SOCIAL AND SUSTAINABLE GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP: ASSESSING MISSION DRIFT AND MISSION ACHIEVEMENT AMONG MEN AND WOMEN SOCIAL AND SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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Research interest in social and sustainable entrepreneurship has increased tremendously in the past few years. Along with the growth in the general topic, some scholars (e.g., Jennings and Brush, 2013) have started to call for more research about how the literature on women’s entrepreneurship can inform the broader entrepreneurship literature on social and sustainable entrepreneurship. Initial findings from the GEM data suggests that women are more likely than men to pursue social and environmental activity with their new ventures (Hechavarria et al., 2012; Meyskens et al., 2011), but explanations for these differences remain understudied. The assumption that women will inherently pursue ventures that achieve more sustainable and holistic outcomes given that feminine ideals are more likely to focus on social good, nurturing environments and care (Bird & Brush, 2002; Hughes & Jennings, 2012) may not actually matter if women led ventures achieve fewer organizational objectives because of lower managerial skills (Cron et al., 2009) and fewer overall resources (Watson, 2002).

Method

Utilizing content analysis and grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) we analyze organizational mission statements and crowdsourcing funding requests/proposals of 107 social and sustainable male and female led ventures located in the U.S. to determine the mission achievement and mission drift for each firm.

Results and Implications

Early findings are mixed, but results suggest that although women may state more holistic outcome objectives as part of their mission than men social and sustainable entrepreneurs, they are not necessarily any more effective at achieving these outcomes. These results are in line with other studies on feminine gender roles, where women are found to be more altruistic, helpful and concerned for others (Kidder and Parks, 2001). However, being concerned versus actually achieving organizational objectives are separate issues and the next step for these ventures is the actual achievement of their missions in real life social and sustainable ventures. By examining mission alignment/drift, we take one small step in developing a more nuanced understanding of how social and sustainable entrepreneurs can actually achieve their missions, which will ultimately benefit society at large.

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