and Fortmann, 2003). Formerly dichotomized as rural communities, these are communities that transform into commuter communities and communities of second-home development for retirees located on the outskirts of metropolitan areas are common examples of fringe communities, where residents may work in urban areas or utilize urban amenities, but want to live in a community that embodies that of a “small town life” in the countryside (Koster et al., 2010; Timothy, 2005). Other markers of fringe communities include business parks and industrial development zones, gated residential communities, regional airports, as well as tourism-specific operations and businesses such as theme parks and allied attractions, tourist shopping villages, modified nature-based tourism, peri-urban parks, factory outlet malls, and golf courses (Timothy, 2005; Weaver, 2005). Many growing fringe communities have a wealth of natural and cultural resources and amenities which are part of the draw for new residents. Those who are drawn to amenity-rich areas are also referred to as amenity migrants or those who are seeking to live in a place that supports a particular lifestyle (Gosnell and Abrams, 2009; Pavelka and Draper, 2015). Consequently, those who are able to migrate towards desired amenities, also share other characteristics such as being older, wealthier, and more educated—often a drastic distinction from the local population (Gosnell and Abrams, 2009). Thus, amenity migration has been identified as a primary contributor of rural gentrification and the “amenitization of rural places” (Butt and Fish, 2016).

This notion also highlights the complicated relationship that many fringe communities may also have with tourism development: these natural and cultural resources that draw in new residents, also draw in

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tourists, visitors and excursionists, and in effect, become center for a new tourism and recreation economy (Koster et al., 2010). Past research has examined resident perceptions and attitude towards tourism development in fringe communities. For instance, Weaver and Lawton (2001) investigated perceptions of residents towards tourism and found that those with shorter residential tenure supported and/or worked in the tourism sector at higher levels than long-term residents. They suggested that length of residence does not necessarily “associate with perception, but is mediated by such factors as the reason for relocating to the community (such as lifestyle choice vs. employment) and the ability to adapt to tourism-induced changes within the community” (p.442). Zhang (2008) also found that there were differences in support for tourism based on individual personality factors and community segment profiles. Of interest in this study is how different stakeholders perceive the conditions for engaging in entrepreneurship. Thus, fringe community settings are unique and more research is needed to understand how the unique qualities of the various stakeholders may influence how they view factors that facilitate or prevent them from engaging in entrepreneurial activity.

*Entrepreneurship in tourism.* Significant scholarship has focused on the role of tourism entrepreneurship in developing and maintaining rural destinations (Bosworth and Farrell, 2011; Hall, 2005; Honggang and Shaoyin, 2014; Kline and Milburn, 2010; Koh, 2002; Koh and Hatten, 2002; Moscardo, 2014; Mottiar, 2016; Ryan et al., 2012; Wilson et al., 2001). Central to the significance of this premise is that, “the entrepreneur is the single most important player in the modern economy” (Lazear, 2005: 649). Tourism entrepreneurs can be considered the backbone for creating tourism products and a vibrant rural economy (Hall, 2005; Koh, 2002; Ryan et al., 2012), whereby supporting entrepreneurial efforts may be just as important than the role of destination management organizations themselves in creating a more competitive destination (Komppula, 2014). The broader entrepreneurship literature also notes that the environmental context—the entrepreneurial ecosystem or climate—is important to address when understanding how to foster entrepreneurs (Autio et al., 2014; Isenberg, 2011)

Entrepreneurial ecosystems can be considered “inter-connected collections of actors, institutions, social structures, and cultural values that produce entrepreneurial activity” (Roundy, 2017: 1252). That is, the framework considers the interactions of the entrepreneurs and other actors in the system, as well as the factors that enable productive

entrepreneurial activity (Stam and Spigel, 2017). Isenberg (2011) noted that entrepreneurial ecosystems can be classified into six key domain areas that are important to address when fostering entrepreneurs: a culture conducive to innovation and risk-taking; availability of capital and financial resources; governance and leadership that promote supportive policies; human capital to draw (including skilled labor and educational/training opportunities); a range of infrastructure, professional, and institutional support services (e.g. telecommunications, legal, accounting); and access to potential markets and distribution channels. Sometimes referred to as “innovation clusters,” these ecosystems are focused on the nurturing of entrepreneurs. Largely, Isenberg’s model was informed by work in large municipalities and city settings across the globe.

In tourism, researchers have identified conditions that are important for entrepreneurs in rural areas (Honggang and Shaoyin, 2014; Kline and Milburn, 2010; Kline et al., 2014b; Koh, 2002; McGehee and Kline, 2008; Wilson et al., 2001). For example, Kline and Milburn (2010) offered 10 categories of factors influencing the entrepreneurial climate of a rural community: physical infrastructure; financial infrastructure; business support services; human capital; networking opportunities and social capital; education, training and assistance; governance/leadership; community culture; quality of life (e.g. affordable housing, work-life balance); and general context (e.g. community size, proximity to urban area, tourism development stage). In comparing Isenberg (2011) and Kline and Milburn’s (2010) work, we can draw many similarities across the elements identified in the models. Notable differences are the ways in which Isenberg’s framework considers “venture-ready markets” (including early adopters, distribution channels, and diaspora networks), where within the tourism research, “markets” are reflected in the element of “general context” with greater concern regarding population density (and scale of the local economy), degree of rurality, and remoteness. These ideas generally reflect the concern over proximity to potential tourist markets in metro areas. In this regard, while the entrepreneurial ecosystem and e-climate frameworks can provide guidance in thinking about the factors influencing entrepreneurship in fringe communities, this paper suggests that there might be particularities to the context that need to be considered.

