

## 7. Are women more likely to pursue social and environmental entrepreneurship?

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### INTRODUCTION

Little is known about whether social entrepreneurship and ecopreneurship are 'gendered' similar to the mainstream concept of entrepreneurship (Bruni et al., 2004a). This omission is surprising given that females seem to be key targets (Pestoff, 2000; Phillips, 2005; Zahra et al., 2009) and agents (Braun, 2010; McKya et al., 2010) of the social entrepreneurship and ecopreneurship strategies promoted around the globe. Moreover, scholars have recently claimed that adopting a feminist analytical lens can help reframe the current conceptualization of entrepreneurship from a mere economic activity to a more complex phenomenon and catalyst for social change (Calás et al., 2009).

De Bruin et al. (2007) call for female entrepreneurship research that incorporates a theoretical approach which emphasizes the role of personal ambitions, and normative and societal environments. This study seeks to fill these gaps by taking into account gender role theory and hegemonic masculinity to investigate the extent to which the social and environmental goals and practices of entrepreneurs are gendered.

To do so, we use a 52-country dataset drawn from the 2009 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM). We begin by describing how female entrepreneurs enact the common discourse that depicts entrepreneurship as embodying attributes of masculinity and economic rationality (Ahl, 2002; Bird and Brush, 2002; Mirchandani, 1999), what Bruni et al. (2004b) commonly describe under the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Because female entrepreneurs tend to deviate from mainstream entrepreneurship, we hypothesize that they will be less likely than male entrepreneurs to emphasize economic value creation as a goal of entrepreneurial activity. Secondly, based on gender role theory (Eagly, 1987), we suggest that

female entrepreneurs are more likely than male entrepreneurs to emphasize social or environmental value creation. In so doing, female entrepreneurs conform to gender stereotypes typically attributed to females, specifically an interpersonal orientation as well as an inherent concern for social or environmental issues (Eagly and Crowley, 1986; Fortin, 2005; Zelezny et al., 2000). Our results show that these gender differences prevail in both entrepreneurs' discourse (that is, their stated goals for social or environmental value creation) and actual practices (the extent to which they create organizations with the main purpose of solving a social or environmental problem). We discuss the practical and theoretical implications of our findings and offer directions for future research.

## THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

### **Gender Roles and Hegemony**

Extant literature is replete with discussions about the existence of an entrepreneurial gender divide (Gupta et al., 2009). This divide is often examined through social role theory and its extension, gender role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly and Carli, 2003; Rigg and Sparrow, 1994). The latter posits that both sexes adopt stereotypical gender roles in order to gain societal acceptance. Males exhibit more dominant, achievement-oriented behaviours and females display more affiliative and nurturing behaviours. For instance, females 'take care' while males 'take charge' (Furst and Reeves, 2008).

Building upon gender role theory, we argue that hegemony stems from stereotypical gender roles. Hegemonic masculinity is depicted as the patterns of practice, beyond role expectations or identity, which enable male dominance to persist (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). However, this lens does not purport that there is a monolithic class of males who oppress females. Instead, hegemonic masculinity is a 'culturally idealized form of masculine character' (Connell, 1990: 83) in which men position themselves in dominant positions by normalizing a given discourse. Hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily the most prevalent masculinity, but rather the most socially endorsed masculinity.

Entrepreneurship depictions embody attributes of masculinity (Bird and Brush, 2002; Bruni et al., 2004a; Mirchandani, 1999), with entrepreneurs described in terms that are associated more with males than with females (Bruni et al., 2004b). Yet, there is limited theoretical understanding of how hegemonic masculinity relates to organizational emergence. This study applies the concept of hegemonic masculinity to advance

our understanding of the entrepreneurship phenomena. Specifically, we suggest that a hegemonic masculinity lens sheds light on why male entrepreneurs are more likely than female entrepreneurs to exhibit goals aligned with economic value creation, and why female entrepreneurs are more likely than male entrepreneurs to emphasize social and environmental value creation.

