

## BOOK REVIEW

### WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONTEXTS

Edited by Cristina Díaz-García, Candida G. Brush, Elizabeth J. Gatewood, and Friederike Welter, Northampton, Massachusetts: Edward Elgar. 2016. 293 pp. \$135 (hardcover). ISBN: 978-1-78471-741-4.

Women's entrepreneurship has garnered scrutinized attention in recent years by mainstream and feminist scholars alike. Thanks to dedicated scholarship and robust empirical research, the role of women's entrepreneurial endeavors in boosting economic development and alleviating poverty has evolved to become increasingly noticed and exemplified. Many entrepreneurship scientists have studied the phenomenon of women's entrepreneurship at the micro-level, highlighting the individual characteristics that boost women's entrepreneurial activity through various theoretical frameworks: entrepreneurial intention, opportunity recognition, effectuation, bricolage- to name a few. Such efforts have shed light on the distinct differences that separate women entrepreneurs from their male counterparts. Consistent with such theoretical frameworks and their findings, the last decade has marked a shift, a progression, in our scholarly understanding of this phenomenon, giving rise to the study of meso- and macro-contextual levels which promote or inhibit women's entrepreneurship. Notwithstanding, the impact that inherent characteristics embedded within these levels, such as social values and expectations, cultural norms and traditions, and gendered social forces have on women entrepreneurs remains understudied and, to an extent, misunderstood. Cristina Díaz-García, Candida G. Brush, Elizabeth J. Gatewood, and Friederike Welter's edited book, *Women's entrepreneurship in global and local contexts*, published by Edward Elgar, fills this gap.

In chapter 1, before briefly introducing each chapter, the editors, led by Díaz-García, emphasize the goal of this edited volume is to offer greater insight to move beyond studying "gender as a variable" (p. 7) to contextualizing women's entrepreneurship research, that is connecting individual characteristics of women entrepreneurs to the context within which they are embedded. This is much needed work because our lack of understanding about traditional gendered institutions has fundamentally hindered collective efforts to achieve gender equality in entrepreneurship, STEM programs, and elsewhere. The fact that there are still "societies that do not perceive entrepreneurship as an appropriate career for women" (p. 14) calls for new research on how a gendered lens can inform women's entrepreneurship and the closing of the occupational segregation gap.

The following four chapters use a macro lens to examine various institutional factors that influence the gender gap. In chapter 2, Ruiz Arroyo, Fuentes Fuentes, and Bojica propose a context-specific, cross-country perspective on the study of heterogeneity within women's entrepreneurship. The study focuses on non-economic variables that set gendered institutional conditions, both formal (female political empowerment) and informal (female entrepreneurial social capital). Ruiz Arroyo and colleagues examine these effects separately on the country's level of opportunity-driven and necessity driven entrepreneurship. In chapter 3, Aidis explores women's disadvantage in the labor market due to occupational crowding and legal restrictions to enter certain occupations. Under this argument, the author discusses the effects of crowding on women's entrepreneurship development due to lack of competition, profitability, networks, and access to public subsidies and tax concessions available in male-dominated sectors. Chapter 4 suggests the study of innovation must be "gender-neutral" (p. 75). Bijedić, Brink, Ettl, Kriwoluzky, and Welter in this chapter report that the common theoretical definition of innovation and its operationalization in Germany focus on quantitative measures that prioritize technological innovation and

the manufacturing sector. The authors suggest future research can fill in the blind gender gaps by also considering social or organizational innovation, and innovation occurring in the services sector where women's contributions are more numerous. In chapter 5, Nziku conducts a critical evaluation of potential strategies and policies the Tanzanian government can implement to enable sustainable growth for women-led start-ups. The author identifies individual (role models in their localities) and environmental factors (poor economic conditions) that are most likely to affect women's entrepreneurial decisions in the Tanzanian context. The study finds that government programs providing access to capital and formal training are less influential, and suggest national consolidation of uncoordinated regulations is imperative.

Based on empirical evidence from three continents, chapters 6 through 10 explore the influence of meso-organizational structures and institutions on women's entrepreneurial endeavors. In chapter 6, Tillmar examines how engagement in cooperation networks for doing business is gendered among SMEs in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. The author identifies the millstone of the patriarchal context in the persistence of gender inequality, further hindering legislation and support mechanisms aimed at overcoming contextual challenges. Using a qualitative approach, León in chapter 7 documents the entrepreneurial behavior, managerial abilities, and business strategies implemented by women running craft microenterprises in Peru. The findings of this case study are numerous, but primarily suggest that family involvement in procurement and distribution, prior relevant experience, and connecting with trading organizations are key to reduce costs and access international markets.

