PERSON OR PLACE: THE RELATIVE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS, NETWORK ATTRIBUTES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS AND BEHAVIOR (SUMMARY)

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PERSON OR PLACE: THE RELATIVE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS, NETWORK ATTRIBUTES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTIONS AND BEHAVIOR

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Principal Topic
Using academic entrepreneurship as our context, and Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behavior (1988) as our theoretical frame, we evaluate the relative importance of individual differences, network resources and environmental characteristics on faculty researchers’ intentions and decisions to exploit commercial opportunities related to their scholarship. Significant aspects of faculty commercialization behavior remain poorly understood. Few studies concentrate on those individuals directly involved in commercialization, and much of this research has focused on campus technology transfer officers rather than on faculty researchers themselves.

Method
We consider three categories of factors that may predispose individuals to position their scholarship for commercialization: (1) individual attributes; (2) characteristics of researchers’ social networks; and (3) faculty perceptions of institutional and school-level policies and procedures. Using path analysis, we test our model with a non-random sample of 399 faculty affiliated with 21 universities in a large northeastern state. (Compared to the national population of faculty at similar campuses, these respondents were more educated; more likely to be among core, tenured faculty; and more likely to be male.)

Results and Implications
Results indicate that intentions to engage in commercialization behaviors are preceded by positive attitudes toward commercialization and by support for commercialization from important identity groups. Individual characteristics, including the researcher’s risk propensity, his feelings based on his knowledge of the entrepreneurial role, the value he puts on the importance of money, and his relative sense of obligation to bring his discoveries to the marketplace directly and indirectly affect a scholar’s intentions to commercialize. Regarding network characteristics, a faculty researcher’s amount of industry experience and his access to resources via social network ties are directly related to commercialization activity—without affecting intentionality. The number of contacts in his social network is linked to the propensity to engage in repeated commercialization behaviors. The diversity of those contacts is related to the range of commercialization behaviors in which he engages. Institutional context, such as the presence of formal institutional policies and practices aimed at motivating faculty researchers to commercialize as well as the presence of supportive infrastructure influence both entrepreneurial intentions and actual behaviors. Perceptions of policies are related to positive attitude toward commercialization, which in turn influences entrepreneurial outcomes.

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