### **Economic, Social and Environmental Value Creation in Entrepreneurship**

Several scholars argue for a more holistic view of entrepreneurial value creation and entrepreneurs' motivations. Empirical findings consistently suggest that some entrepreneurs exhibit strong non-monetary values (Douglas and Shepherd, 2000; Filley and Aldag, 1978; Gorgievski et al., 2011; Low and MacMillan, 1988). For example, Amit and colleagues (2000) report that high technology entrepreneurs are more motivated by lifestyle and contribution than by wealth achievement. Contribution is articulated as 'helping others, making a difference to your organization, community, industry and creating opportunities' (Amit et al., 2000: 143). The present study develops Cohen et al.'s (2008) typology of entrepreneurial motives, extending the entrepreneurial-economic value creation juxtaposed with two other selected dimensions: entrepreneurial-social value creation and entrepreneurial-environmental value creation.

#### **Economic value creation**

Typically, work in an entrepreneurial environment is portrayed as a rational choice; emotional components to pursuing entrepreneurship are largely ignored or silenced (Bruni et al., 2004a). Mainstream entrepreneurship has marginalized females who are considered unable to participate due to their non-masculine traits and behaviours (and instead are engaged in domestic activities). Accordingly, we argue that female entrepreneurs will be less likely to identify with goals and motivations that are typical of mainstream entrepreneurs. One such goal is economic value creation.

Our arguments are based on the traditional depiction of mainstream entrepreneurship as an individualistic and profit-maximizing endeavor. Entrepreneurship is commonly defined as the utilization of productive factors for the creation of economic goods intended to increase the residual element in business income (namely, profits), or to achieve some other business gain (for example, power, efficiency, survival or growth) (Cole, 1946). In contrast, female entrepreneurs consistently emphasize non-monetary entrepreneurial motivations (Brush, 1992; Buttner and Moore, 1997; MacNabb et al., 1993; Romano, 1994; Walker and Brown, 2004). Subsequently, we propose:

*Hypothesis 1a:* Males are more likely than females to emphasize goals of economic value creation when pursuing entrepreneurial activity.

### **Social value creation**

Entrepreneurship's social value is widely recognized by scholars (Austin et al., 2006; Zahra et al., 2009), practitioners (Bornstein, 2005) and policy-makers (Korosec and Berman, 2006). We suggest that the concept of social entrepreneurship has been socially constructed to align entrepreneurship more appropriately with the stereotypically feminine domain. This is because social entrepreneurship departs from traditional entrepreneurship in that it does not focus necessarily on economic value; social value creation is explicit and central (Mair and Marti, 2006; Zahra et al., 2009). Successful social entrepreneurs' goals are conceptualized as a less efficient, less rational form of entrepreneurship, which matches the gendered stereotypes of female entrepreneurs. Since performing entrepreneurship involves a gender positioning, we suggest that social entrepreneurship provides an outlet for females to participate in the domain of entrepreneurship; in turn, social entrepreneurship actively reproduces societal expectations of male and female gender roles.

Our view is supported by extant research that posits females are more aligned with social rather than economic goals. Indeed, literature in the social science arena has demonstrated females' proclivity towards altruistic behaviour, spanning a wide range of institutional contexts and methodologies. For example, Eagly and Crowley (1986) report that females are more likely to exhibit long-term helping behaviour. Others find that compared to their male counterparts, females are more likely to engage in volunteer activities (DiMaggio and Louch, 1997) and volunteer more hours per week (Taniguchi, 2006). Furthermore, females' participation in the paid non-profit sector tends to be higher than their male counterparts, both in the USA (Conry and McDonald, 1994) and internationally (McCarthy, 2001). This is significant given that the nonprofit sector is characterized by lower wages, especially when compared with employment in government and business (Themudo, 2009). Similarly, Inglehart and Norris's study (2003), based on World Value Survey data, supports the claim that females display stronger altruistic and equity preferences. These findings reinforce that females tend to be more aligned with businesses that incorporate social well-being rather than economic well-being. Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 1b:* Females are more likely than males to emphasize goals of social value creation when pursuing entrepreneurial activity.

