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## DO SUPERORDINATE IDENTITIES ALTER ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITY RECOGNITION (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

Kip Kiefer

*United States Air Force Academy, USA, kip.kiefer@usafa.edu*

Justin I. Miller

*The Ohio State University, USA*

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≈ INTERACTIVE PAPER ≈

**DO SUPERORDINATE IDENTITIES ALTER ENTREPRENEURIAL  
OPPORTUNITY RECOGNITION**

*Kip Kiefer, United States Air Force Academy, USA*  
*Justin I. Miller, The Ohio State University, USA*

**Principal Topic**

Considerable research has examined how entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs differ in their ability to perceive entrepreneurial opportunities. This research suggests entrepreneurs are more risk-seeking, more likely to be raised in a family with entrepreneurial experience, and may even vary in their genetic make-up relative to non-entrepreneurs. Most literature suggests that these differences exist between people before engaging in entrepreneurial endeavors; but other empirical studies suggests these differences arise post hoc.

This paper explores differences between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs by focusing on variation in entrepreneurial alertness. Specifically, it investigates whether entrepreneurial alertness is cued by one's social identity—rather than by characteristics of the entrepreneur.

**Method**

This study uses two research protocols. First, a survey of 450 students helped classify individuals according to their sub-ordinate and super-ordinate identities. Second, survey respondents participated in a follow-on experiment designed to 1) prime a specific social identity to which the individual belonged, and 2) assess the influence of this primed identity on opportunity recognition. Following a mild manipulation, respondents participated in a series of experiments exploring the influence of students' social identities on their ability and likelihood to recognize entrepreneurial opportunities.

**Results and Implications**

Results indicate that social identity may be the missing construct that explains inconsistent empirical findings on the differences between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs with respect to entrepreneurial alertness.

This study makes two key contributions. First, with respect to Social Identity Theory, this study confirms how individuals' identity is complex and layered, and that identities may be primed. However, where Social Identity Theory is often used to demonstrate and/or explain differential preference, treatment, and cohesion across groups, our study demonstrates a significant finding with respect to a non-group and non-identity related issue—alertness to entrepreneurial opportunities. Second, this study contributes to the practical understanding of entrepreneurship and is useful for organizations. While we often think of organizations as relatively conservative, especially organizations with strong bureaucratic structures, routines, and norms, there are times when entrepreneurial alertness may be beneficial to operational readiness. For example, under conditions of stress, life-threatening situations may arise where only entrepreneurial action will result in a reduction in loss of life and an ability to prime a particular entrepreneurial orientation could prove incredibly beneficial.

**CONTACT:** Kip Kiefer; kip.kiefer@usafa.edu; (T): 719-333-7970; DFM, USAFA, CO 80840.