

Terjesen, Siri (2006) *Gender in Management and Entrepreneurship: Four Recent Texts*. *Management Revue* 17(2).

Copyright 2006 Rainer Hampp Verlag

**Gender in Management & Entrepreneurship: Four Recent Texts**

Reviewed by: Siri Terjesen,

Post Doctoral Research Fellow, Brisbane Graduate School of Business,  
Queensland University of Technology,  
GPO Box 2434, Brisbane, Australia 4001

Visiting Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute of Economics, Group:  
Entrepreneurship, Growth & Public Policy, [Kahlaische Straße 10](#), D-07745 Jena,  
Germany; E-mail: [Siriterjesen@yahoo.com](mailto:Siriterjesen@yahoo.com)

Books Reviewed:

- *Gender and Entrepreneurship: An Ethnographical Approach*. 2005. Attila Bruni, Silvia Gherardi and Barbara Poggio. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Routledge: London. ISBN 0-415-35228-2. 231 pages. \$125 hardback.
- *Women Entrepreneurs: Theory, Research & Policy Implications*. 2005. Edited by Elisabet S. Hauge and Per-Anders Havnes. Høyskoleforlaget: Kristiansand. ISBN 82-7634-667-7. 175 pages. \$35 softback.
- *International Handbook of Women and Small Business Entrepreneurship*. 2005. Edited by Sandra L. Fielden and Marilyn J. Davidson. Edward Elgar: Cheltenham. ISBN 1-84376-012-6. 282 pages. \$165 hardback.
- *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies*. 2005. Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Sage: London. ISBN 0-7619-7036-3. 193 pages. \$34 softback.

Early research in entrepreneurship is characterised by a neglect of female entrepreneurs (Buttner & Moore, 1997) and a gender neutral approach (Baker, Aldrich & Liou, 1997). Today, the growing number of female entrepreneurs around the world (OECD, 2000) appears to be accompanied by an increase in published studies of the phenomenon. Here three of these manuscripts are reviewed, plus a fourth volume devoted to key concepts in gender studies.

---

*Gender and Entrepreneurship: An Ethnographical Approach*. 2005. By Attila Bruni, Silvia Gherardi, and Barbara Poggio. Routledge: London.

Although the study of entrepreneurship is, to a considerable extent, rooted in economics, entrepreneurship also has a cultural component that is the focus on this book. This book explores the production and reproduction of gender and entrepreneurship in social practice. It is composed of three main parts: (1) an analysis of extant gender and entrepreneurship research, plus the development of a theoretical framework of gender as social practice and entrepreneurship as masculine activity, (2) methodology and findings from ethnographic research in five Italian enterprises, and (3) a reflection on the discursive and narrative practice in entrepreneurship research. This book offers its readers a truly reflective and rigorous interpretation of the gendering of entrepreneurship, in addition to deep theoretical and methodological insights.

In the first chapter, the authors distinguish their approach to the study of female entrepreneurs from that in most of the literature. They make the case for entrepreneurship as a cultural model of masculinity and argue that “to study women entrepreneurs without examining the gender structuring of entrepreneurship is to

legitimate the 'gender blindness' which renders masculinity invisible and turns it into the universal parameter of entrepreneurial action, the model with which every entrepreneurial act must comply because it is the norm and the standard value" (p. 2). Thus, they depart from the empirical feminist approach of gender as a variable (e.g. Fielden and Davidson, 2005) and instead take the social constructionist view of entrepreneurship (see, for example, Downing, 2005). The concept 'entrepreneur mentality' describes not only the entrepreneurs' language, but also the media coverage and academic research. The literature on female entrepreneurs presents their development as a process of 'othering,' and women entrepreneurs are depicted as inferior to their male counterparts.

This literature is critically examined, generating a list of explanations and inherent gender sub-texts. For example, the authors point to the explanation of women's new ventures in services as being explained by previous employment in the industry, and the lack of technical skills and financial resources. These explanations have a gender subtext—that female entrepreneurs "construct ghettos" by starting businesses that require skills learned in their past work in sectors with low entry barriers and limited value. The authors go on to develop a theoretical framework of gender as social practice and entrepreneurship as a form of masculinity.

The next section of the book describes ethnographic research methodology (chapter three) and illustrates the cultural production and reproduction of gender in the social practices of entrepreneurs (chapter four). The ethnography is based on a week-long observation and participation in five different firms by a male researcher, and the subsequent analysis of his reports by a female researcher. The authors selected firms that are not unique or even exceptional, but rather are representative of many enterprises in Italy's industrial districts. The rich, descriptive language used to create the cases is vivid. For example, in the Erba men's shirt enterprise (p. 90-98), this reader could easily imagine herself on the shop floor, overhearing the conversations and watching the interactions of Mr. and Mrs. Erba, the husband-wife owner-managers, with the background whir of the women employees' sewing machines and the stale smoke of Mr. Erba's cigarettes.