### **Environmental value creation**

Environmental entrepreneurship, or ecopreneurship, is a class of start-up activities aimed to exploit market opportunities centring on environmental concerns (Keogh and Polonsky, 1998). The ecopreneurship literature challenges the conventional masculinity implicit in the traditional ethos and organizational practices of economic entrepreneurship. Ecopreneurship is based on strong green values (Keogh and Polonsky, 1998; Kirkwood and Walton, 2010) and has a powerful moral dimension. Isaak (2002: 81) describes ecopreneurship as 'an existential form of business behavior committed to sustainability'. The capacity to have feelings worth expressing, to be sensitive, to have some depth of emotion, and to care for people and for nature (Connell, 1990) contradict the dominant form of masculine attributes associated with mainstream entrepreneurial activity.

Hence, we expect female entrepreneurs to be more likely to emphasize environmental value creation and exhibit goals that are more compatible with stereotypically feminine values. Indeed, scholars reiterate that female entrepreneurs are more likely to emphasize environmental issues, as compared with their male counterparts. For instance, Davidson and Freudenberg (1996) demonstrate that females have stronger environmental attitudes and behaviours, and Zelezny et al.'s (2000) literature review reveals that these results hold across a broad range of social contexts.

Of special relevance to the subject of our study, Borden and Francis (1978) find that females with high environmental concern are significantly more extraverted ('leader-types') than females with low environmental concern; the opposite relation is true for males. Accordingly, the positive association between entrepreneurship, leadership and extraversion (Vecchio, 2003) suggests that female entrepreneurs are prone to exhibit high environmental concerns, as reflected in their goals for value creation. The contrary could be expected for male entrepreneurs. Braun's (2010) recent study lends additional support to this suggestion, as females participating in green entrepreneurship programmes have stronger environmental attitudes and commitment than do males. Based on the above arguments, we propose:

*Hypothesis 1c:* Females are more likely than males to emphasize goals of environmental value creation when pursuing entrepreneurial activity.

### **Goals versus activity**

Furthermore, we are interested in investigating whether females actually engage in social or environmental entrepreneurship activity at a higher rate than males, rather than simply espousing an emphasis on social or environmental goals. This analysis offers insight into whether

sex differences found in entrepreneurial behaviour studies are due to the usage of a gender-stereotypic rhetoric rather than observations of actual practices (Cliff et al., 2005; Rosener, 1990).

In a study of 229 Canadian businesses, Cliff and colleagues (2005) find that while male and female business owners tend to implement a mix of masculine and feminine organizational characteristics in their firms, there is a disconnect between narrative and practice. Specifically, when asked the question 'what are your goals for the businesses', female entrepreneurs are more likely than male entrepreneurs to report stereotypically feminine objectives (such as building strong interpersonal relationships or attaining life-work balance). In turn, male entrepreneurs are more likely than female entrepreneurs to mention stereotypically masculine objectives (such as increasing their status and wealth). The authors conclude that business owners might not be 'walking the talk' and encourage more systematic research on the subject. It is plausible that female entrepreneurs describe their goals as being more socially oriented and less economically driven than their male counterparts; however, their actions are not aligned with their spoken goals. Based on the above, we explore whether:

*Hypothesis 2a:* The proportion of females to males in social entrepreneurial activity is greater than the proportion of females to males in economic entrepreneurial activity.

*Hypothesis 2b:* The proportion of females to males in environmental entrepreneurial activity is greater than the proportion of females to males in economic entrepreneurial activity.

## METHODS

To test our hypotheses, we utilize GEM data<sup>1</sup> from 52 countries for 2009. GEM interviews were conducted between May and October 2009; our sample includes only those individuals who were identified as either nascent entrepreneurs or owner managers of young firms (for example, baby businesses), and for whom we have all the data for the key variables of interest. Within this sample, we select three types of respondents: (1) total entrepreneurial activity (TEA) respondents, who are entrepreneurs actively involved in a mainstream business activity; (2) social entrepreneurial activity (SEA) respondents; and (3) environmental entrepreneurial activity (EEA) respondents. The last two groups consist of entrepreneurs actively involved in the creation or development of a social or environmental organization. The total sample of 10 362 respondents is weighted

according to census adult labour force population (age 18 to 64) data for the respective countries, and centred to adjust for the sample size (the sum of the weights equals the sum of the cases).

