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APPROACHING THE AGORA - DETERMINANTS OF SCIENTISTS' INTENTION TO PURSUE ACADEMIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP (SUMMARY)

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SUMMARY

APPROACHING THE AGORA – DETERMINANTS OF SCIENTISTS’ INTENTION TO PURSUE ACADEMIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Principal Topic

The economic impact of scientific research is receiving widespread attention (Dosi, 1988; Rosenberg & Nelson, 1994). New ventures started by scientists are the most direct or, at any rate, the most visible form of technology transfer and research commercialization (Shane, 2004). However, not much is known about the factors leading scientists to pursue academic entrepreneurship (Audretsch & Kayalar-Erdem, 2005). We attempt to fill this research gap by investigating individual and contextual factors as well as their interplay in determining scientists’ intention to start a firm upon own research. According to entrepreneurship scholars (Bird, 1988; Krueger & Carsrud, 1993), intentions to engage in new firm formation can be seen as a critical antecedent of the decision to become an (academic) entrepreneur. Knowledge about the emergence of and influences on scientists’ entrepreneurial intentions may, thus, be important for both future research on the commercialization of science and public policy aiming to stimulate academic entrepreneurship.

Method

We conducted a cross-sectional survey of faculty and research staff of German universities and non-university research organizations. We utilized an Internet-based questionnaire, which was designed following established guidelines. Survey data were collected from a random sample of 496 scientists. Data are analyzed using hierarchical linear regression models.

Results and Implications

We apply an extended version of Ajzen’s (1991) “Theory of Planned Behavior” to determine entrepreneurial intentions among scientists. Our results show that scientists’ intentions to engage in entrepreneurship are mainly determined by a strong entrepreneurial self-perception rather than, e.g., normative pressure from superiors or colleagues. Scientists’ affective attitude toward entrepreneurship, perceptions of control over entrepreneurial behavior and entrepreneurial self-identity turned out to be the strongest predictors of the willingness to engage in research commercialization. Furthermore, tests of interaction effects provide insights that go well beyond existing knowledge about socialization processes and peer group effects in the context of academic entrepreneurship (Stuart & Ding, 2006). We find that proximity to entrepreneurial colleagues predicts scientists’ entrepreneurial intentions only if these colleagues were indeed perceived as behaviorally relevant role models.

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