

Call for paper
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Shaking up the gender issue in entrepreneurship.

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Entrepreneurial feminism – a conscious and deliberate response to address women’s relative lack of historical access to the levers of business and venture creation. By leveraging feminine capital, entrepreneurial feminists are breaking new ground in creating wealth and social change. Barbara Orser and Catherine Elliott, “Feminine Capital”, (2015).

The treatment of the gender issue, whether it be in the business world, the field of education or indeed in civil society, tends to generate a host of contradictory feelings, particularly as it is often seen as a source for practices of discrimination and inequality. Feelings can be situated along a continuum of ‘unconcerned’ to downright frustration and anger, with an ill-defined feeling of malaise permeating the whole issue. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the field of entrepreneurship, where the desire or need to create and grow a business, in itself a risky endeavour, is made more difficult when gender gets in the way. This is because entrepreneurship, as a profession, continues to be managed and regulated with a set of mainstream, male-oriented norms. Risking over-simplification, those who are unconcerned or simply curious about the issue are people – usually white, heterosexual males - who have never had to question or feel threatened by their gender in constructing their entrepreneurial career. On the other hand, men and women of all ages, classes and creeds, coloured or white, disabled or not, who may also have gay, queer, lesbian, bisexual and transgender preferences experience those feelings of frustration and anger at the barriers that gender creates, obstructing the construction of their entrepreneurial careers. Why is this so and what can be done about it?

This ongoing and profoundly unfair state of affairs is the motivation behind this call and is fuelled by two overriding considerations. Firstly, we are all concerned about the gender issue in entrepreneurship, and those of us involved here need to develop a more authentic mindset about what gender means. Secondly, gender is not simply to be equated with the sex we were born with and although we have biologically based male or female attributes at birth, our conceptions and representations of our gender is not limited to this. This call is focused on

women entrepreneurs and we are making a claim for the emergence of a feminist, non-gendered, inclusive lens on entrepreneurship to enrich and invigorate this field and to give a voice to how they practice and/or envisage their conceptions of what it means to be an entrepreneur. This requires us to do a number of things. Firstly, we need to shift our focus away from the traditional tendency to simply compare male entrepreneurs with women entrepreneurs that has prevailed in studies on gender in entrepreneurship up to now, treating women as a homogeneous unit. We need to see women entrepreneurs in all of the diversities that they represent to reflect real, entrepreneurial, feminist practices as they exist today¹. Then, as academics and practitioners, we need to position ourselves so that we can better understand how stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem could and do integrate and practice feminist principles in their work, thereby making the ecosystem more just and fairer. We can study, model, document and theorize how feminist practices now in operation have been innovated, implemented, practiced and institutionalized – however imperfectly. We can also imagine new approaches to entrepreneurship (feminists privilege abundance rather than scarcity and mobilize cooperation rather than competition strategies to ensure everyone gets a fair share), norms (recognize that value streams, measure and manage different value streams, not just monetary ones) and principles (fair labour practices and pay equity among staff). This will likely require that we look outside of the entrepreneurship conceptual world to see what is fresh and useful in adjacent fields.

In this call, we aspire to recognize how changes in the world from #metoo to public health crises, aging demographics and major political shifts are pushing entrepreneurship to innovate and how people in the ecosystem are now responding. This exploration requires engaging with intersectionality² as a gender concept, meaning how sex and gender are intimately tied with other socially and biologically conceived identity characteristics, including ethnicity, age etc. and therefore how professional and civil communities are affected differentially.

Over the last 30 years, research articles on the treatment of the gender issue in entrepreneurship have produced some encouraging results, even though a lot of progress still needs to be made to generate gender equality³. The question of gender is now widely conceived of as the “social practices and representations associated with femininity or masculinity” (Ahl, 2007:544). This implies that people across some distributions align their attitudes and behaviour with different gender constructs and the impacts of such constructions can be seen in the types of structures that these entrepreneurs choose to create

¹ Here are some examples : <https://sheeo.world/>, <https://www.liisbeth.com/>

² The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

³ Clark Muntean, S. & Ozkazanac-Pan, B. (2015). A gendered integrative theory of entrepreneurship. New England Journal of Entrepreneurship : Vol.18. N°1, Article 3.

and develop. Research activities presented in the book, 'Feminine Capital: Unlocking the power of women entrepreneurs'⁴ presents and discusses the impacts of entrepreneurship on how women do business and contribute to changing the present male-dominated landscape. They observe, for example, the emergence of a different language used by women to describe their firms and their leadership styles that position venture creation as a 'cooperative' process, aiming at mutual gain. Management interactions tend to be more practical and action-oriented, while company structure is much less hierarchically based. A change in governance strategies by women can also be noted, with a much clearer focus on inclusion and participation. The notion of 'performance' has also evolved to encompass much more than just economic gain, with venture creation itself offering women opportunities to also invest in changes on social and cultural levels to progress the debate on gender equality.