*Entrepreneurship and relationship to community.* Of interest in this paper are the unique qualities of fringe communities that may influence perceptions towards entrepreneurial conditions. Residential tenure may be a significant determinant of their perception towards

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entrepreneurial ecosystem in fringe communities. First, framed by the notion of social capital and social networks, past research has noted that established local community networks are important to the success of entrepreneurs and small businesses (Bosworth and Farrell, 2011; Kwon et al., 2013; McGehee et al., 2010). To this end, rural entrepreneurs who are more connected with their local community may be more motivated and supported by locally embedded social relations and networks. Second, the general knowledge of local context (of resources, networks, markets, etc.), is also critical in rural areas (Benneworth, 2004). Third, with consideration that newer residents may be considered amenity migrants, there is research suggesting that their motives towards entrepreneurship may be more lifestyle-oriented (Bosworth, 2009). Finally, Kline et al. (2012) found that residential tenure, as well as level of volunteerism, had the most influence over perceptions of entrepreneurial climate. Relatedly, Hallak et al. (2012) investigated the relationship between place identity and entrepreneurial self-efficacy (i.e. beliefs in their capabilities as entrepreneurs) of small and medium tourism enterprise owners, finding that place identity had a positive effect on this relationship; that is, “a tourism entrepreneur’s sense of identity with the place in which his/her business operates contributes toward entrepreneurial success” (p.143). Hallak et al. (2015) found similar results in a study of Australian business owners where place identity/sense of place with their town of resident was positive-related to entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

Conversely, though, newer residents may have greater connections with other important players in the broader social and financial environments (i.e. the supply chain), and experience of business gained elsewhere (Bosworth and Farrell, 2011). As Paniagua (2002) noted in a study of urban–rural migration in Spain, new migrants to rural areas represented an entirely new socio-economic grouping to the area; after working in the city for 10+ years, they were often at the peak of their professional careers when moving, bringing with them unmatched professional experience to their new rural surrounds. To this end, Moscardo (2014) noted that the “insider-outsider” distinction based on residential tenure was not a useful way of thinking about entrepreneurship in a rural region of Australia, finding that the most desirable tourism entrepreneur could be a long-term local or amenity migrant.

Given the lack of research that has centrally focused on entrepreneurship in fringe communities, the current research identified a need for moving beyond only residential tenure, to study differing community associations and affiliations. Specifically, this study

considers *residential status* (i.e. resident vs. non-resident), whether they *work in the community* (i.e. some individuals may live in the community but commute to other places for work, and vice versa), and *residential setting* (i.e. whether they live in areas within a fringe community that may be considered more “town” or “country”), as well as *residential tenure* (i.e. how long they have lived in the community). Understanding these variables, as well as socio-demographic variables, may provide insight as to who is more likely to emerge as entrepreneurs in the dynamic environment of fringe communities.

## Methods

### Study area

Moore County, consisting of 700 square miles (~1800 km<sup>2</sup>), sits on the border between North Carolina’s piedmont and coastal plain. According to the North Carolina Department of Commerce (n.d.), over 100,000 people will live in Moore County by 2019. The annual population growth rate is approximately 1.4%. Around 89% of the population completed high school and about 32% have at least a bachelor’s degree. The per capita income in 2014 was \$27,437. Approximately 75% of the labor force works within the county. While the majority of the population is White (82.8%), 13.0% are considered African American and 6.3% Hispanic/Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

It is adjacent to the Fort Bragg (U.S. Army) Military Reservation which serves as a major economic contributor to the region. Much like other non-urban areas of North Carolina that had been based on furniture, tobacco, and textiles, all three industries have faded within the last two decades, leaving fringe areas in the state in the position of having to reinvent themselves economically in a post-industrial landscape. Approximately, half the people in the county can be described as “urban” and half described as “rural.” It is located an hour’s drive from urban and highly populated areas; however, much of the county’s land is considered rural due to population density. Aberdeen, Pinehurst, and Southern Pines, the main townships within the county, all liken themselves to having small town charm along with city amenities. It is because of this “dual identity” whereby residents view the county as both rural and urban, and neither completely either one, that makes studying the Moore County community an ideal representation of a fringe area.

Additionally, it is a fringe area where tourism is a major economic driver that has notably led to amenity migration trends in the area. Tourism expenditures in



the county crested at \$469m in 2016, a 6.1% increase from the previous year. There were 5730 people working in the tourism industry and tourism-related tax receipts in 2016 were \$24m for the state and nearly \$13m for local governments (Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, n.d.). The tourism product primarily centers on golf—home to the internationally renowned Pinehurst Golf Course which hosted the 1999, 2005, and 2014 men’s and 2014 women’s U.S. Open Golf tournament—as well as equestrian activities, and historic assets (Convention & Visitors Bureau, n.d.).

### Project background

The study was initiated as a project conducted for Moore County Partners in Progress (PIP), whose goal is to increase economic development and quality of life within the county. Through gaining a better understanding of perceptions surrounding living and working in Moore County they hoped to attract and support entrepreneurs who would strengthen the local economy (Bosworth and Farrell, 2011; Paniagua, 2002). The practical industry needs of this project centered on the development of a website, informed by research, investigating the type of *appealing content, message, and design* for current residents, small business owners, and tourists.

