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≈ INTERACTIVE PAPER ≈

THE UNIQUE ROLE OF SPOUSE ENDORSEMENT AND SUPPORT IN NEW VENTURE SURVIVAL—ALL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

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Principal Topic

Entrepreneurial behaviors are often rooted in the family context, and decisions to start, continue or close ventures may begin and end with deliberations among family members (Bettinelli, Fayolle, & Randerson, 2014). While a large body of work has explored the interconnected domains of family and entrepreneurship (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Eddleston & Powell, 2012), important aspects of the business-family nexus have received little or no attention. This is an important area to explore, because venture outcomes may alter family resources and processes that the entrepreneur relies on for venture sustainability (Danes, 2013). Furthermore, there is virtually no scholarly consideration of the influence of family processes upon venture creation (see Edelman, Manolova, Shirokova, & Tsukanova, 2016, for exception). We believe these early family processes are especially important because they affect start-up methods and other venture activities while also setting the stage for family-to-business interactions that lead to work-family conflict or work-family enrichment (Powell & Eddleston, 2013). Finally, research at the interface of family and business has tended to treat all family relationships as equal, when in reality families are characterized by widely varying forms, structures and relational norms (White, Klein, & Martin, 2015). Thus, when explicating the business-family interface, consideration should be given to the unique rules and consequences that characterize distinct family relationships.

Method

We utilized three nationally representative U.S. samples of aspirant, new, and experienced entrepreneurs to evaluate this research topic. Relying on a field survey and two experiments, we test the recursive influences of family on business creation and sustainability.

Results and Implications

We extend theory at the intersection of business and family by demonstrating that pre-venture family processes—specifically, family endorsement of the decision to start a business—sets the stage for important resource transactions between business and family once the venture has started. In sum, this study seeks to advance our nascent understanding of the role of family in entrepreneurship by extending current theory to incorporate pre-venture family processes, explicating the role of unique family relationships, and looking at the recursive impacts of business and family.

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