## **Variables**

### **Dependent variables**

In order to test Hypotheses 1a, 1b and 1c, we utilize three dependent variables: *economic value goals*, *social value goals* and *environmental value goals*. These measures correspond to TEA respondents who were read the statement 'Organizations may have goals according to the ability to generate economic value, societal value, and environmental value', and then asked to 'Please allocate a total of 100 points across these *three* categories as it pertains to your goals'. Based on their highest response to the goals question, entrepreneurs were categorized as economic, social or environmental TEA participants.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b are tested using SEA and EEA measures, respectively. Specifically, social or environmental entrepreneurship is indicated by a positive response to the following question:

Are you, alone or with others, currently trying to start or currently owning and managing any kind of activity, organization or initiative that has a particularly social, environmental or community objective? This might include providing services or training to socially deprived or disabled persons, using profits for socially oriented purposes, organizing self-help groups for community action, and so on.

A series of follow-up questions further helped to identify whether the activities were mainly social-oriented (SEA) or environmental-oriented (EEA).

### **Independent variables**

The respondents' self-reported biological sex (male or female) is coded as the bivariate *gender* variable.

### **Control variables**

We control for respondents' age, household income, education and home country. *Age* is often identified as a factor that influences entrepreneurial activity (Gartner et al., 2004), as well as social entrepreneurship intentions (Nga and Shamuganathan, 2010) and environmental attitudes (Zelezny et al., 2000). Past studies also indicate that education levels influence entrepreneurial activity (Autio et al., 2001; Honig, 2004; Krueger, 1993; Peterman and Kennedy, 2003). We measure *education* as an ordinal

variable harmonized with the United Nations coding scheme: pre-primary, primary, lower secondary, higher secondary, post-secondary, first stage of tertiary education and second stage of tertiary education. As availability of resources may influence the organizational emphasis of the start-up or young firm, we include household income. *Household income* is recoded into an ordinal variable to represent the lowest third percentile, middle third percentile and the highest third percentile of reported household income among respondents. Individual values vary with a country's cultural and institutional framework (Schwartz and Rubel-Lifschitz, 2009). Accordingly, we control for *country* utilizing a nominal variable to represent the respondent's country of origin.<sup>2</sup> Finally, respondent answers to SIC industry were coded into the nominal variable *industry* to represent four major industry categories: extractive, transforming, business services and consumer oriented services.

## RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for the sample ( $n = 10\,362$ ) can be found in Table 7.1. The sample is 49.3 per cent male and 50.7 per cent female. On average respondents are 38.6 years old; 69.8 per cent have completed post-secondary non-tertiary education or higher, and 47.4 per cent are in the upper third percentile for household income. The industry split is as follows: 8.3 per cent extractive, 21.4 per cent transforming, 12 per cent business services and 58.4 per cent consumer-oriented. Respondents rate organizational value on average as 65.6 per cent economic, 22.2 per cent social and 14.0 per cent environmental. See Table 7.1 for the mean, standard deviations and correlations.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to test all hypotheses. In order to employ the MANOVA procedure, the dependent variables must be normally distributed. Since the dependent variables for this analysis were negatively skewed, normal scores were generated using the Tukey procedure to normalize responses. Significant differences were found for gender and industry. For gender, the test statistics show Wilks  $L = .999$   $F = 4.74$ ,  $df = 3$ ;  $p = .003$ . The multivariate  $h^2$  for gender indicates that about 1 per cent of the multivariate variance in the dependent variables is associated with gender. Based on the multivariate test statistics we can conclude that the independent variables have a significant impact on at least one of the dependent variables. We can also reject the hypothesis that the population means on the dependent variables are the same for gender.

