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THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND SELF-IDENTITY ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY - EVIDENCE FROM EXISTING ENTREPRENEURS (SUMMARY)

William R. Meek

University of Dayton, wmeek1@udayton.edu

Diane M. Sullivan

University of Dayton

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≈ SUMMARY ≈

**THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND SELF-IDENTITY
ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY -
EVIDENCE FROM EXISTING ENTREPRENEURS**

William R. Meek, University of Dayton, USA
Diane M. Sullivan, University of Dayton, USA

Principal Topic

Sustainable development is gaining recognition as a sub-domain of entrepreneurship and recent research has suggested that sustainable entrepreneurship may be the most important topic of our time. The majority of the existing research focuses on theory building and qualitative case studies of new ventures. While commendable, this research leaves a gap in our understanding about the attitudes existing entrepreneurs possess regarding sustainability. This study develops a measure of environmental sustainability orientation (ESO) to examine the impact of gender, and self-identity (SI) on the sustainability orientation of existing entrepreneurs. We explore questions regarding 1) gender differences in ESO, 2) the relationship between SI and ESO, 3) how gender moderates the SI-ESO relationship, and 4) if age of the venture relates to ESO.

Method

Survey data were collected from existing entrepreneurs in two states in the U.S. Midwest ($n = 208$). Independent variables include the extent to which entrepreneurs' self-business identity overlap, age of the venture and entrepreneur gender. The dependent variable examined is the entrepreneur's environmental sustainability orientation. Control variables include entrepreneur education and age. Independent samples t-test and multiple moderated regression were used to analyze the data.

Results and Implications

Our findings suggest that women and men vary in their ESO—women evaluate their ESO higher than men. Further, SI positive relates to ESO for both women and men. Finally, there is a negative relationship between the age of the venture and ESO. This study contributes to the literature by examining important and unexplored relationships related to existing entrepreneurs' environmental sustainability orientations. Broadly, gender may be an important variable to consider in research examining environmentally responsible entrepreneurship. Further, entrepreneur's whose personal identity closely overlaps with their business identity are likely to have higher environmentally sustainable orientations. This suggests that although social identity may take various forms during an entrepreneur's tenure, if we can instill high levels of environmentally responsible social norms in individuals in society early, we may be able to simultaneously increase the environmental sustainability orientation of entrepreneurial firms.

CONTACT: William R. Meek; wmeek1@udayton.edu; (T): 937-229-3760; (F): 937-229-3788; 300 College Park, University of Dayton, Dayton OH 45469-2271.