**Table 1.** Affiliation with Moore county.

Affiliation ( <i>n</i> = 607)	%
I currently live in Moore County	76.8
My primary home is in Moore County	67.9
I work full time or part time in Moore County	64.4
I have lived in Moore County for more than 10 years	53.4
I am an active volunteer in Moore County	28.2
I (or my family and I) moved to Moore County for work/professional reasons	24.9
My parents live in Moore County	23.6
I have children in the K-12 school system in Moore County	22.2
I am at least the second generation in my family to live in Moore County	19.4
I have visited Moore County for leisure/vacation	17.1
I was born in Moore County	16.8
I am a business owner in Moore County	12.9
I have visited Moore County on business	11.5
I have returned to live in Moore County after moving away	11.2
I have retired to Moore County	11.0
My son/daughter attends Sandhills Community College	5.1
I have a second home or property in Moore County	2.8

Fifteen members of the PIP Marketing Committee who represented various business sectors within the county (e.g. real estate, media, tourism, banking, retail, Chamber of Commerce, etc.), and previously established instruments in entrepreneurship and tourism literature (Kline et al., 2012; Kline et al., 2014c; Wilson et al., 2001), guided the development of the survey instrument. An American school grading scale was incorporated, asking participants to rate or “grade” various components of the county’s environment (A = Excellent, B = Good, C = Average, D = Poor, and F = Failing).

The survey was distributed through identified community gatekeepers, membership networks affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce and the PIP Marketing Committee, who shared the survey with their membership networks as well as posted on community-based Facebook pages in order to gain access to a broad constituency. Additionally, representatives from the primary school system, the nearby military base, cultural arts organizations, young professional groups, and small business support organizations were also approached to help spread the word about the project. Survey responses were collected using an online survey platform from 7 May–10 July 2013 and yielded a total of 607 usable responses. To answer the research questions, factor analysis, *t* tests, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests, or a non-parametric equivalent, were conducted to determine differences between groups; post hoc analyses were performed using the Tukey honestly significant difference (HSD) tests. Data were analyzed in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0.

## Results

### Descriptive results

Respondents were provided many options that depict their association with the county and were prompted to select all that apply (Table 1). A large majority (76.8%) were residents of the county, had a primary home in the bounty (67.9%), worked in the county (64.4%), and lived in the county more than ten years (53.4).

Additionally, respondents were asked other questions regarding their relationship with the county (Table 2). A majority were residents who lived in one of the towns, worked in the county, and most had lived there for more than 10 years. The average length of time that respondents have lived in Moore County is 18.2 years.

Of 581 respondents, 32.9% are male and 67.1% are female. Nearly all respondents (93.3%) are White. Nearly half (46.0%) are considered part of the Baby Boomer generation while one-third (33.9%) were

**Table 2.** Relationship with Moore County.

Variable	%
Resident status ( <i>n</i> =607)	
Resident	76.8
Non-resident	23.2
Work in Moore County ( <i>n</i> =607)	
Yes	64.4
No	35.6
Residential setting ( <i>n</i> =205)	
Resident: rural	35.6
Resident: town	64.4
Residential tenure ( <i>n</i> =351)	
<5 years	14.2
5–10 years	27.1
11–20 years	23.9
21–30 years	16.0
31 years +	18.8

members of Generation X. Respondents were asked to indicate from a provided list the classification that most accurately described their employment. Almost half (48.6%) were employed in the public sector, followed by 29.7% who were in the private sector and/or owned their own business. A majority of respondents (76.5%) hold a Bachelor's degree; 42.8% have an annual household income of \$100,000 or greater (Table 3). Respondents were asked to respond *Absolutely*, *Sometimes/somewhat*, or *Not at all* to the following statement to determine how they felt about their own entrepreneurial potential (*I consider myself entrepreneurial either in my paid work or my volunteer work*). The sample responded that they consider themselves to be entrepreneurial most (35.7%) or some (31.4%) of the time.

A host of characteristics that reflected entrepreneurial conditions and amenities were presented to the respondents. They were asked to then grade Moore County using the school grading scale. The conditions and amenities were divided into two questions—the first representing business conditions and the second social and environmental conditions. The most highly rated business elements were resident attitude toward military, resident attitude toward tourism, dependable high-speed internet, and proximity to metro area. The most highly rated social and environmental elements were golf opportunities, hospitals and medical services, attractiveness of area and natural amenities, and volunteer spirit in the communities (Tables 4 and 5). Please note the exemplary mark of an “A” is scored as a 1, while a failing grade “F” is a 5.

