**Visions, Entrepreneurial Adaptation and Social Networks:**

**Evidence from a Randomized Experiment on a MOOC Platform**

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**Abstract:**

Examining the performance of early-stage entrepreneurs before and after randomly showing them different approaches to finding an advisory social network tie, we find important interactions between the type of social tie and strategic process. To our knowledge, this is the first randomized, controlled field trial of both social networks and strategic process that we are aware of in the literature. In particular, the results show that adding a diverse network tie alone is less effective than combining a diverse tie with a specific strategic approach. In isolation, using a planning strategic process is more effective than just adding a diverse mentor tie. Contrary to the finding that entrepreneurs often change their business model and strategic direction frequently, we find that instructing entrepreneurs to have a strong, persistent vision for their startup often results in better performance in the early stages. In contrast to prior descriptive work showing that entrepreneurs often begin their ventures with a cohesive, closed network high in trust and transition later to a more diverse network, we find that early stage ventures appear to be better off with more diverse social ties in the beginning, particularly if a more adaptive approach is taken to the venture’s strategy. The results suggest that social networks should not be altered for entrepreneurs and managers (as many recent policies attempt to do) without also taking into consideration the strategy formulation process.