Chapter five features an extensive discursive practice analysis to illustrate how the entrepreneurs' identity is constructed through language. Finally, chapter six comments on the overlap between the entrepreneurs' private and business lives. A helpful appendix reflects on the use of ethnographic methodology. In summary, this text is a must for scholars interested in gender theory, discourse analysis and ethnographic research methods.

*Women Entrepreneurs: Theory, Research & Policy Implications.* Edited by Elisabet S. Hauge and Per-Anders Havnes. Høyskoleforlaget: Kristiansand.

Hauge and Haynes' edited volume has two stated objectives: to present women entrepreneurship research and to discuss its implications for developing policies to promote female entrepreneurship. The chapters in the first part of the book describe the characteristics of female entrepreneurs and possible explanations for differences between men and women. The next section explores several European countries' policies intended to promote female entrepreneurship. Finally, the book concludes with a discussion of future directions for research and policy.

The book's introductory summary of a number of early studies, while useful, does not do justice to the heterogeneity of female entrepreneurs that is revealed later in the chapters.

Part one is comprised of three contributions from Nordic scholars on the characteristics of Scandinavia's female entrepreneurs. Drawing on her research with Pia Arenius, Anne Kovalainen highlights the distinctions among the Nordic countries' (in this case, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway) rates of female entrepreneurship. While these nations are commonly grouped together, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor population studies in 2001 and 2002 reveal unique characteristics of female entrepreneurs in the four countries. For example, women's new venture start-up rates are correlated with education levels in Finland, household income in Denmark, and informal investment in others' businesses in Norway. Next, Alsos and Kolvereid's chapter offers an overview of over two decades of research on female entrepreneurs in Norway, belying four commonly held notions of female entrepreneurs. Part one concludes with Ljunggren's guided exploration of gender theory in female entrepreneurship research.

The second part of the book reviews government efforts to promote female entrepreneurship. This unique collection is based on contributions from scholar-practitioners in several European countries. Richardson and Bennett provide a case study of the networking policies used to promote female entrepreneurship by the organisation Women into the Network (WIN) in northeast England. Friederike Welter follows with a comprehensive review of the promotion of female entrepreneurship in Germany. Finally, Lotherington and Ellingsen develop a model of extending financial credit to female entrepreneurs based on several types of trust. The book concludes with brief policy recommendations from the editors.

*International Handbook of Women and Small Business Entrepreneurship.* Edited by Sandra L. Fielden and Marilyn J. Davidson. Edward Elgar: Cheltenham.

This volume, also edited, consists of a selection of papers, mostly previously published, on female entrepreneurs. The book is divided as follows: (1) personality characteristics, motivation and behavior, (2) strategies and constraints, (3) experiences of individuals with varied ethnic backgrounds, (4) global perspectives and concluding with (5) a summary of the main issues, themes and proposals for new research directions, and implications for women entrepreneurs. These authors and editors have played a significant role in documenting the experience of female entrepreneurs and business owners around the globe. An introductory chapter from the editors would have helped to define the field and highlight the overarching themes and contributions in the selected chapters. However, even without that, this compilation of international research on female entrepreneurs goes a long way to familiarize readers, especially those new to the field, with the various streams of literature and will likely be a key reference work for scholars.

*50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies.* By Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan. Sage: London.

Pilcher and Whelehan have assembled a work dealing with some of the major gender concepts, including a number of theories. The introduction provides an overview of the short but dynamic history of gender studies, with particular emphasis on advancements in the UK. There are succinct summaries of the concept, illustrative examples and references for further reading. The definitions are referenced and illustrate, albeit quite briefly, the evolution and application of the key terms.

This book would have benefited from the inclusion of an overall framework, describing the interrelationships of the key concepts, but is useful as it is. Many of the concepts were developed and refined in Literary Studies, Sociology, Philosophy and Women's Studies, are likely to be new and insightful for many management scholars trained in Psychology, Economics and Organisational Theory. For example, the extant management literature incorporates perspectives such as socialization, equality, post-feminism and post-modernism, but this volume introduces less-explored perspectives including the politics of identity and backlash.

**References:**

Baker, T., Aldrich, H.E., and Liou, N. 1997. Invisible Entrepreneurs : The Neglect of Women Business Owners by Mass Media and Scholarly Journals in the United States, *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 9: 221-238.

Buttner, H., and Moore, D. 1997. Women Entrepreneurs: Moving Beyond the Glass Ceiling. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Downing, S. 2005. The social construction of entrepreneurship: narrative and dramatic processes in the co-production of organizations and identities. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, March: 185- 204.

OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). 2000. *OECD Small and Medium Enterprise Outlook*, OECD, Paris.