### Factor analysis

Factor analysis was employed to reduce the number of items reflecting the conditions. The dataset was

**Table 3.** Socio-demographics of respondents.

Variable	%
Generation ( <i>n</i> =587)	
Greatest Generation (Born 1900–1926)	0.0
Silent Generation (Born 1927–1945)	11.9
Baby Boomer (Born 1946–1964)	46.0
Generation X (Born 1965–1980)	33.9
Generation Y/ Millennials (Born 1981–1994)	8.0
Generation Z (Born 1995–2009)	.2
Employment ( <i>n</i> =586)	
I own my own business	17.4
I work in the private sector	12.3
I work in the non-profit sector	6.7
I work in the public sector	48.6
I am retired	11.1
I am unemployed	1.7
Other	2.2
Education ( <i>n</i> =587)	
Some high school	0.0
High school graduate	9.2
Associate degree	10.7
Professional/trade degree	3.6
Bachelor's degree	40.0
Graduate degree	36.5
Income ( <i>n</i> =479)	
Less than \$50,000	20.7
\$50,001–\$100,000	36.5
\$100,001–\$150,000	24.8
\$150,001–\$200,000	8.4
More than \$200,000	9.6

determined suitable for factor analysis based sample size and inter-item correlations, Bartlett's test of sphericity (statistically significant at the .000 level) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistic (.928 and .943, respectively) that met the recommended value of at least .6. Respondents who had “no opinion” on a condition were dropped from the analyses, thereby providing a more conservative analysis.

A principle component analysis with Varimax rotation was conducted on the 23 business conditions and 26 social and environmental conditions. The initial analysis was run without any restrictions and produced a correlations matrix, communalities, Eigenvalues, scree plot, and factor loadings. The criteria used to interpret the factor analysis were: inter-item correlation (correlation matrix), factor loadings, and operational goodness-of-fit. Communalities of the items fell within an accepted range (>.25) with the lowest being .559 and the highest being .832. The initial eigenvalues ranged from 1.028 to 11.837.

The results of the initial analysis for business conditions revealed a five-factor solution, which accounted for 66.1% of the variance in the data. After reviewing the scree plot, factor loadings,

**Table 4.** Business conditions/amenities.

Element	M	A	B	C	D	F	NO	n
Resident attitude toward military	2.18	36.0	38.3	15.0	1.8	.6	8.3	506
Resident attitude toward tourism	2.39	26.0	39.6	21.7	3.2	1.4	8.2	503
Dependable high-speed internet	2.68	19.5	33.7	25.2	10.5	3.0	8.1	507
Healthy economic/business environment	2.69	10.2	43.3	31.0	6.1	1.6	7.8	510
Proximity to metro area	2.77	15.2	30.5	31.3	13.3	4.8	5.0	505
Community size/scale of the local economy	2.96	11.2	31.9	35.5	5.8	3.2	12.5	502
Transportation infrastructure (roads, airport, train)	3.05	6.5	28.7	35.0	17.2	7.9	4.6	505
Business support services (printing, marketing, legal, taxes)	3.22	11.1	33.5	25.5	5.0	2.0	23.0	505
Innovative and forward-thinking business leaders	3.28	8.8	32.9	25.5	8.4	3.2	21.2	501
Policies to support business growth	3.28	7.5	31.6	30.4	7.9	1.8	20.9	507
Affordable building space and land	3.34	8.1	27.1	30.2	11.5	4.0	19.2	506
Community is supportive and admires innovation, change, risk-taking and new business	3.34	8.0	25.4	31.4	13.4	3.6	18.2	500
Public investment in community efforts	3.36	7.8	27.2	32.4	8.5	2.4	21.7	503
Land use planning	3.37	6.5	27.3	31.8	10.8	4.3	19.3	509
Private investment in community efforts	3.45	8.8	25.1	30.9	8.4	1.8	25.1	502
Existing networks that welcome new members	3.53	7.6	28.2	26.2	8.0	2.0	28.0	503
Programs exist that publicly celebrate small businesses and others' successes	3.54	6.0	26.6	28.4	11.4	1.6	26.0	500
Labor pool skill set	3.58	3.7	22.4	32.9	15.9	3.1	21.9	508
Innovative and forward-thinking elected officials	3.60	3.6	20.4	32.3	17.6	7.8	18.2	499
Education and training for entrepreneurs	3.77	8.0	20.6	26.4	9.6	2.2	33.2	500
Environment supports young adults and youth in business	3.94	2.6	14.0	30.5	20.0	5.6	27.3	499
Mentoring programs for small business	4.00	7.2	18.5	23.3	9.7	1.0	40.4	503
Access to start-up capital	4.29	3.0	12.1	27.0	11.5	3.2	43.1	503

NO: no opinion.

reliability scores, and operational fit for each set of conditions, *Resident Attitude Toward Tourism* and *Resident Attitude Toward Military* were combined with other "attitudinal components." The results of the initial analysis for social and environmental conditions also revealed a five-factor solution, accounting for 66.7% of the variance in the data. No items were dropped from either scale. Cronbach's alpha tests of reliability were conducted to assess the internal consistency of each of the subscales. The factors, their loadings, reliability scores are found in Tables 6 and 7.

While many of the conditions were adapted from previous ecosystem literature and the survey instrument shortened, the resulting factors varied a bit from previous literature. This may be due to the variations from the original items, but may also reflect the amenities available or the perceptions of residents in Moore County. The physical infrastructure factor and the *financial infrastructure* factor from Kline and Milburn's study (2010), for example, appears as *Capital, investment, land, labor, policies* in the current study. *Networking and social capital* and *Education, training and assistance* (Kline and Milburn, 2010) became *Education, mentoring, networks, business services* and *Innovative, supportive & celebratory environment. Community culture* in the Kline and Milburn study

aligned closely with *Community spirit* in the current research, and *Quality of life* corresponded with *Community spaces/green spaces, Arts & culture, and Diversity/options*.