The between-subject effects test applies an  $F$  test of significance to the



Table 7.1 Descriptive and bivariate correlations

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Education	3.14	1.26	1													
2. Household income	2.26	0.78	.272**	1												
3. Age	38.57	13	-.084**	-.053**	1											
4. Gender	0.51	0.5	.043**	.098**	-.018**	1										
5. Extractive industry	0.07	0.26	-.140**	-.128**	.031**	0.016	1									
6. Transforming industry	0.19	0.39	.023**	.058**	.028**	.072**	-.136**	1								
7. Business service industry	0.11	0.31	.175**	.059**	-.013	.062**	-.097**	-.166**	1							
8. Consumer oriented industry	0.52	0.5	-.126**	-.028**	-.049**	-.137**	-.291**	-.499**	-.356**	1						
9. Economic value emphasis	65.62	25.84	-.029**	.060**	.016**	.113**	.042**	0.009	-.018*	0.001	1					
10. Social value emphasis	22.2	18.84	.022**	.053**	.010**	.080**	-.063**	-.013	.023**	-.01	.439**	1				
11. Environmental value emphasis	14.02	14.84	.009**	.044**	.015**	.079**	0.012	0.011	0.013	-.003	.368**	.544**	1			
12. Economic TEA	0.64	0.25	-.008**	0.036**	-.058**	-.067**	.239**	-.008	.357**	0.261**	.586**	.225**	-.126**	1		
13. Social TEA	0.02	0.05	.017**	-.003	0.007**	0.008**	.026**	-.001	0.030**	0.035**	.062**	-.188**	-.008**	-.012**	1	
14. Environmental TEA	0.01	0.04	.013**	0.004	0.001	0.006**	0.018**	0.01	0.041**	0.040**	.050**	-.165**	.218**	-.010**	-.002	1

Note: \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

relationship of each covariate (age, education, household income) and factor (gender, industry, country) to each dependent variable (economic value, social value, environmental value). The tests of between-subjects factors show that gender is a significant factor influencing economic value  $F(1, 10249) = 6.57$   $p = .010$   $h^2 = .01$  and social value  $F(2, 10249) = 13.22$   $p < .0001$   $h^2 = .01$  (see Table 7.2). Therefore we find support for Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 1b. On the other hand, there is no support for Hypothesis 1c.

Subsequently, we use a  $z$  test for two proportions to examine the differences in proportion of females ( $P_f/P_m$ ) in TEA, SEA and EEA (see Table 7.3). Testing the proportion of females in TEA against the proportion of females in SEA, we confirm Hypothesis 2a. The portion of women to men in SEA ( $P_f/P_m = .68$ ) is higher than the proportion of women to men in TEA ( $P_f/P_m = .58$ ) ( $z = -3.76$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). The difference in proportions of TEA and SEA for women is 10 per cent, with a 5.3 per cent margin of error. Computing the relative risk, women are 1.17 times more likely to pursue SEA initiatives than TEA initiatives. Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that women engage in SEA more readily than in TEA.

Finally, using a  $z$  test for two proportions, the data shows that the proportion of women to men TEA ( $P_f/P_m = .58$ ) is less than that of women to men in EEA ( $P_f/P_m = .70$ ) ( $z = -3.96$ ,  $p < .0001$ ), supporting Hypothesis 2b. The difference in proportions of TEA and EEA for women is about 12 per cent, with a 6 per cent margin of error. Computing the relative risk, women are 1.23 times more likely to pursue EEA initiatives than TEA initiatives. Consequently, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that women engage in EEA more readily than in TEA.

## DISCUSSION

Our findings provide support for the gender divide occurring in economic and social entrepreneurial activity. Specifically, males are more likely to pursue traditional economic entrepreneurial activity than females; additionally, females are more likely to engage in social and environmental entrepreneurial activity than males. Consequently, hegemonic masculinity may advance our understanding of the entrepreneurship phenomena because it can help explain why there are more male entrepreneurs emphasizing traditional mainstream economic value creation than female entrepreneurs.

