

6-11-2011

“ENTREPRENEUR MAKES GOOD”: SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND OPPORTUNITY CREATION (SUMMARY)

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Recommended Citation

Conger, Michael and York, Jeffrey G. (2011) "“ENTREPRENEUR MAKES GOOD”: SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND OPPORTUNITY CREATION (SUMMARY)," *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*: Vol. 31: Iss. 19, Article 8.

Available at: <http://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol31/iss19/8>

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≈ SUMMARY ≈

**“ENTREPRENEUR MAKES GOOD”: SOCIAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND OPPORTUNITY CREATION***Michael Conger, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA**Jeffrey G. York, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA***Principal Topic**

The study of social implications of entrepreneurship, and the influence of socio-cultural factors on entrepreneurial action, is still in its infancy. Although there is a growing interest in “social entrepreneurship” there is a critical need for empirical studies, and for more established entrepreneurship theories and streams of research, to be applied to the context of socially beneficial entrepreneurship (Short et al., 2009). Opportunity recognition and creation has been identified as a defining topic for entrepreneurship research (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Key theoretical questions have been raised regarding this topic including how entrepreneurial motivation affects opportunity recognition (Shane et al, 2003) and whether entrepreneurial opportunities are discovered or created (Saravathy, 2002; Alvarez & Barney, 2007). Several entrepreneurship scholars have theorized about why and how social entrepreneurship opportunities come to be but empirical study has not yet been brought to bear on these topics. In this study, we seek to bridge the theoretical predictions of the opportunity literature with the context of entrepreneurial action focused on creating social, as well as economic, benefits. We draw on identity theory (Stryker, 1980) to empirically examine how the entrepreneur’s self-concept affects her propensity to discover and/or create opportunities for socially beneficial entrepreneurship.

Method

We administered an online survey to 258 entrepreneurs associated with the Deming Center for Entrepreneurship at the University of Colorado. The survey was designed to discover the salient identity profile of the entrepreneur, identify the importance of creating social and economic value to the central mission of the ventures, and determine how the entrepreneur approached the discovery/creation process.

Results and Implications

Our results strongly support the predictions of identity theory, revealing the relationship between the salient identities of founding entrepreneurs and the commitment of the firms they found to creating social and/or economic value. When entrepreneurs perceived high congruence between their identity as an entrepreneur and highly social identities such as community member or environmentalist, the importance of creating social value to their firm’s central mission was significantly higher. Our findings on the opportunity recognition process were inconclusive. Our sample of entrepreneurs seemed to make no clear distinction between discovery and creation in the opportunity recognition process.

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