### Test results

The purpose of this paper was to explore whether stakeholder socio-demographics and different relationships with the fringe community affects one's perception of the community's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The 49 conditions established in the literature as factors influencing entrepreneurship were reduced to nine dimensions.

### Relationship with county

No statistically significant differences were found on *Residential Status* (respondents were a mix of residents and non-residents) or *Working in County*. Only one significant difference occurred between *Residential Setting* (where residents are considered by whether they live in the rural or urban part of the county); *Basic Needs* ( $t=2.402$ ,  $df=102$ ) was found to be significant at the  $p=.018$  level. Rural residents ( $n=37$ ) rated the county's basic needs lower ( $M=2.54$ ,  $SD=.756$ ) than their town counterparts ( $n=67$ ;



**Table 5.** Social and environmental conditions/amenities.

Element	M	A	B	C	D	F	NO	n
Golf opportunities	1.28	86.3	8.6	1.9	.2	.4	2.6	466
Hospitals & medical services	1.75	53.9	29.6	10.7	1.7	1.1	3.0	469
Attractiveness of area and natural amenities	1.75	50.2	33.1	12.3	1.9	.4	1.9	462
Volunteer spirit in the community	2.18	36.5	34.4	18.2	3.4	.9	6.6	468
Outdoor recreation	2.22	30.5	36.7	20.4	7.1	3.2	2.1	466
Variety of culinary options	2.23	29.9	37.9	21.0	5.4	2.8	3.0	462
Parks and green space	2.24	28.1	40.1	20.2	5.6	3.2	2.8	466
Faith communities	2.26	28.4	46.2	14.7	1.3	.4	9.0	468
Opportunity to buy local produce and meats	2.29	28.3	36.2	24.4	5.4	.9	4.9	467
Low crime rate/public safety	2.29	24.9	41.3	23.0	5.6	1.3	3.9	465
Community events	2.29	20.3	40.1	28.0	6.7	1.3	3.7	464
Sound stewardship of natural resources	2.40	19.3	38.7	23.6	4.8	2.4	11.3	462
Resident tendency to buy and support local	2.48	13.1	50.5	24.2	5.6	.4	6.2	467
Lively downtowns and pedestrian areas	2.58	17.0	38.5	25.4	11.6	3.9	3.7	465
Places to gather, network, visit with friends and colleague	2.67	16.3	33.5	30.3	11.6	3.2	5.2	466
Positive, can-do, problem-solving attitudes of residents	2.67	10.3	43.4	31.2	6.7	.9	7.5	465
Performing arts	2.70	14.1	36.3	31.2	8.1	4.3	6.0	468
Variety of shopping price points	2.73	9.4	38.0	34.1	10.5	4.7	3.2	466
Diverse community demographics	2.78	12.7	30.8	35.3	13.3	3.4	4.5	465
Visual arts	2.86	13.2	31.5	32.6	10.2	3.7	8.9	463
Available, affordable health care	2.88	16.1	32.7	24.7	9.9	6.2	10.3	466
Effective non-governmental organizations working in the community to enhance quality of life	2.90	14.7	33.8	29.0	6.4	.9	15.2	455
Available, affordable housing	2.99	9.7	32.4	31.5	11.8	5.2	9.4	466
Options for K-12 education	3.03	17.4	29.2	24.5	8.6	2.6	17.6	465
Ethnic restaurants	3.28	9.0	25.5	35.8	15.0	7.7	6.9	466
Media is representative of all interests	3.34	5.8	23.5	33.0	20.7	8.2	8.6	463
Options for childcare	3.92	4.3	21.0	24.7	12.6	3.2	34.2	462

NO: no opinion.

$M = 2.17$ ,  $SD = .746$ ). Two significant differences were found on *Residential Tenure*, where respondents were categorized according to how long they've lived in the county. In both cases, the residents who had lived there more than 10 years held a more negative impression of *Innovative & Supportive Business Environment* and *Basic Needs* than those who had lived there 6–10 years and 1–5 years, respectively (Table 8).

### Socio-demographic variables

The relationship between socio-demographic variables and perception of entrepreneurial conditions was also explored; several statistically differences were found. Across gender, women held a more positive perspective than men on four factors: *Scale/Infrastructure*, *Community Spaces*, *Basic Needs*, and *Variety* (Table 9).

The group sizes for Race were grossly unequal therefore the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was used to measure differences between White ( $n = 130$ ) and Non-White ( $n = 9$ ) respondents. Significance was found at the  $p < .05$  level on seven of the nine factors

*Resource Investment*, *Scale/Infrastructure*, *Innovative Environment*, *Community Spirit*, *Community Spaces*, *Basic needs*, and *Arts & Culture*. In each case, an individual identifying as White held a more positive view of these factors than Non-Whites.

Because of the uneven group sizes for employment sector, respondents who owned their own business and those who worked in private sector employment were combined, and much smaller groups such as *Non-profit Sector*, *Retired* and *Students* were dropped from the analysis. In doing so, it should be recognized that engagement in entrepreneurial activity can be vastly different between those who own their own a business, and those who work for a private company. In each of the three cases of statistically significant differences, the private sector rated the factors more positively than their public sector counterparts (Table 10).

In the analysis of income, the upper two categories of income were combined. Three statistically significant differences were revealed, on *Community Spirit*, *Community Spaces*, and *Basic Needs* factors (Table 11).