This chapter makes several contributions to the female entrepreneurship literature. First, we answer calls for multi-country and multi-level research

Table 7.2 MANOVA between subject effects for economic, social and environmental value goals

Effect	Multivariate Test		Between-subject effects									
			Economic			Social			Environmental			
	WilksL	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	df	F	Sig.	df	F	Sig.	df
Corrected model	n/a	n/a	n/a	16.69	0	112	4.5	0.001	112	21.14	0	112
Intercept	0.565	2630.5	0	3269.74	0	1	679.51	0	1	517.39	0	1
Education	0.995	16.61	0	1.1	0.295	1	42.86	0	1	2.44	0.118	1
Household income	0.999	3.52	.014	0.383	0.536	1	6.23	0.013	1	7.53	0.007	1
Age	0.999	3.02	0.028	2.56	0.11	1	5.27	0.022	1	7.53	0.006	1
Country	0.727	22.58	0	27.71	0	51	27.82	0	51	36.51	0	51
Industry	0.994	6.91	0	6.67	0	3	3.33	0.016	3	6.65	0	3
Gender	0.999	4.74	0.003	6.57	0	1	13.22	0	1	1.79	0.181	1

Table 7.3 Test statistics for two proportions of economic, social and environmental entrepreneurial activity

Hypotheses		z value	p value	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
H2a	$P_f/P_m \text{ TEA} < P_f/P_m \text{ SEA}$	-3.76	<.0001	-0.15	-0.05
H2b	$P_f/P_m \text{ TEA} < P_f/P_m \text{ EEA}$	-4.15	<.0001	-0.19	-0.07

in female entrepreneurship (De Bruin et al., 2007; Langowitz and Minniti, 2007). Second, we link gender participation in the entrepreneurial process to hegemonic masculinity and gender roles. The cross-sectional nature of the data makes it impossible to determine causality among the variables in this study; however, our study does indicate that the emergence of female entrepreneurs is increasing because the idealized characteristics of the 'best' entrepreneur are changing (with feminine and masculine qualities merging). Yet, the pervasive gendered stereotypes and discourses are neither changing nor improving; however, the contexts in which the discourses are embedded are changing. Instead of challenging feminine ideologies, females are actually perpetuating and driving the hegemony with their emergence as social or environmental entrepreneurs (versus the traditional, for-profit masculine entrepreneurs). Future research with a longitudinal dataset could investigate relationships over time and enable casual inferences. Our study also extends research on female entrepreneurship by highlighting females' contribution to social value creation. The field of entrepreneurship has recently moved beyond a traditional focus on economic performance and towards social wealth (Calás et al., 2009; Short, et al., 2009) and environmental sustainability (Cohen and Winn, 2007; Cohen et al., 2008). Our study demonstrates that females play a prominent role in extending the value creation logic to the realm of social and environmental entrepreneurship.

Our results also offer important policy implications. The past decades have seen a concerted effort to increase women's participation in entrepreneurial activity. Resulting policy reforms were justified on the grounds of increasing equity and economic growth, as female entrepreneurs were found to contribute as much as men to economic value creation (Verheul, 2005). If female entrepreneurs contribute to higher social value creation then the global trend towards narrowing the gender gap in entrepreneurship is creating an increasingly favourable environment for social entrepreneurship and socially responsible venturing. Using cross-national data, Themudo (2009) finds empirical evidence of a strong association between female empowerment and nonprofit sector development, a relationship he

credits to females' higher concern with the common good and their more altruistic behaviour. Supply-side theories (James, 1987; Young, 1983), also indicate that the social sector develops as entrepreneurs with social or environmental goals create new organizations or reshape existing ones. Extending this rationale to the field of entrepreneurship, we argue that to the extent that female entrepreneurs clearly place a higher value on social value creation than do males, then supporting female entrepreneurship would not only boost the economy and foster gender equality, it will also play a fundamental role in improving society.

Our study suggests a number of promising directions for future research. First, longitudinal data would allow an examination of gendered entrepreneurial values across time. Researchers could explore how values may change prior to and during the start-up process. Second, future research could examine gender and value differences for other types of entrepreneurial activity (for example necessity and opportunity-motivated entrepreneurship). Such exploration could enable an understanding of the impact of whether necessity-based entrepreneurs are more likely to prioritize personal economic goals over social and environmental goals. Finally, cross-national investigations could explore variances across both developed and developing country contexts.

## NOTES

1. Detailed descriptions of the methods and sampling frame used to generate the GEM database are reported in Reynolds et al. (2005).
2. Information on the countries included in this study can be found in the 2009 Global Report, [www.gemconsortium.org](http://www.gemconsortium.org).

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