Moreover, the development of feminist constructions that can explain what it means for people to launch and grow a business can lead to a set of feminine de-gendered measures to evaluate performance, providing a more realistic picture of the world of women entrepreneurs and others and how they actually deal with the different phases of the entrepreneurial process. Finally, the validation and recognition of a feminist perspective on entrepreneurship can broaden and enrich knowledge and understanding of gender for both researchers and practitioners in the field, leading to a more balanced, realistic view of the differences and similarities among entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial endeavours.

Researchers supporting this positive shift to continue constructing a feminist perspective in gender and entrepreneurship propose matching it with more appropriate data collection and analysis methods⁵. Building on the small number of existing, qualitatively based studies on women entrepreneurship⁶, researchers are encouraged to adopt more innovative methods to capture and contextualize the socially embedded phenomenon that constitutes gender. Research designs that can position entrepreneurship as non-gendered and inclusive and that can account for the innovative practices that contribute to this change are particularly encouraged.

We believe that changes discussed here can potentially generate a host of new practices that will characterize entrepreneurship, viewed from a feminist perspective. The existence of more authentic and realistic role models can influence and impact decisions on choosing entrepreneurship as a career, offering more contextually based criteria to candidates at all levels of education. Coaching, mentoring and advisory practices will expand to include

⁴ Orser, B. & Elliott, C. (2015). *Feminine Capital: Unlocking the power of women entrepreneurs*. Stanford University Press, Stanford: California.

⁵ Henry, C., Foss, L., Ahl, H. (2016). Gender and entrepreneurship research: A review of methodological approaches. *International Small Business Journal*, 34(3): 217-241.

⁶ Ahl, H., Marlow, S. (2012). Exploring the dynamics of gender, feminism and entrepreneurship: advancing debate to escape a dead end? *Organization*, 19(5): 543-562.

relational practices, favoured by those aspiring to be entrepreneurs or actually doing business. Human resource management strategies will take on board new practices of performance evaluation that account for entrepreneurial trajectories in creating and managing firms.

Through this call, we hope to stimulate dialogue between researchers and entrepreneurs on how entrepreneurship, as a discipline and a practice, can benefit from being non-gendered and inclusive. The wide ranges of stakeholders (in education, training and coaching domains, funding bodies and specialists, institutional actors, policymakers...) that navigate within the entrepreneurial eco-system are also part of this picture and their contributions will be highly appreciated.

Proposals that address (but are not limited to) the following topics are welcome:

- How do conceptions of gender influence?
 - Sectors that people choose for creating their firms.
 - Their value propositions?
 - Their business models.
 - Their growth and development strategies?
 - Their management strategies?
- What are the attributes of a successful feminist entrepreneurial role model?
- What are women's/feminine perceptions and aspirations in relation to entrepreneurship?
- How do men, women and non-binary gender identified people construct their entrepreneurial identity?
- How does gender act on the entrepreneurial process in developing / developed countries?
- What are the perceptions of success for women and men entrepreneurs and how does it influence people and their venturing?

Deadlines:

Submission: 15th October 2020

Publication: October 2021

Editorial line

The *Entreprendre et Innover* review is a high-level popularization journal in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation published by DeBoeck University. Its ambition is to provide a readership of executives, entrepreneurs, professionals in business creation networks and business leaders with original articles that are scientifically sound or innovative in terms of the ideas expressed, without taking up the time of academic publications. The journal is open to ALL disciplines and ALL perspectives that are interested in entrepreneurship and innovation.

As this review is primarily addressed to practitioners, we remain attentive to ensure that the contributions have a concern for practical applications, entrepreneurial implications and/or policy recommendations. In this spirit, the contributions should:

- have a section explicitly referring to these concerns: the reader should always be able to say to her/himself at the end of the reading: and then? how does this article help me to act or to think better for my future actions?
- adopt a more concrete and operational language than that used in academic journals: theory should not be absent but popularized, i.e. translated into simple terms. Abstract concepts must be explained and/or illustrated with practical examples.
- not accumulate scientific references: the aim is to choose a few useful reference authors to understand the subject, not to show the exhaustiveness of the academic literature on the subject. Scientific references should be cited exclusively through footnotes.

Details of the instructions to authors are available on the journal's website: [Instructions to E&I authors](#). It is imperative to respect them when you send your submission.

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