**Table 6.** Business conditions factored into dimensions.

	Loading	M	SD
Capital, investment, land, labor, policies ( $\alpha=.839$ )			
Land use planning	.464	2.76	.956
Affordable building space and land	.459	2.76	1.000
Labor pool skill set	.654	2.94	.899
Private investment in community efforts	.754	2.64	.895
Public investment in community efforts	.695	2.70	.898
Access to start-up capital	.735	2.98	.918
Innovative, supportive & celebratory environment ( $\alpha=.865$ )			
Innovative and forward-thinking elected officials	.745	3.06	1.000
Innovative and forward-thinking business leaders	.722	2.55	.937
Community is supportive and admires innovation, change, risk-taking and new business	.705	2.71	.955
Programs exist that publicly celebrate small businesses and others' successes	.624	2.70	.897
Environment supports young adults and youth in business	.633	3.17	.920
Resident attitude toward tourism	.691	2.15	.906
Resident attitude toward military	.868	1.93	.852
Education, mentoring, networks, business services ( $\alpha=.881$ )			
Mentoring programs for small business	.773	2.66	.940
Existing networks that welcome new members	.738	2.56	.881
Education and training for entrepreneurs	.744	2.66	.944
Business support services (printing, marketing, legal, taxes)	.538	2.38	.888
Economic scale/health/infrastructure ( $\alpha=.804$ )			
Community size/scale of the local economy	.542	2.50	.892
Proximity to metro area	.657	2.57	1.062
Healthy economic/business environment	.631	2.39	.808
Policies to support business growth	.534	2.54	.861
Transportation infrastructure (roads, airport, train)	.651	2.91	1.016
Dependable high-speed internet	.458	2.43	1.018

SD: standard deviation.

Note:  $\alpha$  =Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items.

In each case, the two higher income groups perceived the factors more positively than the lower income groups. No statistically significant differences were found among the variables generation or education.

**Table 7.** Social and environmental conditions factored into dimensions.

	Loadings	M	SD
Community spaces/green spaces ( $\alpha=.869$ )			
Outdoor recreation	.462	2.13	1.036
Parks and green space	.572	2.12	1.014
Golf opportunities	.872	1.16	.498
Places to gather, network, visit with friends and colleagues	.667	2.50	1.002
Community events	.771	2.25	.895
Lively downtowns and pedestrian areas	.573	2.45	1.037
Attractiveness of area and natural amenities	.453	1.67	.807
Arts & culture ( $\alpha=.857$ )			
Performing arts	.742	2.50	.997
Visual arts	.787	2.55	.990
Variety of culinary options	.605	2.10	1.000
Ethnic restaurants	.690	2.85	1.069
Basic community needs ( $\alpha=.795$ )			
Hospitals & medical services	.488	1.61	.852
Available, affordable housing	.725	2.67	1.020
Available, affordable health care	.780	2.53	1.116
Low crime rate/public safety	.698	2.14	.931
Community spirit ( $\alpha=.856$ )			
Effective non-governmental organizations working in the community to enhance quality of life	.739	2.33	.875
Resident tendency to buy and support local	.718	2.24	.778
Positive, can-do, problem-solving attitudes of residents	.676	2.38	.810
Media is representative of all interests	.656	2.97	1.035
Opportunity to buy local produce and meats	.577	2.09	.904
Volunteer spirit in the community	.666	1.89	.911
Sound stewardship of natural resources	.489	2.25	.940
Diversity/options ( $\alpha=.801$ )			
Diverse community demographics	.491	2.60	.976
Faith communities	.626	1.92	.776
Variety of shopping price points	.500	2.62	.944
Options for childcare	.533	2.82	.972
Options for K-12 education	.568	2.36	1.013

SD: standard deviation.

Note:  $\alpha$  =Cronbach's Alpha based on standardized items.

### Entrepreneurial self-rating

Respondents were asked to rate themselves in their paid or volunteer work as to whether they are entrepreneurial. The entrepreneurially minded felt more positive about the county's *Networks* than the other two groups, but were more critical regarding the county's *Variety* (Table 12).

**Table 8.** Ratings of ecosystem factors by residential tenure.

Item	df	F	Sig.	1–5 years (M, SD)	6–10 years (M, SD)	11–20 years (M, SD)	Over 20 years (M, SD)
Innovative & supportive business environment <sup>a</sup>	3, 39.265 <sup>b</sup>	2.989	.043	<i>n</i> =14 <sup>a</sup> 2.34 (.708)	18 2.45 (.455)	22 2.83 (.488)	50 2.68 (.681)
Basic needs	3, 100	3.327	.023	1.88 (.553)	2.11 (.676)	2.15 (.797)	2.49 (.753)

SD: standard deviation.

Note: A higher mean indicates a more negative perspective.

<sup>a</sup>*n* values are lower due to listwise deletion of missing data.

<sup>b</sup>*p* < 0.05; Equal variances not assumed; Welch test statistic used.

**Table 9.** Ratings of ecosystem factors by gender.

Item	df	t	Sig.	Men M(SD)	Women M(SD)
				<i>n</i> =52	84
Scale/infrastructure	130.036	-1.197	.057	3.14 (1.226)	2.63 (1.280)
Community spaces <sup>a</sup>	132.011	-2.035	.029	3.08 (1.141)	2.51 (1.165)
Basic needs <sup>a</sup>	129.956	-5.030	.000	4.50 (.662)	4.08 (1.036)
Diversity/options	134	-2.621	.028	3.14 (1.379)	2.41 (1.322)

SD: standard deviation.

