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**OMT/ODC/MOC Doctoral Consortium Nominee**

**DISSERTATION SUMMARY**

***Short Description***

My dissertation focuses on the increased utilization and institutionalization of alternative medicine within the United States over the past one hundred years. I focus on the changing landscape of healthcare and the policies and practices that have altered and defined assumptions about medicine and healing. I use data from the chiropractic industry to research the ways in which institutional entrepreneurs shape and guide a field and how such actors evolve over time.

***Theoretical Framework***

Both entrepreneurship and organizational theory have appreciated fair criticism regarding a diverse set of shortcomings. While organizational theory provides for the construction of markets, populations and communities, the essential actors behind these entities have generally gone undefined. By the same token, entrepreneurship has provided insights into the construction of firms but has been criticized for being theoretically deficient, especially at the macroeconomic level. Recently, a handful of authors have moved from addressing the diffusion of new practices as a taken for granted concept within a larger context, to defining how the phenomenon actually comes about, representing a reconciliation between various components of organization theory, such as institutional theory and population ecology, and entrepreneurship. A major tenant of this emerging research is defining the dominant forces that drive the adoption of a new practice. These dominant forces are often identified as institutional entrepreneurs; either

individuals (MacGuire, Hardy and Lawrence, 2004; Rao, Monin and Durand, 2003) or organizations (Galvin, 2002; Washington, et al, 2004) that help to establish and direct a specific area of thought by enacting purposeful institutional strategies. Institutional theory provides insights into how institutional entrepreneurs define the strategies available and how they enact such strategies over time. By examining the creation process through an institutional lens, new insights can be added to traditional ideas of entrepreneurship and strategy.

### ***Research Questions and Approach***

This study utilizes the medical field and the increase in use of alternative medical practices as the empirical setting for examining how institutional entrepreneurs draw attention to practices and increase utilization of alternative logics through social and political processes. The main research question is focused on illustrating how peripheral practices compete and grow in an established field, and how the actions and efforts of institutional entrepreneurs affect the acceptance of these changes within relevant arenas. The three questions of interest are 1) how is the direction of institutional change determined 2) who determines the manner of change or the path of diffusion and 3) in what types of behaviors do the directing actors engage in order to influence the diffusion of a practice? Thus the two most prominent concerns are institutional entrepreneurs and the institutional strategies they employ in the process of championing an institutional change, in the case, the changing face of medicine.

### ***Data and Methodology***

The study of alternative medicine is worthy of additional scholarship because, although the practice of these medicines is anything but new – some practices have been

around for more than 4000 years – the various medicines represent emerging industries in the U.S., strongly driven by changing societal values and assumptions and field-level practices. Alternative medicine also represents an alternative model to the conventional forms of organization within the field of healthcare which provides support for differentiation strategies at both the field and the industry level. Currently, I have completed the theoretical outline for my dissertation and have also completed my data collection. My dissertation is, in large part, qualitative, due to the nature of the context. I am studying the evolution of a field over time and thus have assessed multiple archival documents including meeting notes, personal correspondence and association information. I am focusing on field level data including founding information on colleges of alternative medicine, state licensing dates, practices and control mechanisms and health insurance coverage. In addition to my qualitative research, I have gathered data on every chiropractic school since the inception of the industry in 1896. This has been done in order to quantitatively examine the construction of an educational infrastructure. I have also collected data on legislative licensing for chiropractic which lends to the analysis of institutional strategies focused on increasing the socio-political legitimacy of chiropractic. Finally, I have gathered data on publications regarding chiropractic, including journals devoted solely to chiropractic and articles regarding the practice in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and the *New England Journal of Medicine* in order to examine social interest and the focus on increased discourse as an institutional strategy.

I believe the strength of my dissertation will lie in the qualitative analysis that has already yielded positive results. Thus far I have shown significant evidence that

institutional entrepreneurs 1) evolve over time and 2) enact strategies focused on increasing both economic and social capital. As far as quantitative data analysis, I plan to employ time series analysis, as the quantitative measures are longitudinal and time-sensitive.