In chapter 8, Ford and Cooper investigate the aggregate impact of a Kenyan social enterprise (Soko) on systemic social change. They demonstrate that a mobile-to-web platform which connects women entrepreneurs in the craft industry with global customers (via Soko's app) can have a far-reaching impact on female empowerment and leadership development, and the spread of socio-economic benefits to the community as a whole. Uygur, Kahraman, and Günay in chapter 9 feature an innovative four-criteria social business model in Turkey that highlights innovation outcomes other than technological. Their findings propose that innovative and sustainable business models in social enterprises can develop agency among women founders and women stakeholders. In chapter 10, Coleman and Robb confirm that access to external financial capital is critical for women entrepreneurs in high growth potential firms, and can be attributed to the size-gap between women- and men-owned firms. Fear of denial of loan application is higher for women, even though loan approval rates are the same between men and women applicants.

The next four chapters switch the focus of analysis from an institutional-contextual perspective to the individual, highlighting the influence of women's embedded agency on entrepreneurial intention. Sánchez-García and Hernández-Sánchez in Chapter 11 propose a psychosocial model that empirically suggests male university students in Spain score higher than females for self-efficacy, perceived behavior control (PBC), pro-activeness, and entrepreneurial intention (partially mediated by entrepreneurial attitudes, PBC, and perception of subjective norms). While women are more influenced by subjective norms (support from inner circle), men require PBC (to feel capable) to form their entrepreneurial intention. In chapter 12, Alexandre statistically analyzes the influence of the economic and political environment on the entrepreneurial intention of Lebanese university students in two separate regions. The author reports that women are more risk averse and perceive a higher financial constraint than men, but "seem to be more confident in the environment in general (especially the cultural one) and in their own capacities" (p. 236). Both men and women express hesitation regarding registration costs and administrative issues required to start a business in Lebanon. One third of the sample reports entrepreneurship is not an acceptable career option for women.

In chapter 13, Armannsdottir, Brindley, Foster, Wheatley, and Pich present the results of a case study of nine women entrepreneurs in Iceland, an understudied landscape. The authors reveal the recent recession as a trigger factor into an attractive and satisfactory career path that keeps women connected with the business world, while some engage in free-lance part-time work or raise children. Reliance on personal networks and social networks via women's professional associations are key to reach clientele. Finally, Mari, Pogessi, and De Vita in chapter 14 explore the variables –personal, environmental, and social- that influence the performance of 307 women-owned firms in Italy, a complex cultural setting in the array of developed economies. The study finds that an opportunity-driven orientation leads to business success. Various human capital attributes (personal variables) also lead to positive firm performance, mainly education, years of experience as an entrepreneur, having taken professional courses, and time commitment to the venture.

In sum, this edited book represents a useful guide for entrepreneurship scholars interested in understanding how to contextualize their research on women-led or women-owned firms. It is a timely contribution to the growing stream of research seeking to unveil the intricacies of women's entrepreneurship, women-led family businesses, and their critical role in community development, the latter especially in developing economies and inner-city neighborhoods where women's agency plays a pivotal role.

The reader should be cautioned that some chapters have a weaker methodological approach than others, and not all have external validity to similar-setting regions. Chapter 13, for example, details interviews with nine women entrepreneurs, three of which “had a different view on self-employment from the rest” of the sample (p. 253). Chapter 7 details interviews with five clients of a single NGO and five craft exporters from the National Exporters Association (ADEX). Although the selection criteria is presented in detail, the methodology suffers from potential selection bias and may not be representative of the overall industry or other regions in the country. For instance, “ADEX has only formal firms among its constituencies” (p. 133).

Finally, the book lacks a concluding chapter which could delve deeper into the various policy and practical implications of the diverse work presented in this volume. In all, the book's compelling contribution is to bolster scholars to carefully consider the context when developing their research design for the study of women's entrepreneurship.

*Maria Figueroa-Armijos  
Kogod School of Business  
American University  
Email: maria.figueroa@american.edu*