<sup>a</sup>*p* < 0.05; Equal variances not assumed.

**Table 10.** Ratings of ecosystem factors by employment sector.

Item	df	t	Sig.	Private M(SD)	Public M(SD)
				<i>n</i> =46	72
Community spirit	116	-1.794	.075	2.26 (.658)	2.49 (.654)
Community spaces	116	-2.653	.009	1.92 (.646)	2.57 (.679)
Basic needs	116	-2.401	.018	2.13 (.783)	2.48 (.761)

SD: standard deviation.

*p* < 0.05.

**Table 11.** Ratings of ecosystem factors by income.

Item	df	F	Sig.	<\$50K (M, SD)	\$50–100K (M, SD)	\$100–150K (M, SD)	>\$150K (M, SD)
				<i>n</i> =28	50	24	20
Resource investment	3,118	2.750	.046	2.86 (.688)	2.97 (.813)	2.51 (.675)	2.60 (.661)
Scale/infrastructure	3,118	2.189	.093	2.59 (.786)	2.72 (.732)	2.43 (.594)	2.28 (.570)
Innovative environment	3, 54.438	2.702	0.54	2.76 (.865)	2.76 (.646)	2.35 (.619)	2.51 (.523)
Community Spirit <sup>a</sup>	3, 56.890	3.217	.029	2.45 (.805)	2.59 (.690)	2.21 (.629)	2.20 (.423)
Community Spaces <sup>a</sup>	3, 57.248	8.100	.000	2.16 (.767)	2.39 (.705)	1.99 (.730)	1.75 (.376)
Basic needs <sup>a</sup>	3, 58.903	18.241	.000	2.57 (.816)	2.6 (.832)	2.02 (.667)	1.675 (.381)

SD: standard deviation.

<sup>a</sup>*p* < 0.05; Equal variances not assumed; Welch test statistic used in place of F.

## Discussion

This study moves the conversation forward regarding conditions of entrepreneurial ecosystem/climate in fringe communities. With an explicit acknowledgement

that these communities hold unique characteristics and are affected by diverse stakeholders and their differing associations with community, this study's authors sought to understand how association with socio-demographic and community relationship factors

**Table 12.** Ratings of ecosystem factors by entrepreneurial self-rating.

Item	df	F	Sig.	Yes (M, SD)	Somewhat/it depends (M, SD)	No (M, SD)
				<i>n</i> =57	46	36
Networks <sup>a</sup>	2, 83.508	2.666	.075	2.39 (.885)	2.71 (.635)	2.71 (.803)
Variety	2, 136	2.721	.069	2.65 (.586)	2.54 (.717)	2.49 (.706)

SD: standard deviation.

<sup>a</sup>Equal variances not assumed; Welch test statistic used in place of F.**Table 13.** Statistically significant findings with the group who held the lower, more negative opinion of that particular factor identified.

	Residential setting	Residential tenure	Gender	Race	Employment	Income
Capital, investment, land, labor, policies				Non-whites		Lower income
Innovative, supportive & celebratory environment		Long-time residents		Non-whites		Lower income
Education, mentoring, networks, business services						
Economic scale/health/infrastructure			Males	Non-whites		Lower income
Community spaces/green spaces			Males	Non-whites	Public sector employees	Lower income
Arts & culture				Non-whites		
Basic community needs	Rural residents	Long-time residents	Males	Non-whites	Public sector employees	Lower income
Community spirit				Non-whites	Public sector employees	Lower income
Diversity/options			Males			

played into perceptions toward entrepreneurial climate. That is, this study investigated perceptions across stakeholders of how well the community is performing with regard to the factors that foster entrepreneurship. Overall, the findings found significant differences in certain groupings of stakeholders. Table 13 summarizes these differences and identifies the groups who held lower, more negative opinions of certain entrepreneurial conditions in Moore County.

This study demonstrated that community relationships are more complex and the nature of that relationship is not singularly dependent on residential tenure. While tenure certainly drew out differences (i.e. long-term residents had a more negative outlook towards some conditions influencing entrepreneurial capacity), residential setting also showed differences where residents that lived in the rural areas of the county had a more negative perception of basic community needs. It is also important to note that the findings of this study had some inconsistencies with previous literature. Dissimilar to Kline et al. (2012),

the long-term residents in the current study had a more negative impression of the entrepreneurial ecosystem dimensions that held a statistical difference (basic community needs and innovative, supportive & celebratory environment). Within the Kline et al.'s study, the long-term residents expressed contentment with the ecosystem. This finding could be explained by the idea that long-term residents may be more rooted in place and less likely to "pick up and move" to new places even if they may have a more conducive entrepreneurial environment (see Kline et al., 2012; Reuschke, 2014). In other words, it is possible that they have been more jaded by entrepreneurial conditions but willing to stick it out because of their connection to the community.

Additionally, this study found that public service sector employees and men tended to have a more negative subjective view of the entrepreneurial climate. This may be explained by public sector employees having a better grasp on community assets and deficits, or could represent a stark difference of the importance



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of entrepreneurship in the private vs. the public sector. This study also demonstrated that lines of race and income are the most significant in terms of explaining perceptions towards the conditions contributing to the entrepreneurial ecosystem in fringe communities. Individuals identifying as non-White had a more negative view towards the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

However, it is also worth noting the elements of the analysis that did not vary in any statistically significant way. For example, no statistically significant differences were found among the variables generation or education. This is good news since Moore County is hoping to attract more Millennial age professionals to the county. However, it should still be noted that Millennials that may also be considered part of the creative class are being drawn towards cities compared to fringe communities (Walker, 2017)—an issue beyond the scope of this study.

