

## Richness in Diversity: Towards more contemporary research conceptualisations of women's entrepreneurship

### Guest Editors:

Colette Henry, Susan Coleman, Lene Foss, Barbara Orser, Friederike Welter, Candida Brush

Contemporary reviews of the women's entrepreneurship literature have identified gaps with respect to theoretical development, methodological approaches, and embedded gender biases that tend to signal female underperformance comparative to male entrepreneurs (Foss, Henry & Ahl 2018; Henry, Foss & Ahl 2016; Jennings & Brush 2013; Leitch, Welter & Henry 2018). These research biases often serve to marginalise the experiences and contributions of women entrepreneurs, positioning them as 'lacking', 'lesser than' or 'other' in comparison to male counterparts. While our understanding of how these research biases matter is under-explored, calls for new approaches and perspectives to address these concerns have not been fully addressed (Welter 2011; Foss et al. 2018). As such, our understanding of the diversity and heterogeneity of women entrepreneurs and their enterprises using novel methodological approaches and gender theory is lacking in published scholarship.

The neoliberal focus within entrepreneurship scholarship upon growth-oriented firms and their job-creating potential (Coleman et al. 2017; Mason & Brown 2013; Mitchell 2011; Stangler 2010; Tracy 2011) may have the unintended consequence of minimising the legitimacy and importance of the majority of women-owned (Brush et al. 2018; Coleman et al. 2017; Welter et al. 2017). In light of these observations, our proposed special issue aims to provide scholars with an opportunity to take a broader view of gender and women's entrepreneurship by exploring motivations, goals, measures of success and the different contexts in which they launch and strategically manage their firms. With particular regard to the latter, such contexts can include but are not necessarily limited to family business, corporate settings and non-profit sectors. Women's entrepreneurship is a rich and multi-coloured tapestry and thus, we would invite researchers to engage with its complexity, durability, and strength. The aim is to recognise gender identities and to celebrate the global diversity of women's entrepreneurship by encouraging new and novel research conceptualisations that reflect the *actual* rather than the *assumed* status quo. Simply put, women entrepreneurs are not lesser than, subordinate to, or other; some just *do* entrepreneurship differently and, in the process, make significant and valuable contributions to the global economy. Better understanding and conceptualising this diversity of gender and women's entrepreneurship will also contribute novel insights to entrepreneurship research in general.

In this Special Issue we would invite conceptual and empirical papers that can help illuminate the diversity and heterogeneity of gender and women's entrepreneurship in the global context. We are particularly interested in novel methodologies, and conceptualisations of women's entrepreneurship; studies that explore women's entrepreneurship in new contexts (i.e. by geography, industry or sector, culturally or within different institutional settings). Studies that employ theoretical underpinnings from disciplines outside of the traditional entrepreneurship, business and management fields - for example, sociology, psychology, economics, political science, strategy - or that apply macro and micro perspectives to study

how women 'do' entrepreneurship are particularly welcome. We also seek research contributions that look toward the future of how women's entrepreneurship research should be 'done' as opposed to criticising how it has been done in the past, and research contributions that show how our knowledge on women's entrepreneurship can inform the debate on entrepreneurship and gender in general.

**Potential topics and research questions can include but are not limited to:**

- How do different organisational and sectoral contexts - such as family, corporate, non-profit, high-tech, social and sustainable or manufacturing settings, as well as different cultural settings – influence women's entrepreneurial endeavours and entrepreneurial management strategies? How do women entrepreneurs 'do' entrepreneurship in such contexts? Are different theoretical frameworks needed to fully understand these contexts?
- Why do entrepreneurship policy and support instruments continue to focus on 'fixing the women' while often failing to recognise the support needs and differences of women? How can we change this approach?
- How can theories adopted from outside the entrepreneurship/small business fields shed light on women's entrepreneurship and their management strategies, illuminating opportunities for women's entrepreneurial endeavours? How can feminist theories assist us in better understanding the diversity of women's entrepreneurship?
- What is the role of gender and gender identity in the venture creation and management process of new and small businesses?
- What role does gender and other contexts play in women's entrepreneurship? Which new theoretical lenses help explain the influence of context on women's entrepreneurial endeavours?
- How should women's entrepreneurship be better conceptualised so as to better understand the diversity, strategic management and growth dimensions of venture creation?
- Which theoretical, conceptual or methodological lessons can we take from the research on women's entrepreneurship and bring to the small business and entrepreneurship field in general?

The deadline for submission of papers is 31 March 2020; the journal submission site will be open for submissions from Monday 9 March 2020. The Special Issue is scheduled to be published in November 2021. Papers must be original and comply with ISBJ submission guidelines. Please refer <http://isb.sagepub.com/> for submission guidelines and a link to the on-line submission system. In the online system please ensure you submit your paper within Manuscript Type: 'Special Issue: Richness in Diversity'

Questions and informal enquiries should be directed to: Colette Henry [Colette.henry@dkit.ie](mailto:Colette.henry@dkit.ie)