The ecosystem dimension related to *Education, mentoring, networks, business services* did not vary across any independent variables, and *Arts & culture* and *Diversity/options* each varied across only one. All three dimensions held relatively moderate favor among most residents—averaging around a “B-” on the grading scale or an approximate mean of 2.5. While this rating could be higher, two of these dimensions in particular relate to the factors identified by Wilson et al. (2001). A *complete tourism package* was one of the necessary features for successful rural tourism development. *Arts and culture*, and the shopping item within *Diversity/options* for that matter, directly relate to an area’s tourism package. Our dimension of *Education, mentoring, networks, business services* directly relates to three of Wilson et al. factors: coordination and cooperation between businesspersons and local leadership, coordination and cooperation between rural tourism entrepreneurs, and information and technical assistance for tourism development and promotion. Likewise, many other studies have cited the need for networking opportunities to build social capital for tourism development (Kline et al., 2014b; Kwon et al., 2013; McGehee et al., 2010). Over two-thirds (67.1%) of respondents considered themselves absolutely or somewhat entrepreneurial. This statistic is likely more useful to community leaders than the test results, whereby respondents who self-rated themselves as entrepreneurially minded perceived the diversity/option more negatively than their counterparts; however, the difference in means was slight. Overall, each of the entrepreneurial self-rating groups rated the community conditions to as slightly below average.

### *Implications*

It is vital that fringe communities build the infrastructure that is favorable to the incubation of entrepreneurship

while being mindful of the different needs of stakeholders. Fringe communities are made up of distinctly different residents who reflect diverse origins, backgrounds, and values, but who must make future community planning decisions together. To this end, tourism entrepreneurs are often leaders in development efforts (e.g. Komppula, 2014; Moscardo, 2014) and play a significant role in shaping and reshaping the identity of the community.

Researchers are increasingly acknowledging that power dynamics are an important issue in community and tourism planning in the wake of changing rural areas (Cloke, 2006; Frisvoll, 2012; Halfacree, 2004). Equally, understanding what contributes to the success of entrepreneurs has been important questions in the broader literature (e.g. Acs et al., 2009; Poschke, 2013), and this question was considered within the context of fringe communities where unique dynamics that may promote entrepreneurship across the diverse stakeholder groups must be considered. Though no two communities or contexts are the same, this study has demonstrated that differences towards entrepreneurial ecosystem conditions exist in fringe communities. It raises questions related to perception of opportunities for entrepreneurship, particularly among groups that perceived some conditions that support entrepreneurship were weaker than others. Why did some groups perceive weaker performance than others? How can those differences be addressed to assure equitable access to opportunity in tourism entrepreneurship?

It is important for community leaders to understand the different perceptions toward these conditions so that they might adjust the marketing (and hence, awareness) of community amenities and programs or initiate new amenities and programs altogether that would target the different socio-demographic and community groups. In the particular case of Moore County, there is a need for further research to understand *why* the different groups perceived the entrepreneurial ecosystem in a certain way in order to craft environments that proactively encourage the creation of programs, initiatives, businesses, and organizations that contribute to the social, environmental, and economic vitality of a place.

Overall, this study has furthered the entrepreneurial ecosystem literature within the context of fringe communities and as it relates to tourism development. Great care was taken to include a diverse range of community organizations, however, because the sample was procured from gatekeeper organizations (e.g. PIP and the Chamber of Commerce), the limitations of convenience sampling should be recognized. That is, as established economic development organizations, these organizations are engaged with stakeholders

who are more active in development efforts, and those who are “connected” within these networks via social media. Additionally, respondents who had “no opinion” on a condition were dropped from the analyses providing a more conservative analysis. Thus, missing data was dropped from the analysis list wise which resulted in a smaller sample for testing, however, a more rigorous result. Future studies building on this research should expand into different types and sizes of fringe communities.

## Conclusions

Entrepreneurial climate has almost exclusively explored either rural or urban contexts leaving a need to better understand communities located in between that are not categorically rural or urban (Champion and Hugo, 2004; Chase, 2015; Taylor, 2011). These fringe communities that are situated in the continuum of peri-urbanization are increasingly having to negotiate the complexities of transitioning natural, built, economic, political, social, and cultural landscapes. Community and tourism planning must address the challenges that this presents, including conflict over land use and physical changes to the natural resources that have attracted many of the amenity migrants and other new residents in the first place (Chase, 2015). As well, planners must be increasingly cognizant of the pressures to community identity and sense of place as diverse perspectives of new stakeholders may breakdown what had traditionally been perceived as more harmonized practices when everyone historically drew from the same background, history, and shared set of values. As such, entrepreneurs are often some of the most significant change agents in development, which is why attention needs to be paid to who become tourism entrepreneurs in fringe communities. To that end, tourism plays a significant role in these contexts as it often has the potential to become a major industry because of the amenities and resources that so often exist in fringe communities that attract people to visit. Likewise, tourism is an industry that is known for its ability to create entrepreneurial opportunities for the diverse residents living in fringe communities.

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